

- J.F. So so there there were the four and then the BC people came in? But when you first came with the four that you were with it was made up of all ANC people?
- D.P. Mm.
- J.F. Those were the ones you had been talking about - who were all ANC supporters but lapsed in? Or were those people when you were ...?
- D.P. No. Those were the people - ja - right throughout actually.
- J.F. So there wasn't particularly - I don't have to distinguish the difference between the ones you were with in PE and the ones you were with in Leakop? I mean, what was the reaction when you go to Leakop - of them to you?
- D.P. Oh - it was a good vibe. The first few weeks was a very good vibe. You know we were all there together - we were these four political prisoners. There was one guy particular - Lawrence Ntlokwa - who was very articulate in English - and more or less my age - because the others were much older. And we got on very well together, you know. We would discuss things like about relationships and he was in the same - he was with the Young Christian Workers. And he had - ja - sort of the same vibe as I had about all sorts of young things and - you know. I got on very well with him.
- J.F. What was he doing time for?
- D.P. He was serving - he broke his banning order.
- J.F. So ...
- D.P. Serving six months.
- J.F. Ah ah. And how did they see you as an Indian with that factor?
- D.P. In the beginning you know, in the beginning I was conscious of it.
- Mike fallen over.
- D.P. Has it gone through what I've said so far?
- J.F. Ja, it's ok.
- D.P. OK.
- J.F. It's just - ja.
- D.P. Ja. In the beginning I - just me being conscious, right, of being Indian and sort of being accepted by them. I can't say what they thought of me. I would think that they that they would have been conscious of the fact that I'm Indian and that that sort of thing. Pleased by this fact that you know, here was this Indian, part of the struggle, and how good it is and sort of making me feel good. Because it really made me feel good and part of things and made no reference to my being Indian, you know - like how I was part of the struggle.

D.P. And the whole strong emphasis on non-racialism amongst us, you know. And they were so happy to hear about Guy - and you know, this white person was part of the struggle. So we enthused a lot about non-racialism at the beginning. In fact - throughout - except for those lapses. There were there were certain instances which occurred - I'm not so sure how these should be recorded. Because you see, we we - ja - OK - I'll tell you about it and you can decide afterwards how how they - you should - if you want to record this. Towards - I was sentenced in July, in in March, right.

J.F. '81.

D.P. '81.

J.F. Mm.

D.P. By July '81 right, we - between that time we were - we embarked on a you know, like we - almost like a discussion course - discussing things. And lots of disagreements cropped up like, for example, state capitalism. We'd have this amazing debate about state capitalism and they would refuse to admit that there was such a thing as state capitalism. Now such a simple thing, right. I was saying: You've got to recognize that there are these theories and there's more to things ... All of us basically had a superficial knowledge of Marxism, right. I think I had perhaps more of in-depth knowledge or was exposed to more than they were, right. We all identified with it fully, completely, right.

But I raised the thing of state capitalism and I raised the question of Russia being state capitalist, right. I heard this somewhere. And then this question came in like: Fuck. Why are you saying this? Now they didn't say this because I'm Indian and a bit more privileged but because maybe I'm a bit middle class. And a middle-class Marxist. That's why you you are talking about these concepts of state capitalism. You know, not being a proper Marxist, a proper proletarian Marxist.

J.F. Who had what? Accept the Soviet Union and not critique it or ...?

D.P. Ja. And and not - to critique the Soviet Union or raise issues like state capitalism. Ja - to critique the Soviet Union. But then - so - I was immediately conscious - not of being middle class but of being Indian in that that situation, you see.

And then the crucial things of - and then there were other things, like Zimbabwe. I was saying: No, fuck it. Don't do - Nkomo - I've read about Nkomo and he's he believes in capitalism, you know. Mugabe at least says he's a Marxist. And they refused to believe me because Nkomo was the man and Mugabe was this tribalist sell out and - you see - and like - in this small confined space - because you were in a cell this wide, you know. And any little thing just explodes. And then you know you sort of sense - I don't know if it's my projection or (...?) - you could sense they were sort of thinking like: Who's this guy you know, to question what they are saying. And you're not fully committed because you're an Indian, you know.

Now I'm not sure, as I say, you know, whether it's my projection or actually the case - when a really serious incident did occur. You see I was, I don't know it you met Jackie Cock ?

J.F. Mm.

