

J.F. If you could just tell me where you were born and when?

J.S. Well, I was born in Cape Town on the 19th. July, 1936, which means I'm now 51 years young.

J.F. What part of Cape Town were you born?

J.S. Cape Town Maitland.

J.F. What kind of section - was it a Coloured community, was it....

J.S. Well, it was a Coloured - a Coloured community - well, actually it was not really that - it was at that time still a mixed community - I - on the opposite side, for example, where I was born we had some whites staying, and then just to the left of us was some Indian Cape Tonians and.

J.F. So what were the relations - what did the whites across the road have working relations with them - how did they treat you, how did you feel about them?

J.S. Well, we had very good relations - I remember we - we - we - during the war years when I was a small boy - was very small actually - but we used to have very good relations - we used to go to play - play with them and so on, as a kid, but what was even more important for me was that I was staying next to Kensington - Kensington where - which was a thoroughly mixed area, with a predominant occupation of African people at that time, and I personally, although I was conscious of my - at that time conscious of my - my being a Coloured person, but we had very - I had very early contacts with African people and I had - amongst my earliest friends I had (.....) African boys and girls and so on, so I - I - I never really developed an exclusive consciousness of myself and of my family and of my community.

Of course later on in life, when I worked in Johannesburg, for example, I - I actually stayed in - in - in - in a black - in - in an African area.

J.F. Which was that?

J.S. In Soweto - I - I was one of the first occupants of Soweto, and this was in the late '50s.

J.F. Which section of Soweto was it?

J.S. Well, I was staying in Merafe - let me put it Merafe Station.

J.F. Were there many Coloured people there?

J.S. No, no, I think I was one of only two or - or at most three staying in the whole of Soweto at that time, but I was lucky because I - I stayed there, and this helped a lot to break down whatever prejudices I might have had, and I stayed there for, let me see, almost ten years - almost ten years, yes, and I learned - I was very lucky in that respect, because I was given a chance to discard whatever prejudices I might have had, whatever feelings of - of - of - of one kind or the other I - I might have entertained, so this was very lucky for me.

Also as I was working in - in a food and canning workers union in a factory - they had to - they had many African workers - I think out of a total of say, 3,000 at one point the Coloured workers were not more than ten - not more than ten.

J.F. Where was that, in?

- J.S. In Johannesburg, which was now completely different from a place where I worked in Cape Town, where we had only Coloured workers - when I was working in the city council in Cape Town there were only Coloured workers, so there are all these different experiences, and I think, well, it changed me quite a bit - quite a bit.
- J.F. Let me just make sure I get all the details - you grew up in Maitland mainly?
- J.S. Yes, yes, in Maitland.
- J.F. And your parents did what?
- J.S. My parents - my mother is a worker - well, my mother used to work for some university as a laundry worker in a laundry - my father, he was a general worker, general labourer - after the war he came back and he was working as a - as a worker, ordinary worker, general labourer....
- J.F. So he served in the war?
- J.S. My father did, yes....
- J.F. Did that affect him politically - did he come back bitter or did he come back?
- J.S. I don't think, no - he's not the kind of person who could come bitter.
- J.F. Could they (.....) political people?
- J.S. Well - well, my mother was - my mother was a fighter, yes, and she used to attend meetings - those days there was a - what did they call them - the - oh, my God - anyway she used to attend a lot of meetings, my mother.
- J.F. Of political groups?
- J.S. Of political groups, yes, in Cape Town.
- J.F. What would that have been (.....) or?
- J.S. No, no, no, APO was already gone that time, I think.
- J.F. Unity?
- J.S. Well, no, no, no - you know, there were lots of little community groups at that time - I can't remember even one name now, but I - I know - I know the name because it was ex-Servicemans League, for example....
- J.F. What's it?
- J.S. The ex-Servicemans League meetings, and then we had a huge....
- J.F. Your father went to those?
- J.S. Ja, my father and mother, but even (?) my mother, although she was not in the war, you see (Laugh) - there was another group, a very, very big group - I've forgotten the name now - led by a Captain Malan, actually a white army captain who led the group but who died shortly afterwards.
- J.F. Was it Springbok Legion type or Torch Commando type?

