

- J.F. With everyone - this book is looking at people's histories and how they got politically involved, so with everyone I just start out with where were you born and when, so can you start out by telling me where you were born and when?
- R.O. Well, I was born in - in Oudtshoorn in the South Cape in the Cape Province, and I went to school in Oudtshoorn - got my education there - very fortunately for the town itself that we have primary schools, secondary schools and of course a training college. During the time that I grew up I mean teachers - people basically, pupils became teachers - there was no - as a result of job reservation and stuff like that, people basically became teachers, and that is why I think that teachers have played a significant role - in the beginning they were seen as - as very important people and well, I became a teacher in 1967.
- I come from a family - I didn't see my parents - my mother died - according to the registers, my mother died when I was 18 months old, and my father died when I was six months old. We were a family of nine children at that time, and we were brought up by our grandparents. There was a suggestion from people, surrounding people, that we should be put up in some protective home, but they said that they had vowed that they would see to it that each of us gets schooling. I was the baby in the family, and my father was a feather sorter.
- Now today the type of thing does not really - that type of work does not much exist any more - because during that time feather sorting was a very important thing because particularly Britain was buying all the ostrich feathers and from - from the - from the country, and Oudtshoorn was actually the - the spot where the feathers came from. My mother worked as a - my grandma - I called her mother because I mean that's the only mother I knew....
- J.F. And when you said the feather sorter, that's your grandfather?
- R.O. That's the grandfather, ja - she worked as - as a waitress at a hotel, and I think she was very fortunate as a Christian to fulfil - to fulfil a obligation, because the day when I received my first bursary as a trainee teacher she passed away, and it sounds very much like a fantasy, but in fact that is basically the type of thing that happened.
- J.F. What happened to your parents that they died?
- R.O. My father - I think the feathers that he worked with has this dust....
- J.F. This is your grandfather?
- R.O. My grandpa - oh, you mean my - my real parents - ja, both of them died of thrombosis, ja - I think that medicine wasn't much advanced even at that time of course - I was born in 1948, and that was the time when the National Party came to power and ja, my grandparents - it - it's difficult actually when - when you say my mother and my father - I always see them as - as my only parents, you see.
- J.F. And what work had they done? What kind of workers were they?
- R.O. My father was a tailor - that was also a very important job - and he - that is (?) making clothes - and my mother never worked - and so I come from a very poor family, and even the fact that we were brought up by our grandparents, they didn't have much money - very low paid jobs that they were doing.
- J.F. And what kind of area were you - did you grow up in? What part of Oudtshoorn was it? Was it a so-called Coloured area....

R.O. No, it was not. We - we stayed in - in - in Oudtshoorn. At that time we did not have townships, locations, like we having today. We stayed in - in Oudtshoorn. I remember in - in the - we stayed and we lived mixed together, black, white and whatever - we lived together, and there were two parts in Oudtshoorn - the one part was North End, and the other part was - was - was a - as we call it, the town, and we stayed in the town and we - I played with white children when I was a child - I played with white children until of course I was, I think, seven years of age when we had - we were forcefully removed through the Group Areas Act because that was the - actually the time (?) in the '50s, early '50s, that the Group Areas Act came into implementation, and we were moved to a place that was a location that was barren, was nothing - there were those few homes - I couldn't understand this as a child, what was happening, why were we moving from the nice area we were staying in. I mean it was also a poor area, but it was - socially we - we knew the people that we were staying - who were staying next door to us, and things like that.

And it was quite a traumatic thing for my parents particularly - I couldn't understand it, but - but one could - could realise that - today I fully understand what they must have gone through during that time to be - because my father - my grandpa now - he was about where - his work was about a ten minute walk from where we were staying, and when we were moved there were no bus services - I remember that he - it - it's about today still I mean (?) - it's about three, four kilometres away from his work when we were removed to -

Another important aspect of this is that my mother - we never saw her - that's my grandma - we never saw her during week days, because she would get up in the morning, she would go to work round about four o'clock - that's when the hotel hours, I suppose, start - and she would come from work round about ten in the evening, and we - and that's why I say we never saw her during week days.....

J.F. Your granny?

R.O. My grandma, ja.

J.F. Who took care of you?

R.O. My father was the feather sorter - the sisters, we - there were elder - the - the elder sisters, they looked after us - they had to prepare food in the morning and they - they - they had this relationship that each one had a - had a - the chance to - one morning it'd be you (?) stand up and make coffee and bread, because that was the meal for the day, and in the afternoon I mean when we come - we would come from school, because all of us were at school, and I remember my sister when I started with school, she was at the training college, and she would be the person - or everyone would just wait until she is at home from training college - sometimes we had to wait quite long hours because she had to be busy with whatever they were busy with at the training college at the time - and until she arrives at home to prepare something for the afternoon.

My el - my elder brothers by that time also when I went to work - went to school I mean, they were also working with my - just ordinary jobs that the - that they could do. The one had to - all of us fortunately, as I was saying earlier, the - the objective that my mother - my grandma had, to give us schooling, the older one left the - the son - he left school in Standard Nine, and the one just after him, also a brother, he also left school at Standard Nine - I think today that they weren't money - there was not money enough to get them for further education.

J.F. In town before you were removed, do you remember - you were removed when you were nine, did you say?

R.O. About seven years old.

J.F. So it's hard to remember back, but do you have any negative feelings of the white kids discriminating against because you were black, or them being working class whites who were in any way negative to blacks, or do you have a kind of wonderful feeling of non-racial playing together, or when you remember being in town being with - and I take it it was Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites?

R.O. That's right - that's correct.

J.F. What's the memory? Is there much of a memory on a race level (?)

R.O. I think - I think what - what - I never had any feelings that there was any animosity between us as children - we played together - and there was a shop nearby - what I always remember that we were calling - we had this great respect - we were treated (?) our parents to have a very great respect for the white people, because we refer to the white shop owner as baas and the - his wife would be miss, and we - we - and miss not in the concept of what the - as female, but as - as a superior woman, white woman. And when fights would happen among - as children, us, we would be very careful to get in fights involved with - with white children, because you would be punished by the white parent and by your own parent because we were treated - we were told not to get involved with fights with the white people, and I mean it - it - I'm talking of - of the rural areas - I'm talking of a place where - places where there was that gracious (?) respect of - of - of the not white people towards the white people because they were the - the - they were the shop owners - they were the people - because that was basically the biggest type of work that most of our people did, and they were the - the owners of the factories where my father - my grandpa worked as a feather sorter, and they lived in the better houses

Although it was - I - I always also - also remember that - that they would also borrow from us, sugar and other things, other small things, they - they would borrow from us, and we would borrow from them, and that type of relationship did exist at the time.

J.F. And when you moved to the location was it - what was it called, this barren place they removed you to?

R.O. Bridgton - B r i d g t o n .

J.F. And is that where you still are?

R.O. Well, the - with development that have taken place, I am not staying there any more, I'm staying in a - in - in quite a middle class area today - I have my own home and - but I mean it - it's still in the Coloured area as such.

J.F. So Bridgton was the new Coloured area?

R.O. Bridgton was the Coloured area.

J.F. And the one you're in now is called?

R.O. It's called - it - it's called Colridge View - C o l r i d g e - V i e w .

J.F. Once you moved to Bridgton, did the kind of - do you remember a different feeling about the race relations? You were only with Coloured people? Did that make a difference, if you think back, growing up in that area - did you then not have contact with Africans or Indians or whites, or did you just go to a Coloured school and live in a Coloured area and feel quite separate, or did you still have contact or what - just on a race level what was it like?

R.O. The - I remember the African people were moved to an area just behind Bridgton - it was called (.....) - it's an Afrikaans word - I can spell it if you want me to - it's K l i p p i e s - E i l a n d - it's - when translated into English it would mean stone island because it - today I realise probably why it was called Klippiessiland, because of the - it was really just - there was a - a sloop, like we call it in Afrikaans, s l o o t, that runs between the - the Coloured area and the - and the African area, and they lived on this small kopje, and I think that's why it was referred to as Klippiessiland, because there were stones all around the area that they lived in.

Also it was very - what I couldn't understand as a child was we moved to houses that were built for us - we were nine children and my mother and father, and we had a two bedroom house fortunately - we were one of the fortunate people that were given a two bedroomed house, with a kitchen of course, and no other room, and my - my father and mother slept in one room, and all of us were in the other room - I mean my sister was quite a grown up at the time, my brother was a grown up, but we shared one room, and the type of - of - of - I think this had a very great bearing on my life, because I couldn't understand why we were moved, although I was a small child, but I - I couldn't realise what was happening, and our parents just said to us that - our grandparents in fact now - they just said to us that the area - we not allowed to be there any more.

There were no schools in those areas that we moved to - there were only a group of houses, and we still had to walk to the schools, which was quite a distance away, because the schools were in town and the schools were in North End - North End was about five, six kilometres away from our home, and it - it - it led to violence between us as children - between the white children and the - the - the - the so-called - the Coloured and - and African children - because we still had to go to town to go to school, we still had to go to town to fetch our groceries, and the - the - the - the things that we needed were still in town, so we had to go to town to fetch these things - the post office, the hospital, all those things.

And I remember as a child there was - there were always fights between us and the white children, I think simply because we were referred to as - as hotnots, and we didn't like that term, you see - it was a derogatory term and I - I know my - my - my grandparents - I must have got it from them, because they didn't like that term, and I realised afterwards that it's a very derogatory name to refer to - today still people take serious exception when they referred to as - as hotnots, because you - one still finds the type of things happening in the rural areas, on (?) the farm areas.

J.F. What did that word mean to you? Did you have a sense of what its derivation was and what it meant, or what did it mean to you?

R.O. To me it just meant not being white - not being white skinned - not having the opportunity of going to the beautiful schools - not having the - at that time I believed I was not as attractive as - as - as the white people. They've got curly hair which I - which was seen and was - was portrayed to us as beautiful, as attractive, and actually we actually, traditionally I think, that we accepted this, that we were inferior to the white, because that was the type of education also in schools - the boy that works on the farm and the - and the meid - it - it was not the maid that we talk of in - in - the English word maid - it - it's a - it's more quick, it's meid, the m e i d, and we accepted those terms.

R.O. But - but it was obvious that the - the older, the - the - the - the people grow - for example, my - my - my - my older brothers and sisters wouldn't accept that - they would - serious fights would erupt when we come from school and we were referred to as hotnot and meid and I mean but as I said that there was no - the adaptation with the people from - in - in Bridgton was not difficult, and we realised - I think we had that feeling that we sort of were thrown together because we look similar, we have similar features, and the African people we were even - when I was a child we were warned not to associate with - at school it was tied for (?) something at school that we should be careful of the African people because they are involved in - in - in witchcraft and things like that.

And I remember one thing which is very bad - we were in fact said - told that when we pass Africans we would - we should try to uphold our breathing - we should not breathe because - it might sound to you not true, but that is the truth - I'm talking of a per - of personal experiences of mine - that we upheld our breath, because we were not - we were - we were scared of - of being - getting ill, getting sick, or - or developing diseases and so that - that's how it was.

In fact this whole situation had such a serious effect on - on - on - on our lives that although the - the - the - the Bantu people - that was how they were referred to, or kaffirs - k a f f i r s. We had certain days when we had fights with them - we - we - stonethrowing was - was one of the major things - I mean couldn't go to town to throw a stone because it was quite a distance away from us, but we had this stonethrowing episodes always between us and - and the - and the African people, not because we wanted to but because we were brought up like that - we were taught like that at school that we should be careful in this - even the books depicted that African people get involved in witchcraft and stuff like that.

J.F. When you were talking about you played with the whites when you lived in the mixed area, when you lived in town - were you with Africans when you lived in town also?

R.O. There were some Africans as well and - and the - it has its - its consequences, implications, today that we don't have a very serious language problem, that we can - the - the - the African people in the area that I talk of can speak Afrikaans quite fluently, and understand Afrikaans in fact better than they can understand English, because the - the Afrikaaner is the dominating group in - in those areas - spoke Afrikaans - we were brought up in Afrikaans, and the African children attended the - the - the Coloured schools until a certain time when they had their own school - I wonder if I should call it a school, this dilapidated building which was called a school.

J.F. But when you - did most of the African people who lived in Oudtshoorn live in town, or was there somewhere else they lived when you were very small?

R.O. They - they - most of them I would say lived in North End - I don't know for what - what reason, but most of them - some of them did live in town - there were those two areas, you see, and some of them did live in town, but most of them lived in North End.

J.F. And so the kind of positive memories you have of playing with the whites - did you play with Africans as well?

R.O. Yes, we had a - very good relations - the - in fact when we were separated through the schools, I - I - I remember I was in Standard Four, and one of the friends I had, his name is Cliff Tenge, he's - today he's a teacher also.....

J.F. Tenge?

R.O. Tenge, ja - T e n g e.

- R.O. And if I - I was in Standard Four in the Coloured school and he was in Standard Four in the African school, and we - actually we - we grew up together and there was always that relationship, he was my friend - there were other - there was another family, the de Jaatje (?) family, and they were staying not far away from us, and we played together as children, and today we working in the same organisation, the one guy, Moses de Jaatje....
- J.F. How do you spell de Jaatje?
- R.O. D i k g w a c i, and we - we still friends, we still talk of our childhood days.
- J.F. When did the business start with holding your breath when you walked by Africans? If you were playing nicely with them as kids, when did that kind of attitude start getting?
- R.O. I think that it started when - when they were in their own area, the so-called Klippias Eiland area that - and through the school we became more and more educated in this sense - educated in the sense the distorted form of education that we should be careful of the - of the African people, and that - and I think from their side - I'm not sure - I don't have any idea of that - I think they were also probably warned to be careful of us because there is - there was that tendency that the Coloured people were seen as very - as drunkards, as people who steal, and people who'd be involved in gang fights and things like that, so I suppose that they were also on their end warned against us, so there was that whole....
- J.F. The Africans were warned?
- R.O. I - that - that's what I think, ja.
- J.F. So Afrikaans was your home language....
- R.O. Afrikaans was my home language all the time.
- J.F. And did you - was English - where did you get English, once you got to school?
- R.O. One interesting incident was my mother, apart from the fact that she works at the hotel - my grandma now - she did washing for an English woman - I still remember her name and that was - it's over 30 years ago - her name was Molly Gilchrist - and after my mother had now done the washing, we would on a Thursday afternoon, always take the - the - the clean clothes back and bring back the - the - the dirty ones - and she couldn't speak Afrikaans, and I've a brother that - that said - that always says in fact that the language is caught and not taught, and I think that that's probably how I at that stage already started picking up the language, and my mother because of her job as - my grandma as a job as a waitress, she had to - she spoke English - I mean she could speak English - and my father was working for a Jew - he was also in a position, my grandfather, to speak English - so when they didn't want us to know what they were saying they would speak English with - with - with - with each other and - and I suppose that's how gradually we became adapted to the language, picked up the language and started our schooling also (?)
- J.F. Do you think that part of the Coloured identity, and its position in South Africa historically, has to do with speaking Afrikaans? Did you feel even now politically that you're somehow closer to the whites, to the white Afrikaaners because of the language? That's often that whole kind of (.....) Afrikaaner thing. Did you feel that, that it put you closer to whites? You didn't grow up speaking Xhosa?
- R.O. No.
- J.F. And do you speak any now?

- R.O. I don't speak - I - I can - I'm in a position to at certain terms (?) help myself of, but I - I can't speak the language - but on the question of - of - of Afrikaans, yes, I think so. I think that we were brought up to be able to - to take instructions, to - to do our work properly, and I think we felt closer to the whites - that was the type of relationship I think that - that - that - that the white people used as a form of - of domination basically.
- J.F. And do you think it give you distance from the blacks?
- R.O. It did indeed - it did indeed tremendously, and well, as time went on the blacks were further removed from where they had initially been moved to, and so there was no real contact at certain stages between the Coloured people from - from the area where I come from and - and the - and the African people....
- J.F. You're talking about Africans and whites - were there any Indians in Oudtshoorn? Was there any perception of what Indian meant?
- R.O. There were about four or five families only, and I remember quite well that the one man was a tailor, and when I grew up I - I started seeing, in Cape Town particularly, that many of the - of the Indian people, the Muslim people were in fact in the - in the tailor trade - also they - they were the - those that when we pass their houses we - we smelt curry and - but they were not a very dominant group in - in - in - in - the reasonably dominant group in - in - in - in Oudtshoorn or in the surrounding areas. I think Oudtshoorn might be one of the places in the South Cape where one at least found some of the Indian people.
- J.F. So what's the perception of Indians? What did they represent in the South African racial hierarchy to you at that stage, or were they just too foreign? Did you have any sense - were they as good as whites or were they as bad as Africans, or how did they fit in?
- R.O. They were seen to me as people that they sell bananas - they sold bananas then - they were an isolated group. I can't even recall of - of where they went to school because they - they - they were also a very far away group of people - I couldn't associate with them. They also spoke English, which was - English was my conception - perception rather at - at that stage was that English speaking was - was one form of superiority and I - I couldn't speak English - we couldn't speak English the area which we live in, and so I - I saw them also as a - as a group better than the Coloured people, but not in the same category as the white people.
- J.F. I've asked a lot about kind of getting a sense of the race question, but the ideas to look at race and class and politics, so when did politics come into it for you? I don't know, maybe you can pick out what's relevant. I don't want to go through all the details except for really to bring out the issue - but you grew up with a big family. You've told me what the economic position was. What was the politics? Did your grandparents talk about any political movements? Did they ever say these white people must change, we're in bad shape? As you were growing up what was your sense of how South Africa would be long term? Did you think of things changing? Did you hear of specific movements? Did you think it was O.K?
- R.O. I didn't think it was O.K. firstly. Secondly, my grandma, I very - I had a very great respect for her - she was a very principled person. She lost her job simply.....

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J.F. the actual politics of the whole situation - you were going to tell me how that....

R.O. What influenced my....

J.F. And you actually said no, you weren't happy with the situation - in kind of a beginning terms what did that mean? What weren't you happy about?

R.O. I was in fact telling you about how my - my grandma lost a job - she had been working for this hotel, the Queens Hotel - I still remember the name - and for quite a number of years, over 30 years, and she lost her job because they - one evening they found a teaspoon in her pocket, her overall pocket, and they accused her of stealing this thing, and she was explaining to this woman - her account she gave to us - she explained to this woman that she probably just by a co - mere coincidence had the key with her - spoon with her, but she was dismissed. Today I think it was because simply the - she had been working for them so long and they might probably had to pay out something like a pension fund or something, and that's why they dismissed her.

