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Dale: Okay this is an interview with Nina Benjamin. It's on the 9th of March 2010. First of all, thanks Nina for availing yourself.

Nina: Sure.

Dale: Just for the record, state your... can you state your full name?

Nina: Nina Benjamin.

Dale: Okay and Nina before we just get into the issues of the APF and the history, I just want to know a few basic things about yourself because activists ... I am trying to get a sense of the individuals in the APF, so can you just tell me where and when were you born?

Nina: In 1964, in Cape Town.

Dale: My goodness, you are younger than I am [laughter] ... okay and places where you've lived? How long did you stay in Cape Town before you moved up to Johannesburg?

Nina: I moved to Johannesburg in 1998. I lived in Cape Town before that.

Dale: So it's just been between Cape Town and Johannesburg?

Nina: Ja.

Dale: Okay and in terms of your family, do you have siblings, brothers, sisters?

Nina: I've got a brother and a sister both younger than me.

Dale: And any children?

Nina: Me? Yes I've got one child.

Dale: One child, okay. And just tell us a little bit about your own schooling and your studies. Where did you go, what did you study?

Nina: I went to school at a girl's Catholic school and then I went on to UCT (University of Cape Town) to study at UCT ja.

Dale: And what did you study?

Nina: I did drama and history and Afrikaans. Then I went on to teach then I did a little bit of kind of specialisation in trade union theatre.

Dale: Okay so you were teaching at high school level, or?

Nina: I was teaching at high school. I taught Afrikaans and then I worked in a community theatre group

Dale: And this was in Cape Town?

Nina: That was in Cape Town.

Dale: And then you moved up to Jo'burg, what did you start doing?

Nina: I moved up to Jo'burg to join Khanya College, in '98.

Dale: Okay.

Nina: Before that I worked at UCT in adult education department and at UWC in the education policy unit and in the academic development centre.

Dale: Okay and now what are you doing?

Nina: I work for the Labour Research Service based in Cape Town.

Dale: Based in Cape Town.

Nina: But I am here.

Dale: Right and that works mostly with unions or is it just ...?

Nina: Its workers in a broad sense. But a lot of the work is with unions, ja.

Dale: Okay and just give us a brief description of, in your own way, your own words on how you became politicised, how you became a political activist?

Nina: Initially it was in the late seventies after '76, I got involved with a... I was at primary school then, and I got involved with a group called the Christian Living Group which is the primary school version of YCS, and then when I went to High school I continued working in YCS. I was then quite active in the church. At one point I was going to be a nun [laughter] because the school I went to there were a number of nun's that came from the IRA and had quite a strong influence on us. And then I was at school in 1980 so being in YCS in Cape Town ... YCS were pivotal in the 1980 school boycotts. So I became very involved in the school boycotts and in organising at the school and the community youth organisation in the '80's. And then I went to university after that and I was active in ... then it was AZASCO, AZASO, before it became SASCO (South African Students Congress), and I was involved in '85. I was on campus in '85 and I was involved in the community youth at that point. I then became more involved with kind of left groupings in Cape Town, which in Cape Town was not very difficult to do [laughter], but I remained active in the student organisations. And then later I joined CAYCO, which then became SAYCO and I was... when the ANC got unbanned I then joined the ANC (African National Congress) and then I moved up to Jo'burg. And for a little while... I didn't really find any place in the ANC here but that was in '98. Then I had my daughter. So after that by 2000 ...the APF was in 2000, so I then became... and she was born in 2001. I became more active and then started to fight looking for somewhere to become more active. Towards the end of 2001 beginning of 2002 I tried to be more active in the APF.

Dale: Okay alright and just a little bit ... why any specific interest for yourself in issues of privatisation particularly?

Nina: When I joined ... I think my interest in privatisation was when I joined the APF not the other way round. Because I was looking for some kind of political space to work in - a home to work in - so it wasn't driven by me initially by the issues around privatisation. I actually think I became more aware of that in the APF. I was... when I was in Khanya. I mean when I joined Khanya there was a lot of work being done around GEAR. So kind of when I joined in '98 up till 2000 I had some understanding of privatisation, I mean a lot of our work was around... particularly around the impact of GEAR in different sectors. And I think the APF became a place where there were actual struggles around privatisation. So I think in many senses the APF helped to make... help me to have a better understanding of why this was necessary and how one could struggle against privatisation basically.

Dale: So outside of GEAR, why do you think that it was important that there be some kind of focus on privatisation in the context of what had been happening let's say from '94 onwards?

Nina: Okay I think what was... I mean that period was clearly certainly here a much stronger manifestation of what neo-liberalism was going to look like. And the privatisation meant you were going to see a kind of state assets being sold off. But practically what it meant was that things like health, you could see that now, things like health, things like education and what was happening in communities was much more visible the impact of the state selling off these assets now. I mean I had... you know having lived in this country many years, I mean I could see for example the education system what... even under apartheid you know what we had in the state school and the difference between that and what was happening. So it was something that really reflected a massive attack against the working class and part of the dismantling of organisations. It went alongside I think the political agenda which was in a sense the weakening of mass organisations and part of the way this weakening was unfolding was through the privatisation processes. So ja I mean for me it became a very real thing and one could actually see it, the impact of it.

Dale: Okay and then just tell us a little bit about how you got involved in the APF in what stage in its development from the beginning or, ja?

Nina: I was working in Khanya, and then at the end of 2001 I was approached by I think it was George Dor, Melanie a group of people who were organising the NEW... I can't remember.

Dale: Was that the national workshop?

Nina: At a workshop, ja at the end of 2001 at Shaft 17 and because I was doing... I mean I had some history with popular education and I was doing similar kind of work in Khanya, they asked me to help with the design of the NEW... it is similar to someone coming in with a little bit of experience around popular education. So I helped with the design of that workshop and I participated in that workshop and that was I think an important moment and I think that was in 2000, no 2001.

Dale: Right at the beginning of 2001 I think it was.

Nina: No.

Dale: No it was 2000.

Nina: No, because Linda was born in the beginning of 2001 and my benchmark.

Dale: So it was 2001.

Nina: I think it was 2001. When was the WCAR (World Conference against Racism)?

Dale: WCAR was October, I think September, October 2001.

Nina: That's right so it was 2001, because I remember not wanting to go at that point because my daughter was young. I wasn't able to but I was very happy to participate in the NEW, the big workshop.

Dale: Right.

Nina: And after that I then... by 2002, I became a lot more active. But I think it also coincided with my work in Khanya. So in preparations with the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) I was fortunate in the sense that I was able to do some of the work as a Khanya staff member and that's how I became... I mean it was clear also at that point that the APF represented one of the most alive, one of the most significant movements and a revival, a revival that... because I have also been through the collapse of the organisations, the kind of dismantling of community organisations. I understood the significance of this revival because it was a difficult period after '96. And suddenly there was a new... things were alive again, people were wanting to struggle or wanting to do things it was a very significant moment I think for me personally as well because it meant people were wanting to do things again and there were places to work. But one thing... I wasn't that familiar with Jo'burg, so I mean because in Cape Town there was a thing called regarded as being coloured. It was in a language in the way things are done, the distances, I was familiar with... I knew how to so this was a little different and I did initially feel a little alienated because I mean particularly at a level of language and so on. In Cape Town, I mean being able to speak Afrikaans - at least a large section of the coloured working class you can work with. So that wasn't easy. I mean it was a bit of a struggle for me to find my feet, because everyone thought I was white so [laughter] so that was tricky and I mean also the geographical distance here meant that you felt the fact that you were middle class or that you were coloured or something. There wasn't the same kind of social mixing that I had been very comfortable with in Cape Town so that was difficult ja a tough one.

Dale: And that, just a follow on question there because that is interesting. What would you identify, for example, as the key differences in the rise of the APF in a place like Johannesburg and some of the movements that arose in a place like Cape Town? The difference between that kind of politics? You've mentioned some of the more practical realities or social realities but what about the political side of things?

Nina: Look, in Cape Town there has always been in my opinion now, a lot of talking. It doesn't feel as hard ... life doesn't feel as hard as in Joburg. And there's... I can't say a playfulness but a softness of being able to work together and then there's also many ideas. I mean people are familiar with the fact that they are different groups and with different ideas. I didn't get the sense that that was as common in Joburg. In Cape Town there has always been a contestation around ideas and as a result very little action because everyone is always busy debating. As I said in Joburg I didn't feel you had... there didn't seem to be the same history, you know, also even tolerance of different opinions maybe. I think when I was here though at that stage the APF was something that the academics and the intellectuals were interested in. So I came in at a time when there was a layer of peers ... and it didn't seem ... there wasn't such a structure of what was a mandated position and how do you get that so that you were always without a mandate because you were without a community. I mean ... also for me was a big knock because I also came from a community and suddenly I was without a community and without ever being able to speak with a mandate so I think that was also some of the tricky things, ja.

