

## THEMBA MABUZA

**Facilitator:** This is an interview with Mr. Themba Mabuza, we are in Tsakane, and the interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thank you for your time. Please give me just a background of where you were born, how you were raised, your background in terms of school and how you ended up in the world on unions. You can speak either in IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, English or mix.

**Respondent:** I was born in old location that was way in 1959 on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. I started school at Thabong Lower Primary, during those days there were lower primary and higher primary, lower primary was Sub A to standard two, that was Thabong Lower Primary, then from Standard 3 went to Mthonjeni Higher Primary until Standard 6, then I moved to Mamelong Nqabeni until my JC which is Standard 8. Then I started working in the metal industry at Baldwin Steel. From Baldwin I moved to Quickqou Steel, Quickquo Limited in Benoni. All those companies were not organized then, but there were trade unions at that time, but they were still run by liaison committees.

**Facilitator:** The famous liaison committees.

**Respondent:** So until I was joined, I was employed at Funa Foods in Springs in 1984, then I started organizing workers there to join a trade union. Then we managed to organize the majority of the workers to join the trade union, that was 1984, to join the then Sweet Food and Workers Allied Union, which is now FAWU, Food and Allied Workers Union. Then I was elected the Chairperson of the Shopstewards Committee. Our company was one of the best paying food companies in the East Rand; it was first Kelloggs and then Funa Foods at that time.

**Facilitator:** Just to go back you were born in Brakpan in 1959, you were part of the families that were forcefully removed from the old location.

**Respondent:** Yes definitely. We were forcibly removed, we came to Tsakane in 1977, because the township was removed, they started removing us from 1974 until 1982, the whole township was moved.

**Facilitator:** So you had to continue with schooling in Tsakane?

**Respondent:** No I had finished by then.

**Facilitator:** But the family relocated to Tsakane.

**Respondent:** To Tsakane yes.

**Facilitator:** Because that remains an untold story, the forced removals from old location.

**Respondent:** Do you want to compile something about that?

**Facilitator:** I am thinking about it but these things tend to take time.

**Respondent:** Yes, we want to compile a book about Brakpan; we have already started compiling information, Brakpan and Tsakane.

**Facilitator:** Oh really, I was interested because I grew up in KwaThema, I was interested in doing history of KwaThema.

**Respondent:** The history of KwaThema is already available because the African Report ran it four years back, it started from Peinville and

then KwaThema, at least its there and compiled, so that is why we were thinking about Brakpan and Tsakane.

**Facilitator:** We will talk more about it after the interview.

**Respondent:** Ok fine.

**Facilitator:** So your decision to go and look for a job, was it based on your family background or you were not interested in pursuing education further.

**Respondent:** In fact that time, 1976, were highly politicized, some of our colleagues were starting to go to exile because of the police harassment, then we were running away from the police because they were looking for us, we were not living at home anymore and we saw that the chance to go to school is no longer there, then decided to go and work.

**Facilitator:** How were politics introduced in your life and other youngster's lives in Brakpan and Tsakane.

**Respondent:** In 1976 and 1977 it was mostly Black Consciousness politics, you will remember that the ANC and PAC were banned at that time, there was a large in terms of politics, active politics until in 1969 when SASO was formed and then subsequent to that the BPC, Black People's Convention. So all these things, the uprising of 1976 and 1977 were influenced by SASO and BPC. So we started to be involved in that 'Black man, I am Black and I am proud, you are own your own', we started getting organized under those slogans and black consciousness theory.

**Facilitator:** Your role models here, BCM role models in the East Rand, Tsakane, Springs, how did it come up?

**Respondent:** In Brakpan, because it was still Brakpan, there was a guy by the name of Ziba Zwane, he is now Ziba Ndlela, then Nunu Buthelezi, and then nationally of course it was Steve Biko.

**Facilitator:** Ok, so they are the ones who politicized you?

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Facilitator:** I have never heard of Ziba Ndlela.

**Respondent:** He is still a BCM, he is still very active but in AZAPO politics now.

**Facilitator:** He never went to exile?

**Respondent:** No he never. Some of the colleagues were Pushy Molefe, he was arrested then he was only release in 1990, he was in Robben Island, he was arrested in 1977. There was another one, with the name of Oupa Pitsi, he went to exile and I don't know what happened to him because I never saw him again.

