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**INTERVIEWER:** First Bheki, thank you very much for making yourself available, I very much appreciate it. Just for the record, can you please state your full name?

**BHEKI:** My name is Bheki Samson Xaba.

**INTERVIEWER:** And Bheki just before I start asking you some questions about some of the early ..., I think you know this is all history of the APF ...I'm just going to ask you some few questions about yourself so we know who you are before we ask about the more organisational ones. Can you just tell me where and when you were born?

**BHEKI:** I was born in 1967, March 6, from the poor rural area called Colterssberg. That is a very small town with no resources. It was so difficult to access that town through those years when I was young because it is too far from this poor rural area.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where exactly is it located?

**BHEKI:** I think it is Northern KwaZulu Natal (KZN).

**INTERVIEWER:** Northern KZN. And just tell us a bit about your family.

**BHEKI:** I still have my mom, my father has passed away. I think when I was eight.

**INTERVIEWER:** And are you married, do you have children?

**BHEKI:** Yes at the moment I have a partner and I have three children with her.

**INTERVIEWER:** Three children, okay. And after when you moved from Natal, when did you move from there, how long did you live in that area where you grew up and then where did you go after that?

**BHEKI:** Yes, I grew up in that area. I think at around about 1982 I moved to a township called Newcastle, also in KZN where I continued with my studies because, in fact, that side when I was that side I just made a bit of research when I was still young, when I was doing my Standard 5 that time. So I found out that the subject that I want - the subjects that I liked are not offered in all those high schools there. My favourite subjects were Science and Maths so that's why I asked my mother to move me to one of the family there in Newcastle. That's where I just reside there and when I grew up I just have a house there and then I stayed there permanently. I moved my mother from that place but I'm still occasionally go there when I'm in KZN because I like the place also because I'm trying to motivate those people there that life is continuing even if you're there but you must try by all means to free themselves from that poverty life.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you matriculated there in Newcastle?

**BHEKI:** In Newcastle.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then what did you do after you matriculated?

**BHEKI:** I went back to that side because there was a teacher there that was my teacher when I was still young. So we met and then he asked me what I'm doing at that point in time, I said, 'No at the moment I'm just matriculated'. He said that maybe he can offer

me - because he was a Principal at that time - he can offer me a position of being a part time teacher there so I went there, I was visiting so...I went there and teach Science and Maths to try by all means to make sure that those people there just having access to those subjects because to me they are critical subjects.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then after that when did you move to the big city?

**BHEKI:** I think it's 1991 I came to Johannesburg. I just came here and work at one of the small factories, a transport one as a radio ... I don't remember what they called it, radio something. In fact I was controlling the trucks, these trucks who are going to deliver somewhere loads so I was liaising with the drivers if there is any problem, if there is any disturbance on the road... something like that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Give us a sense of where you progressed from that...you worked there for how many years and what happened after that?

**BHEKI:** I worked there in fact for about two years if I'm not mistaken and then there was that political unrest in the township. Because I stayed there in Thokoza, so the community there were divided during that time where there were two areas, they called them "no go areas". So if you're staying in a particular side, you're just called an IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] person whether you were not. If you're staying on a particular side they said you're an ANC people. So by that time we had been caught up in that situation and I remember there were a lot of things that were taking place during that time. And then there is the hatred and that political attitude from one another and there were lot of killings that time. So I really didn't move to Vosloorus but I went back, I think I stayed one month in Vosloorus. I went back because my child was in Thokoza. I went back there. Then something tragic happened there. Someone was killed, a woman in fact was killed, so they... it was a community member. Then we went to bury that woman. In our procession to the graveyard, there was an attack. In fact, our car was totally attacked in front of the SANDF, because they were just standing there with their...what's their...

**INTERVIEWER:** Whips and guns and all that.

**BHEKI:** Yes, it was attacked. So one of the car they tried to chase those people because they were attacking us with AK, I was driving the car that time. So two people have been killed in my car ... so one of the cars, (I think it was an Escort... was it Escort ... no, I don't remember the car), the occupants of that car they just try and chase someone there, they saw that it's the one who was shooting at us. So they caught up with that man and they killed that man. So when we tried to proceed, I didn't know that they killed that person because they just drive off and enter into a township. So we just proceed. When we proceed the same soldiers they came to us and arrested us. We were six, they arrest us in the car, two of us and then they arrest other six people, then we were eight. And then I think two people were released and then we were left with the case because they said, even in the court, they said I was involved in that thing because I can't just be innocent if my car was shot and just say I didn't do anything. So it was unfortunately because I was not even involved in that thing. And then the other thing that I was afraid of because I couldn't able to say anything in the court during that time, I was afraid of being attacked because I'd be killed then. If I was going to say, 'no, this is what happened and who done that' then I'd been killed because I was going to be released because even my lawyer advised me to say, "no, you can't say that. " Because my

