

**KWAZULU-NATAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**INTERVIEW WITH VERA CEBEKULU, CONDUCTED BY RUTH LUNDIE, AT THE  
ALAN PATON CENTRE ON 17 APRIL 1998**

(Sobantu Youth Organisation (SOYO), Young Christian Students (YCS) and Sobantu Committee  
of

Twelve)

(‘I.’ shall signify the interviewer (Ruth Lundie) and ‘C’ shall signify the interviewee, Vera Cebekulu)

L. This is an interview with Vera Cebekulu at the Alan Paton Centre on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, 1998  
Vera, you are very much tied up with Sobantu, but you weren’t born there - Sobantu Village  
I mean. Give us a few biographical details about where you were born and why you moved  
to Sobantu

C. Well, I was born in Mooi River, I was born in Mooi River, but because my father was  
working as a Prison Warden at Estcourt, for six months, I moved with my mother to stay with  
my father in Estcourt and after that because of the hard prison. My father requested transfer  
because of the doctor’s recommendation, he requested to move to Pietermaritzburg to a  
warmer place, so we had to move there and my father got a house in Sobantu, in the township  
and at that time, because he was working for the government, it was very easy to work it out,  
you know, to get the house. So my father got the house, you know, with the government in  
Sobantu and then that is when we, we - how we came to Sobantu.

L. And I’m sure you found it very much of a community once you got there because this is the  
feeling everyone has about Sobantu Village that it’s its own place, the people there belong  
Was this the case? Was it a change from Estcourt?

C. It didn’t.

L. Well, it’s difficult for you to remember because you were so young then, but you got a lot of  
support from the people there, didn’t you?

- 1 C: Yes. I got a lot of support. ja. I had a lot of friends in Sobantu, but what I found out is that  
2 people in Sobantu, because of the history of Sobantu and because it's a small township, very  
3 small township, people were very much united, you know
- 4 L: You didn't have relatives there?
- 5 C: No I didn't have any relatives, but I did find relatives when I got there.
- 6 L: Did you? And were you made welcome?
- 7 C: Ja, I was made welcome, I was very much welcomed by the people of Sobantu.
- 8 L: Now this was, in terms of what was printed, a model village, but someone criticising this has  
9 said ' This term, this "model village" was sugar coating on the bitter pill of urban control'  
10 In other words, it was a very set up by the government to look like a model village but it  
11 wasn't created by the people in it. But in the 1950s, at any rate, there was great political  
12 awareness there, because even schoolchildren were drawing pictures of Nkrumah on their  
13 exercise books which was unusual for that time. And there was an increasing number of state  
14 interventions in urban control. Remember this was just post World War II and the state was,  
15 now the apartheid government, taking more and more control - so that in 1959 we've got  
16 record of Sobantu Youth, calling 'Mayibuye iAfrica', showing the ANC salute, rioting by  
17 stone throwing, so by the time your family arrived in the late 1960s, there was great political  
18 awareness, not only among the adults, but among the young people. Now, did you feel this?  
19 Were you enveloped in it?
- 20 C: Ja, I did feel that, because what happened is that when I was doing my primary, lower primary  
21 education and then there were police - these police - there were police which were working  
22 within Sobantu. So those police, what happens, what is very fascinating is that - what  
23 happens is there were people who were very corrupt. Those people were corrupt, they were  
24 doing all sort of criminal things, but instead of supporting the police, even me, all of us within  
25 the school, when we were there within the school premises, we will support these people, we  
26 will tell them when the police comes. We will tell them that you know 'you must watch it,  
27 these police are coming' and then it was like people are encouraging these criminal elements  
28 and so on, in Sobantu. And all the police at that time were definitely associated with  
29 assisting, or with the government and so at that time, these police were outcast and then if

1 one is- you know - although police at the same time they were doing a very good job, you  
2 know, to uphold, you know - to get these criminals, you know, to lock them in jails, but when  
3 they come then we tell these people to run away and then you will throw stones at the police  
4 and so on. All sort of things and this was happening as in Sobantu you have got a lower  
5 primary school, across the road, you've got a primary school, across - in the primary school,  
6 and the lower primary, and the primary school at the high school, it's divided by the fence,  
7 and all these people when they were inside, they were doing the same thing. Because there  
8 are houses, just across - there are houses, then most of the people who live at the houses  
9 across the road, across the road, next to the school, most of the people there were ...