D.P. Right. You know, being a sociologist she thought it would be a good thing to take notes of my experience in prison just before I was sentenced. And when I come out I'll write all about it right. So that's fine, a good idea. So I took notes from the day - in fact it was Mandla who suggested the idea of a diary, you know, to record things. That's right. And I did record like things like: I woke up in the mornings; I did yoga at that time; and I ate this time and I read. Basic things right in the beginning. So the first four months of my diary was just basically what I did, what I did every day.

J.F. Were you allowed to have a pen and paper or...?

D.P. Ja - because I was studying, right.

J.F. Mm.

D.P. And then Jackie C sort of reinforced this thing to me.

J.F. 'Cause she visited you?

D.P. On - awaiting trial - you know she came up to this part of the world - on trial.

J.F. On - in the trial - she didn't visit you?

D.P. No.

J.F. Ah ah.

D.P. And she suggested this thing - sociologically good thing. Ja ja I thought it was a good idea. So I was keeping a diary. So, when we discussed something like state capitalism - so I'll write in my diary: Discussed state capitalism. That's it, right. I had disagreement, a big argument, you know, those sort of things. But basically most of my diary was concerned with my yoga and what time I woke up and all. You know, I'm - such a pity that I don't have, you know, anything that's interesting.

And then they discovered it, right. And they discovered it, right. And they thought: Fuck it. This guy's - there's something wrong with this guy. They really thought you know - fuck - it was so terrible. I really ...

J.F. That you were some kind of informer?

D.P. Ja. You know, they didn't say it, right, but it was really there - that heavy atmosphere - because they confronted me, right: We discovered this thing on you. Explain yourself. So I explained, you know, I said: Look at the thing, you know, it's full of my yoga and stuff, you know, and ... Eventually they became, well - Lhusha(?) was convinced that, you know, you know it really wasn't much. This other guy, Lawrence, was wasn't so convinced and there was - he had much more of a suspicious mind. And he he just came out of PAC actually into into - so he was much more suspicious of Indians - (...?). Even though I got on with him better than anybody else. And so so so I said: I'll burn the whole diary, you know. And because they didn't directly accuse me of anything ...

J.F. Mm.

D.P. But they just said: Please, if the warders got hold of this diary they could charge you and call us as witnesses and of course we would refuse to testify and then we we'd get bigger sentences. That's how they put it - so very tactfully. But you know I really felt so terrible - my goodness - I mean, the whole thing of being Indian came out you know. It wasn't anything else - it was being Indian and there I've failed again - I've lapsed again. And and I sort of diminished myself in their eyes, you know. That was there all the time - I had to live up to being this proper activist because they had this image of these Indians involved in the struggle were really good solid people who were fantastic activists, you know. That's how the image they get in their minds - I suppose the Indians they came across were articulate and [redacted] etc. And so I had to live up to this and - that's when I lapsed I felt really bad.

And of course the other problem that crept in was the language - especially when a lot of youngsters came in from Port Elizabeth who couldn't speak English very well and so they communicated with them - even before that actually. Because, you see, Lawrence was Shona - Sotho speaking - and Mandla and Nhusha(?) were Xhosa speaking, right. And they wanted to learn amongst each other the different languages and I was in the way because I couldn't understand either language, right. And though we did have classes for me to understand and all that. And sometimes it would creep in that I'm not trying hard enough to learn African language which hurt me. But also I understood it because I hate learning languages and I wasn't trying hard enough it's true. But - anyway - so - what's the point I was going to make?

J.F. - The differences - ...

D.P. So when these youngsters came and they were forced to speak Xhosa most of the time to them you know and I would feel a bit alienated and later on other people, other political prisoners, came who weren't so sensitive to my being Indian. I remember when we were discussing hunger strike - was it a hunger strike? Like when the youngsters came we were continuing battle with the authorities because they - conditions deteriorated and they rebelled against authority and we were forced to support them and also to fight for better conditions.

And I remember them deciding on a course of action and I wasn't part of it, because they were speaking in Xhosa and and and in the end I felt like, you know: What have you decided? You know, and they interpreted my questioning as not being - not wanting to be part of the action, you know. I remember that very distinctly. They said: If you don't want don't want to be part of it you don't have to. When I was sort of saying what it was all about. So you know, all those tensions were there. I was very conscious of it, you know. At the time I tried not to admit it - you don't want to admit those things, you know. Now, looking back, you know you see you see all these things clearly - what they were all about. Because at that time you wanted to feel that you were a black person and you were as a prisoner as every one else - maybe slightly less so than others but you were part of the struggle and equal with others.