**Facilitator:** Really. Pushy Molefe, he was in Robben Island for quite some time.

**Respondent:** Yes, from 1977 to 1990.

**Facilitator:** That's more than a decade.

**Respondent:** Yes, unfortunately he is late now.

**Facilitator:** Oh that's sad. Your decision not to go into exile, or go to university, what was it based on?

**Respondent:** When I was in the trade unions in the 80s, because I remember in 1987 we visited SACTU in Zambia, we were invited by SACTU and the ANC. Whilst I was there SACTU wanted me to join their ranks and not come back to South Africa, but because of Chris Dlamini, who said no, I am more needed inside that outside the country.

**Facilitator:** Just go back to the time when you started looking for jobs now, Baldwin Steel, how were you introduced to it?

**Respondent:** My uncle introduced me to that company. That time, it was between 1978 and 1980, there were no more active politics, it was quiet that time, after the 1976 uprisings, it was quiet, until in 1984 when things started to happen again in the townships, then I was working for Funa Foods, I was a shopsteward at Funa Foods that time, Chairperson of the Shopstewards. At the same time COSATU had adopted, that was before COSATU, it was FOSATU, then came the funeral of Andries Raditsile, where the people were organizing it here in the township. After that funeral COSATU took a very radical resolution that the unionists should be involved in the townships also, and not just on the shop floor. Then we started forming structures in the townships, here in Tsakane I was part of the people who formed Tsakane Youth Congress then, because I was still a youth then. Then the other structures like Tsakane Education Crisis Committee, we had those structures, by that time many students were detained, so we had a branch for detainees, I cant remember the name, I think it was Detainees Crisis Committee,

we used to visit the families of the students who were detained, we used to visit those in prison, formed a support committee through SACC, we would send them tracksuits and clothes in prison. Then the structure for Tsakane Parents Education Crisis Committee, I was the deputy chair at that time, then Tsakane Youth Congress, (unclear) myself and others, we were a bit older now so we formed the Tsakane Civic Association that time. So we started by forming ERAPO, the then East Rand People's Organisation, I was the Chairperson, and then two years later we formed the Tsakane Civic Organisation, that was in 1989 I think, which was of the powerful organizations in the township and in the East Rand. We organized a very big march against the conditions then in the township, which was about 95% attended because it was a stay-away that day, everyone didn't go to work, we marched to the office and delivered a memorandum.

**Facilitator:** And the decision by FOSATU to support the township struggle, was it supported by everybody in FOSATU?

**Respondent:** No not by everybody. We had unions like MAWU, which is now NUMSA, MAWU and the Chemical union which were very much against that. But in the forefront we had unions like Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union who were supporting that, and the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union, those were in the forefront of supporting structures in the township.

**Facilitator:** What was the reason for MAWU and Chemical for not supporting the township struggle?

**Respondent:** At that time the leaders in those organizations were liberals, we used to call them liberal whites, people, who were

influencing workers not to support such things. They believed purely on shop floor issues and not on national or local.

**Facilitator:** Out of the fear of being arrested or what?

**Respondent:** I am not sure, what influenced them at that time.

**Facilitator:** How did you balance these things, the involvement in Tsakane Congress, Crisis Committee and other structures and then this side the workers politics, how did you balance these things.

**Respondent:** You know we used to manage, last time we were burying one of our comrades which we started with. We were asking ourselves how we managed to be so involved, but the problem was that we were so few at that time because people feared of being arrested, so that is why we were overlapping in all those structures, unlike today, everybody wants to be in the leadership, but during those days we used to overlap. You find same people in other structures, same faces.

**Facilitator:** Was there direct connection between the workers activities and township strikes, activities and politics?

**Respondent:** Yes there was direct connection, especially after the formation of COSATU, then that's when we started seeing the mass democratic movement find workers, students, youth formations, civic bodies, churches, Christians, everybody coming together in a united front fighting the Apartheid regime, there was a connection.