She was already over 60 years by that time already, and that in - in - in a sense had a very great impact on my life because I - today I realise the type of principled woman that brought me up, because she could have paid for the spoon - she was put to either pay for the spoon and she refused to pay, and she lost her job. Those are the small type of things. Also the - the fights we had with the - with the white children when we were going to school - also those type of animosity that existed between the privileged group and the under-privileged people.

My brother, who was a grown up, during the elections of 1948 - I was told afterwards - he apparently, when the Nationalist Party came to power - he apparently stabbed a white guy with a knife - they were so happy - they were jubilant, the white people, because the - I was explaining to you it was dominantly an Afrikaans area, and he was charged and sentenced for this, for stabbing this white young man - all these type of things - there was this growing thing within me that if you not white, then you are bad, and this was quite a fight within me.

Today I am a person that - basically I believe in that - I'm a charterist, to put it as simple as that - I believe that people can live together in peace and harmony, if we practice the morals honesty firstly - believe in real honesty in life. In my school career, I remember in Standard Eight our - was in 1963 - our geography teacher was taken away and questioned, because I then heard of this association, the Teachers' League of South Africa, the TLSA, and he apparently was a member of - what I have against him today is that he never gave us any political type of education during that time, but already there was that fight always, polarisation between blacks and whites, because gradually the - the bonds were restored - I was saying to you that we - we had this fight with - with the black children, but gradually the - this thing was restored again - I can - I can actually say reconciliation took place again between the Coloureds and the - and - and the Bantu people, as they were referred to.

J.F. Let me just actually go on with that - was that - I was trying to get you to tell me about overt politics and you talked about your granny and this and that. Was TLSA the very first organisation you ever heard of? You heard of it before you heard of the ANC or....

R.O. I heard first of the TLSA before I heard of the ANC.

J.F. Was there a lot of TLSA in Oudtshoorn?

R.O. It was a lot of TLSA, but I think there was that people were very scared of being - with identifying openly with - with - with TLSA.

R.O. However (?) remember - I think it was in Standard Eight or so, that they had a big meeting and we as children went to listen to what they had to say, and they spoke in English - it was not quite understandable to us, but what - what was very obvious was that they were fighting the regime on an educational level, and they were dissatisfied with what was taking place in the department of education - they were complaining about second degree form of teaching and the salary structures and things like that, and my grandma also, she - because there was that - I think it was because she worked at the hotel that she - that the teachers got bread from her, and they would come to our house because my late father was a friend with - befriended (?) the teachers to his job as a tailor, I suppose - they came to our house and they would talk and explain to my mother, and that in fact had an impact on me as a child or (?) at that stage already.

The later '60s I also heard about this guy Tongene (?) whom I never saw - late - afterwards I - I came to realise it was the ANC organiser for the rural areas in that particular region....

J.F. How do you spell the name?

R.O. T o n j e n i - he was - he was the person who was going around picking up what people would like to see (?) being put into the charter, and I learned - I - with the discovery, with the coming to - to being of Saamstaans when we interviewed older people we - we learned that this guy actually came to Oudtshoorn and he spoke to some elderly people there, and they were telling us that there were certain demands that they feel - that they feel committed to that are enshrined in the charter and they sort of made that contribution.

J.F. But for your own exposure it was TLSA that....

R.O. It was TLSA - it was TLSA all the way.

J.F. And you said first they didn't speak English, but then you found that they actually were anti-government. Did you then feel they were a good movement to join? Did you get closer to them at all, or did they try to recruit you, or was it just from a distance?

R.O. It was - it was a very sort of middle class type of thing, I would say today.

J.F. You picked that up right away?

R.O. It - it was obvious that it was the teachers that belonged to it - there was no organisations as such that - that people belonged to, apart from the church, but here again the church didn't play the role at the time because we had a - a minister from Scotland and he didn't really - he - he spoke Afrikaans very badly - poorly and he - he didn't really point out the - the - the bad things that the government stood for - but I mean as a child what - what - the fact that we were deprived of many things as human beings, and the fact that my mother was against this, my father was against this, that - and they - they spoke to us about this and - and - and I think this had a great impact on my life.

J.F. And so where did it move you towards? You heard of TLSA, you hadn't heard of ANC?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. Did you get involved politically?

R.O. I got involved, I would say, in Standard Ten and after Standard Ten in 1966.

R.O. What - what was very exciting, to put it this way, although I'm not a person that supports violence, but the killing of Dr. Verwoerd was one of the most beautiful things that ever happened - that was one incident. I'm going to relate to you another incident of '61. Ja, in '66 when he was killed, I came from school that day, and everybody was happy that Dr. Verwoerd had been killed, because Dr. Verwoerd had been responsible for forcefully removing us for - from - from where we had initially lived, stayed, grew up. He had been involved in separating communities. He had been involved for - I mean he was the person responsible for the low salaries that our people were earning - that were the type of - how I pictured this man - he was a terror, as far as I'm concerned.

There was a paper called Die Landstem and it was a national paper, I think, and one would always see him in Die - in this paper, a very strong figure and the fist, speaking - addressing people, white people always - and I could read - I mean I was - I was already in a position I read - I read the Landstem and I saw then that - what a vicious person that was, and that grew - I mean I had - I - I said to myself at that stage already something will have to be done to - to - to stop this - this terror, to stop this - this detention of our people, because many of our people were detained also at that time for being members of TLSA, particularly....

J.F. People you knew (?)

R.O. People who I knew - teachers I knew were detained for TLSA.

? Did people talk about any earlier forms of sort of political organisation in Oudtshoorn area? Had there been any? Just sort of thinking back to the old days say, of any earlier - you're sort of implying that there was no ANC or awareness even almost of that. Had there ever been in - at Oudtshoorn sort of community and of a (.....) organised (?)

R.O. There was never organised - political organised structures existing, as far as my memory goes and knowledge goes.

? And what about sort of people from there going - having been to work in the cities and so on? There was no - they didn't (?) sort of bring back discussion of national movements or anything?

R.O. Not really I - no, I don't think that ever happened also - I was saying about '61 also - I think I was in Standard Six and we were given - and something very significant happened - we were to go to a - the white sports stadium, where we were to go and sing the national anthem, and there was a student - his surname was West - he was the head student of the training college - he was to hoist the - the flag, the South African flag, and he blatantly refused. I couldn't understand why he was not - and he was actually at one stage instructed to hoist the flag, and he just blatantly refused, and some other student had to come, but the message came through to us as - because the students, the training college students - I was telling you that we had a training college there - they said to us burn these - we were given these small flags, South African flags : Burn these flags, destroy these flags - and we destroyed them, and we didn't want to, and they explained to us : You shouldn't identify with this because this flag symbolises the type of situation that one finds oneself in - we find ourselves in today - and we destroyed the flags just like that because it - it - it was a symbol of the - of the oppression and - and - and if that flag is one of the symbols of - of - of the system, then it should be destroyed, so we destroyed it on our way - we - we didn't destroy it in town in front of the whites because we were very scared also, you see, but when we - I remember we had to come through a kloof, as one calls it, and by the time that we came to the kloof, it was actually filled with these small flags that the children had thrown into this kloof.

- R.O. But there was not political ongoing movement, organisation taking place within the areas.
- J.F. Did you get a sense that the politics of the TLSA was Coloured or that it supported Africans, or did you see any Africans involved in TLSA, or whites?
- R.O. I didn't see Africans or whites involved - I only saw Coloured people involved.
- J.F. Did that make you feel that it was a Coloured movement or you just didn't think about it or - you said it was middle class.
- R.O. It was middle class, yes.
- J.F. Was it Coloured?
- R.O. It was mainly Coloured as - at that time I said to myself this must be a Coloured thing and the Coloureds - the - the African people is a very small grouping - today we talking about between five and six thousand, or say, six and eight thousand people....
- J.F. In Oudtshoorn?
- R.O. In Oudtshoorn, so at that time it was a very small group of - of African people, and they were - there was only one African teacher that I knew of, Mr. Nyathi, but - and he was the - the bad thing about him was that he drank a lot, and the good thing about him was that he always spoke to youngsters, and he could speak Afrikaans - he spoke to youngsters and explained to us that we should be - we should not accept certain things, we - when we fight, he'll explain to us that we shouldn't have these fights - we are together being deprived of the privileges and - but it didn't really make - make much of an impact on us, you see, but I mean it - it was instilled in our minds that we had a common enemy, to put it that way.
- J.F. Did he come out of any political tradition? Was he ANC or TLSA or was he not - kind of non-aligned?
- R.O. One couldn't say because I mean he was the only African teacher, as I was saying - afterwards....
- J.F. But he wasn't in TLSA himself?
- R.O. He wasn't in TLSA himself- the teachers' league I think was mostly a Coloured organisation.
- J.F. But did they talk about we support our African brothers, or did you have a sense that in principle in Cape Town or in Eastern Cape they were with Africans, or did you just think no, they're all Coloured?
- R.O. It was obvious - I got the impression that they were never a multi-coloured type of organisation, that is was basically a Coloured organisation.
- J.F. And did that bother you at all? Did you think that was a failing or did you think no, the Coloured people must get together, this is good, or did you just not think of it?
- R.O. I didn't think of it at that time.
- ? Did the TLSA articulate sort of general political demands? You implying that it did, not just teachers' salaries and teachers (.....)- that it actually....

R.O. Embraced a lot of other things....

? all sorts of different demands and dissatisfactions with the system in general.

R.O. Right.

? And are you - you sort of implying that in a sort of organisational vacuum a teachers' organisation began to focus?

R.O. It began to focus....

? (.....) from the whole community.

R.O. Right, it - it did happen that way.

? And just one other question - had you or your friends or whatever had access to any of the sort of printed media of the sort of opposition, like New Ages or anything like that....

R.O. No, not really - not really.

? So really it was just an organic dissatisfaction (?)....

R.O. That's right - that's right, ja, to put it that way.

? Just took its own form....

R.O. Ja, but - but not touching on the - or not giving real attention to the basic problems that people were facing.

J.F. What, TLSA wasn't giving attention to....

R.O. That's right, that - that's the impression I - I - I gathered.

J.F. Meaning what - what weren't they giving attention to and what were they giving attention to?

R.O. The - the name in itself says Teachers' League of South Africa - was obvious that they were more concerned as a more trade union movement for teachers, and they were more concerned about the - the treatment of teachers within the department, and that - that's the type of - of - of - of impression that I gained from them. They would - when - when they would come on casual visits to our house, as I was saying, they might raise certain things, and teachers in itself in - in - in Coloured rural politics played a very significant role in that they were on the farms, they were the pastors, they were the people that buried the people, they conducted church services, they....

J.F. Teachers?

R.O. The teachers, ja, they were doing everything for people and I - today I - I must say that I - I don't think that they - they could have done a lot more at that time to probably talk to people and explain to people what - what the - how the system actually operates, which I don't think they really did. Also the question of - of - of - of when man (?) talks of - of media, I don't think that in that regard they - they could really - they met everybody, you see, even the teachers, because it was quite a - a scarce thing - one didn't see the pamphlets really. They had a newspaper - what's its name called - I'm not sure today - but people had a very high respect even in the area where I - I come from for - for - for Kies, Bennie Kies, and - because I remember that he addressed people in Oudtshoorn....

J.F. He came from the Cape?

- R.O. He came from the Cape to speak to teachers at this meeting I was talking to you about....
- J.F. And you saw him speak?
- R.O. I saw him speak.
- J.F. What was it like to hear him for the first time? What was - what kind of person - what was he saying?
- R.O. He was - he came forward as a very charismatic, good speaker, and he was - although he was speaking Afrikaans - in English I mean, I could - I could gather what he was saying, and it was obvious that he was a - he's a brilliant person - he was a very brilliant guy who could articulate the - the - the - the feelings of teachers quite easily and - and his wife also, Helen Kies, she was with him, and I mean both of them played a - a very significant role at this particular meeting I - I - not attended but I was there I mean - attended in the sense of - of being a delegate or something, I guess I was (?) still at school.
- J.F. And you didn't have any dissatisfaction at the Bennie Kies meeting with the limitations of TLISA? Even when Bennie Kies was speaking, did you think this is it, that he's going all the way, or did you have feeling that he wasn't really articulating the demands on the ground, or with Bennie Kies did you feel dissatisfied or satisfied with the kind of level of the demands?
- R.O. I - I think I was satisfied with the level of demand - he - he was also seen as a brave person because - as a hero and - and one didn't really look at the - at the political sort of thing, rather as a person who is willing to come and - and speak about these things that are - that are really bothering the - the ordinary person.
- J.F. If Bennie Kies had come along with a Tonjene or with a ANC guy, black African guy, how would you have responded, how would your buddies have responded? It was such a Coloured atmosphere. Would that have been difficult to take? Do you think it was good that it was just Coloureds and Bennie was Coloured and you were being addressed by them, or do you think it would have broadened you - you would have been O.K. to see an African speaking on the same platform, or do you think it would have been something you would have found hard to accept at that stage?
- R.O. I'm very honest when I earlier said about this whole reconciliation, and I think that with Tonjene in such a meeting, it would have had a greater impact upon the people of Oudtshoorn - it would have had the effect that one finds today, and it could have started that - those years already, had Tonjene possibly come with - with - to address people in the fashion that - that - that Kies had come to address teachers.
- J.F. When was the Kies meeting? Can you remember approximately when it would have been?
- R.O. Could have been in the '62, '63, round about....
- J.F. Early '60s?
- R.O. Ja.
- J.F. So when - I just want to get clear about this because you're being very honest about the antipathy between the Africans and the Coloureds and how it was even kind of built up because of being separate.

- J.F. When did the feeling of reconciliation come such that you would have accepted or you - when did you begin? When did it happen?
- R.O. I was - I was trying to say that in the beginning when we were - were (?) moved initially, it - it - it was - it was this type of animosity and hostility that existed, but as time went on we - because the - the - the African people had to come through to Bridgton to go to - to - to the town - to the city, and we - we accepted, we - we restored the old type of - of - of relationship that existed initially, and so I - I - there was that type of relation that did exist that we were not fighting any - any more (?) - we were sharing....
- J.F. But through what? I want to make sure I don't gloss over it. What helped you reconcile? Some people told me about these - some meeting with a certain person or some experience whereby they saw that Africans weren't different, but how did it happen with you? It's just you're kind of saying well, it happened. Can you remember any particular African person that you first met that impressed you or any politician or how did it happen? I just don't want to gloss over it.
- R.O. Ja - in Bridgton there were some African people living also....
- J.F. Even though?
- R.O. Even though they - they had their own area, and I think they were more the better off type of African people that lived there, and we - we were friendly - our families would - would - would share, and I think that that broke that type of - of thing that - that existed - that was tried (?) to be created (?) through our - our schools, and I think that that in itself is just - there was no particular political thing that really, I think, broke this bond. We were just - our parents I think played a very important role in - in - in relating to us also, that we - we not - these are not our enemies, these - these people are undergoing the same thing that - that we are undergoing, and that's why I think that we came together again.
- J.F. Do you think that you had a Coloured identity, and what is a Coloured identity? You've talked about being able to accept whites and Africans because of - I'm still not clear exactly how it came about, but do you think that you - your youth or say, up to your 20 or whatever you saw yourself as a Coloured? If someone had said what are you, would you have said I'm black or would you have said I'm Coloured?
- R.O. Well, that thing came with the whole BC idea, right....
- J.F. O.K., but before that. Say we're still in the '60s now. In '66 when Verwoerd was killed you were 18?
- R.O. Ja - 17.
- J.F. I'm just wondering what - I'm just so interested in people kind of articulating, because there's a lot written about the Coloured identity, and you did say some of the stuff they say about Bran (?) Afrikaaners has some validity because of the language, but what did that mean to you? Did you ever resent the Coloured identity or did you think no, that's what I am, that's what we are?
- R.O. I think being in the area where I was brought up had this type of influence that I accepted myself as a Coloured person and - and I also accepted the fact that - that the other people there are darker skinned than the Coloured people are Bantu people, and that type of tradition was running through in the schools, in the shops, in whatever - in social life.

- R.O. Functions - we would have a Coloured function, and you might not find African people there, and the African people had their functions, and Coloured people would not be there, so this type of - of - of separate-ness was no problem to me at that time....
- J.F. Was it natural?
- R.O. It was natural.
- J.F. Why?
- R.O. I think it was the system was successful in - in gaining that type of thing. The - on the farms also I would easily identify with the Coloured people on the farms, or associate better with the Coloured people on the farms as with the African people that - that stayed next door to me, because I - I - I was brought up that they were Coloured people and they speak my language and things like that.
- J.F. And what were the differences? If somebody had said well, you know - would you have found yourself to be somewhat better supposedly? What was the differences you saw between Africans and Coloureds then?
- R.O. They were worse off than - than the Coloured people - they had - we were given homes by the municipality - they had to build their own homes - their school - we had a bad school, but their school was worse. They spoke Afrikaans the - the language that we - that everybody - that most of the people speak, and they couldn't - they - they didn't speak Afrikaans properly - they - their way of having church services was different - they would walk in the streets and - and sing hymns where - whereas we would go into a building - that was the type of - of - of - of universal thing that was reigning at - at - in the area where I lived.
- J.F. Do you - could you have accepted a leader to be an African, given your understanding of the differences? Did you think the Coloured people could be led by an African?
- R.O. At that time, no.
- J.F. So would you have - and so how did that fit in with your general feeling though that the system was wrong? Did you have a sense of how the system should be bettered, given the Coloured and African distinctions, or did you not conceptualise it that far?
- R.O. I - I - I thought of - I felt for a new system, but also at the same time the - the politics that was reigning then was that - that Coloured people are to be together.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

- R.O. rights - never had a - was never a key type of problem that I saw and my - my elder brothers would - would talk about Hulle moet ons die stem reg gewe - they must give us the power to vote, and they would lose in the elections and - but also the psychological thing was that the white man was better - he could write books, he could write newspapers, he could produce food.