lawyer was liaising with the community leaders there, so she saw the situation that if I can say something, I come back so I will be killed. So we were sentenced, me I was sentenced to seven years, then the other guy, the one who shot that one because the ballistic tests shows that he did that and he was sentenced to twenty-five years. It was 1994; there about if I'm not mistaken. Yes, and then the other guys were - the guys that were driving in the same car - were sentenced to one year because they were in a possession of firearms, they didn't get anything for me. So they said, fine I was driving so it was necessary. Fine, then I stayed there for about five and a half years then I was released in 1999. Then I go back to the community and I started working with them also as I was working with them before. So I started working with them because I was just elected when I was not in the meeting, I don't know how because I just attended the mass meeting when I came back ... So the next meeting when they convene the meeting they asked if I can be available for that opportunity. Then they came to me in my house and then they asked me to join them, I said, no, it's fine I can work with them. That's when I started to work with them. But that was not KCR, it was Bilisweli Community Development at that time. Then I started to work with KCR in 2000.

**INTERVIEWER:** So just to step back a little bit ... your time in jail, where did you spend most of your time when you were in jail, when you were in detention?

**BHEKI:** Sorry, the place?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes. What jail? Where were you?

**BHEKI:** When I was arrested, when I was still on trial, I was in Modderbee and when the Boksburg prison opened, we opened that prison they moved us... and when I was sentenced, I was at Sun City. Then I went to, where was that, Cullinan – Sonderwater - yes, then I went back to Boksburg.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. So you were moved around quite a bit.

**BHEKI:** Yes...

**INTERVIEWER:** ... how was it that you became more of a political, social, community activist? Was it only after you got out or was it during that period of time?

**BHEKI:** Yes, you see I was active; I was just an active person because I was even active when I was still at school, when I was still young. Then I was active even before I was arrested. There were other, like community issues that we used to tackle but that time, you must remember that time that was a common struggle of apartheid so everyone was engaged in that, we were thinking about that thing. There was a little thing that we were doing in terms of building the social movement context so we were just like playing generally and as part of the black majority people who were being oppressed by apartheid. But the problem that time, there was that attitude of political orientations, although I was not in the political party that time there was that kind of a thing because they end up leading people who speak which language and they associate those people with certain political party. And then that created a division among the members of the community. So people they ended up distancing themselves from other potential people who can be able to assist and build the community struggle on the ground. That was a problem, so I was active but not in that...

**INTERVIEWER:** Political sense?

**BHEKI:** Yes

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay ...so when you came out, when you were released, you said you were asked by ...what was the name of the community organisation again?

**BHEKI:** It was...Bilisweli Development Committee.

**INTERVIEWER:** And that was based in Thokoza?

**BHEKI:** It was based in Thokoza.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you were asked to be part of that group to...Just tell us a little something about what that group was about, what was it doing?

**BHEKI:** In fact that group it was a very new group, it was a very new group, the group that has no political leadership in fact. There were just people who were just picked from that meeting but they were given the mandate of getting the house in order if I can say so...something like, you see that place it's an RDP housing project. It resulted from those people who were deeply displaced during the government strike so they were located on that area. So what happened there, there were lots of things like roads were not tarred, they had a problem of electricity, there was no electricity, there were no street names and other social issues around the area and other things. So that committee was given that mandate to make sure that they try to deliver those things. So the problem was that in fact those people who were elected they had no clue of what is going to happen, you see, the group of people they just like...but they have been advised by one of the lady, now I don't remember that lady but that lady was from the ANC, so that there's someone who said this and that when we were in a meeting, do you know that person? So they said, 'we know that person' She asked them to say, 'Can you bring that person back? Maybe we can get something from that person'. Then I went there and that's how I joined that committee. Then we sat down, then we shared ideas and also I was given a task to write letters to the municipality about these issues. Then I wrote all those letters and tried to politicise the issue. Up until we able break through because the tar was...what's the word?