So and that and that diary thing hung over me for a long while, you know, and I think it hung over other people as well. I sensed that - well it could have been me again projecting - I never knew when I was projecting or whether it was the situation. But throughout, right throughout - right till the end I was conscious of being Indian and trying to prove myself.

J.F. Mm.

D.P. You know.

J.F. Did it change when the BC people came in? Did that make it worse or ...?

D.P. No, you see - ja - I didn't really have a chance to get to grips with it because they were kept separate from us. But we were allowed to communicate with them when we went out for exercise. We would speak to them through their cell door and pass literature, you know - try to convert them to a class analysis. But it seemed that some of them were already converted to a class analysis of their own peculiar form.

J.F. Mm.

D.P. But anyway ...

J.F. You weren't with that other Sowetan reporter - [redacted] - the one that got seven years - [redacted] manda [redacted]'s boyfriend?

D.P. No.

J.F. He was sentenced in 1980.

D.P. 1980.

J.F. You were with [redacted] and ...

D.P. Ja.

J.F. For a year and a half - and testify ...

D.P. JA JA.

J.F. Ja. Mm. So there wasn't - it wasn't like the BCs came and laid a trip on you or anything?

D.P. We were preparing ourselves for them, right. Because we had these young guys from PE - who had this natural, well not natural, what's it? - spontaneous anti-white attitude, right. They identified with the ANC but they came in singing Azania(?) and what have you - a whole mixture of things, right. But there are no problems identifying with the ANC. And then we sort of told them: Azania's out and OK - then it's time to give them the class (...?) and it's really quite a uphill battle because they'd had such little education. They didn't even know what the map of the world was. They thought that Europe was a city somewhere, you know, that sort of thing. And (...?) - so we tried to do these courses and educate them, understand.

It became a matter of urgency when these BC people came - thought: Fuck it. Really can't be allowed to capture these guys. So so we were very conscious of that. And unfortunately before we were allowed to mix I was released. You know I really had mixed feelings being released - it's amazing when I come to think of it, why I did - because it was the challenge of BC..

- D.P.: I was the person with more knowledge about Marxism than anyone else, right. Although in other ways the other people could challenge them much more effectively. But just in terms of that you know, having been exposed to more things and - oh ja - well - just being able to read much more in my cell and outside. I really felt you know that I wouldn't mind staying a few months longer. Anyway -
- J.F.: So did you get released early?
- D.P.: I - ja - well - my sentence was cut in half.
- J.F.: So - and how soon did you find that out?
- D.P.: Two weeks before I was released.
- J.F.: Really?
- D.P.: It took a long time.
- J.F.: I see, you weren't prepared to be released?
- D.P.: Ja. No, because really it was a challenging period - all these BC guys there and I left all my radical literature with them hoping that that would have some influence on them - and I haven't seen them since.
- J.F.: You had radical literature? The stuff that you were studying?
- D.P.: Ja. But some really radical stuff you know.
- J.F.: You haven't - have you seen any of the people you were in prison with since?
- D.P.: Well Lhusha (?) and Mandla and Lawrence.
- J.F.: Lawrence is? What's his surname?
- D.P.: Ntlokwa. Ntlokwa.
- J.F.: Hha. Ha.
- D.P.: He might be a nice person to interview actually. He's very articulate. He was in the news recently - confronting the police. He's from Kagiso
- J.F.: Um.
- D.P.: Kagiso near Krugersdorp.
- J.F.: Mm.
- D.P.: Oh, you won't be able to go back inside the country. But he's a very articulate person. He's got lots of stories to tell - slightly, a bit egotistical but I mean - anyway.
- J.F.: What's he doing now?
- D.P.: He was working with YCW and now he's probably with some church organisation.

J.F. So you were released what - March '82?

D.P. '82.

J.F. And what did you do? I mean, what did you get into when you left...?

D.P.: Oh well the first thing was what? Oh, I stayed in Jo'burg for a while and then I was debating whether to stay in Jo'burg or go to some place like Cape Town or go back to Grahamstown. So I went to Grahamstown and I registered for a course again. And then after speaking to people like Mike and a lot of people were really adamant that I shouldn't be in Grahamstown because I would be locked up in a matter of weeks you know. These guys would really harass me and so I decided: OK Either Johannesburg or Cape Town-and eventually decided to go to Cape Town.

J.F. And did ...?

D.P. Because East London was no go because there's nothing in East London and and and the depression was much greater there.

J.F. So you - did you register at UCT?

D.P. No no. I was still studying through UNISA.

