

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
"VOICES OF RESISTANCE"

INTERVIEWEE: KANDASAMY GOVINTHU

INTERVIEWER: D SHONGWE

DATE: TUESDAY, 4 JUNE 2002

PLACE: FLAT 3 WESTLYNN HGTS
WEST ROAD
OVERPORT.

DS: Good Morning.

KG: Morning Dimakaso.

DS: This is Dimakaso from the University of Durban-Westville, on behalf of the Documentation Centre and the HSRC, we are grateful to have you on our project called the "Voices of Resistance."

KG: Also thank you very much, and I welcome all of you. Happy morning I should say.

DS: Thank you. Mr Govinthu, can you please tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born?

KG: I was born on the 25th of November 1908 and the area is called Swartkop, Pietermaritzburg. It is about three miles away from the city and it is a huge school where my father was indentured for five years, and I was born there. Then after the five-year term expired, and then he signed for another five years. And another sister after me, and she passed away, she was two-and-a-half-years-old, and so my mother couldn't stay there anymore you see, so my mother said we must leave this place and then must go the city, you know.

So that's how my father left the place and then my father came to Boom Street, you know, and he got a place there and he opened a laundry business.

There's still the house there, 415 Boom Street, you see. And my father had a very successful business in Maritzburg and then that is the time my father sent us to school. And so, my - I've got another elder brother to me - and we were very attached as brothers and so, and we two got together and my father put us to school. And this school, Church Street; and this was very well-known as Reverend Thomas School.

They related to Mr Royappen. And my brother and myself we studied there and we started from Class 1 and we had very nice teachers, and so on. We had like one teacher, daughter of Mr Anthony Peters, and she'd teach us something here and so we completed I think Standard 3. So, and we went into Standard 4, and so my father decided 1921, he said: "look here, we will close this business and we will go and settle in Durban."

So 1921 we left Pietermaritzburg and that's the time when I finished Standard 3, you see. And my brother also finished Standard 3; he is two years older than me you know, and he is Late now. And so when we came here and I thought we were coming into the city, so get a place. And we used to visit here, my father always bring us on holidays and so. So we thought that Durban is a very nice seaport, and there are a lot of sceneries and a lot of places that we can enjoy with a park, zoos, and all these places. It was very nice and we were very happy to come.

When we came here my father, you know, he got into - you know he took a place in Overport. So when we came to Overport I think we were very disheartened, you know. There was the city; and when I came to Overport it was like a farming land here in 1921. I saw a lot of fruit trees; and no sanitary; no lights, and then we did not know what to do. But anyhow, my father opened a little business and carried on. So my father was unable to send us to school now.

And my father was ageing. I was the fifth child in the family, and so my father liked us to go to school but he was unable to send us because he was getting old and my mother was quite young, you know. So, then we - my brother and myself and this is it when we opened the laundry, so you two boys can - we do the parcels and everything; you must do the delivery all day, you know. So that is what we did in those days, since we didn't go to school. But I am very happy to read, but I did not have the opportunity to go back to school. It was very unfortunate, you know.

And then after that my father shifted and he came to another place, Edenhall in Essendene Road, off Brickfield Road, you see, and then he got a place there. And he had one, he had two cottages, one for the laundry and one for the living room and we stayed there. And it was there, and the kitchen was outside, you know, the wood and iron kitchen.

So one day my mother said: "look here, there is a man in India..." she said, "you know, he goes to jail and the next day he's out. They lock him up but he goes out. And I asked "what is that Mummy, Ma?"

She said: "No, no, no, his name is Gandhi. But he goes inside; he comes out next day."

And I said: "why is that?" She said: "I don't know how, I don't know if he is Lord or what he is." She said they lock him nicely, but she did not think that, you know, when Gandhi is locked up, you know, the whole of India goes on fire. Goes on strike, rioting, and all that. You know she did not know that. And I said: "what kind of man can that be?" You know, that they lock him up and he comes next day out.

So I was thinking all that, you see, and then I said: "very funny." Then I said: "look here, I'd like to educate myself too and I want to do something too."

And then I said: "you know, that thing was worrying me all the time, I said all the time I think I have Standard three. Now, to get this thing, if you do not get the sufficient tools, you can't repair a car. It is just like the education you see. If you don't have the right education you can't talk to the people, you don't know what to do and then I was a bit worried about it, you see.

Then I was carrying on; then I used to go around the area, look at the people. A lot of the people are poor people, and all that. We were like a middle-class people and nothing was short for us at all. Clothing, and you know, the food and all, there was nothing short, well off, you know. And when I went around in Brickfield Road; Manning Place, they called it; wood and iron houses; people are battling; and a lot of people badly dressed up, and all. All that was working in my mind, now.

And then one day I was reading. I just said, 'let me read any books about India now.' So what I

did, I got a book written by Coopasamy, you know, and he had several titles you know, and he wrote several books, those days. And I got one book, I was just reading everything a little bit, and what I did I

said just for me to read and make a note of it in a notebook, then I will by heart the thing and then I know how to talk English, now. Because I got no teacher, I got nobody. I said, 'let me learn that way.' And so I used to keep on reading the book.

One day I was sitting, it was part of winter. Drizzling, it was cloudy you know, and I was sitting in the kitchen near the fireside and I was just reading the book and making notes. And suddenly as I was reading, then suddenly I thought of the people that were living around me, you know. And so I said, simply you know, I thought of them, I just teared. So I said I'll wipe my tears. Then I left everything, I went outside. Then I looked up at the sky. So I look like this, and I lowered my head and got a message. I became emotional and so I said:

"the people are waiting for me and I must go, and do the job."

So then, the first day when we came from Maritzburg, so we had some far relatives you see. They were young chaps like us. So what they said: "look here, you didn't see Durban, you must come with me."

The next day they came, three of them and my brother and myself, you see, about five of us, so we will show you Durban, our city. So what we did we all went into Overport terminus, we took the tram. So when we took the tram my brother and myself, we were first into the tram. That was the first

experience I am getting. First I went in the tram, and the three of them they came behind me, you know, they climbed up and stood at the back.

DS: Yes?

KG: So we too, we were so anxious about seeing the place so what we did, white people are full, sitting inside the early morning that was, you know, maybe about half past eight or nine o'clock. And the two sides for whites were full on the top deck, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: And what I did, my brother and myself we rushed up right in the front seat and we sat in the front seat now. And then we're telling, "look here. Ooh how that line is going now." The tram is going, my brother and myself; so all the white people are just looking at us. We don't know what it is, you know. In Maritzburg we used to go, we were very friendly, Europeans were very friendly to us, we did not experience anything that like, you know, people were very friendly. White people used to take my father and all to deliver the work and they take us inside, they give us fruits and money and we didn't experience going in the tram car.

We had no experience, and we would go to the shops and all. We had a very good time in Maritzburg when I was young, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: Well-treated by whites. And then we came here, and then when we sat in the front car, then I said: "why my friends didn't come too you know." And then we look like this so they say: "come, come, come, come here." Then we ran back, you know. Then the

white people were all looking at us, you know. We don't know nothing about the law.

DS: Okay.

