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Dale: Okay, it is the 15th of May and I am interviewing Teboho Mashota. Teboho thanks very much for making the time for the interview. Just before we start questions about the APF just a few basic things about yourself - where and when were you born?

Teboho: I was born in Soweto in a township called Pimville in '82 and I have, okay my parents never married. So my dad is married, stays with my step mum and from his side I have three siblings so I am the second born ja. No it's two actually sorry and I am the second one. And from my mom's side I am the last one and it's two.

Dale: Okay, so five in all?

Teboho: Ja, five in all.

Dale: And you have you lived in Jo'burg in this area all your life or have you lived in different places?

Teboho: No I, I lived ... okay I was born in Pimville and I moved out when I fell pregnant with my first son and I moved to Alberton from there with my son's dad. We moved in together got engaged and we moved out of Alberton, moved to Westdene and finally I am now staying here with my two kids. So we actually, I broke up with him when my son was I think two years.

Dale: Okay so you are a parent of two now, how old are your children?

Teboho: The first one five, a boy and the second one a girl who is seven months now.

Dale: Okay and what about your schooling. What schooling did you do?

Teboho: My primary education was in Zone 2, Pimville. Then my High School was in Progress and from Progress I went to Technikon South Africa - that is where I studied Information Technology. I did it for, it was supposed to be four years, I did it for two years then dropped out, you know due to financial problems so I couldn't continue with it. Even there that was not my passion you know, it was pressure from when you are coming out of school and the teachers tell you "no, no you must do IT, you know that is where the money is". And you know me and my friends at school, all five of us went and did Information Technology, you know and three of us dropped out, the two continued you know and in Tech SA that is where I joined the SRC there.

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: But even there, I was a bit, I think I was still naive you know, I was joining because they were talking about fees.

Dale: Really?

Teboho: Ja, that is why I became a member and it started getting nice, with free parties ... okay that is how they were spending their money but we didn't know and they were not even questioning why they were spending, why we are being invited to parties you know if it's a meeting even if it is just for an hour they will select a few people and there will be food and so it was nice. So I stopped being a member when I dropped out and that is where I started being involved with the SECC ...

Dale: And let's just go to that directly. I mean how you did; you have already given an indication of your initial political involvement so just give us a little bit of background as to how you then became more of an activist and started with the SECC?

Teboho: Okay you know when I was still with TSA [Technikon South Africa] politics was, I don't know, didn't mean anything to me, you know I was joining them because I know most of the time when they wanted our votes, they would invite us and truly speaking others would even offer to give you money. And because you're a student and you don't even know how these things work you will accept because one of the guys that recruited me is a member of the ANC, he stays in Pimville; he's like six houses from where I used to stay. So because we used the same train in the morning I will go with him and he will introduce me to some people there ... so after dropping out, then I attended the first meeting with the SECC, they were talking about, they were campaigning around education.

Dale: This is the very first meeting that they had?

Teboho: Yes.

Dale: Yes, okay what year was that?

Teboho: 2001 or I think 2000.

Dale: Must have been 2000 I think because that's about the time of the formation of the APF as well.

Teboho: Yes, I think Trevor was campaigning for Councillor, they were talking about education. So with my sister and two of my friends we went there, we just went there because you know we wanted to hear what they say about education because they had these posters about free education so we were curious since we wanted to further our studies you know. And when we went there they were talking about the way Government is depriving us of education, talked about privatisation and some of the things they were talking about were like great to us you know and that is also when they spoke about electricity and they had a list to say if you have been cut off and you want us to reconnect, you must come to us and we went there. But our electricity at home was Eskom - cut it three years before I met the meeting, so we had already reconnected for ourselves but the problem there was that during the day we'd disconnect and at night reconnect, so there

was that thing ... so what they were saying is if you come to us, you don't even fear Eskom when they come because someone would stand at the gate and say "Eskom is coming quickly disconnect" you know. So they were saying "no just leave it as it is and when they ask you just tell them it's us, you know who reconnected for you". So we went there because we wanted that security, not that we wanted them to reconnect for us, but because we had already done it, you know. So ja, I went to that meeting and they took our names and there was supposed to be a workshop, it is just that I don't remember but that weekend there was supposed to be a workshop and they were saying, I remember Bongani was saying, "no we need young people to you know to come to this workshop to come and learn, you know there is a lot of things that you can learn". And we went because we had nothing to do. So it was myself, my sister and one of my friends who went with me to that meeting. Then later I recruited other people so basically that is how I joined and in that meeting, you know we went to that workshop I can't remember the workshop just because I don't remember what workshop it was but it was at the Workers Library. It was nice, we met people and you know were enjoying it. But it was not to say we are politicians now but it was just for us ... it was a nice experience where you know you meet new people and even though we were bored in the meeting we continued. Then that's when they invited us again to regular meetings of PKRC. Okay, then there was no more SECC it was Pimville Klipspruit Residents Committee.

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: So they say no you must come to PKRC, this is where you know you will talk about your problems as members of the community. So then ... this is where you go back to the members of your community from different areas, this is where people meet and we went again to that meeting. In that meeting we participated because we are asking questions, we wanted clarity and so we went again and the second meeting that is where I was elected the Chairperson. For me it was like "okay, I mean really".

Dale: Of PKRC?

Teboho: Yes. I was like "Okay, Chairperson what do I do now" you know. So Bongani was encouraging me to say "no you can do it man, you know we will teach you"

[Interruption by a child's voice: short pause]

Dale: Okay, we are back on.