**Facilitator:** And the township people were there for the workers, did they support the strikes?

**Respondent:** Yes definitely. I think it was in 1984 whereby Simba chips let go a lot of workers, that is when we started the consumer boycott, that was the most famous consumer boycott in those days, I think it was the first in those days, where a product was boycotted, Simba chips, until such time they felt pressure and then they reinstated those workers. That was not the only incident, SAB also let go of workers, we boycotted beers in the townships, that was in the 80s, and other products of course, so there working relationships and support between the workers and the community at large.

**Facilitator:** And then the possibilities of being arrested or tortured or harassed by the police.

**Respondent:** They were there, very rife but we didn't care because at that time we were so mobilizing, we wanted to see our country liberated. We used to risk all those things, being killed, tortured, and all those things. We were detained, during the first state of emergency I managed to run away but the second one in 1986 I was detained, stayed in (unclear) for nine months detention without trial.

**Facilitator:** You were still working for Funa Foods?

**Respondent:** Yes I was still working for Funa Foods.

**Facilitator:** So what happened, were you fired?

**Respondent:** No the union negotiated with the company, I was paid whilst in prison, my wife used to go every week to collect my wages, and I came back, I worked as if nothing happened.



**Facilitator:** The demands in prison, I mean you were detained without trial, what did they want out of you?

**Respondent:** They just said we are trouble makers, we must be removed from the society, because we are intimidating people.

**Facilitator:** Your involvement in politics, did that destabilise your family, going to prison for instance.

**Respondent:** No it never, I was involved in all these things. I got married at a very young age, 25, so already when I was detained and involved in all those things I was married, and I am still married to the same woman even today.

**Facilitator:** Wow 25, I only got married two years back.

**Respondent:** Next year December I will have been married for 30 years, I got married in 1983.

**Facilitator:** You were young.

**Respondent:** I was very young.

**Facilitator:** But the family remains intact?

**Respondent:** Intact yes.

**Facilitator:** Any harassment from the police while you were in prison?

**Respondent:** Yes of course, they used to come to my place and influence my wife to divorce because I'm useless, I am not looking after her, you know, all those things.

**Facilitator:** You also mentioned that you visited SACTU in exile, was it 1987?

**Respondent:** 1987 and 1989.

**Facilitator:** OK. Now did you go there as a COSATU delegation or just FAWU delegation.

**Respondent:** In 1987 it was FAWU and then in 1989 it was COSATU delegates.

**Facilitator:** And why FAWU out of all the union.

**Respondent:** I don't know, FAWU used to have a very cordial relationship with (unclear) and the ANC.

**Facilitator:** How was this (unclear) relationship between FAWU and the ANC in exile, exile was exile and South Africa was South Africa, two worlds apart in a way?

**Respondent:** You'll remember during the FOSATU, FAWU was in the forefront of popularizing the policies of the ANC, SACTU and the Communist Party then, which were all banned and exiled, even the leadership of SFAWU then and then later FAWU, they were in the forefront of the unity of the workers, in the formation of COSATU, so hence there was that special relationship. We used to take our

mandate from Lusaka, as SFAWU and then FAWU later. Do you know Chris Dlamini?

**Facilitator:** I interviewed him before he died, once before he died.

**Respondent:** Yes, that's my mentor. Chris Dlamini used to go in and out of the country, meeting the ANC whether Africa or Europe, so he came back and influenced us with those politics of the ANC.

**Facilitator:** And the regime was aware of these movements?

**Respondent:** They were aware but they didn't have anything to hold him on because they couldn't find any evidence.

**Facilitator:** Your meetings with SACTU in exile, what were the discussions all about.

**Respondent:** They were seminars and workshops, the history of the labour movement in South Africa and in the world, the history of the ANC, and the history of the SACP.

**Facilitator:** Any programme of action about what needs to be done.

**Respondent:** Yes there were programmes of action, even the ANC members they used to come and address us about the policies of the ANC, the programme of action of the ANC.

**Facilitator:** And your own impression of SACTU in exile, when you went in 1987 and subsequently in 1989, what was your take on them?

