

**KHETSO GORDHAN: INTERVIEWED IN JOHANNESBURG, 14 OCT 1992 BY
J.SEEKINGS**



KG: ... The UDF was launched in Natal in March, March/April 1983. I was still at university.

JS: Here?

KG: No, at UDW. And I was on the SRC, but very actively involved in an area called Newlands East, which is a coloured township north of Durban, where I spent most of my time. So I was quite actively involved in the UDF structures through the Newlands East structures. So when Curnick [Ndlovu] was released, it was early September - was it? - yes, it was September '83 and I had heard a lot about him, and all of that stuff, and I became quite close to him. And the decision was taken in December to put him full time into the regional office of the UDF. By then I had just finished my exams and was asked to help out in the UDF office which I did. So it was both to work with Curnick but also just generally in the UDF office.

JS: Were you paid?

KG: No. No, I wasn't a paid organiser. It was a sort of temporary arrangement between Yunus [Mahomed] and myself. Yunus was the secretary then. And the temporary arrangement lasted until '87.

JS: So you actually started, you actually moved into the office full-time in December?

KG: Ja.

JS: What were your main sort of activities?

KG: In the office?

JS: Ja.

KG: Look, the main structures, the main tasks at that point were still establishing UDF branches in areas where there weren't UDF branches, and helping to strengthen those that already existed. So we started quite early on, running workshops for the key activists in the particular areas that were affiliated to UDF structures. Which we did over and over, but it started quite early in '84. So we would go into an area, say like KwaMashu. We would pull out the twenty key activists from the youth, from the women, from the senior UDF structure, and we would spend a weekend with them, talking about the kind of stuff that was popular then. We would spend half a day talking about the National Democratic Struggle, another half a day talking about why we organise, and how we organise. And then generally spending the second whole day talking about how we were going to implement all these wonderful ideas in the context of the reality in KwaMashu. So we would make an analysis of the area, review the state of organisation in the area, and work out some sort of plan for how to begin to build the UDF. So we started that in '84, it would have continued into '85. That was part of the activity. And in January, already in January '84, we started planning for the Million Signature Campaign. I can remember us holding a national, I mean a regional workshop sometime in January to

plan for the campaign. It was very good workshop. People finally began to understand how important it was in relation to building organisations, and getting into areas that were not organised yet. And I think in some ways Natal provided the lead in the country for the sort of organisational implications of the Million Signature Campaign. We produced the handbook on how to organise the Million Signature Campaign, which was then published nationally by the UDF.

JS: How was the campaign actually organised concretely? How did you and Curnick actually work together?

KG: Well, basically there was the regional office, which was very small. There were three of us operating from the office. Curnick, Lechesa [Tsenoli] and myself. And there were lots of other people who sort of hung around the place, and weren't working there full time. And the main sort of forum that operated in the region at that time, was the General Council which was called together quite often. I can't remember how often now, but probably on a fortnightly basis, during the Million Signature Campaign. And that was sort of two people from each area, or three people from each area where the UDF was organised, plus sectoral representatives from youth organisations and stuff like that. And that's where we would work out the broad strategy for the campaign. So I think by the end of January, probably early February, we already had some sort of plan that we were going to follow. One was related to producing media around the UDF, and explaining what it was, and what it stood for. And I remember long debates about producing those pamphlets. And I can remember that there was one sort of crucial pamphlet explaining the background to the UDF and what it stood for, and what it was hoping to do and we distributed in Natal, we distributed almost quarter million. Which in those days was quite a big number. We distributed a quarter million of those pamphlets around the townships. So that was the one sort of area of the strategy. The second area of the strategy was basically looking at door-to-door work, which was something completely new for Natal. And what we did in almost every major township around Durban, I think we started in KwaMashu, what we would do is we would set aside a Sunday, and say that's the day we are going to blitz KwaMashu, we would spend two weeks before that day in KwaMashu, I can remember exactly what Section we did there. We took Section F which was 1 400 houses. We got the local activists, we got a map from the township office, we confirmed that those were the number of houses. We broke that up into little blocks of thirty houses, or forty houses, with a little map of each section made out of the big map, and we would brief the local activists on how we were going to carry out the blitz, going door-to-door. And then we invited the key activists from the other townships, and our strongest area at that time was Lamontville, who would normally come with about fifty people, forty people. And then sort of ten each from Chesterville and Clermont and other places. And in the case of KwaMashu, I remember there were a hundred and forty of us there on the