Teboho: So for me we were excited. When I got home I told my aunt that "you know they elected me as Chairperson and I don't even know what that is, I don't even know what I am supposed to do". And she wasn't even that enthusiastic about it, you know and she was like "no okay, just go you will learn". So they elected me and I missed the meeting after the elections and that is when Bongani came to my house to say "but you are the Chairperson,

these are your responsibilities". I felt like okay this is a huge task and I explained; 'I actually, I want, I don't think I am really interested in these things you know and my interest is in going to school, you know I think these things are going to slow me down". And so he said "no, just give it a month and you see how it goes". So he would collect me like when there are meetings, when there are workshops and so that is how it started. And I started ... you know gaining interest, you know in the PKRC ... so we started going to other areas with sis Dudu, Bongani, Virginia, Nonhlanhla you know started. Because what happened is I met people like Nonhlanhla, Ma Mthembu - we met when we were busy campaigning so we would recruit them, you know "come to the meeting". So that is how we met with them and I think, where was this meeting, oh in Orlando, when the formation of, this is when the SECC I think it was formed. People were saying SECC but I think before PKRC, because what used to happen is that when the problem of Eskom started, it was just Zone 7. Trevor and Bongani in their area they started, because we call that area it's like a middle class area, well it used to be, I don't think it is now. You know it was that area where we called the Mabujoe [the bourgeoisie].

Dale: Right, right.

Teboho: So what they used to do is every time when there were cut offs they would get into their cars and form a convoy and go to Eskom. That's how it happens but then they discovered that the problem was not only in Pimville but in other areas so this is when the SECC ... this is how it was formed.

Dale: SECC?

Teboho: SECC ja, this is how it was formed the SECC.

Dale: Okay, so in those early years I mean you sort of got stuck in the deep end, you were sort of dumped in there right away in a leadership position. Just tell us a little something about your own understandings about how you moved from the activist to start making the linkages with for example privatisation issues and stuff?

Teboho: Okay as I said I didn't know anything. The person I would say the person that groomed me was Bongani, obviously he was learning from Trevor. After I think a year of being a member of PKRC that's when they recruited me to SG [Socialist Group]. So this is where I learnt; they would give me books, some I didn't understand, some I didn't even read, you know but they were able to in a way link my problem of education with a global problem, you know. So I think that is where I got to understand it. We had like we had study groups, you know and I would go to schools and be part of the SGB's - not SGB - Learners Representative Council.

Dale: Learners Representative Council?

Teboho: Yes so that is where I learnt about your privatisation how it did affect me, the community and all that.

Dale: Okay. When SECC was launched that was more or less at the time that the APF was formed?

Teboho: Ja.

Dale: In 2000, but did you immediately start becoming involved in the APF through the SECC?

Teboho: Yes, what happened is with APF ... I was volunteering for SECC as administrator.

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: And using AIDC which offered us an office at Auckland House you know at COSATU House. So when APF was formed and when the issue of the office came in SECC was already in that office. So I joined APF through the SECC. So now when APF got funding and needed an administrator that's how actually I got in.

Dale: You were already doing that kind of work?

Teboho: Yes, I was already doing it for the SECC.

Dale: And just from what your memory, how your memory serves you how do you remember who the initial groups were and people that were around that formed the APF besides the SECC as an initial grouping?

Teboho: I remember, before I remember there was ... that these meetings that used to happen before AIDC moved out you know there were these meetings that used to happen at night. You know people would come after work and even, I remember Joe was also part of that meeting; there was Wiseman, and who else? But there were other people from COSATU who used to come, just that I don't remember the names. But I know there were also some people from SOPA, SACP because these are meetings that were happening after work. So sometimes I would feel a bit left out in those meetings because I thought these people is like, maybe they know each other or something ... but I used to stay for those meetings after, and they will talk about, I remember the first meeting that I attended, they were talking about the strike in Wits.

Dale: Ja, the Wits retrenchments and yes ...?

Teboho: Ja, that is the meeting ... DSM, some students from Wits were also part of those meetings but these meetings used to happen, was it, not every evening, I think they used to, I don't remember, twice a week I just don't remember correctly but they used to happen like more regularly. You know people are coming after work and then there were talks of a formation you know to form the Anti Privatisation Forum. People would say "no because privatisation you know they strike", people were talking about how privatisation is going to affect WITS, is going to affect basic services. SECC yes was there through Trevor, but the organisation has ... for instance SECC has its own executive but when APF was formed it was not like it's the whole SECC, it was just, I will make an example; Trevor you know who was part of the formation of the APF, but I don't think it was SECC because SECC then didn't know about the APF. So in a way he, how can I put it, he had

interest in joining with other groups, to form yes the APF because he understood how privatisation was going to affect people. So after that then that's when I remember what used to happen is after those meetings then he would go to the SECC to say I attended this meeting, this is what was happening and I think even with the SECC there was still ... the issue then was electricity, and privatisation was far from electricity, people didn't understand how it was fitting in into the daily cut offs of electricity you know. It took some time (for people) to understand because I remember, they would say "down with capitalism" and some of us would be like "okay, that's if people understand what that is". There were always critiques around using such words, you know like globalisation, we were like okay, those words are up there and there are bread and butter issues which people came for you know. People are in the SECC because of the evictions, because of the cut off, not because of globalisation because they don't understand what it does. So it took some time for people to understand how it affects them. This is where every Tuesday because SECC has forums every Tuesdays. For an hour we would have a slot for political education, we call it political education and someone would come and talk about privatisation and explain what privatisation is and what capitalism is. There is an example that we used to laugh about. Bongani used to talk about capitalism, so we know every time he stands up he would be like; "you can't work in a bakery and, go home hungry" because he would make an example to say people work in a bakery but they don't have bread at home. So that's what capitalism does, you know. So he would make those linkages you know. So it took some time for people to understand.