- R.O. I saw it in that sense - and we can work - we are the working - the manual people, but they are the people that are in a position - they are superior to us.
- J.F. At that time - I'm real interested about this when Verwoerd was assassinated. This was before you'd become very political still....
- R.O. That's right.
- J.F. Did you know who did it? Did it matter, or was that not an issue?
- R.O. I knew this guy - in fact my brother was working in Cape Town and he was working not far away from parliament, and he was working for a photographer called Houseman in Parliament Street - on the corner actually of Parliament Street along Market Street - and the morning of the assassination he was in that vicinity, and he came back - he was the person actually who came about and explained to us in the detail what really happened that morning, and our excitement - the - the - the - the - the - the - the Coloured people were - that this guy had been killed, because we thought this was the end of enslavement.
- J.F. And did you know who the guy was? Was he white, Coloured? Was that a factor?
- R.O. What we couldn't understand was that he was a white guy, because I mean white in the sense of he was a Greek, I think, Tsafendis, Dimitri, and what I couldn't understand why a white person should assassinate this man, but also the - the papers - Die Landstem made it quite clear that he was - there were two schools of thought - the one group said that he was mad, and the other group said he - it was a plot by the - by the - by the - by the Russians to - to get rid of him.
- J.F. And did it have any kind of follow-through for you (Interruption) Did it kind of follow-through to armed struggle at all? Did people say you've got to use violence to get rid of them, or did - enslavement didn't end and it was forgotten. Was there any discussion of Umkhonto we Sizwe or violence as being the way (?)
- R.O. Umkhonto we Sizwe not, but what was very significant for me personally was my brother that was working in Cape Town, who was about two years older than myself, and he came back with a T-shirt and on this T-shirt was the young progressives, and he was telling me about how the young progressives are actually opposing Afrikaaner domination and that we should rather - we should try to be able to speak English, we should try to - because the English were - were the people that really are concerned about the liberal thing, the - was concerned about our welfare, and we should really put our support with the English speaking people of the country. And what I really couldn't understand was what - after Verwoerd's killing things were just the same - nothing changed and - but what was obvious already in that stage in my mind that these people have to be eliminated in the fashion that this guy was killed - it will be the only solution to the problem that we - we have to kill these people in order to - to - to gain a better lifestyle, whatever, because lifestyle basically was the - was the trend.
- J.F. And how kill them? Did you get very far to think about that?
- R.O. If we had guns.
- J.F. And did that mean that you looked at the idea of an army, or did you know that the ANC had an army?
- R.O. Didn't know the ANC had an army, but what I did know was that there were acts of sabotage as they were put - it was called that - those years - I mean still called today - when Harris I think - the guy who blew up the - the Johannesburg Station.

- R.O. When - when that happened I mean these - all these things mixed had this influence if - if we could only get some arms to - to - to protect us, particularly against the police, who was very hostile I mean that time already, and they would come into our areas, drive easily in - and walk - earlier they were walking and - to come to arrest, or came with bicycles to arrest people, and when there - I remember one incident also where a guy threw a - they were - they had these gambling spots where they gambled with their dices, and a cop came and the people ran away, and he arrested one guy - he had one guy in his hand and the bicycle in the - and somebody stood away from him and threw him with the stone and he collapsed, and the people went to pick up the money while he was lying there - it was a white cop, and nobody bothered to - to - to assist him, so - so that in - also was - was - was clear to me that this is how you have to eliminate them in order to - to - to get what you really are after - one is after.
- J.F. But it wasn't in any....
- R.O. It wasn't in any framework, any....
- J.F. What were you doing at the time? You finished school. Did you do matric?
- R.O. I did matric and I went to the training college.
- J.F. And then?
- R.O. I became a teacher in 1968.
- J.F. In Oudtshoorn?
- R.O. In Oudtshoorn.
- J.F. And where were you at politically? Were you in Teachers' League? Had you actually joined it or did you just kind of went to a few meetings?
- R.O. Teachers' League didn't really go on then. There was a new organisation called TEPA - I don't know what it stood for - I can't remember now - but there was a split within the TLSA and they formed this other organisation because the TLSA, it was claimed, would resort to violence, and whereas TEPA thought of non-violent negotiations....
- J.F. And did you like that idea?
- R.O. I didn't like the idea at all - I never liked the idea - although I'm not a violent person, I never liked the idea, because I could see I mean through my experiences, my younger experiences in life I - it was obvious that TEPA would never gain what we were after.
- J.F. Had you heard of the non-European Unity Movement at all?
- R.O. In fact to (?) the TLSA meeting this one - this thing came through about the non-European Unity Movement, but it was only a name - it was only a name - it was not really - I didn't really understand how it operated - it was never functional in the rural areas. There was no political movement in the Coloured areas particularly that were functioning.
- J.F. And during the time - I think the next question I must get on to the overt politics - just one last thing about you kind of in this non-political phase of not overtly political, feeling armed struggle had its validity, wanting the system to change. With these acts of sabotage, Harris, the whatever that you heard about, did you have any sense of who was doing it? Who was blowing up pylons or the train station? Who was behind these acts....

J.F. So you figure it was communists?

R.O. It was the communists.

J.F. Who told you that?

R.O. The - the - we were exposed to Die Landstem, through the media - our parents would say it's - it - it's the African people that are - that are getting sick and tired - I want to, before we cut off here, relate one incident - my sister went to a training college in Worcester - that was in 1960 or '61 - and she had to stop her - her schooling and had to come back at a certain time in the middle of the year - I think it was in 1960 - because there was - she was - came home to tell us - and they had a very, very good teacher at the training college, if I should mention his name, according to her account - he was Mr. van Noya (?)

J.F. Van?

R.O. Van Noya.

J.F. Van Noya?

R.O. Ja, v a n - N o i e - and he was telling them about - about the resistance that the African people were putting up - he was telling them about the ANC - he was telling them about the fight, about the strikes at that time, and the resistance to - to the - to the implementation of the - South Africa, rather, being kicked out of the United Nations and becoming a - a republic on its own, and I mean my family had a - had the type of - of - because of their schooling, going out and coming back - the question was asked earlier, but it just strike me now that she came back to tell us this, and it was exciting to hear that our people were really in - in - physically taking action against the system, because they were stone-throwing - children would - were - were stopped from going to school by the - by the African comrades in - in - in Worcester, where she - the training college was - that was in 1960, I remember that.

J.F. And when you said - you told me it was the communists, that's what your perception was. But then I'm confused - and then you - right away you said it's the African people, so....

R.O. Ja, the - the papers said it was the communists....

J.F. But your parents said it's the Africans?

R.O. The - the - the parent - not the - my parents as such - it was the - the accepted thing in the community that it was the - that - that it was the Africans that had committed these deeds of violence.

J.F. The Africans as opposed to the communists? Did that mean it was lies saying it was the communists or what?

R.O. My - my - my perception? It was lies saying it was the communists - it was - because I had an account from somebody that came home and told us that : Look here, man, it - it's - our teacher tells us that it's the resistance that - that's being put up by the - by the African community.

J.F. And did you ever know what - when you heard it was the communists did you think they must be good guys or bad guys or this or that, or you just didn't believe it was them? Did you know who communists were?

R.O. I didn't know who communists were - I didn't (?) only know that they were bad people according to the newspapers.

J.F. You knew that from the newspapers?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. So you were teaching, and what was your perception of the kids' politics? Where were they at politically in terms of the whole situation? Did they seem happy with the status quo? Did they talk to you about wanting to change? Did you talk politics with your students?

R.O. I talked politics with the children.

J.F. You did - from the day you started?

R.O. From the day I started teaching, because I - at that stage in my life I - I - I'd read a lot then - I had - through my college years I was - I was a bad student - seen as a very bad student - I was nearly expelled for not attending the - the morning - the Monday morning assemblies, the church assemblies - the religious services - and because at that time I saw this as distortions....

J.F. The church services?

R.O. The church services, which was conducted by - by the - the - the services were conducted by the - by the staff, and the staff were white people - there was only one Coloured person, and he was giving physical education, he was - and he was never among the whites - he was sitting with the students most of the time, and I was saying to myself I'm going to teach the children the politics, and at that time already in my life I - I was saying that organised structures will bring this vicious system to an end.

J.F. Organised by who? What kind of organisation did you see?

R.O. The - the - the BC movement at the time I was - I was very deeply involved in - in BC politics.

J.F. How did you know - that's a big jump there - how did you get involved in BC? Tell me what - who you met or how that happened?

R.O. I read a lot about Steve Biko, Barney Pitso, Mapetha Mohapi and those guys - I heard about the Zimele (?) trust fund - I heard about the SASO that was to be formed - I heard about the fights they had in - in - when wanting to join NUSAS and, or in fact invited to a NUSAS meeting. I knew about the - the time that they went to the conference, I think in - in - in Natal, and had to stay separately in another block while the white students stayed in - in some other block.

J.F. How'd you get all this stuff in Oudtshoorn, through the teachers college with people - was SASO in Oudtshoorn or how did you get the material?

R.O. I actually became friends with - with - with a lot of guys in Cape Town, and one bad thing about everything is the fact that I - I - I was - and I'm not arrogant - I was - I - I felt that I was the only person that actually knows a lot of these things, because other people....

J.F. (.....)

R.O. Ja, in Oudtshoorn, because a lot of other people saw this as - as - as - as not wanting to get involved into this thing, you see, and - but - but I went to Cape Town and by reading - bought reading material at - at - at Open Books or wherever and - and read about - read about - I read about Beyers Naude's experiences, about the fact that he was banned for a long time, and this had an impact, a tremendous impact on my life, on my style.

J.F. And how did you - just the step of finding out about BC? Again there was just such a lack of politics in everything you're talking about and now suddenly it's like you knew all about BC. How did it get - you had to go to Cape Town to find it through brothers and contact....

R.O. That's right, ja - that's right, that's basically the....

J.F. If you'd stayed in Oudtshoorn only it wouldn't have hit you?

R.O. That's right, I don't think so.

J.F. And did you bring it back to Oudtshoorn?

R.O. I brought it back to Oudtshoorn.

J.F. Material?

R.O. Material, the works, and what also happened is the fact that at the time we - people on - on their way to - to - to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape would touch on in Oudtshoorn and would come to my place because it's very funny how the network spread - spreaded because people knew about one another in - in - although I didn't think that people were aware of the fact that I am engaged in - in - in - in resistance politics - people came to my house and we had long chats, and the Labour Party itself had at that time also - I don't know whether you remember that the - the Labour Party elections and - and they promised us that they going to go into - into the - the house of representatives - that was how it was called - CRC, the Coloured Representative Council - and they promised that they would go into this thing, smash up the thing, because the only legitimate way of - of articulating the feelings of our people would be to sit in on the cabinet, to be in - in - in - in - in the Volksraad - what you call it - in - in the....

J.F. Parliament?

R.O. In parliament, ja, and this was seen as a dummy thing, and I had already started now in my whole political experiences - I had - I'd got justification in - in the - in - in the non-collaborationist politics, you see, so I - I saw that we shouldn't at all collaborate with them, and I worked hell out for the Labour Party at the time to - to get them - and I think the - the voting - the - the - the other party was the - Tom Swarts was the leader of this party, federal, the Federal Party - and those people that wanted to be involved in - in - in - were - were physically attacked by people and - because it was our first - in my opinion, it was the first opportunity that the Oudtshoorn or the South Cape people had of bringing to the attention of the world that we are not interested in a dummy structure, and that is why I went out of my way to work for the Labour Party - I became a member of....

J.F. You became a member?

R.O. I became a member of....

J.F. When did you join the Labour Party?

R.O. It was round about 1969.

J.F. So it was BC and Labour Party at the same time?

R.O. Bc not as much then, but Labour Party particularly.

J.F. First Labour Party?

R.O. First Labour Party, ja.

J.F. And....

R.O. And the disillusionment came when this guy didn't withdraw....

? I was just going to say the Labour Party at that time articulated quite a progressive....

J.F. You're saying they were going to go into to destroy it from within?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. And when did you expect him to withdraw?

R.O. Immediately, that was the pro - what they promised us.

J.F. That they'd win and then withdraw?

R.O. They would go in and on the first day they would walk out altogether, but making - drawing up a memorandum, putting the demands of our people on paper and explaining to the government that look here, this, you know the type of structure that we are interested in - and when they started to play this game of theirs of testing it out for a while, that is when I withdrew from the Labour Party.

J.F. Immediately - they didn't withdraw - you withdrew?

R.O. Immediately when they did not withdraw I walked - I left the Labour Party, idea of the Labour Party - or rather the Labour Party.

J.F. And into what did you go?

R.O. There were no organised structures then, but the - the gospel of BC spreaded around through the sports particularly - sports played a significant role, and that's why I mean for me I'm very - I got heavily involved in the sports....

J.F. What are you wearing - what is that?

R.O. It's the - I'm the - the moment after I'd left teaching I - I was the president of the primary school sports board, which is a SACOS affiliate, and I - when I left teaching I was made the honorary president of the Salvation Districts (?) Primary School Sports Board. I also became the president of the South Western Districts Council of Sport, which was a direct affiliate of the - of - of - of - of SACOS - and I saw this as an avenue to - to organise people, because SACOS itself was - was fighting a political fight through the sports at that time, I saw it like that in my BC years.

? Can I just go back to the election - in a lot of areas and communities and just the holding of a campaign or an election like that is an opportunity for all sorts of formalised discussion to take place, which never happens otherwise. Did that election play that sort of role in Oudts-hoorn area, or did people suddenly sort of - or more just start discussing the issues a lot more and forming themselves into camps and groups, or was it not noticeable....

R.O. No, I would say that the Labour Party - when the Labour Party would call for a meeting, everybody from the areas, young children, the youth, the parents, everybody would be at the Labour Party, because I think that it was as if a dream had come true....

? That's the point I'm trying to make - before the sort of election campaign created the opportunity to hold meetings - that didn't really happen, but now that the opportunity came people attended, people - it was a sort of good opportunity to organise....

- R.O. Right - and for example, the Federal Party had one meeting in Oudtshoorn and we went there, and the meeting was completely disrupted - I was a teacher then - it was disrupted to such an extent that only the people on the platform had to go into a separate room to have their meeting there, and I was - I was - I was actually brought before the - I was - I was brought before the department for this - they wrote a letter to me to say that I am - am - I'm involved openly in - in politics and causing problems within the community.
- J.F. What was the dream that had come true?
- R.O. For the first time in - in - in - in the South Cape, or in the area, the constituency there, people came forward and listed the type of complaints that we had been having over the years. People were dissatisfied with the ho - the houses that they live in - it was those basic demands. People were dissatisfied with - with - with the streets, with the areas, the - the health conditions - but people were also being told now from a politic - from politicians - like we played a particular role in trying to not only conscientise people on civic matters, but bring in the political demands as well, and that - that we could only attain freedom by - by destroying, dismantling the apartheid system and - and getting into parliament, and I think that - that that illusion, that dream, as I was saying, through this Labour Party thing, was - was articulated by the people and we - we saw this - after the elections the - the government would not have an opportunity of withstanding the - because they had created this - this - this - this - the separate thing for us, the CRC, and nobody's going to man it, and they would sit with this problem and the outside world would realise that the - the people of South Africa are not satisfied with the type of - of - of situation in the country.
- J.F. And when the Labour Party people didn't get out, did you go to them and confront them, or did you just quit?
- R.O. I don't know if - if it's too early in my discussion to - to - to say something, but Oudtshoorn has a - a history of militancy, and you would - you would - you can check on anything - anything that is pro-government is either not attended or is destroyed, and the - this thing of - of - of - of the Labour Party neglecting our people in the promises they had made brought this type of - of hostility and animosity, so much so that the person who was elected - Nora Potts is her name - she was one of the only women that was on the - in the CRC - she had a difficult position because people went up to her, confronted her, the parents particularly, because mothers had worked, cooked food out of the meagre they had, for the guys like Allan Hendrickse, guys like Sonny Leon, guys like this guy who left - the Zulu guy who left the Labour Party after they had adopted the - the tricameral system, Norman Middleton....
- J.F. The Zulu guy?
- R.O. Ja, he was - he had - he always said that he had Zulu heritage, you see - he could speak Zulu - and I still remember he would not start - open his address, which was good, by shouting slogans like Amandla and telling us how we should respond and - and - and the meetings was - was - was swept up by the Labour Party - they created that atmosphere, they created that whole scene that liberation is going to come soon after the elections - vote for us and we'll see to it, we'll bring the solution.
- J.F. So you were going to say - did that mean that you did confront them afterwards....
- R.O. We confronted them - we confronted them openly.
- J.F. And so Nora Potts got hit and everyone got confronted?

R.O. She started drinking seriously - she afterwards - other - we - people did not take notice of her after because she got ill, and I think that she couldn't handle the situation at all, because she knew the feelings of the Oudtshoorn people, and she subsequently passed away, and I mean I didn't even go to the funeral and we - we were really supporting that woman, you see, but we saw her as part and parcel of this whole group of people that have neglected us when we had brought the people to that - to that peak actually.

J.F. And that was what - the year of the election was '6?

R.O. 9.

J.F. And then did you just turn full on into BC or did you not get as overtly political, or where did you go after that politically?

R.O. I was a teacher then - I was saying that I got involved in - in sports and I was exposed to BC literature most of the time.

J.F. How did - when was SACOS - when did you get involved with SACOS?

R.O. The first time I attended a meeting was on the 29th. September in 1971.

J.F. You remember it well?

R.O. Ja....

J.F. Who spoke at the meeting?

R.O. Frank van der Horst was - Morgan (.....) was still - I mean the other guy, Hassan Howa, was still the president - and there was a guy sitting next to me and I think it's my - my roots - the fact that I come from Oudtshoorn, and this guy he was saying that he was involved in - in professional sports, and he was physically thrown out of the meeting by - by the SACOS people, because SACOS didn't want to have any association with anything that includes the type of - of - of - of white people in - in - in our structures and - and being with the - with - with the professional soc - professional boxing, it means that he - there were monies from the - from the big companies like Mobil and them involved, and we didn't want to be associated - that was - that was the era of non-collaborationism, and he was thrown out - why I remember that date particularly was my first visit to a meeting of people with different ways of - different line of thinking, different - differences in lines of thinking - was at this meeting that I met the guy from - what's his name - he was M.J. - M - M. Naidoo, I remember him - he was from boxing and he was an ANC organiser in....

J.F. From Durban?

R.O. From Durban.

J.F. M.D?

R.O. Not M.D. the attorney, the man - not the....

J.F. That's R.D., the old guy.

R.O. R.D., ja - it was R.E.....

J.F. He is in boxing, the skinny little guy.

R.O. That's right, ja.

J.F. So you met R.D. at that meeting?

R.O. I met him - I also met.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

J.F. I'm interested that you - how are you saying it was such an unusual meeting, because you'd been to TLSA meetings and you'd been - had you been to BC meetings?

R.O. Not to BC meetings.

J.F. But you'd been to Labour Party, you'd been to TLSA. What was so special about this SACOS meeting in 1971?

R.O. I met an attorney (?) guy from Natal - he was an ANC guy....

J.F. Another Naidoo?

R.O. Not Naidoo - his name will come up as I - I met a guy called - with (?) R.D. Naidoo I met - and then I met the Cape Town people, and the one I met is - today he's in hiding - the other one was sentenced to one year imprisonment for furthering the aims of the ANC....

J.F. Recently?