Sunday. And we covered those 1 400 houses, going in pairs and collected over a thousand signatures for the campaign. And we repeated that exercise in every single township. Around Durban anyway, not the whole of Natal. Now similar things were going on, of course, in Maritzburg and Northern Natal. But not on the same scale of operations. And so that was the second key activity and the third key activity was to go into the general public. I think once a month for March, April, May, June, up to June, ja, we organised a big blitz in the city centre or in Pinetown city centre. And we would have two or three hundred activists from all the different Indian, coloured, white and African affiliates of the UDF coming together. And on those occasions we, in short, the night, the weekend, the Fridays before the Saturday when we did this, we would put up posters all over the place and stuff. It was quite, it made quite a big impact. Then in the work in the areas, actually, before the blitz, after the blitzes was followed up by a public launch of the campaign. It was generally quite small meetings, you know, four, five hundred people, but it was an important occasion just to make public that the UDF has arrived in the area, that kind of thing.

JS: In blitzes in places like KwaMashu, where most of the activists, I anticipate, would be from African townships or would you have many people from Indian and coloured areas?

KG: No, for those blitzes it was only African people, only African activists.

JS: Was that a decision?

KG: It was a decision initially, ja. I am trying to remember. In some areas later, I remember in Clermont it was a mixed group. But initially it was, because it was a just very new experiment. We had a whole lot of conceptions about how people were going to respond. Firstly, there was this myth that the Inkatha factor would be very powerful in the area. And it wasn't. I mean I can remember going into a house with Curnick in that KwaMashu blitz and there was a family sort of get together there, we were sitting and chatting with them and only one of the sort of the people in the house was an Inkatha member, and sort of resisting this thing, and saying "What has this got to do with the Inkatha, and with the Chief" and other stuff and we explained, "Listen it's got nothing, we are not challenging him, it is a new organisation, everybody is welcome to join it", etc, etc. And the rest of the family pressurised him to sign the document. And they were clearly not Inkatha members. But there were very, very few incidents of that sort in the whole of Section F, which is a, which was a sort of strong UDF area, traditionally, with lots of people having gone into exile from that particular part of KwaMashu. But that was the one myth that was blown. The second thing was that you can't do door-to-door work in townships. A lot of activists were arguing that position, and we were able to show them that was not really the case. And, thirdly, I think the important thing was that, until then the townships operated quite separately in terms of their

organisations. There weren't many joint forums. The joint forums were around the bus boycott in '82 and the rent boycott in '83, but that only affected the Port Natal [Administration Board] area, not all the Durban townships. So this was the one thing that was quite helpful, in the sense that people got to know each other much better, and began to understand the conditions in which other people work, etc, etc. That was quite useful.

JS: I want to say, just to go back to this decision initially to use, or not to involve activists from Indian, coloured, white, from other areas, activists from other areas, in African townships, was this, had this been discussed in General Council and debated?

KG: No, no. I think it was left to the people who were organising the blitz to coordinate those kinds of issues. And it was just the sort of cautious approach, to see how things worked initially. But I can remember, Clermont would have been the fourth or fifth area that we had gone to and by that stage it was mixed. And I can remember later on whatever it was we did, particularly in the city centre blitzes, we would consciously mix the groups of activists that were going around. So there was an attempt later on to try and ensure that there was a much broader participation.

JS: What about the first door-to-door work in places like Newlands East and Indian areas?

KG: Oh, it would have been Indian activists in those areas, or coloured activists in Newlands East, initially.

JS: So initially there was a very strong sensitivity to...

KG: It was more to do with the tradition of organising practices in those areas. I mean, Newlands East activists didn't know KwaMashu activists who were right next door. I mean that was the thing about the UDF, it began to bring people together for the first time. I mean in early '83 in the coloured areas, we formed something called the United Committee of Concern, and that was a very conscious decision. There was a very long, bitter debate about whether we needed a coloured-specific organisation. And there was a debate that lasted three, four months and eventually we concluded that we should have an organisation that represents coloured political aspirations in Durban. That remains an issue in the region even now. But those issues were on the agenda. And the NIC had its own tradition of organising in Indian areas, where the civics were a lot more established than in the African areas. And the African areas varied. In KwaMashu and Lamontville and Chesterville you had an ... [?] organisation. In KwaNdingeze, or some of those other areas where we worked there was no organisation, there weren't any structures before the UDF. It was the UDF that gave rise to those structures. So it varied.