Dale: Okay, and after the APF was formed and it was the way that you said - some individuals, political groupings and I think besides the SECC was KCR was the other community organisation, right?

Teboho: Ja besides it was KCR and DCPC. In KCR we heard about UKOSA. This is where Peter Mafisa came from COSATU, I don't know SAMWU, yes he was also part of SAMWU and Tumi Cayicayi who was chairperson of the APF and we had quite a number of people hey. Ok now that we're talking about comrades.

Dale: Ja you just switched you memory back then, ja.

Teboho: So Trevor was secretary of the APF and now he had, I think because of the work he had to change and be organiser.

Dale: Right.

Teboho: But what we used to do with him and Bongani and other comrades even Virginia, I remember we used to go to Vaal you know, to organise in Vaal because we would wake up in the morning around five I remember. He would fetch us you know, go to Bongani's place. In my street there were about eight people who were part of PKRC who formed the executive you know. Okay we had like two days of leafleting, so we would leave late in the morning and all of that. But now this was in Soweto, so with the APF what we did, we talk about you know, uniting with other communities so you know, so we'd wake up with Virginia, Bongani and what's this guy now, he passed away but he was from Pimville as well. We would go to Vaal. This is where ... not Ironside, yes Ironside and VCF but before MaTladi, when what's his name, what's this guy now?

Dale: Jerome?

Teboho: No, no no VCF?

Dale: Phineas, Phineas?

Teboho: No, no I forgot his name now, but not the VCF that we have now. They were old people who, the first people who formed the VCF. So we'd go with them, go to Masiza and then we would sometimes fetch Bricks and go to Masiza, organise there in Masiza and you know. I think it was okay for me then I don't know, I was struggling to understand why, I don't know maybe it's because I was still growing, you know. Why I had to go to Vaal and organise in Vaal from Soweto really, it didn't make sense you know. Okay I understood yes there's the APF, they are an organisation but even then I was struggling to understand the purpose of the APF. You know why? Okay we have the SECC in Soweto there are cut offs you know. So even for me it took some time for me to understand the difference between the APF, SECC and also going to Vaal to organise or going to East Rand you know. So, what was the question, I think I just...

Dale: No, no, that's fine, we're having a conversation. That's exactly what it should be ... what do you remember of those; I mean when did you become the administrator of the APF? Do you remember 2002, 2001?

Teboho: Okay 2000 AIDC moved out and 2001 I was still volunteering for the APF and also doing work for the SECC. 2002, I think this is where, 2001 I think we were trying to separate my role as APF administrator and the work that I was doing for SECC you know. I remember there were talks in the SECC that you know, now that I am doing APF I am doing admin for the APF, SECC will also need to have its own administrator, you know because you can't be doing both and also because APF is growing, is going to grow to be a big organisation. All those kind of things you know. So I think in 2001, this is when SECC had to get its own administrator and I continued volunteering for the APF in 2002 also 2003.

Dale: 2003.

Teboho: Yes.

Dale: The first time we got the major funding from War on Want.

Teboho: Yes.

Dale: That's right.

Teboho: Yes, yes ja that was in 2003.

Dale: Okay and just tell us a little bit about ... I mean that was quite a rapid move from your part, where you started and become an administrator of an organisation at that time, it was still fairly small but as you say it was going to grow fairly quickly ... what kinds of responsibilities, what kinds of things were you doing?

Teboho: Well, it was basically admin work. But I think being administrator for the APF you know, my understanding was, it was not, you know as the administrator you just do your basic admin work you know. But being APF administrator, it was more than being administrator you know. I remember Trevor used to tell me that “you know you have a political responsibility to the APF, your job is not to be administrator but to also in a way be seen as a face of the APF” you know, unite though it was a big challenge. Because he’d say, “five people would come from different organisations, you have to treat them equally”, you know you have to ... it’s not, even though I remember there was always this critique that no but this is something that came I think for four/four/six years or five years, five years I think after I was administrator when the organisation was still growing, was growing now like you know. But there will be critiques like “no you can’t be, you won’t know how to separate being administrator and a member of the SECC” you know. But to me truly speaking I think there was also the confusion because to me sometimes you’d feel like okay no I was administrator of the APF through SECC you know and in a way SECC would, how can I put it, not tell you what to do but expect, how can I put it now? For instance, if I don’t go to SECC meetings, the issue of administrator will always be raised. The “one of the reasons you are an administrator is because you are an SECC member, so don’t separate the two, don’t start focusing on the APF and forget about the SECC”. So sometimes I would feel like you know I owe these people something. So I think that took some time for me to understand you know. So ja but it was a huge thing for me and honestly it was sometimes difficult, you know.

Dale: Okay I can absolutely imagine, because the APF is an unwieldy organisation and it always has been, it is not a normal kind of NGO. Okay and from those early years from the position you were holding in the APF - just describe some of the key moments or events that you think were part of the APF’s growth in those 2001, 2002, 2003 years because that was a fairly heady time for the APF, the WSSD happened, WCAR all these big things were going on - your involvement, your perspectives on those things?

Teboho: Ja, I think. Sometimes I think it grew too fast. For me like the WSSD it was phew it kept us busy but as an administrator and also someone who started as an activist ... you know APF, we had the media committee. Nic was running the media committee ... but with Eugene, Coco and them you know ... because I think APF was still struggling we didn’t have funding from War on Want.