KG: That we have certain seats reserved for us, two one side and three one side and that's all we know to sit; and the others all for Europeans. So we didn't know, and then they say you mustn't sit there, come over here and stand. Luckily the conductor did not come out, he will have pushed you out. We didn't know.

Then we got down, then we went to beach and all. We saw everything. That was the first experience I got, you know. Then after this they say, 'no, when you walk on the beach you mustn't stand and look, the people are swimming. Europeans are swimming, you mustn't stand and see, you've got to walk fast.' I said very funny. And then I said, "oh you can't walk on the lawn, sit down there." This was very bad, the country.

See this is working in my brains now, you see, when I was still small there was all these things working in my brain that was very bad I said, there is no lack of dignity. You see?

DS: Yes.

KG: Yes, if we are not walking with dignity we cannot work with dignity and we cannot live with dignity, this is always what I am thinking about these things. While I was small I don't know where the brain is coming from, I think that's it. Then when I told that when I said my people are going when I looked up the sky and when I wept, I said, then I thought there was a God; He is telling me I must go now. And that is why I went.

Then everything what I thought, it is coming right. Now I said, 'I can't read, now what is that.' This is worrying me and I was to Standard 3 here, so how can I face the people, if I want to tell them something, you know, of the fight against these people about the laws and all this, you know.

Then I said, 'I must study. I must get matric,' I said. Now I didn't have the chance, you know. Then I, when I went out then I said, one day I was...

we went to play on a Sunday, we went to play, you know, like a ball, you know. And there we met a friend, you know. Then I said hello and then they introduced him to me, "and this is a Mr BD Lala." Then I said, "just who is BD Lala?" "He just come from Fort Hare and he is studying. He is a teacher, Mr B D Lala" he said. Ooh you know, then it has got me nicely now, except now if I haven't got a teacher, this is what I am looking for I thought. You know, I am only Standard 3, and I got something in my mind now.

"I want to fight this Government's unjust laws," I said. And I said, "ooh." I said, I told Mr BD Lala, "then can you teach me? You are a teacher privately?" BD Lala said "ooh." He said, "all right," he said, "one day I can see everything is coming right."

Now one day I was standing in Essendene Road. I see two gentlemen coming and I look more at that. Ooh I see BD Lala that was introduced, you see, and another friend of his. He is coming to me, and "ooh" he said, "that is Manny, Reverend Sigamoney's son."

DS: Okay.

KG: So, the two they said they came, and I said ooh they came and said, "I know, how are you?" And they said "Look here, we are canvassing for some people, that we are opening you know nice evening classes in Brickfield Road, you see, and we got a whole bakery house so we got about hundred people now. So if you are interested then you can come in, you can join us, you see."

So I jumped at the opportunity and said, "well this is the thing I am looking for." So what a thing, I said "no I will." So after five, I went. I said they gave me you know, like Arithmetic, English and Geography and all, you know, Standard 4. Now, Standard 3 I just finished, so Standard 4 they put me, you see. Now as we are studying there in about six months time, from a hundred people, slowly they dwindled down.

DS: Okay.

KG: And the only... I was the only man left, because I was hungry for these things I wanted to learn. So I am sitting there and said, "now what are we going to do Mister?" You know, I don't call his name, you know, I remember I said a teacher is a Guru you see, in our language, you know. It is like God, you see, a teacher is like God to us.

So although he was not far from my age, and I never called Mr Lala saying, "Mr Lala, you know, teach me this, or teach me." I only just said, "you know I would like to learn this thing. I like taking all of this fact in like a Guru." And he said, "you know, you are so interested that I was very interested." He said, "now you come to my place and I will teach you by the house."

So that is how I went there. Then he started teaching me, you know, like from Standard 4, Standard 5, and he was teaching me. Then one day he said, "look here, you know that we are opening evening classes." So he said, "we are opening evening classes at the Boys' High School and you can come and join there now," he said. And then I said, "now I was very happy." That was now, you know, the ML Sultan Technikon and all that came about.

DS: Oh, ML Sultan, okay.

KG: And then we went there, he said, "on a Monday you must come there and we can join the school." So there were about 300 young working class people, you know, all of us marched into the classrooms.

That was the... That now it became a Technikon and so on, you know. ML Sultan.

DS: How old were you?

KG: I beg your pardon?

DS: How old were you?

KG: At the time?

DS: Yes.

KG: I was about, I think I was about seventeen years or something.

DS: Seventeen years? Okay. So you said ML Sultan, that is when it started to be established?

KG: I beg your pardon?

DS: ML Sultan.

KG: That was about thirties.

DS: Thirties.

KG: Around the thirties, yes.

DS: Okay.

KG: And in the meantime I was studying privately you know here and there, with Mr Lala, you see, and when they opened then he said, "there is an opportunity in here for you, you know, you can come and join the school." That was the time that I went and joined there, you see. And I went to Standard 4.

Then when I was reading Standard 4, then Mr BD Lala and Mr Manny Perumal, it looked like they all volunteered. They didn't get any money for teaching. They volunteered to teach the people, you see. And Mr Moodley was the head of... he was a teacher at the Sastri College, he was the headmaster of the School Evening Classes.

DS: Okay.

KG: So while we were studying Standard 4, Mr Lala opened a - you know - debating class there, and so one day I took a part and I would say about seven of each. So there they said "Is India fit for self-government?" So we moved that India is fit for self-government and the others opposed it.

So while we are we debating, so they can't come right you know, we had adjudicators and so like Mr Godfrey, Albert Christopher and Mr BD Lala and all, they were adjudicators, you see. And so we were debating and so we could not come to a conclusion, you know. We were winning you know. So they said "this is no good, I think we better take it to the - print handbills and we'll take it to the Gandhi library, so we'll debate it there, you see," Mr B D Lala said.

So all right, we went to the Gandhi library and so I also took part there and Mr HA Naidoo, he moved

the motion and Poonan seconded. And then on the other side, Mr Chance, he opposed it.

And then, so I spoke there for quite a long time, it was written here, and I spoke such a way that I said India is fit for self-government and I gave a lengthy speech now. And all the people were surprised, you know. And then I said... then in a heated argument, and I said, you know, to my opposition party, that I said "you people that have not got Indian blood in your veins, that is why, you know, you are opposing the thing."

DS: Okay.

KG: And that's right, I did not have all the experience but I just told them and the way I spoke and Mr Albert Christopher and Mr JW Godfrey and Mr BD Lala adjudicated; and then we won the debate, you know. And then the person to whom I said "you have got no Indian blood in you, that is why you say that India is not fit for self-government." And then he took it as a revenge and he got very cross about it, and he was very nicely exercised chap. I was very tall, but he was tall and hefty, you know.

Then, while I was reading you know, the next day I saw when I was entering the school, to take my lessons, I see Albert Christopher and Mr TM Naiker and Mr JW Godfrey; all of them standing by the doorway. And then they all congratulated me, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: And they say, "ooh you spoke," he said another four, three times, "you speak, you can be an orator, you see," Mr Albert Christopher says to me. And ever since then they used to come and pick me by the

house and take me everywhere. They used to like me. I said "I have only Standard 4." He said "don't worry I've only Standard 4 too, look what I did" he said. He is my lawyer today.