R.O. In 1982 he was sentenced - that was the year I left - I'd been out of (?) teaching - and I visited - I went to the trial from - from Oudtshoorn to - to Cape Town - his name is Hedley King, and we became very big friends - I actually met him that day for the first time, and he introduced me to a lot of people and....

J.F. Where's he from?

R.O. He's from Cape Town and....

J.F. From the Coloured community?

R.O. Yes - he was quite younger than myself and - but he was quite a - a good guy - he was not the person like myself who talks a lot - he - he - he took me to his home and he shared with me a number of things - he made clear to me a number of other things, and he introduced me to a number of other friends and....

J.F. In '71?

R.O. In - in - no, in - in '71, ja, that's right, in '71 - and this in fact had a - had a bearing - impact on my life because those were the people I associated with, befriended later on, were - when - with the formation of the UDF, all these things, you know, after I had met these - these guys, and it was really good meeting them.

J.F. I'm still trying to get a sense of why you were so taken with the SACOS meeting as opposed to the others. Was it more militant? You said different points of view. Was it that people had a different point of view than you'd encountered before or....

R.O. That's right - there - the - SACOS main thing was it was an AZAPO line all the way, where Frankie van der Horst spoke at that meeting and went on a blatant attack upon a lot of people that I didn't know.

R.O. I remember one particular person he went on seriously attacking was Franklin Sonn - now I got the impression that he was simply attacking this person for sending his child to a private school, and that was the only type of thing that I could gather from - from what he was - his attack that he launched. The type of input that was given by other people like R.D. Naidoo was from a different type - that was the type that I had been brought up with - the - the blatant discrimination about the working class, the workers - and I come from an area where I see what's happening to farm workers, I see what's happening to - happens to - to - to - to - to factory workers, and here I was exposed to a person who could tell us lots of things, not only about the sporting events but what we should try to do during sports meetings, talk to people on - on a number of aspects, and he was very interestingly - he was not excluding certain groups of people - he was in fact calling upon us to educate the white people that want to - to - to - to join us and that are sympathetic to the struggles, to our - our struggles that we - it is our task to educate people and not be naive to believe that people understand these things, and that had a bearing on me, made great impact on me.

And when I went home with these guys from Cape Town, Hedley King, Joe Adam, Daphne Williams and these people - when I - I - I - I went home with them, and there's another guy - he's a dentist today, Callan (?) - he's got a very dif - difficult first name - and I - I was - I was - I was exposed to the type of - of - of politics that I believe in, that I have within my - in my embodiment, to put it - I don't know how to put it in its correct word that - that - that I have been exposed to - not attacking people, accusing people of this and that, and not giving solutions for this and that, you see - and that was the type of thing that I - it really had a bearing on my life in future political involvement.

J.F. Just talking about material things that were affecting you? Is that what impressed you about R.D., that he was telling you about real issues, discrimination and that kind of thing?

R.O. Not necessarily - he was telling us about - about the wage - the - the wars that were waged by Umkhonto we Sizwe - he was telling us about - about the ANC, giving us - for me personally, giving me a background of this unknown ANC, because it is unknown in the area where I come from.

J.F. Is this the first you heard of the ANC?

R.O. Not the first that I heard of the ANC, but for the first time that somebody openly speaks about the ANC, bravely addressing people on the ANC.

J.F. When had you first heard of the ANC?

R.O. I think through my - through my student years - college student years I - I heard of the ANC.

J.F. Just what image did it have for you, the ANC?

R.O. The ANC I could, in its absence, identify with.

J.F. So even what you heard before R.D., you related positively to it?

R.O. I related personally positive to - with - without being particularly aware of the dynamics of - of how it operates and that type of thing, you see, but I was - I was - I was impressed with the ANC because at - it was at the college that I hear about the Sharpeville shootings - that I learn for the first time about the Sharpeville shootings.

J.F. But from who, from BC, from SACOS, from Labour Party?

- R.O. No, from reading only I mean, but not from a political - from any particular political grouping, I would say.
- J.F. So R.D. was the first one who was talking about it in a political context?
- R.O. That's right, ja.
- J.F. And did you figure this guy's an (in) ANC?
- R.O. I - it was obvious, ja.
- ? Can I just....
- R.O. He was talking about SACTU - he was - of the years in SACTU, what they were doing, and a lot of other things.
- J.F. Did you get - did you think gee, this is....
- R.O. This guy's terrible - he's our leader (Laugh) - I'm joking, but I mean this - this is the man that really without stopping, he kept on talking rationally, telling us about the ANC and....
- J.F. But was it just R.D. at this SACOS group, because van der Horst and the others weren't speaking like that?
- R.O. They weren't really people speaking like that.
- J.F. So he stood out as the only one giving this....
- R.O. And the other one from - the other guy from - from - from - I just can't think of the guy's name....
- J.F. Another Indian guy from Natal?
- R.O. From Natal, ja - and what was also significant that day is that the - it was not broadly accepted by SACOS - it was not well discussed, these things. It - it was said and - but it wasn't really entertained in - to put it that way....
- J.F. So they tolerated R.D., but they didn't embrace what he was saying?
- R.O. Ja, I think that a guy like - like - like - I always got the impression that a guy like Hassan Howa was the president but - but lost his seat to Frank van der Horst - I think that Howa was not a highly politicised type of person - he was more the - the type of - of - of - of sportsman and that is concerned about - about sports only, but also I mean saying - fighting non-collaboration, but I - it was not - he was not actually going in a political line - taking a political side actually as - where it was obvious Frank van der Horst where his sentiments lie, and he had a - they had a group of people, they had a - they were overwhelmingly BC type of people - in fact when I left the meeting and I came back, they were quite upset, and it's a thing that today I am upset about, the fact that I - that people saw the vulnerability of - of - of the rural areas and thought that they could move in and come with a political ideologies (?) and - and - and - and foster that in our community, and in fact that was not what people were after, you see - people were after basic things with not a political programme - worked out political programme - I hope you understand what I'm trying to say.
- J.F. Who wasn't after them - I'm confused....
- R.O. The - the - the - the rural area people - they were not exposed to the type of - of - of - of politics, political programmes that the - that the - that the - that the city people were exposed to, and I mean there were no trade unions there.

R.O. There was no civic organisations, there was nothing, and here people were worried about the basic things that - that faces them, the problems that they have in their daily lives and - and - and what I was saying the - today I'm still upset about it, I said, was the fact that it was - it became obvious to me that people wanted to exploit, use me to actually go back to my area and - and push a certain political line....

J.F. Without dealing with the issues that....

R.O. Without dealing with the issues that were facing our people.

J.F. They wanted you to push a SACOS line, you're saying?

R.O. Not SACOS as such because I was a SACOS supporter all the way, but a political line like AZAPO, you see, or - although I was a very strong BC supporter for what it stood.

J.F. Which was what to you then?

R.O. Psychologically the upliftment of people from the slave mentality that our people had been living in and going through it, exploited and stuff like that, and where the whole question to me personally psychologically - the whole question of equality came into being, because I couldn't see myself at that time after - as - as a teacher, being worse off, or not - unequal to any other teacher, whether it be black or white or whatever, or even unequal to a principle (principal) - I was - I was not looking at - at that from the side only of colour - I was looking at it from the side of the whole oppressive type of - of - of - of thing that - and - and the superiority and inferiority that - that - that was - that was reigning all over the show, as I was telling you about my earlier life experiences and I was - I was - I was fighting against this and I - I - I personally became involved in - in - in personal clashes with people on - on issues where I was - I - I would be treated, or would be discriminated against because of my age or - or because of my skin colour, because of - of a lot of other things I mean - because of my class position, because I mean I still was then from the ordinary working class group of people who were earning a lot - a little money I mean and it was - it was difficult to make a living, but - but - but I had that pride within me that I'm not going to be dictated to by anybody for that matter.

? So you were saying that you found (felt) being exploited by some people?

R.O. Ja.

? Why didn't you feel exploited by....

R.O. By the ANC?

? By the ANC sort of line?

R.O. Simple - simple as far as I'm concerned, because here there was no fight against people of colour, firstly - secondly, here there was no infights on - on - on technical arguments and - and things - here was a concern at that moment for me - here was a concern about the plight of the under-priv - the - the - the disenfranchised, the under-privileged people, and that meant a tremendous lot to me.

? So - I mean I don't know if I'm imperpreting you rightly - you saw a bit of political personal opportunism, ambition, whatever, among one group....

R.O. Ja, that's right, ja.

? And the more tradition of involvement and mass sort of articulated....

R.O. That's right - that's right.

? Can I just ask a slightly different question also relating to your response when you first heard sort of ANC propoganda - I mean not propoganda - people speaking about the (?) ANC - did you - before then had you - you were aware of the ANC. Did you sort of imagine it as something historical, something sort of of a past era, and was - you say you were very excited hearing about it again. Was it the sort of feeling that my God, this thing still exists?

R.O. Ja, that's right.

? Because that's my experience and a lot of people's experiences.

R.O. Ja, ja, that's right.

? You were aware of it, you knew about it?

R.O. Ja.

? But it had gone?

R.O. Gone - you don't hear about it, ja, it disappears.

? And then when you first became aware of it again it was a very exciting...

R.O. Exactly....

? That here this tradition still lives?

R.O. That's right, and it was - it was really something that affect me quite a great deal of my life afterwards.

J.F. Did you say to BC people afterwards : Hey, the ANC's still going - and did they ever of you (?) I'm just wondering what other groupings said about the idea that the - finding that the ANC's still around when in fact AZAPO, or at the time BC kind of point of view was to say : Look, they've failed us, we're the ones that can get something done now.

R.O. I've been always a very careful person when it comes to ideology, particularly in my area, where people are completely unaware of - of - of - of the typs of - of - of BC differences - AZAPO differences with that of - of charter people, and it was - it was rather the - the programme or the - the - the - the - what I took home was that you must go into your areas and organise your people into organisations, grassroots organisations - that's what I took home - and not concentrating on looking at any political organisation, but I knew in fact at the time that there would only be - eventually there would only be one type of political programme that people would ascribe with, because there was as far as - I'm convinced today of it that I was right, that the authentic voice of the people of South Africa is that of the ANC.

There was that vacuum, and when I heard about it again, I realised that this is what our people - this is the document, this is the programme our people are after and - and I went home with the - with a basic feeling of - of - of organising people, and I involved myself in any type of thing that was against the system. I involved myself in - I couldn't handle it at times - I was in the sports organisations - school sports organisations, outside sports organisations - we started with discussion groups with - with students - I was involved with student politics - I was involved in teachers' politics, and I - and I - and I - and I joined an organisation called the CTPA, the Cape Teachers' Professional Association - I left them, however, after some incident - but I mean I was saying to myself that the building of - of organisations should be - should be it - should bring the people and - and an overall structure that could coordinate, although at times one was hasty and felt disillusioned when you're not always successful.

- R.O. But as - as - as I matured, as time went on, I - I realised that this is a timeous (?) process.
- ? This was something that really just came to you from - on the basis of your own experience in thinking it wasn't a line that was being pushed by the ANC people?
- R.O. No, no.
- ? Because we talking about early '70s now.
- R.O. That's right, ja - in fact I - I - I'm not saying here that at that time I - I was an ANC member - I was - I saw myself as an ANC member - I rather saw myself as a BC person, you see, because of - of - of - of the - of the - as I was saying, the slave mentality destruction, you see.
- ? Well, there wasn't really a clear split....
- R.O. No, no, there was no - exactly - I - I couldn't - if there was I - I was not aware of it, I didn't see it.
- J.F. Well, I don't know, if you talk to Barney Pityana about the fact that Steve Biko's brother was prosecuted for PAC, and I think there was some explicitness on the part of some people - some had an agenda and some didn't - but for you in Oudtshoorn where there was no apparent split, do you remember when you first got kind of more mobilised with politics and wanting to do things, saying to people : But isn't there this movement, the ANC, what happened to them - and you were - some people said to me that people would say : No, those were the people who failed us - who tried and failed us. There was that image that they failed, they lost. Other people would say : No, they heard about it. Other people would say you never heard of it, and if you did it was exciting, and other people would say nothing. Just wonder for you what the image of the ANC was. If someone had said to you before that R.D. Naidoo speech ANC, what would have popped into your head? Good guys, but I don't hear about them or I don't....
- R.O. Good guys, but I don't hear about them, and also an African organisation, a - a Bantu type of organisation, you know, not really involved in the type of - of things that - that when I - when I - when I heard about it, when I read about it, you see, I - I saw it as - as the - as a organisation that's basically was - was formed for the - for the purpose of - of - of fighting for the rights of the - of - of the - of the black people.
- J.F. The Africans?
- R.O. Africans, ja.
- J.F. And what, that they didn't want you Coloureds or that that wasn't their agenda, or Coloureds never....
- R.O. That was my opinion.
- J.F. That they didn't want you?
- R.O. That they didn't want....
- J.F. But if you'd gone there they would have said no, it's African....
- R.O. It's an African national congress, ja - African nationalist, and also the thing that I - I - I - I got in my mind that they spoke Xhosa there and I - I, you know - you understand - I mean.

J.F. So how did that get out of your mind? What changed you that it wasn't just for Africans?

R.O. BC.

J.F. Did BC say ANC's for everyone?

R.O. No, but BC changed that - the whole concept of blackness, you see, that if you - you're either - there either two - you - you are either white or you're black and - and the - the - the - the concept of - of that those who are privileged are the blacks - under - not privileged are the blacks, and that in itself, and from then on I outgrew my - outgrew my - my BC line - I mean I.

J.F. And along the lines that you were just saying to see R.D. Naidoo....

R.O. Just stop here - are you - are you saying that I'm an ANC person?

J.F. No, I'm not going to say that, and I don't think you should - in the context of the book - by the time this comes out in two years, I think everyone - that there's such a (Tape off)..... to see at this meeting Coloureds and Indians - to see an Indian guy like R.D. Naidoo speaking about the ANC - did that make you feel the ANC involves not just Africans more, or was that important for you? You haven't spoken about - you've just told me about the five Indian families in Oudtshoorn to now. Had you had exposure to Indians before this R.D. Naidoo?

R.O. Only know now (?) when look - when I - I later went - went to Cape Town on quite - on several occasions, you see - I had a girlfriend in Cape Town, so I travelled to Cape Town quite a lot and I met other Indian friends and - and I mean when - when R.D. Naidoo spoke that - that of course - but by that time I would think that I - I had a - a new concept also, I - I didn't see the ANC as - I mean in earlier life I would - I would have seen the ANC as more - it was a thing that you don't really hear about, unless of course the ANC and the - and the Russians, because that was what I heard over the news, and the Russians had blown up something, you see, but it was African people and - and - and not - not the type of - I'm talking about my quite earlier years, but (?) a year at the training college and after the training college I - I - I got new perspectives, and R.D. Naidoo's thing here was quite illuminating - I mean it gave me a - a better understanding of - of the ANC and the - and the meetings I had that day, because I stayed on - my - I had to fly back the - the evening or the -

I remember I was a bit ill (?) also, but - but I didn't leave because of the discussions I - I was - I got involved in and the - the - the media I was exposed to, books I took down home - banned literature I took down home, and I read a lot.

J.F. So where (when) was this meeting, the R.D. Naidoo meeting?

R.O. It was in Cape Town, I say - it was SACOS meeting - I was - I was a delegate of - but what I'm saying is that the - the groups of people that I - I was saying that I left with - with Hedley King and Joe Adam and these people, and I met them and these were really the people that - and I mean Joe Adam's an Indian and Hedley King is a so-called Coloured person, and well, I got a different perspective of the ANC.

J.F. So what did you start doing from '71 from that meeting? How did that affect you? You said you got all involved in things. Can you tell me a bit more from taking it from there?

R.O. I had a lot of problems - my problems started, with the police. At first I couldn't understand it - firstly with the - with the department of education with - with - with the teaching department, because I - I had problems with - with inspectors - I had problems with - I - I say to myself today, and I'm not arrogant about this, I was a hard working teacher, and I was even transferred at one stage to assist at the training college, but at the very bad time in 1976, in the latter part of the year from June until the end of the year - that happened in 1976, ja - but the going back to Oudtshoorn, talking to people, meeting with the youth, getting involved in a lot of things, sports particularly, speaking to people about non-collaborat - non-collaborationism - non-collaboration - I mean you understand today, but I mean not with - not in the concept of black with white but black with - not with the - with the system, any system type of thing - and so during that time I had problems with the department because they accused me of - of - of discriminating against pupils that did not want to be involved in SACOS sports, and I had a lot of problems with the department during those years.

And in 1976 well, it came and it dawned upon us all - I was at the training college....

J.F. In Oudtshoorn?

R.O. In Oudtshoorn - and I was arrested immediately - the students went on strike, boycott classes - the - the secondary school students, and they just decided to march to the training college, and there was one clergyman from the United Congregational Church - I think he's at the moment in America - his name is Stanley Green - he's from Pietermaritzburg - he came to Oudtshoorn, and he was involved in - in - in BC politics, and when he saw this he went and started calming students down, and I was standing one side because the cops were all around the place, and he called me and said to me if I couldn't also play a role here, and I also started speaking to students, and the students calmed down, because many of these students were either some products of me or, through the sports, knew me - and I was arrested then, but not for long - I was released I mean, but on the political side that in itself had a very great impact on Oudtshoorn, because if you look into - I was looking at a book in this library here yesterday, at the '76 unrest, and Oudtshoorn's name is there.

And so Oudtshoorn also just exploded just like that, with no planned action by nobody, I think, but what - what came out very beautifully was the fact that students were - got into contact with other students in other areas and learned certain skills of organisation - I mean I was involved in a lot of student politics also, giving them guidelines on what they should do, what they should ask for, things like that - I was a teacher - probably people would say today that it was unfair, but I at that time in my life and today I mean I've nothing against any student action against the system, wherever the system might be - anything that discriminates against them, whether it be the teachers, whether it be parents, we should take it up and I - I - that was always - that has always been my feeling, and I think it's through my experiences that I've been exposed to, and Oudtshoorn was in effect - it was still not broadly highly politicised, but at least I could share with people on other matters, not only on these basic things that we were talking about - we could talk about the political things.

J.F. And so you said from '71 your troubles started, you got arrested that time was that '71 the first arrest?

R.O. No, in '76 I was first arrested - I said my troubles started with the system - I was questioned by the system, and I think that there was a close relationship, lia - liaison between the department and - because the problems that they saw that I was causing was mainly on the - in the field of education - I'm inciting students and the parents are dissatisfied about it, according to them, and I was arrested in '76.

J.F. But the brief one, was that '76?

R.O. The brief one was '76.

J.F. And between '71 and '76 you weren't in any specific organisation?

R.O. Not necessarily - I mean I was - you mean political organisation - no, not really - there was no - there was no political structure in Oudtshoorn as such, or in the South Cape as such.