Dale: When you came in just from your recollection who do you remember... what groups were part of the APF from the time you arrived?

Nina: You mean like the political groups that were there?

Dale: Well I mean all the components, all the different components.

Nina: Look I mean there was clear kind of left leading political groups. I remember there was the DSM group that was there, there was at that point what was... they weren't called the socialist group, I mean it was the... I mean look all the groups were also [pause]

Dale: Keep Left.

Nina: Keep Left ... as well but it was also very clear ... the one thing that was also very clear about the APF was that there were political groups who were coming in just like I did because they were also happy and enthusiastic because here was a possibility of a new movement. So they also felt that this was a place to have their views heard. So I mean there were... I think there was the DSM which was still the MWT I still remember, I can't remember all the things, how things have unfolded since then. I mean at that point there was the SECC which was then strongest in my memory as an actual community group - many of the other community groups came later. I mean I can remember when for instance... I can remember when the groups from the Vaal started coming in almost the differences in those groups, the Bophelong Group, the Orange Farm. I remember the Orange Farm thing for example because as Khanya we were running education work for the groups but not so much with the Khanya consortium, but with the consortium of income generating projects who then caught on the fever of the anti privatisation and the water thing that formed that. And it was also partly through our encouragement that they then started looking for the APF as a home, but they caught on what was happening around. There was obviously a fever now of taking up the issues around basic services. So my most clear memory of a community group was the SECC at that point and then a lot of individuals a lot of different political

groups. I came in and I think at that point there wasn't the presence of the unions, I mean I heard that SAMWU, NEHAWU or something but when I came in there wasn't any presence, at that point there was like a polarisation already with the unions. There were some cultural activists I remember at the NEW and Sound of what now.

Dale: Sound of Edutainment.

Nina: Sound of Edutainment. I remember they were already making links with the APF.

Dale: What you are describing is a fairly broad range of different individual activists, community organisations, and political groups. When you, from the first part of your experience in the APF, did you find that organisational-ideological, what I would call heterogeneity to be a good, a positive or negative thing or how did that play itself out with your experiences in the beginning of the APF, when you joined up?

Nina: Look I must also say that from my side I also belonged to a left political grouping so like many of the other people I wasn't coming in purely just as an activist in the general sense. I had an agenda, I also thought that I was so much of a socialist with a particular brand of socialism and I saw this also as a place to discuss my ideas. I mean there was a lot of discussion and I think, I suppose when you look afterwards you can make one comment ... but it was in some ways healthy because I think it exposed other activists to different ideas. But I think it was also there were lots of problems with the way it was done because I don't think even in Cape Town there is a healthy history of necessarily being able to have different views and work together in a constructive way and I think sometimes the level of debate sounded very aggressive...and for people coming from, coming in about basic services this was a bit much, I imagine could be quite alienating. And also when I think about it now I mean it was a very kind of patriarchal thing as well ... it was all about how making your point and not giving up as long as you can often which I don't think always was good for how you work as comrades. So I think that as there was a positive side in that it was clearly more than just an ANC thing, many other views and I don't think people coming in had had that kind of exposure before. But on the other hand I think that it was also sometimes quite destructive, the nature of those discussions and I think quite unhelpful often ja.

Dale: And you're specifically referring, in terms of that negativity, with regards to community organisations that were beginning to be part of the APF?

Nina: I think so yes ... I think what it did is it might have created a style of politics which I don't think allowed for a more organic or enough of a ... like something that could have been an APF style something that was about who the people that were there was about. It imposed often a lot of rhetoric but it imposed a ... everyone thought polemics was the way to go. So it gave the notion of that particular style of politics and I think it was, it must have been very alienating for women who came in because where do you even start? I mean you're coming in because of your struggles around basic services but often you don't have a chance to express that, its difficult to have a space for that to be heard and it also creates a hierarchy which I think has had it's difficulties ja, some of them.

Dale: To what extent do you think what you just described was influenced by where people were coming from politically? You mentioned you've have been part of the ANC and many people have been part of the Communist Party, the unions. The APF was an amalgamation of a whole range of different things. I mean in that sense what was that? That history of where people were coming from ... was that something that was very important or did the APF just sort of take all of that and mixed it up and come out with ... in other words that kind of style you were talking about - is there a history to it?

Nina: Ja I think so. I think that, I don't think that we managed to ... there was a sense of what was wrong from where we came from, many people were clear that the ANC was not dealing with privatisation effectively, the SACP had all its problems. And I think that it was a real attempt to think that maybe at the level of the ideas ... what are the alternatives to that? I think that the methods of struggle though ... I don't know how much exposure ... let me put it this way, there's a particular ways of doing things that one learnt, you know, you march like this, you do this. Because I'm thinking you know there were moments and maybe we will come to that on the cultural activities and so on but in many ways there's - 'this is what, how struggle is conducted and that's what we have'. So we brought that in and made a mix but I don't want to say that there was nothing that was different but I do think a lot of the old things came through. I just think of something like the struggle around finding what is a democratic process? I remember those discussions about representative democracy, participatory democracy and I mean that even now one struggles to think of what are the appropriate things to do. I think that sometimes maybe having too many of the people from left groups articulating the kind of thought of, what you call it, fixed things ... preventing a more experimenting because we are so busy fighting whose idea was right that I think it didn't allow for enough experimentation on what the forms of democracy could have looked like and often we just slipped back into what we are familiar with so I think ja, that, that...

Dale: And from your recollection in the those debates and discussions particularly around democracy and forms in the organisation, how do you think in the way in which the APF eventually came out of those discussions and the decisions that it took about the form and the internal character ... how, just describe your own experiences or engagement with that?

Nina: Look I think that the APF all the time ... there was a real struggle to be representative of the working class I mean that was a key aim all the time. I think what came out was if you think of the so called middle class elements or people who came from the university there became less and less space ... you became a resource you didn't become... this was not your struggle this was something that you gave for which I think was a big problem. I mean, I think that you needed to recognise that you are not doing this for someone else and it then becomes easy to leave because when it becomes too much and there's too many meetings, it becomes and you've got your work and you seem to be able to put your commitments somewhere else ... people somewhat drifted off. So I don't think we found ... and also there was a lot of, there was maybe a very crude notion of what working class representation was going to be. So in a sense people were also isolated, pushed out you know and I think one of the notions of the APF, one of the big features of the APF from my recollection of previous struggles and movements of organisations I was in ... I was never in an organisation where they only had unemployed people. I think

that the APF that phenomenon was very unique because of the period that we were in and I don't think that we spent enough working out what that really meant. Because I mean just the rhythms of the APF prevented someone who was working to actually participate and in the townships for example as soon as you worked you were out, you could only really operate in the APF if you were unemployed. That also created a separation between people who worked and had some level of resources even some levels of skills. So I think that it was too divided, it wasn't saying look we were part of this broader ... I think it was the fear we didn't want to be the broad church that the ANC was and I don't think we've managed to figure out how to do that. I think what was good though is the APF did hold its working class voice but I think it lost something with the other processes. Even the mandating process later on I began to feel there was a ... you know people would say you come from Small Farm with this mandate and I used to wonder what did that mean? You know because we didn't for example, like what the ANC did, because there was this hybrid thing ... because there it was claimed that you had to have so many members and that you had to quorate and that's how you got your mandate and so on. In the APF it was much more fluid, there was no membership forms ... so it was this funny thing of a mandate but you weren't too sure who gave that mandate because who were those people did they sign up, did they become members, was there a register at the thing? And for me one of the more tricky things about that was that you had a layer - this is now purely my opinion - of mobile young men who often became the key people of the APF. They were... they didn't have all family responsibilities so they could go to any meeting you know, they could move up and down in town because in terms of security it wasn't a big issue, they often found the theory, the discussions easier maybe because they had more confidence. So, I mean I often found myself working with a layer like that, a layer of I think bright young men. And also as one began to understand, why is there this group, where were they coming from, it was a whole set of factors I think that set this up, allowed this to emerge and stuff.

Dale: Okay and what about the structures that the APF formed in response to that debate, the way in which it structured itself to try to deal with issues of representation and participation?

