J.F. OK. So tell me when and where you were born.

D.P. Well, I was born in 1959 in East London.

J.F. In what kind of area did you grow up?

D.P. It was a very working class, run down area. But my family, ja, stood out as a fairly middle class family because my father had a shop and was quite respected in in in the community - and I think his mother was a property owner. But when I say middle class, it's ot to be, it's it's relative to you know, what was around us. It wasn't a very, we we didn't live in a very big house or anything, you know. And we lived in a street with coloureds, and in another street with whites, poor whites. We didn't mix so much with the whites but we mixed a lot with the coloured kids as we grew up. So that's very much of my upbringing, you know. Our street was filled with very poor people - next door - who didn't have electricity - and we played in the street together and that sort of thing.

J.F. So how long were the whites there? Were they out of the picture at some point or ...?

D.P. They were there all the time - until I was in my matric year - and then they, we started moving in different group areas. So we, ja, we were right next to the centre of town - so it was, you know, a whole mixture of of of people and the group areas only started to take effect in the late '60s, early '70s. And then finally by the late '70s we all had to move out.

J.F. You had to move out? They - you were ...?

D.P. Ja, we finally moved out, I think in '82. We were the last - my mother refused to move out and she, we were a little houde, an island - like, you know, on an island of rubble and broken up houses and overgrown and - till she finally had to move out.

J.F. And how was she able - was your father not ...?

D.P. My father died in 1973 so, ja.

J.F. And how was she able to resist so long?

D.P. Mother's a very, very forceful personality and since my father died she took over running the shop, with me, because I was the only one that was really forced into looking after the shop with my father. And so, so - she's quite independent - she's a forceful person and, so she she she managed the shop and she managed the house and managed all of us.

J.F. Were either of your parents political - overtly aligned ...?

D.P. No. Now this is the, ja, contradictory, qualificatory part. You see, my father, I only heard heard about this since I been in London from my my father's niece, who's more or less, you know, his age. That they were involved in the Young Communist League in the 1930s or something - and apparently she was the secretary of the Young Communist League which was, I'll say, surprised to hear.

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D.P. But but after that I mean I mean, since we were born and since I've known him he's never really had any strong political well- never radical - working class or socialist perspectives-but definitely he had he had a strong feeling against the government and you know. And he would try to defy the racial laws, you know. We we couldn't go to the fairground and he would just let us go in and then cause a little bit of a scene and get into the newspapers - that sort of thing, you know. That that is part of my consciousness - of my upbringing - knowing, remembering those sort of instances; fighting against racial laws. But nothing beyond that - nothing socialist or or being angry about poverty, you know.

I mean we we, because we owned a shop, right? and he employed African workers and what, from what, from when I could remember, it was people who would do watch repairs, it was like a watch repair place - and also employ servants - African servants - we, we were relatively, compared to the other people - in the - around us - we were better treated but still badly treated - so so there there wasn't that sense of, you know, people should be paid properly. But at the same time we had African friends in the Transkei, you know. And my mother belonged to an art society where she she was an actress, an amateur actress and she would mix with people of all races in that.

I think that was a large part of our developing a a non-racial consciousness, I think - my mother's cultural activity and people coming in out of the house - different races. Because she came from Durban where that never happened, I mean, her family in Durban, because they were so rigidly segregated, you know, you wouldn't find even coloured people mixing with Indians. Whereas in East London, because of how we were living, it was much more common place - and people intermarried and all that.

But at the same time again, my father still had this Indian consciousness, for example, he was, he promo-, he was, he sponsored a football team. And he would insist that it be an Indian football team and he didn't like the fact that coloured people were playing in it, you see. That was, it was all contradictory but - and yet some of his best friends were coloureds, you know. And they would come into the shop and they would joke and call each other sort of derogatory names, you know - a coolie is a derogatory mane for an Indian and a Hottentot is a derogatory name for a coloured. So they would call each other that in a sort of friendly, joking fashion. So there was really, ja, and we and we and we used to listen to all this you know and sort of laugh at this and in, ja. Between coloureds and Indians that wasn't really - that racism wasn't really very pronounced for us.

Sorry, I've forgotten what the original question was.

J.F. But does - no - following up on that - was that because he would have seen Indians and coloureds as in a kind of class different than Africans but different than whites? I mean, would that have has something to do with the fact of him accepting to deal with coloureds?