10 L: Sympathetic, or not?

11 C: Not sympathetic, but they had those criminal elements, you know, they were hiding, they  
12 were doing all sorts of things that are not good for the community, but every time when there  
13 were - like selling people who were selling dagga, there were people who were selling beasts,  
14 I don't know, this - there is that ... drug

15 L: Drug of some kind?

16 C: Drugs of some kind, but - all across this road and then if you - if you try to support it, the  
17 police and then you'll be pointed out as an informer or something. Youngest is actually at  
18 the primary school

19 L: As low as primary - you would be called an informer?

20 C: Ja, at the lower primary school, and then you'll be called an informer and what not, you  
21 know, all those things

22 L: Do you think the police, in doing their job were corrupt or not?

23 C: Sometimes some of the people, some of the police were corrupt, but most of the police were  
24 doing the right things, you know, you know, trying to get those people to lock them in jail,  
25 maintaining order within the community but you find that they were always, you know, there  
26 was that gap between them and the community and the police were not doing anything to try  
27 to bridge that gap.

28 L: So all this was your life when you were in primary school, you were aware of criminals, you  
29 were aware of politics, you were aware of police and by the time you got to high school,

- 1 1982, I think, was the first rioting by schoolchildren in Sobantu and some young boy was  
 2 killed, do you remember this?
- 3 C: Yes.
- 4 L: Was that 1982 - you'd have been in school then?
- 5 C: Yes, it was in '92..
- 6 L: '82.
- 7 C: Ja, 1982, I was at school, I was still studying then when the red boycott started.
- 8 L: Yes, tell us a bit about that.
- 9 C: So what happened in 1979, just before that I was still at school, then we were recruited, you  
 10 know - I became the member of SOYU, or the
- 11 L: The Sobantu Youth Organisation.
- 12 C: I became the member of YCS, not of SOYU.
- 13 L: Which was the Young Christian Society?
- 14 C: Which was the Young Christian Students.
- 15 L: Students?
- 16 C: Ja, and the YCS was mainly building leadership skills to the young students - to the students  
 17 and it then it also gave them information about what was happening around the country, even  
 18 outside the country, you know. But then it was giving us all the political history of other  
 19 countries, like Bolivia, like Bolivia and other countries where we were supported and so on,  
 20 and all
- 21 L: Vera, was this a particularly Roman Catholic Society, or was it all Christian Students coming  
 22 together?
- 23 C: It was a very - in YCS, had a national organisation. From its structures, and this national  
 24 organisation, you - from eight? You have the provincial structures that were attached to the  
 25 national organisations. From these provincial organisations, they were mainly based in  
 26 Roman Catholic churches and then you'll find that a certain priest, or the sisters and then  
 27 there were the leaders of this YCS and then they were doing that recruitment of people in  
 28 schools, they will go out with certain people to schools and recruit them. But they were  
 29 recruiting all over - like myself I was recruited within my church, fortunately I'm a Roman

- 1 Catholic Church, that was where I was recruited
- 2 L: But it wasn't exclusively Roman Catholic?
- 3 C: No, it wasn't - not at all, it was - they were recruiting, in fact they were all - they were also  
4 mainly recruiting people also in Roman Catholic Schools, in Roman Catholic Schools, like  
5 Montobello, Oxford, Maranigerum, Damana, here in Pietermaritzburg? There is the other one  
6 in Newcastle..
- 7 L: Inkamana?
- 8 C: Ja, Inkamana, there is one in Kamala, ja, Kamala..
- 9 L: Sorry, I interrupted, but I just wanted to know about that - So the Young Christian Students  
10 formed SOYU, that was the way round it happened, not the other way round?
- 11 C: Ja, that's what happened, is that there were people - at DCO - there was an organisation that  
12 was called DCO, I don't remember the name of - it was ..
- 13 L: You're not thinking of the DCO, Matiwane?
- 14 C: Matiwane.
- 15 L: But this was a very important group in Maritzburg, it was an old man who used to stand  
16 outside the City Hall, protesting, who crocheted a cap on his head, and Ben Martin was  
17 concerned with him at that time.
- 18 C: At that time - So there was this organisation with the
- 19 L: Now the DCO/Matiwane Group was concerned with SOYU?
- 20 C: What happened is that with the start of this DCO, Matiwane, there were some people, were  
21 then, the YCS, that said - you know - were need - because in YCS, it was just a Christian  
22 student movement, and then people felt that, no, we need to have an organisation that you  
23 will recruit all members of the community, toward the community, that you will take up issues  
24 of the community, seriously. And then because you were just a movement that was building  
25 up leaderships in - it wasn't much - I would say it wasn't much revolutionary - or that much  
26 radical ..
- 27 L: No, it was not political in that sense
- 28 C: Ja, it was political, because we discussed political issues, YCS, but we were not taking part -  
29 we were not very much radicals in such a way that we will take up issues of the community.