DS: So he was a motivational person?

KG: Albert Christopher, and he used to take me in his car to the things and all, he would come pick me up and take me about, you know. He used to like me you know. And then when I was reading now, I was in Standard 6 now - I was in Standard 4, 5... and I took 5 and 6 in one year at the evening classes. BD Lala used to teach me 6 at home and 5 I used to be at classes.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I took the two in one year. You know, I was so greedy, I wanted to complete my work, you see. So I worked very hard, you see. And once I finished, when I come from school I don't wait. So when I just come from school and after I have my supper, then I'd go and do my homework.

You know I take so much homework, I'd do it right through; maybe two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning I sleep. So I went on. I think 50% I didn't sleep, you know, normal sleep. I only slept about three hours for the night. Half the people say, "you don't sleep well, you'll die early" they say. So I slept about three, almost three in the morning, you know, if there's so much work.

Even Sundays I used to go, take turn, you know, to BD Lala's place and go and study there half a day and come home and then I used to study, do all the homework. Ask him, I was so busy, they used to give me three, four pages of Arithmetic I want it

completed, and I want to fill it up and want to do it as fast as possible I can do, you know.

DS: Okay

KG: And that is why I used to do it, and I finish 3 in the morning, 4 in the morning, then I go to bed. And there is the laundry work as well, so again by six o'clock in the morning I got to be in the laundry again, you see.

DS: Okay

KG: So, then we have to help my family work, that was, you see. So I went on like that, and then one day Mr Lala came in the classroom and engaged a Mr Jithoo, who was my teacher in Standard 5; he said, "look here, Kandasamy, you must sign this form." "Mr Jithoo, so what form" he wanted to say, "this man can't read." BD Lala said, "no, he is going to sit for his exams." He said "Standard 6?" He said, "he can't read, Standard 5 he's done this year," he said. You know, like I didn't know nothing, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: I used to put it like that I used to be in Standard 5.

DS: Yes.

KG: But my old job I am doing it and I knew what exactly, what I am doing, you know. That's why I learn privately you know. So Mr BD Lala brings this examination form to sign, so I sign the form; and then Mr Jithoo just laughed, he was my teacher, you see.

And then when the time came and, well they said well now, and they gave us the papers and there was a white inspector. So he told us, he said, "well right, as soon as I ring the bell then you must

put the pens like that" he said. I am sorry, I'm putting it down. And he says, "drop the pen, if I ring the bell you must drop the pen."

DS: Okay.

KG: So I did it, I was so good. Before the time I used to do all other subjects.

DS: Okay.

KG: Where I was caught up, is on the Arithmetic.

DS: Okay

KG: All the other subjects I did it in half an hours' time like that, because the way BD Lala taught me it was all in the brains, such a way he used to do it with sketches, he used to do the thing where the wheat is growing he'll put a map, where is the De Aar, where is the biggest junction in Africa, you know, South Africa, and he will draw all, he say I must draw the maps. I have wonderful drawing I have got here, I can just like you all I can draw.

DS: Okay.

KG: Some other time. And I used to draw all these maps, and they used to give me very good, you know, they say write it down. You know, "these pictures they are fairly a good one. Ooh, very good, just like the map is." And no tracing nothing, I just do it up.

That is my job, you see, I said to Lala and Albert, you know. And then when we had the debate I was still carrying on in seven now.

DS: Okay.

KG: I passed my six.

DS: You passed your six.

KG: I went into seven, you see, and there we met HA Naidoo and George Poonan became my best friend,

just because I was looking for some friends but who can help me, I've got a plan. So I want somebody to help me; that we want to form a body.

DS: Okay.

KG: You see, so now I found HA Naidoo was very good. God sent me something, He said, "pick up some people out of some 20 people." So HA Naidoo and George Poonan they said, now I think there are two of the right people that I can get who can help me to form a body, you know, I had it in the mind now. So I spoke to HA Naidoo and George Poonan, and they were very happy about it. And I said you know, Singh came here and he gave us a talk at the Boys High School. And he said, "today the young men and young woman must be changed" he said, "to become the leaders of tomorrow." So I wrote that in the book, I quoted that you know, what he told. So I had it in my mind, I said this is what we must do.

So we must form a body that we must train the people, that tomorrow they can be the leaders of tomorrow.

I have lots of African friends, my best friends a lot of them in the Natal Indian Congress too, and I like them. So what I did now, I was reading in Standard 7. You see the man that I told "you havn't got Indian blood in your veins..."

DS: Yes.

KG: "...that is why you are opposing, you know" I told him. Now he comes outside; he starts fighting with me. He said, "why you want to insult me" he says, "what do you think I am?" Now he was quite big sized.

DS: Okay.

KG: And I was frightened you know. And then every time when I go to the toilet or something he'd catch me, you know, and shake me up, and all. So I told HA Naidoo and George Poonan, "look here I have got to leave the school because I see the chap is troubling me a lot."

DS: Yes

KG: So HA Naidoo said, "look here don't worry about it, we will fix him up."

DS: Okay.

KG: They told all you know, we will fix him. Because they all liked me and now what I told them, you see, about forming a body and all that, you know.

DS: Yes.

KG: So we used to be very good friends, you know, my right hand man he was like, you know. So he said "don't worry, I will finish him," you know. Then I told Mr BD Lala about it too. Then he said "ooh, don't." That is, you know in the debate we can say that we can be friends again.

DS: Yes.

KG: "Is this a debate issue? Then you should not take it in offence," he said, BD Lala said.

DS: Yes

KG: So I complained, you know. And then I told HA Naidoo and George Poonan, I said "I told BD Lala that I don't think I will read here now. I will stop, you know, and I won't be coming to school any more, you know." I said, "I won't come." So I left school.

DS: You left school?

KG: Because of that I left. I didn't go into Standard 7. I finished 6, and then they gave me a Certificate. I've still got the Standard 6 Certificate.

DS: I see.

KG: I should have got a six.

DS: Okay.

KG: A Standard 6 certificate.

KG: Mr Nowbath was the man who pondered over the evening classes, he was the principal of the Natal University. Mr Nowbath.

DS: Oh okay.

KG: And then Mr was the - I forgot that name now, the lady, you know, and David, the foundation members of it; those evening classes, you see. And then I left there and HA Naidoo and George Poonan also left school.

DS: So they followed you?

KG: I beg your pardon?

DS: They followed you?

KG: Yes they also left the school.

DS: Okay

KG: Ja, and then I went and I was worried now. And then what I did I wrote in the article now about, you know, to form a body now. Then one day I was reading a newspaper, and see what God is just telling me what I must do, you know, is follow Him, you know. Just what I think, you know, and I used to go out; and then I said before that, what I did. I said, "let me go into the City, God said, you know, the people are waiting." So I wipe my tears, I've got to wipe the tears of other people and put a smile on their face. So that is what is in my mind now.

DS: Okay

KG: You see. So anybody that is sick Then I said "look here, I will go to the City and you know look for anybody, I've got no friends." that you know, has got no friends. So I said "let me go to the City and... you know."

