

MOLEFE PHETO

Facilitator: This is an interview with Molefe Pheto, we are in Johannesburg, the date is the 20th of April 2011, and interview is done by Brown Maaba. Thanks very much for your time. You were still talking about when you had this conference in London in 1980; you had nothing in terms of documents.

Respondent: Yes, we had nothing, absolutely. You see, when we went out, others went to Europe, Africa, America and England and then we found out that we came from one philosophy but we were not an organization but we were parts of black consciousness movement, and then there was a feeling that we should come together to form an external movement, we did not know what we were going to call ourselves. I think there were attempts at fundraising in different places, somehow anyway those who were doing that got the money and congress was eventually held in London unfortunately because we wanted it in Africa, African countries did not want to touch a congress by blacks who were fighting against racism in South Africa, Kenya being one example. We ended up in London as our host country without any problems.

Then there were things like, among others, then we'll have to have some kind of a document/s to publicise us and particularly to sort of process our ideology, information document, political analysis and things like that, which came out of that congress, I am no more telling about the ins and outs of congress, I am just telling about how to go about being known and doing work, lets say in London but in other regions. It was agreed that there should be some kind of political document of Black Consciousness Movement of Azania because the body was called that after it was founded.

It took some time to get a document to coming out, which was our analytical document; I think it came out once in every three months. Mainly it was done in London, editorial was in London, but contributors from Harare, that is Africa, from Germany, from America and of course from England there were contributors. Most of the issues were political commentaries more than anything else, very little on culture and yet culture was very important but there were not many writers on culture. The major role players on that document of ours, Rose Inis Phahle was one.

Facilitator: Is he still alive?

Respondent: Yes he is still about. Then that was the time of Barney Pityana but he left us soon after congress, no he didn't play any role there, because soon after congress he left us. Then there was a man called Basil who became the Chairperson of the BCMA, the first Chairperson of the BCMA.

Facilitator: Basil Manning?

Respondent: Yes, Basil Manning. He was also key person in the document; he loved to have that document going. Then we had, he was also in Fort Hare, his name now escapes me, tall fellow.

Facilitator: Siphon Buthelezi?

Respondent: Yes, Siphon Buthelezi, he was also interested in the document, very much interested in the document, though I think he had another agenda of a document called the (not clear). Now those were the key players in the UK and I think as I say the editors probably it was Rose Inis Phahle, he was the main editor and then Basil had a

hand in it, but we were sort of hands on. We had Harun Variyava, he was an administrator, who made sure that it comes out with Moodley, not Strini, the other Moodley, the brother to Strini. We were the distributors, whenever it came, I would send it out to the support communities in the UK, either by post or by hand, so that it could spread. Then a lot went to Harare and Harare then brought it into the country for people to read. That was the main document. Then there would now and again be articles here and there. The other things in as far as material was concerned, were posters and leaflets and pamphlets, those were for local work, whenever we had something like Steve Biko memorial or June 16, then we would go out and campaign and get support from somewhere and make those things for the relevant event. Each time we had an event we used to send them to Harare so that they could see them, because late Harare became the Head Quarters of the BCMA. So we would send just about everything down to Harare, they were good in Harare because they used to keep the stuff much better than a whole lot of other areas. But for keeping the material, when I was then Secretary of the BCMA region in the UK, I kept them very meticulously. I had a room which had nothing else but just BCMA material.

Facilitator: When were you the Secretary, which years?

Respondent: That was about in the middle 1980s, I became the Secretary. Then yes, very meticulously kept, until the whole crew was devoted to them. I remember the day Mandela came out of prison, everybody was on TV and I decided I was just going to work on our library, I just worked when I realized it was going to be a lot of sharrad, so I was working on those documents, behind time a little but. Eventually when we came home, we heard that there was a request, no only from the BCMA, but from the ANC by Fort Hare, that those

documents should go to that place. There was some debates, some of us wanted to know why they should go to Fort Hare, we were thinking we would keep them in our own library here coming home, but looks like academy sort of overcame us, the reasoning was that it is an educational institution and it is historical in many ways. But also the other liberation movements were sending their stuff there and then people will get to look at them for research. So if we were holding back, what we've done will not be known, where we stand in the liberation for instance will not be known, so we then gave in and said let them go to Fort Hare. But remember the reason why we were not keen, some of us that they should come home was the settlement that was arrived at in Kempton Park that did not make many of us happy.

We were of the view that the black liberation movements should form a united front, but along the way we were detisent, and we were the only ones who were left and we didn't take part eventually. So alongside with things like that we didn't feel that those documents should come home to a system such as the one that we ended up with. But eventually like I say academy pronounced, in especially now Pugusio was here, Pugusio was really campaigning for that, he was really moving for that, he was trying to give us the rationale. As I say, as soon as we knew the other liberation movements had their documents there and so forth, then we will lose out. We were even thinking of sending duplicates there and keeping originals or vise versa, we were thinking of that, I don't know what happened to that process, because sooner or later I think round about that time then it was the great move from Harare to home. I think the way they moved was so unfortunate and so hard that carrying important documents like that was not easy because we were not funded, we were not helped to come back home from Harare, we found our way, whereas the other movements had the United Nations funds and what not, they really could collect,

but for us it was up to you, you'll see how to get back to, same as us in the UK, when I decided and the other comrades that we are coming home, we couldn't go to the United Nations and say we are also refugees, now we want to go home, we had to find our own way. Now, when you do that you leave a lot of stuff that perhaps you would have wanted to bring home.

