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Dale: Okay it is 30th of March 2010. Virginia thanks very much for coming and making yourself available. Just for the record can you state your full name?

Virginia: Virginia Dipuo Setshedi.

Dale: Okay and Virginia before we get started into some of the questions I have about the APF and its history and so forth, I want to find out a little bit about yourself, we are trying to get a sense of everybody and the activists, so, just a few questions on that front. Where and when were you born?

Virginia: I was born in 1970 in Diepkloof, Zone 5, Soweto.

Dale: Okay and ... just tell us a little about the places where you've lived in South Africa?

Virginia: Ja I was born in Diepkloof but at the age of seven I went to KZN (Kwa-Zulu Natal), Port Shepstone where I went schooling just after the 1976 uprising and I was schooling in Port Shepstone until I was fifteen, then came back to Soweto in 1985. But it never worked because it was also still some riots and my parents took me to back to KZN but now in Newcastle which is a bit further than Port Shepstone. And I did my standard eight, standard nine and standard ten. Then after standard ten I was pregnant then I came and looked for a job. I worked for a bakery in Parktown North which was called 'Mr Crusty' for two years. Then after two years I worked as a cashier at Clicks in Commissioner Street. And I applied for admittance at Khanya College, well that time it was still providing pre-university college. And because you know KZN where I was studying there education was very inferior, so it was very difficult to get like full entrance at Wits University, so Khanya College played a role of bridging the gap between university and high school. And it was quite a challenge because like the education that I got was like far different and was very low in such a way that at Khanya College I felt lost. Wits University became worse. And there was a point where I was feeling 'oh maybe am I supposed to be here' maybe I will make the statistics of drop-outs. But I was very adamant and I told myself I don't want to be a drop-out. I failed my first year dismally because I could not understand what was happening, the lecturers, I didn't have a clue of what was happening around me that is why I made the decision that I was going to be part of the Student Movement where maybe I will be able to get a sense of what is happening in the world. And I became part of SASCO (South African Students Congress Organisation) since 1995. Then 1997 I stood for SRC (Students Representative Council) elections, but we didn't win that is where the University of Wits was having these so called coconuts who were taking power at that time. But that helped me a lot because then I actually got exposed to what was happening around me, even in the community where I lived in. At that time I was, I think around 1996-97' 98 I was married and living in Diepkloof but Zone 2. My parent's house is in Zone 5. So I lived in Zone 2. And the education that I was getting, you know through SASCO in some conferences and in some seminars then I became conscious and always wanted to be helping around where I lived. And when there were problems in the community people will knock at my door and say "Virginia we have a problem, they have cut off our electricity and you know the street lights are not working'. Then I got able to know where to go and who to talk to, just to be able to help people. Even with issues of kids that are being abused by their parents and sometimes partners that are being abused by their partners would always knock. I became so like a social worker of the streets and maybe more than one street as well. So it's then in SASCO then we had

a campaign that said 'a student is a community member as well', which featured in who I was at that time and then I am going to organise people in the community, colleagues all meeting and stuff. And that is when in 1999 we heard Eskom was switching off electricity and the first meeting I remember was at the back yard of my house that I was living in and people spoke about their problems and all that. And then I got a sense of where the community is and we started now engaging councillors and it was clear that the problem is not only for Diepkloof Zone 2 but for the whole Diepkloof. Then we formed and it was called the Diepkloof Concerned Residents and I was the leader there with some big old traditional guy's who couldn't take the fact that I was more informed than them. And it was some type of a challenge and that is how I met Trevor and then we combined all the concerned residents because it was not only Diepkloof Concerned Residents there was also Zola Concerned Residents, Pimville Concerned Residents and we formed the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee after a series of marches, protests and you know talking to the media about the problem. And the community was like feeling at least there is a place where they can go to because they realised that if they go to the councillors which were like the ANC Councillors they wouldn't get help. Because even if I was not able to switch on the electricity but I could be able to take them with my own time, with my own money take them to Diepkloof where they were complaining and you know they hear what the issues are. Yeah so basically that's how I sort of like became involved in activism.

Dale: Okay that's covering two or three of the other questions. That's fine because I was going to ask those anyway. And you talked about your schooling and politicisation. Just tell us a little bit, do you have children?

Virginia: Ja I have as I stated in 1999 I got my first kid who is twenty one this year and that is why I couldn't further my education and had to go look for a job. And when I was married I also got another daughter who is thirteen now. And I also have a boy who is four and his name is Sinethemba which means 'we have hope'. So I always think there is hope.

Dale: So three children?

Virginia: Yes.

Dale: Okay and you've also talked about your working jobs. When you graduated from university, then what did you do?

Virginia: When I graduated from university I worked for the Municipal Services Project which was directed by Patrick Bond and John Pape - who we knew as John Pape - then and David McDonald. So the project was doing research on service delivery. So my work was to take that research and disseminating it around the world. So I'll be travelling around Argentina, Cochabamba you know disseminating the findings of the research. And so that made me more exposed to issues and I was even lucky to see where Che Guevara was laid in Bolivia. So I became more involved and also took part in some of the Keep Left activities and then I was caught between the SG which was a very...

Dale: Can you just explain what the SG was?

Virginia: Ja the SG was a Socialist Group which was Trevor's group, a political group and we held the meetings of the SG at the house in which I was living in Diepkloof. But we didn't agree on certain issues because it was like few people and it was too many men who were like taking decisions and I had questions; things about 'so if you do - because it was like a sort of disciplined political group - we can't do this thing we can't do this, we can't talk like that' you know and then people like myself were always reprimanded for doing this and for doing that. And then I questioned who actually disciplines the two you know gurus of the group. And then I guess that is how I was manoeuvred out of the group. But also I wasn't only manoeuvred out of the group but also out of the SECC (Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee) because during the formation of the SECC I like came with the Diepkloof Concerned Residents in other areas which I was not living but they also asked for my help when organising around these issues. So during the formation of the SECC, people will like say, "Virginia should be the leader of the Soweto Electricity Crisis (Committee)" but then it was difficult for me because I was still thinking that I am overwhelmed, you know these are new things, I need to learn more and all that. So then they had appointed Trevor to be the Deputy Chairperson and then I asked myself you know let it be the other way around. I will be the Deputy Chairperson until the next AGM. And the reason why I did that was because I also wanted to see if I am capable of organising, running the structures and stuff. And I proved myself well because Trevor was always overseas and whenever he comes he will say himself, "oh it's just like you are the leader because you know you have everything you know on the dot". At that time I wasn't driving but I would always organise some drivers, take his car go and have a meeting somewhere, do Operation Khanyisa and the organisation was growing and I was working closely with Dudu Mabona you know Silumko's mum and even like the visitors from overseas. I mean the first time War on Want came to South Africa we had a ... because they were received by SAMWU, by Victor Mhlongo the late Victor Mhlongo and Victor called me directly to say there are people from War on Want and they want to talk about the APF. So we hosted a meeting and then we told them about the APF and we fought to draw John Apollis to come and be a part of the meeting and we will be the ones taking them to the taxis, to the township to see the living conditions and all that. And that's how even the APF got its funds in because we exposed them. You know I can't remember the first person, there were two of them and then Wendy later.