**Respondent:** They used to have a strong leadership which used to have a rich history of our struggle in the country, I used to admire those people, they were old by then, people like Mark Schoppers, John Nkadimeng, Eric Mtshali, they were powerful old men, and I used to admire them. There was an old lady which happened to be from the Food Canning Workers Union which was part of the merger that made FAWU later, Ray Alexander.

**Facilitator:** Ok I know her, Simon Alexander's wife. Did they still have a sense of what was happening in South Africa?

**Respondent:** Those people were up-to-date with what was happening in South Africa, they listened to news, they read newspapers, they were getting all the information, and they were abreast with the happenings in the country.

**Facilitator:** Your trips to Lusaka, did they feed into FAWU, FOSATU later COSATU or was it your own indaba?

**Respondent:** No, we used to share information those days. If you go abroad and then when you come back and there's a meeting, not only FAWU people, other affiliates as well, even township guys, they would come under one roof and give them feedback and then we take the programmes forward.

**Facilitator:** FAWU served as a union, was it sustainable because you relied on contributions from workers?

**Respondent:** Yes it was sustainable.

**Facilitator:** So the money was enough, there was no need of outside funding?

**Respondent:** No there was no need of outside funding, we were against that because the funding used to come with strings attached, so we were very much against those things.

**Facilitator:** Ok, you wanted to rely on membership.

**Respondent:** Yes.

**Facilitator:** Just going back to Baldwin Steel and subsequently you worked for Quickquo, also a still company, you mentioned that there wasn't a union back then, but liaison committees. The nature of these liaison committees, were they sweetheart unions?

**Respondent:** Yes they were sweetheart unions, they used to convey what the management wants, our demands or our concerns or demands were not taken care of.

**Facilitator:** Were there problems in these steel industries, the two steel industries, these two steel industries.

**Respondent:** Yes there were problems, there were big problems because you couldn't negotiate your own salaries and working conditions, you were just at the mercy of the bosses of that time.

**Facilitator:** Why didn't the workers do something about it?

**Respondent:** In the 70s, although there was a strikes in 1973, big strikes in Durban, then subsequent to that there were these coordinating

things. During those days we were still forming the trade unions, the unions were not strong during those times, and they started to be strong in the 80s, mid 80s.

**Facilitator:** The reason for leaving the steel industry to join Funa Foods?

**Respondent:** Just for greener pastures, it was for greener pastures and nothing else.

**Facilitator:** So were they really greener, Funa Food, was it a green pasture?

**Respondent:** Yes it was at that time and we even made better by negotiating better salaries.

**Facilitator:** You mentioned that you were well paid at Funa Foods, why would you want to form a union then?

**Respondent:** It was not well paid but it was better than in the steel industry, but the working conditions were never good.

**Facilitator:** What was the problem?

**Respondent:** Working hours, we used to work more than 9 or 45 hours a week without overtime, working equipment, the safety of the people was not there, on weekends they used to forced us to work without being paid overtime, there were a lot of things, some of them I don't remember.

**Facilitator:** Did the employers do something about it when you started complaining?

**Respondent:** Yes we forced them, after we joined the union we pressurized them, because we ended up even having housing subsidies.

**Facilitator:** How bad were these working conditions, make some examples maybe?

**Respondent:** How they were bad?

**Facilitator:** How bad were they?

**Respondent:** Another thing you were even fired without any hearing, there was a Black supervisor, if he feels that he doesn't like you, you could be fired on the spot without any wrong doing.

**Facilitator:** You also mentioned that you worked for long hours, did you get paid for those long hours?

**Respondent:** No we were not paid.

**Facilitator:** So it was just pure exploitation?

**Respondent:** Yes it was exploitation.

**Facilitator:** Did this change when you formed a union?

**Respondent:** Yes it changed.

**Facilitator:** Did the employers just sign the recognition agreement.

**Respondent:** There was resistance, but we pushed them because we had 50 + 1 maturity.

**Facilitator:** Was there an alternative union other than Sweet Foods, was there WUSA for instance, and was it dominant?

**Respondent:** There was Food and Beverage Workers Union which was an affiliate of CUSA then, Council Union of South Africa which later became NACTU. WUSA only came to existence late in the 80s but I didn't affect our company, the only company that was affected in our union FAWU, it was Jabula Foods.