I went there, I just took my clothes. I just take the tram. I'll go into the City. I said, "look here, I'll go." I used to go to Queen Street and turn to Albert Street and Victoria Street and to Grey Street, around and around like a mad fellow, you know, I used to go; to see anybody coming from the building.

DS: Okay.

KG: Decent people...

DS: Yes.

KG: And I would say, "hello, how are you?" I said, "look here, I have got a plan. Can you help me?" You know, that is how I went, I cannot actually tell you what happened to me. I went through there like a mad man, you know, looking for friends, to form a body to see our people, you know, to be educated and to become leaders of our people, you know, to change the unjust laws of people who are leading this Country.

DS: Okay.

KG: So that is my worry. Then I went around and around and I didn't find anybody. And one day I said, "let me, you know, Kajee." Now I see they got Congress Meetings, so I said, "let me just go to them." See I don't know, I am thinking now how I went. I don't know, I can't remember now.

I was a small boy; I was short [pants]. And suddenly I'd seen this road I used to go to, I didn't know the

Natal Indian Congress were having meeting in Royal Bioscope.

So every time, Sundays you know, they are having a meeting. So I said, 'let me go and learn now,' you see. Ooh they are having a meeting now. Mr EM Paruk was the Chairman, President of the Natal Indian Congress and Mr AI Kajee was the

President, and I think he was the President. I don't know why, EM Paruk, they said he was the President, and I don't know what job Mr AI Kajee had, so Mr PR Pather was the Secretary, VSC Pather, JW Godfrey, Albert Christopher, SJ Rustomjee, all these people with us, and all these people were there. All of us every week; some every time.

I don't know how I get that in my mind. If they said on Sunday they are having a meeting, I'll go there, you see, and then I go and sit right in the back and to listen what they are doing, you know, what they are talking about. Are they talking about the masses, you know, how other people are living outside. Are they interested in talking and are they going to do something about it?

So I was worried about that. Then they were only talking about business, you know. Where businesses were getting affected or where the licence is getting affected, or we elect somebody. We get a deputation, we send him to, you know, Cape Town and see the Minister of Interior, you know, Justice and all that, you know.

DS: Yes.

KG: And ooh, I was thinking now. I got disappointed, and I said "why are these people not talking about,

you know, those masses and what about people living in hope, there's a lot of poor people all over, people living in Riverside all over, and in Clairwood and all this side you know, people are poor."

DS: Yes.

KG: And I said these people are not talking about improving the conditions. So I said "no, if they only are talking about business, about their..." They are like a merchant class you see, and talking over commercial side only, you see. So I said "no, I don't think they are doing anything good for us." I was getting worried about this, you know. Then I see Kajee, and one day I said the way they speak, roaring like lions inside, you know, sometimes Sarabjee Rustemjee; sometimes Mr AI Kajee and all, you know, fighting amongst themselves.

DS: Yes

KG: Sometimes, they come to the meeting; sometimes they don't come to the meeting. So I was doing a regular visit you know. I visited there, you know, to study.

So one day I see, while I was walking, I went to Mr Kajee's office, I said "look here, I'll see if I can get a job at A I Kajee's office." He had an office, business in Grey Street, you know where Dr Seedat was - to be a surgery - and right inside the whole building. So he had a shop there, you know. So I thought if, you know, if I get a job there then I can learn about Politics. How to, you know, how to form a meeting and how to fight. So what I did now. So one day, I dressed up, you know, with a coat.

DS: Yes.

KG: And I went through the passage, I went. I see Mr Kajee is taking a comb and he is combing it [his hair] like that on the veranda, you see. I stood there; he looked like that. "So what do you want?" he says. I said, "Good morning."

I said, "you know, I am looking for a job, Sir." I told him, you know.

DS: Okay

KG: "You see, I can... You know, any job." I said, "you know like a tea boy, or you know, wash the floor or writing, or anything, you know, as long as you can give me a job" I said, you know.

He says, "no job here." He said, you know; that is how he said. That was a very bad response that I got.

DS: Just like that?

KG: And what I did, so I came a few yards away from there; I came into the passage; I stood there. I just stood for a few moments and thought, "being a father of the nation." I just thought that way, you know. I said, you know, "a President, you know, head of the Indian Community," I said, "can talk like that." I just thought to myself, 'and ooh, what a response I got from him,' I thought, you know. I was very disheartened, you know. I said, you know, 'this thing... If I were him, I will tell you', "where you do come from, what do you want, what is your trouble."

Or you know, 'you got so many places here.

Too many buildings here, you can get a job somewhere. You are not trying.' You know, if

I am the head of it I'd say, "I must treat them like

children.”

DS: Yes.

KG: So he just said, "no job" and then he start combing his hair. So I thought you know, this man is no good. You know I said, one day... I think, you know I'm thinking in my mind now, one day I must do something about this thing. You know, take him out of the Congress. You know I had that all that's in the mind. So I said we must take this man and we must put yound blood inside there now. That is what I was thinking now.

DS: Okay

KG: I walked out. Then that was one other thing that I had, you know. Then one day I was going, I was reading a paper. Suddenly I see all that is coming into my way now. I think I am thinking, when I said God said, "you know, you must go and do your job now," you know. And I'm thinking that, ooh, I said always when I walk I think.

I said, 'I got God following me, I'm going.' All I am thinking every time when I walk from Essendene Road, as a young boy, you know, and who will think of me.

There are so many educated people in Durban, you know; my mother said, "What do you want to do all these things? There are a lot of educated people in Durban. You don't do that thing; you do the Laundry. You got a little education; you can read laundry clothes, shirts and sheets and all. That is enough for you," she said.

I said "no, no. I want to study," I said, you know.

DS: Okay

KG: "I've got a job to do."

So what I did, I read a newspaper; I see that there is a body formed, South African Youth Movement and they were formed in Durban. So - and the Chairman was Mr OS Hansen. He had a - he was a lawyer, he had a very big office, (Little & Cole).

He was a lawyer; right by the Courthouse you know, a very big lawyer, Masonic Grove. He said, Mr Hansen, he likes to help anybody. So what I did quickly I took a pencil and a paper. I wrote a letter quickly you know, and I post it to him, you know. I said here, and then he told me that I wrote a letter to him and said look I am anxious to join the body. So I said, "I want to join your body."

DS: Okay

KG: So he said... Then when I wrote, then he wrote a letter to me, you know, and he...[interruption]

DS: Mr Govinthu, I just want to find out what motivated you to be involved in Civic Associations like the South African Youth Movement and the Indian Movement?

KG: What made me?

DS: Yes, what motivated... What made you to decide to be part of the Civic Associations?

KG: You see, well the unjust laws were prevalent in this Country that time, you know, and we wanted to fight the unjust laws in this country.

DS: Okay.

KG: That was the thing. We cannot go to, you know, in that building like we want to... You know, if you want to go into that building only Europeans allowed, you see, and the 'non-whites, got to go right from that building, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: And then if you want to go into a lift, there is a lift for us, in like a 'non-whites', and 'Europeans'. So you see all that is hurting me.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I said no, we've got to fight here. So we want to go to beach side, we can't go there and you have to go, you can't sit down, you got to walk very fast, you see.