Dale: Lies?

Virginia: Who? Lies, oh ja.

Virginia: And then I was also involved in World Conference against Racism. I am selected being part of the committee that organises everything which was very frustrating because I was working with people like Ashwin Desai who were like disorganised and I was also working with Fatima Meer and Mercia Andrews. You know like I am the *smalanyana* (little) girl and then these gurus who have been around but I learned a lot and then at that time the social movements were growing in a way. But what then happened because I had more questions than the SG so I was manoeuvred through the SECC so that people would like you know declare me as not an affiliate and stuff like that. And people who were used were like Eunice Mthembu and Simon Mthembu, Bubu I can't remember her Babukobo Makoba, Bongani were used to make sure that Virginia and Dudu are not elected to the executive anymore because they chow this foreigners money. We were like what money, because actually somehow we are

also using our little money that we had in taking you know taxi's to Soweto and all that because there was no system at that time. And at the AGM where everyone was like we want a chairperson and a female chairperson, already they had identified a chairperson who will be suitable for what they were looking for because she will not be questioning things like I was questioning and also making people responsible. And they elected a woman from Meadowlands which I don't have a problem to elect another woman, but only if she was competent enough. She was not competent and Trevor and Bongani were the ones who've been telling her how to operate the organisation. And in my mind I still have that picture of how it happened at the AGM because Trevor had planted his people so that each and every caucus who had ever heard my name you know then people should speak out and say 'no not Virginia' and then some old lady, ja I think MaNkwashu raised my name. No, no a lady from MaNkwashu's place raised my name and then people just kept quiet and someone seconded and then Trevor looked at this boy and said 'speak', you know 'speak against whatever that's been raised' and then this guy stood up and said 'No. Not Virginia' you know. And it was like 'oh why? And then because at that time I was doing LLB so they justified it 'no Virginia will be fine if she continues to be our legal officer' you know like they tried to quote you know what I mean. But then I had said to myself I am not here for positions, I continue to be part of the organisations and whenever I am needed and whenever I have to do some work. I continued to do it which was different from Dudu because I mean they did the same thing to her. So she was like 'no I am not going to be part of this'. But then after that whole thing and actually even the funds for the SECC which came from South African Development Fund - I was the one who spoke to Joe Wilson who was at the march at the World Conference against Racism and asked Patrick ... because I was leading the march and running and all that stuff. And he couldn't see me because there was lots of people and he said to Patrick 'please bring that woman to me alive' and Patrick just came in commenting 'there's someone who wants to see you' and as I came in he said 'oh I have been expecting a big woman' and I was like 'oh okay unfortunately...' and then he said I want you to tell me about the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and the APF. And we talked about the Electricity Crises Committee and the APF. So we had something like three hours and I was telling him. And then fortunately two weeks after that I was invited by the 'Fifty is enough' to do a speech on service delivery and looking at the perspective of the debt repayment. And his office is in Washington so he heard that I was coming and still I had a meeting with him in Washington but I also involved Trevor in that meeting. So that is how the SECC got its funding. But just after they got their funding they were made sure that they do away with me. But I was fortunate enough that during that whole period I had built up the press not knowing exactly you know what's happening I got a job with the Alternative Development Centre and that is where I went to live in Cape Town for two years - 2002 and 2003.

Dale: Okay. Let's just step back just a little bit in terms of the SECC - it was formed in what year?

Virginia: 1999.

Dale: 1999. Okay, so just from your experience at the time, the build up to the formation of the APF in 2000. What do you remember about the groups that were involved and how they came together?

Virginia: I remember there was SASCO. Do you remember at Wits there was this retrenchment of one hundred and thirty or one hundred and fifty workers and there was also SAMWU who was also like

becoming part of the issue and NEHAWU. And, there was also that meetings that were held at the SAMWU office downtown. And this is when Anti-Igoli 2002 was formed. And you know pockets of community people and as well as you know individuals like yourself, like John Apollis, like Lucien van der Walt. Who was this guy with the big beard? James Pendelberry! Ja you know those people. Even Melanie Sampson ... I remember we used to have meetings at the COSATU House and decide who will be in the research committee and Mondli as well who were in a Research Committee in Research and Education. And myself and Mondli and Melanie who were actually leading the Research and Education Committee and there were also other committees like led by people like Alan and Rob, I can't remember clearly but I can remember those were the people who were around. And one event that I remember which I think actually sort of like made the APF grow but also made other people to withdraw like NEHAWU and SAMWU was the Urban Futures Conference which took place here and because the Anti-Igoli Campaign members were confrontational and I was also linking issues of what was happening in the communities and in the universities with the community with macro economic policies. So there was this withdrawal from some members.

Dale: You remember that in that initial period before the actual APF was formed it took on a form of an activist forum?

Virginia: Yes.

Dale: Correct ja? Okay and then in July that came together in the formation of the APF. So tell us a little bit about, I mean you've already mentioned that you were at the World Conference against Racism and a few other things but in the first lets' say year or two of the APF's existence, how the APF fairly quickly transformed itself from what it started as to what it became within the same [period] around the WSSD?

Virginia: What happened was the Anti-Igoli 2002 campaign, you know there were some changes on who were the members, who are not the members but at the same time people like myself and Trevor who will go to townships like the Vaal, KwaMasiza, Daveyton, Katlehong and where people were like talking about the same issues that we were talking about in Soweto. And they were like, "we are the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee there is no way that we can be like Soweto even outside Soweto". So there is a formation that is more accommodative of all these structures from around Gauteng and that is how we were able to invite people to the activist forum meetings you know. Which were happening late sometimes some people were not able to attend; and then I remember we had that workshop which took place at the 17 Shaft, what was it called?

Dale: National Exploratory Workshop.

Virginia: National Exploratory Workshop. And that drew you know even people from Cape Town you know and in Durban. I can't remember very well what the outcome was, but that actually made people realise that actually now there is a need for people to form an organisation. Given the fact that what we hoped for was actually not going to be. And the first sort of like a conference you know that took place there at the Wits University Senate House, I think that was when the APF started to be transformed and then we spoke about the affiliates, we spoke about who can be affiliated to the APF and things like that - that's how far I remember.

