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**Interviewer:** Can you just state ... your full name.

**Florence:** Alright I will. My full name is Ntombi Florence Kwashu.

**Interviewer:** Okay and Florence I want to know, we're just asking everybody a little bit about themselves so that we can get a sense of which they are... Where and when were you born?

**Florence:** I was born 1929

**Interviewer:** And where were you born?

**Florence:** I was born in Alberton and I grew up in Ladysmith.

**Interviewer:** In Ladysmith?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And where else in South Africa did you live besides those two places?

**Florence:** Oh, I lived in Sophiatown for 7 years. Western Native Township for 6 years. I moved to Western Native Township (WNT) I went to Moroka Township where they used to call Masakeni. I build my house with ash and cardboard and I used to live there. We used to make fire with coal and wood and I lived there for 14 years. And then we were moved to Zola, I stay in Zola for 10years. After that I got my own house, I'm living now at Chiawelo.

**Interviewer:** And for how long have you lived here in Chiawelo?

**Florence:** I've been in Chiawelo for 35 years.

**Interviewer:** 35 years?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay and Florence just tell us a bit about your family, your children, and grandchildren, extended family yes.

**Florence:** Yes I've got 9 children and then some of them are twins so they are 10 altogether. And then my first son was born 1952, my second son was born 1956 and my third son was born 1959 and my fourth one was born 1960. Then my daughter was born 1963 and my other son was born 1965 and the other one was born 1967 and I got twins 1968 and my last baby 1973.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that's quite a family you have there and your husband? I'm assuming your husband passed away some time ago.

**Florence:** Yes, my husband passed away in 1982.

**Interviewer:** Okay and what did your husband previously do when you were moving around...?

**Florence:** My husband he was working at the hotel, he was a Head Waiter at Martin Hotel then he died there.

**Interviewer:** And yourself in terms of work? Have you worked formally?

**Florence:** I was at industry, I was working to the factories, they even offer me machine, and can you see - a sewing machine? I'm a good dressmaker, making things, curtains, clothes, and all kinds of clothes. I work in the big firm that used to make the uniform for the police and nurses and soldiers in Doornfontein. That was my last work - end up in 1987.

**Interviewer:** In 1987 and since then you've been a pensioner?

**Florence:** A pensioner, I'm a pensioner.

**Interviewer:** Okay and what about your schooling, your own schooling, your education?

**Florence:** My schooling and education - I only went to Std 5 because those days we start school at 11 years so we were quite big. I was 12 years old when I start my schooling and then I went up to Std 5. And then from 5 and then they start to be an African Congress and then they used to run after me at school while I was at Western Township. So I run away to Tzaneen where I get married.

**Interviewer:** In Tzaneen?

**Florence:** Yes. Then I was very big person in the African Congress.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little bit about that, your political involvement, when did it start and what happened in those years?

**Florence:** Those years, I start to be African Congress in 1947 in WNT. And Mandela was still working at Crown Mine when I was there.

**Interviewer:** And what did you do for the ANC at that time?

**Florence:** I was very busy with ANC, we were collecting, you know those money which we used to call 1 in 6 to build ANC, and it was becoming bigger and we used to go to George Goch Hostel and make meetings there and when they start to harass Mandela it's where we were very, very popular. I was even being arrested...quite a long time I was arrested in Hillbrow while there was still that big police station for us we used to call Number 4.

**Interviewer:** Oh, yes.

**Florence:** Yes, I was there for 6 months, they lock us in. And one of the lady run away, she went to Mafikeng and then when she come back and when we start to burn the passes for people at Zola, I was there carrying my child at the back. So it's where I start to run away because they saw us when we took passes from ladies, the men used to took pass from the men and we used to took the Dompas to the ladies and burn them there. And then after that they start to pointing us and we run away.

**Interviewer:** And that's when you went to Zanini?

**Florence:** Yes I went to Tzaneen. I went to Tzaneen but they keep on coming home to my mother's house looking for me and my mother says she doesn't know where I am, understand. Until my mother write me a letter and say that at the municipality there they are moving, they are moving to Zola so I must come and make my identify myself that I want a house also because I was a big lady. So I came. It took a long time for me to take an ID because I was scared, you understand. And then I stood...I think I took my ID 1960 something...because I was scared understand, I couldn't even apply for a house so I let my husband apply for a house because he was not in the African Congress, they wouldn't recognise.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Florence:** I remained and I pushed very hard until I find out that ANC doesn't work for us and then I leave them.