**Facilitator:** Yes I was told by Ms Nkosi yesterday, she had very shocking stories.

**Respondent:** Told by whom?

**Facilitator:** Ms Nkosi (unclear).

**Respondent:** Oh Nkosi, yes Zandile.

**Facilitator:** Yes Zandile Nkosi, actually I got your number from her.

**Respondent:** She was a shopsteward with Jabula Foods.

**Facilitator:** Yes, I was shocked by the stories that came out of that. How were you introduced to unions, before you joined Funa Foods, there was no union at Baldwin, subsequent to the other one in Benoni.

**Respondent:** I used to have a friend, Dusty Ngwane.



**Facilitator:** Oh I interviewed him.

**Respondent:** Oh you interviewed him, yes he is the one that influenced me to join trade unions, he was a shopsteward at Colgate Palmolive, not only a shopsteward but also a Chairman of the Shopstewards Committee, was also very active in FOSATU in those day, he is the one who influenced me because he used to be my friend.

**Facilitator:** So the union at Funa Foods was started from scratch, Sweet Foods?

**Respondent:** I introduced the idea.

**Facilitator:** Did the workers buy in?

**Respondent:** Yes, because of the conditions they were working under.

**Facilitator:** Did people die because of these working conditions, accidents?

**Respondent:** No we didn't have any at that time, nothing.

**Facilitator:** So you became the first shopsteward for Sweet Food and later of course FAWU in Funa Foods, what needed to be attended to, what were the priorities as the first shopsteward?

**Respondent:** It was creating conducive working conditions for the workers at that time, for instance there was no pension fund, the pension fund it was for White staff, the Black staff used to retire without a penny, that was the problem, even the medical aid was for white people. All those things were all equal now.

**Facilitator:** You also had access to medical aid and pension fund.

**Respondent:** Yes and housing subsidy.

**Facilitator:** How did White people feel about this, being equal to a Black man?

**Respondent:** They didn't have a chance, they were not happy but they couldn't do anything about it, you know, because we were very strong, one of the well organized company in Springs, Funa Foods.

**Facilitator:** What about female benefits, maternity leave, did you have them?

**Respondent:** Yes, you remind me now, there was no maternity leave for women, they used to resign and then come back if there's any space, and if there's no space they have lost their job just like that.

**Facilitator:** Is it?

**Respondent:** Yes, they used to resign. Coming to males we got what was called paternity leave, when your wife goes on leave to maternity, we used to go and nurse her at home. And we used to have what was called compassionate leave, if there's bereavement in the family, we could take four days to arrange the funeral. What's unfortunate is I don't have copies of our recognition agreement, because all those were in our recognition agreement, I didn't keep it, and I didn't know that it would be so important even today.

**Facilitator:** In terms of worker representation, were women willing to take leadership roles at Funa Foods.

**Respondent:** The first shopsteward committee, we had two women in our committee, it was a committee of ten, at that time when the priority was not there for women to be in a leadership position.

**Facilitator:** Was it a shopstewards committee of Funa Foods?

**Respondent:** Yes, Funa Foods.

**Facilitator:** Did their input, I mean....

**Respondent:** Yes, we used to have a woman by the name of Madidaba, unfortunately she is also late, and she was an experience shopsteward because she used to work for Weston Biscuits, which was in the strikes also in the 70s, late 70s. She was the other person helping me organize in Funa Foods because she had that experience of belonging in a union and she was a shopsteward there.

**Facilitator:** So she was good at that?

**Respondent:** Yes she was good at that. I was a shopsteward at Funa Foods, Chairperson of the shopstewards, and I was once the Secretary of Coast local, Springs KwaThema, and within FAWU I was once the Chairperson of the branch, Springs branch, then I was in the NEC, in the province of FAWU.

**Facilitator:** Was it easy to recruit workers for Coast?

**Respondent:** No we were not recruiting for Coast, Coast is just a federation but we were recruiting for unions which were affiliates of Coast.