**INTERVIEWER:** The tarred road?

**BHEKI:** Yes, the tarred road, electricity was installed and other social issues that were needed they deliver those things. And then there was also a problem of these names of the streets and then I wrote another letter and then they did that. The other thing was the street lights because they said the place is dark and there is a lot of criminal activities that is going on there, so I think the lights will do better and they will try to prevent whatever that was happening. Then I did that thing, they did that. Then after a while, there is an organisation called DPRA, yes, that time it was these places, just these places. Those guys they came to us and say, "Guys in fact our concerns are the same". So it was before the election of 2000, I think, local government elections. They came to us and said, "Look guys, we are having the same social concerns so can we work together?" Then we didn't have a problem; then we said, 'okay we can work together'. And also there was KCR, they were like that then and I was fascinated in fact from the KCR side by their struggle. It was like a little bit unique to me. You see it was not just a

bread and butter issue it was of a political issue that elections and the way they get these houses, from during that apartheid time. And then the leadership also, they were like weak. They were old people who did not understand politics that way, they just understand that political party politics not these social politics in fact, social movement politics. I was a little bit fascinated in fact and I said, "No this is the one that is ...but we agreed to work together with these people. And then towards the election, and then these DPRA people, they came and said, "Let's go to the elections'. I said, "it's fine". I was a Campaign Manager, Campaign Coordinator. They said, 'No you can be the campaign coordinator'. I convened the meetings of the community and talk and campaign and give them our manifesto. Then we got one councillor at that time.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now KCR is the Kathlehong Concerned Residents right? So that involves more than just Thokoza, its Vosloorus, Thokoza and Katlehong. And that was in 2000 and that's when you became an active member of KCR? Is that correct?

**BHEKI:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Just tell us, you mentioned very briefly, what was KCR struggle really about? What were they doing at that time?

**BHEKI:** Yes, the main struggle of the KCR was they were opposing evictions, right. And since as it started in 1995 because of those evictions, when they had the advent of democracy in South Africa, the banks they came back and attached property. While they were not able to do it when there was a fight around the area. So when everything was clear and there was peace, in the area they came back and attached. Then they said "we need to form an organisation." That time they were SANCO people inside that committee. They sold out the people afterwards. So then the main struggle that side it was to oppose eviction, they were totally against the evictions because people they were just moved around all the time. They were getting eviction like nobody's business so they decided to say "we need to do something about this thing". But the problem...the organisation had that kind of a vision to stop evictions but in fact they didn't totally stop the evictions because the only thing that they were doing, they end up colluding with the banks and the SERVCON because it was the beginning of SERVCON to evict...

**INTERVIEWER:** Just explain to us what SERVCON was exactly?

**BHEKI:** SERVCON was an institution that was established by the banks and the government and after seeing that people are not keep up paying their instalments for the bonds. So the aim was to assist those people but SERVCON ended up evicting the same people because the problem was a social issue, it was an economic issue, it was not just people did not want to pay. There were heavy loss of jobs and some people have died and leaving breadwinners so they couldn't able to keep up with their instalments. But because those people they got those houses before 1994 and I think we thought that, "No, this is unfair and something must be done and the government must intervene to bail out these people". But the government was not keen because the SERVCON ended up evicting the same people giving them the trouble when it comes to the houses. Then I said that ... in fact the KCR members they were like in the fight with SERVCON and they didn't like to talk to them. That's when I came to them, I said, "No, if this institution was formed by the government, we can't...just let the government do whatever they want, we voted for this government into power so they are accountable to us we're not accountable to them. So we need to engage these people, even if there is

sort of an enemy but we need to engage them to get the solution because we need to present our case and they must present theirs - why they keep on evicting these people because some of these houses, those people are not supposed to leave those houses. The issue here is to say they must be attached to their own houses because if they keep on taking these people from the houses that have been paid for more than 16 years for me it's wrong. They are taking the same people who got five roomed houses before 1994 and taking the same person to the two-roomed house of which it was applied by someone else who didn't have an access to any house before. So for me it's uncalled for. So we need to stop this thing, we need to engage these people" So because my attitude was to say, look we can't allow the situation at hand because it means that waiting list will just stop. Getting the people from five roomed houses and put them to two-rooms is not the better off situation as the constitution. So I said, "No this is uncalled for". I said "look we need to engage these people and if they don't we just stop the evictions". It's what we did.

**INTERVIEWER:** So you eventually started direct action, is that what KCR started doing?

**BHEKI:** Yes. I just tried to engage the structures, Katlehong and Vosloorus and work with them and try by all means to build a power base there so that they can able to respond to whatever the attack is going to be. So that's what happened. I said to them, "Look we stop the thing and I wanted the Ekurhuleni Municipality that time to say; "look if you don't want to intervene and facilitate this process in a way that will be assisting the people we are going to do something" And then we just direct the physical fight and say, "look you need to stop it" and then we stop.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then it was around the same time in 2000 that KCR became involved with APF. Can you speak a little bit about why that happened? What was it about? The APF was brand new at that time but KCR was one of the first organisations to be part of the APF.