JS: The number of signatures collected in the campaign in most regions was much smaller than had been initially targeted.

KG: Yes.

JS: Was the original target completely unrealistic?

KG: I think the targets were realistic. I think what was not made clear in the beginning of the campaign, was what was the emphasis of the campaign. Whether we were just targeting a million signatures or whether we wanted to build organisations. And there was a contradiction between those two objectives, which people, which we certainly didn't recognise initially. We thought it was part of the same process. And if you wanted to build organisation then you needed to go back into areas where you had collected signatures to consolidate the activists and recruit the people who showed keen interest and all of that kind of stuff which took up a lot of time. Time which could have been spent collecting more signatures. But that wasn't done, and I think correctly so. There was a national evaluation, somewhere in the middle of the year, I can't remember exactly when, where it was agreed that the numbers were not important. But that what we had effectively done was take UDF organisation into hundreds of new areas around the country and that was more important.

JS: Were there many national meetings around the Signature Campaign?

KG: Ja. There was a National Coordinating Committee for the campaign which met probably six or seven times in the period of the campaign.

JS: And that from Natal, you and Curnick and Lechesa would each go or...?

KG: Depends on how big the coordinating committee meeting was going to be. We had meetings where just one person went. Sometimes Yunus represented the region, as the secretary, he had a sort of general idea of what was going on. Sometimes it was myself. I can't remember if Curnick ever went to those things, probably not.

JS: And obviously Murphy [Morobe] would be there. He was the convenor.

KG: Ja.

JS: And from other regions?

KG: Whew, I can't remember who used to be there. Actually I can't.

JS: If I can just go back to one question which comes to mind about slightly earlier.

That when UDF was formed in Natal, it was very shortly after Msizi Dube had been killed.

KG: Ja, just weeks, months, just a few months after.

JS: He was killed in April, it was launched in May.

KG: Something like that.

JS: Do you think that if Msizi Dube had not been killed, would he have been elected onto the REC?

KG: Probably, probably.

JS: Despite being a councillor?

KG: I think it would have been a Lamontville sort of debate, internal debate. But he was on JORAC, which was the equivalent of any other coordinating structure in the region. And he used to serve on JORAC. And JORAC was one of the key affiliates

of the UDF. And I mean there is no logical explanation why he couldn't be on the REC. It is hard to say what would have happened, but I mean, in sort of theoretical terms, I don't see a problem.

JS: There might have been people from other regions who would have seen problems?

KG: Maybe. But I think there was enough tolerance of regional differences. In fact that was one of the key features of the UDF. We spent hours debating regional differences. And there was a lot of tolerance about conditions being different and the need for different approaches and strategies and stuff. I think we would have been able to persuade people that what we were saying was quite realistic.

JS: I find it interesting that at a very general level the UDF, both in the region and nationally, their response to the problem of Inkatha seemed to be, essentially, at this point, if you ignore it it will go away. At a local level, you give the impression that there is actually quite a lot of sensitivity to actually how to go about organising and campaigning in places like KwaMashu. Was there quite a lot of discussion around it?

KG: There was a lot of discussion. I mean, people, I am saying there was the myth, that Inkatha had a very powerful presence in that... We spent hours with activists saying, "Now, if you go into a house and somebody from Inkatha is there, what are you going to say?", and had worked out an approach, which basically said that the UDF is not excluding anybody. It is inviting anybody who subscribes to the following principles and agrees with our vision to join. And that you didn't have to be a member to sign. That was the second key point that we were making. That you didn't have to join the UDF to sign the form. That you could simply indicate your support for what it stood for. That kind of stuff. And after a lot of the work that we had done in KwaMashu it was very clear that there wasn't a strong presence on the ground. That, in fact, politically, what you needed to do, was just to continue organising the people to support the UDF, and that was enough of a strategy. I worked, personally, I worked in a place called Lindelani, outside of Ntuzuma, which is the township neighbouring KwaMashu. Now, Lindelani was sort of a huge squatter camp, even then. And we walked around freely. I used to go there late at night to drop people off, and distribute pamphlets and stuff, and it was about eighteen months later that it was impossible for anyone to go there. I mean our people were being killed there. That became Mandla Tshabalala's stronghold. So I mean that was the transformation within such a short period of time. So there was the window of opportunity there to out-organise Inkatha on the ground, which we didn't consciously plan for, but in hindsight you can see that was there. I think that is the basis on which a lot of us have argued over the years, that in fact we are very strong in the Durban townships. That, despite what Inkatha might say, they don't enjoy much support there.