DS: Okay

KG: So, like if you go into a Park, you cannot play, children can't play in the Park, you know, play with the swings - it's only for Europeans.

DS: Okay.

KG: You go to Mitchell Park, they say no Indians, 'non-whites' can't play with the swings and all. There was so many, you go to pay an electricity bill account or something, or something or telephone bill, you got to have a very long queue.

DS: Okay.

KG: So these are some that need to be...

DS: To be ...

KG: You know, take out the action.

DS: To be involved... okay.

KG: You see, this is one of the things that was a burning issue that was in me.

DS: Okay.

KG: To fight for. We must form a body I said. We must form a body.

DS: Okay.

KG: This was my intention. So we did not come to so far, that we formed a body an all, you know.

DS: So, in a way you managed to form a body?

KG: Yes this is why I said; this is what happened. So when I saw the letter, when I wrote to Mr Hansen, so he wrote me and said he is very happy about it. So he said I must come and have an interview with him. So I got Standard 3 and a little bit of education and he is a lawyer.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I was a bit frightened, you know, I said. So he said he was very happy to meet me and, you know, "You can help me to form a body."

DS: Okay.

KG: So then I got an opportunity and I said, "Give Indian people a start now. There is no start because the Natal Indian Congress is not doing anything for our people, to the masses." That is what my argument was, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: So then, when I wrote to Mr Hansen and so, he said I must see him. So when I went with... Look at what happened to me now. When I first went, and I went so far and I looked at the building and I looked at the window and I saw all the ladies in a very big office. And I looked at the office, then what I said "Ooh, you know."

I got very nervous then I got frightened to tap the door to go inside now. I went away, home.

DS: Oh okay.

KG: So I went a second time, same thing happened again. "Can't have an interview with him. I don't know what to do" I said. "This man is a lawyer and I am an ordinary man."

KG: So it is the third time I made another attempt, then I tapped the door, then the lady opened the door.

Then I went inside and see all the people are typing.

So then I went right into that building, I saw a big office and I see a tall man sitting inside. And when you are sitting, I see, you know, there is like books, Attorneys got the books. And I got more nervous now.

DS: Okay.

KG: When I saw all these things, you know. And he was sitting. And he said "Ooh, come in." And then he shook hand to me. Then I shook hands to him, and then he said "sit down." And I had a chat with him, you know.

DS: Yes.

KG: Then I told him that I was very interested and he said "Look here, the law in this country you know, they cannot accept you as a member." He said, "This was the law, but we like it. But the law prevents us from accepting you, but what I can do is to form a body, you see, I will help you to form a body, you see."

And that is how he came and I came and told Mr BD Lala that this is what happened, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: And Mr BD Lala says...

DS: I'll just pause for a while to change the cassette.

END OF TAPE 1A - RESUMPTION ON 1B

DS: Earlier on you spoke about the Indian Movement, the South African Youth Movement.

KG: Ja.

DS: Is it the South African Youth Movement or the Indian Youth Movement?

KG: South African Youth Movement was a white body, and so we had no Youth Movement or something for the Indians to train themselves as, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: And so therefore we only got South African Movement. He helped us, and I thanked him for helping us.

DS: Okay.

KG: So he said he will help us, you see. Then I told Mr BD Lala. Then Mr BD Lala was very happy about it. Then he said we will form a... As long as you form a branch, and so then, from there onward and once we were trained, so, then after that we can go form our body independent of them, you see. That is how we started, you see. First we had South African Youth Movement, Indian Branch.

DS: Okay.

KG: So for a year we ran that, I think. So we had Mr George Singh as our President, and Dr Cooppan was Secretary, and Mr GS Nulliah, my old lawyer died in London. He was the Treasurer.

DS: Okay.

KG: And HA Naidoo, George Poonan and myself we took up as Committee, Committee Members... as Executive Committee Members.

DS: Okay.

KG: And this is how we formed, and we had it for one year and so there was no politics in the South African Youth Movement, Indian Branch.

DS: Oh okay.

KG: So what we did, we had to dissolve the branch and form the new Natal Indian Youth League.

DS: Okay.

KG: So we formed Natal Indian Youth League.

DS: Okay.

KG: So therefore we had the Youth League and then Mr HA Naidoo, George Poonan, myself and Suburajah - they have known a year about it. He was the first President, that is how I put it. And he, so in the meantime HA Naidoo was - I told them, 'you all must go. Go into the taxis and get the main man in the taxi, you know,' because I saw people having lunch there on the pavement in Sidney Road and all I was walking about. I see them, you know. I used to go everywhere, looking at things. So I went to Sidney Road and I see people are having lunch on the pavement. There is no proper house for them to have lunch.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I told HA Naidoo to go into, you know, big factory; get one main man so he can organise all the workers. So then, go to every factory. George Poonan and HA Naidoo, they went out. That is how they formed Unions.

DS: Oh okay.

KG: This is how the Unions came about.

DS: Okay, so Mr Govinthu, were you ever married?

KG: I, this is a thing I forgot to tell you about the marriage. You see, what happened to the marriage, this is the thing that happened now, this one thing, you see. When I wanted to start this work, I said, "No, I have to. I have got a job to do," you see.

So then I was about eighteen, nineteen, twenty years, something like that. I was in Centre Street, we moved there, 1920 I think. So what I did now, I said now I have got a very important job. How am I

going to behave myself, you see, to do and people to respect me now.

DS: Okay.

KG: So what I did now, I said look here, I was thinking in my room, you know, like the lounge; I used to sleep there. So what I did there, I said "Look here, I said I am going to serve the people" I said, you know. "Now wait a minute, take an oath." I got up now and I kneeled down, and I said "I am kneeling down" I said "Until death I shall not take liquor. Until death I shall not smoke. Until death I will not smoke, use vulgar languages," you know.

People were there, every time it is the common thing they use, F's and b's.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I won't... never use that languages, and I won't visit any vice dens, areas.

DS: Okay.

KG: These things, and I won't touch liquor. I'm 94; I never touched liquor. People offered me in Cape Town and all the Coloured girls.

DS: Oh that's funny.

KG: They said, "You are a lousy fellow" they said. I said, "No man, I will rather walk out that joining you." I told them.

DS: Okay.

KG: I said no, I was very strong about it, you know, I have an oath on that thing; I should never accept that. Then also marriage was not my immediate concern.

DS: Okay.

KG: And so I married at the age of thirty two.

DS: Thirty two?

KG: Aha. My mother forced me, she said, "Look here, you are the youngest son. One son is married; he has got five children. Now you are the youngest, now you are about 32-years old and you are not getting married, I am getting older and I may die," she said. "I may go back to India," she said. "If you don't get married, I am going to take poison or something."

You see, she worried me now. So I told my mother, I said "Look here, so many people offered me in Jo'burg, Transvaal, and in Port Elizabeth. I said my sister-in-law, my sister-in-law's sister would marry me. And then I told her want to give me all the things. So now, and my mother said, 'no, no, no, no. We don't want two daughter-in-law's to be here. My mother, she said, "I don't want another daughter-in-law to come in my house." she said. She's your own sister, you see. So they were a rich family, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: And I said "Okay." So my Dad said, "So what are you going to do?" I said "no, I should..."