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D.P. Ja, it's very difficult to say to say that. You see mainly he first of all, his first wife was actually a coloured - and we were living together, right. And and he was employing Africans - actually he also employed Indians as well in the early days. But he also had African friends. So so I I think it was mainly because we were living amongst coloured people that that that he was more you know on equal terms with them or accepted accepted them more. I I I can't remember him ever saying that you know that African people should never get political rights. But at the same time there was a condescending attitude towards Africans - mainly in terms of the servants - and a paternalistic attitude.

J.F. Would you - did you ever grow up with an idea that Indians and coloureds and Africans would work together politically?

D.P. I don't know how I came - I I never really thought - I can't remember having a a a firm, definite idea in my head that Indians and coloureds were politically separate - because my fa- when I started thinking politically it was at a very very early age - when I was about thirteen. And I used to read the newspaper a lot. I I can't I still can't - why that that was the case. I read the newspaper a lot because none of my brothers and sisters did.

And Donald Woods was the editor of the Daily Dispatch and it was the most left wing liberal newspaper in the country - and he was promoting Black Consciousness to an extent etc. And so so when I started thinking politically it was in a non-racial framework you know. Ja, then I started thinking politically - I never thought politically in any other any other way. But my initial political thoughts was also based on Ayn Rand.

J.F. We should leave her out of it.

D.P. Ja. But it was important - I read Ayn Rand and there she was - she was talking against government control over people etc. etc. - and like this true freedom and this non-racialism - because racism racism comes from governments who impose things on people. And that had an impact. And I read her read her when I was in Standard 7 - when I was what? - thirteen years old. And that did have an impact on me somehow, you know, and for a long time it - I carried that with me.

J.F. When you say you were politically or non-racial - what do you mean by that? If you were reading Woods and he was pushing BC, I mean, what what do you mean, non-racial?

D.P. Just, ja, that South Africa should not be ruled by whites, right. Ja, only for the first - in the first instance - and everybody should live together - there shouldn't be separate group areas and racism and discrimination.

I think though I did believe in a class division, right - obviously room and rand. ? That even the more educated people, the more professional, richer people maybe of all colours should be able to mix together - and then their thing. Ja, I remember clearly writing - I used to write letters to the newspaper - supporting the PFP. I think, I don't know if I supported the Qualified Franchise but I know I did write and say, you know, you can't judge African people on the basis of the servant you have in your house, right - because she doesn't represent - there are educated African people and it's only because of discrimination that you know she's uneducated etc.

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D.P. Ja, so so I believed in sort of this elitism of - that everybody can come together and there's no real difference if once you're educated and you and you're middle class I suppose - and I, and everybody else sh- - would eventually rise up the ladder if there was more opportunity and that sort of thing.

J.F. So you knew about the PFP?

D.P. The PFP - well, Donald was promoting the PFP in what? - the early '70s - mid '70s. So that was, ja, the newspaper actually was quite a big influence on me of any thing I read.

J.F. So neither he nor you saw a contradiction between BC and the PFP?

D.P. Ah well, ja ja, well BC wasn't overtly promoted , you know. You would have articles in the newspaper - I think I remember disagreeing with with some of the articles on BC. I think now that that people shouldn't preach separatism and ja, I remember arguing with some people about that. But I agreed that, you know, that that people were fighting for their rights but this this was a bit later on, right. This was now '74, '75. My earliest period I'm speaking about is '73. '75, '76 was when the BC articles started coming in the newspaper. And then, I could, ja, but before we get to there there's still a very important step: I joined the Institute of Race Relations, right.

J.F. When?

D.P. That was in '7 - '75. Ja, that was when I really - the first time I came into contact with whites and and and and African school children of my age, you know, sort of mixing with people. Then I came into contact with BC people who also used to attend the Institute of Race Relations. And that's where I started for the first time having political debates and discussions. And at school there were also one or two people who were, coloured school children, who were inclined towards BC. And I I remember ja, one one guy wrote on my place: Black Power. And I said: No, no, it's terrible - can't talk of black power - everybody must be united sort of thing, you know. And so I was unhappy with that aspect of BC, ja.

J.F. All the way through it you never...?

D.P. No, not all the way through.

J.F. Initially you were?

D.P. Initially.

J.F. Ja. So what prompted you to join Race Relations? What did you do?

D.P. My brother took me along to watch a film and after that - no well we - they just invited us to outings and plays or whatever. And this was the Youth Programme - there was a conscious attempt to get people of all races together. And if you you were interested enough you could you you could go to the young adults' discussion group. That's where they

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D.P. discussed things - political things. So that caught my interest, ja. I mean, nowhere else, there's nowhere else in East London where you could find any sort of forum for discussion. The people who were dominating those discussions were socially, socialist inclined, right.