JS: Right. Do you think that the experiences of KwaMashu... Or, rather, how did the experiences of organising or doing a blitz in KwaMashu affect strategic thinking?

You say that most people realised that Inkatha wasn't so strong on the ground. Do you think it made people rather dismissive of the strength of Inkatha?

KG: No, no. I think there was definitely an... I can remember discussions where we were saying, "Listen, they might not have a presence, a strong presence, but they do have a presence." Because we bumped into people all over the place. And, secondly, that we have got to be aware that they actually control the facilities, the town halls, and all that kind of stuff. And that we don't want to antagonise them. There was a conscious attempt not to antagonise Inkatha, or sort of attack them publicly or whatever. But, thirdly, that there was a recognition that while we were doing this in the Durban townships, we were not going into the rural areas. Because there we were convinced that Inkatha still had a stronger presence. But even that began to disappear as we began to organise down the South Coast in areas that we thought were going to be Inkatha strongholds. But we never extended it into the heartland of KwaZulu.

JS: So are you saying you were not going into rural areas because Inkatha there would be insuperable? Is that essentially that?

KG: That was initially the view. But I think that changed because once we had established structures in the sort of lower South Coast and Empangeni areas, which we had done by the middle of '84, people began to say, "No, this is not true, we can actually organise in those areas." And it was only when the repression came in '85 that people realised that we had underestimated Inkatha. Although the rules of the game were not the way we had assumed it would be. That they would try to out-organise us politically. What we expected was more from the other side.

JS: Do you think that, with hindsight, are there ways in which the UDF or UDF affiliates could have been more assertive in organising in areas, even in the Durban area?

KG: Not really. I think we were quite up front. In the townships, I think after the rent boycotts of '83, and the bus boycotts of late '82, people were quite confident and very assertive. I don't think we could have done much more than we did. There was a mistake... The mistake, if there was one, was not organising the hostels. And even in KwaMashu we ignored Section A, consciously, or whatever, but we never thought we needed to organise that area. And in Umlazi we did the same. Lamontville was different. In Lamontville they did organise the hostels which had quite useful benefits later on, because Inkatha could never really use it as a base. They tried, and they lost. But we didn't do the same in Clermont, Umlazi and in KwaMashu, which we should have done.

JS: In some other parts of the country, for example, there in Cape Town, there appears to have been a sense among many of the UDF regional leadership, that you didn't have to worry about African areas, because it was like guaranteed support.

"Africans are working class, and they are revolutionary potentially, and they are ...



[?]. The problem is can we pull in the other sections of the oppressed, people from other oppressed communities, so-called coloured, Indian potential voters." That was seen as the problem. And in a sense, that thinking clearly meant that the potential for divisive tactics by the state, vigilantes and so on was underestimated. Now obviously in Durban the situation was different, because Inkatha was there very forcefully. Were attitudes towards organising in the African townships primarily understood in terms of "Does Inkatha have support, or not?" Or was it understood that these are complex areas to organise?

KG: I think the difference, I am not sure what the reality on the ground was in the Western Cape, but the problem in Natal, is that you have actually Indian areas which were very well organised, relatively. Because you had the fairly powerful NIC structures that had organised the Anti-SAIC elections already once, and had consolidated themselves. So you had, you could call an activist meeting and get a hundred people quite easily in the Indian areas. And then there was the longer tradition. [INTERRUPTION]. The difference was the level of organisation in the African areas around Durban which was a problem. I mean in a sense the organising experiences and experiments had been done in the Indian areas, street committees, all of that stuff had already been tried out, during the '82 rent boycott in the Indian and coloured areas which was quite a powerful success, ninety percent support and all that kind of stuff for the boycott of rent. So I think that was the key difference in Natal. And I think the other key difference would have been the, not absence, but the weakness, in terms of very powerful African leadership in Natal. I mean you had Archie Gumede and few other people, but that was about it. Which made organising in African areas quite difficult.

JS: Why do you think that was? Why was there such weak African leadership?

KG: I don't know what the explanation is. [PAUSES]. I don't know, maybe the BC organisers, I mean organisations of the '70s had taken out some of the key people, others had probably gone into exile, or something, I don't know. I haven't really looked at that in detail.