Facilitator: Just to make some follow-ups. I remember that after the meeting in London, 1980, there was this document which was called An Urgent Task, which was produced by the movement to make sure that you begin to implement whatever that was on paper. The issue of documents, was it central to this, I need to actually find the document again. Did it form part of it?

Respondent: Very much so, it was extremely essential to a point where after the congress of the conference, Urgent Task was not really emerging, it became an issue that urgent task had to be found, had to appear. I remember now, I don't know the sequence, whether part of it came from Harare or some parts came from Europe, I think people were contributing towards the main document. Its arrival in the UK was quite a very secretive business. We didn't agree that it must come by post or by anything else, it had to be brought by courier. Urgent Task was the thing that was really going to get us off the ground.

Facilitator: Most of the stuff in Fort Hare is BCMA stuff, not AZAPO stuff, it's the stuff from exile in 1980 to of course 1990 and 1991 or so, but after the unbanning. The cadres that went to exile in 1976, 1978 and so on, was it difficult for them to take some BCMA material to exile, for the 70s there seems to be a gap there, in terms of this particular collection is concerned.

Respondent: You mean the cadres that went out in 1976.

Facilitator: Yes in the 70s, even earlier and then 76 and 77.

Respondent: AZAPO documents or BCM documents?

Facilitator: BCM documents.

Respondent: I think the problem was, you know that there was this myth that we won't be long outside, we believed that struggle, because we were so ready for armed combat, that we thought we'll get there train, finish and come back home and then in a little while we'll probably defeat these guys and so those documents. Nobody was thinking of carrying anything out, but I think it was the method of leaving the country, I mean just immediately get out, we couldn't prepare that I am going to go to exile, we thought I'm still going to be at home and do some work, and then suddenly when things change the first thing you think about is that I'd better go. Now things like documents sometimes become not that crucial, but the younger generation of 1976, documents were not in their minds, no I don't think they would want to carry anything. They were so hot that they want to get there, get those guns and come back, so I think that was the missing thing, nobody was thinking about that, but also carrying documents was not that easy, because the country was full of road blocks, soldiers and police. I think maybe people felt that, take nothing just be as you are and if you are caught at least let them put something without being helped by some letter of identification, I think that was, maybe that makes that gap so prominent.

Facilitator: And yourself, when did you go to exile?

Respondent: I went into exile in 1977 and mine was the easiest, it was not jumping fences and things like that. I was invited by the United States Information service, by then called Africa Crossroads in the United States. That was after I was in prison, I didn't think I would make it, but somehow the United States diplomats here were very strong I think, because I had been refused a passport, couldn't go, so I told them there's no point I can't go because I had been refused passport, they said they would deal with it. I got a phone call saying they've got my passport. Then instead of coming home when I wanted to come home, I was sort of blocked through our communications system, that was now in 1977 when I wanted to come back home, I think it was after September, after Steve Biko was murdered. The security police and other agencies started looking for activists, my house was raided many times. When I called to say I am on my way, my wife thought I was crazy and my friends thought you must be mad, but the thing is that they sent me information not to come back, I think that information was intercepted. So I was going to get right into their hands, even when I called them here at home, I called them through the American Information service facilities in Johannesburg, so I think that's why maybe we could not be intercepted, or something like that, and they would have to go and pick up my phone calls from there and call me from there. So 1977 I ended up in exile, but like I said, the easy way, I didn't jump fences and things like that. I was in England on my way home and then that was it.

Facilitator: You also mentioned that there was an editorial staff and office that operated from London, what happened to the bulk of that material, or people who were producing that. Were they very keen on safe guarding and keeping this material from (not clear).

Respondent: I would have thought so, but at that time when now looks like we were preparing to come home, they were no longer active at all, or not as active as when we started. When we started for instance, the Chair was Basil Manning and the others, I think I was in the committee. Then later it went to different comrades, and when it went to different comrades, Manning was no longer Chair, Rose Innis was no longer editor or something like that, so we were left with the baby, we were left with those documents and it was now the new executive that was making decisions, what do we do with these things. The earlier decision was to keep those things ourselves, and whoever wanted research could get in touch with us, and we did get a lot of people wanting research, from the Caribbean, United States, Africa, Europe, and we used to send the stuff, so it was useful and we saw the value of keeping it. But then the earlier editors where no longer really active, it was now a new group of people. I think I was of those that was secretary for a long time, even our last Chair, was a Chair for a long time until 1994, I think I was Secretary until 1992, there about. Now with us the debate was we will keep these and bring them home for the office of AZAPO or whatever we were going to be called, here at home, no Fort Hare, no other universities. If they wanted anything we would make copies, that's what we were saying.

Facilitator: And then you said other people like Manning, were no longer as active as they used to be in the end. Did that impact on the loss of documents or accountability of the material and the future of the documents.