**Interviewer:** When did you leave the ANC?

**Florence:** I leave the ANC in 1990.

**Interviewer:** 1990, just when the unbanning was happening and Mandela was released?

**Florence:** Yes and then I start to leave them.

**Interviewer:** Tell me why did you feel the ANC wasn't doing...?

**Florence:** Because I could see after Chris Hani's death, you understand what is going on. You know, Ramaphosa, he's just here, he grew up here in Chiawelo. Their house is here, Cyril Ramaphosa. And then he's the one who gave me a clue that, "Florence, what's going on now, I don't see' ... because Ramaphosa was supposed to be next to Mandela. He is the one who pointed Mandela. Mandela wanted to point Cyril and then

Mbeki had all those things, challenging people. So I said “No they even don’t look after us. And I never vote for them”

**Interviewer:** The first time?

**Florence:** Yes,

**Interviewer:** Since 1994.

**Florence:** Yeah, I vote in 1994, that was the end.

**Interviewer:** That was the end of it?

**Florence:** That was the end. Because we start to see now things, people are coming, flowing and we were suffering and now we are nothing, you understand?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** So I said, No. Even if you go to Khotso House and go and complain, you find young girls, young boys, they don’t know you - you must go to Pretoria. I even got those books that I went to Pretoria to claim myself but nothing happened. Only 5 people got money from Mandela after release. Those who were working, 5! After that, No more.

**Interviewer:** No more?

**Florence:** Yes. You see then I start to see that this is nonsense and then when they start calling us we must go and sign ESKOM and what. I said, “I won’t sign for ESKOM because we’re the one who asked for electricity from Thebe Hadi and we used to pay R12, R24 each house R24 they used to collect and then we say we want electricity. And Thebe Hadi went over and when he come back he says, when he come and tell the ...what do you call, those Apartheid people that, ‘People applied for the electricity, here is the money, give the Soweto people electricity’. You know what they said? They said they haven’t got the electricity for black people. And that time it was Orlando power, they used to take electricity here from us, we haven’t got it and transfer in town but without

electricity but they got the electricity from our place. And from there Newtown, it was also electricity place but we didn't have it.

**Interviewer:** So up until what point did you not have electricity?

**Florence:** For quite a long time, we were starting to have electricity in 1982.

**Interviewer:** Only in 1982?

**Florence:** Only in 1982 because the Dutch people says we will not give Africans...we've got no electricity for Africans, you know. With your money and all! Then he goes back again Thebe Hadi, it's where LTA start to dig our houses and we did sign and after that they say, you know, all that pipe is from that time, you know they used to put holes, you know, holes like here, a pipe as it is, just put it. This I made myself to be inside. You can even see here this line that I had to grind and put those things inside so that it mustn't look untidy. They just put, put - in '85 - and then they give you your list that your electric is on and now what you must do, you must buy every month you must pay R35 to the office so that you can get electricity. What about a house? No you'll only pay once, no more paying." And I bought this house R1800 to be my own for the Title Deed but now when ESKOM come it was another story. That's why I start to fight.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So tell me ...when finally 1994 happened and the ANC became the government, what was the situation here in Chiawelo with basic services and your situation in 1994 when it started ...?

**Florence:** It started. It was it started at first it was alright, we used to pay. Well some of those people who never paid who were saying, "I wasn't at home and I don't have to pay" I said, no to them, it doesn't but the house is yours, you must pay electricity, you in/you're not in you must pay it because it's your house. You can't say I wasn't in my house. Alright some of them they complain all the time, "They make me pay electricity and I didn't use the electricity" All sorts of funny things and that it wasn't the right situation the way I see it. The right situation, what you said you were going to afford do it, you're in, and you're not in do it. So '86 I don't know what was happening, they start to black out the whole Soweto.

**Interviewer:** In 1986 or '96?

**Florence:** No, '86 and then the lights went off. ESKOM is coming ... "from where?" Nowhere, they put these boxes; pull our electricity up to here. My main box from Thebe Hadi is the other side of the garage. But ESKOM has pulled a cable from there from my electricity that I paid for to be stolen in my house and bring it here and put that box. You can see this wire it comes from this side and you pull it there and you put that watch so that I must pay more. And then after that it was those watches, then we start to fight.

**Interviewer:** So when did you form or become a member of the groupings here in Soweto that started to fight against electricity?

**Florence:** I start in 2000.

**Interviewer:** In 2000? Tell us a little bit about the formation, how that happened, how people got together and started to struggle.