1 we fight with the police - we were not like doing that but we were doing more of the reading  
 2 - building leadership skills, and building creativeness to the young people. Because of that,  
 3 these people felt that they needed an organisations that will work like the DCO Matiwane,  
 4 that they wanted to take up but there were issues that are affecting Sobantu and the important  
 5 issue that was coming up was the issue of the rent boycott and then this SOYU, with the  
 6 leadership of Machina Qumbu, that guy Machina Macuma, was formed and that's how it was  
 7 formed, but we also, from the YCS, we attended some of the meetings

8 L. Of?

9 C. Of SOYU

10 L. Oh, did you, yes...

11 C. To discuss certain issues, our divisions should be taking now

12 L. Did you not join SOYU yourself, surely you did?

13 C. Very late. Very late, after all this rent boycott and other things - you know when other  
 14 members of the SOYU were arrested were taken in and then we remained from YCS, but we  
 15 isolated the

16 L. You wanted to show some support for SOYU?

17 C. Ja, I wanted to show some support for SOYU, but I was mainly - I was also working, I didn't  
 18 leave the YCS. I was mainly working with -that was my base, that was my base, that was  
 19 my base, as I was working with the YCS, I was using it as my base, as my base to get political  
 20 education, to get leadership skills an so on. I was getting my information within SOYU and  
 21 then you were taking up issues that affects the communities and that affects us at school

22 L. The rents, the non-payment of rents was a resistance to government control, I mean that's  
 23 what it was about, wasn't it?

24 C. Ja.

25 L. How did the young boy, or the school boy, was it a high school boy get killed? How did that  
 26 happen, did you know?

27 C. What happened was that in fact we were rejecting, the community councillors. The  
 28 government came out with - remember that the government, as early 1979, they came out  
 29 with local councillors - community councillors, we rejected those councillors after that they

1           came up with the local  
2    L       The Tricameral Parliament was what they were . . .  
3    C       They had local authorities, they were calling that, but those councillors when they came up -  
4           they wanted to do things - they were offering to do things, we had the elections of  
5           councillors, we said we want to learn to give them some times. Because what happens is that  
6           in Sobantu, we knew each other and so on and then what happened is that there were people  
7           who were very greedy, who wanted to grab that opportunity of becoming councillors and so  
8           on, and then what happens is that we worried that we were coming to conflict with their  
9           families, some of the members of the families were friends, like their childrens, their sons and  
10          daughters, we were friends, we were schooling together and so on. So we wanted to prove -  
11          it was difficult to prove from us that this local community council are just the structures, are  
12          just the structures, or the bodies that you have no teeth, they will never do anything and they  
13          will never bring any delivery or address our issues as the community. And so it was also  
14          difficult not only to them, it was also difficult to prove to the community. The community  
15          didn't knew anything, so the community see us as a great opportunity when this came and  
16          then we were struggling, we were finding all ways of trying to prove to the community. We  
17          said now let it happen, let it happen and then we will prove it, then we will make the follow-  
18          up, we will work with them to prove that these bodies will not - will not at any stage deliver.  
19          Okay, what happened is that there was elections. After the elections, they came back to us  
20          we said, no let us work with you. And then we gave them all the grievances that we have  
21          We said 'Go the city - to the whatever the authorities, to your senior authorities, and table  
22          these - these are our grievances, are our grievances that we have ' We helped them to collect  
23          these grievances from the community - it wasn't that they took it from us as the organisation,  
24          but we helped them we were working with them, so they were very much helping. It was like  
25          we were forming like sort of a one structure, we were much united, so with that they went  
26          to their seniors and then they went up and down. They always came back, they were very  
27          much happy, to come back to us, at the community, not to us as the organisation, as the  
28          community, to report. To give the report-back and then we help them to organise meetings  
29          you know for that report-back, for the community. Okay, they came back to us to report that

1 they. they are not getting any joy because when they went to the NPA, from the NPA they  
 2 will move from one office to another and then nobody is addressing their grievances, they've  
 3 reported us to their meetings, all their meetings, it was just people - they were meeting with  
 4 people who have no authority to take decisions, who can not take decisions, those people,  
 5 they meet with them - in order just to listen to them and then to take it back and then when  
 6 they bring the report-back to them, after that they will never - they will tell them that 'Oh no,  
 7 we have failed, we don't have the money, we don't have the ?'

8 L: No action.

9 C: No actions what is happening? We said to them 'maybe you should go to Pretoria, don't you  
 10 think?' They have agreed - they said 'no, let's go to Pretoria and what not.' We said 'Okay  
 11 can you go?' and the funding was organised for them to go to Pretoria.

12 L: And they went?

13 C: And they went

14 L: And what happened

15 C: They moved from one office to another, how, the same thing happcned

16 L: Bureaucracy.

17 C: Ja, from one office to another, and then they came back, they were tired, and then they said  
 18 'And now these people, are playing games, these people are not prepared to do any actions  
 19 whatsoever ' But because they were getting the money here - you know - and then - they  
 20 were still very difficult you know to resign

21 L: Yes, quite. I mean it was a job for them, it was an income for them .

22 C: It was an income for them ..

23 L: And they were in a position of some importance

24 C: Those who were working, it was an extra income, so and then they were - not that it was only  
 25 an income it was also they were getting that respect within the members of the community -  
 26 so that's all what happened, and then we requested them again to resign in front of the  
 27 community and the community and the whole community was also angry by that time - they  
 28 wanted them to resign. Some of them resigned and some of the refused and then we had to  
 29 force them to resign.



