

Mandla Isaac Gai

Summary

Gai was born in King Williamstown but brought up in East London. He speaks of his family being forcefully removed from their home in Duncan Village in East London but of how his father negotiated to stay there by swapping his allocated house in Mdantsane with another family who lived in a shack in the Sphunzami section of Duncan Village.

He schooled in Duncan Village and Mdantsane and was involved in school boycotts during 1980 and arrested by the police. He was forced to leave school after his father died of throat cancer. He took his father's job at SA Druggists in East London in 1981 where he continued working until 1994.

While there he attempted with others to organise the workers into SAAWU. However the bulk of the workers were old and feared losing their jobs and their benefits. It was only after the formation of Cosatu when many of the older workers had retired and Cosatu had a public presence that workers joined the chemical affiliate, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU).

Workers at that time faced immense difficulties at the workplace. They fought over hours of work, protective clothing, recognition of the union and its shop stewards as well as health and safety rights.

He describes the reluctance that they faced from Saawu who were not keen to hand over their chemical members as required by Cosatu's policy of 'one industry one union'. Some Saawu supporters also saw CWIU as collaborators with the apartheid state because of its support for the registration of trade unions while other Saawu officials feared they would lose their jobs. He says Saawu also differed from other Cosatu unions in

that many of its officials used Saawu as a vehicle to advance political issues rather than focusing on workers' problems at work.

Gayi began his career in CWIU as a shop steward and subsequently was the NEC representative of his branch. He also became deputy chairperson of Cosatu Eastern Cape and then chair of Cosatu before becoming a full-time organiser for CWIU in 1994, provincial secretary of CWIU in 1997, retaining this position after CWIU merged with PWAWU to form CEPPWAWU.

In 2001 he was appointed provincial organiser/educator of Cosatu Eastern Cape and from 2009 until the interview was conducted, held the position of provincial secretary of Cosatu. As Cosatu provincial secretary, he describes how the federation was concentrating on holding the ANC to account by rallying around the education and health crisis in the province.

Facilitator: This is an interview with Mr Gai we are in East London the date is 15 November 2010, the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thanks very much for your time. Please give me a background of where you born and the family you are from, whether you were rich or poor and how you ended up in union structures?

Respondent: As I said my name is Mandla Isaac Gai, I was born in King Williams Town but I grew up in East London in a township which is a place now called Mercedes Benz South Africa, there used to be shack houses there. We were then forcefully removed to but my father made arrangements with someone from Duncan Village in the C Section at Sphunzami, the person was prepared to move to Mdantsane but my

father was not prepared to move to Mdantsane because at the time the laws were saying that if you move to Mdantsane you can't have a house in the rural areas, you can only move to Mdantsane, you only had one choice, you can't have a house in town and another home in rural areas. So he was not prepared to sacrifice his house in the rural area in King Williams Town, an area called Montkuku. So he made that arrangement then we moved in 1965 to C Section at Sphunzami, I schooled there until we moved back to Mdantsane in 1974 because they had now relaxed that particular rule or requirement by that time. And then I .., because we moved around July, so I continued to go to school here in Duncan Village until the end of the year and then I started school again in 1975 in Mdantsane in a school called Dickson Young.

I continued until 1980, there were boycotts around that particular time, we were arrested but the case continued but it was struck off the roll the following year, early 1981. During the same period my father was suffering from ill health, he had throat cancer. I was then forced to look for work, but there was an arrangement between his colleagues and the management there that I should work in his place because it was clear that he was no longer going to back to work. That was in December 1980, but then he died on 2 January 1981. I thought I was going to work temporary work until he recovers, unfortunately he passed on on 2 January 1981, so I had to work there permanently. I worked for South African Druggists, a pharmaceutical wholesaler, a company that distributed medicine and cosmetics, mainly linked with chemists and pharmacies that were under Link Franchise. So I worked there from 1980 December until 1994.