Dale: Okay and how did that affect the way that the APF became structured organisationally from an activist forum to what it eventually became as an organisation with all of its different components? In other words ... how do you remember - from being there right at the beginning not only as an activist but as one of the key affiliates and also within the nascent APF or insipient APF - how do you remember the debates and the ways in which those meetings, the ways in which those decisions came where a constitution was adopted, structures were adopted and so forth? How did that happen?

Virginia: I can't remember very well. I can't remember but what I know, the discussions now were like who is supposed to be part of the APF and those people who are from the communities they felt more entitled than those who were not coming from community based organisations. And there was also which was also my concern, was that there was a level of disrespect from people who were coming from the communities who felt like they actually they are entitled for this struggle and for the organisation itself as compared to people who are not from those organisations. And there was also like this debate about ja "the intellectuals are ruling the APF, actually it's not run by the members of the community" and all that. And there were also sometimes ... we were trying by all means to say "let the community members people come and take part but then whenever they delegate us, they will never do the task and then they end up being the so called intellectuals you are referred to. So we would end up covering, coming to the rescue and then you ask yourself if these intellectuals were not there would the APF be able to prosper as it prospered at that time? And then another debate would be "no, no people don't have resources"; but I will always make an example of myself, for me I didn't have resources, I didn't even know how to punch a computer but I learned in the APF office because if you want to do something and then you know you learn. And I remember I was interviewed by Sakhela Buhlungu who was doing some stuff for CCS research and then his perception was the APF was run by the intellectuals and the community people were not being given the opportunity to learn and then I said I am a community person but more of the stuff that I know how to do now is because of the APF. And then you're learning from those intellectuals themselves because I cannot deny the fact that I grew up in Kwa-Zulu Natal where I was not exposed to anything but also learning from these people now I am able to be who I am. So that debate or the sort of like playing victim you know 'intellectuals took over our organisation' is just normal laziness of people always wanting to pass excuses - I never took it as serious.

Dale: At the time that the debates and discussions around the way the APF should restructure itself to where it was unlike a lot of the other social movements that have risen at the time; it became much more of a structured organisation with a constitution and democratic structures and representation. From your experience at the time, did you think that that was the correct approach to take or that served the APF well in trying to restructure itself?

Virginia: You know I heard some concerns why the APF you know is structured like this and many people believed in organisations that didn't have a structure and they felt that that was more democratic. But the experience that I had in the APF as I said, without knowing who is supposed to do what therefore noting would happen, do you understand? At least we knew that those people that were given those positions were actually accountable to the people who elected them and for me I saw it as sort of like trying to run away from responsibility now giving people the relevant positions and so that they are able to account to the constituency that they represent. And it was a debate even in Cape Town, when I went

to stay in Cape Town I was always criticised for coming from the APF that has a Chairperson and a constitution and all that. But my feeling is that it actually helped the APF's growth because even though there was resistance from the locals against intellectuals and all that, but things were happening. Things were happening and I actually like feel that at that time we had a more vibrant APF that was known by everyone and even not only in South Africa but all over the world because we were like shaking the powers that be and kicking ass where we were supposed to.

Dale: And in that regard what do you remember - of what I call the formative years of the APF – of the APF's main strategy and tactics, how did it go about struggling? In other words what was the APF'S strategic approach to addressing the issues ... what were the main campaigns that they had under taken in those years?

Virginia: If I remember correctly ... myself, Melanie and Mondli would do a research on a particular issue and then why are people not having water in the particular community. Then we will workshop those community members; which was sort of like assisting the community members to be able to challenge their Councillors or their Mayor or Mayor's at that time, to say according to this, this is what is supposed to be. And comrades were sort of like struggling on an informed basis, that they take these issues based on the fact they have documents, we always make documents and make hand-outs and teach comrades around these issues. And it was easy for the APF to sort of like to say today we are struggling we have a march, a big march on housing and all those affiliates that have a housing problem will gather at the Library Gardens or wherever and then take up the issue and even if after that march we are asked to go to a meeting, a follow up meeting, people whom we knew that they grasp whenever there is a workshop they will be the ones who are speaking at those meetings. I remember one time we were invited by Eskom, sixteenth floor in Braamfontein ... they were not talking about cut offs but they had some fancy name which actually we had been work-shopped about through the Education and Research Committee and then it was easy for us to take them on to say 'no don't tell us that', this is what we are saying and just call a spade an spade and then we will be able to challenge them because we had the information. So I think for me the APF at that time ... worked for me because being able to learn about issues and study about issues empowers you in the debates and in strategising around a particular issue or around a particular institution. And sort of like empowers you in a way you don't have to have degrees but understand actually what the issues are that actually affects you as an individual but also as a community.

Dale: Okay and one of the things that also helped shape the APF and its approach was the response of the ANC, the response of the state. How do you remember experiencing that once the APF got off the ground and started actually having direct actions and other things? How did the state and the ANC respond to that, how did that impact on the APF in those early years?

Virginia: The response actually was very scary. I remember there was a time in Soweto where some of the ANC guys were threatening to shoot us - I remember that incident when we were doing Operation Khanyisa. But also I had my phone bugged many times you know especially during the World Summit on Sustainable Development and even the house where I lived in there will be cars just running, just to scare you late at night. And a Jacob Maroga who is now the CEO of Eskom actually like came to Patrick

Bond's office and my office was next door and he said to me "Virginia I am ready to talk" you know. And I'm like "no, you know me because I am part of the SECC so if you want to talk you must talk to the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee. So it was a form of saying listen to me you know and I will do better things for you, you know. So that was how they responded, trying to silence the voices that were more vocal but also the arrests. And I will say there was positive and negative impact of that because when you recruit or organise people around issues that the APF was addressing they will be interested because that's what they live you know and then they wanted also change, to see change in their life. But as soon as there is an arrest, people will back off because they don't want to be arrested. But at the same time because there are arrests and there will be media and at that time we had lots of media coverage whether it is in Soweto or APF at large. So APF became very well known and even if today you speak to someone in the ANC he will tell you 'hey APF was a threat for sometime'. Because we were sort of like action orientated, and then what I also sort of admired at the time was that affiliates were more supportive to each other. We will be like SECC is having a meeting in Eskom but other affiliates will come as well you know and be part of the action even if it's two or three people but the fact that SECC is also an affiliate of the APF that they sort of like working. And it was even more useful in terms of power and being powerful and being able to even report at the APF meetings and this is what happened. I remember when we broke down the door at Eskom some of the members of the APF were there with a camera and stuff and even during the arrest of the eighty seven, the Kensington eighty seven. Those were like the times which I think APF was sort of like the limelight and not only because it was making just noise but also because people felt that through the APF there were a lot of issues or a lot of things that would have been made worse. I remember Eskom was supposed to be bought by an American company but because of all the noise and the defiance campaigns and all that there it ended, not taking off.