Nina: I think that from the little I know of the LPM (Landless People's Movement) or the other movements I think the APF went a long way in trying to find ways for views to be more democratically heard. I think the notion of having the general council meetings, the executive meetings the extended executive meetings of the secretariat. I mean the flip side of that was that were lots and lots of meetings and a lot of that was to try and keep this as representative as possible and in a sense also participatory. I think that these ... I can remember the council, what was it called, the general council meeting, was like I don't know it felt like every second week or something. But I mean there were two day meetings and they...it was very difficult to keep the pace because you couldn't not go, there was things followed on, there was an educational component. I mean it was a long process of allowing everyone to speak so I think there was a real struggle with the representative participatory thing. And I think that the setting up of the structures was one of the key attempts at doing that. I often used to laugh and think that every time there's something we set up another structure or make another meeting, but we didn't know what else to do. I mean how else to make sure. I think what it also did is that it had this coming to town thing. I mean people kept coming to town and especially the mobile layer, this became like a replacement for

work because it was a place you could... I remember initially you could drink coffee, you could... you know when it was in COSATU House still. But I mean you could also understand why, because people didn't have this somewhere else and just saying to them go and do this in your community wasn't the answer they were looking for. I mean they were looking for the space with this kind of engagement but I think there was, there was a more ... and then the structures became more in a sense sophisticated.

Dale: Okay we just took a brief pause, ja continue.

Nina: The one thing I can say not about all the squabbles and stuff ... there has always in my experience there's always been an attempt to get as representative an opinion on something as possible and sometimes almost to a fault in a sense. But there might have been many questions you know but I can't remember any example of something where that didn't happen, where there wasn't many meetings called, many people consulted. So the one thing that I think for me which has been an important thing that has come out of the APF is that reconnection from ... I think anyone who has participated in it knows that you do always need to try to find ways to get as much of, ja to get as representative an opinion on something as possible, ja.

Dale: Okay and sorry just one other follow up question because it relates to what you said earlier. In that process of the APF debating and then coming out with these forms and organisation ... how do you think that that impacted on what you earlier talked about in terms of the role of particularly of women and their participation and representation?

Nina: I think it's made the participation of women very difficult. I think you know if you just think of the normal... what responsibilities the women have and on top of that all these many, many meetings. It's impossible for women... for a woman to... you find younger women trying to come but for older women it is very difficult because just of the levels of responsibility. That and I think that there was then also as I was saying, the difficulty of engaging with the discussion because it often... I think for many women didn't feel a space for them. I remember us trying to start something separately with doing education things and it went on for a little bit but there was at some point an attempt but there was the irony of that became another thing, another meeting to attend, another workshop to attend because ultimately you still had ... if you were going to be effective you still had to attend all the other things too now you are going to have something else. So I don't think we found a way that you didn't add on, and then you had all your community things to do, you know if you wanted to be active in the community too. So that and I think that it showed I think that the voices of women or finding even organisational expressions which were more comfortable, where women felt that they could participate more, it was like a kind of chicken and egg thing because if you don't have them there then you can't do that then if you can't do that it is because you don't have them there. So I think that became the effect of that. I mean the women who did and I'd be very interested to know the women who did stay through all of this. What was... what kind of support did they have at home, you know, what allowed them the space which many other women didn't have to be able to do that? Because there are women who even up till now are still active and there must be particular reasons for that. I think the tricky thing sometimes with that is that it then gives the impression that if some of the women can do this why can't the others. Maybe

sometimes you know there's also the thing about if you are very young or if you are old or if you are... my experience is not only the APF but more generally is that sometimes you get an older layer of grannies who sees themselves as now free and I think that the SECC grannies are an example of that. They then go and they see this as another space to go and do things in but I think in between that it's very difficult because of all the other things, ja.

Dale: Okay you mentioned that you came on just before, in the lead up to the WSSD (World Summit on Sustainable Development) which was a large, a very large mobilisation. How do you think that the WSSD and what came afterwards impacted on the APF's character and the way it developed through that, because it was a very significant moment in a lot of different ways?

Nina: No I mean I agree. It was really a significant moment and I think it was the kind of first expression of a united response because it was across all the different movements ... the mass you know, thirty thousand people was bigger than we had seen for many years. And also I think one of the difficulties up to that point was that under apartheid it was always known as a common thing that everyone knew about and one or all groups could come around ... here there was one again ... it felt like a common thing too. I mean I don't know much about how much of the environmental issue's ever... I mean there were little bits here and there but ... I think with electricity questions maybe a little bit here and there ... but as a show of strength, of solidarity and then there was all this. It also coincided with the anti-globalisation movements, all the visitors that were here, so you got a very special moment of recognising that we are part of a bigger struggle ... before that people would go to a demonstration, to a...but not many people have that exposure, suddenly you had foreign speaking people that were there with you and I think for many people that was a big thing because they had not had that experience before and then I think it... I mean always when I think of the APF I think of that as a real lift. Because after that I remember in 2003 you know the education rights thing happening, the cultural groups you know a lot of the cultural activities. Because I mean with the WSSD preparations there were all of that cultural activities that happened and a strong APF, you know for me it went up, it was like a kind of a peak, WSSD, 2003, 2004 with the elections. I mean it was still at that peak I can remember the kinds of debates and so and then maybe a little bit of a dip from 2005 or so on if my memory serves me correctly. So WSSD, I mean it inspired people it gave them a sense of solidarity of strength and internationalism. And I remember there was that teach-in, I remember at Wits. The globalisation, the anti -globalisation people came and also the thing about globalisation and all of that became something that many activists could now speak about, the struggles around Palestine. I mean suddenly other issues became important too I remember big demonstrations, going to the embassy, I don't know if my timeframe is right but one big thing at Wits I think was the Jewish Council with the big demonstration there. There was Indymedia that also coincided with that, so you know there was cultural, students, the Indymedia and lot's of other media things happening and a lot of media emerging in the APF there were a lot of people interested in making banners, doing posters, doing videos ja, so it was a big moment, I think.

Dale: And did you see any potential negative impacts in terms of what that produced in the APF?

Nina: I think that one of the things that I remember even at that time thinking you know we missing some....I mean the WSSD was a lot of things around the environment. We missed that moment I think to deepen maybe an understanding around what WSSD was about what that kind of big thing is about at an environmental level, not now at the broader political thing. I think from a negative side I can't think... I mean the negative things happened, not negative but the big challenges. I don't want to say negative but some of the hype. Okay let me put it this way, you know understanding this as a moment in a long process, understanding that you can't sustain that moment. I don't think we had enough of a sense of that. So, people wanted to have the same levels of mobilisation, the same levels of enthusiasm which was not possible to do. I mean the kind of dip-down is also partly what happened to the anti-globalisation movement more generally but I am just saying that we couldn't... I am not sure how you do that, how do you tell people in the middle of something in that moment that 'please contain yourself' but I think maybe there was a little bit of demoralisation that you were not able to keep that same energy, you're not able to get thirty thousand people out and I think... I mean it is something that maybe was characteristic of the period. But I think the thing of what different actions represent, why something is a demonstrative action, what a demonstrative action actually is, what do building processes means over a long period? I don't think that there was... it's like everything will happen tomorrow and there's a lot of activists within the APF that knows that that wasn't the case but I don't know if we were able to convey that at all maybe you can't. I don't know in a way that helped to sustain the people over a long period of time maybe that's the ...

Dale: And during that time you mentioned earlier about how as someone who particularly who works or maybe comes from that middle class environment, how over time that there was a leaving of quite a number of those people and I think that is what happened over that particular period of time. Do you remember that in terms of people you were working with and why that was the case at the time, why people started to sort of drift off a bit in those 2004/2005 years?

Nina: I think what happened is that...also I said earlier on there's the fact that maybe in the APF... the space wasn't always conducive but I don't think it was only that. I think it was also the fact that this long slog ... the patience, the being there, the slowness of the process, maybe it just wasn't exciting, that's the sense I have. It was just too much it became too much and people couldn't define a part-time role for themselves. It was very difficult in the APF to define a part time role for yourself - you were either in ... or you out. Because they couldn't define a part time role, they also became less what is there to write about when you are going from the one meeting to the other meeting. So it wasn't as interesting for many of the academics, because I remember then those university people there were a lot of people showing an interest. But I think that what followed was that it was not interesting enough to keep the movement building process, which is not just that momentary thing ... couldn't keep the middle classes going, keep them there and at the same time I don't think in the APF we were able to also say that ... what do we do, how do we do? Because I remember it was very, very difficult. Part of my own not being able to cope - and I didn't leave the APF from an ideological thing or anything - I mean my drifting away in a sense was it just became impossible to...you know I was working in the education committee and at one point there was like ten other people who would help design something, who would run an activity

who could find resources somewhere and then there was nobody. And the people that were there the participants and the people of the community with particular sets of skills but maybe we hadn't find a way to use them but also didn't necessarily have the kind of skills to run an education. You could have said... and the process of building that layer had started, of working with people and saying you designed something let's work with you. Now that takes longer and it can only work if there are other people who help you with that. And I remember there was a conscious attempt - if I think of the education committee now - to have, not at a token level, to have a sub group before the workshop and then they planned and then they will have another meeting of that sub- group and then other people are running the thing and obviously that takes more time. I think... I managed to last as long as I did because of my work at Khanya. I don't know if I had been working somewhere else, it would have been virtually impossible to find a way to work in the APF but because of my work at Khanya, that was part of what I saw as my work, so it was a little bit easier but it became more and more difficult because there was just no other people to help us.