**Florence:** Yes, what ...people we were called from Pimville that they say there is a gentleman there in Pimville who was working with Masondo and then when they make a meeting, Masondo says they must go and tell people that they must pay the electricity. And after the things they have done, so Trevor said, 'No we mustn't do that to the people, those people who are there that are old how can we invite ESKOM to come and privatise', you know when they start to privatise everything in the government. So we went there in Pimville we find them make a big meeting. There was Bongani, there was Trevor and every other people so they said to us, "No this place is too small so we rather go and hire a place in Career Centre so that everybody must make a big meeting." Then they start giving me papers to supply in Chiawelo so I went there and then Trevor they give me papers and I took some other old ladies who were suffering, I gave them papers. We walk all over from Kliptown right to Naledi also we delivered these papers that we've got a big meeting so they must come to Career Centre. Everybody was there then we start boycotting. When they switch off, Trevor says, "Turn on your light'. Bongani, some other people, boys some of them are dead and some of them live in



Diepkloof, plenty boys and then I start to call them here to Chiawelo to come and see. And Chiawelo was dark, no light.

**Interviewer:** So they'd cut the electricity?

**Florence:** Yes, they've cut the electricity and then they put those pre- paid and then it's where I begin to run to SECC.

**Interviewer:** That's the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC).

**Florence:** Yes, SECC/APF and then I start that time, until now. And I didn't move. When you go to ESKOM, now when a person goes to ESKOM they tell them go to SECC or if you don't know go to Mam'Kwashu. You go to the office, you go and complain and the Councillor says, go to Mam'Kwashu. I'm telling you what happened on Monday. On Monday there was a lady who come here and I said, "You've arrived, where do you stay?" she said, "I stay the other side of..." Then I call that gentleman who lights for people I said. "Go and put electricity to this road, don't go to ESKOM. How much ESKOM wants from you? She said to me, "ESKOM says they must pay 50, they owe R70, they owe 70 00 or 70, they must pay R50. Who's got R50 000?"

**Interviewer:** R50 000?

**Florence:** Yes and then we light for you. I said, "Okay, when they say to you, who light? You say, Operation Khanyisa. Don't even hesitate, tell them that.

**Interviewer:** Tell ESKOM that?

**Florence:** Yes, tell them that because they tell people, "Don't you know Operation Khanyisa? Go to Mam'Kwashu" So they come to me, I light for them so what do you want? You see?

**Interviewer:** So Mam'Kwashu, how would you...just tell me a little bit about how the SECC became from a small group of people initially and then became very popular in most of Soweto? How did you organise? What was the way in which you...?

**Florence:** What we did, we hold meeting every Wednesday. We call people that every Wednesday what's going to happen, what we must do and what people want. What must we do when these lights go? They say, "No we must fight, we must fight ESKOM!" Alright, "How do you fight ESKOM?" "We light, if they switch off we light'. That's why ESKOM has come across of this green box because of Chiawelo, they switch off we light. And then we open all the structures like Naledi, Diepkloof, all around they know me. We went there. Then comes water and I was in, you see.

**Interviewer:** When they started implementing the prepaid water meters?

**Florence:** Yes, and then there is a lady here, I think you know, Nobuhle it's myself, it's Sibobo, we know how to dig that thing up.

**Interviewer:** So you've also been helping people to by bypass it, the meters?

**Florence:** Yes, yes, yes. I think we did do something here, we did it right here in Chiawelo and the Police he say he's going to shoot us. I say, "shoot." We open that thing, we dig, we dig and then the water comes to the house. And then they came to me to close my water and I said, "close it, to me it's free, I'm free, do whatever you want to do but don't sign by 5 o'clock I will have water!" When they left, I think there were police in that corner, there were police here, there were police in that corner, you know so that people mustn't come because they know that...they say that woman has got a lot of group. Once she blows a whistle, people come out with red skipper and they are going to fight you if you go to that woman so you must first go to the police station and go and stand there so that people they must be frightened. I tell people that, "don't worry, don't come, and don't come , just leave them do whatever they want to do'. I only switch off my geyser so that when the water is out because they drain all the water in my house, water comes right down and when the water is out they start digging there. I said, "What are you putting there?" they said, "We're going to put stand pipe" I even got the pipe here with me, they put that standing pipe then they open. I say, "what I'm going to do now, you see if you go to the toilet you must take a bucket." 'So you've got a toilet in the house?" I said. "Yes you take a bucket and bring water here, you take a bucket you bring water to that toilet" I said, "good, thanks", then they go. After they go I take, I even got

them I collect water, I tie the water from the street then we collect. I call people from Dlamini and then we collect. They came here 9 o'clock ...2 o'clock I was using water.

**Interviewer:** You had your water back?

**Florence:** Yes, till today! I even got that meter there.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Can you ...I just want to talk a little bit about the SECC because you were at the founding, at the beginning.

**Florence:** Yes, at the beginning.

**Interviewer:** Just tell me a little bit about how the SECC, the membership of the SECC, who used to belong? What kind of people...was it mostly women, men, older, younger, poor people or everyone?

