

J.F. Maybe you won't know that you ...?

D.P. Ja, ja - this was the beginning and eventually you know, ja - what was going on in my head was: You know, fine. Nobody came to me and said: We're setting up a cell and become part of our cell. But I thought: You know, maybe this is what it was leading towards. To me that was fine, you know to be part of all this. And in a sense I felt a little bit guilty when they accused me of this, you know, it's weird, completely weird. I hadn't done that much but I felt that I would have done that, you know, if they'd just let me alone for a couple more months. And so I felt guilty when they asked me all these questions - and almost admitted to everything. Ja, I would have done all that.

J.F. Feel guilty - you mean having done it - not ashamed of it? Just culpable?

D.P. No, no, not ashamed of it - but ja - just in terms - ja - this legalistic framework. You think: Fuck it. Overstep the law and these guys are hammering me and wanting to know how much I've overstepped the law. Ja, ja, no, not feeling - I remember going back to my cell and thinking: Gosh. I must not tell them anything about Ngegema(?) because he's doing good work - because he gave me a lot of banned stuff, you know. And ja, ja, I remember feeling very strongly that that you know, fuck, these guys mustn't get away with it - and the struggle must continue and you know, that that sort of thing. So, so I didn't break down at all.

Those were by beliefs - except - and I unhealthily became attracted to the Bible you see. The Bible was like you know, it was speaking out against injustice and here were these guys trampling all over me and I needed something to cling on to, you know. And and I find the Bible a source of strength. So I said: Well, you can do what you like to me but God's on my side - God's against injustice - until my mother sent me Hindu books. Oh that was great. You see, I told them that I'm not a Christian, right, and I must have Hindu - a Hindu bible - and coincidentally my mother said the same thing, exactly the same thing: You can't give him a Christian book - he's a Hindu. And I wasn't a bloody Hindu - well - family.

But the thing is, the Hindus don't have one bible, they have many books. So she was allowed to send me a book every week. But they weren't Hindu books - they were - one was on the struggle in India which they didn't know was a you know, political book and all sorts of you know, interesting ... That's when I really started appreciating Hindu culture and India and well, philosophy and all. It was a great time for introspection - prison.

But I I didn't not enjoy it actually - no, not enjoy it - enjoy is a terrible, is a wrong word - gain something out of it - become enriched. I was enriched by that experience I must say. Not that I would want to repeat it or or you know - it was - and just coming to grips with my personality and my beliefs. Anyway ...

- J.F. So when was it that she sent in detention still, she ...?
- D.P. In detention. She was - so she - was allowed to send me - and I think they allow that for other prisoners - Guy and everybody else.
- J.F. Did they have any attitude towards you? This was, was it white cops beating you up?
- D.P. Ja.
- J.F. Did they have any attitude towards you as an Indian? I mean, was there kind of ...?
- D.P. Oh yea. They called me Curryhol.
- J.F. Curryhol?
- D.P. Curry arse.
- J.F. Hh, ja.
- D.P. Sort of kept on saying: Ja, your mother owns a shop. She's oppressing blacks and here you are saying you're fighting for blacks. That sort of thing. Why, why why are you doing this, you know, Indians are living better than than than than blacks. And: You're going to become part of a new political system, you know - and you are educated - you are clever - you - . Sort of playing on your ego and sort of middle class position, whatever. Making you - trying to make you feel: Fuck it. Why am I doing all this? And you do have some stake in the system.

And there I would engage them in debate which was quite good actually. We used to actually have these big debates about the fact that they are not pure white because most Afrikaaners are actually coloured and they couldn't handle that. Because there was this one guy, you know, this one security policeman who was quite dark. He looked looked like a coloured and of course he was but he was classified Afrikaans - Afrikaaner. And and I pointed to him you know, he just - their faces fell. They couldn't answer me. I said: Look at him, he's coloured. He's classified white. You can't be called a pure race. You see, I - me and him, used to discuss about Afrikaaners fighting for their political rights and black, you know.

Anyway we had these discussions and basically they were trying to make me feel that I shouldn't be fighting for black people because they don't deserve it. You know, they would talk to me about how dirty they are and how the townships are ... You see, they're starving - not them that's starving - there's food all over the show because we take dogs - we send dogs into the townships to fill their bellies with all the food that's lying around and they waste food ... And they have Rolls Royces and Mercedes-Benz in these townships and you know that sort of fool... Such weird analysis.