Dale: Do you think there was... I mean at the time you said the APF tried in different kinds of ways ... do you think there was any other way to get around that problem? Because earlier you mentioned that the dominant character of the APF was unemployed people, and that had its own realities that were brought into an organisational form. And on the other hand you had an initially fairly large group of skilled middle class intellectuals and others and then that began to wane. Did you see at the time that there was any different approach that the APF could've taken or?

Nina: To help with that, or to deal with that, I think on the one hand [pause].

Dale: Sorry about that.

Nina: I think... look one of the things that characterised the people with more skills, the more middle class layer, was that it was not like ... in terms of language it was basically either white people or so called coloured people in the thing which meant that at the level of language... at the level of where you lived or so, that was always a problem. It created a distance. Now I think that when that layers... but the APF when it formed it was based on the understanding that the training, the skills would come from inside, that the people providing that would be inside. When those people left, I don't think we looked at what that meant, that now we don't have that now and now to build capacity maybe needs a different strategy. Maybe we... and it's difficult to call on these people now, because I don't know wherever they are they're busy and they're not going to come. So I don't know and sometimes I wonder if it wouldn't have worked if we actually had funds or resources and employ people and put people on ... I don't know, get a organisation and run a training thing, formalise the capacity building process which would have needed resources. Now there was a lot of resistance to that. I remember some discussions around that even and there was resistance to that because there was a whole part I think, some kind of a part of discourse of the left there that was that NGO people or middle class people, you can't involve them and you can't work with them and therefore the notion that you can actually pay them to come and do these things, what kind of revolutionaries are they, that's not on. Now and I think that kind of struck a cord because people are unemployed. So when you listen to someone charging a thousand rand

a day to facilitate something, they're going to say no. But in reality it meant that we were not able to formally build that capacity and the people inside - I mean I am thinking of how the media training - now became your responsibility. Now it becomes impossible to do that say once a week and somebody comes and next week they don't come, another person comes. So it just doesn't work and I mean I had that experience from the education thing, but I had the benefit of Khanya. I mean Khanya had the benefit from this as well, because part of how we define the work in the project of the strategy centre I worked in was that we were working in APF communities. I can't think of another at that period... I can't think of another, other way of doing it. I think we could have spent time negotiating with these NGO's about what they are charging and in that way rebuild. Maybe they won't all come to the council meetings, the workshops or to the meetings or anything but we keep alive a connection, they charge less so they know they understand. The thing about that is you need a layer of people to be able to do that. That in itself is another difficulty because from my experience, even with the REMMOHO thing you... that's all well and fine but then there are two or three people who need to go and set up those meetings, make the thing. I don't know, I think maybe if they caught it right in the beginning, it was this exodus and say, 'okay we can't do this ourselves, we need certain skills', these skills are not all bourgeois skills, they're the skills that we do need to run an organisation, lets look at how we can get them from outside. Maybe that would've helped with this capacity building processes.

Dale: Okay. Just shifting over a little bit. One of the things that the APF was able to do fairly early on was access decent amounts of financial resources from about 2003 onwards and that continued all through and has continued more or less. How did you experience and how did you see the impact of significant financial resources on the organisation, its character, politics and leadership?

Nina: Look, obviously accessing the resources at one level was important, because it helped for a growth and a sustaining and an extension of the organisation at all levels ... transport which you wouldn't get without that resources. It also... I think in many ways the APF was ... I mean I'll come to the other difficulties, but the money was used for the things that it was supposed to be used for. It wasn't... I mean there was no investment in anything or it was lots of little bits of money for transport here and I think... because it was such a clear attempt at making sure that this acts as a resource for moving forward it need a lot of capacity to do that because it's like you know if I think of managing money in the APF, it should be quite easy because you're not dealing with a whole lot of projects. But it's not because it's people who are unemployed, people dealing in cash all the time, you having to work with. You know people having the temptation to use the money even when they didn't mean to steal it. I don't think necessarily they started with the idea of stealing it. So I think that maybe...if I think about it now, maybe one underestimated what kind of resources was needed to be able to disburse this money, maybe, ja I don't know. I just think that with the part-time, with the administrator who is not only dealing with money, who's dealing with a thousand other things being almost solely responsible for the daily disbursing and then a treasurer who is in an elected position. I don't think... with that we needed maybe more, more capacity and someone else working on that. I think though it also did... I mean I look now and I hear other examples of people having a meeting, not in this country though but in other places. You know people have a meeting and they bring food to the meeting, or they make soup collectively,

but there is a commitment. There is a thing whatever you want to call it in rural areas and somehow we don't have that. I was trying to think, did we never have that, but I didn't remember the times when I was in CAYCO in the community things, this thing about money and the resources and the struggle to gain access to it. But then again also, not everyone in the organisation was unemployed. I mean it was most of the people had some form of income and people's standard of living was not what we have now. There was always some person, one or two people in a house that worked. So even if you were a student or unemployed, you were not in the kind of conditions that you're living in now. So I think there has been quite dramatic shift in people's ability to survive. I think what then happened is ... the thing of the little resources that the APF did have - I don't know how to put it - it created a ... I mean as I was saying it created this layer of young men, the mobile, the transport. You know it starts off with I come to a meeting and I also come to do something else when I come, and then it comes, you know I take the train, because... because you know I am constantly looking at forms of survival for young ... for women I look forward to something, I go to the meeting, I actually will take the train and keep the other money for whatever, bread when I go home. So in a funny way people started having a sense of how they could use this little bit that was there. Then in some ways it became I think coinciding with this discussion about us and them, you know, them being the people who work, the people who... it became a little bit of an entitlement around the money. I think coinciding with another discussion which was about who are the funders, the role of funders. I think we never... not never, but I think what was introduced to the APF by the left groups was, you know that the funders are these people who you must, in sense is the enemy, they owe you something. You know the fact that these people are collecting money from somewhere or from the Government. I mean, I remember, there was an attempt to explain, you know that the people we are getting money from... this is who they are, this is what they are trying to do, this is very often about solidarity more than just getting money in. But because there was another kind of thing being introduced there which was that these people owe us this, there was an entitlement and I think not enough of an appreciation of what it means to, through the funding, build forums of solidarity ... you know in a sense respectful, both ways. So there is the funding problem there is the thing of entitlement, there is a little bit of how to use the little bits of money. And I think that the money has now caused quite a problem, I mean it has caused quite a problem now that people now often think that because they participate in things. I don't know they're coming to town, they're getting money they... sometimes it's caused a situation where people have lost - coinciding with the dip in the other issues that happened - they lost ... they've lost actually why they are there. Ja, I think it is a little bit like that now. But I don't know, it's part of a national discourse, it's a difficult one. I mean I don't think the APF was...

Dale: I was going to ask you. Do you think that was specific to the character of the APF or as a result of a sort of external contextual political kind of problem?

Nina: Ja, I think it's a... I mean I see that now, I work in a campaign with young women in unions and I see now that the people will come with cars. You know they will make sure that they claim the most they can for petrol and then you'll get a young worker, casual worker who would ask for their transport money, but very soon what they're going to see is why must they do that? You know they don't come in

... the thing is that the people don't come in with this intention but there is a national thing that the corruption is fine. It is basically just ...I mean the latest thing now with Zuma not wanting to declare and finding an illegal loophole. It is just that it is the most horrifying thing of how people feel that this is fine, it's justifiable, like it's like an entitlement, ja.

Dale: And speak - because that is interesting because a lot of your work in the APF was in educational activities, political and other forms of educational activities both in Khanya and APF - speak a little bit to why you think and your experience in the APF, of this gradual shift from what one would call a more solidarity and of an activist kind of base to one which seems at least to have shifted - not simply in the APF but the APF I ask you to ground the APF - to one in which political and other consciousness seem to have been dissipated quite substantially from what we experienced in the early years.

Nina: Look I mean that I think that there's the frustration of being unemployed and there's the thing about ... you employ someone as the administrator in the office and he or she will have hell, because she's got a job. Now there is something that I don't know where it comes from. I am talking of a national discourse, a national consciousness. There's a thing of a jealousy, like you pull the other person down. And I am not talking of the APF now, this you will find in any other context. I've never understood how we really got here, there obviously must be lot's of explanations for this. So there is that thing that, there is a sense that we must all be equal with nothing, if we have nothing then no one must have anything. [No that is Tanya my daughter, she is not well today so she must be asleep.] There is that thing it is a kind of an equal ...

Dale: race to the bottom almost ...