Dale: Right.

Teboho: I know we would work at night. Stay until ten, eleven, go to Wits to use the printers and the fax, make posters. I don’t know if I am mixing these things but I remember there was this big event that we were planning and we had to go sleep at Wits and make posters, banners and the like. So everyone was putting ... it was not this issue of we need to get money, we need to do this everyone was doing it out of love and you know people were passionate about what they were doing. And even with WSSD, you know a lot of comrades contributed you know to make it a success. I remember even when the NIA came to the office you know people just put their foot down saying “we are going ahead, the meeting is at Shaft 17 and you know. So that’s the work that was put into making it a success that it was. And I think when, you see when an organisation grows, new people come in and we used to, in a way being jack of all trades you know, but when, when new people come in, in a way to do what you were doing its like “oh oh, these one’s are like getting into my

territory now". So I think that was also that thing of I think of being in an organisation for a long time and having to do one you know almost all these things and when new people come in you don't, I think sometimes open for people...in a way change you know. When an organisation grows, obviously there's going to be change. So I think there was also ... okay, I don't know for other people, I think for me it was like "okay this organisation is growing too fast now". At first it was like five affiliates, now we have twenty or fifteen organisations and there are all these demands coming in and at some point you have to prove "Ay I have been here long before you" [laughter] you know. When all these demands are coming in, it's like you sometimes when change happens, we don't accept that, you know the organisation is growing, obviously it will change ... just be open to that. I think for me I was a bit struggling there...

Dale: One of the things that the APF did as it started growing and when it got some funding was to restructure itself quite substantially in terms of the way of meetings. I mean you were part of that and all the different discussions around that. Did you think that, that structuring was something that was necessary and good for the APF? Because the complaint had been that "well things are too loose you know and we need democratic structures and a more structured organisation?"

Teboho: Like your sub committees and...?

Dale: Your coordinating committee, your executive, your office bearers, you know the whole lot ...

Teboho: I don't know for me at first it was okay you know because we have always been saying "no, we are a democratic organisation" you know. I remember at first we were arguing for APF not having a structure, but let's be a loose organisation you know and but as the organisation was growing, I think being a loose organisation was not going to work out you know. But I'd say having like the executive, the coordinating committee and the sub committees it was part of APF's growth at first, but I think as it went on and on to grow and then things changed you know. As I said and APF became too loose I think, how can I put it? In a way we taught people to be dependent and...

Dale: Politically, are you talking about generally, politically, financially or how?

Teboho: Politically I would say APF you know when, when APF was formed I think in terms politically yes we differed you know, but we had one vision, you know when it comes to privatisation why we are part of the APF even though there were others who were saying ... I remember even at the AGM when we were pushing for APF to take or put in this constitution that our vision is for socialism you know. We, we differed. You know some people felt no it's too soon and all that, but eventually people were convinced to that and APF took that position you know. And even though we differed, we were able to work together even though we had differences. We would step on each others toes, but at the end of the day we would find a way of working together even though there are differences. And now, what I think when APF was formed, we said "let's all come together to one room, those who are against privatisation, just join". And as we were going we had to define you know to say "yes we are anti privatisation, but being anti privatisation what are the politics of the APF". I think that's why COSATU had left the APF even other organisations, the SACP and all of that because some people, I remember there was also this meeting, some people were walking out to say "no you are anti government" you know, you are this, you are that. These are people who left and never came back you know. And those who felt, who agreed actually stayed but I would say for

me those are the people who understood, I don't know if I should say or maybe we should call them intellectuals you know, or the people who understood. I don't know what to say, who understood politics - I just don't know the right word to use - but who had the understanding you know on what we are building. When you know you have your KCR coming, SECC, UKOSA and other organisations and now your VCF and started having more and more affiliates joining in and the structures, I think we opened up and this thing of people being autonomous. We opened up a space for a lot of opportunism I think, because, how do I put it? Even though in the APF, not everyone has the vision for socialism you know. Just like in the SECC you know not everyone has the vision for socialism. People are there because they want their electricity to be connected, they are there because ... okay we will say in the meeting people use us as their society or insurance to say "if I have a membership card, the day that ESKOM comes, I know I have a membership card they'll come and reconnect" you know. So I think in the APF we opened that space, we said "whether you are UDM come in" you know, IFP you're welcome. So I think in a way this is what I think, because we are saying ... and affiliates it doesn't matter because you'll find ... even having a chairperson. That's why people like what's this guy from KCR? Who is this guy who was [laughter] we used to fight.

Dale: Oh Bheki?

Teboho: No, no this other who was too, the Zulu one. Zulu [laughs]

Dale: Ah that's right, ja. I seem to remember him.

Teboho: Yes, that's why I think people like Zulu who especially when the issue of the elections came in you know, would fight a lot with them because their vision was "no APF must be parliament, we must go to parliament" and all those kind of things. And even though some would say "no it's not parliament, it's not why we have the APF" you know. Others would come with their talk about socialism and people felt "no that's not it" you know, if we can just be councillors and those kinds of things. So I think we ...

Dale: Okay so we just took a bit of a pause. I wanted to ask you just some other things as the APF started to grow. As you said, besides just being the administrator, you were an activist within the APF and very involved in all of its activities. How did you see the relationship between how the APF developed and the response of the ANC and the state to what the APF was doing?

Teboho: Okay. The state has always been...I don't know, I don't want to say critical...no that's not the right word.