**BHEKI:** Look, we just heard that there is this kind of a body that is going to be established and then even the peoples of the APF and also we were quite aware of this neo liberal policy that was implemented by the government in 1996 and then we were seeing the effect of that policy on the ground when people lost their jobs and become casuals and other things and we didn't like that idea. So and then we decided to say, "Look let's go and affiliate to the APF so that we can able to work together and try to share the same platform to a change the views and ideas as to how are we going to fight all the general things because the same things that we're fighting about them in the township is because of this GEAR. So if APF is saying the privatisation is out of order and we can see it is really, so it also creates the same problem that we have or are facing on the ground ... which is why we're facing all these kinds of problem because of this policy of the government."

**INTERVIEWER:** And just tell us a little something about how when you joined the APF or when KCR joined the APF how that relationship either was good or... the good points and the potentially the bad points of that relationship in your membership in the APF.

**BHEKI:** Yes, okay at the beginning I think for me the relationship was good because everyone was keen to see the APF growing and see the APF direct that kind of a vision and also assist the community on the ground. . I think it was fun because some of the people within the APF from the affiliates, they were young and new from their own

organisations but the APF had to give direction and also the political understanding and direction to these comrades. In fact it was trying to breathe new life to these young comrades who were there in the APF. I remember when LPM comrades and other social movements, when we were there at COSATU house, all those things and then it...for me we used to attend those meetings, for me we used to share information that was relevant to our struggle and then also some of our comrades have acquired organising skills through those meetings. Then every house has its own bad and good things and coming to other things that I was not happy about, even now I'm not happy about, is the way the APF trying to certify everyone, if I can say that. One of the things that bugged me during that time was that when someone comes with a report from the township now, comes with a report the APF just takes that report as it is. They didn't go to do a site visit and see if what I'm saying is what's happening there. I'm just fabricating reports and other things and I'm just taken serious, as a person who is organising. Even that thing it's happening, I have picked up that thing during was it during the APF AGM recently this year?

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, yes.

**BHEKI:** I picked up some of the things from the document. I saw that this thing is continuing. And the other thing was when comrade Trevor was an organiser. You see a person must be committed in a struggle; a person mustn't be dragged in a struggle. A person must grow with the struggle, must have a passion of the struggle, must be committed and must be honest with the struggle. When we're trying to form the regions, we discussed the issue of establishing regions and then we agreed that a region would be established. And then... I'm talking about the thing that was done to me... When we established East Rand, it was ... we were in Vosloorus, then the comrades of East Rand they elected people to serve in the structure - that's what happened. Comrade Trevor was there, he witnessed it. He never opposed that thing; he was an organiser in that thing. He never opposed that thing. Then when we try to now organising ourselves, and to make sure that we draw programme of action and other things for the region, then we just heard rumours, it was during the Khanya Winter School, then we heard the rumours that Trevor is not happy, APF is not happy about the structure that was elected from this side. Then that's okay, we convened a meeting with the Secretary that was supposed to take place in Thembisa, then the meeting took place. That's where the other people they came with the suggestion that because Bheki is working, he must step down. I'm working for Khanya so I'm earning a salary so I must step down. Then because there was a meeting which I was not in that meeting that discussed the issue of payment that the Chairperson and the Coordinator of the Region will be getting salaries. I don't know whether you remember that...so that's where the thing started and then I was just like; "oh, that's the problem because this thing is not about money; it's about building structures that are going to respond to these problems that are facing the community on the ground." It was not about money. That is why I'm saying the comrades mustn't like go into things because they will be getting anything. A struggle is just about your own political consciousness.

**INTERVIEWER:** And just speak a little bit from your experience because you were there during those first few years and were quite active in structures of the APF and other things and it was at the same time that the APF received it's first resources and funds and everything ...now that you've identified that, I mean from the affiliates side, as someone coming from the community side, how was that experienced because it had potentially good things and maybe it also had potentially bad things?



**BHEKI:** Comrade, for me, I used to tell the comrades on the ground - I think that is why we were able to sustain our own organisation - I used to tell the comrades that the struggle is not about the money it's about what I said before commitment, you should be self conscious about what you're doing. So when the money came to APF, and everyone wanted to access that money, you must remember that the majority of our comrades are not working so when they see APF they see money, they see money and then they make sure that they must make friends with people who are next to the money. Unfortunately that's Dale...so they want to access that and then they don't think that these are resources that aim at driving the struggle on the ground. And then even if you're talking about giving the comrades pamphlets and other resources that are not cash they tend to like say they don't want. I remember some of the comrades they drafted their budgets in terms of cash and then you can see that that's a problem because at the end of the day you will not get an accounting, people who are responsible to account for the money and it's channelled the money to personal things and then there is no accounting process hence the donor or funder needs that thing. So that is a problem; that is why I think that the other community organisations that have resources such as money they have a lot of fighting and collapse.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did that affect KCR in particular?