**Florence:** Very poor people and old and young. But it was almost, they target old people like us and then the young people they follow because their granny couldn't afford to be on the street and then they go to the street like Bongani, Bobo, you know. They are still there right now; they are still working under SECC. So it was...you know when you sent buses here, I used to have 2 buses for Chiawelo For Pinville, Chiawelo, Naledi but here in Chiawelo one bus get full here in park station. The way we have suffered here, we are the first ones to suffer.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And also tell me a little bit about ... SECC was not just about electricity but it was doing many other things. Tell me a little bit about the politics in that.

**Florence:** Yes, other politics like councillors selling old people's houses and then we went there. If maybe somebody had a house of a bond, now he's not working, now he's got to be kicked out of the house and then when he go to the bank, we used to see the statement, "How did you make a deal with the bank?" And did you go and report to the bank before they coming to kick you out in the house?" "Yes". 'Did you tell them that you're no more working?" "Yes" "How much are you going to pay?" "I'm going to go pay less than that and now, now they say they can't wait for me, they kick me out of the

house” And then we go there, we put the furniture in the house, we go to the bank. “How did you negotiate with this person?” And then the bank says, ‘We got no right, if a person is not working any more, told you just give the house to the person’. Then we did that, and then even here some other people buy a house from the councillor and then you see people with a truck, they say they bought this house because you don’t pay your fee. And then the people come to us and then we go there and we even face the councillor and then we take the person back to the house.

**Interviewer:** Back into the house?

**Florence:** Yes that's what we used to do.

**Interviewer:** Alright. Now I want you to tell me a little bit about when the SECC started and when you started struggling, the SECC joined the APF?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So tell me how it was? Did the APF assist or what were the maybe good things and possibly as well as bad things? But let's look at the good things that the APF gave to the SECC.

**Florence:** No, you know what I really saw with WSSD.

**Interviewer:** WSSD 2002?

**Florence:** Yes, yes it was very supportive, even when we were arrested.

**Interviewer:** At the marches like the Masondo one?

**Florence:** Yes. Even when we were arrested, you were very supportive. Even now when people die, you know one of the members. So I couldn't...you know I've lost plenty good members in Shawello, they all died but now SECC told me that APF haven't got money anymore, we must stand for ourselves to help those people. I said, “No we can't help everybody, we've got people that works, people who does the job, those people who

APF can talk about but not every member must get money from APF” It’s what I’ve said, you see. People like Bongani, like us, like you know those who are in office, those who arranged a march like myself I went to ask permission when I... you know I always go and ask for permission to march.

**Interviewer:** Is that so?

**Florence:** Yes. And then in Newlands they said to me, ‘Mam’Kwashu, how long have you been marching?’ I said, “We are the citizen and we are the old people I march because I do march, don’t you see me in marches?” ‘Yes we do but I think it’s about time...’ I said, “No just because you want to take these young children to jail so take me to jail because I’m fighting for my rights. It’s not right where I live, so I want the right thing. Is this right that electricity...?” “No, yes, yes, there you are talking.” “And so...? Why can’t you give me the permission? And they gave me permission.

**Interviewer:** So what you’re saying in terms of just to get to the APF is that the APF was a good support for the SECC?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** In many different ways.

**Florence:** The way I see it.

**Interviewer:** The way you see it?

**Florence:** Yes

**Interviewer:** And what about the things that you as an SECC member were able to attend and meet other people and do other things outside of Shawello?

**Florence:** Yes I did, I did.

**Interviewer:** Tell me something about that please.

**Florence:** You know Woza from Zimbabwe; I'm with them and Makoma, what do they...?

**Interviewer:** Earth Life.

**Florence:** Earth Life, I'm there, many organizations I'm there, they all always ask me to be with them. You see I went to Swaziland, you know. It was you APF wasn't it?

**Interviewer:** That was Southern African Social Forum.

**Florence:** Yes. I went to Lesotho; it was Zimbabwe people coming to take me there. I went to Lesotho, Zimbabwe, it was Zimbabwe people. They always called me, you know yourself, yes so that I must come and talk for them what we do in SA. But now what really disappoint me I think March, if it's not March it's when people, Woza people from Zimbabwe wanted to come here and I told them that, ' You come to Soweto and I will show you how to use your electricity'. Because they've got those boxes that we use to take out electricity they've got the very same box and I ask for...I went to... I ask Fereras, and I cut them and I joined the electricity with what do you call...I said, "Look it's what we do in Soweto when they cut our electricity"

**Interviewer:** So you showed the Zimbabweans?

**Florence:** Yes. And they were so impressed that's why they always call me that I must go around and they want to learn how to do it. And then they went there, they asked they want to come here and then SECC wouldn't allow them, they must start to go to Soweto...there at the office and these people they want to come to Soweto, they want to come to Shawello to Mam'Kwashu, they mustn't stuck to Mam'Kwashu they must ...you know they make a lot of things which I didn't like.