- D.P. You know, I really came to see, you know, how ignorant they are, right, and really they were genuinely ignorant - a lot of them at the lower level. Some of them were really sincere family family men you know who cared about their children. And and at a certain level cared about us, you know, for our well-being after they'd beaten us up and got the information. That's weird - totally weird. And ja ja - it's - listen to it - like this one guy would come and confide to me about his wife, and his ex-wife who doesn't want him to keep the children, you know. And I came to see them as these socialised entities who really believe in what they're doing is right, right. That they that they they they - well these particular cops believe in Pik Botha, who was a liberal man, so they're perhaps not a good example of what all these guys are like. So, you know, they believe that you know things are going to come right and you've got to give them a chance and all that. Sorry - I'm drifting.
- J.F. So they did do a whole number about being Indian. I mean, that was a way they kind of tried to get at you, saying: You know, you're not African and what are you doing in this ...
- D.P. Ja. No, that that was very much part of it.
- J.F. Did - and - OK, this is detention. And how long were you in detention?
- D.P. Detention for four months.
- J.F. Were you and Guy detained exactly the same time, same time?
- D.P. A bit longer - Guy was two weeks after me.
- J.F. Two weeks after you - and he had known you were detained?
- D.P. Ja.
- J.F. And it didn't occur to him that he'd be taken next? I forgot to ask him that.
- D.P. I think he did suspect that. I remember we went - before I was detained - we discussed it once. We - all of us expected it, you know. But we were so amateurish we didn't really make any precautions.
- J.F. Ja. And so then you were four months and then brought to trial? I mean ...
- D.P. Ja ja - four months waiting trial.
- J.F. And I mean - so how long was the interrogation and beating up time?
- D.P. For me it was two weeks.
- J.F. And did you talk about - you talked about things with Guy afterwards? Did you feel that - I mean, did you both conclude that he'd gotten better treatment as a white?
- D.P. Oh yes. That came during the the waiting trial period. Because Mandla and - were initially for about two weeks we were allowed to be in the cell together during the day, you know, we discussed things. And Guy wasn't allowed to be with us - and we would exercise together after that, because they they separated us again. And and we would shower together and then we saw this hot water

D.P. waiting for the white prisoners and I asked them: Can't I use hot water? because, you know, it was cold at that time. And they said: No, that's for the white prisoners and, you know, fuck you. And later on we learned that they had - that we we used to use the bucket as a toilet, but they had a special plank sort of covering to sit more comfortably. You know, that really pissed me off. Not - I wasn't angry at Guy or anything, of course, but - ah, shit.

And I made a complaint - that's right - you see, the magistrate used to come every two weeks or so to ask if there were any complaints. And I could see that opposite me there was an African prisoner who - I could see a different food to what I used to get - a big slice of bread, not a slice, like almost a quarter of a loaf of bread with some syrup or jam on, and of course some terrible vegetables. And I could see - his cell was opposite mine - and he had a small slice of bread and then he had some sort of porridge with it. Ja - I saw this fuckers is different.

Then - once I was taken to a shower - so you're taken to a shower you pass the kitchen - and I saw these eggs, or what looked like eggs, and - anyway, much better, and soup - much better food than we got. The fuckers must be going to the white prisoners, you know. And I thought: Is this what's happening, you know, three grades of food. So I decided to complain and the magistrate was so angry that I'd complained. Anyway, I mean, he wrote it down and nothing happened. And then the next day this (.?.) policeman confronted me: Ja, you're complaining about the food. And I said: Ja, well we're all in it together - why should we eat differently? And what did he say to me? He said something to the effect that: Ja - because white people are more civilized. Or something like that, you know. But it was my 21st birthday so I didn't want to get too angry. Ja, so anyway, that was the big terrible thing.

Ja. When we were sentenced as well - this was a potential source of conflict because I was given different food to the other prisoners. I was given some sort of currified thing - and of course, a bigger slice of bread - and they were given porridge. For some reason they felt we ate bread and they ate porridge. And we decided to share this big slice of bread amongst us. But at times it didn't always work out that way and there was resentment on their part that I was eating this bigger slice of bread. I - anyway - ja - it's a really good strategy to divide people.

J.F. And that was all during the detention period?

D.P. Detention?

J.F. That you're talking about.

D.P. No, no - ja, detention and then afterwards - the sentence period when I was given this curried food.

J.F. But before the - at the trial - did you see Guy at the trial?

D.P. Yes yes, we saw each other quite a bit - with with the lawyers. With Mandla some of the time. But not the later period.

J.F. So when there, when there was dealings with the lawyers Guy would be there?