Dale: And just to follow ... one of the criticisms of the form of an organisation like the APF as a social movement is that at some point in time they are going to be victims of their own success. There's an issue that comes up, it gets a lot of attention, a lot of as you are saying media/publicity there's a lot of actions and then things changed and the most immediate emergencies and needs of responding to something is no longer there. Was that the experience that you had in the APF after that initial period where because the state changed its response or began to change some policies and some of the actions were successful in stopping certain things from taking place. How did that affect the APF? Or did it?

Virginia: Yes the state has changed its response but those responses never said that the APF was no longer necessary. And I think as a social movement APF is still important in this point in time because it is not always only about policies, it is also about the voice that is different from the voice of the traditional political parties. For me as an individual, the APF was sort of a home like for the voiceless people. And we will continuously need that you know as I see it. But the responses were like maybe they did kill some momentum in some of the affiliates or even in some of the APF but for me I never had that experience. I just saw it as still necessary and it will continue to be necessary because we will have the political parties but the voice of the marginalised and the working class will always be needed.

Dale: Okay and you mentioned earlier on in the formation of the SECC in their earlier years and your eventual marginalisation in the SECC - at the heart of that were access and use of resources. Then you

mentioned the fact that the APF by 2001 -2003 had managed to get significant financial resources. How do you think that - if at all - changed the nature of the organisation or what impact did the access to those resources have?

Virginia: No I think you know the issue of the resources is good and bad. Because it depends on how people come to organisations. And it also goes down to the fact that people are unemployed and you cannot be part of an institution where you see money being exchanged and at the end of the day you don't have money to go buy bread, which to some extent I understand; the fact that resources then become an issue that actually breaks the organisations and most people then want to also survive. But my principle was always even when I was in the SECC, I'll say "comrade if I give you five hundred rand for you to do something I wouldn't mind if you pay one hundred rand and do the work" and be able to account for it in a way you know. Because actually we need to do this work, so if you do you take the whole five hundred rand, so how do I myself account, understand? And then the resources then become issues even with the SECC even with the APF where the people thought 'if I don't push myself into that position I won't be close to the resources'. But I think for me it was different because even though I was part of the executive and all that, I was also studying and was able to find a job for myself so it was not an issue of me mismanaging funds but being able to sort of allocate funds where they are supposed to be. But what also then put me on the very difficult position because people would say "because she's working she doesn't know how we feel" and as if that will call for just using funds anyway. So resources are a good and a bad thing in a way. You see it even today where organisations are powerful as soon as resources come in, now there are fights. You know "now who's supposed to be the treasurer...who's supposed to be the treasurer"? Who is supposed to get this money, who is not supposed to get"? And then there is this tendency of people having this mentality of entitlement, 'this money is being given in our name, the poor'. But then it is not given for you as an individual as the poor, it's has been given to a group of people that are poor so they can be able to make campaigns. I think that this is also connected to the fact that the amount or the extent of political knowledge is very low. So then people tend not to actually understand why they are part of the APF or whatever organisations but see it as an opportunity for them. And even in the SECC and this is something that I will pick up, people will say "I also want to travel like that, just like Virginia" without knowing why Virginia was travelling. You know as I stated that I was working for the Municipal Project. So it's kind of like competitions of politics and they would say "I want to be like this", "I want to be like Dale I also want to ride an expensive bike" "he gets to buy this bike because he is close to the funds". Those mentalities that are actually not building, but that are actually destructive and then mainly because people, I don't know how can it be done people actually get their political knowledge that don't actually allow them to understand their positions in the organisation.

Dale: Just speak to that just a little bit because one of the things that the APF at least seemed to be attempting to do at least in those early years was to build a movement, to build a cadreship as opposed to just responding to electricity or just responding to these kinds of things. And you earlier said that one of the benefits for you was to be skilled politically, I assume that also means politically not just in terms of practical. So how did you experience, with the communities and working with them in the APF in

those years and in terms of how the APF went about trying to build a political cadre that could connect the dots between the local and the national and the international?

Virginia: It was quite a challenge because and I think it has also got to do with our history, like where we come from and how we are socialised. First of all as members of the community we always think less of ourselves you know especially with the people who are more knowledgeable than us and secondly there is also this mentality especially amongst men that if it's another woman I will allow her to be part of development skills; for me as another woman stupid mentalities but they exist. It was a challenge where APF was having these wonderful workshops and seminars in very important issues, but you will find people going there for an outing. Even when I was working for the AIDC I had the responsibility of holding a leadership training course, talking with workshop people on political economy issues of capitalism and all that and you'll find same people attending the same leadership every year. And when you ask "comrades don't you graduate?" because if you have gone through the introduction of political economy, how can you come again and be introduced to political economy. It was a huge issue because when I was responsible for the leadership course I had guidelines, that the purpose of this leadership training course is to build a new layer of cadres. We can't have the same people, we can't have the Anele Mbizo's and the Skus' - there were these guys remember from Youth for Work - they were the ones that took that space as their space but you'll find that it was not becoming a space for them to learn and move up. It was just a space to go on an outing; 'who doesn't want to go to Cape Town every year' and then you will find that within the APF comrades where they just saw these workshops as an outing. They will be able to find transport money and all that and I even asked them to say I was part of the leadership training course once then they graduated. That is why I am able to provide it for you; don't you want that to happen to you? But because you are closing these opportunities it's like "hey Virginia you are better off than us so you cannot tell us what to do". So yes we may count one, two, three people that were able to be skilled politically or otherwise within the APF but it was a challenge and it's becoming more of a challenge now.

Dale: The one thing about the APF that stands out from the very beginning was what I call its ideological heterogeneity ... people coming from all sorts of different political organisations and everything else. How did that play itself out within a movement that was not a political party but clearly wanted to have a clear politics at the same time?

Virginia: Ja hey that was a struggle because there are people who wanted to be part of the APF but at the same time were loyal to the ANC you know and the people who sort of like worship Nelson Mandela and some of the politics of the APF actually exposes Mandela ... this person is actually is the cause of all the problems that we have. So sometimes you find debates and you know I remember there were members of the APF who actually nearly fought literally over that issue thing. As much as we want water but the ANC is still ours you know it was a challenge but I think that's how you know the sifting took place ... then the APF was adamant to actually clarify its ideology and then that actually sifted who actually was not part of the ideology. It started even when we sort of like adopted the fact that all the problems are as a result of the macro-economic policy and then you wouldn't see the COSATU's, you wouldn't see the SAMWU's you wouldn't see the NEHAWU's and then even with you know REMMOHO's ideological principles of whether socialism or you know capitalism. Then people were like this hmm—

hmm if I continue being part of this I won't be able to get a tender you know. So I think it happened automatically even though sometimes you have big debates and misunderstandings, but people like us we've always liked to joke you are in the wrong place, if you think you are going to sing the nice song that you sing say Oliver Tambo or something like that; so you will have people like us saying, "not here".