Nina: Yes, that kind of thing. So that is there, that's the one side. I don't know, maybe things came too easy, that is the flip side of the resources thing. You know we started having the meetings and then when you had a council and had a meeting, education meeting, you gave everybody transport money and you gave everybody food to come. So when someone starts having an activity, before they had an activity calling people together, suddenly now that activity in the community needs to look like the thing they experienced here. So they must have the food and the transport and all the other dynamics start setting in. I don't know, maybe when one got these resources... we set up a modelling of what an effective meeting must look like. I think coming from the Khanya thing I think we played a role that obviously contributed to that and that we at some point had a lot of residential workshops, when people go away and everything was provided. At the same time there was all the other rush to hotels and things - I mean that wasn't happening in the APF - but everybody else was staying in all kinds of fancy places. But I think there was from within the APF we created a model that people then thought that is what you need to do, and you need it and you can't do it unless you have all those resources. I mean in many way's even the thing of a workshop in the education, you need to have the flip chart stand, you create an artificial thing, and then and if you don't have that then it is not possible to run that activity. And I think with the education thing we played a big role in doing that, in creating a particular model of what the thing should look like. I am saying that was there and then I think there was a thing of just at the practical level, there's the thing of handling money because more and more people had to

handle money and had to report on that handling. The time and energy it needs for all of that. Now you are looking at people that's far away, you've giving them money to run an activity. Now they must come... but you must give them money to come fetch the money, then you have to give them money to come back to give the report and it's all in cash and it's all...and everybody... and then because you can't get a receipt, and because the public transport system it is a screw up, you then have a thing where everything is by signature. So just at a practical level built into this thing, was a thing that I don't think people would start up-front to be dishonest. But I know of this thing, you sit there and you think okay I must take that back next time I go to the meeting but I mean now I don't have change on me I will use that. Okay I am working so I can replace that, but the other person isn't working so they're not able to, so they don't come. So I think just all those practical things of not having money and then having access to this and sometimes thousands of rands. Because if the event was big there would be thousands of rand ... and then tied in with this because on one side was an over-estimation which ties in with the political thing of what you can do, the capacity of how many people can come and on the other hand... So you have an over estimation, so you ask for more money because everything is done in estimates now. Next time you don't necessarily have an over-estimation, you now see a gap sometimes, you ask for more money even though and you find spaces. I think tied in with this. I don't know, but you know the income generating... there was a lot of discussions we had about income generating projects. We never... I don't think in the APF we ever cracked that. As a result in some ways the APF became a little bit of a space for the income generating processes, at an individual level. You know because I tried many things, get a person in the community to cook, then you have all the drama that go with that thing. I don't know what the answer is to that one, but I think both into this with the thing of a lot of unemployed people with the... and maybe this could've all been fine if you didn't have what was happening nationally ... I had experience of people who would handle the money and hand back up to the last cent and in the APF I had experience of people like that. So that wasn't impossible, but it took a hell of a lot of will power to be able to do that. I don't know I think maybe if it wasn't for the national thing, it wouldn't, people wouldn't have felt it okay, it would worry them, it would drive them crazy that they are doing the thing. I mean also to be honest I think the other thing has been that we have to look at who has been the Treasurers. In a sense that it was yourself, Florencia before that ...and people want people they can trust as a Treasurer. So that must be someone who is working, who has got their own income but at the same time it's almost like you're like a father. Because if we can get away with something then we will do it because it is not like that connection in the same way ... maybe I don't know, maybe that has also played a role and one ends up then taking on what can feel like a parenting role. I know that from my own experience because you are fighting you are protecting your...I do think though maybe less money - and we would have had to know then what we know now - scrupulous things, with very small things initially to set not one single thing must go - right at the beginning - must go unchallenged. I think what happened there though is that Florencia did that at that level, but at another level, maybe at an office level or so, it was all tied in ... 'ah, now this is the funders money now and we can share it, to hell with them and we can do what we like' ... and you didn't have that. So I think this attitude to where the money came from is another important component of this thing. I don't think one can...because this is their money, the white people's money, why must we worry? I mean why do

people have stokvel's and other things and they don't kill each other and they share the things with each other? So I mean it's not like they were born with it I mean there are examples where it isn't like that, so I think that ja...that this coincided with this thing of where the money comes from. You know you mustn't get me started, I can go on and on ...

Dale: No that's absolutely fine because it is a fundamentally important part of that history and it remains so. Just one other follow-up question on that, in that regard - you mentioned you know that for about a year and a half Misello Bayi was the Treasurer so you know with Florencia and then Misello ...

Nina: Oh it was Misello, I forgot about Misello.

Dale: And then I came on board when things had gone bankrupt, can you remember?

Nina: Yes.

Dale: You mentioned this context of wanting to trust. Why do you think it is - and this has been the APF experience over most of its history - that despite financial training and workshops and all these other things, that there has never really been a desire or seemingly wanting to take the space to democratise the ownership of those resources in the sense of people who run the show, the leadership context, so there's always someone as you were saying who is not coming from the communities.

Nina: Do you know the four nations thesis?

Dale: What is that?

Nina: In the struggle time, the role of, you know, the role of the Indians ...

Dale: Oh yes, yes.

Nina: I think ... there is the thing that we can't trust each other. I don't think so much that this was a racial thing. I think more...firstly it has to be someone who is working as a Treasurer who doesn't have their own income, because they are obviously going to eat up the money of the organisation. That is bizarre because I am just saying how can you have an organisation of unemployed people that is managing their own resources? So I think there is that notion that we can't... I mean it is this deep distrust, we just can't trust each other, because we will all be doing something. And I think that it helps if you, you know in terms of racially if you are white also, because you're probably more privileged and there is even less chance of you doing it. I think it is as basic as that.

Dale: Okay. Just shifting off to finances for a while. Again from your experience in the APF how would you define the relationships that then were generated after that initial period between the different component parts of the APF? In other words community organisations, individual activists, political groupings predominantly, because as you said by that time the unions and others had more or less left the APF. So those three main components, the relationships between those three, how did you experience those?

Nina: Look I think now towards the latter end the communities definitely are the dominant groups. I think in the earlier stages there was ... the individuals, the political groups appeared to be a lot more dominant. But I think part of the democratisation processes ... because I mean in a sense you can't argue working class control and argue purely for a political group... So I think there was a strong sense of the role of the community groups, but then the political groups then started reshaping themselves, so as to either be in the communities or find other ways, which I suppose is... I don't know, I can see the point of that. And in a sense more than with individuals, the political groups tried to say we have to vote. I remember that the SG, the Keep Left. So they did formally start locating themselves in a way if I can remember correctly, didn't have the same voting power as the community organisations. So that was healthy in a sense, I think that was a healthy discussion. Where we didn't manage to find a solution was with individuals, where do individuals come in what role do they play? Because I think there's a strong... there's a notion of socialism that has emerged within, kind of unfolded in the APF, is that the individual has gotten lost. To be an individual is to be individualistic and it's to be petty bourgeois. And I think in many ways then it goes further because it also has the particular need's ... of women or there's a sense of one set of needs with one set of demands and you can't... you don't go beyond that. So you... because to do that is something to break this homogenous notion ... I mean there's the working class and it's like this [*points at picture on wall*] ... it was the LRS. I always look at this LRS painting of these people who were standing like this, you know a very kind of Russian or Stalinist notion of who this working class is ... they're not people they're just this thing. So as soon as you started looking at individuals ... you know it becomes a problem. I think I mean that for me has become one of the big challenges within the APF. And I think in many ways we created that, with the left groups and what their notion of socialism is and it's fixed notions and when you have fixed notions you don't need to find anything, you don't need to look carefully, you don't need to listen, you definitely don't need to listen. So, you are not going to understand that the collective thing is, in a sense, made up of a whole lot of different people with different needs. I think that the role of individuals was almost the most stark way that it manifested itself in something - there is no place for you as an individual and there is certainly no place for you as an individual if you are unemployed and from one of the communities. Maybe if you can come with some resources and some skills, but if you are somebody there, there is no place for you. I mean I saw that and how that unfolded in REMMOHO because there were many people, I mean there was at a practical level you can also see, what do I do? Pay for an individual to come to a meeting. I mean just at that level the way things then got structured, it then becomes impossible to contribute, what mandate do you have? So I don't know lots about other movement building processes elsewhere, but I think maybe we could've also in the APF spent... and I think back now looking, but we would have had to do it with a lot more appreciation and much less arrogance. I mean in South Africa we have the notion that we have all the answers to everything, but I think maybe have looked a little bit more at movements elsewhere and how they unfolded and what role different groups played and that type of thing.

Dale: Just picking up on something you mentioned. How did you understand during that time - what one would call -the strategic vision of the APF was in political-ideological terms?