We tried to organise a union, South African and Allied Workers Union, SAAWU, which was led by Thozima Leqwede, we were card carrying members but not all of us joined, some did not join and as such the union did not have the majority because the other workers were scared to join. Many of the workers there, they called them old citizens, I would say about 90% of the workers there were old people that had been working there for more than 20 years, according them they didn't want to jeopardise their pensions etc. At the time it was easy to dismiss workers purely for joining trade unions. Those who joined the union were just card carrying members, they just didn't have an affect because the union was not recognised by the company. Gradually those old workers were going on retirement and new young workers were being employed. When COSATU was formed in 1985 we saw an opportunity of joining COSATU (interruption), so we joined the Chemical Workers Industrial Union which was an affiliate of COSATU, before that it was an affiliate of FOSATU. In this area I don't think there were any FOSATU affiliated unions, the dominant unions in this area were SAAWU and Food and Canning Workers Union. Those were the two major unions in this area, in East London. In Port Elizabeth you had Macwusa and Gwusa, so we then joined Chemical Workers Union in 1986, then the same year I was elected shop steward, we had a task of establishing this union because we didn't have it in this area, but there were, even though in Port Elizabeth we had MACWUSA and GWUSA, Chemical Workers Industrial Union also existed in companies like Plascon Paints, the deputy president of Chemical Industrial Workers Union came from Plascon Paints and also another company called Shatterprufe, so the leaders of Chemical, both the deputy president and the chairperson in the province were instrumental in organising us into Chemical Workers Industrial Union. So we then became part of the structures, though we did not have a formal structure in East London but

we would from time to time attend regional meetings, but they used to call the structure branch there, we were calling the structures branches even though it was the role of the province.

So we used to attend branch meetings. We started then recruiting more workers, but at the time there was a contestation between SAAWU and former FOSATU unions even though they were now in COSATU. SAAWU did not want to hand over workers that it organised into the industrial unions, there was some resistance. It was then difficult to organise workers that were in SAAWU into Chemical Workers Industrial Union, and most of them, especially in those companies in SAAWU, most of them were in the Chemical Industry and most of them were multi nationals. During that time you also had the Sullivan code¹, particularly those companies that were from America, they subscribe to the Sullivan Code which forced them to recognise trade unions in South Africa, so those multi nationals then recognised SAAWU even though SAAWU was not recognised in other companies, particularly local companies. So those companies that were in SAAWU from the chemical industry were Johnson and Johnson, BP South Africa, petroleum company, Chloride First National Batteries, it used to be called Raylite then, but today it's called First National Batteries, Pharmador was also a pharmaceutical company. So there were quite a number of them those were from the Chemical Industry that were organised by SAAWU, so as such we battled to organise them into chemical but we tried, but also there were other pressures from COSATU and I believe also from SACTU outside the country that were pressuring SAAWU to dissolve and hand over the membership to the industrial unions. After some time then SAAWU then dissolved and those members came into the Industrial unions including those who were in the Chemical sector.

¹ Written by the Rev. Leon H. Sullivan of the Zion Baptist Church of Philadelphia in 1975 it bound companies from the US to abide by certain principles in their workplaces

So they now continued, rising through the ranks of Chemical Industrial Workers Union. First I was elected as an NEC member, what happened is each of the branches of Chemical Workers Industrial Union would have four office bearers but also there would be one NEC member, who would attend NEC together with the four office bearers. So I was elected as a NEC member. That was also to accommodate this part of the province, because all office bearers were in PE, the chairperson, the deputy, the secretary, and the treasurer. So in order to accommodate East London they elected me as the NEC member, replacing another fellow worker who was a shop steward together with .., I replaced him as the NEC member. Then I continued being the NEC member.

The following year I was elected as the deputy chairperson of Chemical Workers Industrial union, but also we participated in COSATU activities in the province, I continued being the branch deputy chairperson, from 1988 until 1991. Then also in 1991 I was elected as deputy chairperson of COSATU East London, after that I was then elected as the chairperson of COSATU in East London. Then in 1994 I was requested by the union to become a full time organiser. I was then employed in 1994 as a full time organiser for Chemical Workers Industrial Union, in 1997 I was elected as the secretary, branch or provincial secretary. Then I continued from 1997, then the union in 1999 merged with PWAWU, which was PaperWood and Allied Workers Union, they merged to form what is today called Chemical Energy Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union (Ceppwawu). I then became a provincial secretary of the union, they called them regions because not all of them are provincial, whilst it is provincial Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Kwa Zulu Natal, but in the Gauteng and Limpopo and all those areas it is not as per the provinces, so that is why they are unable to call them provinces because you will find some in the Gauteng

area, Gauteng area will for instance cover workers that are outside Gauteng area into its region so that's why they are unable to call them provinces. So I continued being the secretary of NUM as the union. Then in 2001 I joined COSATU as the provincial organiser/educator. I continued in that position until last year 2009 July Provincial Congress, I was elected as the provincial secretary to date. The previous secretary is now a member of the Provincial Legislature.