J.S. Torch Commando - it was a progressive movement, you see, which - which tried to - to - to - to - which - which fought for the improvement of the conditions of those people who had fought in the war (?) especially the Coloured people at that time, because they were given a raw deal, absolutely raw deal - they - take, for example, my - my father - my father, after serving in the war from 1939 up to 1945 - and in fact he came back in '46, early '46 - he was given a lady's bicycle....

J.F. A what?

J.S. A bike - a bicycle, and that's about all he got, plus I suppose, his great coat and some other small things, that's all - but I was very young in those days - I didn't really take note of some of these things - what was even more important for me in my political development was that in the house we used to discuss a lot about what's going on, about what's happening in the country and so on, in the house, in our house, but it turned out that I was the only one out of the whole family of about - we were about 12 in our family - that's my mother and my father, my mother's sister and nine - well, eight children, plus one cousin who grew up with us, so we were about 12 in a very small house, and in the house there was a lot of discussion about politics and this (?) and things, apartheid especially, because it was the time just after the war when apartheid just became the issue, and we were discussing apartheid, but it wasn't really until I - I went to school in - in - in the early '50s when I did my - my matric, when we had the defiance campaign and all the papers were full of people shouting Afrika, Mayibuye and so on, and the defiance campaign where people marching and singing through the township all the time that - it's only then really that I became conscious of what's going on - whatever went before was just sort of a - an unconscious rebel - academic, if you want to, rebel.

But it's only after I left school really that I became involved in politics, in real politics, not just talking and that and shouting and so on.

J.F. You left school and went to work right away?

J.S. Yes, yes, I went to work right away - I left school in 1955.

J.F. You didn't go Trafalgar (?)

J.S. No, I never went, I - I left - I left - I went to John Bisseck (?) High School in East London, and I finished in '54 - in '55 I started working.

J.F. As?

J.S. Well, my first job was in some laboratory where soil was tested - soil testing laboratory - it was for the roads division on the Cape provincial administration at that time, and we were testing soil to find out its - its - its capacity to hold water, for example - its clay content, its loam and - and clay content, O.K., sand, and the type of - of - of - of soil that could be used to build the roads in specific areas - it was specific climatic conditions, that kind of thing, so we had to test the soil - that's where I first worked - my first job ever.

But I was a very restless young chap, I - I moved around a lot - from Cape Town, for example, I went to Port Elizabeth, and from P.E. I walked - I hitch-hiked to Johannesburg, and I went as far as Messina, for example, hitch-hiking, seeing the country - and then I went to Natal Province and right up to Durban, and I can say I know quite a bit about South Africa, the country and its people - and its people.

J.S. And this also tempered some of my views, because I discovered in these tours (?) internal tours, or hitch-hiking trips, if you want, that there are very, very many good Afrikaaner people - people who used to take me into their houses and give me some food and a place to sleep - people used to give me lots of lifts and that sort of thing and help me when I'm in need of help, you know, that kind of thing, very, very helpful, very friendly and very good people, specially Afrikaaner people - I suppose with me it was easy because I was Afrikaans speaking - I still am Afrikaans speaking - in our house we spoke only Afrikaans, and it wasn't until I did my matric where I actually started learning English, right, and it was easy to communicate with the Afrikaaner people, although I had a terrible resentment of having to use the word baas - I - I felt terribly humiliated by that word, and I never used it - I never really used it, and that's one of the reasons why I switched to English later on, because in English you don't have this word baas and - and even boss doesn't have the same kind of - of overtones as the word baas, you see.

But really it was in the factories in Johannesburg where I worked where I became part of the food and canning workers union, for example, where I became an active organiser in the factories, where I first really established contact with the ANC - it was there where I learned my politics, in the factories - in one factory in particular - it was H. Jones & Co. - it's popularly known as a jam factory - as a jam factory, where they produce jam, they produced canned fruits, they produced sauces, that sort of thing, you see.

But it's only there that I really began to understand what I mean the - the whole dynamics of - of political struggle in our country, where I - I started paying attention to questions such as organisation, administration, mass mobilisation, that sort of thing - it's there - I learned it in the factories, and that is an experience that I would consider to be my - my - my formative experience - my formative experience in the trade unions, in the Food and Canning Workers Union.

J.F. Can you just give me any specific example because that's such a powerful statement to make, to say that you'd been in school, you'd been in the community, but that you really - politics came to you in the factories - you went to your first job and you met someone who told you about the ANC or was it through the union or what happened?