Nina: Look I think the APF was... the APF stood for socialism. Socialism was the opposite of what we have. I don't think we built our understanding of what that is ... we didn't build our own notion. It was a sense of, in some ways, of a utopia – that we will get rid of this and then we will have that. And the thing in between - what we are doing - and even that socialism, what we build in what we doing now. I don't think there was a lot of an appreciation. I can't remember. of us thinking of us being a socialist organisation in how we are organising presently, we only saw it as the goal. So that was very strongly...sometimes I mean I've been... now I feel a little sad about that because sometimes I go to forums and things and maybe where there have been some APF people and so on and now I am maybe standing outside, coming from another organisation or so and there isn't... there's sometimes the thing of engaging, listening and responding and that is now to the latter period. I think earlier on that wasn't the case. I think there was more of an engagement but now I spoke to someone who also said there was some forum at Wits and they said there were about ten APF people who just... the person wasn't doing this critically, they were saying it was a worrying thing to hear them just repeat, correct things, I mean it was things that we would agree with, but there wasn't an attempt to convince other people to engage with the... and there wasn't the capacity to engage, but maybe the capacity to listen and that was a big thing. But I mean the socialism in that way, and it wasn't the Communist Party socialism, although I am not sure how many people you asked would have been able to articulate what the difference was.

Dale: Okay and what about the key campaigns and activities that the APF undertook during those particular years? I mean speak a little bit to the character of first, those things and how they impacted on the APF but also, the other way, in other words how the campaigns and activities lent themselves to what the APF was trying to do?

Nina: Ja, look I think the electricity, the water were really significant campaigns. Because not only would people often find very creative ways to challenge privatisation because in those campaigns there was a very important mix of defending my basic rights and at a more ideological, conceptual level saying what this is saying about the state and what the state is doing not just to me but to us. And because there was that, it inspired other communities. It inspired other communities to think about their own basic services, to react to it, to take action to it, to engage in running battles that people did. I don't know much about the Water Coalition, but I always thought there was an important example it seemed - I never participated in them – but what I understood about it was it was an important example of broadening, of bringing other groups in, of bringing academics in, of taking up the water privatisation issue in a way that was now creatively saying, look in the APF, we don't have these people, these people, these people let's see how we make a coalition, even though the sense I got was the APF always drove that coalition. So I mean that is a very important example of how one can do it as a broader coalition, because there I mean there were individuals, academics and other people in ... and those campaigns were ... for me very often they were what the APF was about. Because many communities came in because of that, they didn't come because of our campaigning around the elections. I mean there were those things there but those campaigns were the heart. I mean there were all the things, doing all the mass work, the demonstrations, the court case, you know the notion of taking up the battle in different forms, what the different forms mean. I think we learnt through those, through those

campaigns and I mean there was a lot of international and other components of international interest and support for those campaigns as well.

Dale: You touching on several other...

Nina: Oh okay.

Dale: No, no it's fine. It's absolutely fine because it's more of a conversation than anything else. But I was going to say... I was going to ask about that, specifically about how you thought ... you mentioned earlier on how the WSSD in particular ... the exposure to a lot of international ... but as the APF grew and as it moved through, the impact as well as the character of the relationships, not only on the international front, but with other social movements as well?

Nina: Look I think in my opinion...there was locally, there were the other movements. I never really participated in the SMI but the sense that I got was that the APF had moved a little faster than the other movements had, also that in a sense it had more resources, but had moved a little faster, had been sometimes clearer about the relationship to the state, what was necessary to do at a particular point, and in a sense led, the SMI. The notion of the SMI, the attempt, I mean that is an important thing, because I think we were trying for the different movements to learn from each other to strengthen as a block. The WSSD was an expression of that but I think the SMI that followed then, you know providing solidarity to Zimbabwe. I think the unfortunate part was that the SMI also came when I think things were not at their best, at their strongest and obviously, the challenges, the weaknesses internally will be magnified when you put it into a ... but I think the idea of that, even for the short time try and made it work was a very significant development on what does it mean to build solidarity. International solidarity, I mean there were people we got who went visiting. I remember to water coalition meetings elsewhere, to the World Social Forum meetings and that's always important I think in the exposure, the experience that people had. I think that just having that sense that you are connecting to a bigger struggle. I always still wondered how much we understood. I don't know, maybe when I sometimes go to an international meeting, I come back and I listen to the other South African delegates and wonder if we were in the same meeting because often all we can think about is what the other people didn't know or didn't say. Even when in some cases now when they are way ahead of us in strategies and things ... and I also I think that with this international engagement, how much we understood we had to learn and not be so sure sometimes that there was a strong sense that we are going to tell them what we are doing, which was important to do. But how much we took back ... there is still the hangover of how important we think we are from the anti apartheid struggles. Maybe, maybe we would have been able to try out new things, experiment more if we brought more back and not just do it. But that was important, I think it gave us a sense of the world out there and it was an important time too. No matter what happens now, you have people who have gone through that or have that experience, who will engage with that and who will sit with that and carry that and whatever comes up, that will be there ...

Dale: Okay now we are just moving over into the last portion of the interview. When did you start... I mean you said that you sort of gradually started pulling of more active involvement in the APF, so when did that start happening?

Nina: Look I think it was a very practical thing, I think that once I started leaving Khanya , once I left Khanya it became difficult to continue sustaining ... I mean I tried to work with REMOHO as the...

Dale: Sorry, can you just describe a little bit about what REMOHO was?

Nina: When I was in Khanya, we had a women's reference group and in that - it was initially a gender reference group but ended up being a women's group - in that group we did basic things around what gender is and what... it was a small group of people of twenty-twenty five people and it was over a period of time. So there was a lot of development I mean amongst the people in the group and I think they were exposed to a space which was different from maybe the way we tried to do gender work before. And I think there was a very strong connection between the collective and individual development. Some of the people, not all of the people were from the APF, they were from different organisations. The reference group started - Khanya was going to do a winter school on international globalisation on gender and women - and the reference group started as a way to feed into that winter school, so it would be like a layer of people who would lead the discussions and then the reference group continued after that. Some of those people were APF people, that was Nokolo, Mpho, Jabulile at that point, and then they came to Khanya and said they would like to start something, but not only in the APF, but with the women in the social movements. Initially with the idea to deal with what they saw as very patriarchal behaviour in the social movements and that's how it started. Then it was all the things about how to structure and be open and there was a strong thing you don't want the thing to be a replica of the APF, you want all women to be welcomed. And then they tell you about all the challenges - how do you do that, how do you bring people here, who comes, who doesn't come, when do they come? And then it was a combination of education work. I think what was difficult was some people who were in the reference group tried to replicate something which was very specific and small with a much bigger group of people and I don't think we found the ways to do that. Then REMMOHO has taken ... but what was I talking about, how?

Dale: You were talking about how you moved, you own movement away from the practical...

Nina: When I got out, I mean when I went out of, when I left Khanya and I joined LRS I tried to, in the LRS, motivate - because I was doing gender work in the LRS - motivate for the importance of continuing to try and work within REMOHO because I couldn't do all these things outside of work hours for REMOHO, because all these things happened during work time. So I explained the things of unemployed women, ja, I motivated why it was important and then continued trying to assist and with the same idea of building a layer. But it became more and more and more time consuming. I started not being able to do other things and I drew Nosipho in with the idea that she keeps the process going. I think what happened there was maybe it was the APF, the difficulties, the in-fighting and all the things we spoke about before and it was almost a little bit more difficult when it's women because there's another, you

know some people refer to as self hate, and a whole dynamic of pulling each other down. I think without a careful holding that all the time and maybe people helping, it slipped into a lot of habits and behaviour's and things and ja. Initially I thought I would define my work in the APF through REMOHO, because I could no longer do the education work because there was just no way I could practically ... and then the REMOHO thing being impossible too. It just became... it needed more and more work and I thought that Nosipho could play that role, but it was clear that what it needed was a building up of a layer of people. I then worked with the "Gender at Work" people, the idea there was that to build a layer of people and I thought through the Gender at Work people - because that worked with a smaller group, a change-team - that would happen there. So that is how I ended up seeing myself not directly there but playing a supportive role and then also just because I had other projects and that was to sustain funding and all other kinds of things, ja.

Dale: And what has been... not necessarily totally standing outside of, but not involved on a regular basis in the APF, as you said the benefit of hindsight in some ways allows us to see things that we didn't before ...but if you were to look at the APF over the last while, what would be your thoughts, how would you look at things?