D.P. Mmm.

J.F. And how was it to see him? I mean how ...?

D.P. Great. I just loved it - I - just want - every time we could be together and just talk to him.

J.F. And how was he doing?

D.P. He seemed quite fucked - emotionally drained. He kept on saying: Oh gosh. You know. How can you be cheerful? How can you ...? I was hammering that time - I regret now - hammering that time about inform - witnesses. Cause he didn't want Jean to testify. No - he did want Jean to be sent to jail for not testifying.

J.F. His girlfriend?

D.P. Right. And we had this big discussion and I was taking a hard line on that. Mainly influenced by Mandla who was taking a complete hard line - that noone should testify at all - under any circumstances.

J.F. Even if it meant they served jail terms?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. Ah-hah.

D.P. So I was sort of like you know - just regurgitating that, more or less.

J.F. And what was Guy's line?

D.P. Guy was being more flexible. He didn't - well he seemed decided that he didn't want Jean to go to jail. She didn't have much to say about him anyhow - and one or two other people as well. I I didn't want to - I didn't want to see his argument, I remember. But but still I didn't feel any animosity towards him for for that. Because I really respected him as a clear thinker.

J.F. And so what did happen? She did testify?

D.P. No, in the end we changed our plea to guilty and they didn't accept it so - but but - didn't accept our guilty plea but it still meant - we we made certain admissions and it meant that no witnesses were called. So so we sort of got out of that.

J.F. Did you see that taking a racial line?

D.P. Oh right. Oh yes, definitely definitely. I remember thinking - you see there was this guy Alan Zin (?) - this coloured unity movement guy - and he was - all these reports from the lawyers - from people we saw in court - that he was absolutely not going to testify. You know I really felt warm towards this guy - that he was under no circumstances going to testify. He didn't have much to say - he didn't really have much to say against us, except that I gave him banned literature which is, of course, it's criminal - but not much more.

J.F. He hadn't been detained?

D.P. He was detained - he was in detention at the time.

J.F. But not with you?

D.P. Not with us.

J.F. Because they wanted to turn him into a state witness?

D.P. Ja. And there was Mike Kenyon and Chris Watters(?) and other people. And Mike Kenyon and Chris Watters - especially Chris Watters - was going to testify, you know.

J.F. Two white guys?

D.P. Ja. And I remember feeling quite anti-white at that time. And discussing with Mandla you know, and him sort of trying to correct me saying, you know: You shouldn't be anti-white. But then he lapsed into it - so. And we were trying to convince them, especially Mike, you know, I was really sad. He was actually, subsequently - (...?) - he was really in two minds, and he was confused. But he had the most to say about me. He could have actually sent me away for a longer time than I got if he had to testify. And I was really sad about that. And I was sort of developing this thing in my head that: Fuck. You can't trust whites really, you know. But of course when I really began to think about it I I knew that there was Guy you know, who was going to be sentenced and - you can't really make that blanket statement. But still, you know, that that sort of creeps into your head.

And then the students at Rhodes - a lot of them were called to testify - and we heard a lot of them were going to testify. That really really saddened me. And ja - so so so - it did take on racial connotations. But there was this one guy, Penrose Pobana(?), who was from East London and he was - he came all the way, all the way from East London to Port Elizabeth to testify - he called to testify and then he was going to go there and say he was not going to testify and go to jail again after being in jail for so many years.

So those are the things that's come into play you know. And sort of made to feel - ja - there is there is a difference definitely - you can see different levels of commitment.

J.F. But does - what does that come from? I mean, did that come from his experience or did that come from him being African and innately more committed?

D.P. I think it came from - ja - his experiences - being African - and the social pressures on him. I think the social pressure is great. I - and you can't dismiss that. There were no social pressures on the white student. You know I mean, their community would not - they would want them to testify and get out of all this, right. To a lesser extent in the Indian and coloured community as well, depending on where you are, you know. Like for Alan Zin, there was a lot of pressure on him because he was really fully involved in unity movement and those political circles. For me there wasn't any social pressure - I could have escaped it. My mother was actually urging me to testify against Mandla - which was another trial. But anyway - so so that took on a different form.

D.P. So I understood that understood that because I was identifying with what Guy was saying and I could understand what Mandla was saying. You know, really, it's true - I always tried to reject this thing - Indians and coloureds being in the middle - but actually there is a lot of truth to that, you know, - we are in the middle because we can see both sides, yeah. And you're sort of caught in between and sometimes you don't know - as a grouping, ja - you're caught in the middle. It's it's - there is some truth to that.