J.S. No, I - it was - it was really through the - well, you see, the - the union itself, the Food and Canning Workers Union, in which I later was elected the secretary of Transvaal area, Transvaal Province - it was of course affiliate of SACTU - SACTU at that time was part of the alliance - of the congress alliance, and so you had the - the SACTU, through its affiliated organisations' unions, participating in - in the congress alliance, which was in fact really led by the ANC at that time, and still is - of course the congress alliance has more or less passed into history - but that's how I got in touch with - with the ANC, through the congress alliance, and through my work, my activities in the factories, because it wasn't just organising for its own sake - of course we fought many battles in the factories, for better wages especially, better working conditions, such as protective clothing, overalls and so on, for - for - against a practice which I found completely unacceptable when I got to this factory, where people are hired on one day and fired the next day, that kind of - those kind of issues - we fought and won and lost many battles around these issues, but finally one had to of course - to - to - to consider where all this was leading to, and I found the answer in - in - in the policies of the ANC as expounded at meetings of the - the congress alliance at that time.

J.S. So I was almost moving into the ANC politics - I moved into that through my activities in the factories, and that's where I used to meet ANC comrades, ANC leaders, many of whom are now leaders of - of the ANC at various levels, many of whom are now in prison, and many of whom have now died, but that - that was my entry into the mainstream of South African politics, through the trade union movement - the - the - the point I wanted to make about my earlier - my school days and before that even - is that I entered life as a worker, already conscious of the need to change South Africa - I was very conscious of that - I - I didn't have to be convinced, I didn't have to be organised, I didn't have to be persuaded - I was very conscious of all this - but the vehicle that I used was the trade unions.

Of course I didn't decide one day say : No, how would I participate more effectively - then I said : No, I'll join - no, it wasn't - it wasn't like that - it happened that I was a worker and I joined the unions and the unions became part of the congress alliance through SACTU, and that's how it was - not something that I decided, well, one day I'm going to intensify the contradictions between the regime and the people - no, it's not that - really it just happened gradually.

J.F. And when you went to Soweto the factories were not Coloured labour mainly - they were mainly African labour - were you....

J.S. Yes, yes....

J.F. All the time?

J.S. Well, I suppose even now, I don't know, but that time at least - that time at least - I would say that 90, 95 percent were African labour in that particular factory.

J.F. And that was this Jones?

J.S. Jones & Co.

J.F. How - does - didn't that make you a different sort of Coloured person or do you think there were others, many others like you - weren't there Coloureds who felt that they wanted to be in a situation with other Coloured workers, that they wouldn't want to bind together with the African workers or....

J.S. Well, yes, yes, there is that kind of attitude on the part of - of Coloured people, which has tended to isolate the Coloured people from the mainstream of political life in the country, and I had personal experience (of) it in my contacts in - in the Coloured community and - and this in fact is a - is the result of - of - of - of centuries of divide and rule policies of the regimes - not necessarily the present regime but all white administrations, all white regimes have done the same policy - they've divided the Coloured people from the rest of the community of the South African people, and I suppose because of the language, it was very easy for the Coloured people to feel themselves much better and much closer to the - to the whites at the time and - although this is mainly in the cities - in the rural areas it was quite different because the - the level of the farm - the Coloured farm worker and the African farm worker, at least at the economic level, are almost the same - on the same level - they had the same kind of problems, and communication was much easier for them, because that raw farmer did not really distinguish between Coloured and African.

J.F. Didn't what?