Nina: You know when you stand outside you can also just be critical, you know and say ha ha, you know but there has been ... you know all of the things of the rape case and ... I don't know, it is difficult to say where the APF is ... Firstly I think the APF is there still, it exists you know. I think there was something in Pretoria, there was a response of something, so there is still a voice, a presence, it has not gone away. I mean I don't see the LPM for example anywhere, so I presume it doesn't exist any longer. I was in a meeting, two weeks ago, gender program process, and there was the REMMOHO change team and I was quite taken aback because there was like five people there, because from the relations of the gender issues and so, were giving examples, small examples of what they saw as possible changes or positive things that they feel were there. And it made me think that maybe - there's a lot of challenges now, it's nowhere close to what it was before - but there is obviously still work happening and there are still organisations, individuals. I mean I spoke to the BOCOSFO people and they were doing something on labour brokers and I thought I didn't know they were still meeting, you know and I was chatting with them and I mean that was quite significant that there seems ... and I spoke to a student that was doing her PhD, it seems like Small Farm is still doing something, I mean they have their cultural things, they are running their activities. So I think that the APF doesn't seem to be dead, I think that maybe it is at a particularly low point, I don't know if it can continue. I don't know for example if it was the resources or something like the BOCOSFO thing or the Small Farm thing, the little instances that they were describing was not linked to resources. I don't know it is difficult for me to say but it's not all doom and gloom it's not the end of everything. And even with all, I don't know what people would have learnt from the whole process of the rape case and the disciplinary process...but in a strange way, the fact that it actually happened eventually and was concluded is sometimes more than you can say for example in some other organisations, in some of the unions. So with all the problems that were there an actual process happened there was external mediators that came in, the people were actually disciplined, they were removed from the thing ... which means that there was an organisation with an organisational

process, a messy one, a difficult one, maybe not even messy, not messy in a sense that wrong things happened, I am just saying it had its own internal problems and all that, but it went through a formal set of steps and came at the end and said this is it. Now I think there is a value to not losing that, to... some people might just say it bureaucratic ... but I think holding on to something that maintains some character of the organisation. And even if the APF closes, whatever it decides to do, it doesn't get funded, it will be better if it does it like that in that organisational way, because people leave I think with a different... I mean they hold onto their, they hold onto what has happened to them and that is different from dissipating, so I don't know ja, that is my sense, ja.

Dale: Okay .I just wanted to get your perspectives because even though I think it is more recent, like the last year and a half, it said quite a few things about the APF and that in some ways it was the rape case. From where you were standing, your involvement with REMOHO... just give us a sense of how you thought that played itself out, not just in terms of the processes but what it said about both potentially the good and bad about the APF with regards to a lot of the challenges identified earlier with regard to patriarchy and sidelining women and the way that, that worked itself out?

Nina: You know I think when I used to go run this residential workshops, sometimes I don' sleep I go... there if I go, sometimes I sleep there because I'm busy working during the night, and I later realised that there was another whole thing that happened that I was completely unfamiliar with and was quite taken aback by. I mean some of it was just young people and so on, but other's seemed to be the kind of... real kind of sexual harassment and just the inequality that this brought, the unequalness that was there was very stark between how you negotiate things there. So the rape case didn't come as a massive surprise, I mean Slimuko's involvement in it threw me completely because there was before, brought to the attention of REMOHO, an accusation from a young woman from the LRF, at the Khanya winter school.

Dale: I remember that, yes.

Nina: Yes and this young woman came and she reported this thing in REMOHO, and it was a complete and total disaster the way it was handled. Because immediately she was put up, I mean it was just a mess the fact that she came, I mean the whole process was a complete lack of experience on our part to know how to do this, what to do and I mean sexual harassment and rape all of those it is not an easy thing to deal with. But from a women's organisation you know, we needed to be quite clear about the steps and we weren't. But we never went back to say you know ... I mean we destroyed that girl. She never went any further with that thing, there were no discussions, she disappeared after that. The thing with the rape thing should have ... initially I was like oh my God how could we let such an obvious thing and even just the idea of the thing of going to get the woman and three men, whatever, four or five men in her room whatever it was supposed to be on APF things and... but I mean this is a common thing, not just in the APF, everywhere. So I am just saying that, that... I mean for me coming to work with unions and other organisations, it is shocking but it is not something unheard of. And I think in some ways it is one area in the APF that we have not managed to make any inroads on unfortunately. And when I look back from where I'm sitting now, I know there has been on that level of inequality on the power relations that were there and, and that these mobile young men also become... they also...the APF have

also given them a certain power which has made it worse, which has made their ability to exploit the people around them worse, because they are the leaders, they get to move around, they... I mean this group wouldn't have the kind of opportunities that I think they were having. So that is worrying because I mean...not worrying, that is not what I am saying, but I am saying that, that is I think one of the things that we never challenged that we never found away to address that. And I think that it is part of what I was saying earlier on, this thing of the individual and the personal, lets not just make it the individual, that the personal... you know I always used to ... you know you are an example of someone who brings their personal there but you are the only example of the leader ... nobody else is ... you know you are like this activist with no other life there, you know the...and the contradictions between that was never...so and in that sense it was a funny place it's not a home, when you think of an organisation as a space where you are building socialism, because we are challenging ourselves, we are challenging our daily practice we...it is not just a set of rules, but it is a constant challenge. And I think that in that activist formation without that constant challenging, it is a very one sided development of an activist and it also on some levels makes the women, because for them the personal is in more there, there is no place for that so only a few stay out, you know people can manage to see through the process, but for the men it becomes a... it strengthens their... what I was saying it gives them these even more powerful positions. So we shouldn't have been surprised in a sense and I don't think it is the only example of this, I think it is just that it came out. And I think the fact that it's been so not just in the APF, but embedded in...and often the women will say the activists, or the unionists are the worst. And I understand now why they say that because there is a whole rhetoric that you give, you know at least with the one at home there you can... I mean it is obvious if you do... the consciousness of the rhetoric is clear of the thing, here the thing is too mixy, too messed. So I'm just saying that because it is so embedded, I think of how we handled that is a reflection of that and trying to understand in REMMOHO, I think slowly some people have begun to come through this now. For many of the women they can't...couldn't... there is always the fear of Tebogo, but they couldn't challenge it, because it's challenging themselves. It was not so much that they all supported Patrick, but because the thing was too much too real and also... there is also the fact that probably Tebogo knows some of their stories, so it is just a matter of time ... so this was about themselves. And then there was those who could do ... interestingly often it was the women with slightly different kinds of relationships, with partners who don't play the... who feel a little bit more confident to speak out, to say more. They've got this whole thing within REMMOHO now about challenging with respect ... I mean it is like a mantra that they're using now because I mean for some of them would now looking back at how they didn't challenge or they did and made it worse or ... because for some who feel that they could challenge, a big thing was how do you bring other people along to feel comfortable that they can, to recognise that, maybe Tebogo's position ... to challenge her, but to be able to see where she is ... because you see yourself in it.

Dale: Sure.

Nina: Listening to some of the people speaking now, I was very... I mean it was very interesting to hear how they thought, how they're beginning to find a way and women who tried to heal some of their relationships. So I don't know the broader APF, although I know the REMMOHO women interestingly

were saying that they're feeling that there is some... there's slight shifts at moments with some of the men in how they are responding, but it is all very, very tentative. And I think for them, even for them it is not if they are going to challenge things in the APF how to do that in a way that just doesn't create a gender war and kill's everything off, because I think what happened is that they came with the notion, build REMMOHO, challenging the APF and it didn't work like. I mean as soon as they saw someone demolish them, nobody else was going to do it, after that it is the end of it, it doesn't help that you or John defend the person, because you are not the one going home with it, you know. So... but I am just saying that's the, I don't know in the broader APF, I am only speaking from what I hear now, from what REMMOHO is saying now.

Dale: Okay one thing we haven't touched on and if you can just say a few words about this ... was that throughout the time that you have been involved in the APF ... how do you think the response of the ANC and the Alliance has impacted - whether you know in some ways helping or in other ways - how has it impacted in relation to how the APF has had to respond and has that had an impact itself?

Nina: Look they helped, they helped in the sense that they made it very clear, they polarised ... with the ANC's response, I mean you know, remove all opposition. It was just... it was for people who came into the APF, not all of them came because they had a thing with the ANC ... many people came just because of their own basic struggles. But the ANC forced them into taking clear positions against the ANC, because often I mean there was what they would hear there, but then there would be how the ANC would respond at the local level, with the councillor and then you know and at the broader level. Similarly I mean they created ... the alliance of partners can't handle any opposition anything they regard as a threat. So I think in a funny way it helped people clarify the politics... the organisational politics of the ANC and even helped in the clarification of some of the other issues, the policy questions. I think where - and look I am speaking now by guessing, I don't know enough of it - but I think maybe where it has had a bit of ... it's created a little bit of an opposite thing ... our ability to ... not our ability but how we challenge at a local level, with the IDP, with the what's it's name ... Sometimes I think we've not built up all the resources for capacity, because the attitude was this that we had nothing to do with this. But I think the important spaces were not taken at the local level, that we could've taken, for contestation, I am not saying necessarily to be sucked into those things but we haven't...and I think those... those things are important about what one is learning about what one is building... the long haul So I am saying that is the flip side of this, is that anything to do with the ANC, blah! Blah, the government is ... you don't even look at it, it's just wrong. So you don't engage with the thing, so you know you are creating alternative things and a lot of it is engaging with that. So I am just saying that is the flip side of it ja.