Respondent: No, unless you had individual copies and everybody had individual copies, but the core, no, each executive committee that took over handed over documents, equipment and offices to the next

one. So that went from each new executive after another, but individual copies, I am sure some people still have.

Facilitator: So these documents were kept at your place or in the office.

Respondent: They were in the office, some of them, but then there was quite an overflow. When I as Secretary I had space where I was, most of them, I mean the majority of the documents except administrative stuff, I would have Urgent Task like anything, I would have shelves and shelves, those were kept at my place. Anything important that was at my place, it was on condition it should be available when needed and there was no problem there, we were very close knit.

Facilitator: So the family was ok with that, some room being converted into storage?

Respondent: Absolutely no problem, in fact that room was sort of sacrosanct in the sense that, but lucky my wife was also in the organization and my children. So they would go there and read and things like that, but basically they knew, if you wanted something you could go, that's when I was Secretary.

Respondent: And you mentioned that other people also shown interest in the collections within the movement, Buthelezi and others as well. Where they interested in getting something from the material or were they interested in keeping the material, what was their position.

Respondent: Buthelezi was mainly interested in writing and that our documents were political quality, he was crazy about political quality, no matter how difficult, because sometimes political language is

difficult, but I think he comes from that school of using the right terminology and whatever, he was strict on that and he was interested in that, and I would say he was interested in keeping a copy of each production, that's fine, we all did that. But also remember that when you have such an interest sometimes you influence what goes in, and then if you have maybe a certain line, you are interested that, that line must appear in the document, that's what we would say maybe personal interest. But if there's some total that no this is ok, its part of our struggle, because language can be very crucial, it can be BCMA language but with a certain twist which is now talking to other forces. But we had interest and I think honest interest.

Facilitator: Your stuff was at your place, and then 1990 come and then there was now an issue whether you should send the stuff home or not, and then eventually Fort Hare. What was your exact debate or issue around this thing of sending stuff to Fort Hare, what was your concern?

Respondent: In the first place, the concern was that the country is supposed to be free but in most instances we were not happy with that kind of freedom. Two, the reason was that we shouldn't just send them, because we need have a history of our own documents in our hands. Like here, we have nothing here, absolutely nothing, which shows what we did when we were outside. It's all at Fort Hare, I think if we want it we have to go there and say may we have copy so and so. Say for instance you are writing something and you think oh it's in that publication, now you have to go and get it in Fort Hare, whereas if we had our copies here, then I think we would move from what we have and do whatever we want to do. Right now I have finished a book, but I am sure there would be some missing issues, if I had those documents, but now I am going through them in my mind, whereas if maybe we had been listened to then one of these rooms could be

having all that stuff. So we can boast and say this is what we used to produce, but also its information, we can't show anybody, our members here, we have to tell them go to Fort Hare and you'll get them. So that was some of the arguments, we are empty, we are naked basically.

Facilitator: What about the nation at large.

Respondent: Both ways, if the nation wants to go to Fort Hare it can find them, but why not find it from the real source. I mean it's like if you want to study African art, you leave it here in Africa, you go and study it in London, and it doesn't quite make sense.

Facilitator: Internally those who argued in favour of Fort Hare, what reasons did they advance?

Respondent: The main guys was Pugobia, and mainly it was scholarship, his thing was scholarship and we must compete with the other liberation movement, the others are already there and you have not sent your stuff. It's not necessary, if they want it they will get it. But as I say in a democratic debate you lose it, but now I think we've lost it here because we can't show anything.

Facilitator: If you had kept the documents here, were you guys going to have enough manpower to archive the documents properly and run it through an archive that was going to be a public thing, or was it going to be an internal thing.

Respondent: That's true, if we kept it, if we were going to archive it properly, it is true. If there was money, or we would campaign for money to run a library, but it's not only progressive, so who might do

that. In most cases people can't see the point, take them to Fort Hare and so forth. But for the members of the movement I think it's a bit of a disadvantage that they are all there and we have got nothing here, I wish we had duplicate copies here, or a duplicate library here. Now archiving properly, yes it's a problem, we need a proper librarian, we wouldn't have one, space ok and then rust and rot and things like that if the building is not aired properly, those things could go to waste, but those would be the problems we would face. And I am sure if they came here we would have had a problem, I am sure.

Facilitator: Was there an alternative to Fort Hare at that time in terms of documents.

Respondent: Especially our material, I am still of the view that they should be where we are, wherever our office is. That kind of material should be with us so that scholars and others, they can go and check what's in Fort Hare but then come and double check at the atmosphere that is where those things really belong, because we empathise with them unlike at Fort Hare, they'd ask where BCMA things is and they would just be pointed towards the document, but with us its different, maybe I would say I will take you to them. There's a difference in how you interact with them than when they are in a place like that. If we had brought them here, I would be one of those who would find a sponsor, find a sponsor somebody who understand business, could sponsor this library for us, and maybe even get a librarian who is paid part time, doesn't have to come everyday. And we as we come in here, if maybe someone wants to research, then they can say Molefe can you come in because so and so is only coming on day so and so, and then we come in and things are available and so forth.