- J.S. Didn't distinguish between Coloured and African - although they speak of - of my volk, meaning my - my people, they - they - they never really behaved as if they believed in what they were saying - you cannot say that my people and then you - you - you - you deny them a decent living - you see, the generation was just dying off because of starvation or disease and that sort of thing, and yet you call them my people - I think there - there's this contradiction in what they say and what they actually do, but this was particularly so in the - on the farms, and I know the farms - I know the farms - I've been there, I worked there, I stayed there, because part of my family stayed on the farms - my - my father's - my father's brother for example, and that whole branch of - of - of - of my family grew up and lived on the farms, and so I know what I'm talking about - I used to stay with them - I used to live with them, visit and so on - I - I know the problem that they faced.
- J.F. Whereabouts was that that you went?
- J.S. This was in the Eastern Cape Province.
- J.F. And what do you think it was that enabled you to get past what other Coloureds would have felt with that divide and rule - what made you work in a factory that was 90 percent African, what made you move to Soweto?
- J.S. Well, well, well, that's a - I was unemployed, you know, for almost two years.
- J.F. After school or when was that?
- J.S. After - well - well, after school I worked for some - for two years I worked in a - in this laboratory I was talking about, soil testing laboratory, but thereafter I - I went to P.E., as I said - I couldn't get a job there - very interesting, because I had my matric certificate, and I thought that, well, this - this would be as my - as my - as my school principal had said to me on graduation day - he said : Look, now you have the key to life (Laugh) in the country, you see - meaning the - the school certificate - it proved to be completely useless and - and in fact I - I just forgot about it afterwards, because I went to a whole number of places looking for job, and he said : First of all, look, you've got a certificate of matriculation, but you are too small, you are weak, you can't work and that - and I just couldn't - I mean that thing proved to be completely useless, so in Jo'burg I was unemployed for about two years.
- J.F. And how come you'd gone to Jo'burg, because you weren't getting anywhere in P.E.?
- J.S. In P.E. I couldn't get any work at all - I stayed there for about four, five months - couldn't get any job at all, and my family wanted me to come back to Cape Town, but I - I felt I couldn't go back penniless - I had to -to show something for my - and I really felt I should contribute to the family budget, so I left - I went to Jo'burg, and there for two years I was looking for work - couldn't find anything, because in Jo'burg at that time there was a particular problem, you see, I - I didn't - I've forgotten how you call it, but what it meant is that unless somebody in a factory recommends you, you can't get a job - doesn't matter who you are - there must be some person in the factory who knows you and who would say : No, this one is the - is the child or the cousin of my cousin, or an uncle - that sort of thing, you see - otherwise you wouldn't get a job - you couldn't get a job - and so for two years I couldn't get - I was very lucky in fact to get the job at Jones & Co., and - well, when I started working there I immediately joined the unions and became very active in the Food and Canning Workers Union in the Transvaal.

J.F. For those two years before how did you get by - who did you stay with?

J.S. Oh, it was very difficult because I - I was living from hand to - to mouth actually - well, I did odd jobs here and there, and I had many friends - I was staying with a - somebody whom I used to call my cousin - he wasn't really my cousin - in fact he was no relation of - of - of mine, but he had been a worker on the railways before, and he was working as a - a traveller for the railways - what did they call him again - man, I've forgotten all these things now - but he used to travel from - from Cape Town to Johannesburg - I'm sorry, from Jo'burg to Cape Town once or twice a week by train, and whilst in Cape Town he stayed at my family's house, so he became almost a part of the family, so when I went to Jo'burg I looked for him and I found him and he said: Well, come and stay at my place - and that was it - so he looked after me for about two years.

J.F. And in those two years did you get any politics or was it not until you got into the factory?

J.S. No, no, no, I was already active - I was already active, but not in an organised way, I mean discussing a small un - unorganised ad hoc discussions - I was - I was very - very talkative, very noisy about things and - but it's only in the factory, as I say, where I became practically involved in - in - in political - political work.

J.F. What year did you go to Jo'burg?

J.S. Well, I was there late (?) in '55 - at the end of '55, beginning of '56 I was in Jo'burg.

J.F. Why did you go to Soweto, why did you want to move there?

J.S. Well, I - that was a conscious decision of mine, to go and stay in Soweto - firstly - firstly because of a special friendship I had in Soweto - special friend I had - and also I was invited to come and stay there by a certain lady who - whose husband was in prison, and who had problems paying rent in the house, and so I went to stay there, and I almost assumed responsibility for - for - for the rent at least, of the house - she was working as a casual worker in - in the same factory where I was working, but in her case the difficulty was it's not permanent sort of employment - she would work there say, during the tomato season, say, May, June, July, and then she would be laid off and come back with the peaches and apricots and so on, say, in December, and so she - she didn't work the whole year, so she asked me actually to come and stay at her place - her husband was in prison because he didn't have a permit - didn't have a permit, and he was not a - a working type man - he just didn't like the work - he didn't want to work, you see - he preferred to - to - to - to gamble and to make money through ways which - which would then (?) have been acceptable - so that's how I came to stay in Soweto, but it was a conscious decision on my part - I left my - my (.....) cousin to stay there.