**Facilitator:** When you are serving for Coast local level, what are your responsibilities there?

**Respondent:** Coordinating the activities of all the unions, that locality, be it metal, chemical or whatever, and when there are strikes irrespective of the affiliate, we used to coordinate all those things and form support committees for striking workers.

**Facilitator:** Any form of training, you were attached to unions for quite a long time, did you receive some training?

**Respondent:** Yes definitely we did, we were trained by SACTU also outside, we were trained by ILO whilst we were in Zimbabwe, even Coast itself and the Food and Allied Workers union used to train us. There were professors from Wits University like Phil Bonner, Alec Erwin, Toughie Haggler, they were part of the training of trade unions, and they were the trainers.

**Facilitator:** Was this training effective?

**Respondent:** Yes in terms of labour movement it was effective, because I know economics today, I didn't study economics in school but I am very good because of those people.

**Facilitator:** That's where you picked it up.

**Respondent:** Yes that's where I picked it up.

**Facilitator:** In terms of coordination, someone once raised a point that because there were no cellphones back then, it tended to be difficult

to organize and to communicate, in the case of FAWU was this a problem?

**Respondent:** Yes, but our communication was effective, I don't know how but it was effective, because things will happen now and then by tomorrow everybody knows, even the transport, it was difficult organizing, there were no cars, we didn't own any cars as trade unions, remember FAWU as a union didn't have a car, the whole of Transvaal. We used to go to meetings hitch hiking, there were no cars, there was no efficient public transport at that time because we organized as far as Witbank, but we would get to where there were strikes, using lifts.

**Facilitator:** The kind of cases that you had to deal with at Funa Foods, what kind, were they winnable?

**Respondent:** Yes we had strikes, wage strikes, remember we had a go slow, the company decided to pay us also low wages because they claimed that we didn't produce exired production, so we took them to court, labour court and it was a test case in South Africa, because there was no other case like that before, we won that case because the contract between them and us at that time, it was hourly paid contract, not a production based contract, so they couldn't pay us as per the production that we produced but should pay us per hour that we spent at the factory irrespective of how much production we produced, so it was the first in the country, that outcome in court, then it was used thereafter by other companies and trade unions, it was referred to.

**Facilitator:** In terms of disciplinary cases within the company?

**Respondent:** We used to win them.

**Facilitator:** Was the disciplinary committee of the company fair or unfair to the workers?

**Respondent:** No you see our company, our Directors were scared of the union, they couldn't debate with the shopstewards, I don't know why, they used to get outside consultants to come in because they were no match because of the training that we had at that time, so they couldn't match us. I remember at one stage they even hired the services of the HR manager of Kelloggs to come and help them, because they had seen Kelloggs as the company that know better about trade unions in the Springs area, so they used to call the HR manager to come and help them.

**Facilitator:** General relationship with management, was it frosty or?

**Respondent:** In the beginning it was not that good, but later they understood, because even those consultants we used to tell them not to work against the trade unions but work with them, then you will understand them well.

**Facilitator:** In the case of undisciplined workers, how did you handle the cases, theft, drunkerndness, late coming.

**Respondent:** We used to tell them that we are not going to defend people who are not disciplined, so our workers were disciplined.

**Facilitator:** Did you have to deal with cases of racism as the union?

**Respondent:** Yes, during those days we used to have such cases, especially the White formants used to treat Black people badly.

**Facilitator:** And management, how did they take these cases because they were White, and it was White formants against a Black union?

**Respondent:** Fortunately our Directors were within reach, we didn't have Directors that are there at Head office, Midrand or Johannesburg, they within the premises so it was easy to deal with these things, and they were sort of liberal because they were of British descent.

**Facilitator:** How long were you attached to Funa Foods?

**Respondent:** 10 years.

**Facilitator:** Why did you leave?

**Respondent:** I was tired of working, I started my own company, I was tired of working for somebody, it was immediately after the unbanning, because I left Funa Foods in 1995, and to be involved in local politics, local government politics.

**Facilitator:** Were they happy when you left, the management, good riddance?

**Respondent:** Maybe, but by the time when I left the company was already sold to one of the monopolies, which is Huletts Tongat.

**Facilitator:** So you were not short changed as workers in the process, because these days you sell a company and then the next thing is no our benefits start from here to there.

