

Interview : Zora

JF ? what was so great about her?

A She had the grips on the thing. She was with the people and she was one of those people that spent special something. That I cannot explain but that will always be a memorable about her role.

JF I'm sorry but I keep asking about the white part because I'm interested in non racialism but was she someone who...was it something that she worked well with blacks? Or was it that she just believed in non racialism? In terms of the black white thing what why was she so good about that?

A She worked well with them and she had the aims and objects of the organisation at heart. I mean you...could see colour in her. She was one person who I identify who would be not ordinary black town-ship. (She was not doing things for people, she was with them.)

JF What was your job in SACTU? Did you have a position?

A I was..pardon (did you have a position?) I was the Secretary of the Union called the Commercial and Distributing Workers Union.

AF Which was a SACTU affiliate?

A Yes. It was a SACTU affiliate.

JF Did any of these whites speak any African languages?

A A little bit they do but because of translations are..I mean any membership of a non racial union we'll have to have real translation. Because it's a matter of not wanting one group to dominate the other. For instance in this union we have more blacks workers than any other was call, racial group. If we were to talk Xhosa that would....it's something that's the sensitivity around. a dominating language. So even if we were 10 racial groups we would have 10 translations, to cater for all. And it..actually goes to show that we are catering for all races. So that does not give you a good chance to learn languages; For instance in jail I was not very good in Afrikaans but I think if I stayed longer I could have spoken Afrikaans...because nobody catered for the fact that I was not good in Afrikaans. They were just talking in Afrikaans.

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JF Which township did you grow up in?

A Lange?

JF And sorry, just one last thing, (when you think back to the '50s and 60s and) you think of (the way SACTU worked) and what the political alignments were in those days (do you think there are lessons we must learn?) There were problems with that or do you just think the reason there were problems with the state crushed it or I mean; most people talk about the lessons of the '50s and I don't know what they mean. Do you look back ~~oto~~ to the '50s and the '60s before those organisations were totally chased <sup>underground or out</sup> and do you think we made mistakes then, we must do it differently now? Or do you think we must look at how we did it then and learn to be as good as....

A That's...(which one?) How things were done then.

JF You think it was ok?

A Mmmmm.

JF People like Ray Alexander and there were people who were members of Congress of Democrats and they ~~would~~ <sup>did</sup> work in alliance....

A The (one thing) I would have about those... (is that there was more of looking up to the leadership rather than training the people on the base. And as a result this is why for a long time certain very good people are not replaceable- not because they monopolised the struggle but it is a matter of) doing (not actually transferring the skills.) It lies more with transference of skills than anything (Do you think that was.....?) Because I mean <sup>in</sup> not transferring skills I maybe here if I have got any skills at all, I don't say I do have some, I would be prepared/perhaps playing a...if (lets say I'm playing a good role - what would be the use if that good role goes with me in one way or the other). Perhaps <sup>(if I am)</sup> detained, <sup>or</sup> perhaps being (banned,) perhaps getting tired- I am getting a little bit tired of the work now.

I've done it so long that it's quite a strain now. I would like to do something easier if I could.

JF And that's what you think could have done better than the '50s. The training of the skills.

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A Yes, that's right.

JF Ok. How do you spell your name please?

A Zora Mehlomakulu.

JF Is that a Xhosa name?

A Yea, that's Xhosa.

JF Ok, the last question I'd like to ask : Do you think that unions like yours should be involved exclusively with issues on the factory floor? Or do you think there's ever a time for taking up issues in <sup>the</sup> community? What do you think?

A Yes. There are times we will take up issues in the community.

JF Do you think that should be kept to a minimum or...how would you define it if someone said, would you say factory floor, community, ....

A Both, but for a trade you know; the priorities, the struggle in the what you call, in the factory. But they are intertwined. It's a matter of extending resources here.

JF And' just because you've been involved for such a long time you must have a little bit of knowledge of the history - how did you feel when you saw the UDF being set up? How do you feel about it's role or its use?

A The UDF is good to a sort of showing government the dissatisfaction and the pressure but um, the same, it would need a base rather than tackling issues as they come. Perhaps in addition to that it would also need a base in the line of a training membership and that would actually create a situation where people for instance, a trade unionist I know what my area is, what I can and cannot do; for instance the one thing that would discredit the UDF is that if it calls say a meeting, a very important thing, and they know the real good points to be tackling but I could come not being a member of the UDF and behave in such a way and that will be you know two things: That would reflect on the UDF.

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A Whereas if there's actually a base for its like...aims and objects membership, how this type of situation can be handled and credentials of membership more formalised then a lot of things that are now labelled on them could actually...go away. Because they would not necessarily be done by the cream of the UDF. But like people for instance who actually are outside the thing and who will just come to abuse the whole thing.

So in all I think they need a base but say ah, who<sup>?</sup>(does a)voice. And they think a lot of current changes are coming because they are in many ways aware of the fact that these things are now being brought up. And after all organisations are not dead, they are still alive. And they know what the people want.

I mean because for a long time in S.A. blacks have been taken to be wanting blankets and shelter, now organisations like that are able to show that no, it's not only that that the people need. And in that sense they are quite good but I think they would need a base all the same.

JF Would you join UDF? Have you been involved at all?

A Well, I have worked with them, <sup>But</sup> I don't think I've got enough ---- you know, all my (anger). the union takes all my energies.

JF What's that, the union takes you energy?

A Ja. I wouldn't be that much useful, if I work. If I am called on to speak I go. Or to take whatever role I do.

JF Were you at all skeptical when it was founded? Are you more positive now or did you think it was a good idea from the beginning or how did you feel when it first came up?

A Well, when it first came up we had a wait and see attitude rather than anything. The whole thing we didn't sound feasible till it was actually there.

JF And now you feel more positive.

A Mmmmm.

JF Is the membership of General Workers Union involved in UDF at all?

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A Some of our ~~work~~ members, but I wouldn't know what percentage.

JF Do you have a family?

A Yes.

JF Do you have kids?

A I have got 2 kids.

JF How old are they?

A 9 and 6.

JF And do you have people who you were living with in the townships who were ever involved in UDF?

A Yes.

JF And what's your position in GWU?

A Branch Secretary.

JF Branch Secretary for which branch?

A Cape Town branch.

JF Well, thanks very much. 221