J.F. That was '59?

J.S. No, that was '58 - somewhere in '58 already.

J.F. And you didn't get any hassles - by then they were moving people....

J.S. No, funnily enough I - I had no problems - later of course the special branch used to meet me in Soweto and - and - and even they said to me that : Look, we - we - we - we're not here representing the - what did they call them again - the location superintendent - so we're not going to ask you about your permit and that sort of thing - they asked me about my political life.....

J.S. No, they didn't bother me - the people that did bother me were the location authorities - they - they used to - I was arrested even once or twice for not having a permit to stay in - in - in - in - in this place, but the community as a whole, oh, they - I was quite welcome - I was quite welcome - I had absolutely no problem at all.

J.F. Did you speak an African language?

J.S. No, I didn't - I learned it there, and later on I learned to speak Sotho and - and Zulu language, but I learned it there, but I had no problem whatsoever - and that time Soweto was quite a rough place to be in, quite rough, but I was never once assaulted or - or otherwise accosted or - or robbed or that sort of thing - not even once - everybody used to know me - I'm in that train (?) and I stay where I'm staying, and I was welcome in almost every - every house and - and the tsotsi element used to pass me all the time, because they knew where I was staying and who I was and so on, but more than that I - as I said earlier on, it helped break down whatever feelings may have remained in me, you see - whatever hangovers I may have had about my being a Coloured, my Colouredness and that sort of thing, you see.

That was a really unique experience for me, and I'm very grateful to those people for helping me.

J.F. Did they ever ask - were they curious - did they ask what your motivation was?

J.S. No, no, I mean we didn't think of it in - in - in - in strong political terms, it - it was not a political decision - it was simply a decision to go and stay there because I wanted to stay there and - and - and I was invited to stay there, but I - I never thought that, well, I would go there so that I must shed my - my - my - my prejudices, or I didn't do that that way - I - one didn't think of it in that - in those terms - it's the kind of thing that just happened - of course I - I had been very lucky - I - a large number of young militant politically conscious African friends, very strong youth group, who helped me to see things in - in - in - in their proper light - some of them of course have followed - and by that I mean they have - they've now gone into the system, but the majority of them are active, or have been active, and many of them have died, but I was very lucky to - to have had these friends, and it was with them - in discussions with them now at a different level that again I - I - I clarified my mind about what is happening, what - what the answer should be in the country, so I think all of these experiences helped.

Of course for me my - when I left the country I - I - I became, well, a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe - I trained with - with a - with everybody else - and that too was - was a part of my - my - my formation - part of my formation - there, because of the extreme restraining difficult situation in which we lived and trained, there was complete and total equality - I mean there was - there was no question of - of - of anybody getting one or two extra biscuits because he - he's a Coloured or he's a - or he's an Indian or he's - he's - he's a Zulu or - no, nothing of the sort - in ANC (?) complete equality - complete equality, and that too helped me a lot.

J.F. So you never were in the Coloured People's Congress in South Africa?

J.S. Well, I did attend the meetings now and then in Jo'burg, and even in Cape Town once or twice, but I was never really a member - I was only a member of the ANC.

J.F. But how did that happen....

J.S. And of SACTU (?)....

J.F. because if you look at it theor - it seems like theoretically as a Coloured person you should be in the CPC and in - how did you get into the ANC - was it because you were in SACTU or because?

J.S. Ja, because I was in SACTU, and I was very active in SACTU, but I - I was never really - I never really - at that stage I didn't even consider myself to be a Coloured any more - I mean in my mind all these divisions of - of - of colour and race had disappeared by that time - it - I could then already see everybody as South Africans, of course occupying different economic positions, but I could look at the whole situation in a more objective light - almost a balcony view I had of - of - of society, and I had no more any feelings of - of any sort about my - my - my colouredness and about the - any particular political organisation - I just didn't have that kind of feelings any more.

J.F. Were you opposed to the idea of the CPC - did you not want to get....