Dale: Hostile or probably...?

Teboho: Hostile, yes, yes towards the APF. Because we have always been seen as being anti-state, anti-ANC, anti-government you know but I think to our members, I mean it was not a problem that the ANC was seeing us as being anti. So even though they were hostile it was expected from government, a bourgeoisie government like the ANC. So ja I think though sometimes it was a bit difficult to organise in the communities you know. Especially when we were going to a new area you know. People will say "Ah you are anti-government" you know and you have to explain yourself to people that, "no this is what we are doing, this is why we do this" and sometimes it was taking time

for people to understand why we are doing what we are doing you know. And because others would go, we used to do door to door. When we say APF “ah you, anti Government” they will shut their door ... but I think it was taking, it took time but people you know got used to us and especially in Soweto when we were loud hailing. People knew SECC as Operation Khanyisa, not as SECC so when you say Operation Khanyisa, then they know what you are talking about ... it showed we are a threat to government you know. APF is a threat to government and also what we were doing was in a way threatening them and making them to think, for instance if you, I don't know if you still remember the moratorium?

Dale: Ja on the cut offs.

Teboho: On the cut offs you know. If it wasn't for the struggle that we have been pushing, I don't think there would have been a moratorium. So it showed that this, you know is something that we are doing. I think also with the water case you know. It's through the effort that the APF was taking and its members to make the case to go where it went you know and also the process of Operation Gcinamanzi to be slowed down. So I think ja. They were hostile, but we are still going on.

Dale: You've already identified one of the key challenges of the APF which was to locate itself within communities ... there was a lot of propaganda around the APF about what it was supposed to be about in terms of trying to convince people. What other kinds ... what you would call political organisational challenges do you think the APF had at that particular time when it was growing? It made a name for itself in these big events and yet there was still a battle within the communities over political loyalties and activities?

Teboho: I think even with now there's always this thing of yes we do reconnect you know, we reconnect for people when people come to our meetings. But there is there's always this issue of poverty I think. And even when we are organising in the community people will come to meetings, you will see next week they're not there. People are looking for jobs and I think that's a challenge for the APF I think, not only for APF, even for SECC because if you can look at SECC five, six years ago and now, you will see a huge difference. There is that loyalty, you know but there are those people who are consistent in coming to meetings, when we organise and marches but the majority is not there you know. Its either they found jobs or they are looking or they feel “you know what; you know this route is not getting anywhere, it's not taking me anywhere you know”. So I think that's a challenge for the APF I think.

Dale: There were lots of debates within the APF and there's still are to a certain degree, but I mean in those middle years ... you mentioned previously about the way in which the character of the APF and where it should be going. Given the fact that the APF mostly organised within communities with most people unemployed and as you say in poverty, did you think that at the time that the decisions that were taken by the organisation were the correct ones given the situation in terms of maintaining itself as a social movement or community organisation under conditions that were increasingly quite difficult?

Teboho: Ja, I think so. Because I mean look, yes there is a problem of poverty but there's not much that APF can do ... even if we wanted. I know that there are some organisations that have projects and you know they are assisting comrades but it's not something that can be done by, okay no

maybe let me not say it's not something that can not be done by twenty five affiliates. Maybe they can do it but the APF as an organisation I don't think so. This is also something which I am debating myself you know, I don't know. It's a challenge for us as an organisation and we cannot solve it, we cannot solve it and it's the system that it's creating the problem you know. So unless if we confront the system then we can solve the problem of poverty you know what I mean. So we can come with immediate solutions like projects you know, but people will still say "you giving...other people are getting seven hundred rand from the projects" but it's too low you know. So I think this is a challenge which as an organisation we must, just don't know how to deal with it but try to deal with it.

Dale: Well one of the debates was should the APF move more towards becoming a organisation or political party which would change the nature of the whole struggle that the APF was involved in. That was one of the debates that were very central in the APF at some at particular point in time.

Teboho: Ja but I think even there it doesn't mean we are going to give people jobs you know or we are going to give them houses and sometimes you may think sometimes that ja maybe this is a chance that we need to take as an organisation but doing that because of the challenge that we have of poverty, then its raising false hope to our members. Because then taking that route and people supporting because they think they are going to get jobs, then its like misleading them in a way because even if the APF changes its face, its direction, it doesn't mean we are going to satisfy everyone. And I think sometimes in fact it might mean an end to the APF I think because we are saying the political parties are failing you know. So now if we go that route we are then saying we are going to, it means we are better than them you know what I mean. So unless if we go that route with a clear mind, but I know someone in Soweto if I say "APF is now going to be a political party" they will think "oh at least I am going to get a job or at least I am going to" ... So you and me may understand or, I don't know, an ordinary person won't understand it. Maybe we might think okay *mani*, being a political party is going to solve but it wont actually it won't. Because a political party...I mean an example is OKM , it was in a way the first time as SECC we took a stand as a organisation and we have challenges you know and we're learning from those challenges. But we have not given people jobs or houses or anything and so they were even saying "yes we are not going there to give them jobs, but we're going there to make a statement". But I mean Zodwa comes to meetings complaining every day, she was hauled, she was this, she was that ... so imagine APF you know being a minority. I mean we are a minority compared to the ANC you know and we are and it doesn't mean we are going to have...we may be having nearly twenty five affiliates it doesn't mean we are going to have twenty five councillors.

Dale: Sure.

Teboho: You know. So I don't know I think that's something that still needs to be debated I think.