He said, "No, no, no, I don't want any girls.

You see, I want to see the girl for myself. And then I said, "Okay. I give you the , wish because I am the youngest son and because I am 32 years old." I did not want to get married. She said "I will take you to her now." I said "Alright. I go to Durban." She went to arrande the girl. Not far from my place, you know, she said, "I found a nice girl, you must get married to her," she said. I hadn't seen her. Forty years we stayed and we never put a slap on the face.

DS: Okay.

KG: That is how we lived. When we had an argument although you were very nervous, we never said... we argued in the business, she was also in the business, you see. If you had an argument and something goes wrong in the laundry, seeing customers and all, we had an argument and all, you know. Just about few words. One teacher told me, you know, "Okay," he said, "you know when you marry a woman you must not hit, because she is defenseless. You must never hit a woman."

So I told all the people in my family that they must stop hitting woman.

DS: Okay.

KG: I said when you get, you know, drunk or something, so they must not hit a woman, she cannot return, and he taught me, the teacher. You will not, Kissoonsing's family, you know, you will not. So he became a very good friend of mine, so then he said, "No, don't hit."

So I told all my families too, you must not touch a woman. For forty years, my wife, I never touched her. It is the only Bramdeo. He said count to ten and walk out.

DS: Okay.

KG: And then when you come back everything is over. When I used to have an argument, so I walk away. When I come back there was a smile.

DS: Did you have kids? How many kids?

KG: I had about - I think all together eight children: Eight children. And I had two passed away.

DS: Okay.

KG: I got six children now.

DS: They are still alive?

KG: Yes, I think I got it with papers. Do you want them?
Do you want them?

DS: Well, it is okay I will take their pictures later.

KG: Do you want to see? Oh later.

DS: Okay.

KG: What do you want?

DS: Sir, I just want to find out, were you every banned
by the Apartheid Laws?

KG: No, no, no. I was - I never was banned at all
because I wanted to organise, I was all the time I
was keeping away like, you know, not noticed
because I said, I have got so much work, you know,
I work behind the screen.

DS: Okay.

KG: You see, so with all the work that we, you see, I did
not know what to do. I created the Nicol Square
and all, you know, mass meetings and all.

DS: Okay.

KG: And Chief Luthuli and all, we worked together.

DS: Okay, so you were the Editor of the Indian View
Paper?

KG: No, not the Editor.

DS: You were not an Editor.

KG: No, I did not write any paper. I was not that
generous.

DS: Oh you, okay.

KG: Yes.

DS: So... But you were involved in...

KG: I used to write letters, ja.

DS: Or usually write letters to Indian View
Newspaper?

KG: Oh, this paper I wrote myself.

DS: You wrote yourself?

KG: Yes.

DS: Okay.

KG: Ja. This little paper I wrote to call in the Youth to join me.

DS: Okay.

KG: Ja.

DS: Okay. So I just want to find out from you, who were your role models in the struggle against Apartheid?

KG: Role models?

DS: Role models against Apartheid?

KG: In our?

DS: In your, in your community.

KG: Well, we had Dr Naicker, HA Naidoo. There's so many people, I cannot tell you... It was HA Naidoo, Poonan and me, and there was another one... See, I forgot their names... And, some name it was, and... see, there were so many people, Dadoo came after that.

DS: Okay.

KG: We all joined up. After forming this all, you didn't always - I was the first one who created that, and then after that...I can tell you one about Monty Naicker too. His story, can I tell you?

DS: Yes, yes.

KG: You see, what happened, when I went to form the body, so I said, "We haven't got the brains like a doctor's brain, he has got the brains, Dr Monty Naicker."

DS: Okay.

KG: Okay, so what I did now before forming the body, I went to collect the people, so that we could get the people and all who joined us, you see, and then we can form the body. Hansen said, "You know, get

your people, and form the body." There was no body. Everything was quiet. 1930 was not all quiet on the Western front. That is how Grey Street was, all quiet, nothing happened. I was the only one walking about looking for things. So what I did I went to Mr Monty Naicker's offices, you know, and told him that, you know, we are forming a body.

I went there about half past ten in the morning, nice sunshine, Short Street, so I went inside, I tapped the door. So there was no answer from, you know, the sitting room, you know, waiting room, you know. Then all the chairs were right around; a enamel table was put there. I tapped the door, and then I walked inside. Then I feel there was a door this side, a white door. Then I tapped that door and then Dr Naicker, you know, he opened the door. Then he had a white coat on and he just smiled. I knew him as a friend, you know, and I knew him very well, in short. So then he had a smile. So then he came out, you see. I want people to take it like a... to be head of the movement or something, you know, as a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and so on, you know.

DS: Oh, okay.

KG: So now Monty and I could sit. He came, then I was leaning on the table like that, I was leaning just like that and then I said, 'look, I have got a plan now.'

I said "I have got a thing that, you know, we want to form a body. We have not got a body, we must form a body that, non-sectional body, I want."

You see, non sectional body, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: Then he smiled and then he said, "You know what happened" he said, "I was in Dublin Medical College." Then he said, "You know, first word I can remember, 75 years I continue, first word he told Pharsi fellow goes to Pharsi fellow, Tamil fellow goes to Tamil fellows, a Hindi goes to Hindi and Muslim goes to a Muslim, you know, there is no unity, you know."

There, he said, in the Medical College, he had that experience. So he said "now it won't work, and it is no good" he said.

So I left him and I went away. I was disappointed but I would not let him see, you see. He said you know, "I got a Hindu Club, Youth Club. I am doing well," he said. I am President there and I am doing very well in May Street. That was the real words, and I can still remember what Monty Naicker told me. I said look here, Monty Naicker did not want to do his best. Then I walked up and I went and told Mr BD Lala about it, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: That is how we formed this body, you see. I told BD Lala. BD Lala said, "Don't worry." He said, "I got George Singh." He said now then he was from Fort Hare. He has been an estate agent and all, you know, after that. Teaching, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: Then he too, he said, and we got him, you see.

DS: Okay. So, I just want to know what kind of work did you do during your Political involvement?

KG: Hey?

DS: What kind of work did you do during your Political involvement?

KG: My work?

DS: Work, work. Any jobs?

KG: My work, living, you mean?

DS: Work, job or...

KG: Laundry. I had a laundry.

DS: You had a laundry?

KG: Yes, that was a steam laundry.

DS: Okay. Was it hard to raise eight children?

KG: We raised them, because it was twins last.

DS: Whow.

KG: This is a twin and a boy, last twins you see. We did not get... I say we all got girls and my wife said "No we must get some boys all right," she said, you know. And then that is how we increased our family...

DS: Okay.

KG: ...bigger, you know.

DS: Okay. Was it hard to raise them?

KG: What is that?

DS: Was it difficult?

KG: No, no, no. We had a business; we had nothing too short. We were... Nothing short, you know, like you are considerate all the time. You can sit for four to two hours still working.

DS: Oh. Okay.

KG: I was doing business like that and I go to white people houses like that. Doing my business, driving car. Forty, fifty years I was driving.

DS: Okay.

KG: All the time. And no, nothing short.