**Interviewer:** Uhm? Ok.

**Florence:** Yes, why they would look for Mam'Kwashu because they saw what in did for them because I find there in Zimbabwe you know, people they had AIDS, no light, no

food, no nothing. And when I go there in airport they stop the grocery that I had for Zimbabwe people and they couldn't the way I fight. I went with those...you see those luggages, they were full of mealie-meal, full of sugar, rice, tinned stuff. In Zimbabwe they say, I say "If you take me to Zimbabwe, give me the food, I'll reach there in airport and I did pass airport, they couldn't do nothing at the airport so Zimbabwe people they want to see me so they couldn't allow that because I was here at home, I lose my son I couldn't go out so the people went outside. Still they call me so I go; I just pass and tell them like, the other day when my son...when I came back their, my son died. I was with Mandela's wife.

**Interviewer:** Winnie?

**Florence:** No, the little one.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Florence:** So they make a meeting there in Khotso House so Zimbabwe told me that I must be there. So i went to report to SECC I said, "Look people, my son is in the hospital but I can't lose this meeting so I want 2 of them on one, we must go and hear what...ooh! I find Graca Machel there with all the stakeholders and Zimbabwe people so when I listen to them they..., No they are not talking about the situation of Soweto they talk about the soccer, those people of Zimbabwe they must go back, they say on the 12<sup>th</sup> they must all go back to Zimbabwe and then they must pull them out and put them in a car like that. So I listen, I listen to Graca and then we must make it faster and then on Friday we must stop this thing and all this so I lift up my hands. So I say, "I will like to hear from the comrade, wife of the President Mandela, I can hear that you people are talking, you're talking about people who are supposed to be deported from Zimbabwe , you're not talking about here. Let me tell you something Graca, here in Soweto APF when people were fighting in Alexandra we had red bags carrying bags, carrying food, tinned stuff to give those people who were there in the police station, that was APF, I was there. It stopped there. In Soweto because we are APF, SECC we stand there in Baragwanath when they come to chase them and we chase them away then we ask the drivers to help us. They didn't come. Come to my house I'll show them where we hide them and these people they are working for themselves, they are not stealing from



anybody, so we keep them. Don't tell us that Soweto...Soweto did nothing to those people. Go to Alexandra and go to George Goch and go to Jeppe it's where you find where Zimbabwe get hitted there, but not in Soweto because we go there and give them food and those food were from APF. I was there.

**Interviewer:** So that's another struggle against xenophobia and also...

**Florence:** Yes, don't say that people of SA are...there is a part, I don't say they didn't do, they did it but Soweto, I can tell you about Soweto because I know Soweto better than you people. So they start saying, "This is a big issue" I say, "No the electricity, how can we supply these people they are in our backyard, they use electricity. We can't say don't use electricity but when it's so high, how can we? Because they are there in Soweto, do you want to go there?" Graca says, "This is a big issue" It's the answer that she says, she says, "This is a big issue, xenophobia get connected with Mam'Kwashu and tell them when we want to...those people who were not against organization about Zimbabwe where to find them. I says," You go to APF there in Dorofontein you find them, you go to Soweto we've got an office near Baragwanath, Carrier Center, if you go there and ask for me you will get me. Even when you go to Soweto and say, "Where is Mam'Kwashu's house?" They will tell you so don't tell us that, you're not there to help about electricity,. you are only fighting for your brothers." I said that to Graca in Khotso House. You only get her because your brothers they must go back after the soccer on the 13<sup>th</sup>, between 12 and 13. So that's not an issue because go to Soweto you will find all the Zimbabweans selling, they are there selling. When you come this way you see people with vegetable and all that, those are Zimbabwe people, nobody hits them, nobody take their food. They make furniture nobody fight with them.

**Interviewer:** And Mam'Kwashu, why do you think in a place like Soweto like this the SECC and your organization in the struggles have been able to do these kinds of things, have been able to basically fight ESKOM , make them basically...?

**Florence:** We've got helpers from outside, it's where I thought that you were fighting for funders, I remember when that old lady died ion Orange Farm, remember we went there when we went to Durban?



**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** They were fighting about that money, why did we keep government's money and all these things. I went there with you in Pretoria isn't it? With that gentlemen there, whom they call who's in Orange Farm?