- 1 L: And you were a school boy at that time
- 2 C: We were school boys at that time and
- 3 L: Isn't that marvellous?
- 4 C: And that's how it started. The whole thing break loose. And then there were police over
- 5 there and then - and - but nobody was hurt. that was when you were being chased by the
- 6 police. it was at night. you
- 7 L: Did you come in for a lot of police contact?
- 8 C: Ja, we came - we had a lot of police confrontation, we had quite a lot of confrontation with
- 9 the police and then when we were there with this guy, Machina Qumbu? He used to confront
- 10 the police. he used to tell them, he could speak Afrikaans fluently. English fluently -m then
- 11 he was the one who was our mouthspeak and that he was working very hard with us and so
- 12 on. And then, after that we used. - and then at that time we used to have a lot of meetings -
- 13 maybe twice during the day..
- 14 L: Twice during the day. you were working hard?
- 15 C: Twice during the day and maybe one meeting in the afternoon. because the situation. Things
- 16 were changing now and then and now one place they were active, we had to react, we had
- 17 to respond to the actions of the police and so and then we had to wait in a very short
- 18 space of time. And then we had our ways of calling these meetings. we had people all over
- 19 the streets, we had these - it was like we had formal street committees, but we didn't have
- 20 those formal street committees, but we had our people within each and every street who will
- 21 notify everybody that we have got a meeting. and then we bring a short
- 22 L: ?? Yes. .
- 23 C: .. Space of time we were there and then we will summon at one place. Sometimes there is
- 24 a forest outside the Sobantu, next to the sewerage farm, and then sometimes we would meet
- 25 there or sometimes we will meet somewhere and there will be people. also between the
- 26 houses, and then there'll be people who will watch for the police and so on and then once
- 27 during that confrontation with the police, that was when this boy was killed, when we were
- 28 running away from the police and so on.
- 29 L: I see, and just shot by the police?

- 1 C: He was shot - it happens that when we were running, this boy ran into the house of a police  
2 man and then in fact he was crossing and - he was crossing, as we were running, we were  
3 scattered all along, and then he was shot by this policeman who was off-duty, because he got  
4 into this house, in fact this policeman was shooting at anyone - there were other people who  
5 were hurt, but who didn't die, it was only this guy who was shot dead
- 6 L: But it took a great deal of courage on the part of you school boys because school boys you  
7 were, in a way, but in another way you were very much adult
- 8 C: Ja, ja it took a great deal of courage because, in fact it mobilised us further and then you - we  
9 because someone has died, has died for this cause we said there is no way we can turn back -  
10 we need to move forward and then we need to take up the issues and then we continue to  
11 force these people to resign.
- 12 L: And did it succeed - getting them to resign?
- 13 C: Ja, I think we succeeded, we succeeded to get them to resign and then although we took  
14 longer than we expected, maybe took a question of what, two weeks, you know, to get them  
15 to resign
- 16 L: But that's not long, that was very .
- 17 C: I mean we didn't kill anyone, we didn't kill anyone within their families, but we did throw  
18 stones, ja we did throw some stones and one man, one Councillor, actually, this persona was  
19 supposed to be the Mayor, or something like that, of Sobantu, and then we drew Councillors  
20 - he called his brothers - other people from Ixopo in order to come and fight with us but we  
21 were just running away but we showed them that we were very strong - we were there - And  
22 then we avoided march confrontation, you know...
- 23 L: But you showed him you were organised..
- 24 C: We were organised because we would run away but we were always there to tempt them -  
25 we were clear with our, with what we wanted - We told them this is what we wanted, we told  
26 them that this is what we wanted, we are not fighting with you, we don't want to fight with  
27 you. Eventually these people they were tired because they were the old men from rural farms,  
28 they didn't know how it works, especially at night. Because we would be there, even at night  
29 to tell them we make a lot of noise to them we tell them that they must resign, that's why they