JS: Do you remember, I mean during the Million Signatures Campaign, or around that period, was there much discussion and contact between UDF and, on the one hand the FOSATU unions, and on the other hand SAAWU?

KG: Ja, that was a big issue in the region. [LAUGHS] I mean it started when UDF was launched, because we met with all the unions to discuss it. And there was a conscious decision from the FOSATU unions not to join the UDF. But the - what was it called? - the National Federation of Workers, SAAWU, there were about five smaller, very, less organised unions, that joined the UDF. And they became known as the UDF unions. I mean that was how bad the division was. There was very little cooperation between the UDF and FOSATU unions. The one campaign, which

was a pre-UDF campaign, around which we worked quite closely together, was the bread price increases in '82. [INTERRUPTION]

JS: And around the Signature Campaign?

KG: I am trying to remember the details. You see what happened was they had agreed to cooperate, but we had to sort of drop off the pamphlets and posters and forms with the union offices, and they carried out their own work within the union. But what happened was that a lot of individual members were part of UDF structures in the townships and they became actively involved in the UDF, I mean in the community-based structures, not in the unions.

JS: For example? I mean if I go down to Durban and want to talk to individual unionists from FOSATU unions.

KG: Not unionists. You wouldn't find too many full-time organisers or whatever it is that became involved. I can't think of anyone actually that did become involved. But it would be interesting to talk to Mandla who is now the secretary of the Food and Allied Workers Union. He was then secretary, regional secretary for the Food and Canning Workers Union. Because he'd been a sort of ANC person, been to prison and stuff, but was part of a FOSATU union at that point. But was very sympathetic to the UDF. His union, for example, worked, although they worked on their own, worked quite hard on the Million Signature Campaign. We had similar tensions within the General Workers Union. I can't remember the name of that old guy who used to be there, but he is dead now. From the Western Cape who had come down to organise stevedores. He had sort of ANC kind of sympathies, worked closely with the UDF, while Mike Morris and others, who were in the General Workers Union in Durban, were less sort of keen. So I think you found that kind of variation in most of the unions.

JS: And what about SAAWU?

KG: SAAWU was affiliated to the UDF, but it was a very weak organisation, a very weak union in Natal. Sam Kikine was the big chief of the union there. And I mean it was a sort of militant union, very pro-UDF, and Charterist and all that stuff but I don't think it was able to deliver much in terms of actual work on the ground.

JS: And SAAWU leaders, Kikine, were never really drawn into UDF's sort of decision making?

KG: No, they were, they were. They attended all general councils and all of that stuff. No, those five unions, I can't remember their names now, attended all our meetings, and we operated physically next to their offices, so there was a lot interaction and communication.

JS: Where were the offices?

KG: At the Ecumenical Centre in Andrews Street.

JS: I am intrigued, given that there was an absence or weakness of African leadership in the region, why weren't some of the people from the UDF unions drawn into the REC?

KG: They were. They were. I can't remember who was on the REC, the first and second REC's, but there were union representations. In fact there was a breakdown in the second REC election which should have been in '84. There was a breakdown. We had to have the officials, then Indian, coloureds, unions, students, whatever it is representation, that was how the REC was constructed, so you actually had sectors represented. And that continued for a while into '85 as well, but that was the model for the UDF in Natal. And I think it was followed in some of the areas. I think even in the Western Cape, there was a sectoral breakdown to the REC. In the Transvaal, as well. So there was a conscious attempt to bring them in. I can't remember who the union reps were on the thing. In fact I can remember one of them - what's his name? - from the NFW, he's back in Durban, he went into exile, but he's come back now. But he was one of those people who served on the REC. But I mean the problem was not so much having union people but the strength of those unions. Those unions collectively probably had 5 000 or 6 000 members. It was very small.

JS: Just thinking about the Signature Campaign generally, overall, what would you say with hindsight were the main achievements of the campaign in Durban?

KG: I think I have covered most of them. I think the one thing was the high level of interaction it created between different areas, which served the Democratic Movement quite well over the period of the '80s. Secondly, I think it built a solid level of activists within each township, which was later consolidated into various kinds of structures. There was the whole idea that we needed to create disciplined collectives, you know, sort of secret structures within each township, which was done on the basis of the people that were drawn up during the Million Signatures Campaign. I think we were able to spread organisation quite widely around Durban. There were lots of unorganised areas before the Million Signature Campaign. I mean those were ... and the whole concept of door-to-door work and localising structures as far down as possible. That was a sort of product, by-product of the Million Signature Campaign. And the whole sort of, I think at a general level, outside of the townships, we were able to strengthen the whole activist culture, whatever that meant at the time. But sort of dedication and hard work and working together and non-racialism in practice and all that kind of stuff. Those were quite big issues I think for that period. I might be confusing it with the year before but it was around that time that was quite a key issue.