J.F. Oh oh.

D.P. By correspondence. I finished my degree through UNISA.

J.F. Oh I see. And then just did the studying full time in UC - in Cape Town?

D.P. I studied and then I looked for a job for a lot of the time. And I got involved in the student movement, almost immediately when I got there.

J.F. Being released, was there a difference in the political climate in terms of non-racialism between ...?

D.P. Ja ja.

J.F. I mean, with the detention it was more than a year ...

D.P. It was twenty months altogether.

J.F. Ah ah.

D.P. I mean, we were already aware while we were inside that events were passing us by - there was lots happening, you know. And when I got out, that was just after there was this very successful June 16th stay away in Cape Town. It was quite significant - (...?) thirty five per cent stay away. And so there was a good vibe in Cape Town you know - people were on a bit of a high. That was ebbing - but it was still pretty high and - ja.

D.P. People were starting to talk of student movement - well AZASO was growing as a student movement and that was actually the most prominent political organisation. That was exciting political organisation because it had just come out of BC and all these new debates were emerging there, you know, non-racialism and all the stuff we were working on. We felt, I felt, like you know, we were working on this in 1980 and here it's come to fruition, you know. And we sort of felt - ja - I sort of felt that some of the seeds we were sowing - sort of worthwhile sort of thing. 'Cause AZASO then was a BC organisation in 1980 - so it was good - and so so we sort of you know merged into that.

So - ja - non-racialism and - ja - was more acceptable towards the end of '82. It was the first time I think Joe Pahlha addressed the NUSAS congress and there was a big event. Was it '82 or end of '81? - I'm not sure. So the whole thing of linking up with NUSAS you know, and of course facing heavy criticism from ultra-left and BC were doing that.- and so being continually confronted with those issues of non-racialism. So so being involved in the student movement was - ja - was ...

J.F. So what were you involved with? A AS?

D.P. Ja, A AS. Ja ja. You see it was peculiar. In 1980, before I was detained, I was - I arrived at the position that you cannot have a black student organisation - you should have a non-racial student one. And although when I came out I was as non-racial as ever, I saw the necessity for a black student organisation. I think I - perhaps - also inside - that's that's true.

There was one incident inside prison with Mandela and Lawrence. We were reading the newspaper because on guy was smuggling the newspaper for us. We read that NUSAS - some NUSAS members attended a PFP congress, you see, and they were arguing that PFP - PFP congress - PFP should become more concerned about the (...?) struggle and what have you. And they really violently reacted. How could NUSAS claiming to be a radical student body attend a PFP Youth congress? I was trying to defend NUSAS, saying you know: You've got to understand the contradictions in NUSAS etc. And they were really anti-NUSAS at that time. It was really quite surprising - again this contradiction arose.

At other times they would praise NUSAS and they would praise non-racial unity building up in the country. At that time, it just came - ja - it just turned - and they were so violently critical and refused to understand how NUSAS could - they they they compared it to COSAS(?) - attending any (...?) youth meeting, you know, try to influence the (...?) people. Ja - so this again emphasises the contradictory sort of attitude people had.

Ja, so when I came out I definitely saw the need for black student unity - especially on white campuses - you could see that. And I also saw the contradictions of working with NUSAS. There were real contradictions which I tended to overlook at Rhodes. Actually I did overlook it - I was so like blindly non-racial for some time.

D.P. And so you saw you know the fact that NUSAS had a liberal base and it was forced to be much more conservative than AZASO could be and how that had a constraining effect on us in terms of an alliance and all that sort of thing. And so while I didn't revert back to being anti-white I began to understand all these racial factors and so you know how they work more clearly. Ja. But at the same time rejecting the four nation thesis as some people were advocating in other parts of the country.

J.F. Ja. I was going to ask you about that. So was that something new on the scene in terms of coming out and finding - I mean - the TIC just being reestablished?

D.P. TIC was established - ja - I remember going up with people from Cape Town to this anti-SAIC congress where the TIC was formed and where the whole idea of UDF was conceived.

J.F. January '83?

D.P. Ja. I was sort of happy TIC was being reformed because on the one hand - was so fine - a continuation of the history that was necessary. But at the same time - and I remember one African guy coming up and saying: Listen. You know, isn't this a contradiction - like an Indian organisation - how can there be an Indian organisation? And I remember trying to argue - to answer him and thinking: Fuck it. My argument is quite weak. I couldn't really defend it because I wasn't sure myself, you know. And in the end - ja - it was difficult to defend. It was difficult to defend - an Indian organisation being formed.

