

L Chiba Interview (1)

LC – L Chiba

JS –Jonny Selemani

JS: So the aim of this research is to kind of weed out the definition of non-racialism, we're going to be looking at it pre-1994 during the struggle, and post-1994. And also look at the idea of an ideal non-racialist state, what we should do to attain a non-racialist state. So it's ideal to talk to you, because of your experience, your exposure, your understanding of certain things. So I have about 6 questions here, very open-ended, please feel free to answer them as you see fit. My first question is what is your understanding of the historical root of non-racialism pre-1994.

LC: What is my understanding? I'd like to go back to the mid-40s. Let me start with the 1946 passive resistance campaign. Now that passive resistance campaign was conducted by the South African Indian Congress. That was against some sort of a discrimination against people of Indian origin. Now it was a highly successful campaign, in the sense that 2000 Indian men and women went to prison for defying certain laws. That campaign was so successful, that it left an indelible impression on the leadership of the African National Congress. At that time, the leadership of the ANC was Dr Khumalo, who was the president of the ANC. Now the president, the 3, the president of the Transvaal Indian Congress, and the president of the Natal Indian Congress, Dr G M Naicker, together with Dr Khumalo, who was president of the ANC, they got together and they signed what they call the Doctor's pact of March 1947. What was the essence of that pact? The essence of the pact was that it was necessary for the Indian people in this country to join hands with the African people, and conduct joint political struggles against the oppressive regime. So that was the essence of it. That paved the way for co-operation between the South African Indian Congress and the African National Congress. In 1952, they jointly launched the defiance campaign, what was called the campaign of defiance against unjust laws. Those two organisations conducted the defiance campaign against 6 unjust laws, during the course of which about 8000 people went to prison for defying all sorts of laws, restrictions. That was in 1952. After the defiance campaign, what actually happened is it was felt that other congresses should be, other organisations should be established which would represent those people in the communities, just as the African National Congress was an organisation of African people, the SAIC was an organisation of Indian people, there should be an organisation for the colored people in this country, and then they formed what was called the South African Colored People's organisation, and there was another one for Progressive Whites, the organisation for progressive whites was the Congress of Democrats. Now these 4 organisations then constituted what came to be known as the Congress Alliance. And they then conducted all sorts of campaigns, one of the campaigns was the Congress of the People. The Congress of the People was basically a countrywide campaign to determine from the people themselves the type of South Africa that they wanted in the future. And they collected hundreds and thousands of little demands and at the congress of the people that was held in Kliptown on the 25th of June 1955, those demands were incorporated in what came to be known as the Freedom Charter. And the opening, well the, principle points that were made in the freedom charter was that South Africa belongs to all who lived in it. Right. One of the important principles that was captured in the document was the

establishment, the nature and character of the future democratic south Africa. And that was that it should be a united, just, equal, non-racial and non-sexist democratic South Africa. So when you talk about the emergence of non-racialism, the co-operation between the different ethnic groups in this country, working together, conducting joint political struggles, and that is the basis of the non-racialism the way I see it.

JS: In relation to the ANC in exile, can you speak on the notion of non-racialism in context of the ANC in exile.

LC: Well, I suppose they held the same views. They were members of the ANC, and as members of the ANC, they accepted and promoted the concepts that were ensigned in the documents and policy of the ANC. So I don't think there were any different perceptions for the concept of non-racialism between those inside South Africa and those who were in exile outside South Africa. The policy was uniform, accepted uniformly and practiced uniformly by all ANC people, no matter where they were.

JS: And would you, what is your understanding, in comparison to that, of what non-racialism has become today, post-1994, with regard to things such as the core values behind non-racialism. Does your understanding of non-racialism still apply today?

LC: Yes, I personally think that non-racialism is.. Let me put it this way. You see let's accept the reality, that is that South Africa, there are different groupings of people, and their differences aside, in their culture, their traditions, their religions, they pursue their languages, their cuisine, their dress or whatever it is. Those are different groupings of people. And these different groupings of people, despite those differences, and despite the diversity, there is what one would call unity in diversity. You follow what I'm saying? And that's where non-racialism really comes in. Now when we talk about what is meant by non-racialism, I think I would like to talk about that. Despite the existence of different groupings of people, being there a majority of African people, be there so-called minority groupings of people like the Indians and the coloreds and the whites and so on, despite that, there is a feeling, or there should be a feeling, what the ANC definitely practices, is in that context, non-racialism actually means there should be no discrimination between people who have different social backgrounds, different cultures, different languages, who belong to particular or different ethnic groups. There should be no discrimination. This is what is meant by non-racialism. Now today, after the 1969 Conference, the ANC accepted people of different cultural backgrounds and upbringings and religions and languages, different people belonging to different groupings, they were all allowed to become members of the ANC. Now in 1961, I was a member of the Transvaal Indian Congress. But in 1961, I also joined Umknoto we Sizwe, which was the military wing.