DS: Nothing short?

KG: No, nothing short. Only my children didn't want to read. I was anxious to read but they did not want to

read. But there is lots of grandchildren now, grandchildren, they all got top jobs. But they are all all right now.

DS: So are you proud of the work the Youth Congress has done?

KG: The Congress?

DS: Yes, the Youth Congress.

KG: We did not have a Youth Congress.

DS: You did not.

KG: No we did not.

DS: Or the Indian...

KG: You see, we had the Natal Indian Congress.

DS: Yes.

KG: Then yes, we formed the Congress. You know, afterward we formed the Congress; that was the time we had that, we created ourselves we must have mass... you see first I told Mrs Phyllis Naidoo too, I said, what... I called, before forming I called H A Naidoo, George Poonan. You see I went to George Poonan, he was working in the Mills now. So I went there about three times, that white lady said, "Okay, I called him."

The fourth time I went there the lady said, "You must get out, you know. You do not interfere with my servants." So I walked out and then I told Poonan. We called him Gengan, you see. So I told him "Look here, I cannot come here now, the lady is in Umbilo Road."

Not far from Phyllis Naidoo. So he was working at Mills, Knitting Mills. So I told him "Look I will write letters and tell you. I will not come here any more" you know.

Then I told him one day, the last time I went there, I told him "Look here, you must come to my house at six o'clock." I will tell him, you know, and we would have a little meeting, the three of us. So I went to HA Naidoo, he was at Field Street. He was... he had a tailor shop, you know, he was working as a coat maker. So he had a call. I went to the boss and say, 'can I see HA Naidoo,' and he said, "Oh yes," he called him, you know. And then he has a coat, you know, in the hand, like that on the shoulder, then he had a garment and was pulling the cotton out, you know.

Then I called him and I said, "You see, I have got good news." I said "You know, you must come to my place, Centre Street, at six o'clock we meet."

Poonan, HA and myself, we want to discuss about opening this meeting. Then HA Naidoo and Poonan came, we discussed everything, I had every thing. And then I said, "Look here, first thing we must do is, we must call up mass meeting. Little meeting until you get the awareness of other people."

Then we called mass meeting, and then we must go to every factory, you know. And get the key people there and tell them what is the quality of workers life, you know. They must bring it, better quality of life for workers. So we must get the same man in the factory. He must organise it, you know. So that is how I told HA Naidoo, Poonan were there. That time there was no Union. That is how Unions came about afterwards, you see. And then, so they went away. But then I called them. So then I told HA Naidoo, so we formed the body.

DS: Okay.

KG: Mr BD Lala and I came and formed the body.

DS: Okay.

KG: And from there onwards, then after two years I think, then Mr Monty Naicker used to come and talk to our meetings very frequently, about health affairs.

That is how he used to keep coming and going every time. We had a small office. It is Cross Street now; they demolished that place of Cross Street.

Saint Aiden's Hall, they called it. So we all had our meetings. We had all our meetings there.

And then, so when, then I found... Suddenly he joined after two years. After two years everything was going from strength to strength, the Movement and then from Movement to the National bodies and segregation councils, and Youth Council, you know.

It was one after one, you know, forming a new name. A new name, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: And then, finally, you know. Then Dr Monty Naicker joined. And that is how we then created that now we said we must have mass meetings. That is how Monty Naicker, and then they called it Red Square Meetings. Red Square. Now, they call it you know, Red Square, you see; and that is how we held all of our meetings that we had. That is how we started.

DS: Okay.

KG: Then also the Congress, and after that Congress, you know, to the Youth Movement and then from there we had the Election Committee and National Block and from there they decided to... we all applied for membership to the Natal Indian

Congress. So we all applied. So then they accepted our membership, you know, but they didn't come to the meeting, to Curries Fountain. So their work, Monty Naicker was elected, then that is how the Natal Indian Congress got a hold of their old members were left off. From there it went on, Natal Indian Congress was the one that fought.

DS: I just want to know what upset you most about apartheid.

KG: Upset apartheid?

DS: About apartheid.

KG: Well we, we... Well apartheid was a terrible thing, and there... They were taking all the good places for themselves, the Government; and the outsiders... I mean the Group Areas Act. They used to take all the places, Riverside.

DS: Yes.

KG: They take the Cato Manor. There it was like a Christmas. Always when I was a small boy my mother used to take me to this place, that is Bellair Road. Ooh it was lovely to walk there one time, you see, it is the bush. They took that now; and then they took, they all got places. You see what happened, the 'non-whites' cannot open any business, upon where they give you. Within that area you have got to do your business. You can't go to West Street and put a shop or a business or at Point Road or anywhere beach front, anywhere you can't do; only whites can do.

You cannot open a bottle store, you can't be a plumber, you can't be an electrician, all those was worrying me at that time. I wanted to be an electrician, or a plumber. But I did not have it. They

said no lectures, no nothing, there is nothing open for you. I wanted to be, you know, I was interested in being a plumber when I was there, you know. They said "no, no plumbers." That is how it went on, you see. That made it for us, you know, to form our own body to fight these unjust laws.

And then one day at the Red Square Meeting ... You see that is the time the Government comes to know, this is a terrible thing, you know. And then I told HA Naidoo and Poonan first, you know, in our starting time, I said "We will send cables to India, and we will send cables to all the democratic countries, you know, the peace-loving countries. We will send letters to them and ask for help. What is going on in this country." That is how it happened and then everywhere, you know, every country - peace-loving countries, would come to know what has happened in this country. And that is why they start banning the country, you see.

DS: Okay.

KG: So then HA Naidoo told them he was going to USA, United Nations. I met him in job, I went to his house, to his office, we had a long chat and I said "You know, Naidoo, don't forget when you go and meet Vijayaluxmi Pandit and explain first thing what is going on in South Africa." HA Naidoo must write to, you know, United Nations; I mean, to advise the others of Apartheid. So I told him that thing too. Because HA Naidoo always consult me whatever he wanted to do, you see.

DS: Okay, so did you mention a sense of hope or optimism during the years of Apartheid.

KG: Apartheid?

DS: Yes.

KG: What is that?

DS: Did you ever hope that Apartheid would end. Would come to an end one day.

KG: We were fighting for it.

DS: Okay.

KG: We must get it out. That is how it went. So they have been banning the country. All the countries were banning, I do not know... Not doing business with this country. So the country was going down. So Pik Botha was the Minister of the Foreign Affairs. He said, "Don't worry" he said "this is only a domestic matter. Why go and tell other people," he said. He used to come on the TV and say, you know. And you see he wanted to put us, now we haven't got vote, he is still saying "Don't worry, this is a domestic matter." How can domestic matters be... you know, come right, and cancel all these Apartheid laws.

Then how can you do that when we haven't got a vote? I said, "We haven't got a say." That is how it happened, you see.

DS: Okay. Did you have any... Have you met Gandhi?

KG: No, I did not meet Gandhi. I met Sastri, personally and I shook hands to him, there at the station. And I met Sir Harvey Boola, I met him personally, and shook hand to him. Then another person, Mr Sompersadh. Sompersadh, I think he was; came on an educational deputation in this country. I met him and we shook hands.