Facilitator: Just to go back, you said that you were arrested in 1980 following a school boycott „?

Respondent: yes

Facilitator: were you one of the ring leaders so to speak?

Respondent: Not really a ring leader but you know at that time, they would just, we had a march actually from school, we were just marching not knowing where we were marching to, so the police came with their vans and they took us to the police station and also to court.

Facilitator: was that your first brush with the law?

Respondent: yes

Facilitator: In terms of the unions, what motivated you to begin to think that the union is important in the survival of the black people in this country?

Respondent: There was a lot of exploitation, working conditions were bad, there was discrimination at the workplace, black workers in particular were not regarded as employees or as workers, we were just there to assist, wages were very low, in fact you wouldn't have regular increments, what would happen is that if the manager likes you, you will get an increase but if not, you will continue without ever having any increase. So that then forced us to become union members.

Facilitator: Just going back a bit, you mentioned that your father didn't want to move to Mdantsane but then you moved to Sphumzami ...?

Respondent: yes

Facilitator: Was there a different arrangement in terms of the land?

Respondent: Sphumzami at the time was not part of the homeland system, it was not part of Ciskei, so Mdantsane was part of Ciskei which was a homeland

Facilitator: so that's why you ended up at Sphumzami

Respondent: yes

Facilitator: The challenges of running a union in the 1980s, organising SAAWU here, people were afraid of joining etc...?

Respondent: People were afraid of joining because they were not protected because also the union was not recognised, the other thing, it was not registered as per the then Manpower Act, so it therefore did not

have access to what was called the Conciliation Board which was replaced by CCMA, so if you get dismissed it would have to engage lawyers and the matter will have to be taken to labour court, industrial court then, which would take some time before the case is resolved. It could take up to a year and that would then even demoralise those who are not dismissed but work with you. Employers will always use those that were dismissed as an example to demoralise those who wanted to join the unions and they would then get discouraged because management would point out that those have been dismissed for joining the union. But also SAAWU itself was being harassed by both the security forces of the then Ciskei regime and also the South African Police. So some people were scared to identify themselves with SAAWU.

Facilitator: how brutal were these forms of harassment from the police?

Respondent: they were very brutal, especially in the Ciskei homeland, where people would be sjambokked for no apparent reason, for instance there would just be curfews without any reason, you can't walk after 7, they would stop you, without even asking they would just sjambok you, it was very difficult, you must get permission if you are to bury anyone, you must get permission if you want to conduct the traditional rituals, taking boys to the mountain etc. They were brutal

Facilitator: but then people began to eventually join and why did they eventually come into the ranks of the unions? Was that a change of mindset or there was a change somewhere which influenced other things in the lives of the workers?

Respondent: Well I would say when COSATU was formed, the strength and also the publicity and the vigour, people were hopeful that here now is the organisation that will be able to assist us and help us, particularly with its slogan that of 'an injury to one is an injury to all', but also towards its formation, the Unity Talks, this one union, one industry also was catchy for workers because it gave this impression and understanding that if workers in a particular plant, within a particular industry go on a strike, those workers within the same industry would also embark on a strike in solidarity with that particular plight. So that then gave hope and encouragement to workers that with Unity they will be able now to fight for their rights and improve their working conditions. So that's what gave hope to workers and then they started joining in numbers.

Facilitator: but then you also mentioned the fact that SAAWU was reluctant to join COSATU or to hand over its membership to COSATU, what was the exact reason for its refusal?