**Respondent:** There was a process when they sold the company, we were involved we were negotiating the conditions, we were part of the negotiations, and Prince Dlamini was also part of us as the president of FAWU at that time.

**Facilitator:** So the workers did get their benefits?

**Respondent:** Yes they did get their benefits.

**Facilitator:** Why was it sold, they were tired of the strikes?

**Respondent:** Yes they said they can't handle us, we are too smart for them, so it's better if we are taken over by a company that has the department of human resources and could deal with these issues. It was owned by four guys, so they just sold the company and shared the money.

**Facilitator:** Ok they shared the money, at least they made some money out of it?

**Respondent:** Yes they made a lot of money because Funa Foods when it was started by these guys, it was started on 2000 capital, everyone paid 500 each, they were working for Jabula Foods then, when they started Funa, then they stole the recipes and started their own company and ended up being powerful than Jabula.

**Facilitator:** After 1990, the unbanning of the ANC, are you happy with the direction that the unions took?

**Respondent:** Yes I am happy.



**Facilitator:** Because of course 1994 came and some members went into parliament and so on, was that not a problem for the unions in terms of crippling the unions.

**Respondent:** It was a problem at that time because we lost very experienced unionists in the names of Jay Naidoo, Chris Dlamini, Cyril Ramaphosa, all those people, by joining the government, but it was necessary because they were experienced guys, they know a lot in terms of politics and labour issues, so it was good for them to start a new government, because during those days we used to have what we called 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> layer leadership, because when the system detained people the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer took over and when detained them another layer came and took over, things go smooth as if nothing happened, its business as usual So by them going there, there were already other people who could take over after that, so it was not a problem, your Vavi's today.

**Facilitator:** Yes they were there waiting by the wings. So no regrets for leaving Funa Foods?

**Respondent:** No, no regrets. I should move on with life, it was necessary for that time, life goes on.

**Facilitator:** So you left 1995. When you look back at your experience at Funa Foods as shopsteward and Chairperson of Shopstewards, what were the outstanding achievements?

**Respondent:** I've given a lot for being a shopsteward, politically, my negotiation skills, and the way I see things today, it has changed me all together. If it was not for Funa Foods, it was not for Coast, I wouldn't be where I am today.

**Facilitator:** How do you see things, you know when you say the way I see things?

**Respondent:** Objective, very objective, even my approach in things, it has changed altogether, before and after Funa Foods, it was a breakthrough working for Funa Foods, even for FAWU, my life is what I am today because of FAWU.

**Facilitator:** Talking about FAWU, I forgot to ask you about this, the move from Sweet Food and Allied to FAWU, was it supported by all at the Sweet Food, the unions.

**Respondent:** Yes definitely, because we were the first union after the formation of Coast to go on one union - one industry, because that was one of the resolutions of Coast when it was formed, so we were the first union, immediately after the formation of Coast to implement the resolution of Coast.

**Facilitator:** So it did benefit?

**Respondent:** Yes it did benefit us, because the strength we had, as Sweet Food we were not that big a union, but after the merger of Sweet Food, Food Canning and RAWU, we became one big giant with a muscle in terms of negotiating and doing other things.

**Facilitator:** Any struggle for positions, people jostling for positions during the formation of FAWU?

**Respondent:** Yes, because you had your FAWU with its national leadership, provincial and local, and then it comes to Food and

Canning, the RAWU, we used to fight for positions, of course it is a natural thing, but as time went on we happened to find one another.

**Facilitator:** Any downside for being in Funa Foods representing FAWU, were there any periods where when you look back, where you could say these are the most bad periods in terms of the workers struggle, or these are the failures during our stay there, or we should have done things in this particular way.

**Respondent:** No not exactly, we used to enjoy ourselves at FAWU, it was our second home.

**Facilitator:** So what happened to you after 1995, you went into local politics?

**Respondent:** Yes I started in local politics, went into a pre-TLC period, 1994-1995, Brakpan was the first that reached agreement in starting a transitional local government, we were the first in the whole country, people used to come to us and ask us how we did it, we were the role model of the whole country, here's the photo, that was the first TLC of Brakpan.