**Interviewer:** Beks Makhulu

**Florence:** Yes I was with you and they ask me, "How do you finance? Where do you get finance?" I said to them, "We've got no finance, we are beggars" That's what I say. "And people who are giving us money is from overseas or somewhere else and we've got people that they write and say, look what's happening in SA in Soweto they've got that feeling, some of them they say, "We can't fund you anymore!" And then there is no money. We've got no factory, we've got no income anywhere. We collect each other, 20cents, and 50cents, R1 and make a big thing and go there. But people which I know that they get...how do they...how do you people afford? What do they say to me, "How do you people afford to be in town with 3buses, 5buses?" It's where I start to say that, 'We've got white people who fund us and we've got people that ask for money for us. 'To pay those buses, where do you get money to pay those buses because you find yourselves full in town with old men where do you get money?' I said the money comes from APF and APF is getting funder from outside so some of them they don't fund us, we've got no money. It's what I've said to them, we've got no money!"

**Interviewer:** Ok. And on the ground here in Soweto, why do you think the SECC for all the 10years has been successful in fighting for the basic services whether it's water, electricity, housing...these kinds of things. Why have you and the comrades in SECC been able to do the things that you've done? How have you been able to do that?

**Florence:** Let me tell you this Dale, we've got members; we've got cards I can show you. We've got this card. If you're a member of APF or SECC, you must have a card, produce a card that...like ANC, ANC's got cards so we've also got cards. We know our members and In such a date if as person wants to join us, you go there, we'll give you a card, you pay R15, it's how we pay our finance like that, it's how we do it. Ok, end of the

month when we're supposed to move because they don't allow us to hold meetings in their house but now I did fight for the school, now they hold meeting at the school, Tuesday, there. I fight with the...what do they call it? The Councillors, so I've got a key I've got my class where I hold meetings with these people without paying. But now there in church, I've got 2 meetings here, one at school and one at church. I only pay R60 a meeting so I make them collect R10 each, even myself I pop out that R10 to make it R60 so that we can pay the church, we can clean there where we stay, do you understand? It's how we manage, It's how we manage,. Even when we're supposed to go to Carrier Centre, we collect 25cents each member, it's how we survive.

**Interviewer:** Now you mentioned earlier, you said earlier on that when you stopped being a member of the ANC you saw that they weren't doing what they shouldn't be doing, right?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And you started the struggles around SECC, when you look now in the last few years of the struggles, which has been the main enemies of the people in Soweto who were the people that you were targeting, that you were fighting against? Is it just Councillors or its all...so tell me about who is it that you have been going to and saying, "You must change, we don't like this'?

**Florence:** We've been going to ESKOM, going to Johannesburg Water , we've been going to houses , that's all, those people who target us.

**Interviewer:** And why do you think that the policies that they have implemented, the cut offs, the high prices, why do you think that's happening? What's the problem?

**Florence:** The problem is because of the policy of the ANC because it's now privatizing and the tenders, it's where things got money, people ...I can built , I can do this and then the ANC give money and they give a tender and then when you finish, take the money and go like housing people , when the person is supposed to... contract comes and build a house, exactly like...what do ...those...that person who used to build houses? Rooms

for people, what do ...that contract who used to build homes for people and collect a lot of money?

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Florence:** And then it's where things happening, what was happening that time when I leave ANC because they privatize. Through privatization, that's why I left ANC because government of ANC they privatize everything. There's nothing for people, it's only tender, tender that's all. And those people those tender they don't do the right thing like houses in the middle there's no money to build houses, the person is gone. He's nowhere to be found. Like my son, the one who died, they say they want a house; they must pay R6000 per household so that they can have houses. They pay that R6000, others paying, when we went there and asked, "How much is a householder?" They say, "R3000" , "R3000"? "Yes." "After we've paid R12000 for 2houses?" That is that. The houses, we didn't get those houses, they didn't get those houses because why? The tender. That person who was building the house was arrested because he took money from...

**Interviewer:** He was taking the money

**Florence:** You see, that's a policy...that's ANC. Those houses are built to ANC. Those people who are having tender from ANC, they run away with the money, you see?

**Interviewer:** So have you in all these last since you've been fighting the ANC, the promises and the privatization, what kind of changes have you seen for people in those last elections?

**Florence:** The changes they get worse, I see worse.

**Interviewer:** Worse?

**Florence:** Worse.

**Interviewer:** Just give some few examples of how things are for people now and ...

**Florence:** People are suffering because people of '96 they haven't get their houses yet then now they are worse because...it's suffering because you can see now we don't cook the way we want, we not eating the way we want, you understand? We're suffering. Last time I had a meeting there I told people of Shawello that I think we must boycott these lights, don't go to Eskom, let Eskom take it's own...what do you call it? Electricity. Because from '82, all these years we were here, we didn't have electricity. How did we live? How did we survive? Can't we go back to the old system?" "Eh! "Eh! "Eh! "Eh!" You see? So I say it's going to be like that. Okay, so let's dig all these boxes and give the people light. Who will do it? Eh? Scared for the police ...you know they dig 12boxes then they were arrested.