J.F. Blacks dominated it?

D.P. No, blacks and whites. Some of them were Rhodes University students and - so that's when I started to grapple with the whole question of socialism and capitalism - and vociferously argue that socialism wasn't a good thing and total free enterprise was what will solve all the problems.

J.F. This was when you were in what what - how old were you - what years?

D.P. What - '75, '76, '77.

J.F. And can you remember why you were so anti-socialist or why you were pro-capitalist?

D.P. Ah well, just that Ayn Rand was so forceful, you see, she wrote - she just - ja, that that was basically it. And it made sense for me - 'cause the government was so ever present in our country. And it made sense that the government shouldn't be - people should be allowed to mix with whoever they want to, you know. I think that that's what really made most sense. Also the whole thing - I wanted to be an architect - right at The Fountain head - and I don't know if you...

J.F. Ja.

D.P. And and I sort of - inspired me to be an architect - and a sort of a sense of elitism as well mixed in all of that. That you, you know, if if you were good enought and you were bright enough you could - you should be allowed to reap all the benefits of that. But but I think mainly it's just that the arguments were so forceful, you know, and I wasn't really exposed to a well-developed alternative from from the people that I came across then. It's only when I went to university, and that's when I started thinking differently.

J.F. And between going to university and moving to any kind of different economic analysis, did you change about BC? Were you still - by the time that you arrived at university between - when did you get, when did you first go to university?

D.P. '78.

J.F. So between kind of '76 and '78 did you change at all about BC? Did you become more pro- or anti...?

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D.P. Ja, I think by the end of, you see, there's one guy who was an ex-detainee and he was really hiding away from every one else when he came down to East London. He was arrested for BC activities and he eventually came to run the Youth Programme. But anyway, he was a fairly prominent figure around, you know, promoting BC but at the same time mixing with whites so it was a mild form of BC. And I keep, I gradually became closer and closer to him. He was an African African guy. And I think towards the end of '77, '78 - that's when I started being attracted to a BC type analysis. Suddenly he - making more sense - and at the same time I sort of fitted it in with a welfare state-type socialism, sort of thing.

Because I remember in the beginning of '77 - that's when I wrote my letter to the newspaper attacking the whole concept of middle-class blacks being incorporated into the system sort of thing. And then I started attacking the PFP by then as well. So I think he was the influence there - in that. But by, I I never strongly adhered to it because at the same time I was mixing with with all - with the whites that that came to Race Relations and who were moving leftwards from the PFP as well, ja.

But then the crucial departure from that flirtation came in '70, '70, late '78 at the university, ja. Being exposed to NUSAS and the class analysis that they, you know, brought forward and and just seeing, you know, white people really active and involved. But but more crucially I think '79 when I met Guy and - was it '79? Ja, ja '79 actually was was the crucial turning point, I think. '78 just gave me more - exposed me to a lot of alternatives.

But when I met Guy and then I met this cousin of mine who's - ja, a distant cousin who was inv- who was involved with the Movement outside. And he sort of, you know, presented me with the ANC/CP alternative and that sort of thing and I made a quick break - which really pissed off my BC friend. Ja. I think - this guy gave me things to read - critiques of BC, you know, class based critiques of BC. So so so it was a brief flirtation with with BC.

J.F. Do you know what what - can you remember what you read that influenced you? Whether ...?

D.P. Student publications and there was there was a particularly influential article which I got later on - a CP article which which it didn't actually - it wasn't a critique of BC, it was contextualising BC. It was a critique of ultra-left ultra-left slamming BC but contextualising BC. But at the same time saying you've got to move further. But but I think the student articles were very, very influential.

J.F. Would that CP article (...?) or have been an AC - or was it, or just something accepted from the AC?

D.P. Ja, ja, ja, it was it was a sort of annonymous typed thing - which is - I don't know how it came into my possession. Oh ja, I remember now.

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J.F. So had you - I mean, what had been your image before you'd heard of the ANC and SACP? Before?

D.P. Right , ja. I'd heard - no, I thought they were a spent force, right, because this guy was telling me, you know: They're through - that's the older generation - the new generation is BC. He kept on telling me this and I was I was almost influenced - well, I was influenced for a time - almost convinced.