J.F. Was there a SACOS?

R.O. There was a - there was a council of sports, yes.

J.F. But you weren't on the council of that....

R.O. I was the president of the South Western (?) Districts Council of Sports.

J.F. South West?

R.O. Western Districts Council of Sports.

J.F. From '71?

R.O. From '71, ja.

J.F. And so then things happened in '76, you're saying. That was when you got arrested, and then did you get into an organisation then or - political organisation?

R.O. Not really - we didn't have real political structures always - we never had - we never had real political structures.

J.F. So the only structure was through the sports?

R.O. Through the sports and through the education - I left in that same year - in '76 I left the - the CTPA, the Cape Teacher Professional Association.

J.F. Why?

R.O. I think it was with the - on the same day that Bernard Fortuin - I think it was in September or November that Bernard Fortuin was killed by the - by the cops....

J.F. How do you spell....

R.O. Bernard Fortuin - he was killed in Cape Town - F o r t u i n - he was the 13 year old youngster that was killed - Boesak always refers to that killing where the - the child was killed by these guys from the kombi in Elsie's River.....

END OF SIDE TWO.

J.F. What year (?) was Bernard Fortuin killed - that was?

R.O. '76.

J.F. So he was the kind of Hector Peterson of Cape Town?

- R.O. Ja, and this organisation, the CTPA, decided then to have a - an interview with PW or whoever - not P.W. - it was le Grange (?) - wasn't it le Grange '77 - Kruger or whoever, I don't know - but they - was P.W. Botha already the president then in '76?
- J.F. It was Vorster.
- R.O. Vorster - but anyhow they went on behalf - that's how I felt, because I was a member of that organisation - on behalf of the teachers, went to discuss with the system the - the killing of our people, the detention of students and things like that, and I took serious exception and I resigned point - that same day I wrote a letter to them telling them that : Look here, I - I'm disassociating from you - because I mean I was still anti-non-collaborationist.
- ? Were you an officer of that?
- R.O. In - in the area that I was I was the vice-chairman - my brother in law, who was high up in the organis - in that organisation - he in fact tried to persuade me - he was the chairperson then, and still is, and he tried to persuade me to stay on as fighting (?) from the inside, but I - I couldn't take it at that time - things have changed now, but now - I mean at that time I couldn't take it - I resigned - but again I - I didn't resign and then went on some way of - of accused - fighting them, because my basic feeling always had been organisation of people into structures.
- So when in 1980 the teachers' action committee was formed, it was difficult - people wanted me to start with that type of thing in Oudtshoorn, but I knew it was completely out of the question - or in the South Cape rather, and....
- J.F. Why was it completely out of the question?
- R.O. It was difficult because the - the - the CTPA was formed basically because it was looking at the - at the basic demands, like a trade union move - the shop floor interests of the - of the teachers, and they were organising perks for the teachers, and the TAC was formed actually in protest of what was happening within our country, as a political - a strongly politically orientated teachers' organisation, and I could see that it didn't have the exact effect that it might have in the - in the - in the urban areas, and I would expose myself - I would expose myself in such a way that I'd be detained and wouldn't serve any purpose, and then that would, in effect, cause that other people might be dissatisfied with the fact that they helped me join this type of thing.
- J.F. So again maybe I can just let you trace the political developments from '76. I'm just trying to look at how you moved. There was nothing still to get involved with directly, but you were involved in....
- R.O. In sports organisations.
- J.F. In sports and then just discussions with your students?
- R.O. Right.
- J.F. What level of school did you teach?
- R.O. I taught Standard Sixes, and I was never at the secondary school.
- J.F. Primary you were in (?)
- R.O. I was at the primary school, and I was transferred from the primary school to teach at the - at the training college....

R.O. In '76, ja - they had a problem with - my English is not as good, but I mean that's one of the problems that they had, that they couldn't find a person to teach English to students, so I was asked to - if I would be willing to do it, so I went....

J.F. To the teachers' training college?

R.O. To the teachers' training college, ja.

J.F. Your pupils, what was their consciousness like politically? We can't talk about a specific organisation because there wasn't one. We can talk about what it was like to hold discussions with the students in the pre-'76 period.

R.O. What happened - one of the advantaged things was the - the fact that many children during the '70s had gone to university, and when they came home - that was during holidays - that means four times a year - they had picked up a lot of things in - in wherever they were studying, and we had these groups, and they were able to bring in some of their friends that were still in Oudtshoorn, because I would never have gone out and organised students as such, but when these students came, these students in the early '70s and later in '76 etc., they - they - I think there was their committee of 40 or - no, it was not in '77, it was in '81 - but they - they would have these student talks and they had - had on several occasions asked me to come and talk to them about different things and I - I - so I had this contact with students many a time.

And also I - I - I want to - it might not be of very high political nature, but the fact that people, parents had problems, problems with the municipalities, problems with pension grants, things like that, and although they could go to the clergy, many people came to my house - I mean it's that type of situation that prevailed basically in - in the rural towns - and I could help people, and at the same time always talk to people - it was basically not straightforward political organisation that functioned, but I was - I mean I - I was sure what - what - what I believe people should go in - towards, you know - go towards.

But there was never that thing where I - I - I started, I initiated during those times any idea of a political organisation, because I mean Oudtshoorn also is - is the - is the - is the base - is the headquarters of the security police.

J.F. Oudtshoorn?

R.O. Ja, is the - of - of - and it stretches up as far as Uppington, which is about 800 kilometres away.

J.F. Of the South Cape....

R.O. The South Cape - it - it covers the kernel (?) of Oudtshoorn, covers the areas of Graaf-Reinet, Cradock etc., so it's a - it - it - it's - and we have the defence force base there, I don't know whether you know that - so we have this type of situation also, that the moment that you come out and say something, you exposed, you see, and you prominently stand out as a troublemaker, whatever.

J.F. So that's what prevented organisation as well?

R.O. Basically, ja, and I mean also the detentions that I went through then, because I was detained - I was saying this morning I mean I can count when, what year I was detained, but I was detained probably just for interrogation for two days, where they would ask me what does this bloody SACOS thing mean, why - why do you get involved in this - are you not satisfied with what the government is doing - the government is offering this, the government is doing that.

R.O. I also - I've always said to myself I never get involved with arguments with - with the police, the security police particularly, because they're dumb guys, but they - they have this blatant indoctrination that they were to put across to you, and you don't fight with them - so that in itself also I - I - I was a very (.....) well, a contagious disease for certain people, you know - by associating with this guy you could easily be picked up, you see.

J.F. So you first were picked up in '76?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. Around the time of the uprisings or right after June?

R.O. After June - just after June - I'd just started at the training college when I was picked up and detained.

J.F. But can you give some sense - I'm sorry I didn't hear your thing this morning, so don't assume I - can you give some sense of when you were first picked up and how all along you were held and just give a - from how long they (that) continued?

R.O. Very significant about the '76 detention, there was a - there was a white guy - he was teaching with me at the training college - his surname was Stander - and when they picked me up and they brought me to the police station, there was this cordon of police standing, and I had to walk through this cordon, and among this cordon stood this - this - this lecturer - it was the - the reservists - they were police reservists that had been called up to assist them, you see - and I mean I had the biggest fright of my life.

I remember one incident one morning at the training college when the students left college - students just left the college and we - the rector said to us that we had to come and just sit there, and the one guy who was the head of the English department - he's still at the training college - I was not wearing a tie, and he was asking me - and I mean it was very tense during those times - he was asking me : Why are you not wearing a tie - I said : No, I didn't feel like wearing a tie because the students aren't here - and then he said to me : But I'll tell you - I tell you you should wear a tie - I told him : You don't (?) tell me anything - you going to tell (?) anything you go to your house to tell your parents or your children - you go and instruct them, you don't instruct me - nobody instructs me - and I just went on a political attack on this guy.

And I mean this also - the rector was a very scared person also, and he had just been appointed with me - we were appointed simultaneously, you see, and at the end of that year my services were just stopped - I got a letter from the then department head (.....) I remember - he was director of education, and he wrote a letter - because what happened is that they - also in '76, I don't know whether you remember, some question papers - there was a problem with question papers, was either stolen or something by students, because students had a terrible year, and so I was called in by a - it was during the holiday - I was called in by a group of five inspectors, the chief inspector and four others, but I didn't know these guys at all, you see, and I was called to the college by one of the guys who were there (?) said that these people wanted to talk to me, so I came there and I came into this room - there was this guy sitting in the classroom with a lot of files in front of him, and I - I walked in, I stood there and I think - I said to myself no, I'm probably in the wrong place, so I was about to leave this room when this guy looked up and said : Are you Olifant - so I said yes - they said : Then you are in the right room and - but the way in which he was saying - he was talking to me, I took exception, you see.

R.O. Again the atmosphere that was existing, the whole type of - of white supremacy thing, I'm being looked at now as a Coloured person, you see - and he said to me : Sit down - so I told him : No, I don't (.....) - I don't feel like sitting down, I want to stand - he says : I tell you to sit down - I said : I tell you I - I don't know who you are, I'm not interested who you are, and I'm not sitting down - so he said : Well, Jy is die hardegat man wat ek van gehoor het - you are the hard cracker that I've heard of - hard type of person.

So we went out of this room and he said : Just wait a second - so I waited because I - I was also going to challenge this guy, you see, and he came back with four other inspectors - I don't know whether to (?) actually go on with this, but I mean the - the - the thing what I want to point out was that these guys started posing questions to me, and the first guy said to me : Do you know about the student that had question papers - I just looked at him, you see, and they started and (?) a lot of them, and so I said (?) : Look, you guys, let's just get something straight here - I don't answer questions, not from - I don't know who you are, and even if you want to explain, I'm not interested - by then I saw these guys - I - I recognised one guy - he was an inspector from - from the area - I'm not interested in who you are, I'm not going (?) to answer questions here - I don't even answer questions to the police (.....) and I won't make a statement here, whatever you want to do - so he said : O.K., you can go so as I leave he just said - I was about to leave he just said : Just one second and we - he let the others go and he said to me, this chief inspector Olivier - he said to me : You are the most rude teacher I've ever come across in my life - and I said to him : You are the most rude bloody inspector I've ever come across (?)

And about three days later I received a letter from the department to say that my service had been terminated at the college, I should go back to my post (?) and they warned me, if ever I make any remarks towards officials from the department, they will take action against me, and I mean they took action against me eventually (?)

J.F. So from '76 your services were terminated at the training college?

R.O. Yes, and I went back to my old post.

J.F. And then how long did you stay there?

R.O. In 1981 - 1980 the school boycotts started again, and the red meat boycott and the meat - the Fattis & Monis and this was all SACOS things that I was involved in basically - and I was going to say something before you - this whole period '80, ja - the anti-SAIC thing, you see, which also came up, and the call, that thing which came up....

J.F. The call?

R.O. The call - that was the - the - the document which came out....

J.F. On?

R.O. I don't know whether you've heard of the call - the call was this document that were basically stating the demands as enshrined in the charter, but not the charter as such, you see - it was - now if one looks at the - at - at - at the - at the politics of the Cape particularly, it was mostly Unity Movement type of politics, as far as I know, and Joe Adam chaired the meeting, the anti-SAIC meeting, and they - the other people were unaware - the people who are so-called respected so-called people see themselves - I mean a guy who's an advocate today, Siraj Desai and them....

J.F. Who?

R.O. Siraj Desai - he's an advocate I mean - they were unaware of what was planned by people, because they thought it was going to be an Indian thing type of, and instead the call went out, you see - the call was this thing where a call was made on people that the time has come that we should break the barriers, the ethnic barriers and things like that, you see, and at that meeting the chart - the - the - the banner, the ANC banner came up, you see - it was removed quickly again, but it was there, very significant - the marshal would dress - marshals were dressed in khaki and things like that, and that had a very significant impact on the political situation of the Western Cape, as far as I think.

J.F. Where was the meeting held....

R.O. It was held in the Athlone Civic Centre, I think.

J.F. There was an anti-SAIC meeting?

R.O. There was an anti-SAIC meeting.

J.F. And how do you explain the fact that the Coloured community responded to anti-SAIC? It was against a co-optation of the Indian community, and yet you as Coloureds and the meeting was held in a Coloured area of Athlone. How was it that the Coloured community responded?

R.O. Yes, we - what I would say is that we have entered this new - we then entered this new era of political outlook and political involvement that as we have been operating all the time is exactly how the system works, and unless we do something about it directly, it'd - I mean the ANC had been - had been working like that, but I personally was unaware of this, and I think if they did, it was probably in the Transvaal or in Natal areas, where the NIC was, but I think it was not that much strong within the area - in the Western Cape area, as far as I know, you know - other people might have - that lived there might have different explanations to this - but the anti-SAIC thing was an anti-election campaign, anti-what the system wants to - to - to put forward, and that's the type of - of involvement that came from the side of - of - of the Coloured people, as you were asking about the Coloured people I mean and I (?) suppose from the African people, because there were African people in the meeting, and there were white people in the meeting, you see, in - in the anti-SAIC meeting, and it was fantastic.

So I think it - it's important that that was a very significant event also in the history of the Western Cape (Tape off)

J.F. think gee, I wish I had a better understanding, but '76 to '81 - by '79, '80, '81 I think I have a sense of where the mass organisations resurged (?) charter, this point of view, but from '76 to '81 can you tell me a bit about that time, starting with were you detained only in '76 and then again in the '80s, or were you detained again?

R.O. I was not detained as - as a detainee, but as I was saying, I was detained and questioned on several occasions during that time....

J.F. Throughout the '70s?

R.O. All - always, and also the - I was - I was still strong BC in my operations in - in speaking to people about - about BC politics, about BC - BC type of upliftment this - the psychological upliftment I had been speaking of earlier and - but during that time I - my focus was mainly on sports particularly, and on - in the teaching profession and the teaching structures, and many a time I was asked by newspapers on my things - on my feelings about certain things, and I would give them stories, and on that I mean sometimes problems also happened from the side of the department particularly, so I have a bad record actually in the department.

R.O. And so in '81 I was - when - when this thing, as I was saying, the anti-SAIC thing came up, and the whole question of political organis - I mean grassroots organisation, the formation of grassroots organisations came into - people came to realise in the rural areas even about this that - how important it was for the formation of grassroots organisa - already the students were organised into student structures, and at the training college and at the secondary schools - and rent boycotts then didn't really happen, or any type of - people would basically have a meeting where they would speak of the - the - the rent issues and things like that and - and - and ex - give their objection to the type of - the way in which rents are increased and - and things like that.

But bus boycotts and those type of things never happened in our areas during those times, and we don't have those at (?) industries where - where workers were organised into structures.

J.F. So what did happen?

R.O. Basically there was my polit - my involvement - people were - have always been, as I've earlier said - always been against the system - there was always just that hostility and animosity between people, but there were no - there was no clear-cut organisations that'd articulate the feelings of people, until of course after the - in the early '80s and later '80s it was (?)

J.F. So what was the first thing to come up in Oudtshoorn? You said there basically was a kind of undirected feeling in Oudtshoorn?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. Until when? What was the kind of beginnings of political?

R.O. In 1982.

J.F. And before that were there no BC organisations? There was no SASO or BPC or anything in Oudtshoorn?

R.O. No, there was no - there was no such organisation existing.

J.F. So what happened in '82?

R.O. In '82 - I was transferred of course in the end of '81 and I left Oudtshoorn.

J.F. Were you transferred - to?

R.O. To a remote place called Kenart - it's spelt K e n h a r d t - I just got notice at the end of the year on the last day of the school term - I was no - I got notice that I'd been transferred to this place, which is about 900 ks from Oudtshoorn.

J.F. In what direction? Where is it?

R.O. In the North West Cape, very dry, very, very, very small place.

J.F. Towards Namibia?

R.O. Towards Namibia, in the Kalahari, as they say, and....

J.F. End of '81 or end of '82?

R.O. End of '81.

J.F. So why do you think you got that notice?

R.O. In September of '81 I was - in '81 I was on several occasions - particularly '81 I was on several occasions detained, and in September, '81 the security police did a raid on my house and they got political - banned works - Cabral's book was the one thing that they were quite interested in - they also took Das Kapital - was also - which I also had - and there was an Indian journal that was also banned - it was started by a group in Pietermaritzburg, and a very good journal, and they found that, and I was locked up and the charge - the - the state withdrew charges against me - I still today do not know why - but the then major of security police, Major Vosloo, he said to me : Die jaar nie op d - the year was not going to end on you, you will see what's going to happen - so I just got a notice that I'd been transferred - actually we were five people in the country that were transferred.

J.F. So you went?

R.O. I left - the basic reason why I left, I had three children then, and I had built a house, a new house, with a state type of subsidy, at the beginning of '81, and I - I couldn't just - I had no other way to pay the bond on the house, so I left and - but on the first day of my - that I started teaching in Kenhardt....

J.F. Took the family?

R.O. No, I went alone - my wife was teaching in Oudtshoorn - and I resigned on my first day.

J.F. From Kenhardt?

R.O. Ja, on - on the 18th. January in '82 - I remember because on the 17th. was my birthday, and just the following day I resigned from teaching - I could - I could - I could give a 24 hour notice and me - that means I would have only received the amount of money paid in through the pension fund, or if I stayed on another three months, I would be given what I paid in plus two and a half percent of that amount, so I stayed on for three months. That particular incident - yes?

J.F. I'm just wondering - you went all the way to Kenhardt and then resigned the first day?

R.O. Ja, I had to submit my resignation on the first day - that's procedure - ja, my - my letter of resignation. The CTPA, although I was never - I was not a member then - took up the matter with the director of Coloured education - he's Mr. A.J. Arendse - and they asked him why had this man been transferred - explain to him the financial - my financial position - and he said to them that he had got written proof that I am a member of the ANC and that I am - have an organised cell, ANC cell operating in the South Cape, and the security police - in fact he was supposed to have transferred me or sacked me some time ago, and I should actually be very grateful that he only transferred me to that place.

Those three months was very difficult in my life in that I'm not - I'm not - today (?) I'm not crying about it - was a very nice experience also, but I saw this as a form of imprisonment, because although I was outside a prison physically, I felt on an island, because the people that I'd gone to, the area where I'd gone to - on that Sunday the - of my birthday, the 17th., the Rapport came out on - featuring on our transfers....

J.F. Rapport newspaper?

R.O. The Rapport newspaper, and they wrote about the times when I had been in detention and I'd been found with bad literature, I'd been charged, and I had been accused of organising school boycotts.