J.S. No, I wasn't - no, I wasn't - no, no, no, I wasn't opposed to that - it's just that I was in the ANC and I was in SACTU, that's all - I - I suppose at some time I - I might have assumed that - that I - I - I automatically qualify for membership of - of - of SACPO at that time, but I mean I - well, I never really attended the meetings - I never became active in them - as a trade unionist I remember, for example, I went to address groups of - of Coloured women, for example, or once even a branch of - of SACPO, as it was called that time, South African Coloured People's Organisation, but I was always a - first and foremost a member of trade unions before anything else - it was only until I left the country that I became first and foremost an ANC member and secondly then of course a trade unionist and whatever else I was.

J.F. Because there are those who look at history and see that SACPO and CIC were not nearly as big as the ANC and the African and Indian movements and say : Well, it just shows some kind of weakness in the theory of having a Coloured organisation - and then it came into the debates in the '80s about the UDF affiliates, TIC, NIC, that Coloured (.....) - what do you think about that whole idea - do you think you should mobilise Coloureds separately?

J.S. Well, not any more - not any more - that time it - this - you must know this is after apartheid came in and after all these separate areas were created, where it became difficult, or increasingly difficult to - for example, for an African organiser to work in - in a Coloured area, because he was really separated - he was already from outside the community - same thing happened with - in the case of - of say, a Coloured organiser, who were having to work in - in an African community - it became increasingly difficult for him to do work.

The - the area where they could really work together with - on the job - on the job, in the place of employment, in the factories and so on - but I - I don't think - I mean if I were sent into the country I wouldn't be organising CPC, I - I would be organising units of the ANC, other ground (?) units of the ANC, and if I were arrested in the country I would speak as a member of the ANC and not - and not as - as - as a member of the Coloured People's Congress or something like that, because the ANC has emerged as the leader of - of the struggle in the country - there's no doubt about that.

- J.F. Sure, I'm just looking historically if at the time - certainly that the Indian congresses historically have had their effect and it's been quite a strong one - just to look at what the effect has been of the Coloured People's Organisations, that maybe it hasn't been as strong.
- J.S. Well, it hasn't been as strong I - I must say, you know, I think in - in Cape Town it has been fairly strong - in Cape Town itself, because there's where you have the largest concentration of Coloured people in our country, but in relation to the Indian congresses, for example, I think the CPC was a fairly weak - fairly weak - a problem in Cape Town was the existence, for example, of a very - well, I should not say very but fairly organised Unity Movement, and this deprived the - the Coloured community of the intellectual leadership that they - they - they would have had if such a useless organisation as the Unity Movement didn't exist in Cape Town - we would have had all these young Coloured intellectuals actually participating in the CPC work, and that would have certainly lifted the CPC to the level of - of - of the Indian congresses and so on, you see, but as the - the presence of the Unity Movement, that is the historic problem that they created in Cape Town, Unity Movement with their armchair politics, boycotting everything, even boycotting (Laugh) the struggle, you see, but that is - I think that - that must be one of the reasons why in Cape Town the - the CPC never really rose to - to the level of other organisations and - and this is - this is strange because the majority of the workers in Cape Town are Coloured workers, and they were the best organised in - in terms of trade union membership - there you had a strong trade union movement, but a very weak political movement, and I can attribute it to the - to this Unity Movement problem in - in Cape Town at that time.
- J.F. Did you grow up with an awareness of the history of the Abdurahmans, the Gools, the APO, the Unity Movement?
- J.S. Well, not - not - well, I didn't know much about this - my mother used to tell me a little bit about some of these things - it wasn't until I - I was - I was now very actively involved that I learned about AP - African People's Organisation, about Abdurahman, about Jane Gool and others, but this came much later through my own reading and my own enquiries and so on, not - of course my mother did try to help me, educate me about some of them, but I - I can't really remember her actually sitting down one day and giving me a lecture - she sort of talked to it - talked about this in - in - in - in passing.
- J.F. When did you join the ANC, and tell me about how you left the country and why?
- J.S. Well, I joined the ANC in the '50s as - as I say, you know.
- J.F. After being in SACTU?
- J.S. Well, after being in - in - in - in the Food and Canning Workers Union I became a member of SACTU - I joined the ANC then, and I participated in the youth activities of the ANC, youth league activities of the ANC, and after ANC was banned I continued to participate in the youth league activities of the ANC, but I was banned in 1964 because, you know, as - as layers and layers of leadership is being removed, either through imprisonment or banning and that sort of thing, new levels come up and - and - and more and more of the new levels of leadership have to expose themselves by addressing public meetings and - and that sort of thing and - and I was one of those people who had to speak out publicly, and I was banned in 1964 - in April, '64, I remember very well, and this meant that I couldn't work in the factory where I was employed up till then.