Because in Cape Town there's a totally different vibe you see. Non-racialism was much more (...?) - UWO - women's organisation was completely non-racial and I thought this was a really good good experiment - something worth a try and should continue - getting people together. Fine - they had separate branches according to residential area and not according to race - but if it happened - it occurred that way, right. But still people got together and I thought it was such a good thing and speaking to people afterwards - and especially like Merle Jarvis who's the organiser for UWO and who I became very close to - and speaking to her about this non-racialism and - it really had - I really was very very encouraged by this.

And yet when I went to AZASO congresses and we spoke about this they would really dismiss this idea - it's like foolish experiment. Non-racialism doesn't work - it can't work. People had to be separate, you know, you had to organise your own constituency. And that didn't jell with me. Coming out of this anti-BC phase and - I suppose - well - not necessarily understanding all the dynamics in the Transvaal which were very different to Cape Town, I suppose.

J.F. So how did you ultimately resolve this?

D.P. Well - never ever. How did I resolve it? I don't know.

J.F. Well how do you feel about the four nations?

D.P. I'm against the four nations thesis, right. Because it's it's - no-one advocates it anyhow.

J.F. You mean kind of - I mean, there was a time when there was ...

D.P. There was a time right, in the '50s - the four nations thesis - and people were sort of trying to recussitate it now in a half-hearted fashion - which we thought, thought we were trying to recussitate it. I don't know what the feeling is now.

I can understand the need for JODAC right, in Johannesburg. Before I rejected it - I - because of this - ja - you know - oh, for various reasons. I mean, the need to forge a non-racial unity at a certain level was very crucial. The the the mere fact that white activists have access to so much more: families, finance, etc. so they have a much greater impact on the media right. And by virtue of the fact that they are a white organisation in a white constituency they were much more conservative. I mean, they're much more constrained. So their interpretation of congress policy would be a more right-wing interpretation, right. So that would be more prominent. So those would be my worries - so that would - so so congress would take on a more right-wing stamp publicly right. And so in Cape Town I opposed - I was part of a lot of people who opposed the formation of a white - in fact I still don't think it's workable in Cape Town - it's a different scene altogether than Johannesburg.

J.F. The the - what - the...

D.P. CADAC or whatever. *(Cape Democratic Action Committee)*

J.F. CADAC?

D.P. Ja. Because they had gone so far with UWO and I really think it was a good experiment and it would just negate all that, it really would. I understood the need for you know, white area committees and - I'm less opposed to it - I'm less - I've got - ja - I can understand the arguments now, right. Because I can see what impact from this distance - what an impact it makes for whites say to send flowers to Soweto, you know, whites to go to Alexandra, right as a grouping OK. I understand those things but it can - it needn't take on a a a a solid organisational form. I mean - ja - ja ...

J.F. What about NIC?

D.P. Now NIC - you see, NIC has been around since '72 - I mean it reemerged right. So we always accepted it and it played a big part in anti-SAIC campaigns and it was always prominent and visible. So a critique never really arose because it was an organisation you had to had to go to and to be part of. Because it was you know a voice where nothing else existed. Whereas TIC came out afterwards and as long as - ja - so so that contradiction - because that existed right and I understood I understood the differences right - Indian community - as it was actually - it need to to appeal to the Indian community in a different way as to the African community right. But still those contradictions arise because you - when you are organizing separately - Where is the meeting point? Is the meeting point UDF? And how tenuous is that? Who is meeting? Is it just leadership? Right - and who else do you meet? You meet in mass meetings - people come together. But but at what point are you going to develop deeper things? Those sort of questions worried me. It still worries me. But at the same time I see the practical difficulty because of these group areas - separation, you know.

J.F. So where does that leave you?

D.P. It leaves me - it leaves me - I don't know - I don't know where it leaves me really. I can't be too critical - I've just got to be wary. You see the thing is - my problem is that I haven't lived in Durban, haven't lived in Johannesburg, I haven't experienced these organisations on the ground, right. I've lived in Cape Town when things were really picking up, particularly, right. So I've got a different experience. I've got second hand experiences of these other parts of South Africa. So I've got a critical conscience - I've got a wariness. I know I can't be over critical because I don't really know what's on the ground - I don't really know what it means to live under Butheleji and Carter in Natal, you know. It-amazing to say it's my own country but it's almost like different worlds, you know. So so hence - ja - I don't have all the answers.

J.F. Do do you think mainly this is a

(End of tape)