R.O. And so the - the - this small place - this place where it would just be very quiet is - in fact is very quiet, people were actually very scared of me, and I was very negatively accepted by those people - people saw me as - as a danger in that place - even the woman where I stayed - I was supposed to stay with the principal, but he - he said he couldn't accommodate me because he had no space in his house, and (Laugh) I mean he had ample space, and I stayed with a woman - I will never forget that family because they really made me to become - to adapt myself - initially they said - the woman said - I heard her saying while (?) I was in the room when they read - saw - seen the paper this Sunday - she couldn't understand why they were sending somebody there with such a history of - of being in prison and such a trouble-making character to that area, but I - I understood - I understood them, and later on I - when I was in the area I immediately was accepted by the people, after about a month I think, because I - I - there were certain practices which - for example, each child had to pay one rand as a form of a school donation to the school fund, and I said to parents that they shouldn't pay this rand, because that means they enrolling their children and that is not - that is against the law actually at primary school because children are not supposed to pay, and parents - the story went around - I mean it's a small community, about 2,000 people - two, three thousand people - and the story went around and people refused to pay the - the enrolment fee that they had been paying all the years, and it came out in - in a staff meeting one day, and that was the only staff meeting that was held during my time there, when I explained to this man that he's actually contravening the education regulations and things like that, but I think I - I - I - I got through to people - I was accepted by people - also what happened...

END OF SIDE ONE.

R.O. Also what happened is that in the whole - in the history of - of - of - of Kenhardt, there'd never been security police, and I had been there just one week when the security police from - from Uppington came to pay me a visit there and said to me that they are aware of my history, and they want to warn me that I would get involved in any activities here they not (?) the people from the South Cape (?) they will just detain me and things like that. Also there was - I - a roadblock was put up when I went one weekend - I went to - to Uppington - that also the people said had never, never happened in the whole history of Kenhardt, that there had been some form of roadblock, so I - I - I'd always seen myself as a victim of this whole system, but I've never become bitter about it - I've never become bitter about it.

J.F. You didn't see - you didn't think of staying there and trying to organise? You just thought it was impossible?

R.O. At that stage particular I - I didn't see the - any possibility of something like that and - and I felt I had this commitment to the people of Oudtshoorn, where work had been gradually - things had - starting to materialise into certain directions, and I felt that I had to go back and start working in the community.

J.F. So you went back in early '82?

R.O. I went back in early '82.

J.F. To do what?

R.O. I worked as a - for a book-selling company called Campan (?) - it was a Coloured guy who had a book-selling company, which means that I had to go to schools to sell books to - to - to schools, you see, and it was wonderful to get this type of new experience but still connected with the schools, and it was - it was quite time (?) and I mean '82 meant a lot of things to me because in that year the whole idea of - of people's organisations became a reality, and I met this guy Mbulelo Grootboom - he had just come from university - he in fact stopped his years at university, him and another youngster called Vincent Skosana - Mzukisi actually - Mzukisi is - that's his slavery name, Vincent - his - his - his Xhosa name is M z u k i s i - and they had been at Fort Hare University, but their parents couldn't go on with paying their fees, and so they came back to Oudtshoorn and we started working together.

They went into the township and the - the - the township people having I mean a history of resistance, although it was never noticeable during my earlier years, they formed what was called the Bongolethu youth organisation, BOYU....

J.F. That's the township there, Bongolethu?

R.O. Ja, the Bongolethu youth organisation, and this had a direct effect upon the youngsters in Bridgton, who later formed the Bridgton youth organisation, and this was the start of bigger things of '83 - and then the government successfully came into our whole thing with the announcement of the tricameral thing, and the Labour Party accepting the concept, and the idea of the UDF in '83 in January, Boesak raising this thing - let's just say for the - for the record purposes Boesak (Laugh) raised this thing - and we started working because here we had legal grounds of operating, and just to think about - to think back about it is fantastic (Laugh) for me I mean going through those experiences - going from door to door and speaking to people why they shouldn't get involved in the election campaign, why they shouldn't vote and things like that.

We had, however, one big major problem because always been an obsession to me to organise farm workers, and we spoke to the church - the church, however, is still very conservative - there are some trends moving in, you see, but at that time, two, three years back, it was quite conservative still - and just for Andre's (?) purposes, I mean I was out of teaching now then, and so we went to farms. Now during the time what - what - what astonished me, and very understandable also, was the fact that during the time of (?) the Labour Party elections we - we went into the - onto the farms and asked the people to vote for the Labour Party, and the farm owners, although they didn't much like the idea that we spoke to workers and tell them to vote for the Labour Party, they didn't - they didn't debar us from coming onto the farms, but when we came with a new type of thing, with the anti-election campaign, the farmers warned us - anybody who's setting - sets foot on their farms will be shot - and I mean the police were there all the time - I mean they were patrolling when we were working, you see - we bring - we brought our pamphlets - and in that whole process (?) a lot of things happened which Oudtshoorn got involved in - the whole thing of a community newspaper came into being through Grassroots people that came to Oudtshoorn and started speaking to us - and in the election campaign we didn't only focus on Oudtshoorn - we moved into the - to the outlying towns, George, Naizner, Mosselberg, Riversdale.

One of the places that needs mentioning is Willowmore (?) which - Willowmore - like willow tree - more - m o r e - which is a very small place, at least the size of Kenhardt. Now the Carnegie report was also at that time being conducted under the - the coordination of Prof. Francis Wilson, and the Carnegie report showed that Willowmore actually is the poorest town in South Africa because....

J.F. Where is it (?)

R.O. It - it - it's in the direction of the Eastern Cape - you know where Oudtshoorn is - you get de Rust, then you get the - the - the Meiringspoort, where - where you go to towards Beaufort West - now there - there's a road turning off into the direction of the Eastern Cape Moor (?) and then you get to this small place....

? (.....) Willow?

R.O. Willowmore, ja - and Willowmore and after Willowmore, Aberdeen, Aberdeen..

J.F. What was a Rust?

R.O. De Rust - d e R u s t - so we went to Willowmore and here was the finest experiences for my political career actually, because we went with the idea of Samstan to people and asked them what they feel about - and people were complaining - it was also very bad because those people were completely isolated from other people, and here people came to ask questions - what we later realised is the fact that people saw in us we probably going to try and bring something for them to alleviate the type of problems that they were faced with - there's - there - there is work in - in - in - in Willowmore, but it's only once a year when most of the people work, and that's at the end of the year - this time of the year they get work at a place where dried food they are - they sorting.....(Tape off)

So we started working in this place, interviewing people, going from door to door - we would go in a group of about ten people to a place of that size, and before going we would come together, the Samstan organisers - come together and ask - explain to people what type of questions to pose and - and talk to people, try to raise the conscience of people that the time has come that we must organise ourselves to resist the type of onslaught that the government has been waging against us all the years.

So in this place - when we left there we felt we had done our work. Afterwards, when we went back, those people had organised themselves into an - into one organisation that everybody belonged to - it was called in Afrikaans (.....) - in Afrikaans it is the Bekommerde Gremenskaps Groep - if translated it means the concerned community group - and this structure would entertain every field, every facet of - of - of - of the society, and that's why I say that through that campaign I think Willowmore was one of the places that needs to be mentioned, where we - where we feel people had been waiting for something like this to happen.

The - our - our trips were twofold in that it was - we were organising, looking towards the establish - of coming into being of the Samstan community newspaper, and at the same time talking to people about the anti-election campaign - so the UDF was formed at the end of '83, and that had the - we - lots and lots of people from the South Cape went to the - to the launching - and I remember I had to leave early the morning by car because the rumours were going around that they were going - they were looking for me then, you see, and I left with a friend to Cape Town the morning, and they stopped the bus in - at any rate, and I wasn't in the bus - they just went through people and etc., and I think today the government is possibly upset about the fact that they allowed the - the launching to take place.

We had a conference - I mean you know about the launching etc., but the launching itself had that also, that type of - of - of effect upon the rural people particularly, and when the toyi-toyi-ing start, although our people, particularly the Coloured people, were not aware of what was singing, they learned the songs, and the songs were explained to them, and they danced, and to bring out that type of - of - of enjoyment and resistance that they were - had been feeling over the years.

R.O. We went back with a programme of action, saying to ourselves that we have to organise our own UDF structure, and work then just started, and we're going to form our own UDF region, and at the same time we're going to see to it that nobody - that was our objective - nobody goes to the polling booths. Lots of things happened. Teachers were warned. The government came out with all types of anti-election - I mean pro-election propaganda. Hendrickse was allowed the TV and stuff like that - they - they were going to contest the election.

But we felt certain that the area where we are going to work, or where we have been working, they not going to be successful - successful basically because it's not that we were coercing people, as I said earlier, by certain elements, or that we were intimidating people - I think that one should really be grateful - I was talking to a comrade yesterday, and he said to me they never hear of fights that - that happen in our areas - I said : No, we don't have that type of fights - we - and I think I must go back to you to say that you remember I said that there was no political organisation or political programme along political framework that we were organising in, and when this thing start with the UDF, it was the first time actually that people were identifying themselves with an organisation that were embracing basically everything that people have been talking of over the years, and that I think is - is - is the situation, that we never had any type of other ideologies, but this was not because of coercion or intimidation, for that matter....

J.F. It was because of what (?)

R.O. It was because of - of - of - of the - of the resistance that people were against the state, and here for the first time a formal political programme was put to people, embracing, as I'm saying - embracing everything, and that is why people were then - organisations were formed, like civic organisations sprung up in all the areas, youth organisations were formed. By that time we didn't have street committees and stuff like that, but that was basically the main areas of - of - of - of - of - of organisation namely civics and youth structures and student structures, and of course women organisations also. I don't know whether you want me to go on or what - I just go on?

When the election came - on the morning of the election we decided just that the evening prior to the election - we decided to invent a complete new thing, namely picketing, because never in the history of resistance in the South Cape, even since (?) when we started with anything else - anything with - related to the UDF - did we have picketing - and nine guys volunteered, actually guys who said that they'd be willing to be locked up in case they are to be locked up, and nine guys went on strategic points in Oudtshoorn, because we didn't want to have this thing all over the South Cape because we knew that the cops might just take action against our comrades, and they went early the morning and stood when the people on their way to work, and they had at least an hour or two hours, then the cops came and arrested them and kept them until the evening after the elections, you see, but the work had been done.

The - I was confronted by the security police that day - that was the 20th. August in '84 - the security police - I went to find out at the - at the police station why these guys were held and if there was any possibility of bail or something, and while I was there it came over the radio - I heard it - if Reg Olifant comes to the police station, keep him there - and I made as if I didn't hear this, but I just slowly moved out and stood on the - on the outside, and the sergeant behind the counter was a pupil of mine many years ago - he said to me : Meester - Meester, moenie weggaan nie wag (?) - it means teacher, will you just hang on - sir, will you just hang on for a while - I said : O.K., no, fine.

R.O. And just when he looked away I got into my car and left, and on my way to Bridgton I came past the security police, and they were pointing at me to stop, and I didn't stop, I went on - they came after me - and I went to stop at a place where all the people were standing, the youth - a lot of youth people were standing and just watching what was happening during the elections that day, watching who's going to the polls and etc., and standing there, a large group of people, and I stopped right there, and the security police - four guys got out and they said they want me to go with them - I said no, I - I wasn't going to go with them - they said - they said why - they said because I was intimidating people - I said : No, I'm not intimidating anybody - so I said to him : When you had your referendum last year in - on the 2nd. November, we didn't worry you white people - this is a Coloured election, you don't worry us today, because this is legal - and they - we put up posters and - we had put up posters, and they started ripping off the posters, the police, and we had a fight also there that day, the cops and I particularly, because they - and they charged me on that same day for putting up posters without the consent of the municipality or whatever.

But I mean that was the elections, and after the elections of course - the poll was very low for the first time I mean in - the poll before that time was 89 percent, and here we - we - I think we had 17 or 20 percent, 21 percent, which means that we had been successful and people had start to realise, and in a short space of time I mean, for - for elections to fall in that capacity it means must have been quite a shock we - the UDF - I attended the meeting of the UDF in - on the 16th. December in 1984, where we worked out strategies and tactics, what we were going to do, future purposes of the UDF, and that was very significant in the sense that two schools of thought came up that day - I don't know whether I should - the one was the Durban people felt - the Natal people felt that we should have a referendum - was that now in '83 - it was in '84....

J.F. It was right after the tricameral - there was a discussion for a referendum for - what was it for, the African - whether the African....

R.O. Ja, such a lot of things had happened since that time, but I mean we - there was the - and some people felt then - and I - I think that day I - I - I personally made contact with people that have been involved in the politics of the ANC for years - guys like the Transvaal - Prof. Cachalia and those people - Prof. Mohammed from the Natal Indian Congress, those - Transvaal Indian Congress - Curnick Ndlovu had just then been released from prison, and he did tremendous input, and it was quite astonishing to me that this man who had just been released from prison could speak as if he had been outside all the time - he did a magnificent paper - but I think the UDF made it clear that we going to go on with the UDF and we going to organise our people into strong structures and consolidate those structures, because we shouldn't be seen as opportunistic organising people around the - around the elections only - they should become an ongoing thing, they should - and - and the whole thing of people's power was not at that stage discussed, but I mean the whole thing that the UDF should be - try to be sustained - we should go on and take on rent issues and popular issues in the vicinit - in our areas, and that's what we did - they have been doing.

J.F. You're saying you never had contact with people who were ANC before?

R.O. I think where people really - I mean apart from - I mean here I was, I - it felt like I was sitting in an ANC meeting for that particular day - I mean I attended the conference of the UDF....

J.F. Where was this held?

R.O. The what?

J.F. The conference of the UDF.

R.O. The - the conference was before the launch in the evening in Cape Town.

J.F. This is the UDF....

R.O. The launching....

J.F. That's back in '83.

R.O. Ja, but I say in '84 we had this meeting in this - it was in the Feather (?) Market Hall in Port Elizabeth - and here it was - I mean already at the - at the - at the UDF launching it was obvious that we were - the people there present were mostly charterist, and I mean the national forum had also been formed then - not lose sight of that also - and which was an open BC thing and so - so here was something different, with one big difference - we had people, ordinary people, and not a high class intellectuals and academics sort of. The meeting itself was quite interesting because we had regions from right across the country at the - at the meeting in - in - in - in Port Elizabeth.

And I was - I was - I was mentioning these names of people because I mean they - that - those - those were people - we spoke there of - of the ANC, of - of - of what the ANC has been fighting for, and I'm not saying that we are the (.....) but I am indeed saying this, that the - the - the struggles that have been fought by the ANC have - are being embraced by our - our organisation, and that's that.

J.F. That was the first time that you had contact with ex-Robben Islanders and that kind of thing you mean, the Curnick Ndlovu types?

R.O. That's right, ja.

J.F. At that P.E. meeting?

R.O. Ja.

J.F. Just tell me about your detentions. Were you detained any times. We were talking about since '81 or so. Through the elections were you detained at all?

R.O. I was detained on several occasions. I was detained in '82, I was detained in '83....

J.F. For how long periods approximately?

R.O. Most of the time it was the Section 50 detentions, which means 14 days. I was detained for every year. In fact my child said the other day to me before I left for Zimbabwe - my child said to me : Daddy, you haven't been in this year - and I was saying to her : Don't say it, it's not the end of the year yet. But I mean I have been detained every year, and in some years, like '84, '85 on more than one occasion. I've been in prison - I mean detained on - on - in - in - in - in several places all over the South Cape - inlays (?) with George, Mossel Bay, I - I've been - they - they - they would never actually keep me in Oudtshoorn - I was never - I was only once kept in the Oudtshoorn police cells, but most of the time when they detained me they take me out to these other places.

J.F. Why?

R.O. I think that because of the fact that there are - Oudtshoorn has this - there are always - there's always been since '83, '84 - always been comrades in prison, and I think they don't want me to make contact with these people. I think I have valid proof of that in the sense that in '86 with the state of emergency, we were 400 people in the prison at George initially, and certain people were kept at - at small police cells, and on the 15th. May in '86 I was taken away from the George prison to a small place called Uniondale and kept there for the rest of my detention.

R.O. And I learned on release that actually on the 16th. May they brought in all the other whom they would regard as senior organisers in - in the areas - they brought - who were in other places - they brought to prison - and I was the only person actually taken away from - from - from prison and kept as from the 15th. May, 1986. But the - one of the most significant things that one should never lose sight of is the formation of Samstan.

J.F. That's what I wanted to ask you about. If you can just take it back, what year was it and why did you want to form it and what did people think, and just the whole source of the idea to do it and how it came to fruition?

R.O. The - the idea was - was brought from Cape Town by the Grassroots people that came to have this conduct as a survey and find out - found - try to find out from people what they feel about a community newspaper and things like that....

J.F. Had you had contact with Grassroots before....

R.O. Yes, I did - yes I did.

J.F. Because I don't want there to be a danger of people thinking that there was some group from outside that came and imposed it on you.

R.O. No, no, no, no.

J.F. So how did Grassroots get involved that they came to do a survey to see and all that?

R.O. You see, I had been selling Grassroots in Oudtshoorn since its - since Grassroots came into being, and I would sell it to people from door to door for Grassroots, and so when - in fact I - I - I spoke to them at certain times that they should try to get in Afrikaans stories as well, because people were complaining, and that is why they - they - they put in Afrikaans stories, but they - then the - I think the realisation came that there was a need for an Afrikaans type of community newspaper, and I think that is why they came and I - in fact we asked them - the groups of people that were - were - were busy in Oudtshoorn organising around a lot of things because this was '82, I was saying to you that we - we asked them what the possibility was of organising of - of making arrangements for a similar type of newspaper in the South Cape.

So the editor of South now, Rashid Seria, he came down with people, and people came on regular basis to speak to us how our newspaper operates - when we went to - when we went to people to ask them what they would feel, people say : Yes, it's O.K., but what do you know about a newspaper and what does - what does this newspaper entail - the idea it's all right - the idea was accepted, but still the people wouldn't - couldn't believe that we want to start with a newspaper, because a newspaper is a big thing I mean - we are (?) the commercial press and things like that....

J.F. Are we capable ourselves?

R.O. We - ja, that's right, ja - we would never be able - where do we get the machines, who is going to take the photos and stuff like that - and at the end of 1983 we brought out a pilot copy, our first pilot copy, after a week long work - a weekend long workshop - we brought out Saleem Badat and them - was it you who said to me yesterday ja, he was actually the person who came down with the workshop, him and Rashid and them - and we brought out our pilot copy, which was called South Cape News, Suid Kaap Nieuws, and I - I don't know whether I told you that the front page story was Die tyd het aangebreek dat ons moet saamstaan - the time has arrived that we must stand together, if translated, and we immediately decided unanimously that the name of this paper should be Saamstaan.....