- 1 resigned. And then they said, we had to look - at that time when they resigned, we, we didn't  
2 have anything in mind that what are we supposed to do - we only thought after they've  
3 resigned we said 'My gosh, we are sitting with a problem - what are we going to do?'
- 4 L: But this was interesting in how experienced you were becoming politically, you know,  
5 because, I mean, you had accomplished what you wanted to do, now you had to build  
6 something up - so what did you do?
- 7 C: And after that - that's why in certain meetings we discuss these issues and then it wasn't only  
8 the children, there were also people who were adult - those people, you know, decided on this  
9 thing because we have got people who are working with us - adult people - they let us elect  
10 them, let us form our own committee - we are
- 11 L: Of course - because you were in a politically aware urban situation - you weren't rural people,  
12 you weren't farmers - you knew what what was what.
- 13 C: No, we weren't farmers - ja, we knew what was going on and so on - well then we started  
14 having meetings. We said, you know - we've got - we came up with this idea of a committee  
15 of twelve, but the problem was that how are we going to have elected that committee of  
16 twelve because we couldn't have meetings within our hall. We were supposed to call the  
17 meetings - the committee of the community - at that time it was very difficult because of the  
18 situation that was there. And then we said we couldn't just elect the committee of twelve,  
19 in order for this committee to be accepted within the community, we needed this committee  
20 to be appointed, to be elected in a community meeting. You know, so that was the difficulty -  
21 but we said nevertheless - we'll organise a meeting - we all organise a meeting .
- 22 L: Where did you hold it?
- 23 C: At the - in the community hall...
- 24 L: In the community hall?
- 25 C: First of all, the first one, the police came and then they threw teargas, we had to run away,  
26 and so on, we had to run out of the community and then we ran away 0- and that was the  
27 problem, we ran away. The after that we tried and said, what are we going to do and then we  
28 spoke to these people. We spoke to these people - these other people that - that's what we  
29 need, we want to have a meeting and so on and no. And then they tried to get some

1 connections that you know, it will be a community meeting and then these are the issues that  
 2 we want to discuss and then the police were not in favour of that because those were not  
 3 commun - we were talking about structures that are not constitutional ja, and then we  
 4 wanted to form our structures, something else and that was the problem. The problem the  
 5 police - the police were having problem with that -but nevertheless, after that we said let's  
 6 try again and they couldn't agree But nevertheless, we said let's try again. We organised  
 7 another one - unfortunately they didn't disturb us, but they were there - around .

8 L: But not with teargas?

9 C: They were having teargas, but they didn't throw it at us, they didn't - but then we continued -  
 10 or we have this meeting, we told them that it will take so much time They allowed us - they  
 11 let it happen. But then we elected this voting - which was the committee of twelve

12 L: What a marvellous thing - you accomplished what you set out to do.

13 C: Ja, we did, we

14 L: Was there much agreement, or did everyone have in their hearts, beforehand, the people that  
 15 they knew would be the right people for this committee of twelve?

16 C: No, it was like we had to motivate very strongly who we need to have this committee of  
 17 twelve, why you - why we need this committee - because we said we need definitely, we need  
 18 people to work within the community -we can't sit down and do nothing after we have - after  
 19 we have moved - we have manage - you know - to get the councillors to resign, we need to  
 20 have something We need a certain structure that will take up issues It's not that we don't  
 21 want to have any structure, or to have any committee - but we were against the committee -  
 22 or we were against the structure that will not - that we know very well that it won't deliver.  
 23 We wanted a structure that is going to deliver. You know, but then there were people - they  
 24 managed, they understood and everyone agreed that we should elect this committee. And then  
 25 that's how it was elected.

26 L: Yes, good Now, you see, was it at this time that the government wanted Sobantu  
 27 administered by KwaZulu - or was that much later? That is in the 80s?

28 C: Ja, it was .

29 L: But this was in the 80's -

- 1 C: Ja it was during around this time that the Sobantu - they wanted it to be governed by  
2 KwaZulu - I think whilst that ...
- 3 L: Or the provincial administration ... those were the two options, weren't they?
- 4 C: Those were the two options and then - but the one for the - to be governed by the provincial  
5 administration - was - that was more likely - but they tried this one of - of - they tried this one  
6 of getting, of trying to get the Sobantu to be governed by KwaZulu.
- 7 L: But you showed where you ...
- 8 C: But it's quietly they brought Inkatha into Sobantu -
- 9 L: Now tell me about that ...
- 10 C: Ja, they brought in Inkatha.
- 11 L: Was this very close in time? To the formation of the committee of twelve?
- 12 C: Ja, it was very close because they brought these Inkatha impis to come to Sobantu and then  
13 we said 'Gosh,' we had a problem. There was - there was only one person, a very old person  
14 - he used to be the police - a policeman. He's used to working for the SA - South African  
15 Police but he was working at the court - at the civil court - here in Pietermaritzburg - he was  
16 working like that and then - these people - I think the IFP People had managed to recruit  
17 him. And then there were other - they were also - we had a number of people - all very old  
18 people who were IFP members - within the community - but they were very much afraid to  
19 them when - during the beginning of the rent boycott. And there were also - even before that  
20 - they were very much - because they knew people that Sobantu was very much - you know.  
21 In Sobantu in 1959 - there was this - there was already a - there was already some activities  
22 that were taking place in Sobantu - like you know - the burning of the schools and so on ...  
23 in Sobantu, -so people - these old people - elderly people - they were quite aware. But they  
24 were the members of the IFP in what way - there was this that you should - we should... They  
25 were thinking that when the IFP or when the Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi - when he was  
26 forming the IFP, he was forming an organisation that will take up the issues of our - or - of  
27 the oppressed people. Of the people who were oppressed, of the Black people - so they were  
28 thinking that they couldn't see. And then it was very much difficult to make them to  
29 understand because their attitude was - a organisation, a very big organisation. It enjoys a