**BHEKI:** Yes, in fact, KCR there... when we were in KCR before, we used to access some of the resources from the APF but not that much but they were comrades who came late to the KCR, that's when the problem started because some of them they wanted to access that resources and they didn't report to the organisation about those resources from the APF. But that was fine because what I said, I said, "No it's not about, although it's an organisational issue but we will name those comrades who are doing that. The APF they must bring us the names of the people who signed for the money and everything and they must account. I remember when our comrades were arrested, we request money from the APF and then the money was given to us, I think it was close to R1800, I don't remember that money came back to the APF because that money was given to certain individuals to go and bail out those people. They didn't give back that money up until the split, up until the split and some of those people because they were creating that kind of a split because of the DRPA. So they were being used by the DRPA because they were going underground with the DRPA and so they didn't give back that money until the split and that's what happened. Those kinds of money issues affected us really and it cost our organisation.

**INTERVIEWER:** Just speak a little bit about what happened in KCR that led to a split in the organisation.

**BHEKI:** Yes, apparently it was about the different opinions that was based on ... when I was negotiating with the government to release the title deed for certain project, they call it self-help scheme houses. So when I was negotiating with the government to say, "Look you have failed us so you need to release the title deed of this kind of housing project that you were involved in, part of SERVCON programme. Even the houses, bond houses that were registered within the thing at SERVCON because we felt that SERVCON is doing corruption there, was involved in corruption. So I said, "No you failed us and you need to release those things. When I was talking to those people, those guys, I used to invite, tell the organisation when going to the meeting but the part of it they didn't pitch up. More especially the Kathlehong branch, they didn't ...they were not

keen to participate. Then I was being labelled as a sell out who's sitting with the government in board rooms and talk about big... I tried to explain my political attitude on that thing because there was no way the government would have been able to just consider that. They said people must be evicted, they can't take that. I said, No, you can't, we're going to resist further and you will release the title deed'. Then that thing, it created that kind of acrimonious relationship between us. And one of the thing, Dale that is very bad within our own organisation; this kind of tribalism is existing. And then they look at you and say, "Where is this guy coming from?" There is a jealousy, because people they want to be you and they can't and two; the tribal card also is a problem because I was just labelled as a new person who's just coming from KZN wanting to take over their organisation and all that... and those people who were saying that were new in the organisation. I recruited those people and allowed them to be part of the organisation because some of the old people said, "No look, you can't allow these children to come to the organisation". I said, 'No the organisation belongs to everyone in terms of gender, age and everything, the organisation should belong to everyone. So if we're solving problems, we're solving problems for everyone and if they have their problems they must partake in the organisation. You can't say that" So they just turn around and turned against me. That was fine, I said, 'okay fine." Then when the government agreed to release the title deed, then they said, no I'm a sell out because what I said, I said people must go and sign for their title deed - that was the process. Then they said, "no people mustn't go, Bheki is selling out our people because these people are going to be evicted." I said, 'Even if whatever can make me unpopular, as long as I know that I'm here and that thing is right for the community and its fine and I will not allow anyone to stop those people to go and get that opportunity of which we have fought for many years". I was saying that because I was engaging the government myself, not them, they didn't want to be part of the negotiation process. I did everything. I wrote letters, I did everything.

**INTERVIEWER:** What position were you holding in KCR at the time?

**BHEKI:** That time? I was just a person.

**INTERVIEWER:** An ordinary member?

**BHEKI:** I was just an ordinary member, it's just that some of the ...the majority of the executive members ...I must say this thing, I was blessed because they were respecting me. Whatever I was saying in the organisation they used to listen to and keen to cooperate but there were certain individuals they chose because there was corruption activities that were going on in some part of our community. There were houses that were taken from the security guards when other people were evicted when I was not there. I said, "No you can't leave, stay with these people in our own houses. They must get off and put our own people who need houses into these houses." That's what I said. So now they saw the opportunity of accessing resources, they wanted to rent...I mean to rent those houses to other people so that they'll get money and then I refused. I said, "No we can't have that "And then there was a spate of this kind of misleading, inside and everything but I was just consistent in my position because I knew what I'm saying. So that was a problem. All those things triggered some of this kind of relationship that was very bad. Then when we try to explain the position why we're saying people must go and sign they just said, no. But surprisingly the leaders they went behind the people's backs and signed for their houses. Just imagine!