JS: What did, once the campaign had passed, what were you involved in, subsequently?

KG: Two main things. One was the whole youth, youth work, and secondly - I am talking late '85 now - because for the whole of '84 we basically carried on with coordinating the campaign against elections in the African areas. There was a lot of work around Anti-Tricam work that was done in African areas.

JS: In '84?

KG: In '84, ja.

JS: What kind of work?

KG: We tried experiments, basically, mobilising African activists into Indian areas and coloured areas to go and persuade people not to vote. Lots of African activists came into the work in the city centres, in distributions. Lots of mobilisation for the mass rallies that took place around the Anti-Tricam elections. You would find, if the NIC was calling a meeting, you would find, those days it was fortunate, you could actually get 6 000 Indian people into a meeting and there would still be 2 or 3 000 African people. So a lot of that kind of activity.

JS: And that was a very conscious attempt to build on the Million Signatures Campaign?

KG: Ja, I mean I served on the coordinating structure for the Anti-Tricam election, but my responsibility was African areas although a lot of the work was happening in Indian areas.

JS: What did your responsibility involve?

KG: I mean basically persuading activists to join in the activities. And then we put out a number of - not a number! - two UDF pamphlets in the period. Because there was a bit of a tension, you see. Africans were not going to vote, Indians and coloureds were going to vote and there was a number of concerns amongst ordinary African people, that Indians and coloureds were now selling out to the Tricam. And we needed to explain that Rajbansi doesn't represent Indian people and all of that kind of stuff. So there was a bit of, let's say, educational work that was done at a mass level in the townships. But the rest of it was mainly mobilising people into different kinds of activities that were happening in the period. I mean, it took a lot of hard work to get African activists to go into Indian areas because you had to prepare them. You can't use the same language, and you can't use the same concepts, etc, etc. It had to be toned down, and all of those things. So there was quite a bit of work training activists before they went out into the field, that kind of stuff.

JS: And then after the Tricameral elections?

KG: Ja, the two main things were, I am trying to remember what other stuff we did. Youth, I can remember, youth work was one of the big things. We spent a lot of time doing that. We spent a lot of time trying to build civics in the African areas which were just not taking off.

JS: Why do you think they didn't take off?

KG: Because the majority of the membership that we had in the UDF structures were fairly young people. There was this distinction between the young and old people. It was easier to organise civics, civics were very well organised in Chesterville, Lamontville, Klaarwater, areas that were under Port Natal, because the enemy was very clear, the NPA. In KwaMashu and Umlazi it was very diffuse, and that was

another problem. You couldn't quite target the councillors and you couldn't quite target Ulundi, it was very difficult to do those things.

JS: Are you saying you didn't want to target councillors because it was purely provocative.

KG: No, no we wanted to but they didn't have any power. So it was not the same kind of thing to go and negotiate rent issues or whatever it is. And the reality was that there were very different kinds of problems in the NPA areas compared to the KwaZulu areas. Rent was not a problem in KwaMashu. You had R13 a month, you could hardly go and mobilise around rent problems whereas in Lamontville it was a hundred and some odd rands which you could say was too high etc. So those were the kinds of differences. There were lots of other sort of complicating factors which made it quite difficult to organise civics.

JS: Such as?

KG: The absence of senior people within the UDF structures, I think was one of the key stumbling blocks to the work. And you need... In Lamontville it was very easy to organise around civics, because there were key issues. And in a sense, in a place like KwaMashu you struggled to find the right issues. We tried to do it around lighting and the condition of the roads but it just didn't really, we couldn't get enough sort of mobilising effect around those kinds of things. So it was very hard essentially to get people into action around those kinds of things. My memory's fading, now '85...

JS: In other regions, there was, after the Tricameral elections, there was like a kind of a period of reassessment of the UDF, where is it going to go. There was quite a lot of doubt and uncertainty...

KG: Yes, yes.

JS: ... In some regions like Cape Town, very little happened for about a year, because nobody had much of a sense of what to do. Was there any of that sort of sense in Natal...?