- 1 lot of support in rural areas anyway. But in Sobantu, nevertheless, beside that you - we didn't  
 2 - much of us - as the youth, we didn't know very much - we didn't know much about the IFP,  
 3 but .
- 4 L: You knew about the ANC.
- 5 C: We knew about the ANC but we didn't know anything much about the IFP - it was just that  
 6 it .
- 7 L: It had been fairly recently brought up again - round about '78, I think - Selby Msimang was  
 8 trying to promote the IFP out at Edendale.
- 9 C: Ja, in Edendale, but the youth in Sobantu we had no experience with the IFP we didn't know  
 10 All we heard it was a traditional organisation, traditional things for people who are certain -  
 11 who were staying - who used to stay under the Chiefs and there was that we used to like  
 12 undermine people from rural areas as compared to the urban areas. And then there was that  
 13 and then people of Sobantu - historically they had that pride - they used most of the people  
 14 who were original members of Sobantu are the people, you know, who were - some of them  
 15 who were exempted from pass laws and so on are the people, who used to stay in town. So  
 16 because - when these things - when this Group Areas Act was in attack. They were moved  
 17 from town, outside town to Sobantu - that's how those people and those people they always  
 18 regard themselves as people who were better than those people in rural areas or elsewhere
- 19 L: Oh did they?
- 20 C: Ja, there was that tension between Sobantu and Edendale or Imbali - there was that tension  
 21 that Sobantu regards themselves as the people, who were
- 22 L: Superior?
- 23 C: Superior, and so on - you know - so that tension existed at that time and then - in such a way  
 24 that before the rent boycotts and so on, people from these and other areas were very much  
 25 scared to come into Sobantu - you know - they were very much scared. They were very  
 26 much threatened do you know - and then we were able to identify anyone who did not stay  
 27 in Sobantu by that time. Because we knew one another because we were ?, because of the  
 28 geographical Sobantu the schools were and ? The shops ...
- 29 L: And it wasn't a big place

- 1 C: Hey, it wasn't a big place. we meet everywhere and then because of those issues. so we meet  
2 together frequently and then we knew each other. Like I know most of the people in  
3 Sobantu, most of the houses - most of the families in Sobantu, throughout Sobantu - I know  
4 those houses right now. So it wasn't very difficult for us to know each other. So what  
5 happens, because of that and then we undermine the youth especially at that time - in 1980s -  
6 the ? Thing - mainly the youth and the people they undermined the - and certain people within  
7 the adult people, they had that tendency of undermining the IFP as the something for the  
8 chiefs - of our people who lives under the chiefs and now we used to ...
- 9 L: Not for you?
- 10 C: Not for us, no, it was something like that - I think maybe more to people - I'm not saying  
11 there were people who did understand, those people who were reading. And like people who  
12 have joined the YCS, and then those people who were - they knew about what was happening  
13 about the IFP. But most of the people, most of the youth, they didn't want it
- 14 L: They didn't want to be bothered
- 15 C: Ja, they don't want to be bothered by the IFP. So there was this person by the name of Mr  
16 Thusi. In 1982, '83, this man, he joined the IFP and he decided you know that he will  
17 convene an IFP meeting there in our Sobantu - in the community hall - that's where the  
18 trouble started. And then you - we have already seen at that time - there was something that  
19 was starting in areas, like Imbali and then we have seen pressures taking place. And then we  
20 have read on papers that hey, these are not good in Imbali where there is IFP and people were  
21 very much of scared. And then - one - this issue of IFP turned to people and then they seen  
22 that those people - they will cause confusion and chaos to our - within our community  
23 Because when the issue of rent boycott united people - firing
- 24 L: Of course, it mattered to everyone
- 25 C: Ja, and the other people - also from - you know, they were also allowed to come in and walk  
26 freely in Sobantu. In Sobantu I can tell you at that time - during the rents and whatnot, when  
27 it was quiet you could go to anywhere at three o'clock and people - you would see people  
28 walking up and down in Sobantu. You know through the middle of the night and so on
- 29 L: Not like the trouble in Imbali?