- J.S. And I stayed April, May, June, but by then I was really getting so frustrated that I had made arrangements with the leadership of the ANC to be taken out of the country, and they took me out, and when I left I joined - well, I didn't join - I mean I went for training and became a very active member of our people's army.
- J.F. So can you talk a bit about that, that you - get back to South Africa did you?
- J.S. Well, I'm afraid I can't say much about that at this stage - I was active of course in - in - in all sort of struggles in the region, for example, in - in - in - in the struggle in this country, in Zimbabwe - I participated at various levels as a military man....
- J.F. The Wankie Campaign?
- J.S. Wankie Campaigns and - and after, or even before that, but I'm afraid I cannot say too much about that now even.
- J.F. Why is it that if people know a little bit about MK and Coloureds in MK they - I would think of James April, Basil February, those people connected with Wankie who were Coloured - in South Africa, to be frank, that you wouldn't get very many people who would think of an MK cadre and be able to name any Coloured person, whereas they could tell you (.....) - there was the guy who was killed at Sasol, the second Sasol attack, who happened to be Coloured, and there were a few, but it's very few, whereas there were - if you say Wankie Campaign you would think of some names that are Coloured.
- J.S. Ja, ja - well, Basil February died in - in Zimbabwe - we were very close friends actually, the three of us, Basil February and James April and myself, very close friends - there were some others also - some of them died already, died - and in the Wankie operation there was a friend of mine (?) called Charles, who died also - he came from Cape Town also - but I suppose the reason why - why people don't identify themselves as, say, Coloureds - I mean the - the best way to identify yourself is as a member of MK - that says more than anything else - I mean it (.....) whether you're a Coloured or a Indian or a - or a Sotho or a African generally - it doesn't matter - to be a member of MK is - is - is a great honour, and a privilege in fact, for all of us, everybody - I never expected that I would end up in Umkhonto we Sizwe - I never thought I mean - it wasn't something that I planned for, but the - the struggle and its own dynamics drove me to this point.
- J.F. Again obviously it's an area that you can't - some things you can't say, but I'm just - my interest is in this race, class area, and I'm just wondering - some of the people I've interviewed who were in Zimbabwe who actually fought - for example, chief rep in Zambia, a few other people - was - when people talked about how you had to blend in with the people of the country and then they weren't even South Africans - they were Zimbabweans and even the language wasn't exactly the same for most of them and this kind of thing, what - were there any factors about being Coloured that were useful or a problem or?
- J.S. No, no, no - no, no - no, we - we worked as ANC unit, as MK unit - of course with our Zimbabwean friends - but there was - there was absolutely no - I didn't feel anything, any - any - any special problem or privilege by - by - by being a Coloured at all - no.