KG: Well, I can remember the debates, I can remember the debates because the UDF was formed around the Anti-Tricam and Koornhof Bills, but it didn't last very long. It was a sort of quite a logical conclusion that we need to continue to organise and make it into a broad anti-apartheid front. I think the first debate around whether it should adopt the Charter started then, in Natal certainly. But that didn't, I can't remember it being a very hot debate. People said, no they don't want to narrow the Front, they want to broaden the Front. And that in fact became the main slogan for '85, we want to broaden the Front against apartheid. I need to be sitting with some people from Durban to remember the rest of it.

JS: During '85, you got very involved with youth structures, organisations. Were you given a responsibility to work amongst youth structures?

KG: I was never formally given the responsibility, but the UDF office at that point basically coordinated everything that was happening in the region. And the UDF General Council agreed on the need to create an International Youth Year Committee under the UDF as part of broadening the Front. Because we didn't want just the narrow UDF structures, we wanted everybody else involved. And, I can't remember exactly when, but it must have been February of '85 that we started organising around the IYY.

JS: Right. Now were you a part previously of national thinking around IYY?

KG: Ja, ja. There was, I mean at the national level, there was a big debate going around whether we should form a national youth organisation at that point. It started in '84, probably. And there were two very powerfully organised groups that had different views. And we were part of an alliance together with comrades from the Transvaal, and some from the Western Cape and others, arguing that it was too early to launch a national youth organisation.

JS: Was that the Freeway House position?

KG: That was, it was anti-Freeway House position.

JS: Anti-Freeway House position.

KG: The Freeway House position was that we should launch it. What was his name? Deacon was the Freeway House symbol around the country, mobilising, saying, "Listen, we need to form a national youth organisation, take a high political profile and go for it. The militancy is there, we've got support", all that stuff. And our position was that while the militancy and support is there, the organisation is not. We've got highly uneven regions. We've got to consolidate much broader support on the ground before we can launch the organisation.

JS: And IYY was taken up very clearly as a way of trying to deal with organisation?

KG: Organisation, yes.

JS: So IYY, I mean at national level, the IYY is seen as an alternative to that, and there were two separate sort of committees that they were on, more or less.

KG: That's right.

JS: Were there two separate groupings before the conference in... There was a conference in Durban at the beginning of '85, which took place in the Mnandi camp, I am not too sure what the name is?

KG: Ja.

JS: Now at that conference, were you at that conference?

KG: Ja, there were two groups there, very clearly. That's why... Probably from '83 onwards, there were already emerging two groups, which became a little bit clearer in '84. You see, in '83 it was two different views, in '84 it was two different camps. By the beginning of '85 it was very clear there were two different camps. You should speak to, if you get a chance, speak to Dan Montsisi, and Mandla Nkomfe

who was on ... [?]. Those were the, I can remember the two people we worked quite closely with in the Transvaal.

JS: I have spoken to Mandla.

KG: Okay. So there were very clearly two different views and two different groups. And the compromise that was arrived at, at that workshop was - I can't remember the wording now - but something like, "Let's consolidate around the IYY and then we will launch the youth structure the year later" or something like that. So the mandate was given at that conference to form a national youth structure, and a subcommittee was set up. Two subcommittees were set up. Dan to lead the IYY campaign, Deacon to head the national youth organisation.

JS: Okay, but now in Natal itself, those two committees were actually one committee. Is that right? One separate committee for Natal?

KG: Initially, there was one committee and then it flipped as the Youth Forum began to draw more support and began to link up more directly with the Freeway House position even if not organisationally with Freeway House.

JS: So, initially why was there one committee in Natal? I mean how come there was only one committee in Natal, initially, when there were two committee initially in other areas?

KG: Well, our view was that there was no organic separation between the two things. The one campaign was going to lead into the other and that there was no need to separate the two. [INTERRUPTION]

JS: The impression I get from you is that initially in Natal the Youth Forum wasn't seen as having a strong view on issues.

KG: No.

JS: That only developed during 1985 itself?

KG: Ja.

JS: Is there any reason why that developed? Was it simply an assessment of strategy?

KG: No, I think it had to do with personalities and a lot of other sort of factors thrown into the thing. There was a link up with other people, nationally, who had a different view. There was a link up regionally with people who had a different view. There was some suspicion of the cabal controlling the UDF, and all of that kind of stuff. So I think it was a whole lot of different complex issues that resulted in that. We probably won't be able to understand all of it now.

[END OF INTERVIEW]