Respondent: I think that there are perhaps a number of reasons, one reason was the others grew to become so sentimental about SAAWU itself, they felt that SAAWU was then being tilted out of existence, secondly for political reasons, they felt that it was more political than other unions that were joining COSATU and therefore that political identity was going also to suffer. But others felt that they were going to lose employment if they were no longer within SAAWU especially those that were employed full time, they were going to lose employment. Then the other reason, because unions then in COSATU were registered, they used the concept of registration as if those who were registering were selling out and then there would be conditions on how these unions were going to operate, they would be confined by registration; I think it was an

exaggeration. So whilst there were certain rules under which unions were going to operate, especially those that were registered, it didn't mean that they were .., by registering, collaborating with the system, but the .., I think the information that some members or leaders of SAAWU were giving out to discourage people from joining those unions, mainly those that were from FOSATU, was that they would be collaborating with the system.

But to a certain extent, there were unions that were in FOSATU that only focussed on shop floor matters. Some of them were anti-ANC, so SAAWU had a point on that. But I think the problem was that it then brushed everybody who identified with COSATU at that stage as a, to a certain extent being anti-movement, yet some of us were clear about our loyalty to the movement but also focussed on the unity of workers. We knew that we have formed a congress movement and therefore it was important for us, for the sake of unity to be part of COSATU but also push our political influence, our congress line influence within the structures of COSATU. I believe that we succeeded to do that. We managed them so that COSATU was within the fold of the congress movement, in support of this struggle that was led by the African National Congress. We dominated those who were only focussing on shop floor issues, at the exclusion of community struggles, we combined both the workers struggles or shop floor issues together with the community and the broader liberation struggle.

Facilitator: But in terms of both the community struggles and the workers struggles, were all workers in favour of ..(unclear) both or workers wanted to be seen as, workers things are just workers things, to stay away from community issues?

Respondent: Workers understood that, in fact particularly in this area, SAAWU would have done that had it not been harassed by the security forces, then it would have done exactly what COSATU was doing to combine both the shop floor issues as well as the community struggles. But it didn't have that opportunity, it tried under the circumstances to do that but due to the harassment of its leaders being jailed and harassed, it could not then focus organisational to build a strong organisation of the shop floor but also in community .., but also its leaders also played a role in establishing a residents association, youth formations, both in East London and surrounding areas, in areas like Katka, Stutterheim, forming residential associations, those areas that were progressive and affiliated to UDF. So it played that role in combining both community struggle and shop floor struggle, but the only problem was that now when FOSATU was formed, I'm still not clear why they resisted going into COSATU. In fact I take it that some of them wanted to go into COSATU as SAAWU but unfortunately COSATU had this policy of one union one industry. But SAAWU was a general union, the rule of COSATU was that general unions must hand over membership into established industrial unions. Industrial unions which were organising in the same industry must merge, so that's why you had unions, I think they were 33, they merged I think to .., if my memory serves me well they merged to 12 unions. But then they grew again into 21 unions because there were new unions particularly in the public service and that then affiliated to COSATU. At the time unions were merging into 12 unions, it was the industrial unions at the time, because it was very difficult to organise public sector workers because government did not recognise those workers, instead you would have toothless employees associations in the homelands and also in the Republic of South Africa.

Facilitator: In general was the membership of SAAWU overwhelmingly black or it was mixed?

Respondent: It was overwhelmingly black, I can't remember any white workers who were members of SAAWU, mainly black in this area and Durban and some other areas, and there were also coloured workers in Western Cape who were members of SAAWU.

Facilitator: But here there were no coloured workers joining SAAWU?

Respondent: there were particularly at Mercedes Benz South Africa, some coloured workers who were part of SAAWU, who were even shop stewards of SAAWU at the time

Facilitator: was it easy to recruit beyond the black masses, coloureds, ..(unclear) in terms of this area?

Respondent: it would depend on a particular plant. For instance where management would be forced to recognise SAAWU, SAAWU would then improve conditions of service in those particular plants and that would then attract other races into SAAWU. For instance at Johnson and Johnson, at BP South Africa, at Mercedes Benz South Africa, workers, particularly coloured workers also joined SAAWU, and also became active and others became shop stewards.

Facilitator: and then in terms of .., did SAAWU identify with UDF or it was just ..?

Respondent: SAAWU was an affiliate of UDF, in fact it also played a bigger role in the formation of the UDF

Facilitator: but were there no voices that were like opposed to this kind of relationship?