**Facilitator:** And the Mayor was still White?

**Respondent:** Yes it was a White guy, but he was our alliance then because Brakpan was conservative, so it was a strategy to remove those CP people, he was the Chairperson of the Brakpan Ratepayers Association that time, so we gave him the Mayoralship because it was just a ceremonial thing, then we took the Chairperson of what was then called a Management Committee, which was a structure that was making strategic decisions about the town, Mayorally, it was just

ceremonial, opening buildings, cutting ribbons, the power was with the power of the executive which was the ANC.

**Facilitator:** So he did not necessarily become a member of the ANC?

**Respondent:** No, but we had a working alliance.

**Facilitator:** The situation today, he's gone of course?

**Respondent:** Yes, very funny, you see that lady with a white dress, the White lady, she was with (unclear) that's Shelly Louw, she is the Ekurhuleni, she is now the leader of DA, then the Mayor is the Councilor now for DA.

**Facilitator:** Ok they are still around.

**Respondent:** Yes, they are still around, but in that picture it's only three of us who are still around.

**Facilitator:** So your skills in the labour movement, did it help you out when you became a Councilor?

**Respondent:** Yes, it did, arguing and debating issues there, negotiation skills and reaching decisions.

**Facilitator:** Looking back was it worth it to be a unionist?

**Respondent:** Yes it was worth it at that time, it was worth it because we used trade unionism to fight our own political battles with them because we didn't have a mouthpiece so we were using trade unions, labour movement to fight battles.

**Facilitator:** Just the last two questions, the state of the unions today, are you pleased with the direction that the unions are taking?

**Respondent:** No, not at all, the unions are no more representing the workers, workers are vulnerable, unions are just sitting in their offices and not representing workers, disputes in the factories, and this other thing that has taken a lot of time of the organizers and union officials, this things that you call SETAS, they seat on those things, permitting they get paid, so they no longer interested in representing workers because they attend those meetings because they get paid, so a lot of workers are no longer interested in the unions because there is no representation, other are joining the White unions, people are joining IMATU, the police are joining SAPU, they are all joining the opposite unions now that used to organize White people, Black unions are dying.

**Facilitator:** Where did it go wrong?

**Respondent:** After liberation I don't know what happened, but people are just interested in money more than anything else, that's the problem.

**Facilitator:** Your take on labour brokers, I know are seating outside unions today?

**Respondent:** My feeling is that they should be banned and not regulated, that's my feeling, because it's pathetic for the workers, they don't enjoy any benefits because of these labour brokers.

**Facilitator:** But as a unionist or former unionist, are you happy with the Labour Laws of today?

**Respondent:** Yes, not 100% but at least they are better off than before, we cannot be 100% perfect, but there's room for improvement.

**Facilitator:** If you had your way, what would you change in today's Labour Laws?

**Respondent:** If an employer says the laws favour the employees and then the employees also say vice versa, but I think if I was today, the working hours should be shortened to 40 hours for workers, and then also we should improve on the salaries of workers because things are expensive, the cost of living is too high.

**Facilitator:** Is there anything else that is important that should have been part of this interview?

**Respondent:** No I think we've covered most of the things.

**Facilitator:** A closing word for this subject?

**Respondent:** I don't know what you are going to do with this information, I am just giving the information but I am not sure what you are going to do with it, because there is a book already that has been compiled but that was on FOSATU, I think it should go until Coast days until today. I was not happy on the launch of that book, most of the people were not invited, and a lot of people were not invited.

**Facilitator:** Who were you expecting to see there?

**Respondent:** Chris was already gone, but people like Jay Naidoo were not there.

**Facilitator:** He was invited.

**Respondent:** In terms of workers, people like Mike Madlala, Shulong (unclear), Jentro Dlalisa, Siphon Kubheka, I was expecting to see those old people of FOSATU, they were not invited, instead there were the White people from Wits, and workers themselves were not there.

**Facilitator:** Another problem is that most of these things are sent by emails, most of our people don't have access to emails.

**Respondent:** But you are aware of that problem, we could use text messages.

**Facilitator:** Are there other people that you think I should interview maybe for this project?

**END.**

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