J.F. So was there any - sorry, were you going to say ...?

D.P. No no.

J.F. Was there any aspect of the trial that illuminated some of those things you were saying - about the race ... non-racialism or racialism - of the way things went? I mean, in terms of who came out to support.

D.P. Well, the thing is, one thing got very noticeable, that we were being given a lot of media attention which other trials weren't being given. Or some were - with Africans involved - but not as much as we were. OK, partly because we were this black and white - trials - fairly unusual.

J.F. Was it just you two ultimately got to trial?

D.P. Ja ja. Well Mandla was separated out into his own trial.

J.F. And Zin wasn't there on trial?

D.P. No.

J.F. There was no other coloured on trial?

D.P. No.

J.F. It was then black and white that was the big...?

D.P. Ja. And I suppose partly because we were university students and he was a lecturer. So so I can understand it on that level. I remember Guy also commenting: Fuck. We're getting all this media treatment and we didn't do all that much. Some people did much more. OK, so there was that. There was a lot of support from the university and students coming in - well - ja - people from Port Elizabeth as well. Everybody - that was very good - you know you could see Africans and coloureds and Indians coming in - giving support. I don't know what one can actually say about that.

Just that - ja - we both waited to - towards the end of the trial we both felt that you know, we were much more committed than we were in the beginning of the trial or in detention. We became more and more committed as the trial progressed, you know. And of course, all the support and and and so I think both of us were feeling that you know you know - wanted to show people - the masses - the African people that: Fuck it - we really - we don't regret what we did and we want to carry on. And Guy even suggested that we - in front of the magistrate should, you know, put our fists up and you'd get a longer sentence even - that means - just to make a statement. But...

J.F. Did you do it?

D.P. In the end we didn't do it, because some people - we discussed it with other people and they thought - our lawyers and what have you - they all talked us out of it. But we were so - we had a feeling, you know - so so so so it had a radicalising effect on us - the trial. And of course going into prison, meeting - mixing with other people.

J.F. So what what was your sentence? And what was it for?

D.P. So my sentence was - membership of the ANC; furthering the aims of the ANC; possession of banned literature; and distribution of banned literature.

J.F. And you got two years you know for all that?

D.P. Ja.

J.F. And then where were you sent?

D.P. To Leeuwkop - in - just north of Bryanston - I mean just north of Johannesburg.

J.F. Right. And that was that? I mean, you didn't see Guy after you were sentenced and taken away?

D.P. I saw him the day after. The last time.

J.F. What - for lawyer consultation?

D.P. No, we just bumped into each other in the prison. It was - ja - it was a fairly lax p rison.

J.F. Really?

D.P. Well, not lax, just badly run.

J.F. I see. So, you didn't make a statement: you didn't raise a fist: you didn't do anything when you got sentenced?

D.P. No.

J.F. And then you ...?

D.P. No, we raised our fists after the magistrate had left - ja.

J.F. And then did you get immediately taken to Le

D.P. No. I was kept in in in the Port Elizabeth prison. And that in itself was an experience because there I was with these criminals - but African criminals - sort of mixing together and ... That also was a really weird experience - because you know, there were murderers and robbers and what have you and they really looked up to me as a political prisoner, you know. And - especially this one African guy, you know - he immediately - I got there and was quite intimidated with the new surroundings - in Port Elizabeth. He said to me:

D.P. Don't worry, I'm a boxer and if anyone touches you,... he'll come and protect me, you know.- once he heard I was a political prisoner. And then I - then - all that time - what was it? - a couple of weeks - I was mixing with them. And they were common law prisoners and I was like, you know, mixing with them; eating with them; playing cards with them and exercising with them.

And really just to get to know common- law prisoners - criminals - how they became criminals and their different life stories and the conditions in townships. That was a political education itself. It increased, I suppose, my non-racial outlook in a sense, you know, it blew that away. And then, later on, I went to mix with other political prisoners after, I think, after I was sentenced. I went to mix with other political prisoners because we were kept apart for some odd reason. They thought I was big heavyweight politico - badly influence the other political prisoners for some reason.

J.F. In Leeuwkop.

D.P. Ja. No, not in Leeuwkop- in in Port Elizabeth.

J.F. Oh. I...

D.P. Before I was sent away.

J.F. Ah ah. Mm mm.

D.P. They kept me apart. I don't know why.

J.F. In ...?

D.P. Because I had books I supposs.

J.F. And did - what the Hindu books? Or ...?