- J.F. the time has come that we must stand together, how does it - what is it in Afrikaans?
- R.O. Die tyd het aangebreek dat ons moet saamstaan - the time has come for us to stand together.
- J.F. And so you produced that first pilot issue and then it went on the next year, and it continues to come out?
- R.O. That's right.
- J.F. And what kind of people are working on it with you? Have they had any experience in media before?
- R.O. Initially three people were employed, and they went on courses to Grass-roots and people - they went through a lot of training - Humphrey Joseph was the first full time organiser, and he played a significant role - he worked tremendously - unfortunately he's not on the paper at the mo - at any more.
- J.F. What's happened with him?
- R.O. He's - he - I think the detentions had a - had an effect, and also he converted into a con - he's now converted to his Apostolic Christian type of thing and - now - but out now....
- J.F. But what?
- R.O. He's out now I mean - he's not interested any more.
- J.F. But how many times was he detained, for long times?
- R.O. In '84 - in the end of '84 he was detained for a period of five months and charged for subversion for being - in fact the whole staff was - of - of Saamstaan was detained.
- J.F. Were you detained?
- R.O. No, I never worked for Saamstaan formally - I was the chairperson of the organisation - it....
- J.F. The chairperson of which organisation?
- R.O. Of Saamstaan - Saamstaan does not work as a - as other newspapers - it - it - it - it's a organisation that's run by a central committee that consists of people from all the different areas, with regional committees and news-gathering groups, and then this - the - the - the - the news-gathering groups and the - the office from where the stories are sent to and decided upon which stories goes into Saamstaan - go into Saamstaan, and these stories are then taken to Cape Town and when in Cape Town they are - the stories are typeset and layout is done and the paper's produced. In it - we have to go to Cape Town - initially our typesetting was done in Oudtshoorn, but only for the first two editions, when the - the man who did it for us, the company, said to us that he - he's not in a position to go any further with this thing because he's printing for the SADF, and if it leaks out that he is doing typesetting for us, he will land up in problems.
- We couldn't get any advertisements from any white shop in Oudtshoorn or in the other towns - although there are printing places in George, three or four, not one was willing to print the paper, so we had to travel to Cape Town to have the paper printed, and this all led to people's dissatisfaction with the white business people, and with the detentions of people in the same year of '84, and a consumer boycott was initiated, and it was well, most successful for about - for one month.

R.O. It only went on - it was tested for one month only - not one single person bought from the white shops firstly, and secondly, people were not intimidated. The bus station, the - the - the depot - or not the depot, the terminus is in the centre of town where people have to get onto buses to come from town back home to their homes, but the people wouldn't buy a thing, not a stitch in town, and then they organi - they - they picked us - they picked the Saamstaan staff, plus two other people, Clive Stuurman, who was involved in the Oudtshoorn resource and advice centre then - Clive Stuurman - S t u u r m a n - and another chap who had been at university and was very skilful in making posters and stuff - he was also picked up - and they were held under Section 29 for about five months and charged for subversion, organising a consumer boycott - the court case lasted for about half a day, and they were acquitted just like that I mean, after five months.

About the paper itself, the - it was selling initially for ten cents we sold it to people, because it's a non-profit making, and people really organ - and the - and - and Saamstaan paper should - should be seen as - as the organising tool of a lot of things, because we had the - a lot of (.....) it was called - rent - tenants' association, so (?) civic bodies - Hurdurs Aktie Komitee were formed in - in - in - in different towns because the - the problem with housing and with rent problems, people started to organise these things.

J.F. Under Saamstaan's umbrella or separately?

R.O. Saamstaan would highlight stories of what happened in certain areas, and other areas would initial - immediately respond and - and form their own structures with - with Saamstaan people going regularly out to these towns and at that time I mean that was possible, but it didn't last too long - we were stopped - we were picked up - people were picked up, people were detained, and people were scared of Saamstaan actually - people became scared of Saamstaan.

J.F. Why?

R.O. Because the - the system was picking up people that had anything to do with the paper, that provided stories - one guy - many people lost their jobs for giving stories to Saamstaan about malpractices in work situations or whatever, and so it became a - a very difficult situation for Saamstaan. Then three youngsters were killed in the township - the township at that time was, to use the word ungovernable....

J.F. Bongolethu?

R.O. Bongolethu, and George, and Knysna, and Mossel Bay, kwaNqabe - k w a - N q a b e.

J.F. With a small k?

R.O. No, a capital - no, I don't know - I'm not sure.

J.F. So how were they killed?

R.O. The - there was this - the - the - we - you know, the uprising (.....) to be explanatory - the organisations - people start to realise that the councillors, the management committee members, these other people that are selling us out, and in Oudtshoorn it happened that these people were thrown out of the township - the first - the first attack on a house was on the house of a com - of a security policeman, Richard Ngoma, and his house was fire-bombed, and a similar thing happened with two other security policemen that were staying in Bongolethu.

R.O. And while they were removing the furniture, the cops came with a SADF truck and take - took the - the furniture and stuff of the - of Ngoma, and they left unaware - people weren't aware of this - they left three people in the house, three cops with shotguns, when they took the first batch of stuff away, and three youngsters went to the - to the house - they apparently tried to break down the house to go in, and they were shot and killed. We were detained - I was detained immediately after the incident because they said that I was going to organise an - we were four people that were - three people that were detained, myself, Humphrey Joseph and Clive Stuurman - they couldn't get hold of (.....) he went into hiding then - and they said we're going to organise an ANC funeral.

By this time you must remember that the ANC name had become - the ANC - ANC had become a household name, and people would even say : I'm not from the UDF, I'm from the ANC....

J.F. Did they say that?

R.O. People would say that, you see, because I think that the - the brutalities had led people to come to realise that there was - the solution does not lie in negotiations and talks - people had to - will have to take action against these people, and some youngsters left Oudtshoorn - I mean I don't know where they are - apparently, according to the state, they've left the country for military training, for training - guerilla training. But I mean that's the type of situation that was then reigning. These youngsters were killed and we were detained, and Humphrey was charged afterwards - when we were released - after the funeral we were released again, the Tuesday - the funeral was on the Saturday, we were released the Tuesday, and Humphrey did the story on this, and he was charged under the Police Act, and was found guilty and sentenced to one month imprisonment or I think 500 rand or something.

And in the township also one nasty incident also was the - I'm talking about Oudtshoorn particularly, where a farmer's 14 cows from a farmer - this was - was apparently brought into the township and slaughtered in the evening, one Sunday evening, and sewn up and meat was distributed to all the people in the township, and the cops arrested about 300 people, and so it had been going on. There was another incident where the people, the - the army moved in, sealed off the township - in the wee, wee hours of the morning people brought out of their homes - it was extremely cold and they had to stand outside while numpimpis would sit with balaclavas in the vans and point out the trouble-makers in the townships, so we were at war completely.

Houses were fire-bombed - my car was set slight - Saamstaan offices - three attempts were made to - to set the office alight, and in one case somebody saw the police and the - and the MP organising this thing, the MP for Oudtshoorn....

J.F. The what, the MP?

R.O. The member of parliament, the tricameral parliament guy, and this guy made - he was willing to made an affidavit and he made an affidavit, and I think this is very important, that for the first time people came out and say things, whereas in the past people they didn't do this - and we gave this to an attorney, who submitted it to the commissioner of police, and after two or three days we had a response that there's no such proof of anything - so Saamstaan has been going through very traumatic times, tragic experiences - many a time when these - when the - when the people were inside the paper couldn't appear of course - and in '86 with the declaration of the state of emergency the - everybody connected to Saamstaan was imprisoned, detained....

J.F. For how long?

R.O. For different periods of time - Mbalelo (.....) was kept the longest, the one who's again in now.

J.F. The one who's?

R.O. The one who's still inside - he was - he was held for 13 months, and he was released in July and redetained on the 9th. September this year, and he's still inside. So then the other thing that they came with kitskonstabels - one of our full time organisers - because we not seen as journalists - we seen as full time organisers because the - the office has a - a large role to play - it is not a - a news office, it's an advice office - it handles all matters - it - it - it - it serves as the - as the place where people come to for advice, and when people are locked up they come there and attorneys have to be phoned, affidavits are taken there - our equipment was destroyed in Saamstaan and - and all the stuff taken from the office, records, everything, in '86.

They broke open the offices, they shot the burglar bars down and came into the office and destroyed basically everything, and so in effect the paper has had a severe type of way of being able to operate. At the moment the - there's a - there's an - an interdict - about 40 people have given affidavits to the attorneys, through the LRC, of harassment, assaults, by kitskonstabels, and they were given until the 10th. November to respond - this happened in - in July - started in July - and on the 10th. November the - the chief justice of the Cape Munich (?) said that there was no time to - to listen to the application that day, or to respond that day - the case has been again transferred.

But meanwhile since that - since that undertaking - undertaking was - that they gave that undertaking, it never stopped - the kitskonstabels just went on rampage all the time, so much so that one of our full time organisers, Patrick Nyuka, stayed in hospital for more than a month after being shot by kitskonstabels, when he took photos of people that had been released from prison - two people had been sentenced to a three year imprisonment in 1984, and they were released just recently, and because of the fact that it was the first time actually that political prisoners have been sentenced and have - have been released, the organ - the Bongo-lethu resident decided to organise some welcome party for them, and it was an ordinary welcome party, and when they were in this hall where this thing was, Patrick came on with - with his camera, and the kitskonstabel demanded the camera, and he said : No, we going to take photos - and he grabbed it and (?) Patrick - grabbed it away from and started running, and he shot him.

At the moment he can't use his left arm - in fact his right arm, because he is left handed, because of the injure sustained - there's still something like 12 or 14 pellets still in his back of his - two in his lung, I remember that particularly, and one in his liver, and specialists are not in a position to remove it yet - as yet - we don't know what's going to happen - so much so that there are only two people left in the office at the moment that - and we were compelled to come out in - in four page style (?) - but now what happened is that Patrick was able at least to answer telephone calls now, so he's in the office basically not to do physical work - manual work, but to just do - cannot write I mean.

J.F. What's his surname?

R.O. Nyuka - N y u k a.

J.F. Why are they so opposed though, wanting to attack Saamstaan? What's the threat?

- R.O. I think they - they realise that the people are sympathetic to Saamstaan - they, however, see it differently - they see it as a Marxist, ANC alignment inspired way of us to organise cells in Oudtshoorn, and we have been instrumental in causing all this things, all - although there hasn't been any - I mean after (?) our people were charged for furthering the aims - 14 people were charged for furthering the aims of the ANC - two were found guilty for - at a funeral they were wearing certain garments, and they were found guilty and sentenced to a year imprisonment - they currently on the Island - and Mbalelo was one of those accused - the people were accused for street committees and - and kangaroo courts - and about 15 people, of whom the one man is over 70 years - his name is Kleinbooi Klip, and his wife just died recently, and he was in detention for seven months also under the emergency regulations, and on release he was charged with subversion, organising street committees and - and the state withdrew charges against them, against all of them.
- J.F. Does that pretty much take us up to the present now? What's happened with Saamstaan now? Is it still publishing?
- R.O. Saamstaan is still publishing - it - it's been coming out in a four page style now recently because of the fact that we haven't got the manpower. We have been very interestingly - been out to Namaqualand about three weeks ago to explain to them, because they have approached us how we started with our thing, and in conjunction with Grassroots a workshop was run in - in Namaqualand, and we're looking forward to seeing that paper.
- J.F. Do you know what they're going to call it?
- R.O. Not yet - there is a - I'm going to show you the - if you're interested, unless (.....) receive it - I have a - a copy of the - of the paper - I've asked - going to make copies of it - and there is a - we came out in eight page form now, and we using a lot of stories from the - Namaqualand also and - because while people were running the workshop - two people went - one was involved in the workshop, the other one went around in Namaqualand.
- J.F. When the police detain you what do they say to you about the paper that gives them idea of how they see it or how they're threatened? What have they said to you in interrogation and stuff?
- R.O. The police basically sees the paper, as I said, as a - that it's being funded not, as we say, by church organisations, but by the ANC - they also say that they have proof that I am making contact regularly with ANC people and people - I am intimidating people. One particular thing which happened - at the moment there are quite a lot - we can talk about it - about the interrogation - they - they basically see myself and Mbulelo Grootboom as the chief organisers of the ANC and in - in - in the township - in the townships, because of the fact that we go out to places and talk to people, and that I address meetings and - but they - they have never been able to formulate any charges against me - I mean I've been charged for - for a lot of things, but never had I been sentenced, apart from one time when I was sentenced for assault on four big, bulky security policemen, resisting arrest in crimen injuria, when a guy from the Netherlands came to Oudtshoorn.
- J.F. And what did you get sentenced?
- R.O. I was sentenced - I was found guilty on all charges and sentenced, given a fine 90 rand, 90 day, something like that, 80 rand.
- J.F. What job - what paying job do you hold now?
- R.O. I work for Juta & Co., and that is why I - I - I - I keep a low profile because I mean they - in fact they - they were very sympathetic - you know Juta & Co., the printers - they were very sympathetic.

R.O. While I was in detention they paid my salary and - but I - I was very honest with them also - they asked me to come and work for them and....

J.F. From this....

R.O. Campan - and I told them that I will work with them but I want to explain to them that I am involved with community activities, and they said no, they not bothered about my private life, and so I have been involved in my political activities unabated - I mean I've never stopped.

J.F. And you're selling books - you're a book salesman?

R.O. Yes, to schools particularly.

J.F. And what's your position with Saamstaan?

R.O. I'm an executive member - I was the chairperson since the inception, but we believe that other people should also - I'm only on the executive at the moment.

J.F. You were its chairman from when to when?

R.O. From 1984 until 1986.

J.F. I've got a whole lot of other questions that maybe you can give shorter answers to, and just bearing in mind that I am looking at this issue of non-racialism. When did you first hear that word non-racialism, do you remember? Do you ever use it now, and when did you first use it?

R.O. Through the sports - I think through my involvement in the SACOS.

J.F. And when you first heard it how did you feel about it? Was it important, did it make sense, because you've said a lot of things that would indicate that, as with so many people, you came out of a tradition that wasn't non-racial - BC and even being anti-Afrikaaner and things like that, so what did you think when you first heard it and how did you move? Tell me a bit how you grew to be non-racial.

R.O. I think that I've met a - afterwards I met a cross-section of people and people that are definitely genuinely sympathetic - white people I'm talking about now - and not only sympathetic, involved in the struggle, and I think that to a great extent, because I - I started reading about the earlier days of the ANC and of - of - of Bram Fischer, Joe Slovo, comrades - those comrades, and I think that that in - in itself made me to believe that this is not a - a colour struggle - it's got nothing to do with colour at all, and so non-racialism actually when I heard it I was happy to hear that people are in fact looking at that type of society.

J.F. When did you move into that feeling? When do you think you started? When did you meet these whites that impressed you? Not in SACOS?

R.O. Not in SACOS, but I mean I - I read - I was saying I read a lot - SACOS itself was - was - was saying they non-racial, although there was - always seemed to be a fight against white people, because it seemed always as if whites were excluded - I mean even here a statement was made yesterday, but anyhow the - the point that I want to make is that I have - I - I - although I was brought up in the traditions of anti-white, anti-white in the sense of the conditions that we were brought up under, I - I think I outgrew (?) that - I lived through that - I - I was able to matured (?) over that, and that could have happened with me particularly when I physically started in - when I started teaching and I met other people through - through my teaching career, so that could have been the early '70s, I would say.

- J.F. And what whites did you meet, or how did you meet them that changed you? Or was it more reading about the - in practice - are there whites in Oudtshoorn helping you?
- R.O. No, not at all - no, whites I particularly met in Cape Town, and I can't now pinpoint names that comes quickly, but I think that it was through my going to Cape Town on regular bases that I - I met other white people that had a different outlook on life.
- J.F. How about - in Oudtshoorn you don't work with whites - do you work with Africans?
- R.O. We very fortunate, as I was saying, that the African people and the - and the Coloured people, there's never - I mean I'm not talking about the lighty (?) days, the smaller days, but there - Oudtshoorn is actually - if you make a study you will hear from other people, people from Soweto, people from Cape Town, they would say to you Oudtshoorn is actually a un-very unique situation because it is here where we have been easily able to form youth congresses with people from both areas and - and - and - and in Saamstaan I mean there's - every organisation in Oudtshoorn is non-racial I mean, although we don't have white people physically involved, I mean it's open for them, but - but African and - and Coloured people have been working through this era of - of - of - the UDF era and have worked together hand in hand, with no problems whatsoever.
- J.F. And how did you find - again I don't want to gloss over it like it was so simple - maybe it was simple in Oudtshoorn, but you didn't have some Coloured people who felt that - it took a while for them to get used to it, or that they weren't so - it didn't come so readily, or did people just jump right in and say O.K., let's go to Bongoletu? Do you find that Bridgton people happily go into the township or Bongoletu people come to Bridgton? Were there not people who were a bit nervous, they thought that tsotsis would get them if they went to the townships or whatever?
- R.O. I think that could have happened - the - the - that type of situation could exist - could have existed before things are as they are now, but that time, yes, I would think that, that there was that type of - of - of fear still in - in some of the older people, but I think that the - the - the youth basically broke that down through their interaction all the time in community organ - in organisations that they have - it sounds a bit - it's a pity that you not in a position to come out there, but really it is indeed, if you ask other people also - it is indeed so that we work very well together.
- J.F. What about - you made a statement early on about being - about the Afrikaners being the problem. Do you see Afrikaaners still as a problem? Do you think they're worse than English speaking whites?
- R.O. Today?
- J.F. Now. What's your view, because you said when you were young that the kind of (.....) Afrikaaners were (?) the enemy. Is that true now for you?
- R.O. No, I don't think so - I've.....

END OF SIDE ONE.