Dale: And what about the role - you've mentioned earlier you have been part from the beginning of one of the political groups that belonged to the APF, the Socialist Group and the APF was open to other political groups as well most of which are not in the mainstream and are considered to be Far Left, Trotskyist whatever it was - what role do you think the political groups played not just in the early part but as the APF grew and the key strategic debates - elections, political parties all these things - started to happen in the organisation?

Virginia: I think they played a very important role. You know I think even if I have issues with those small political groups you know each one thinks they have the best politics you know more than the other one. But I think they helped in actually paving the way the APF is supposed to be ideologically and they won't agree sometimes but I think like on the basis of everything in terms of what politics is the APF actually standing for. They play a very important role even though sometimes they're confusing. I know other members of the APF didn't know whether they should be part of the APF or the other political group and then they would come also with their political groups and put it here in the APF and now then the APF becomes a mess. And then people don't even understand that they are still members of the APF or Keep Left or SG or whatever? So it played itself in a way that it has its positive and negative.

Dale: One of the key challenges of the APF after the first few years was the issue of once it structured itself and had an organiser, an administrator and everything else was the role of the political groups and those intellectuals, I suppose the middle class intellectuals who had become a little bit less at the time. I want to ask you another question about that, but do you remember, what is your recollection of that time 2005-2006 where this blew up within the APF in terms of misuse of resources for political purposes and the organiser resigned and stepped aside and there was a whole change in some of the leadership of the APF ... how do you remember that?

Virginia: I wasn't very active with the APF at that time, but I remember actually you know some statement that I will never forget ... whenever I think of that statement and then I think that that was actually the continuation of that statement by Trevor was that when he introduced us to the Socialist Group - this was at the house that I used to live in, in Diepkloof - he said "my dream is to have my own political party". So when I heard all those things I was like oh this is you know the means to make sure that the political party begins but then the sad thing is that it's been done, it's been done through the APF and the APF funding. And remember as I mentioned, one of the reasons why the APF funds were received is because of the obvious role that I played and it was like saddening to hear that you play this role and making sure that the APF gets its funding to cover a broader constituency and then there is someone who wants to use it for his own purposes, for developing a political party. I was wondering how was it going to be structured and what I was also worried about in the APF was that there was no women leadership in a way. When we started there was no women leadership and women were sort of like seeing themselves even those who were part of the APF, they were more withdrawn. And my

experiences had sort of like developed me to be able to sort of like push for my position as a woman to say “yes I am a woman but I also deserve to be heard”. But it was very difficult and especially with those you know kind of people you had who like wanted to push their position of opening their political parties and who had not always been too happy that there were women members in a way. Anyway that was one of my concerns and I am saying that because when I was living in Diepkloof I was married and my husband beat me up, he was very close to Trevor and myself. When I told Trevor and he said ‘but he is doing it for the first time’. So that sort of like opened a whole different world for me like, “okay this person calls himself a socialist, so is it clear that socialism and women’s rights are far different issues’. And then if the political party starts up where will women’s rights be, women’s role in the whole thing? So those were some of my concerns.

Dale: Okay and by that time in what I call the middle years of the APF ... you mentioned how the fact that SAMWU and others had moved away in the early period - but around those middle years a lot of the individual activists and the more middle class, whatever one wants to call middle class intellectuals had began and started to move away quite rapidly. Why do you think that that was the case?

Virginia: I think that one of the reasons was as a result of the fact that there was this sort of ownership from the community members of the APF and people who were like APF is made up of affiliates and the affiliate members should be the ones who are more permanent than these so called, intellectuals. And also some of the studies that were made and criticisms that were around was that the APF was run by the intellectuals and then that has led to some people withdrawing and all that. But there’s also these tendencies bad conduct, I don’t know but there is one thing that worries me in the APF that will always worry me when it comes to elections, who is supposed to be the Chairperson the Treasurer? People just change it’s like we are in a different world. I don’t know why, even myself I was like ay, are these the same comrades that I see and talk about the plight on the working class you know sort of like seeing themselves? Now they become like vultures when it comes to elections. And I think that’s also one of the things the people felt like this is not my world; I am not going to be part of the struggling for positions when we are supposed to be more vocal in the APF more than any other. Because I also felt like ‘okay I am from the communities but what’s happening here and ... it kills you someone who is not used to a part will be like ‘where am I? I thought this is where my home is supposed to be, my home is where I can feel safe. People just change when there is elections.

Dale: Why do you think - I mean, some people have said that one of the differences about an organisation like the APF is the character of its constituency and you mentioned this with regards to resources and other things and you also mentioned the fact that you believe that the political level of knowledge was fairly low, the degree to which you think the character of the constituency of the APF shaped the ways in which it approached these kinds battles so to speak both internally as well as otherwise - in other words, from your own experience in the APF would you make the argument that a lot of these things happen precisely because of the nature of an organisation like the APF and who it organisers and who makes it up ... I am just drawing that out so you can address in your own experience what you think?

Virginia: I'm not sure really because part of me is like some of the things that I saw is that even the affiliates were sort of like directed by the so called you know big gurus of politics; how to operate you know how to do things, who to target. So I don't think it will be the affiliates themselves. And I think the sad thing is that even in any society or in any organisational structure, there are those who are sort of like more knowledgeable than others and then people sometimes just follow for the sake of you know 'Virginia is our leader, this is what she says' without actually knowing exactly the nitty-gritty's of the whole situation. So my experience is fairly limited in that one but what I observed is that the affiliates, yes they made the APF but they were not sort of fully into knowing what is happening because the example that I can make is that when I was ousted from the SECC, the person who said that Virginia should be the Chairperson was a member of the community that knows that Virginia is always there wherever she's needed, you understand? Because they had never caucused with her that Virginia cannot be. Until someone who is the leader of that community stood up and said "no not Virginia" and they were like "oh, okay if you say so" you know. They don't have their own sort of like independent intellect of deciding what to do and sometimes it is not their fault, it's because how this structure is in organisations. Because even now; like Eunice recently has told me that they were told the reason why we needed to be ousted was because we were chowing money from overseas. And because they were new in the SECC so they were pumping for information and when you think it is the organisation only to find out its few individuals that are planning to.