- 1 C: Not like the trouble in Imbali and so on and you will see people - because the police. at that  
2 time - during the rent boycott. were united - it was like members...
- 3 L: So, the 1980s were progressing and there was this resistance and the UDF, there was the  
4 resistance to Inkatha and side by side was the growing support of UDF
- 5 C: Ja, there were -
- 6 L: Had you matriculated by them?
- 7 C: No, no
- 8 L: You were still Standard Nine or something?
- 9 C: Ja, I was still in Standard 9 and ...
- 10 L: But I think the school uniform must have been a very good disguise if I may say so
- 11 C: Ja, there were quite a lot of things that were happening even at school. Because I was at  
12 school, at that time the schools - they - we started to have police and so on, just coming into  
13 our schools. And that was also - that was another part of the struggle and then we are very  
14 much intimidated and then and so on ... like if you come late into the school, and our school  
15 was fenced, the police decided to fence the school
- 16 L: Extra ... MMM...
- 17 C: Ja, to fence the school extra and then and so on - after that they brought the soldiers to come  
18 and walk on our verandahs with those big guns.
- 19 L: No, really? While you were having classes?
- 20 C: ...and we were having another problem, ja, why we - that was another part of it. That  
21 started at that time - that was another part of it that started at that time - But in the township,  
22 this issue of the IFP, and then we worked it - when -we admitted, when we heard that the IFP  
23 was coming to us, we - said you know, we won't leave it - then we will take it up. We went  
24 to the Progressive Party. We said - then at that time the Progressive Party seems to be very  
25 sympathetic .
- 26 L: And did they welcome you there? Were they glad that ... ?
- 27 C: They did welcome us and they did welcome us .
- 28 L: Good'
- 29 C: And then we presented our case but the problem is that we didn't have the evidence that this



1 is what was happening - we couldn't prove that in Sobantu they do not have members of the  
 2 IFP and the IFP do not have members - we said the IFP they need to have the membership  
 3 first in Sobantu before their launch their organisation .

4 L. Of course

5 C. Bu we couldn't prove that because they were claiming that they have got their membership  
 6 and then what we did was - we were told the - we requested the Democratic Party to take it  
 7 forward They took it with the police, with the government - the Progressive Party. I mean  
 8 at that time and then when they took it with the government and then they couldn't prove also  
 9 that the IFP do not have any membership or and so on.

10 L. Understanding and so on ??

11 C. Understanding in Sobantu and the fact that we were also claiming that we were afraid that  
 12 there will be violence and so on - we couldn't prove all those things and then we said - gosh  
 13 how are we going to do it We take all the bins and then in Sobantu they used to collect all  
 14 the refuse removal on Thursday On that day, we requested the truck - if they - the truck  
 15 from the City Council came and took in that - all that. All those bins They came with those -  
 16 when they under - were on their way - when they were going out of the community, we  
 17 requested them to stop at the community hall. we wanted them, we requested them to unload  
 18 the - that refuse removals in front of the community hall while the IFP was planning to have  
 19 their meeting. .

20  
 21 End of first side

22  
 23 Second Side

24  
 25 C. We were sweating - it was very hot, we took all the dirt inside the hall and ... we put all the  
 26 dirt inside the hall and then we - it was very - it was dirty all over on the stage - we remove  
 27 all the chairs and ...

28 L. Oh, really - you really were having a .

29 C. The chairs - everything - we put it in the side rooms, we lock it in the side rooms and then we

- 1 put all the dirt inside the hall and then we left it at that??
- 2 L: And went home?
- 3 C: And went home and - no we went to meet and then every day we had a problem during that  
4 week - everyday we couldn't sleep - we had to watch the IFP members they will come at  
5 night and then we will see them - we saw them coming - they used to come into patrol in  
6 Sobantu and so on and go to a meeting with this person and after that - but we decided - we  
7 said we will threaten this person - we went to his house, we threatened him and then decided  
8 to move out of Sobantu. But on Saturday, he came to Sobantu - we requested in his  
9 Progressive Party to come during the day and then they came early on the day of the meeting.  
10 They went there - when they went there - they came with persons - they transported people  
11 with buses and the it was difficult for anyone who doesn't stay in Sobantu to identify whether  
12 those people are from Sobantu - who was the people from Sobantu who are the people who  
13 are not from Sobantu and then when they ..
- 14 L: So it was the IFP bringing all these people.?
- 15 C: Ja, they brought some people.
- 16 L: Busloads and busloads...
- 17 C: They started working - they started working - perhaps they were working, trying to clean up  
18 the hall. we went to the Progressive Party - we brought them and then they turned to Sobantu  
19 and then whilst the women were cleaning the community hall, whilst the IFP Impis, the men  
20 were harassing the community - were going and then the police van will go behind them, -  
21 will..
- 22 L: Supporting them?
- 23 C: Escort them... you know to make sure that nobody is threatening them, is hurting them, while  
24 they were sjamboking people you know, people - they were beating people on the road and  
25 then ..
- 26 L: And the police were definitely there to support the IFP..?
- 27 C: They were there to make sure that they are safety - to - they are protected. And then they  
28 were walking and then we showed that all the - to us it was a tool that we had to prove that  
29 these people they have came to cause the violence here. I think we showed the Progressive