**Interviewer:** So people are scared?

**Florence:** You see? But they are off; those people are having lights free.

**Interviewer:** The ones?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So Mam'Kwashu the situation as you say things have gotten worse for people, so where when you look now for the future for things, where do you see things? What do you see happening?

**Florence:** I don't see, I don't know. I'm praying for our grandchildren and our children, where will they be? Because as it is from now this...you buy electricity for ...I think you spend about R700 a month.

**Interviewer:** Just for your electricity in this house?

**Florence:** Yes. Tell me, who pay that money before? Even to the white area they are now starting crying but this thing, you know it happened when black people go to stay in town. It's when electricity goes up, all along it wasn't ...can you see that it's only us? Government is fighting with us. Because all along they were not paying that money but

since the people, black people moved to town, they buy houses in town and then everybody is crying, you see?

**Interviewer:** So for organizations like the SECC and the APF and other ones across the country what do you see? Do you think they must ...what would you say needs to happen in this sick circumstance?

**Florence:** You know, outside, I mean I can tell you about Zanini and some other places. They don't complain, you know they pay R50, sometimes R20. Well I don't blame then, some of them they haven't got the stove like here, you know. They use radio, iron maybe...they don't pay much but the thing is here, here in Soweto where there is no money. They said money is here, everything is up here understand? They don't cry like we do. They are R50. Who won't afford R50? Who? Who won't?

**Interviewer:** So do you think that's so because in a place like Soweto over the years people were used to a particular way of living and now it's been going backwards?

**Florence:** Yes. Now we backward and it's very hard, it's very hard to go back ward.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** For example there in Naledi, there is new houses, they've got no electricity, they use candle but already 3houses burned because of a candle. Do you think people will want to go back? No, it can't be. So let's find a way, government must pop up money to reduce this. What the money for the stadium did? Eh?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** We want electricity; we won't say we will do without it, that is only to punish ESKOM because it's asking too much money. But electricity is our right,, we did fight for it, it's our right, we need it! Nobody wants to go back. Who can be born again? Like a church? It's not a church where you say, "Now I've left everything what I did, now I'm born again" No but this is lifetime, you see.

**Interviewer:** What other rights do you think people have now? What they should be having and enjoying, besides electricity? What other rights? What other things do you see people not enjoying that they should be having?

**Florence:** Houses, food is up, everything is up, we enjoy nothing! Look what is happening with our grandchildren, they are not going to school, what world is that? eh? And the toyi-toyi always has been there, look now what they are doing to mistresses and nurses, you know? Part of life. People are dying in Baragwanath, they've got no doctors, no nurses. That's the life of SA, is that good? Life is very bad now, very bad. If you get sick now you can't go to hospital, you go to the doctor, doctor is not there, he's gone. Eh? And doctor is so expensive. I don't see anything. What is the right thing to do so that people must live? I think that government must look abroad. Basic...not basic for people. What is really important to a person? Water, lights, house. That's very important. If you haven't got those things, how can you live? You see, government must pop out money for the poor people to make a living better because we need electricity. We can't go back to coal. We are coughing sometimes the coal has got smoke, you can't you must...there's no life; there is no life for people I can tell you.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Uhm..let me just see if I've got ...I wanted you to just speak very briefly , you've said, I know you've expressed quite strong opinions of the things inside the organizations like SECC or the APF, things that need to change. What do you think needs to change?

**Florence:** You mean from APF or SECC?

**Interviewer:** Yes, from that side, not from the side of government but within the organizations. What...?

**Florence:** Strong feelings?

**Interviewer:** They've become weaker as well.

**Florence:** Yes they are becoming weaker.

**Interviewer:** Why is that? What needs to be done?

**Florence:** Because people are losing power because what they do it doesn't success. So I think people like APF, like SECC, okay, as they say they've got one Councillor in OKM which is SECC, let's organize again, let's organize again people. Let's start organizing people again because without people...