**INTERVIEWER:** The Title Deeds?

**BHEKI:** Yes, they go and get their own Title Deeds, while they are saying, "Look, you mustn't go there..." Then I said, "Look comrades this is unfair". They said, "No you don't know nothing". As I'm talking about 300 people couldn't access that thing they were supposed to access that thing. I have to go back because last week I had a meeting with the Deputy Director from the Human Settlement Department, nationally about that thing because that money of the amount of R25 800 per unit was taken by the bank. It just sits there at the bank and then no one is accounting so that is the problem. I said, "No, no..." So that is the problem that created that kind of split. When we're trying to solve that problem, we phoned them, we set up the meeting, to solve that thing we phoned then they said they are in the APF office. I phoned John and John said, "No this comrade has gone to attend the meeting." And then...I don't know whether you were present in the meeting down there when I was attacked, brutally attacked and called by names...

**INTERVIEWER:** What year was this?

**BHEKI:** I think it was 2005 or 2006 I don't remember, I think it was 2005.

**INTERVIEWER:** I don't think I was here.

**BHEKI:** Yes, I think it was 2005 and that's how we've been chased from the APF. Me, I was like chased from the APF, they said Jabu and Joseph must stay because they are the right people, me I must just go because I'm a sell out. So that's how things happened and then APF came to KCR and tried to mediate. I said, "No I can't stay in that meeting, I can't, I'll just stay for fifteen minutes then I'll go because Trevor was there and Lawrence was there. All those people they were talking nonsense about us. So I said, 'No I can't stay in that meeting', Mr Mnyani said so also, he said, "If Xaba doesn't stay in that meeting, I can't. Because we know what had happened, we have been ...we should have been trying to resolve the issue internally before the APF came but what got us here today because when Xaba was attacked during a CC meeting you just kept quiet and you were chairing the meeting, John. We said, 'No we will not and we are not prepared', and we were not prepared because we knew that we're dealing with criminals, we are dealing with corrupt people. But APF chose to take sides with them.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you say the APF, do you think the majority of members in the APF knew what was going on?

**BHEKI:** Not the majority, but the executive, not the majority because that position was taken in a meeting and then when the Vaal comrades raised their concern about that thing, they were just shut down.

**INTERVIEWER:** So it was more to do with some of the leadership of the APF?

**BHEKI:** Yes. It was more to do with them ... they have their own vendetta about us I don't know. And then they forgot one thing that we wrote letters to affiliate to the APF, we've been struggling with them, they just forgot about that. They just picked up with the new people they don't know and while we know those people are corrupt. So that was the problem. Then because I had that kind of an attitude to say, 'look the struggle has nothing to do with money, it has something to do with you as a person, are you able to rebuild the KCR and emerge strong as it is now?'

**INTERVIEWER:** So after that incident is where you essentially left the APF and the other KCR split right?

**BHEKI:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Then what formed after that outside the APF?

**BHEKI:** From our side?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes, from your side.

**BHEKI:** No we were working, we continued with our work, and then fortunately we got a support from the community, we got support from the members of the executive, the old one and then we got the support from the community. We just continued as normally. The whole thing was just a burden on my shoulders because I had to drive the whole thing and try to explain the real situation.

**INTERVIEWER:** And that's been continuing over the last several years?

**BHEKI:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Around the same struggle about housing?

**BHEKI:** Yes. And then we also are diverted more now because of this kind of lack of service delivery and other issues ... we're kind of picking more or less all the issues now.

**INTERVIEWER:** I think there are quite a number of the questions that you've answered there with regards to your time at the APF but I want to ask you the more general kinds of questions...the APF came out of a context in which people or communities like KCR and others were struggling around basic issues right, and has been around for ten years with it's ups and downs and other kinds of things. What from the experience that you're coming from, the experience in the APF what would you say is the main, both the strengths and the weaknesses of social movements like the APF which tried to bring numbers of communities together to struggle and to provide some degree of both material resources but also political education and so forth and so on?

**BHEKI:** Yes, I think for me, I'm sorry to say this, but for me it's real. APF has a problem of the leadership and I think the leadership has changed from one face to another. There was a time when we started APF when I saw that this movement is going somewhere and you must remember that at time we rallied behind the APF all the way. When we organised for, what was that thing?