Dale: That unfortunately has been an abiding character all throughout the years ja. You played a fairly significant role in the early and mid years in regards to the APF's relationships both nationally and internationally. Speak to us a little bit about...the character of that, who did the APF work with, who did it create solidarities with and how that impacted on the work and the character of the APF?

Virginia: Ja there was a time where I like, I have family in Durban and it was in Kwa-Zulu Natal as I told you I grew up in Kwa-Zulu Natal. So I will go and visit and I would realise that hey people don't exactly know things as we know in Jo'burg. So I wrote a letter - which actually was one of the reasons why I was kicked out in the SG - I wrote a letter to AIDC and said because I have a family, I can live with my family, if they can just give me a thousand rand I want to do a series of workshops in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban. They gave me the one thousand rand then I went to Durban. I did a workshop in Kwa-Mashu, in Chatsworth; you know using like one hundred and fifty, two hundred rand just for snacks in Umlazi and Chesterville. And those workshops actually contributed in the formation of the Durban Concerned Citizens Forum because after I gave them the workshops, they were like "so where do we find such an organisation where you come from"? Then I referred them to Fatima who was having the Chatsworth Concerned Group. So that's how I was able to work with Fatima in actually putting together the Durban Concerned Citizens Forum. And at that time it was also actually Ashwin and Heinrich Bohmke. And also with the research we were doing on the water with the Municipalities Project with Shaun we went to Hammersdale, we went to people like Umhlaba you know and we will address meetings and stuff. That's also how we were able to influence the APF struggle into other areas outside Johannesburg. And with also the work that I was doing with the Municipal Services Project I was able to invite it to other organisations and speak about service delivery. But there was a time when I was invited to a SAMWU Conference; it was a tough one because they wanted to understand what's happening in the township

and you could see there were divisions between the groups you know. Some were like “oh ja these are the issues” and some who were like loyal to the ANC and were saying “ja this is un-called for”. It happened even in the SACP remember? And those were the situations we found ourselves in, but I don’t know what pushed me, I was like not even caring about what was happening as long as I was able to give the information that I needed to. And then even as I would be going overseas during the Municipal Services Project I would find an opportunity of talking about the APF, the electricity crises and talk about the general problem of services but then talk about what’s happening in the township. And then also sort of like people got very exposed to what was happening in the APF and some people started to come and if they come we take them to communities and they will do research and write about the APF, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee and then at that time the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee was very vibrant, so we were like having actions all the time and always on the news and because there were limited skills at that time sometimes I was running organising, sometimes I had to go to the SABC (South African Broadcasting Co-operation), go to Khaya FM and stuff like that. But you know it was quite an experience and it put the struggle of why the APF was actually formed ... into a very big exposure.

Dale: Okay and one of the things that at least it seemed that the APF had a little bit more success of doing, was involving itself in solidarity initiatives and exposing itself on international levels as opposed to maybe some of the other social movements who were more localised or regionalised. You were part of quite a number of delegations and participations in the World Social Forums, Southern African... How did you think that that impacted on peoples not just the APF as an organisation but on peoples own understandings of the problems that they were trying to struggle for or against?

Virginia: I think that that worked wonders because even like even today in the communities whatever struggle that is, for instance the members of the Soweto Concerned Residents, they are able to link the local to the global, they take issues of whatever that is happening to them in Soweto and then they link it to the international issues. There was a day when I was getting into the SCR meeting and I was so impressed to hear Eunice who only has a very limited educational background, but making a speech linking the lack of service delivery and the issue of debt repayment. And also that impressed me because then there was that linkages but what also impressed me is because Eunice has been part of my training when I was still at the AIDC and also the Freedom of Expression Institute. So when she sort of like shares this information with the broader constituency of the Soweto Concerned Residents and the members of the Soweto Concerned Residents when they watch TV and at the meetings they can stand up and say “we saw people in Haiti died” and they connect that and say ‘why are these people who are in Haiti, they are in because they look like us, they look like you as the poor people’. That actually makes you realise that even though you don’t have twenty people that are sort of training those workshops but one person can actually make a difference as time goes on because they watch TV in a different way now, even the old grannies they now can make the linkages. So I think it was that that situation it is very important and for me I wish it was something that could be kept because then people are able to associate themselves, what is happening in other countries regardless of what it is or what the issues are.

Dale: You have worked for numerous what we would call NGO’s; you started out at AIDC, FXI, MSP, and now you are also working for a funder. From that perspective, of someone who has been an activist but

also within the NGO's, one of the things that has been a constant in the APF has been the debate around the relationships in NGO's and social movements and other's. Speak a little bit to that from both, you've spoken from the activist side, from the NGO side and the relationship that has developed as a result.

Virginia: Ja that was a challenge because first of all I don't see myself working for the government or the private sector. So the NGO's are the best place to be. And what I am also proud of as an activist within those NGO's I was sort of like bringing in the activism perspective in whatever work that they were doing. For instance, at the AIDC they would have all these workshops and blah, blah about globalisation trade and all that. But I have always sort of like made sure that those that are trained use it for their own activism work. And when I arrived at FXI there was no activism. When we looked at the issues of access to information and all that and I pushed that to happen, I involved community based organisations around Johannesburg and we looked at issues that FXI was looking at, but we were looking at but also in a way that brings in activism and at that time when I was at FXI, FXI was on the news all the time because it was not only a member, an employee of FXI but there was also masses behind whatever campaign that was there and that also helped in people understanding issues of Section 16 [of the SA Constitution]. Not only as something on paper but also included issues of the ability of expressing yourself through protest. And also the fact that people that also had an understanding of actually what the SABC is or should be and even issues of Telkom. And then for the first time when I started work at FXI, FXI was having marches, pickets which is something that was positive because then all the issues of Access to Information, Freedom of Expression, Freedom of the Press were sort of like very far from the community people. But even today if you can go to an SCR meeting or go to Evaton, people will tell you that "we have watched the news and this is how much they covered for issues that don't concern ANC and this is how much they covered for things that concern ANC and this is how much they covered Zuma" and all that - at that time it was Mbeki - but also people's ability to monitor how the SABC operated at that time, I remember there was a big march around SABC and all those issues that we were raising at that time are the issues that just came out. Remember the SABC last year and there were a whole lot of issues and those were the issues then, and people were like "you comrade Virginia told us about these things" and then these things we going to happen. So I agree sometimes you get to NGO's and then sort like get caught in but I think I try by all means because even with NPA (Norwegian People's Aid) which is a funder and I think one of at least positive things about the NPA as a funder is that its politics is more focussed on working class communities and organisations which is a bit comforting. Even though you don't have like the same people believing in that but last year I attended our programme management seminar in Oslo and the Chairperson was clear that our politics are with the Left and if you feel uncomfortable just resign because what we want to do, we want to make sure that community based organisations are strengthened and they are able to raise their voices against injustices that they find themselves in.