What I understood then was, once they came into our place, we would guard them like anything, we would guard them very closely.

Facilitator: But in general, in terms of skills and skills acquisition, how many of the cadre had shown interest in archives or studied library sciences.

Respondent: Belonging to our movement, there was not one who did library sciences, but there was a girlfriend then of one of our members, who did library sciences, I don't know whether it should have been, in fact she was not our member and she never came to meetings, so she did it because maybe she wanted to do it for the country. Within us at anytime there's was not one studying library sciences. No it was a formal education, the sociology, the arts communication and some of them doctors, engineering and what we call this, town planning, we had that kind of focus.

Facilitator: And then the organization of these documents then in the office, for instance in London, you had been in London for a long time, what did depend on, it depended on just anybody just applying their own mind?

Respondent: Yes volunteers. When they were in the office, because once we got to be too many, the office couldn't contain all those, that's why they came to my house, but when they were in the office we were all volunteers. I once worked in a library for eleven years, so I was fine, because I used to work in a library for eleven year at Wits, so I was fine. They were annotated properly, you could find them by date, you could find them by title, in fact that they realized I could do that without knowing that I was once a librarian in that sense, not that I had gone to school for it. So each time they wanted something I would just

go pick it out, here it is. Filing them was my job because I know once you file it wrong, you forget it, but otherwise we were volunteering.

Facilitator: Were there people in the movement who didn't see a point of keeping a large collection of documents as you said in your place or even in the office, people who could advocate for the shredding or the destruction of the documents.

Respondent: NO we didn't reach that level. We were just proud of those things, no we wanted to keep them even if they were overwhelming us in terms of space and weight.

Facilitator: Were there documents that maybe got lost, you've kept documents for a period, documents that got lost from the office or at your place.

Respondent: Yes, that's one we call archival education and things like that. Yes from moving from one place to another, when you get lets say to my house, before they are put in whatever sequence, somewhere along the line a document disappears and you don't even know what document it is, and maybe if something tells you its this document, you look for it and don't find it. I think that possibility was there, like at home, I am looking for certain material right now, we should still go there, that's photos of when were in Duqui in Botswana, I was the photographer, I took photos, when I returned to London I sent copies and everything and I had also copies. The copies that I had, I have a problem right now that once in a while I bump into them, and I say I will bring them in the office, and maybe something else, just within that small desk of mine, I can't find them again.

Facilitator: You also mentioned Dukwe, what happened to the collection from Dukwe.

Respondent: That collection I think went to Harare, it eventually went to Harare. Now in Harare, it was not safe hands and I suspect there in Harare it was Thloko Mputse, you can't get anything from this man, you will crawl, if he gives it to you, bring it back. Now whether he could archive properly, when you want something you will get it, that I don't know. But when we work here, and maybe in a meeting and we say that document, and he says it's in this place I will go and get it, he will go out and come back with it, you don't find that anywhere else. I am sure in many places you ask for a document and they come back and come back saying I will find it tomorrow. But he was like that, if you want something from him, oh you have problems, but he will give them to you but you have to give it back.

Facilitator: How long you were at Dukwe, Botswana?

Respondent: Me in Dukwe, I didn't stay in Dukwe because the people who went to Dukwe came from Gaborone during the upheavals and when the South Africans were attacking, and I think our lot, the Botswana were not happy with them because they feared this lot will fight back. Now with the ANC they were shot and with us the Botswana I think thought that these guys are going to fight back and took them out to Dukwe. So I didn't stay with them in Dukwe but I went to Dukwe because I had come for a central committee meeting, coming from London, as I was a member of the senior committee and then part of the armed struggle, I had to be in sort of inducted into the movement, security and everything. So then I went to Botswana in Dukwe where I stayed with the comrades for some time. But also I was documenting with my photographs, with my cameras, some of the stuff

that we were going to keep and then some of the things that I was documenting were made into posters of armed struggle, so I took the participants and when we got to London we made posters, that at the time it was felt are needed inside the country to show the country that actually BCMA had an armed wing which was active in the country. The only thing with those posters especially women fighters, the faces had to be covered, then those were secreted to Harare and then Harare brought them to the country. I don't know whether we still have copies of those. At the other office here, you know we were in Pritchard Street I saw some of those copies, they were still there, I don't know with the moving around where they are, I don't know whether those copies found their way to Fort Hare as well, I don't know.

Facilitator: Now you mentioned issues around you know Boers would attack, the cross border raids issues, you mentioned that in passing. Now being found in possession of these documents, what would have been the replications or the results, if you were in Botswana or the frontline states?