Dale: ... I think most people would say and other activists from the past in the APF that its been in the last lets say two or three years where the organisations like the APF, the Anti Eviction Campaign all these organisations that started about ten years ago have done what they can kind of, do you think there's still a role for the APF to play and it's community affiliates to play in the contemporary or the current situation because a lot has transpired over the last ten years in South African politics?

Teboho: Yes there are a lot that has transpired but I think there's still a role that APF can play or even with the other social movements being the watchdog because us being there has in a way we show government we are watching you know. But it's not only to show government that, but I think with us, I don't know about other organisations, but I know with the APF we have a vision of a changed society you know. We may debate what kind of society that is but we all agree this one is not working you know. But I think also I mean it's been what, ten years now we still agree that the society that we're living in is messed up. But the problem is with also with the changes I mean I can't sit here and say government is not dealing with it. ANC is dealing with it you know. There are houses and even our own members, I mean I don't know, I don't know if this is, I know some of my comrades are, if they can hear me say this they'll think "ah this is now a bourgeoisie but you see I sit here as a mother with two kids but what I am thinking about is; "okay what am I going to cook for my kids?" you know. And someone will say you are working, so I mean really. And even me who is working, I have to worry about paying a bond you know, I have to worry about paying school fees and you sit alone and you think okay now my salary is not able to accommodate the bond so I am thinking about an RDP. I remember we were laughing with someone, I was saying "really Thembalihle why don't they go to Legae". They won't have houses, come next year they won't have houses because I want to go to Legae and they're not going to lie and say, I mean if it means having a shelter for my kids I will go to Legae. Whether APF is there or not I will go to Legae you know. So I think those are the things that even just, if I am thinking like that then even just an ordinary person who is our member. When we criticise people end say "come elections you will see people going and queuing for food parcels" you know what I think we are living in hard times really. I am not going to blame people for anything; honestly I am not going to blame them. So I think this is also the challenge that we are facing as social movements, even our own members who are in leadership positions, they also have the same problems. We have those problems I mean we worry about a lot of things you know. So sometimes I think maybe this is why people don't come to our meetings anymore you know because they feel we're not giving them what they want. Maybe this is why, I don't know, really you'll find us fighting over money because we really need this money you know what I mean. So I think it's, compared to six years ago it's, it has changed.

Dale: So what you are saying it is the most difficult socio economic conditions for people have almost forced them not to think so much about politics as opposed to the material realities of their lives ... and that makes it much more difficult for an organisation like the APF to do what it set out to do?

Teboho: I mean I stay here in Naturena and I pay my electricity. I just paid a thousand rand for electricity. I had to go and look for that thousand rand to go and pay it, because I cannot imagine living in the dark and having to make this bottle for Nonhlanhla and wake up in the morning. So I think the conditions are really making it difficult for one to think about politics you know, now when things are (bad) so I think it is a challenge which APF or SECC, I don't think now we are at a ,I don't think we can, it's the society you know. And it will take us years and years and years to solve.

Dale: Okay and you mentioned and this has always been an important aspect and also problematic aspect in the APF is that on one side when the APF managed to get in a substantial amount of funding it allowed the APF to do a whole range of things including employing some people and into programmes but over the years as you indicate those funds became a source of some kind of

division or conflict with the organisation. The question I want to know is do you think it was the right thing to do for the APF to enter into funding relationships with War on Want and all the other funders or that it should have maintained itself as some kind of more of a self sufficient independent irrespective of the fact that, that meant one couldn't do nearly as much financially?

Teboho: I mean look, I think when APF started, I remember we used to buy like chips, chicken like about five full chickens and cut them into pieces and we'd share. And even with transport you know, those who had money would give others. But then I think we didn't have like, not even more than six affiliates I think ...

Dale: Ja.

Teboho: And affiliates were transporting themselves and you know. So I think then it was working out and people were not dependent on the APF, we all knew what we wanted to form we were trying to form but when the organisation started growing, then that changed. For me I think maybe the mistake that it was a good thing that we had to source funding because there was no way that we were going to sustain what we're doing ,having people to contribute every time you know every time so we had to get money so that we can continue. But I think what we didn't, I don't know maybe we didn't think that having affiliates coming in to transport people maybe in the long run was going to be a problem. And also I think even though we say APF is a home of the working class but I think at some point I think we are supposed to limit the number of affiliates really because not that to shut them outside to say "no, no we have twenty now the door is closed' but to say we can only have this number of affiliates you know, I mean really. We're not a union and they are not even contributing. So having twenty five affiliates depending on one funder or two funders, it's I mean really and people dying every day, having to pay bail monies and the like. I think maybe we were supposed to say we limit the number or have some sort of a contribution from the affiliates. So that people, let me make an example with COSATU. When people contribute pay, what you call it?

Dale: Their fees, their dues when they pay their dues.

Teboho: Yes when they pay their dues to COSATU and in a way they feel there's a responsibility to do so I think but with our affiliates it's like APF is expected to give us the money, it's our money you know what I mean, so but with that money I mean there was no way, I mean there was no way that we can satisfy everyone anyway I think so it was a good move but you know...

Dale: Okay but a challenge as you say, it always brought up a lot of challenges. I think it's very interesting to get from your perspective. When you were working as an administrator, I mean you dealt on a day to day basis with pretty much everything in the organisation, whether that was administrative things, political things all sorts of other things. What were for you the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the APF that you saw while you were there?