Dale: Okay and a couple of last questions. Have you noticed or did you notice in the trajectory of the APF over the last few years that its core constituency shifted at all, its membership? I say that in loose terms because it is not a membership based organisation. You mentioned previously it started on an unemployed basis ... has it remained so, has anything changed on that front?

Nina: Look the little that I know is that the unemployed base... I think the one thing that is not there, you know there was the one thing with the education rights campaign and the bringing in of students and young people, but I mean that was also tied in with the fact that then you had the education rights campaign, the EPU, the role it played. But that layer from what I can see ... you know you don't have that as a feature any longer within the APF. I don't know enough now to say whether you know all the young people are still there. The only thing I can say, that hasn't changed ... you know sometimes I look at a COSATU gathering or another gathering and just physically, APF people look thinner. I don't know there is something about...It is not that I am saying that they eat less, there is just something, the physical look of the APF hasn't changed. It is a not just a working class organisation, but it is a working class organisation of, I don't know... not fat cats. That kind of character is still there, you know the people you can depend on to be in the march, be in the thing the militant people... I mean that has not changed at all. I mean from what I can see that looks very much the same now. I mean even in the communities and so, I don't know which communities are more prominent now than other's.

Dale: Okay, an interesting observation ... last couple of questions. What you identify as... I mean this is a very general question ... but what would you identify as the main strengths and weaknesses of the APF since you've... I mean irrespective of the fact that you not there ... in the overall context?

Nina: I think that the main strengths of the APF, was the fact that it managed to rebuild community, a sense of what communities organisation can be. It revitalised community struggles at a time when that was, when that had been in many ways squashed through how the ANC had worked over that period. It's strength also is that it attempted to create a democratic structure with the working class, constituency with the working class, with the working class face, with the working class character. It's a strength that which also became one of the big challenges, it tried to take up every possible struggle or sign of exploitation. It tried to support struggles all over and I think it also inspired... it spread, because it was other communities took inspiration, learnt from each other, tried out similar things where they were. It created a core of activists who can say they are socialists, who can go to activities and speak about struggle, a layer that won't just disappear. And like I said earlier on, it experimented with very creative things, you know the prepaid water meters, the electricity things, it did research, you know we tried to speak about, you know we experimented with ... tried to play a significant role in the SMI, so the thing of building the others, the Coalition, Water Coalition, different forms ... REMMOHO, the student issue, the cultural thing, you know. There was a time that that was strong ... it was in all the regions in Joburg. So ja...though it met with a lot of difficulties, but it tried to develop positions around the elections, even sometimes contest the election. The thing I think of bringing left groups had it's problems but also I think it was a time for people to try to work together, you know in a broad forum, which I don't have lot's of memories of, and it lasted for a long time you know. I remember trying to do that in Cape Town, it was not easy to do. But I think one of the important things about that because the left groups with all it's funny behaviours and things did all agree on the importance of working class leadership and the character of the thing. And because it seems there was that common agreement, it kept the character, it didn't just become a ... it could easily have gone the other way, it could have become a group of individuals or left people in a talk shop, which would've fallen apart long ago, but the

fact that what started as individuals and left groups together and ended up like this, is I think something really significant and quite different from anything certainly in my memory, you know when left groups or individuals come together. In terms of the challenges, I think one of the big things... I don't think it challenged the patriarchal nature of the society and I think somehow it entrenched some of that within the organisation itself. I think that we didn't necessarily listen carefully enough, the thing was because we were leading in many spheres, the SMI, I don't think we always, you know you can support the Zimbabwean struggle but you can be learning at the same time, I don't think we spent enough time learning from others. I think sometimes the way we assimilated lessons even from our own struggles, were, because it was done with a lot of point scoring from the side of left groups often, I don't think the way people learnt it or assimilated ... maybe it could have been done in a more comradely way, we could have drawn the lessons out in a different kind of way. I think that the unemployed thing - that yes there was a lot of discussion around income generation and so and for me it was partly a reflection of in a sense almost of a patriarchal nature of the organisation, that those things are small things, they are not revolutionary, they are not political enough and they are women's things even though no one is articulating like that. So and I am not saying that about the income generation, and I think just being able to break that divide and recognising people more as people, with a life, with a home, with a family with a personal life, would have forced us to make more... create more spaces to do... to take the income part, to take the unemployed question, to take that into account. And then I think that... I don't know, because you see some of these things they feel you know... might say through weaknesses you start blaming someone.

Dale: Not at all.

Nina: But I am thinking of the money thing is a... I think one thing is the mistake was to not... to maybe not have spent more... I am wasting a lot of time on the money, but I don't know I can't say that that is difficult to say. I don't know something which would have had a relationship that found ways in understanding what the role of resources were. But I think that could only happen if it went together with the whole thing of unemployed, because then you're not dismissing where people are coming from, there is an acknowledgement and it's political and it's important and then some of the money takes a different dynamic because...and now when you have the money and someone has taken it...no one is saying, we are paying lip service to it but in reality its not important; the fact that you don't have food when you go home or you... not just food, but the thing of work and income and so on. So I don't know, but the thing for me is that the two would have had to go together to have made an impact - Ja I think that's a some of the maybe big challenges of going forward either as one rebuilds the APF ... I mean I think just practically on the money thing, how differently... no not that, it would have to go with the other part, the income part. I think that the REMOHO thing also struck a cord with me because I think that notion of confronting with respect and I mean I asked them to explain, you know what that actually meant? They had a whole set of things about, how do you listen and its interesting because it is not about diluting differences, but it is about building a different way of relating to each other and I think what they're trying to do is really go against their type because there is so much aggression and so much anger and so much self hate and I don't know all the other things and it goes with a whole lot of

other things that you need to do. But I think that thing, that more consciousness about how we relate and finding ways to ... and that the socialism is here was something I didn't think we did enough of in the process. Ja, that's the challenges.

Dale: Okay and at the end of all my interviews I ask that if there's anything that we haven't discussed or anything I haven't ask that you want to say, anything about the APF? This is as you know - I am doing these things as a oral history from both past and present people and sort of getting the whole thing and I want to give every opportunity for people to, you know, if there's anything else that you might think is important that you wanted to say?

Nina: I think one would need to for the APF ... I think that if there's a way to bring that thing in of I am not going to say a softness, because that is not the word I am looking for ... that you have a layer of activists and maybe in some cases is not easy to un-change learnt behaviour and things. But I mean you have a space and you have people who still are committed and many people are still with the struggle and if there was a way, like another breath of fresh air that could be brought in, which can start introducing ways for people to relate just organisationally in different kinds of ways. And I can't think exactly what those examples could be. I think that the APF could be... of all the things that its learnt and you know the history that is there could still be an important organisation, but it needs as I say some breath of fresh air that will come in and that will almost make us remember who we are and why we are there and why we are together and how we think of each other? You know and it can't... that is always the flip side of it, you know when you have too many fixed organisational processes. Some of these things are not... there's the disciplinary and the this meeting and the that meeting, but those are just the meetings. I mean there's something - if I was religious I would say a soul - or something that we need to find again and it was there. I think I mean it was there and I am sure it still comes out, but I think that it can't be a model, to have an organisation where the meeting is about tearing at each others throats about preparing how to fight with each other. Because it is about confronting and having differences but it must be about doing that in a different way because I now believe you can't build an organisation without. I don't know what the REMMOHO people were talking about confronting with more respect or something. I mean many people in REMMOHO were I don't know, deeply religious and all kinds of other things - but it's not that, that must be the other thing, because it has the same hierarchy and all the other stuff that is there. As I think you know ... when I was in India I met some of the movements and someone there and some of them have a very different quality to how people connect and even some of the Latin American. I mean I spoke to some of the women of the feminist movement who organise across the continent, like domestic workers organising across the continent and some of the leaders are domestic workers. I mean I am thinking now about, how... what is it that's preventing that? I'm sure they disagree and there is fighting and so on, but there is obviously other things that hold things together. Because I mean I listen to other things like funders that come here, they laugh at us when we say network, they say it is almost impossible... I mean and I have been experimenting because I have been working with women from all four federations trying to experiment and some of it... funny, but some of it is about a lot of thought of how you structure the meeting and a lot of little things ... and now there is a consciousness that you need to find, ways to work together. So I don't know I think that if

there is a way to bring someone...because I think there are people there in the APF and it will be a real pity if something doesn't grow from this. But it does need a big shuffling, shaking up and maybe if that shaking up is not possible, it will have to die, it will have to go through a process where things don't work out and you start fresh, sometimes that is also necessary.

Dale: Okay thanks very much.

Nina: Sure