Dale: Just for the record, what does NPA stand for?

Virginia: Norwegian People's Aid ...that is important because of my legal programme if I say I worked for the NPA people are like "Ooh okay"

Dale: One of the things that you got through the APF and that the APF helped form was the Coalition against Water Privatisation and you became personally very involved as the leader in that organisation or front. Just speak a little bit to that experiment which was an attempt by the APF predominantly to broaden a particular campaign that was taken up to a wider level and also adopt different kinds of tactics in addressing basic services issue.

Virginia: Ja no I think the main aim was to sort of like take the issue of water as a universal issue outside the ideology of the APF and try and draw all the people who sort of believed that water is a human right. And then we tried to draw people from different organisations, even NEHAWU even also SAMWU and the coalition was formed precisely because we wanted to accommodate all those people who didn't communicate what the APF stood for. But still, we talk about water; we talk about something that we cannot take out of the real politics because water has become this big commodity that relates to all the issues that people are affected by. But then we continued with the coalition after even everyone left and we decided 'no we cannot be part of this' and what happened was that we drew a strategy of mobilising, mobilising communities around the issue but also decided to take the issue to court and fighting it in both ways which was very strategic but which was not easy. Because then there was also issues of resources, issues of either members of the APF criticising the strategy of going to court - 'the court will never help, the courts are still part of the state apparatus' - all those kind of things but I mean you learn through these things and you take feedback to the community, positive feedback and you learn. But then the funny part I remember when we won the case at the High Court there was no criticism. I was like "wow" even some of the ANC guys and the ID (Independent Democrats) was like "wow"; but then [with] the appeals court case ruling everyone kept quiet. It was even worse at the Constitutional Court which was a very sad ruling but I think for me what the communities are supposed to sort of like focus us on now is mobilisation and making strong their voices on the streets of where they live in terms of the pre-paid water meter installation and just more access to water in general.

Dale: Do you think - using that as a example - do you think that the fact that over its ten years of its existence - the APF is now ten years old - that even though as you said there has been debates and criticisms around particular strategies that the APF has embraced a range of different tactics and a range of different strengths, that's been a strength of the organisation or not?

Virginia: Ja the range of tactics it depends on what the outcomes are but I think at the same time we cannot just use one tactic; it depends on the issues and it depends on where the country is in terms of what is actually supposed to be taking up. Because the issue of water, the reason why the strategy of court was taken is the fact that there was this sort of like a vibe of socio-economic rights had to be taken up and the litigation on these rights were so limited. So then we thought this was an opportunity to take advantage of the litigation process and also internationally the issue of water was sort of like you know many organisations even at the World Water Forum people were like pushing for human rights to water. And then we were hoping that the Constitutional Court would be the Constitutional Court but now we're not sure whether it is a Constitutional Court you know at least as I see it ... and then it becomes difficult because now people they actually don't know what to do. This is why I am saying I think there's more that needs to be done in pushing people's ability to take issues on the street because that's always

been the culture to take issues on the street and as a collective push for a stronger voice outside the courts.

Dale: Okay and what about the tactic which has also been a constant debate in the APF almost since its formation, about participation in elections? Your own experience of that - both as an affiliate and as a member of the APF, as a political grouping - debate because that is one constant throughout the organisation's history?

Virginia: Ja when the issue of the elections came out in the SECC I was already out. I was in Cape Town then I came back from Cape Town and I continued with the SECC and then the issue of elections also came up and there was like disagreements all over; "no who is going to be elected? Because there's an issue of money as well despite the politics there's issues of money that if this person gets elected this person is going to be earning salary and who shouldn't earn a salary and who should earn a salary? And then the manner in which the SECC was looking at now the salary was going to come to the organisation and that person will get a certain percentage. But then that strategy also was proven wrong by the first councillor that they elected because then she wanted the money and she wanted to complain and all that. And my concern with that strategy with issue of elections is that I think it disempowers the cause of what the people in Soweto and in South Africa should actually take up because they decided that they just going to take someone who is not very active in the organisation but this person is also expected to be at the council meetings and pushing for some issues. How is a person who is in-active exactly knows how to push for issues? That has always been my question. And what I am saying is proven right since they had a councillor in the council chambers because you have to know the issues, you have to be able to know strategies and how to push for issues and you also have to be knowledgeable on certain things, because issues don't just emanate from space, they are committed to certain issues. So I think that that whole thing is actually whether or not the APF is part of it or not part of it, it has actually crippled the APF from the council, from the mayor because that person is seen as the APF member within the chambers and then even if you as a member of the community, you try to challenge your councillor and then the councillor will say "ja but why didn't you ask your APF member in the council chambers to push for that?" So it is sad and if we can have political parties and change the APF into political parties my concern is that the voice of the poor and the marginalised will then therefore be gone. Because as soon as a political party become a political party and known then it has its own interest, then the protocols and the line that it's pushing.

Dale: Just a few last questions. Over the last several years in particular many of those social movements that rose up at the same time as the APF did are no longer there or are there and are a shadow of their former self. There's been a general, I guess what observers or writers would call, a general sort of downturn in terms of what social movements used to be but at the same time in the last several years there's been an upsurge in the protests on service delivery all across the country. As someone who's been there in the beginning in varying different forms and ways, how do you understand that seemingly contradiction of things or is there a contradiction?

Virginia: Come again.

Dale: Okay on the one hand in the last several years most of the social movements that arose in 2000-'99 many of them have either disappeared or become quite weak or they not nearly as strong or as active as they used to be. The APF is still there but people could argue that it's not as it was. At the same time you've had this upsurge of service delivery protests and protests all around the country including in small towns and rural areas and everything else. My question to you is do you see that as a contradiction or not? In other words ... one of the criticisms of an organisation like the APF has been "well where has the APF been over the last three years when all of these things have been going on"? Others might say "well hang on, hang on a minute if it hadn't been for the APF and its own things ..." So I want you to engage that. Is there a contradiction or not?

Virginia: No, no I don't think so. Like for instance as I said I have families in Kwa-Zulu Natal but not only in Kwa-Zulu Natal. You go to these places and there you see these things and then you ask people "oh why you allow this, we don't allow this in Joburg?" And people actually learn from what they hear of the APF. And then they decide to stand up on issues and I think to some extent the existence of the APF has actually made people to feel that "you know if they can do it in Joburg why can't we do it ourselves"? Even though they may not have the APF's name but the fact that people understand that these things are happening in other parts of the country so they also feel that they can also do the same and stand up for their rights. I mean I remember in Vryheid they don't have access to water and I said "oh maybe I should come and spend a month here" and they said "oh come, come" and I just recently heard that one of the ladies said "Virginia doesn't come, let us go to the councillor or to the headman and say we want water at this time ...". So, those things are happening not in an organised way but by the word of mouth people would like listen to issues and what is happening and also watching television and reading about what is happening in the other parts of the country. And the APF has always been there ... and then people were like "oh ja these are the people with the red t-shirts so you are fighting?" Those issues, I think it's not a contradiction, I think even though the APF might not be active as it was but it has sort of like planted a seed.