Teboho: I think I don't know now but I'd say when it comes to organising and making something a success, APF can pull it together. You know if we all say this is a priority, this is something that we have to do. I mean WSSD is a good example and there are the marches, I mean the racism march we were part of, the anti xenophobia march is another example we all put the energy to making it a success. And also I think with debates, with debates sometimes we hurt each others feelings,

sometimes we say nasty things but when I look at what is happening with other political parties I think APF is strong, really. In debating, disagreeing but at the end of the day finding a way forward ... in our meetings there's not even one meeting where someone has been stabbed or you know something like that.

Dale: Sure.

Teboho: So I think there's a sense of maturity I think you know? The weaknesses, what's our weakness, I think everything is so distressed eish I think sometimes even though we can say you know when we agree on something we put our energy efforts making it a success, but there's also, I don't know the thing of relying on a few people to do that. People can talk and talk and talk and talk but when you say give them the actual task to do you have to push people to do the work. So I think there even people have been given media training, they have been given training I don't know the name of these things, leadership training and people will stand up there and say I have not been trained you know? And you wonder, I mean I don't know this layer that we are trying to build, really when are we going to build it. So I think there that's I don't know is the people...is it because people don't want to learn or is it you know? So I think because I think sometimes they pretend to...you know what, for me when I was administrator it was easy for me to point fingers but I think maybe it was a good thing that I stopped ... I didn't leave the APF. I stopped being the administrator then because then you are able to see things from you know a different point of view if I can say that. Because I know even I was one of those people who will say "okay they are intellectuals, they are doing this they are doing that" you know. But if you say to someone, okay you train them and you say "no do this" they won't do it, they will still want the same intellectuals to come and do it or you know for them. So I think, I don't know if I should say it's that dependence or we are just used to this tendency of blaming of saying "no you didn't do this or you didn't do that" and all those kind of things you know. And so I think that's where the weakness is you know because we can't say we have not trained people, we have trained people with media skills but even today I think it is a struggle to get the newsletter out on time you know? So ja. I think that's where the weakness is.

Dale: I just want to pick up on something because I think a very important observation is in some cases yes there has been a layer of cadre that's been developed and the APF has been able to maintain itself. But from where you've lived coming straight out of the townships you now you've had opportunities you've had different kinds of work so you've experienced all the different sides to that. What do you think it is about that failure in some ways to create a larger presence of political activists you know who are confident and quite capable of doing things whether it's in the APF or otherwise? Do you think that's just something that can be explained by people's social economic conditions or do you think its something historically that is there that is just a very difficult thing to overcome?

Teboho: I don't know. You know what I think blaming your background I don't think that's it you know? Because personally I come from a very poor family you know what you can say a very dysfunctional family you know? But it was up to me I had a choice to make you know. I could've just said "you know my family is like that, there's nothing I can do". But I wanted something better for me you know and even for the APF I've always been even at school I've always been that person who is articulate. But I think in the APF I learned a lot you know. I remember my first interview I was

so shy, I was trembling and I was doing it in the media room but it was like, but I had people who believed in me “no you can do it” you know, you can talk and there is that in the APF. For instance I will make an example with, I don’t know if I should mention her...but she won’t mind Malehlohonolo. She’s been in the APF for quite sometime now and just when now when she was organiser of the APF and she has grown like very fast you know? Even I was surprised I was like “wow she has grown” you know? I was surprised her facilitating a workshop on globalisation and she was good, I think it’s up to an individual if you want to learn. I remember I was telling one of my comrades in Remmoho that “you know the struggle has an opportunity for people to learn”. You know some say it’s an industry, it’s not an industry but there is space for learning. If you want to learn you can learn you know? There are comrades there who have been there since the formation, but even today they are still the same. But I think it’s up to an individual if you want to learn you can learn. And APF has opened the doors to people to learn and I know in some meetings at Remoho people will say “no it’s the background, it’s people not being confident, it’s the male comrades” Okay I don’t think its that really I just think there we cannot blame anyone its just up to an individual if he wants to learn.

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: Oh yes there are maybe you might say when you go home you don’t even have a chance to take a book to read but when you are in the taxi you have that time to take a newspaper and read straight or just two pages of a book you know? So there are places where you can read you know if you can’t read at home.

Dale: Okay I wanted to ask you specifically. I mean you’ve just raised this and it’s not about blame but a mere experience as a woman and as a young woman in particular in the APF to give some indication as to how you know the potential positive or even potentially negative things with regards to gender relations within the APF. The APF’s a progressive organisation, it claims this equality. From your experience was that the case or were there some serious problems in that regard?

Teboho: Okay. Truly speaking when it comes to the issues of gender APF has never, I don’t know. I might be wrong but when we talk about gender we go “no let’s just be gender sensitive” but in terms of getting serious about talking about the issues of gender, I don’t think we’ve done that as an organisation. I mean our constitution speaks for itself really you know ... an example is when there comes elections, it’s like we forget that we have females in the organisation. No one will you know or maybe someone will say no let’s vote, forget females, but its not like the constitution says, even the ANC says that “no in our leadership we are giving ourselves maybe ten years at least we will have fifty/fifty”. We don’t have that in the APF you know really? We don’t have maybe we don’t say “okay at least in three years time we want to make sure that when it comes to gender maybe fifty something or fifty/fifty or that you know that target”. So we don’t have that. So I think that also still is a challenge I think you know that. And also a mistake which I think organisations like Remmoho are making because the purpose of forming Remmoho was to introduce that to the APF. But I think, you see when it was formed, people spoke about which I think it’s a mistake which even today we’re making. We talk about male comrades as the enemy “its men that, it’s men this, its men that”. But we are not talking about gender reconciliation you know? We talking about in a way it’s like we’re having this struggle with the other gender as let me just let me say just as Remoho now. So I think

this is also why it's going to weaken our politics, in the gender politics in the APF because as an organisation we are supposed to say ... I remember initially when we started this is what we had in mind to say "we need to have meetings with both genders and discuss about these issues and debate". We only had one meeting where we did that and debate about these issues and at the end of the day find a common ground. Yes we will differ but find a common ground you know? But now its like "no we need to be alone" [laughter]. So I don't think we'll achieve you know? Really I don't think we can change. If we want to talk about domestic violence we cannot talk about it as women alone because yes we are affected and it includes both genders. So I think that this is the mistake that we are doing as an organisation.