**Interviewer:** No Organization.

**Florence:** No Organization. Let's start and be strong like before, you know, we used to have action every month, you know that?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** But now I don't see any action. That say, "Hey this is APF," "Hey this is SECC, you know things like that. Now we've got calls to go and have another Organization and that Organization has got to give you money for the bus, money for that. Oh, we're getting weak. We need to be strong again especially now that the election of Councillors are coming next year, where will we be? We will go back to ANC, vote for ANC because they don't see us acting. You see before they saw us we were acting because we used to light for them, take out the prepaid water, we used to do that, we used to be there, found, arrested, go to jail, come out. The money is getting finished you see? We're not getting anything from government. We're private....i mean you can see...look at COPE, look at what they did but they are still eating ANC money. You see that? We must organize another people from abroad, overseas and then they will want to know what are they fighting for, what are going to gain in SA, why? Where? They want to have something, a place for them, you see? Like Zimbabwe, they've got a place for them in Pretoria they've got a big offices for Zimbabwean people. Which office that we got in Pretoria? None. Look at COPE when it start to depart from ANC, look how big are they! We also depart from ANC, we're also big, but we can see GEAR ...eh that kills me, when I think about that. It was so wonderful, everybody fought for it.

**Interviewer:** They fought for what?

**Florence:** For WSSD.

**Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

**Florence:** Do you remember?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Florence:** Even in Durban.

**Interviewer:** The conference against racism, yes.

**Florence:** Yes. It was red, even now you can see when they say there is a march somewhere, you see red skippers, it's getting bright. We were there in...where we were with Makoma; they were wearing those black skipper on December 12 in that hall, in Sauer street. Remember?

**Interviewer:** Oh, Joburg City Hall?

**Florence:** Yes, Joburg City Hall. It was black and white but comes APF with their skipper, red, you know it gives ...do you see that picture?, it was wonderful you can only see red , you couldn't see black. So that's why I say this uniform, it must be forever it mustn't be changed because it's bright, everybody can see that's APF. "Oh is it SECC, ooh APF!" You know, even a small child here in Soweto , they know about Operation...here. You see Mam'Kwashu, "Eh, Operation Khanyisa" You see but now it doesn't happen because our office are getting down, they are no more like before. We used to have action every month. We do that, we go there, we go there, we go to Naledi, we go...you know, it was a very big Organization SECC, very big. But now people are gone, The Mam'Kwashus they are gone, look at them. You see? So our children they must take over they don't follow because they get arrested and nobody cares for them. I say, "No man, if you arrest one, it's no good! Let us all go like Jeppe. I say, we must all go there the whole bus inside. Nobody is going home! They couldn't afford us, you see? They could only afford 3. They couldn't afford us, 87! Aha! Ah...I make miracles there,



they couldn't afford us. They even call that Sophia town police for me. I said, "No you won't do nothing, you just bring the keys and open the wardrobe and give us clean blanket...these boxes and give us clean blankets for the old ladies because we are not criminals, we didn't kill anybody, we fight for our rights and we get arrested. So please open the drawer, we must have blankets, we're all going to sleep here, we're not going home." And he opened the drawer, take all those blankets, dirty blankets from criminals who were fighting, I chucked them outside and let's clean the place. We clean the place and then we sleep. That's all.

**Interviewer:** So power in numbers?

**Florence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And that's what's not happening anymore, is that it?

**Florence:** Yes, it's what's not happening anymore.

**Interviewer:** Just an last couple of questions Mam'Kwashu, what ...when you look now things are now bad, we're going backwards and everything but when you looking at the future for not just APF, SECC but for poor communities now, what do you see?

**Florence:** I see death.

**Interviewer:** You see death?

**Florence:** Yes, I see death because if I can tell you now...

**Interviewer:** (To 3<sup>rd</sup> person) Just need to get one answer from her. (To Mam'Kwashu) Okay, go ahead.

**Florence:** I only see death because if I can tell you now what's happening here in Soweto to our Organization, people are dying from paraffin. To be honest with you , I just bury one girl there, Makoma was there and I told the Councillor, I said...I even went to ESKOM I said, "You better light if you don't want any problem, you better light , you must

...can you see this house? It's stinking paraffin. The child died from headache because of paraffin, it's you ESKOM. Can you see any money in this house? When you look at this house you find that there is money. What is in this house what costs more than a R1000? Tell me? Nothing. So I ask you to make a life for these people before we fight you" And then they give me the light and I bury the girl and they are still on light right now, "Can you take off Mam'Kwashu?" And everybody were there, the Councillors. Can't they do...don't you think this it's a mistake or it's purposely? You've got to fight before you get something for yourself. If you don't fight you don't get nothing. Is it the right thing to fight? No, it's not, but it's what they want so it's what we're going to continue doing, you must fight before you get something right. And it is not right. This year I've got 25funerals through sake of electricity, 25! The last one where did it happen?...here in Western, the other one it happened here in my house. Arthritis, pneumonia because no more heaters here, we don't use heaters so that's why I say, I see death!

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Florence:** That's all