Respondent: Not at all

Facilitator: or maybe one of the PAC wanted them to stay out of this whole thing of politics and so on, unions must just be unions?

Respondent: SAAWU was clear on non-racialism, it broke away from Black Allied Workers Union precisely on the principle of non-racialism. Black Allied Workers Union was BC aligned, so then we had a group of leaders who broke away, that group of leaders who broke away from Black Allied Workers Union was led by Thozamile Gqweta, because they believed on the principle of non racialism. So therefore it was not difficult then for SAAWU to associate with them and even play a role in the formation of the UDF because already it identified itself with the principle of non-racialism.

Facilitator: In terms of shop floor issues, what were the pressing issues in the 1980s when you were still working for South African Druggists?

Respondent: it would be the hours of work, protective clothing, health and safety issues, basically those were the issues, but also the recognition of the union, and recognition of their shop stewards because at the time you had what was called liaison committees that were bodies that were appointed by managers. So workers would be appointed by managers

to represent other workers, they were more like ...(unclear) (toy?) telephones, so workers then wanted a direct voice from themselves, they wanted their own representative in the form of shop stewards, they wanted their unions to be recognised so that they could take up issues like wage increases and then safety issues. Also issues of working conditions like hours of work because workers had to work long hours then.

Facilitator: but were these winnable cases or you just like lost the cases as the union?

Respondent: Well it depended on how strong those plants were organised, the stronger the plant is organised the better the chances of winning these demands.

Facilitator: and the role of women in union structures around this part of the world, where would you place them?

Respondent: there were women that were very strong, some were even stronger than some men. There were women that also got harassed and got arrested, that were key in organising and recruiting workers. I remember who is today a policewoman, Priscilla Maxongo, Nosiviwe Maphisa-Ngcakula, she was responsible also for organising domestic workers, Nomqibelo Mkhosi but she has passed on. There were a number of them that played a role. The wife of Tony Yengeni, Lumka Yengeni, those were women that were very active.

I think the other thing within SAAWU you had also comrades who were in the underground structures of the ANC, and its military wing, so some of the comrades there were members of MK underground structures, so

some of them when the harassment was too much for them then they went into exile, people like Nosiviwe Maphisa-Ngcakula for instance and others went into exile when they were harassed.

Facilitator: but were there no chauvinistic attitudes from men about being led or be seen to be controlled by women or powerful women within the unions?

Respondent: Not really – though I would say the issues of gender were not that strong, but I think at the time people would be judged on their activism in the trade union movement, but also in the broader struggle, they would not be judged according to their gender, but according to their activism.

Facilitator: Then you went on to be the deputy chair of industrial (CWIU?), what were the challenges that came with that?

Respondent: Actually I didn't .., I felt personally that I was not ready to become a leader of the union, in fact, until today I'm always reluctant to take up positions in the organisation. All the positions that I've ever been elected to, I had resisted. People would be the first to observe leadership potential, abilities in me before I do so myself. But once I'm persuaded to agree to accept then I have that responsibility of not wanting to disappoint people that have confidence in me before I had confidence in myself then I end up trying very hard not to disappoint those people. So that was I think the first challenge. The same challenge I had to ensure that the union also spread particularly in this area because the office was in Port Elizabeth area, we would say we were squatting in those established unions in this area. We didn't have an office of our own, so

we had that responsibility but also a challenge and the responsibility of going out and recruit, the other challenge that was thrown at us was that for us to be able to have an organiser and the office this side we must reach a particular threshold in terms of the numbers that we must organise. So if we had that responsibility of ensuring that we organise as quickly as possible so that we can have an office, and also organise, first we managed to have an office but because of the threshold we could not have an organiser, there was another threshold for us to be able to have an organiser. So the challenge was for us to be man, maybe its gender insensitive, to staff the office after work so that we look at administration, but also we would use company time to go and recruit workers, sort out the forms and post them to the office in PE. We finally reached the threshold and got an organiser, at least things were again better, because at least we had a person full time. The person is now the Deputy Secretary in the National Assembly, Mike Coetzee, he was our first organiser of Chemical Industrial Union, he went on to become the secretary before he moved to the Western Cape.