- J.F. But I mean was it in any way an advantage that can be used against the enemy because of assumptions that would be made about a Coloured?
- J.S. No, there was no advantage at all, except that according to the reports we received later, they were rather scared, or they were surprised or worried by the fact that some Coloureds were taking part in the - in - in the armed struggle in Zimbabwe at that time - you must know that this was long before the so-called Cuban problem came to our region, and very interesting because they were saying I was a Cuban, yes - I mean according to their - their own propaganda, they were saying that no, at least they've seen me as a Cuban participating in - in - in some of the combat actions and - and this is completely wrong because I - I'm not a Cuban, I'm a - I'm a real South African, you see.
- J.F. Meaning there's someone there who's not a dark skinned African so you must be a Cuban?
- J.S. So you might be a Cuban, ja - this is the - well, this is a problem of their own racism, you see - it's a kind of conclusion that they come to not because of - I think - I think what they said about Dakar, that the regime has managed to impose deep levels of ignorance on the white community - I think that's quite true - I think many facets (?) are very clearly in the Wankie operations, for example - I was not personally involved in that particular operation, but I was told by my colleagues and my comrades that at one point near Wankie South African troops actually marched openly to attack a unit of - of - of Umkhonto we Sizwe, and of course they were all wiped out, because they couldn't - they couldn't perceive - they were not taught to think that Africans could actually shoot - they thought that if they marched in attack, Africans would - would get so scared and so worried and run away, as they did when they were unarmed, and this - this - this particular frame of mind has led to many casualties on their side, I would say, but they didn't respect us - they didn't think that, well, we - we are a match for them, and that's why so many of them died in - in - in these operations in - in Zimbabwe.
- J.F. A couple of just quick things to wrap up because of the time - did it ever bother you that there weren't Coloureds on the NEC - you were elected in '85 to the NEC?
- J.S. Yes - no, it never bothered me.
- J.F. How did you understand it or explain it?
- J.S. I - I - I was part of - of - of - of a discussion, out of which came a decision that - that the ANC would lead the - the ANC - the African leaders in - specially in Africa - so with me the - I had never a problem with this - I never had a prob - I was always ANC, so I never thought of myself really as somebody separate from the general membership of the ANC, so I never thought that, well, we should actually have a Coloured in the NEC - I mean that kind of thing never came to me - of course with the rapid growth of the struggle in the country and with the - the discussion taking place round about '84, '85, I personally was of the view that we should begin to have members of all communities in the NEC of the ANC - I - I supported that view and - and this was a view which was supported by the overwhelming majority of the people, members of the ANC, because it does say something if you have one or two representatives from the Coloured community on the NEC - Coloured people would then feel that they have a home in - they are not just step-children in - in - in - in the movement, or second class members - they are full participants and they are full members, because you see, this became necessary because of the effect of apartheid on the Coloured community - they became -

- J.S. Of course after the uprisings of '76 more and more Coloured people came - became active in - in the struggle - even early on I would say, the BC movement did a great historic service to the Coloured people by breaking down the barriers of - of - of race, of race consciousness, of colour consciousness - the concept of black being first of all (?) all those who don't have the vote, and all those who participate actively in the struggle, whether or not you have the vote - that concept was a great contribution to the overall historic development of our struggle, and I think that leaders of the BC movement should be saluted for this - I don't agree with them now, the AZAPOs of this world and so on, because they have tended to become a sect instead of an active participant in the struggle - they are really becoming an obstacle now - they become an obstacle.
- J.F. Were you aware of the debates in the youth league of the PAC breakaway - do you remember....
- J.S. I do - I do, yes.
- J.F. How did you feel as a Coloured in those debates, because when I look at it historically it seems specifically that they are anti-white but anti-Indian and very weird about the Coloured issue....
- J.S. Yes, yes, the - they were quite clearly black racists - I mean that's how we saw them, a black racist group, and I personally (Laugh) was very vociferous in my condemnation of - of the - of the PAC at that time, even before the breakaway, with (?) the PAC element, Africanist - so-called Africanist element within the ANC - and when they had broken away and when the - there emerged a new avenue of struggle, ideological struggle, I participated fully in that, and I saw them as - as anti-white, anti-Indian, anti-Coloured - although later on when - when - when the - they actually formed the PAC in '59, and when Sobukwe actually said something about Coloureds being, well, Africans, it - it didn't help to - it didn't help to more or less satisfy me, whatever else they may have said - I wasn't satisfied about that.
- J.F. Lastly, what's the role of Afrikaans going to be in the future South Africa?
- J.S. Afrikaans language - well, the Freedom Charter makes it very clear that the cultural heritage of the people, including Afrikaaner people, will be protected and promoted - Afrikaans will remain a very active, very vibrant language used by - by the Coloured people, by the Afrikaaner people in - in the media - they will have their own books and - and so on - there - there's no way that - that a democratic movement could even think of suppressing any aspect of - of - of - of the people's culture - that would lead to nother struggles - other struggles - I wouldn't support that - I wouldn't support that, and I - I think the - the only thing that needs to be done about Afrikaaner culture, or even the culture of the Coloured people, if you could speak of that, would be to cleanse it of its own racism - to remove that from it - to remove everything that's reactionary, to give it a progressive content and to - to motivate it towards a national identity more than say, an Afrikaaner identity or a Coloured identity or an Indian identity - first and fore - first of all we should - you should feel yourself as a South African citizen.

END OF INTERVIEW.