Respondent: Botswana was going to be told by Boers, South African army and what not, that you keep on refusing that you are harboring people like this, here's the evidence. As it were, when they arrived, these South African armies and blastering Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho and so forth, I don't know if they found anything, but it looks like they were just killing and not looking for anything. With us they got nothing because anyway they never attacked us at all the places we were, for reasons that I know they couldn't. Now in London, which is another part that I found very awkward with our movement in London, on one occasion our office was broken into. I used to volunteer every Saturday and Sunday I don't go to school, I would go to the office, because we realized that some of the communities who supported us,

black communities, they themselves were working during the week and they couldn't communicate with us. On weekends once we started the process of me going to the office connecting with them, we were connecting with them and then they started phoning back so I kept that momentum every Saturday, I did that for two years. I would go to the office just in case there are phone calls coming in and so on. So one morning I was going in, the door was open, I started in the toilet and then the door was being banged, it looked like somebody came down the stairs. When I went in, our office was open, when I went in papers were all over the place, so that person took some stuff, I don't know what but took some stuff. So when we came to our meeting that this and shall we go to the police and things like that, no it was kept down, I didn't understand that and I didn't agree with that, but when you are outnumbered, it was kept down and I don't know. I know the ANC made a noise when they were raided, and the PAC made a noise when they were raided, and I think we were raided before, but we sat on it.

Facilitator: When was that incident, which year?

Respondent: It was in the 80s, 1982 or 1983, round out there, I remember that's when I was at film school.

Facilitator: In the context of Britain, who would have raided the place?

Respondent: The South African intelligence, there were loads of them there. My house was broken into, when I went in from school, I found all the BCMA documents, nicely put on the bed. Nicely put, my cameras and everything, nothing was taken, but also I disturbed that person, when I came in I think he bolted. You know these places you go through one door, there's another door up there. When I came in it

was not closed, I thought maybe my wife had come in and had to quickly go out, when the documents were nicely put and my cameras and so on, but only to realize that when I checked that the door was broken into. They took what they took, but not everything, so I think these guys probably studied us, that when they leave in the morning and then they are gone. They took very nicely their time. When I went to the police station to report, I was told to wait there, when I went in to this officer, policeman, when I sat down he called me by my name. I'd never seen him he did not know what I was coming about, it was first time I was meeting him, he said Mr. Pheto what can I do for you? Actually there were quite many and we knew that. There's a certain fellow, they call him Serhwayi, he lived in Brixton, and we also lived in Brixton. So one night the police, we had racist police, the British police, they used to really intimidate the Caribbean community especially black young man. So they caught this guy with a whole group of other Caribbean young fellows, then in the van one of the cops says in Afrikaans, hierde deen hy leek soos een van ons.

Facilitator: Really?

Respondent: Yes, but they thought he's Caribbean and he heard what they were saying. He came running to my place because it was not far, after he was released and said hey it's bad here, this is what happened. Then the little community, African Caribbean people, we were very close to them, they told us you'd better watch out because there are South Africa Security police at the Brixton Police Station.

Facilitator: So you were being monitored.

Respondent: Very closely, but we took it like, you know sometimes intellectuals, but yes we were monitored seriously.

Facilitator: Your documents came from London straight to South African, I am talking about the evacuation now at your place. Were they sent straight from London to South Africa?

Respondent: I think they went to Harare. We were very well established then and Harare was the ones, in fact we had this argument that lets give them to Harare and they will do the final thing.

Facilitator: So that's the mid-90s?

Respondent: Yes.

Facilitator: You also mentioned the issue of funding that you were literally transporting the stuff yourselves. What was happening, no funding opportunities.

Respondent: No we were not so welcomed by many organizations, support groups, there was the time when there was this argument that there were sole organizations, sole representatives of the struggle. That thing was sort of fairly established in a place like Holland, and England, England preferred the ANC first, if not only, and then Holland and Germany. But we fought back, we fought back like anything, and eventually we made a break though in Belgium, there was a labour party of Belgium, they were socialists, so they started supporting us for a long time but in London they would not give us money. Their whole focus was that whatever we give must come to inside the country. What we would do was just inform them we need this and they would tell us to get in touch with so and so, but they would tell us to our faces that no we will not give you money in Europe, but for home, for whatever we will let it go. So we couldn't use it for whatever we needed, they saw us as a front that must work for the inside. So most of

our recommendations to the labour party of Belgium, whatever they assisted with, was directly into South Africa, sometimes they would not even want to let it go via Harare. But I think some kind of arrangement eventually was made. Now with that thing of sole liberation movement, we had a problem raising funds, it was until we went to the black community, and the black community in London would say we support all liberation movements because they are legitimate, whichever will emerge we are not going to choose. But we still had a problem because there some within the African Caribbean community who said they will only support the ANC, we said no you are wrong, you must support anybody who says that has legitimacy at home to be supported. So we started getting some support, that kind of thing, but even breaking communities up, when an organization that was supporting say the ANC has to argue, we think that we should support these other organizations, sometimes there are some that split. Most support groups have no money but governments have money. The way they would support us would be to fundraise and get money, but fundraise with our assistance and get some money, but you don't make millions, we get money so that we can do this stuff and the other.

Facilitator: How did you keep the office going then if you had the problem of funding, not forgetting the issue of (not clear) the staff.

Respondent: At the beginning we were ok somehow, before we arrived and even before the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania was formed, there was BPC and we had a man called Chris Matibane. When he arrived in a place called Victorian, there was some money from some churches to run the office. After founding the BCMA then we went to North London where the office was cheaper, but there was money from the Canadian churches which came through Barney Pityana, I think it was nice money, we could pay rent for a long time, I

think by the time we stop rent was when we started working from our houses, but that money ran out anyway. But that crunch from the Canadian Council of Churches through Barney Pityana was some good money that kept us going.