Dale: Do you think that the political changes at the level of the ANC and the government over the last two to three years all of the things that have been happening, do you think that that has had an impact on an organisation like the APF and if so how in terms of the change, the supposed change in the nature of the politics, the language, the things that have happened given the fact that the APF started very much in the Mbeki era, GEAR, privatisation everything? How has that shifted or not?

Virginia: Ja no I think there's a bit of confusion. Like when it comes to the Zuma issue, from the affiliates you know. Sometimes like over the weekends I get to go to the affiliates and like for instance two weeks ago I was at the KCR you know giving a women's day empowerment workshop and then you get to hear people wanting to sing Zuma songs and Zuma praises. And I still say that's also because of a level of educational political understanding of what the issues are and know exactly what Zuma stands for. But also with the fact of the limited understanding of what human rights issues are and also gender equality issues. Because I mean if you look at Zuma as a person I mean women should actually be coming out and say, "fuck this man" you know. But no one actually does that because there's this thing of thinking that Zuma is better than Mbeki precisely because Zuma can laugh and come to people and Mbeki wasn't. So, it's an issue of personality versus politics because this one laughs and I've said to the people,

"I think Mbeki was even better because I understand by the look this one can even kill you". By the time you are up he's done things because he's laughing at you. So even other members of the APF like in the leadership find the confusion when people think no' it's going to be better because Mbeki is no longer there actually the problems were caused by Mbeki'. But then the question I would ask is that has Zuma said there is something wrong with the ANC politics? He hasn't. And then so there will never be any difference. But it is sad and it's not only in the APF but actually in the whole civil society organisation, in the whole sector where there's this confusion; the ANC is there and the therefore you sort of even lose the allies that you made you know as an organisation because people are thinking oh no, we know Zuma is going to come up with good things, and then on the other hand you that understand that actually it's not true so you are like actually two opposite sides and that actually destabilises the power in the strength of the civil society organisations in South Africa.

Dale: Okay, last two or three questions. What would you characterise over its now ten year history as the APF's main achievements?

Virginia: I think one of the achievements of the APF is that with all its weaknesses, but there is always this consistent existence of a voice that would just come up, anywhere and say 'oh no we don't want this, we don't want that' even though you don't like get the full package of what you don't want. But there's always like this thing, "if it wasn't for the APF this and this would have gone wrong or this and this would have gone worse than it is now". And I think having working for the Norwegian Peoples Aid where they always talk about even the smaller results and I would say I am also wonderful because I am from the APF because I sort of like learned within the APF on how to do things even though for the fact that I am able to write reports and stuff you know, it's because of the APF - I didn't learn that from school. And there are some of the privatisation projects that were supposed to have taken place for instance the issue of ESKOM. But because of the SECC plus the APF you know that those things were reversed and regardless of the fact that we lost the case in the Constitutional Court I am telling you its quiet in the township, they are not sure whether they should install pre-paid meters or shouldn't they install pre-paid meters. And I say that because even though the Coalition was like a separate thing but the APF has played a bigger role in making sure that those issues are actually being looked at. I was talking to somebody who said "I know you, I know you from somewhere" and then later said "oh you are one of those people from APF, what happened to the APF"? You know guys just to tell you I am not the APF person I'm for business but you know the APF played a big role, the noise that it was making, it helped many people. And those are the things that we don't hear about, but if you hear them being said by people from the outside then it makes you feel good because then you somehow sort of feel like depressed "oh I've spent so much time in the APF" that happened. But actually you may not see some of the things that the APF has achieved but actually it has achieved a lot.

Dale: And on the flip side, what do you think have been the APF's main failures?

Virginia: I think the main failures, I don't know okay there's this new strategy of decentralising activities and I am not sure how it's working but for me I don't think it's working because now you get people sort of claiming like to be doing things in their own communities and those things you never see happening. For instance just to give an example the march last year that was supposed to be in Protea South and all

that, there were ten people there and it's already the funds, the resources have already been taken out for that activity. But if it was like we used to do like we have affiliates coming from different parts and we would have a meeting as the APF my experience is that it would be different. So I think the flip side is trying to decentralise things but at the same time without having enough skills and enough commitment from the members coming from the affiliates and precisely because there is also the issue of resources and money and trying to score and all that. I think for me that has actually lead to the real demise of the APF.

Dale: Do you think the APF still remains relevant?

Virginia: I think it has never been relevant than before. This time it is more relevant because I mean ... with Norwegian Peoples Aid there was a Women Can do it Workshop last week and I was looking at the women that time. They were coming from the APF they attended the workshop, few of them that had been like vocal and understood what the training is. And I think at this juncture in this country we need women leadership and given other issues around women and gender issues and we need women leadership that understands what it is to be like between a woman within an organisation let alone in the country but in the organisation and now we are going to be able to say "wrong is wrong, right is right". You know because if it continues like this with Zuma and his polygamist tendencies and traditionalist and all that we will end up having a country where women are not seen at all. So I think the APF with other organisations will play a big role in the nature of a particular group of women, build a cadre specifically of women who are going to be able to sort of like continue in making sure that women issues are always on the agenda.

Dale: Okay those are all the questions I had. I always ask at the end of the interview if there's something that I haven't asked, if there's something you think we've missed out ... please add or if you have anything that you wanted to add and that we haven't addressed that you think is important.

Virginia: Ja I think for me you know like, I don't know how, to what extent to try to do this within the APF. I don't know how it's been done but I think there's a need for the APF comrades to be sort of like empowered in different skills; computers, ability to do presentations, speaking but of course that also depends on them because I know you can take a horse to drink water but you cannot force it to drink. But we need a group of comrades within the APF that are sort of like capacitated in some issues. So that let's say myself, yourself okay we've had an experience, who is going to be the next coordinator of the Coalition? So we need a system where we monitor and make sure that it becomes part of the plan that five people maybe in a year are skilled on one, two, three, four, five and make sure that we build that consistency because at the end of the day we also don't want to be in the leadership for the rest of our lives and then therefore the criticism will come that "oh Virginia, Dale" or whatever are actually the ones who are running the APF. Because the APF doesn't have to belong to anyone of us, but belongs to the members and the communities that it represents.

Dale: Okay thanks Virginia, appreciate it.

Virginia: Ja.