And but there were people coming out of prison, that's right, I almost forgot that. People coming out of prison, like Mandla Gxanyana - was also involved in our trial later on. And they were also involved in BC - but they were obviously not BC - ANC-inclined people but working with BC because that, you know, it was it was proper to do that at the time. And they started coming to the Institute of Race Relations, to the Youth Programme activities. And they were released in '79. And talking to them was a big influence and , ja. And they gave me things to read. So so the whole coalescing of different things, you know, who are related-like this cousin of mine came from nowhere; a guy who just happened to be in Grahamstown and and his girlfriend was in East London; and these people coming out of prison. All that sort of at the same time sort of influenced me away from BC. Also coming after at being UCT from '78.

J.F. Had you first gone to UCT?

D.P. In '78, ja.

J.F. For one year?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. What was the situation being an Indian? Could you go or did you have to get permission?

D.P. I got special permission.

J.F. And what...?

D.P. To do to do architecture.

J.F. Ah, you were supposed to do architecture. And did you just do that for a year or did you...?

D.P. Ja, I did it for half a year and I sort of did one or two courses for the rest of the year because I'd decided I wasn't going to be an architect. I was too interested in politics and mathematics - I couldn't decide between the two.

J.F. And then why did you decide to go to Grahamstown?

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D.P. In '79 I didn't go anywhere - I I registered with UNISA because they didn't accept me for for BSc here at UCT. And so I registered with UNISA for maths and politics - so I could decide between the two. And then I stayed here in East London in '79 and then became active in the Youth Centre which became now the Masasani(?) Youth Centre - and Hector Mbau the this BC guy was in charge of that and I became his assistant - mid '79.

That's when we sort of organised all sorts of discussions and ... Ja, with with Mike Kenyon, another guy I mentioned. Mike Kenyon was also a student at Rhodes and he was also part of the group I grew up with at the Institute. You know, he was a big buddy of mine and ... Ja, that true - even during my BC phase he was this buddy of mine - he was white - and then we both sort of discussed on racial politics and class based politics together you know. And then we both - and then I joined him at Rhodes in 1980.

J.F. So then you you got into Rhodes? Were you accepted ...?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. And what - to study what? In what department?

D.P. Well, initially journalism but - ja, to do do sociology and carry on with politics and eçonomic history.

J.F. Can I just get those - you just said a bunch of names - that I just - I mean, I won't necessarily use them but I (...?) and spell some of them. This Mandla?

D.P. Gxanyana.

J.F. Can you spell it?

D.P. Gxanyana. He's now an organiser for Food and Canning Workers Union in Durban.

J.F. Ector Mbau?

D.P. Hector Mbau.

J.F. Hector and what?

D.P. Mbau.

J.F. And Mike Kenyon?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. OK. OK. Did you - you - did - you never seemed to go through a rabid anti-white phase - or did you?

D.P. Not really, actually. It's it's been with me throughout - periods when I'd be anti-white but never sustained - Ja, nothing really deep. Ja. Not really .

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J.F. And did you ever - was it always quite easy to get in anyway attracted to BC in terms of their attitudes to coloureds and Indians? Was that...?

D.P. Ja, ja, that that wasn't an an appealing aspect ..

J.F. That was?

D.P. Ja, the fact that you know coloureds and Indians we could feel part of this oppressed nation, this oppressed group - equal almost - you know even though we knew - I I I realise that Indians were oppressing the Africans - in terms of having servants. And of course, we were at a at a higher level than other, than than African people. But but I, ja, I felt good to be part of that black group. In fact I I I I retained that that feeling of being black. In fact I still retain, I think - throughout, you know - but at the same time seeing the necessity for drawing in those whites who want to be a part of the struggle.

J.F. And did you find every one who knew, met, came across in BC, the same amount of being open to coloureds and Indians? You didn't ever find any Africans having a - any prejudices about people who weren't African?

D.P. You see, that's the thing. Mixing with African people, especially the students, you know, there there was such an openess, such a a sort of - ja - an open acceptance of people of other races. But at the same time I also felt that others, ja, you know, that there was this difference, right. That you were less oppressed - living in a better area etc. - and sometimes it did come out, you know, that people would lash out at Indians for for contemplating, you know, accepting the new tricamaral parliament. Or - it was it was being proposed in what? '78, '79 - and people would lash out at that. But generally there was this, you know, enormous sort of good will that that really, you know, encouraged encouraged one.

J.F. Just let me change this tape.

(End of side 1, Tape 1)

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