Facilitator: So by the time the repatriation of this material had to take place, there was no money at all.

Respondent: No, we were doing it on our own mostly. The Labour Party of Belgium might give a little, or say do this but it was not that keen to leave money or to give money. We were really on a very poor footing.

Facilitator: Was there money for the repatriation of manpower, exiles and semi-exiles.

Respondent: Not for us, we found our ways. I can't remember a single BCMA person who was assisted by the United Nations. I don't know about Siphon then, quite frankly, I wouldn't count Barney Pityana there because he was no more there with us, he went to the ANC. Nobody from us, we had to scramble and come home.

Facilitator: The issue of money, did it impact on the repatriation of the material, like deciding we have to store things away because of money, we can't take everything.

Respondent: I think what we would do, some duplicates would remain, and the main copies would go. Now from my studies as a librarian when I was giving away those that should come home I would say at least of the ten copies, two copies must remain incase they can be reproduced.

Facilitator: The general practice with particular chapters in terms of the material, there other chapters, I think there was a Canadian chapter, London, Botswana, Zimbabwe, at some point in time there was an office in Nigeria. Were people into preserving material as far as you know?

Respondent: Harare and Botswana because at least I went to those two places, I know that in Dukwe actually, in there desert there, there was a room which was a library, we had a library there, I don't what happened to it. I think when they went to Harare, that library went to Harare. They had a very nice library, I mean you are in exile, you have no money but you have a library, and it was called a library, which really knocked me out.

Facilitator: The library also contained these primary resources.

Respondent: Yes.

Facilitator: You also talked about the army, I don't know how much you were involved in the army activities of the BCMA. What could have happened to material, papers.

Respondent: Papers, those were top secret, those were for commanders and I think very little was written about those. The only thing that I can remember was my induction, there was some paperwork and I was told the dos and don'ts but otherwise anything and everything that I did, nothing was on paper, you just do what you are supposed to do. Report to Harare was not by paper, it would either be when someone would be passing and then would report on the situation. Nothing on paper, if there was I think it's still somewhere.

Facilitator: But not at Fort Hare.

Respondent: No we wouldn't keep those documents in our library. There somebody called Nkutsweung Motsau (name not clear) should know because he was a commander.

Facilitator: Is he still alive?

Respondent: Yes he is still alive, he is very ill though, he was hit by a car and then had complications. He was Chief Commander. Vusumuzi Mangena as our supreme Commander should also know if there was paperwork. I don't even think the Secretary General wants to be part of that.

Facilitator: In your experience as you were (not clear) for stuff in London, was there sensitive stuff that you thought no this cannot go to Fort Hare or you just loaded everything.

Respondent: No those could go, there was nothing sensitive. Earlier on in our Urgent Task document there was a decision of resort into arms struggle, so that was kept so that these people here, our enemies here can't point anywhere to the fact that yes, you BCMA have got approved armed struggle. The document went out eventually went out with the fact that yes, we are committed to armed struggle.

Facilitator: You also mentioned the Kempton Park settlement made you unsettled and one of the reasons why you were not happy to sent stuff to Fort Hare, when you look back what was it that was exactly unsettling about it?

Respondent: The terms really from our perspective. Our struggle was based on reclaiming our motherland, as a majority as people, no compromise about that. It happens that it's democratic anyway, the majority of the people should decide. If we have whites and other groups, it does not mean that we are undemocratic to them, when the majority says we want back our land back and other stuff. The premise of our struggle was that the land belongs to our people. But at Kempton Park there's that thing now, I mean we have to buy land ourselves today, so it didn't come back to us, so we were not happy about that. Quite frankly it was going to be compromise situation basically, because the white power structure remained intact. Today our country is still South Africa, I don't think if we won it, let's say through armed struggle, via AZANLA, I don't think this country would be South Africa, it's a new country, we were South Africans before we were free, South Africans during our struggle, South Africans after freedom, and it doesn't make sense. So we suspected the changes will not be very fundamental, there will be nice (not clear). Nothing has changed, not much, we have new RDPs and what not structures but fundamentally even white people have not changed. Now unfortunately for me I live on the farms and I see it everyday, we haven't done anything yet, and on those basis we were not happy on what eventually happened.

As I say we were prepared to take part, there was a time when the Black Front, the three liberation movements, we said lets come together and approach this thing as a Black Front, whatever we agree we would have taken part and then maybe go back to our political organizations and go to the people to relay elections. But when they are now saying that they (not clear) us, because probably, my thing is that maybe we were too revolutionary, we were not going to get too many benefits. They said AZAPO is a nuisance and got rid of us, and then we didn't go, eventually to the Kempton Park things. So from that

angle, I particularly and the others in London, were not happy, the fact that these Kempton Park things were suspicious. You don't get it like this, total liberation, you get through the table with such enemies before, and of course the other thing was these people were really fronts of capitalism. We talked to them, yes you are free and so on, and capitalism is still very much in place here.

Facilitator: Entrenched, yes.