**INTERVIEWER:** WSSD.

**BHEKI:** WSSD and then we make a breakthrough and the dream came through and that itself it created a platform for everyone to exercise their rights, in fact even to showcase their ability of organising. And I think the coherence of the APF leadership and the leadership of these affiliates I think for me was very positive. This is why we were successfully able to do that. But over time I saw the decline of such spirit and also

coherence that I was talking about within the two and then even the problem was also the response of the APF when it comes to the problems that were happening on the ground. For instance when there are evictions, maybe in KCR, then the only community that has to rally behind those things and make sure that that thing it's tackled its only that kind of a community. And there was no solidarity or support now from the top structure, to avail themselves and also go there and do some of the research. For me because I think they must go there and do the research to find facts about the whole area and use that research to publicise their victories and weaknesses and other things. I think that is the thing. But for me it continues to decline of which that went down to the affiliates because if you can see, look at the thing, I think APF has many affiliates but in terms of a response and also a technical response from the APF there is no such thing and then some of the affiliates are not happy by the way the APF is acting. Some of them they are honest, they don't need any resources but they need the serious support from the APF so they must have a direction, which they should take if there is something that is happening. And then some of the things like, APF needs to respond in issues, national issues, they must respond to those national issues, to be heard because they are representing this kind of the communities that are struggling on the ground, because the same problem that are facing the community in Gauteng are the same problems that are facing the community in KZN, Cape Town and other areas. For me they must be pro active and try to throw the problem that is able to fit in all this kind of social issues. And the other thing now is that, on the side now of the... of us as social movements, we are to blame, we are totally weak, some of them are not caused by the APF attitude but us we are totally weak. Because some of the comrades they just come to the APF office and get their transport money and overcharge the APF because they are even not conscious of that resources overcharge the APF instead of getting R30, they will charge R50. They'll just get away from there and go to sleep, they won't do anything. It shows the weakness of the organisations on the ground. And I have a fear that this kind of an attitude is going to spread all over the place, even those who are keen and in passion with the struggle they are going to die.

**INTERVIEWER:** To me that's a very interesting observation and one that I will personally agree with. Why do you think that over the last ten years since organisations like the APF started and other social movements... you mentioned earlier on that when the ANC people came to power things started changing, you know, from the old days when everyone was together against apartheid ... what is it that you see as some...besides maybe some of the leadership and mistakes and other things but in a broader sense, why do you think those kinds of things have been happening and the movements that started out as fairly strong and did quite a lot of good work and everything have all, not just APF but many of them have gotten weaker as a result of as you say of things on the ground becoming weaker. Just speak a little bit about your own experience why you think that's the case.

**BHEKI:** Yes, for instance take the case of labour movements. You remember at that time we were fighting for a common cause and then we were united behind each and everyone. But now, this thing for me it's about political orientation and political attitude. I saw this thing and even in our organisation I have witnessed this thing. Some of our comrades are saying, "No we're going back home." And even when they were with us, they were reporting to their principals, which is the ANC leadership. So that is the problem. This kind of a political attitude it reverse our efforts ... in fact if I can say that because some of these comrades they have their own political organisations. That is why I chose, when I joined the community movement, I chose to be neutral. I said I will

not be accountable to any leader of a political party because the same people that I'm leading now are belonging to these organisations so I'm unbiased. So for me it's a political attitude, they are married with their own organisations and that creates a problem for a movement because some of them they are opportunists, they just see the APF as a resource organisation but at the same time they look around and see the opportunities somewhere because they are being promised. I'm facing the same situation at this point in time, there is an issue of Indian bank, so the same people that asked me to intervene there, they belong to an organisation and are speaking to the executive of the ANC in respect of what and then those people are told to leave that thing alone but those people are suffering. So you can see when you agree on certain issues, and then next time it's not like that they just changed because they attended that meeting. So for me the kind of political attitude tends to divide us, we can't be unified because this kind of political attitude plays a very important role within us so if someone is coming from the IFP and someone is coming from the ANC and the other one, then the organisation just break this because even the government is doing the same thing because they are making promises to these other people because they want to use them as organisers of the ANC as a ruling party. And you must remember, for me according to my assessment through these years there was no early democracy within the political parties, if you're trying to raise the general issue and the critical issues and become critical, you are expelled and even being killed so there is no democracy. So these people are kept in a situation where you're just given promises that are not met and then they are being confused and then they come on as to divide the people because that is the strategy, they don't want to see anyone who tried to contest the political space, more sufficiently the ruling party, they don't want that. Once you try to contest their political space you become an alien and then they will crush you out but that it needs a commitment and being consistent on your own issues - that is fine. So that is the situation that I view the whole pattern of issues at this point in time. But our comrades are opportunistic because you need to stay wherever you are and don't be convinced. You need to engage people and even if they are trying to engage you, some of the comrades are being bought by money and other things and just sell out the people, people must be honest.