- R.O. Through my experience I've learned that it is - with the Afrikaaner you basically exactly know where you stand, whereas with the - with the - particularly the English speaking white people that they are very opportunistic, and the liberal attitude that they have, they want to still see that we don't get the real things that we are after, but we should be satisfied with certain things - today I - I - I sort of have that type of - of feeling that I exactly know how I - where I stand with the Afrikaaner, that the Afrikaaner is either - is - is - is honest about this (?) whole thing - I don't think that you find that honesty among the English speaking white people always. I'm not saying - I'm not generalising, but I don't - but always - in many cases one finds one (?) come across those.
- J.F. But do you have any - have you seen sympathetic Afrikaaners in Oudtshoorn? Isn't it the Afrikaaners still who are detaining you and shooting and all that?
- R.O. It is - Oudtshoorn has one particular aspect which needs to be mentioned - it is a very polarised situation - you have an extreme rightist - right wing Afrikaaner population and an extreme radical black group of people, and there are at the moment - I'm involved in, for example, a group where we are trying to feed people, and I was invited to - to take part in this discussion group, which when I came there the first time there were about ten white people, I was the only Coloured, and about eight African people.
- J.F. In Oudtshoorn?
- R.O. In Oudtshoorn, and....
- J.F. White from Oudtshoorn?
- R.O. Whites from Oudtshoorn - at the moment we are only two - there are only two white people, and more Coloured people have come in, and African people are in this thing. I think the - the reason why they withdrew was that it was clearly stated there - I said I would participate - I made it clear right from the outset - I'd be willing to participate in anything on condition that we look at the root causes of the - the hunger problem that is reigning, and apartheid, I said then, that's the root cause, and it should be the task of any organisation, any group of people that want to bring some form of alleviation or eliminate the structures to say that apartheid is the reason for this, and that we should in our activities, say to ourselves, put it in writing, make a policy statement, that we would work towards the destruction of apartheid. There only two people, two white people left - the others - well, what came out during discussions and debates was that if you need support from the white business people and you want to attack apartheid, you will not get the support that you - that - that the hungry people need.
- So I explained to them one incident - I want to go quicker - incident where the - with the taking over of the township by the military and the police, they have been issuing pamphlets in the township, and they brought out a sort of a competition - they said they were going to give - they said in this thing that Saamstaan is misleading the people and they want to issue a new type of newspaper for people, and it will bring out the demands and the griefs and the wishes of people....
- J.F. Who put that out?
- R.O. The municipality in conjunction with the - I mean it's (?) the JMC thing out and out - and they said anybody that'd be able to give a name to this paper would - a more - a very appropriate name, would win 50 rands worth of groceries, and not one single person participated in this - in this competition, and I explained to those people it doesn't go -

- R.O. People are willing - people have reached the stage in - in our struggle that I rather go without food, I'm not selling out any more - I have to identify what my - what - what I am against and what I fight for, and if you're not willing to accept it like that, go take your food somewhere else. So I mean the - the - the thing is that white people still are not willing to take part in the - in this type of thing - although they are terribly panic-stricken, worried.
- J.F. But then how can you say that and say you're non-racial? If these whites are so useless, then what's the point of being non-racial?
- R.O. I say that because I - I think that the whites also need some form of education - that the whites have been indoctrinated by the system, through the churches, through the schools, through whatever available to them - they - they have - and - but still I feel that the struggle is not against human beings, it's not against the individuals, it's not against the race of people, it's against the system - the system should be destroyed completely, and that is why I say I embrace the principle of non-racialism.
- J.F. How did you get there? How did you get from BC to non-racialism? As you pointed out, SACOS wasn't really the great clue (?) even though SACOS was supposed to be non-racial. What moved you? Was there any particular white you met or was there any particular black comrade who explained the point of view of non-racialism? As you say, if you live in a place like Oudtshoorn it's not like you can say : Oh well, there's a huge - like JODAC in Johannesburg (.....) 300 whites that are doing something - they even left your discussion group. What moved you, especially through the BC era to the non-racialism thing?
- R.O. I will respond by saying that traditionally the area where I live is very strong - the church has played a tremendous role in the lives of our people.....
- J.F. Are you involved in the church?
- R.O. I'm a Christian.
- J.F. In which church?
- R.O. In the United Congregational Church, and the concept of - of - of - of love thy neighbour as thyself I think has had a bearing upon my life personally, and apart from that, I have to be quite open - I mean this is - I have made a very in-depth study of the struggles that have been waged by the ANC, and today I support out and out - with no hesitancy I will say that now I support the ANC, and I've been to meetings, I've met with the ANC formally, and I see nothing wrong with the ANC and I see - regard the ANC's programme - the charter being at the moment the - the - the document which we embrace, and the charter not making one ins - in one instance any note of any ethnicity or any discrimination - I think that is to me personally is the basic thing, so the - the - my - my upbringing as a Christian and - and my further involvement in politics and meeting with - with - coming into contact with the charter and the ANC has further consolidated, and that's why I regard the ANC as the noble and the authentic voice of the democratic forces and the oppressed forces.
- J.F. So it's really not any on the ground experience that makes you say : Look, this is my - this shows non-racialism is - it works, but if the ANC says that's the way to go, you'll support it?
- R.O. Of course.
- J.F. It doesn't make sense. What if I was a young Coloured person who'd say to you : What's the point of working with whites, they'll sell you out - look at these useless whites in Oudtshoorn - what would you say?

- J.F. Show me one thing I'd say (?) Show me one reason in Oudtshoorn - all my 20 years that ever whites have been worth it (?) Why you don't just let us go forward on our own? How do you respond?
- R.O. I'll respond to - by saying that it - history has taught us that it - I mean if we look at the struggles that were waged in Zimbabwe, the struggles that were waged in - in - in Mozambique, we see that - where Mozambique is in one hell of a state at the moment as a result of chasing certain people out of the country, whereas in - in - in - in - in Zimbabwe certain people were utilised into - I mean take the biggest enemy that the - that the Zimbabwean people had, he was even in the parliament structure, the governing - the - the - the - the decision making body of the - of the - of the country - and simply that I believe that - that we should not discriminate if - if we should act against the white people like they have been acting against us, it - it's just the form of - we would (?) have a war in reverse, like we are having at the moment, that the - the - the white people if - if we treat them as they have treated us, then they would also probably come in - in - in and wage a war against us, a struggle against us.
- J.F. How about looking at it from another way, that for a lot of African people, even working with Coloured has been a step - it hasn't been a tradition that's (.....) Can you point out any examples of how you feel that it is working, and is anything - any African person ever said to you that made you feel no, this - he wasn't that convinced, but now he's convinced, or is there any kind of inevitable friction that you've had to deal with between Coloured and African? I accept - I can see that it's - the non-racialism - I'm doing a book on non-racialism, but I don't want to again gloss over as if there's never been any problems - the Africans are a minority in your area as well. It just seems so incredible, but it's happened to that level. You still don't speak Xhosa - not that most whites do either - and that African - maybe there're many Africans who don't speak Afrikaans except when they have to because of work. But what is an example of how you've moved into - to being able to work with Africans successfully that shows the troubles, shows the challenge, shows the achieving of it? Have you ever had any evidence from Africans in Oudtshoorn, even maybe a few years ago, that they were a bit sceptical that the Coloured community was on their side and now seeing that it's been successful?
- R.O. What happened is - was that that type of - of attitude was instilled in the minds of African people by the South African system, that how can you - how can you trust Coloured people, and Coloured people are better off than yourselves, but I think it is through continued struggles that people see commitment, and real commitment coming from people that they identify with - with - with people and that - that people are giving - if one looks in - look at - at the question of numbers that the - the - the Africans out-number the Coloured people by so much - so many people, but - and - and - and yet we don't - we as the Coloured people don't side with - with - with - with the other cla - the other group of people to make a stronger force, because the question is - is not around human be - as I've said, not around - it goes about principles, it goes about moralities, goes about the virtues, and I think that we'll have a - a long - I've never had any problems, frictions with people as such - I haven't been exposed to it - I don't know how I would be able even to handle it if I'm faced with that type of thing, but I think again it - it's a question of - of - of siding with that which you believe is right and which is just and righteous and honest, and that is what the programme is that's being enshrined in the charter, and I mean let's one - for one minute take a look at - at - at the - the figures within the ANC, like Oliver Tambo, like Nelson Mandela, like Joe Slovo - I mean not Joe Slovo, Govan Mbeki and these people.

R.O. They realise, they - I'm sure that they see that we have outgrown this ethnic situation - we have completely been able, through commitment in work, in struggle, in our activities, that it - we have to - we have a common enemy, and the common enemy is not an individual, it's not a person, it's the system that we are fighting, and we must remove the evil of that system from within society, and all those that want to identify with the system still even after liberation, they will be - I mean action might well have to be taken against such people - I'm not emphasising (?) is that the correct word?

J.F. Emphasising, ja.

R.O. That - that it will - that certain things are going to happen to white people, but what I indeed say is that the whole concept of - of - of - of blackness as such is in effect in conflict with what the charter says, and the charter at the moment is - has been adopted by so many African people - you look at COSATU, for example - we look at the UDF - so in effect the - the - it goes around the principles that we are fighting for.

J.F. What's the future of Coloureds going to be in a liberated South Africa?

R.O. I don't see - I don't see it in that fashion - I don't see it as - myself as - as a Coloured person involved in struggle - I see myself as a - as a concerned person, a revolutionary involved in struggle, and I see every other comrade that - that - that embraces the type of programme of - that I embrace as - as a fellow comrade - even if we have differences in ideologies, I - I - if we would identify, for example, many of the AZAPO guys, they are against the - the idea of - of - of - of - of white domination over a group of people, and so I - I regard them as my comrades in - in - in struggle.

J.F. But surely there's some people in Oudtshoorn in the Coloured community who have ever asked you what it's going to be like under an ANC government. Do you think - do people ask will there be guarantees for Coloureds?

R.O. People ask me that regularly - people ask me that regularly.

J.F. What do they say?

R.O. People ask me don't you think that after liberation we going to be treated - because we were treated as a middle class group, as a - as a buffer group, as - and - by the system - don't you think that the African communities would - would - would do the same thing? My response to that is that we are talking about a system that believed in the - in - in - in - in the supreme force in society, whereas we are not talking about liberating ourselves, freeing ourselves from those evils that have been practised by the system, and this system has used every possible means to dominate and to reign, whereas we - we - in our organisations today, in everything that we do, we don't have any colour bar - it - it happens where - let's take COSATU, where the working - the working people, the workers are - are millions, and yet the secretary is an Indian guy - and let's take the UDF - we have a lot of Coloured people on the national executive committee - we have Coloured people, we have Indian people, we even have white people on the national executive committee, so this in itself - in the ANC - on the ANC executive there are people of all kinds of groupings, put it that way.

J.F. Are they reassured by that, the Coloureds who asked you these questions?

R.O. I hope so (Laugh)

J.F. What about Afrikaans - you do all your business, your talking, your politicising in Afrikaans in Oudtshoorn?

- R.O. Basically, that's right, and the charter has also been translated into very beautiful Afrikaans and people - people understand it.
- J.F. What's the future of Afrikaans in a liberated South Africa?
- R.O. I don't think that for one moment that Afrikaans would lose its - its - its force, because I think that Afrikaans has also grown tremendously and we - we are able to - to - to share our - our - our political activities in Afrikaans with people, and I think that that - that should be - that would be held, and the charter has no problem whatsoever with - with anything that - that - that - that is South African, that is from South Africa and South Af - and Afrikaans is a language within South Africa.
- J.F. What's your personal feeling about Afrikaans?
- R.O. I don't have problems.
- J.F. Not problems, but do you like it, do you have any emotional feelings about it? If - I'm just saying will you be happy to be part of the new South Africa? Is it a language that you like or is it kind of you just inherited it and that's that? I'm just wondering what you feel about it.
- R.O. Ja, no, I have no hassles about that (?) because I - I mean there are so many people that do - if we look at the - the - at the greater part of - of the Northern Cape and people don't - you don't hear English in those areas, and it is - it is - that is why I think many a time I am being used, not in the sense of being used, but people ask me if I wouldn't go to a certain area and - and speak to people because of the - of the language problem that certain people do have - I think that is why the - the - the - the Namaqualand people approached Saamstaan, because they see the - the similarity in the - in the language question also, so my problem is that I - my - my situation is that I don't have any hassles about Afrikaans - however, what I do discover now recently is that I - my Afrikaans is getting worse (Laugh) because I'm more exposed to English speaking people - I don't know whether my English is O.K.
- J.F. But do you see - you're saying you don't have hassles, but that kind of makes it seem as if ag, you accept. Do you like the language? Would you say that you feel any personal affinity? I'm just trying to (Tape off) - did you go through a stage in BC where you said it was the language of the oppressor?
- R.O. I did go through that stage - I did go through that stage, and I think that many people went through that stage, but what I want to say is I - I'm only basing my politics on realities - it is the reality that a lot of people, particularly Coloured people, do speak - do speak Afrikaans - a lot of white people after liberation will not be forced to speak English, they speak Afrikaans, and I - I - I think that it'd be totally unfair of anybody to come afterwards and say that Afrikaans have to be ruled out because of the fact that it was the - the - the medium through which our people were also dominated and oppressed.
- J.F. And again just that thing I was saying when you've been saying you don't have problems, ja, ja, it's inevitable. Aside from its inevitability, do you have any positive feelings about Afrikaans or do you not?
- R.O. I don't really (Tape off) - ja, I feel that Afrikaans is a beautiful language, and I feel that in - particularly in - one looks at the - at the Cape Province particularly, there is certain words, there is certain phrases of saying things in Afrikaans that cannot be said in English, so I - I would say that Afrikaans I will not see that Afrikaans be eradicated, because it's beautiful, it - it's the language of the klopse, the coons, the carnivals, the - the coon carnivals.

- R.O. They - they - they sang in Afrikaans many of the songs and - and - and - and many of - of the plays that - we have plays today that - that - that - that come out also in Afrikaans that - that are beautiful and - and - and bring forward a message, so I - I think that - that - that apart from the fact that it's inevitable, I also feel that Afrikaans has a - has a - have (?) deep feelings within me.
- J.F. What kind of words - can you give an example of something you can't say in English in a political sense maybe (Tape off)
- R.O. Like for example, you say - you asked me whether there were any terms that are being used - I think that the word Saamstaan is quite significant - I'll tell you an incident - what happened where one of the - during the - the 6th. May elections - one of the - I think it was the - the - the MP for George area, he was coming to - to George, and he was saying to people that - to the whites that they must really now with the - with the - with the right wing attack on them, they must really (.....) saamstaan (Nulle moet saamstaan) and - and after he had said that, he said but remember I'm not talking about that saamstaan that is causing problems here within your area, so he in - in effect is - is actually saying that the word saamstaan has become anonymous with - with - with - synonymous I mean with - with - with - with the struggle, you see - also if - if - if - if we would sit in a company and somebody walks in and you don't want to talk in front of a person, somebody would just say - the word (?) mpimpi is - is - is a word that everybody would - would easily know in Xhosa or in English even, but to say (?) Vuil hond, people would exactly know this guy is - is - you have to be careful, it's either a police informer, it's a - it's a sellout, you see, and so those are terms that one can really - that would be useful and still be used even in Afrikaans there - I don't think that they could be replaced by any other word.
- J.F. And do you speak Afrikaans with the Bongoletu people when you're organising in Bongoletu?
- R.O. Particularly when I speak to the older people, because the older people is not that good in English because you can - they - you can understand that they were either Afrikaans or - or Xhosa, and so when I speak to - to - to African grown-ups I speak in Afrikaans.
- J.F. The youth?
- R.O. The youth - most of the youth they speak English.
- J.F. Does that indicate the youth are changing a bit, that you have less affinity for Afrikaans among the African youth?
- R.O. Not really, because you find that many of the youth that have not been to school particularly, and there are quite a lot, would - would - you don't - you - you start speaking in English simply because of - I don't know - that you've been probably brought up like that traditionally that the African people speak in English or in Xhosa, so you start speaking in English and the guy would start speaking in Afrikaans, and you would also start speaking in Afrikaans, particularly those that were not good (?) schooling would (?) occasionally.
- J.F. Lastly real quickly, tell me about Oudtshoorn - what's the population?
- R.O. We have 43,000 Coloured people - say it's 44,000 - we have about between 38 and 40,000 white people, and about between five and eight thousand African people.
- J.F. And what's the economy about - what's the - what people do?
- R.O. People - people basically work in - there's a shoe factory, and there's the factory where they make feather dusters - at the moment it was announced just recently that they were going to enlarge the - the ostrich slaughterhouse, so that it also be one of the industries that people -

- R.O. Otherwise most of the people - there are a lot of teachers as a result of the training college being there, so much so that - that there's not place for all of them to teach within Oudtshoorn and they travel to the outlying farms and areas, and of course there's a lot of farms, farming - tobacco farms and - particularly tobacco farming and cattle farming - then many people work in the municipality, the council, and then basically that is all in Oudtshoorn (?)
- J.F. And what's the distinction about ostriches - it's the - how would I put it? It's the well known what, ostrich farming area, do you call it? I just know Oudtshoorn has to do with ostriches, but I couldn't write down what I mean by that. They have a lot of ostriches in the area and they have a slaughterhouse there or what?
- R.O. Yes, but - but every bit of the ostrich is used for something - every part - not a single thing is thrown away from ostrich. They make ornaments and they make handbags, the feathers are used for women clothing stuff, and everything is used of an ostrich.
- J.F. But it's the place in South Africa that has the most?
- R.O. It's the place in South Africa that has the most ostriches.
- J.F. And then in the surrounding all (?) Southern Cape, is that an ostrich area or....
- R.O. It's an ostrich area, ja.
- J.F. With Oudtshoorn being the capital of it?
- R.O. That's right, the central.
- J.F. How far from where is it?
- R.O. It's the capital city of the Little Karoo - it's terribly cold in winter and extremely hot in summer - it's just 50 kilometres away from P.W. Botha's former constituency....
- J.F. George?
- R.O. Ja - it's - it's very known for the kango caves and ostrich farms that we have there, so many visitors from all around the world come there.
- J.F. The closest big, big city is Cape Town - how far from Cape Town is it in which direction?
- R.O. It's about 450 ks from - from (.....) - the other city is - is - is Port Elizabeth, but it's nearer to Oudtshoorn, but funny enough, people don't have the same type of relationship with Port Elizabeth that they do have with Cape Town - Cape Town is - Port Elizabeth is about 350 ks from Oudtshoorn.
- J.F. In what direction? I'm just trying to think, is it....
- R.O. In the eastern....
- J.F. P.E. is - Oudtshoorn is west of P.E. or is it north-west of P.E.....
- R.O. Oudtshoorn is - is east of - the sun comes up in....
- J.F. It's west of P.E. and it's....
- R.O. Ja, west of P.E.
- J.F. What direction from Cape Town is it, north-east?

R.O. North-east, ja.

J.F. And then the - Saamstaan covers what area?

R.O. It covers quite a big area - it covers the whole of the South Cape, which includes Oudtshoorn, George, Mossel Bay, Knysna, Riversdale, Heidelberg, Willowmore, Aberdeen - it goes as far as - as (.....) - we still get stories from (.....) - we get stories from - from Cradock also....

J.F. How do you spell Knysna, N....

R.O. K n y s n a.....

J.F. call yourself a so-called Coloured?

R.O. That's a difficult (Laugh) - ja, I don't have any problems about whatever people call me.

J.F. So it's just not a big deal?

R.O. It's no big deal.....

END OF INTERVIEW.