- 1 Party, who phoned the government about that - we said - these are the people - that - they  
2 all not from Sobantu and then we want them to leave - we showed them and then they did.  
3 What happened is that they eventually they work it out they got a court order to remove them  
4 - to remove them out of Sobantu.
- 5 L: That was a triumph..
- 6 C: Ja, a big triumph.
- 7 L: That was a victory
- 8 C: That was a victory for us because we manage they moved them altogether and then we went  
9 back to clean our hall ...
- 10 L: Having dirtied it
- 11 C: Ja, to clean up the hall But what we did is that person you called these people - we chased  
12 them out - and then I was at that school by that time - what happens is that there were some  
13 school people - they were about three people who were schooling in Sobantu who reside in  
14 Imbali - they came with the buses - they came with all these people who were IFP people  
15 On Saturday On Monday, these few people - three people - they came to school, to Sobantu  
16 - then the havoc started in Sobantu. Everyone stand up, and said I didn't know anything - I  
17 didn't see them Then the havoc started and then the people were saying we can't study with  
18 these people - we are going to kill them
- 19 L: Were there only three of them?
- 20 C: There were three of them - they wanted to kill them.
- 21 L: Goodness, and what happened?
- 22 C: And they started beating them - we had to protect them because what happened is that by that  
23 time the police were there - we had the soldiers - we had the soldiers and by this - and it's just  
24 by that time, when we were still, on the prayers - every time in the morning, we had the  
25 prayers..
- 26 L: Yes, assembly
- 27 C: Assembly - when we were still there, they were outside the gate and the gate was locked and  
28 we said - hey this is the trouble - these people are coming and they will shoot everybody  
29 indiscriminately, we are providing them to shoot, yes, and then they were trigger happy And

- 1 we said how are we going to do this. But it was very difficult .myself and other people - we  
2 had to protect these children. We protected them - we took them to the office and  
3 fortunately...
- 4 L: Did you have a good principal?
- 5 C: Ja, we had a very good principal. Thulani Hadebe and then at that time we took them to the  
6 office and then we locked them there in the office.
- 7 L: Well, that was a good idea.
- 8 C: We locked them in the office and unfortunately the office has these bars - these steel bars and  
9 then we were able - raise these steel bars and our doors - and the door - and then we lock the  
10 .
- 11 L: So there was no hope of anyone getting in at them.
- 12 C: Okay, there was no hope - but still the programme - the programme was still there - how we  
13 were going to take them out - we couldn't go to the police and ask them because we were  
14 against to be seen - you will be collaborating with the police and that was the problem
- 15 L: And what did you do?
- 16 C: We sat down with the teachers and then we had to - but we had to take them as fast as we  
17 could because the people were gathering around - they started to know - they wanted to go  
18 out of the school to get their - to get their guns and so on to come and kill them . And then  
19 we had to act before - but the problem is that they were - they were unable to get out of the  
20 school, because the soldiers were there at that time - but we knew when they get the chance -  
21 because they were planning outside - how are we going to get them. And then we - what  
22 happens is that we requested - we opened the gates - we assigned the principal to open the  
23 gate - and then we said the principal, one of the teachers must bring the car next to the office,  
24 in front of the office. we'll take them whilst they - no one is aware and then we will .  
25 L: Drive quickly?
- 26 C: Ja, will drive quickly . and then that's what we did . And then that's what we did...
- 27 L: They just whipped them out...
- 28 C: Ja, we just took them right inside the car while no one was aware and then. .
- 29 L: But that was very clever .

- 1 C: . The teacher drove away with them
- 2 L: What a good teacher.. And they got them home?
- 3 C: We had to - ja, and got them home and then we had to work it out how this is - how this is
- 4 our plan - especially we as the students, but then we had to take up the responsibility, we
- 5 didn't want the other students to shift the whole blame to that teacher who took them and
- 6 then we had to take the blame - we had to cool them down. To tell them, 'No that is how -
- 7 this is what we have thought about -we told them - we told them that there are people here
- 8 at school who could not run away. If the police they start shooting, if we would kill these
- 9 people, these people would have got in and killed even more than three people and then we
- 10 would have lost more than three people '.
- 11 L: It would have been a massacre.
- 12 C: It would have been, ja - and then we - people of those - although some were grumbling but
- 13 we managed to cool the majority - we won the majority and then after that it was
- 14 L: Oh, it was alright, you had the majority
- 15 C: Ja.
- 16 L: Vera, shall we stop there - you must be tired ..
- 17 C: Ja
- 18
- 19 There is nothing else on this side