**INTERVIEWER:** ... how do you think as an activist and as someone who continues to be active in the community that the recent political shifts in both what's happened over the last two years in the ANC as well as the country has affected the struggles on the ground and community struggles around basic services and needs?

**BHEKI:** I think that that will always be basically the case more especially when people they don't do things according to their own thinking but do things according to their hearts. I think the whole issue it has to do with the ruling party case, that's where the whole shift happened. And also the policy of the government and the ruling party plays a very important role in our life. So for me I don't see any drastic change in transformation, for me I can't see any transformation for being there before 1994 up to now because we're experiencing the same thing. In fact, we didn't want just to share the same toilet with whites; we did want a total power and freedom. When we're talking about those things we're talking about political and economic power because we can't live without any work. And instead when the ANC came into power and recently there is loss of lot of jobs and the government doesn't respond to that thing and when they recall Mr Thabo Mbeki many people they think that...because they were happy about him they said, "No, Zuma is approachable, Zuma is accessible" And they forgot one thing that this thing it has to do with the policy it has not to do with someone. If I can put someone there,

before the passing of the policy, same thing is going to happen. So in fact at this point in time for me the policy of the government is taking sides with money who have access to resources, that's the thing. So the political issue at this point in time for me is something to do with us as communities to change the attitude of the government because if we just keep quiet and say maybe the parliament is going to do something for us and is going to change things in a better way for us, that is not going to happen. And I'm worried if the social movements are declining and become weak and weak, so we couldn't be able respond to these challenges because we have a huge challenge that we have to take on.

**INTERVIEWER:** To what extent do you think the decreasing socio-economic conditions of a large number of people in poor communities - and things has gotten worse for many people on a bigger perspective over the last ten years - how that has impacted on the social movements whose main membership is unemployed people? Speak to that.

**BHEKI:** I understand that but you know what I used to say, the struggle starting from your own community, it's not starting from somewhere else. It doesn't need you to have money for transport to go to that struggle. It doesn't need any money to initiate the struggle on the ground. People have access to those struggles because struggle is just the way you are. So for me I understand that challenge of unemployed young people will get frustrated and confused. But for me it's about a political understanding and being conscious about these social issues. To say, no one is going to solve this problem except me because no one I can invite from somewhere else to come and solve this problem, I must start something. I must start contesting this kind of a situation and you must able to know the person and the thing that is the cause of that problem. So I understand that the comrades are getting confused sometimes but for me ... there was a time that's when I was not working and I think it's for a period of a year but I was very active because I used to go from one point to another just by myself in a township and doing research and finding out what are the problems. That was...for me that was the best time in my activism because that time I knew each and every corner of the township and know what is there and what is not and what is needed there, what is not. That is a problem. The comrades just sit around because they have no job and say ...And then the other thing, the problem, you can have the comrades when they are not working in the struggle but once they get the job they just disappear. They just disappear and have no interest at all so now you ask yourself, what is needed? What is needed it's a work opportunity or being unemployed. So you don't know. For me, that is not the factor that can affect the activism of a comrade, it's about commitment.

**INTERVIEWER:** So it's about consciousness and...

**BHEKI:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Just one last question. What do you see as the main challenges ... you've talked about the history, the weaknesses and things that have not gone so well particularly for organisations like APF and other social movements ... what are the main challenges now? What are the main things? I mean it's a difficult period.

**BHEKI:** Yes, it is a difficult period. I think the style of organising must be different but I know that the same people are being affected but the same style of organising must be developed. For me that is the challenge and also the challenge at this point in time is for us to have clarity of the change and also the dynamics and also the problem that we're

facing and we must be conscious about those things. And try by all means to employ whatever we have in our disposal to conscientise the majority of the people because sometimes when you meet people on the street, you can just assume that this person has no problem. But when you create a certain platform and you say, people must speak, people will speak and if you... (technical error)

**INTERVIEWER:** Go ahead.

**BHEKI:** So for me those are the challenges and we need to try by all means now to give, to create more platforms as I was saying that if you meet someone it doesn't say that one is...create more platforms, being active as an activist and go each and every corner of the township and try by all means to make sure that those people are politically conscious because that is a problem. You can have people who are not politically conscious and then tomorrow they will just be convinced by being given parcels, food parcels and other things and off they go, they said, "No the government is delivering" but the problem sits with them that is the problem. And also for me the challenge is to integrate all kinds of struggle together and make sure that all kind sectors of the society come together and find a common platform where they can able to build their own power base support because that is the problem. You mustn't say this person stays somewhere, in a flat and this person stays somewhere in a hostel. We need to try by all means to bring these people together in one platform.