Dale: Okay some last couple of questions.

Teboho: So in a way we are supposed to guide the APF on the issue of gender. So if we are not clear ourselves we cannot guide the APF.

Dale: Over the last several years, particularly over the last two or three years in particular, many of those social movements that started out ten years ago have either disintegrated or they are no longer or they have become quite weak anyway over the last two or three years. The APF celebrated its tenth anniversary this year and as we've talked here it's quite clear there are many problems and challenges. Why do you think that the APF has been able to maintain itself though unlike many of the other movements?

Teboho: [Laughs]

Dale: Ten years is quite a long time, I thought to myself at one point when all of us started "we never thought ten years from now the APF was still going to be around" you know?

Teboho: Why? [laughs] you know for me, the truth is I think you see if we didn't, I mean we may be having differences as an organisation but in an organisation there are always people who, whether making mistakes or not, but there are always people who are always driving the organisation. Maybe think that they are driving it into the wrong direction you know, but there are always people who keep the organisation together. So I think I mean people like yourself, John and other comrades. We've had critics you know comrades "No you are doing this wrong, you are doing this right" but I mean if you sit and think and say "okay, in the APF let me remove this one and this one and this one and see where it would've gone". I don't know maybe we would have become a political party now and died or something you know? And also the debates that we always have, I think that's also what kept us going despite the differences, I think that kept us going. Having that vision for the organisation and people who were able for ten years to be there and drive it. Because I will make an example with SECC ... it's not Trevor's organisation. But if he wasn't there to call people and say "why are you not in the meeting today, why didn't you come, why this, why is the forum not sitting?" I don't think there would still be SECC today. So I think it's because of those people that we have in the APF.

Dale: Okay you said earlier on - this will probably be our last question - is that maybe now in the political situation, the socio economic situation the fact that the APF has done a lot of different

things that it might you know signal somewhere that the APF is towards its end whatever. You're still an activist in APF and still very much involved, what kind of future do you see?

Teboho: That's a tough one.

Dale: Ja it is a tough question, it is a tough question and you know you might say, you know there might be a difference in what you have seen in reality and what you desire. I mean there are two different things ja?

Teboho: Honestly, I will be honest with you. I am looking at the APF, you see as I said you know earlier the reason we are existing even today, it's because of for instance an example of John; sometimes we used to differ with him you know and think "we might have said John is biased on this issue and John has been this" but always he tried to unite the organisation you know and despite even though sometimes you can say okay I can see John is pushing for this position you know, but he has always tried to put us together. So I think that is what we needed and that's what APF needs now actually and looking at the current leadership I am a bit sceptical you know? It doesn't matter how hot the debate was but you wouldn't, okay even though sometimes if you know him you will say that John is now fed up but you wouldn't see him like "oh no you can't do this, you have to..." he'll try to be calm you know; in a chairperson that's what you need. Because I think someone said in the AGM we need the old leadership to guide the new one. At least if it guides them you know because it will take some time for them to, you now but I'm a bit sceptical really.

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: I am for new leadership, change people learning and you see that, I just think I don't know if it's a mistake, maybe I don't know. I might be disappointed and see miracles you know? Because I think a mistake was for us to change the whole leadership you know? And to have new people you know what I mean? Okay there is Matladi but even there she needed guidance from John so...so ja we'll see.

Dale: We'll see [laughter]

Teboho: We'll see. They will just need some support I guess.

Dale: Okay. Thanks a lot

Teboho: Are we done?

Dale: Yeah.

Teboho: Oh, ok.

Dale:, I always ask at the end of the, of the interview if there's anything ... anything that you think about the APF that we have not touched on or that you think is important to say, please do so.

Teboho: About the APF?

Dale: Or you know this is about the history of the APF in sort of trying to capture different perspectives and about what the APF was about in its struggles, its character, challenges, problems, weaknesses, strengths.

Teboho: You see I don't know if it's happening some people are talking about study groups and whatever because I think we need to start having more of that you know? Your political meetings because we are getting new affiliates you know? And I don't know just for people to debate issues and we debate about where we want to see the APF going. Maybe its ten years now you know, the future for the APF basically and also just discussions and I don't know get comrades to be, for instance we have that workshop in Wits, the... what left something?

Dale: The Conference of the Democratic Left.

Teboho: Yes and I didn't see a lot of comrades from the APF because I think we need to have more of those but with our members and debate as APF members and learn from each other ... because I know we used to learn from each others struggles, you know to learn from the struggle in Pretoria. I think we need maybe more of those things you know?

Dale: Okay.

Teboho: ... not meeting when it's CC [Coordinating Committee] or just executive meeting. So I think that's what we need and more of you know the workshop like the workshop that Malehlohonolo and them had you know, just more of that.

Dale: The challenges are ahead.

Teboho: Ja

End of interview