D.P. No, the political stuff. Oh. I didn't tell you ^hat. There was this big contradiction. After I was senten.. - on trial, right - I was allowed to study - and had all these political books coming in - some of it was overtly Marxist.

J.F. Right.

D.P. Because they didn't realise, you know. So I had all these nice things to read and I had them with me throughout. There are so many contradictions in the system. And - we, you know, we used that as the basis for some fairly good discussions.

J.F. And with the with the criminal prisoners - was it a factor to them? They were mainly African and coloured, right?

D.P. Only.

J.F. Only. So how did they - was it a factor to them that you were an Indian? Did they comment about that?

D.P. I think that increased their respect for me, you know.

J.F. It was some thing very much out of their experience ...?

D.P. Ja. There's this Indian person. Because in Port Elizabeth - everywhere out of Durban - Indians are well-off by-and-large. Because the professionals moved out of Durban. And so that's their experience of Indians: Professionals - doctors, lawyers, businessmen. Here was Indian who was fighting for black people and it was quite something, you know. So they really - and when I went, you know, into the cell, like after I was sentenced - you see, before I was sentenced I was with Guy. They kept me in a white cell - it was a big privilege for me.

And when - once I was sentenced they shoved me into this horrible crowded cell with all the windows closed and smoke everywhere. And crowded, crowded, crowded. And then I got to start speaking with all these guys, you know, it was - pathetic cases. And they really, you know, respected me for for being involved in the struggle you know. It was it was quite heartening you know, you just felt these positive vibrations and you said, you know: Fuck. This is worthwhile what we're doing, you know. Just - I just had this - in itself it's a contribution to non-racialism - that people can see this. In fact, this is what actually sustains me throughout. Just by, just by making political statements and letting African people see that - in itself is a lot. That there are Indian people who do care, sort of thing you know.

J.F. And then you got sent to Leekop - a few months afterwards?

D.P. A few weeks.

J.F. A few weeks, sorry.

D.P. I think it was two weeks.

J.F. Ah ah. And then was that-that was totally African as well?

D.P. Ja, totally. Ah well, the politically prisoners, totally. The common law prisoners - there was a mixture of different people and there was this - ja. Such good - a really good vibe because there were only four of us in the beginning.

J.F. What - political prisoners?

D.P. Ja. And we were kept in individual cells.

J.F. Why were you sent there? And and - as opposed to being sent to Robben Island?

D.P. Well that's something we we were were trying to find out from the day we got there - as to why we weren't being sent. We continually hassled them - we didn't - I don't know. Because none of us knew because - ja - Mandla wasn't sent there. Well - yes - six months - we thought: OK, well he wouldn't be sent there. I was there for two years - was it because I was Indian - or maybe they were going to release me early. I sort of held on to that.

- J.P. But this was a continual source of conflict with the authorities. That that we were being kept in this horrible place - because it was really horrible compared to what we knew of Robben Island - food and everything. And we were fighting with them to be sent to Robben Island. So I don't know - I don't know why. Ja. Because we - they kept people there for a while and then just all of a sudden some people would go and - but there wasn't a logical pattern to it, you know.
- J.F. So did you end up with Mandla? Is that where he got sent?
- D.P. Ja. Mandla and I stayed together - he went off - he got six months.
- J.F. For six months? For what?
- D.P. For charges that were much greater than ours.
- J.F. Why?
- D.P. But noone testified and he pleaded guilty.
- J.F. Ahm.
- D.P. And the person who did testi.. - would - will not do it unless - if I - was called up to testify and refused - Nakushe(?) - the other guy I was telling you about. He got a year - so.
- J.F. Shame.
- D.P. Terrible. Shame. So we stayed together right through.
- J.F. And - so it was just four - the most you had the whole time?
- D.P. No no. In the beginning there was four and the most we had was nineteen.
- J.F. I see.
- D.P. At the end they were BC people who came in. That was a nice time because we were engaged in all these discussions and debates with them.
- J.F. And when did they come in?
- D.P. Beginning of '82.
- J.F. Which BC people were they?
- D.P. Sowetan guy - what's his name - I've forgotten his ...
- J.F. What - Peps - the one from Seathlolo(?) - the one from - who went to...?
- D.P. Ja. He was there - he was there. But there's another guy from Soweto - joined us - Tam - Thami Mazwai.
- J.F. Thami Mazwai. Oh.
- D.P. And - ja. And other people who were [redacted] people.
- J.F. OK. I'll save that for off the record.

(End of side 2, tape 2)