Respondent: Those were some of the problems.

Facilitator: Other people say the fact that AZAPO didn't participate in the elections was itself a kiss of death which affected the organization later on in years.

Respondent: That's true, we had the arguments, we said please take part in the elections, we are no more part of them, we didn't do the talks, but the elections, many comrades said go and take part, and we still had the principle that no we are not going to take part. Some comrades inside AZAPO said no go and take part, and others supporters abroad, African Caribbean communities, Americans, African Americans and so forth said go and take part and we said no we have this principle. Of course we suffered, we suffered in the sense that people forgot about us, the next elections we didn't count for much, and we took part in the following elections for the first ones. That affected us because people forgot us, and those who took over made sure that they entrench themselves, left, right and centre because the money was there. So right now we have a nation of people who are politically naïve and not educated, I don't mean going to school and so forth, but you know when you are there in parliament you are working for me, but we don't have it like that here

at home, we think that we belong to these people, so we don't have that political education and so there's nothing we can do and we bring them back every time because like I say once you are in power you have money. Before elections we get mealie meals and things like that, people are working and after elections those people are gone and those benefits are gone. Our people suffer more because they are not sharp about these things, they are just naïve and we have many old people, those who can't move. Month end I get pension, but we'll still get pension even when AZAPO is in power, but they are told no you won't get it. That cost us a lot, not to take part at the first elections, first elections were crucial.

Facilitator: So somehow the negotiations needed to, in your opinion, they had to be separated from the election activity, the first election. There was CODESA and then the elections, so in your view they needed to be separated.

Respondent: After CODESA there would anyway have been elections, the only thing is that we could take part in elections after CODESA, as long as you register your party you could take part, I am one of those who felt that we shouldn't take part, quite frankly, forgetting that people have short memories. I still lived on 1976, and the other things that we did when ANC had to disappear, PAC activities were almost nil, so we were there thinking that we are fine and people will remember us. Post 1994, not only did they not forget us, but also the party that came in made sure that give a little bit here, do this razzmatazz, t-shirts, excitement, but the (not clear) is not there. I mean if our people were politically alright this corruption and these things going on today would not happen, that part would be out. With us here, in fact if they come with a nice big car, it takes only one person, we are happy and we applaud and then later we can't go home

because its raining, you have go to walk on the farms, there's not even a single bus, and yet the price of that one car can but about four or five buses.

Facilitator: Are there people who have insisted on keeping their material with them.

Respondent: Yes I am sure, not necessarily as their stuff but it is our material but we felt that they need to keep some for themselves, for history or something. I am sure Mitshupare Sekwayi in London has got something. I am sure Basil Manning has something, those are scholars.

Facilitator: Is he here in Joburg?

Respondent: He is somewhere in Roodeport. I am sure Rose Innis has got some selected bits and pieces. I had kept some bits and pieces, copies of what was going, the only thing that the organization hasn't got, the organization has got original copies photos, I sent them the photos and everything and then I kept some copies, but I don't see any of them here unless they have gone to Fort Hare. I have got some copies.

Facilitator: Is there anything that you think is important, it should have been part of this interview.

Respondent: Yes, cultural material I think is part and parcel of. When I went to Dukwe the guys had drums, I don't know what happened to those drums. When I got to Dukwe they were doing art projects, they were painting, sculpting, I think those things become part and parcel of us. I know that you mean materials and stuff like that, but when we were in Dukwe there were things like for instance, utensils, some (not

clear) of those things are crucial, I think those just disappeared, so we can't point at anything. If we had money in AZAPO, at Dukwe, these guys picked up a huge water tank, because its desert there which they use for self sufficiency, vegetable and other things. The history is that they pulled it from somewhere up to somewhere, but I think if we AZAPO had money that tank should really come home because it tells you what happened. Maybe the Botswana's have bit it up and turned it into scrap metal now, then it means it's gone. I think those things are missing.

They don't give some of us work, I am in the arts. When I arrived I thought I could still contribute. I applied two times, for a job here at home, the first reply alluded to a job I did not apply for. The job was an international liaison, and the reply said internal liaisons. There was also a job of arts general, Director General in North West, I applied for it and I was told that they had better candidates. The man who got the job actually came to me and said I was a better candidate, but they didn't want you because I was not the right person, I did not carry the right credentials. The DG later told me that he saw my application but he later lent that you were not wanted. I stopped and never applied again.

Facilitator: When did you come back exactly.

Respondent: In 998, you wanted to say something.

Facilitator: For instance this freedom part, ok it was after 1994, I know they work with liberation movements, former liberation movements or so, but I think there are other problems at freedom part, I can see it has money, I can see its money, somewhere I think in the truth of it should be out there, I mean it says somewhere that former Boers were fighting

for this country, when they were fighting the British. I am not too happy with that, my view is that they were fighting to take this country for themselves, it had nothing to do with us. If one was involved there, I think I would not have stayed long, but actually make them aware. Or maybe it could still be as it easy but take a different positions. They are not losing skills like South Africa.

Facilitator: In general the state of the arts in South Africa, how do you see it.