Facilitator: why are you yourself hesitant about taking positions?

Respondent: I don't know whether maybe it's a lack of confidence in me, I don't know, even if people were to say I must go to the legislature, it would require convincing that I am suitable material to go to the legislature or parliament. I have maybe this weakness of not having confidence in myself. Perhaps I regard myself as a follower not leader.

Facilitator: And also you became a deputy chair in East London?

Respondent: of COSATU, even there I had a fight with the comrades from my union because when I was elected, I was not in a meeting, they just came back and said I have been elected as the deputy chair, in fact what they ..., they had told me that they wanted to put my name as the chairperson. I decided not to attend that particular meeting where there was going to be these elections and they told me that somebody else was then elected as chairperson but then it was agreed that the person who was contesting that candidate should automatically become the deputy. So that is how I became the deputy, so that is how I became the deputy. I was reluctant, we argued in the meeting but everybody was saying I have to accept. As I say, because I didn't want to disappoint them, then I worked very hard.

The other thing which was similar to the situation we find ourselves in, in chemical (CWIU), is that even this side, you didn't have a COSATU office because the COSATU office was in PE. So we found ourselves in a similar situation as that of a Chemical Workers Industrial Union, so we had to do things on our own without any assistance, you would go to the union offices for assistance, writing notices for when we were convening meetings and agendas, it was ..., sometimes we even had to even buy lunches for administrators of these unions for them to also assist us because they also had their own union work that they were doing, employed for, now we had to overload them by asking them to also do work for COSATU, but some of them because they were not politically active, they were just regarding themselves as employees of those unions. So now we had to either give them money to assist us so that they can assist you or even promise to buy them lunch, but we continued under those difficult circumstances, staging big marches, big rallies, organising

those rallies on our own without any assistance from the provincial office or the HR offices they were called then.

Facilitator: but these marches and rallies were they successful, did they serve the purpose?

Respondent: yes they served the purpose, in fact they were attended more than they are attended today, we managed .., some of the people that I was serving with, the chairperson is now the chair of chairs in the legislature, Alfred Mtsi, the secretary was also once a member of the legislature from 1994 until last year, he went to Cope but then he came back to the ANC, he is just now an ordinary ANC member.

Facilitator: at one time there was a merger of the unions, how did that impact on the unions themselves, these mergers?

Respondent: The problem with mergers I think, especially the union that I was in, I would say maybe it's something that is similar to when SAAWU resisted going to merge. The traditions sometimes become a stumbling block in the mergers, if people are used to particular traditions and practices, they are reluctant to do away with those traditions and become accommodative to other ideas and traditions and practices. So I think when we merged, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union with PWAWU, we observed those problems of traditions because Chemical Workers Industrial Union would do things in a particular way, PWAWU would do things in another way, so it was difficult to bring those traditions together and have one union. I would say still almost after 10 years those signs, even though I left the union I think a year after the merger, but I've observed those problems are still there even now, not only in that union,

but also in other unions that have merged, unions like SATAWU, which came as a result of a merger between SARHWU and Transport and General Workers Union, though they are trying their best to invite the unions, but even when it comes to election of leadership, everybody rallies around those who came from their previous unions as if that union is gonna come back again when it's not coming back. People want to stick to those people that they elected in the past. The same thing happened to Chemical to CEPPAWU, those that were in Chemical Workers Industrial Union would want to see people in this union assuming leadership and those who were in PWAU ..(unclear) even today. I think those were the problems – it could be a problem in the public sector, unions when they merged to becoming one single, I'm sure it's going to be worse there because you will be having all these .., I think we've got about 8 different unions in the public service within COSATU, imagine if they were to come together, become one single public sector union with those different traditions and practices and different structures.

Facilitator: Connecting, working as a committee in 2001 as a union organiser and achieved ...??

Respondent: I started in 1994 becoming the organiser for the union. My responsibility was to negotiate wages, working conditions and also in producing union in those companies whose workers have joined the union.

Facilitator: but when you look back, what were the pitfalls of the unions as far as you've experienced?..(unclear) of SAAWU maybe .., when you look back?

Respondent: With SAAWU I won't really say there were weaknesses, except that it was harassed in that .., put it in a situation where it was very difficult for it to operate as a union. But the other I think problem, there were people that were not necessarily workers, who were leaders at SAAWU, people that did not have the interest of workers, people that were more seeing SAAWU as an opportunity for them to be in the liberation struggle. You know for instance you had people like Rev Makhenkesi Stofile, also playing a role in SAAWU, not for the interest of workers but it was an organisation that also could be used to fight against apartheid. I would say, no I wouldn't say that was a weakness, I think that also created some problem because you didn't really have people that had an interest of workers, that were focussing on improving working conditions of workers at the shop floor, but you had more people that wanted to use SAAWU as an organisation to fight against apartheid, which was not something wrong, SAAWU's role also was to combine the workers and community struggles, those who were not workers mainly focussed the direction of SAAWU, mainly on fighting against apartheid at the expense of improving the conditions of workers on the shop floor. Most of them were not workers themselves.

Facilitator: but did the workers voice their feelings or thoughts about this whole thing, people who were non-workers but found themselves in the rank and file of the workers?

Respondent: Well at the time I was not in the leadership structures, this is an observation I have after having developed in the struggle and when I look back I see that there are people .., because I've also observed their conduct now as some of the people and also their stance against workers now and then I then conclude that even at the time they were with us in

SAAWU, judging from their conduct now, it shows that they were not really there for the workers' interests, but they were there using SAAWU as platform to fight against apartheid, had they had another platform they would not have associated themselves with workers.

Facilitator: and post 1994, would you say that the unions underwent a metamorphosis of some sort or is it still the same as pre-1994, the conditions?

Respondent: I think what has changed now is that unions do not have to fight for everything, most of the things that they fought for have now become legislated. For instance you don't have to fight for the recognition of the union, it's there in the Labour Relations Act, all you have to do is just to follow what the Act says. So therefore you won't have to mobilise workers to fight for the recognition of the union. So most of the things you would mobilise workers around are already now in the legislation. So there are fewer things now that unions are really focussing on which are not provided by the law. So that then makes this distinction between the unions pre 1994 and post 1994, it's the difference of issues that they rally around or mobilise workers around.

Facilitator: You are now provincial secretary of COSATU since last year, so where do you go from here as COSATU?

Respondent: We are co-ordinating the work of the unions, improving the conditions of workers, but also improving the lives of our people generally, focussing on the development of the province, economically and socially, we have established structures and forums of engagement with the provincial government for example. We have taken ..., actually we've

declared a dispute with government of the province on issues of service delivery, to NEDLAC, NEDLAC's ...(unclear) came down to listen to the issues in dispute with government, that resulted then in government establishing joint structures with us to look at those issues. So that way we are advancing our members and the interest of the citizens of this province, we are engaging from time to time with the departments on issues that affect our members and also issues that affect the communities, from time to time we invite the MECs to our meetings to make presentations, engage them, for instance the ...(unclear) of COSATU, we've invited the MEC for local government to make a presentation about the state of municipalities. We've invited the HODs of health and education, because there's a crisis in the education and health in this province, so we are inviting those two HODs to tell us about their turnaround strategies and we will be engaging them on those things. So this is what we .., we also engage at an alliance level with the ANC and the SACP, but we decided that we not only going to engage the alliance led, we will engage directly with government because sometimes in ANC, the employees in government, that is employees it will turn not to be harsh on them, ensure that they do their work but we are harsher as COSATU than the ANC in our direct engagement with the employees that are in government. So we are going to continue doing that. We going to continue not only engaging at provincial level of the government, but also go to empower our local structures so that they also do the same, they should also engage with local municipalities on also district municipalities but also we will be taking up campaigns on job losses, campaigns on HIV and Aids, 16 days of activism. So we continue to do that but also identify strategic partners like civil society, I'm sure you heard about the recent civil society that took place nationally. We going to do the same at the provincial level, we not going to be ...(unclear) to identify

civil society organisation in the province and we planning that next year we will also convene a conference of civil society, take up issues on poverty, job losses, fight against corruption. So going forward these are the things that we will be focussing on. But also assist ANC with regard to the local government elections on the level.

Facilitator: Thanks for your time

Respondent: thanks

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