Respondent: Its back, it s not relevant, entertainment, they should but not necessasarily. The arts should commend, because they come from (not clear) of us, happening around us. But if in the process they also entertain then that is fine, even the process, the sculptor makes money and the right type of money. I am not saying because you are an artist, you must be poor as if it is fashionable to be poor because you are an artist, I think that was (not clear), I that was not so. If you are an artist you can be rich as anything as long our work helps the country commence, pushes the country in a certain direction, makes people think. That's not happening now, but European artists or white South African artists, they make the world think and in the process they become rich.

Facilitator: When did we go wrong here.

Respondent: Here we went wrong because we imitate other countries, we imitate America, English, mostly those two countries, what about our own, stick to it. You look at the music festivals that they talk about, even when they talk they pronounce like Americans. You look at the music festivals they talk about, even when they sing they pronounce

like Americans, they behave American style. I think we are losing it, we have lost it already actually.

My view would have been, as soon as we arrived we go to the rural communities that is where the arts came from. Even us here in the cities, we really copy that and we make it sellable, that is not authentic, that is where I disagree. There is no programme, lets do the others that are sellable, Mapungubwe, those things that were found there, the makers didn't care and today they are, that Mapungubwe, that animal, those were genuine stuff and it has been proven today, but when they were doing them, it was nothing like somebody is going to buy it and I am going to make some money or I am going to make it nice so that this person buys it. Look at when we go out to dance, we don't wear the original dancing things, any little plasting of colour is fine, its indigenous, its African, people coming from Europe to see you dance there, they don't know the difference.

Facilitator: Your field in the arts, what is it?

Respondent: My field is music. I studied music abroad, I did four years at the Gildof School of music and drama. From music, formal school was photography, and then film making was formal as well.

Facilitator: So even photography is at (not clear) as far as you can see, because its part of that.

Respondent: Yes it is, but what they are now doing, installations and all that's fine, you will see maybe its backward, the craft I think is going down, the instruments used today are very automatic, I seldom hear somebody saying I am going into a dark room to print, they take a photo they put it through something and then its out, they have no

control on that thing, this is different. Photography is losing documentary that it should make today and I think there's so much, when you hear about about these disturbances, lack of delivery, what do you mean, a photographer can go in and say this is what they mean. In 1994 here, we are still here, that story is vividly put, we want to be photographers because it's the in thing and so forth, which miss out why the arts. It's easy for somebody to say I am an artist, I question that, yes you are an artist, what happens, they say they are on stage, what happening on stage, so things like that. The first department of arts and culture, up to now, I think they have lost it, they had this two day conference not so long ago, what I saw there, I think very few artists, I saw business people there. If you go to MPs or Minister's houses today, they are trying to collect African things in an authoritative or authentic, you don't find anything authentic, and they don't know any better. What they should do is to go to an artist and tell them they want to collect a mask from Nigeria, how do I go about it. The minister stops at the airport and tells an assistant to buy them that thing, that's not it, and at the airport, these artists are smart, they sell crap there. The real things are there but you must pay, so you find our minister's houses, full of African things, not worth a thing. Now that's sad, they have European white ministers, you go to their houses, you find authentic African things, now this to me is very sad.

Facilitator: What should have been the way forward?

Respondent: The department of arts and culture I think should look for artists, real guys and women, teach the nation, workshop the nation. Sometimes I travel with my little business of pig farming, get to the rural areas, find white people there looking for old stoves and they are giving them new stoves but taking old stoves, that's cheating, because they take the real material, they come here, polish it and sell it for a lot

of money, but they took it from an old lady in the rural area, told her its old you cannot do anything with it, give her an cheap one, I see that time and time again. Furniture, those people in the rural areas who have real authentic antiques, but they don't know and these guys come with trucks and look around and find things from people just sitting there, and offer to take it from them and give them a new one, I have see that happen quite a number of times. Now if the department can bring a lot of us in, we run workshops, including the government. The face that they show to the world is also plastic. You get to Oliver Tambo airport, what you see in those images, feels like you are in Europe and not in Africa, we must tell the world when it arrives that you are in Africa here, that's where the artists come in, they can help the country, government and so forth, along those lines. You go to a school with mask from maybe Ghana, children laugh at it, they miss the point, they don't know any different. The government/department is not aware of people like us, or if they are then you are not the right one. Also we artists, something has broken down among us, African American artists, in those days if one had a job calls the others, come lets eat, but they will still do their own thing. But today here, when somebody gets a job to play saxophone and I play saxophone, comes to me afterwards and tells me he was playing, where was I. Those days you would go to white people's parties, we don't see you for the whole weekend, and when we ask you where you were, you tell us that you were the only black guy there at that party and he is proud about that, we have those problems.

Facilitator: Any closing word maybe?

Respondent: Well I say we should have that collection there and its presentation and maintenance, they should give it the dignity that it deserves, I have never been there so I don't know in what form it is

kept there, but I think its part of the contribution that this country needs. Researchers should go there, ok they can't come here, but should still go there and research there but its still not, and it hasn't got the ambiance of where it comes from.

Facilitator: Thanks for your time.

Respondent: Thanks for this.

Facilitator: If you have an email address I will send it.

END

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