DS: Okay.

KG: And he had a secretary, a white European secretary, Miss Gordon, I shook hand to her. All these people

we had, and Mr CF Andrews who worked with Gandhi. We shook hand to him, he came and visited our school and he spoke to us. Then Mr Bernard Shaw, he came and lectured at the Gandhi Library for us. Nahnaad Shaw. And we had our other early prominent people from India;I mostly forgot their names.

DS: Okay.

KG: A lot of Indians came and spoke to our Youth Movement. We had a lot of people, and we have forgotten...

DS: Okay.

KG: And Mr [Jan] Hofmeyr.

DS: Oh

KG: You see.

DS: Okay.

KG: And I got letters here. I wrote a letter. The same time I wrote, then Mr Kajee of the Natal Indian Congress didn't write, I wrote, and I am thinking when I wrote, and I am thinking "How could the Parliament." Now which man can I write and say "stop the Bill from going through." And I am thinking if you are a reasonable man, you cannot do it. They will say "what is he doing man, we'll only recognise..."

A recognised body can write a letter and then they can pay attention to that. Now if an ordinary man like one of us, write a letter to them and say they must stop the Bill and deter that thing, then they'll say who you are.

DS: Okay.

KG: So now with all that ideals, you know, I was so eager to do something to stop the Bill. So I took the

paper I just wrote, and I said "who are you thinking of, who I can write to?" And I am thinking now, 'who I can write to.' And I am thinking, thinking, thinking... No, I think I know one man I can see is liberal enough, Mr Jan Hofmeyr. So he was the acting Prime Minister during the War too.

DS: Okay.

KG: So I got several letters, you know. So he... then I wrote to him and told him "Stop the Bill" you know, for the Indian community. So he wrote a Bill. He said "Tell the Indian Congress I am the friend of the people, I am also resigning from the Cabinet."

And he wrote me, within five days time I got a reply - how happy I was. I said, "from the Parliament, I know which man." I said, "how lucky I am."

I said that God is all the time, He is helping me to do something to improve the condition of the people.

DS: Okay. What Bill are you talking about?

KG: Hey?

DS: What Bill?

KG: What?

DS: What Bill should they stop then?

KG: Ahh. What?

DS: The Bill. The Bill that you said they must stop it.

KG: Stop, I said this?

DS: Yes, you said you wrote a letter to...

KG: Oh yes, the Group Areas Act from going in. The Bill.

DS: Okay.

KG: Ja. That was going into the Parliament to make it a Law.

DS: Okay.

KG: So before it goes I wrote to him to stop the Bill.

DS: Okay.

KG: You see he can stop the Bill; he was a very influential man.

DS: Okay.

KG: So then, he wrote within five days time. He said, "Look here, I am also resigning from the Parliament, Cabinet, because of the Group Areas Act."

DS: Okay.

KG: And he wrote the letter. I got the letter here.

DS: Okay. Were you ever arrested?

KG: I beg your pardon?

DS: Were you arrested...?

KG: No I was not arrested. There was always a time, you know, if I get arrested and gone then I do not think what will happen to our Organisation or to organise the people...

DS: Okay.

KG: Or to go forward looking into the people, you know.

DS: Okay.

KG: That was my intention, you know.

I said, "No, I do not know if I should go there and say all right, I am doing the mass." I had Mr Reverend Michael Scott and all those. You know we used to sit and sit and sit every night there I was not taken. I was not arrested like Dr Goonam and all. I always always took part, but I did not go to the - you know, but I did not go, you know, into the Prison.

DS: Did you belong to any...

KG: I think I was always frightened everywhere I went,

I said where I went I will not play. I do not want to get locked up and I wanted to be on the outside to teach people and influence the people and strengthen our body. That was my aim that I did not...I can go as a platform speaker and say "oh", then arrest me and then I will come out tomorrow. You know I did not want to do it.

DS: Okay did you belong to any Political Organisation then?

KG: Hey?

DS: Did you belong to any Political...

KG: Yes, in Overport I was a member of the Overport Social Club and also I was a Trustee of the Social Club. We had our own property and it was written here that we donated that R43 000; I was in charge of it. And I was also a member of the thing and I was a Trustee ever since we formed the Body and then we closed the Body and I was a member right through, since 1937, I think. Right, I was a member of that, the Overport Social Club and they even got a plaque there on the wall, on the top; SRS Hall; and then we ... I was a member there. Then sometime I went, I was a young fellow, I was very busy. Then I had a meeting, they were robbing cemeteries, you know, in the cemetery world, you know. Then they used to take the money, put it in the pocket and they never used to clean and the City Council, you know, they object to them keeping the place dirty. So then they wanted to close it, you see, so when I went there they had a mass meeting, so I just went to see and they said, "Ooh they are going there, they will put in as a Secretary, so I said look here I got up to the neck with hard work, I got

TB cases, I got to go on the air looking for TB people, taking grants for them and all this is for the Social Club, so I got so much work, I got two, one Tamil school I am running, I got children, and I got work religious work that I am doing.

DS: Religious work?

KG: And I got Tamil school going.

DS: Okay.

KG: And I got to collect money. I am doing my own business.

Meeting there. And then they said, "no, you will do the cemetery world, be a Secretary there."

So I go there, and I say, they said no you will be a part-time secretary. Then when I went there they had a meeting and then they took the meeting and they told me, I am going to be a general, be a secretary for a year...

DS: Okay.

KG: So I have been there for twenty five years.

So I used to go six o'clock, twelve o'clock they tap the door. Nobody want to do it. Twelve o'clock they tap the door and say we cannot accept it. Oh they said "look here, my daughter, mother died, give me a place." So I take their book, I look at it and say okay I will give you. Then six o'clock in the morning I take my car, I go and take the man from the Estate, elderly man, you know, who works for the graveyard, clean the place. So I go there, I pick him up. Six o'clock I will start digging. Six o'clock I am digging with him, you know. Digging, making, digging a grave. Six o'clock. Half past six I am done, see if the grave is dug properly according to the law.

So I go there and kneel down with him. Sometime they come across - sometimes there is a body there. Twenty five years I used to go there, kneel down and pray for them myself. By eleven o'clock, I remember one time, I kneeled down I said "You people are silent, I am here to help you. I will look after you."

That is what I told them.

DS: Okay.

KG: So that I did for twenty five years. Cemetery work.

DS: How did you feel when Nelson Mandela was out of prison?

KG: Ooh quite happy. We wanted to know who is this man, I didn't know.

DS: Okay.

KG: I didnt know much about it you know. Then I wanted to know. He is in jail they said, he must come out, unconditional release, there you are. Because Mandela did not want to have a conditional release, you know, because he wanted a... They said we will take you out but on condition; but Mandela said no, unconditional release he wants. So they - De Klerk, President of South Africa released him, and we were very happy that he has, because they were fighting for a long time.

DS: Okay.

KG: Africans I mean they are disadvantaged people. I used to go through the stationer where I used to buy stationery for my laundry, and I see people buy and I used to ask them because I am so interested, I said, "Mama, why do you buy this?" "No we are going to buy school books, we have got to pay for it." In the schools they do not allow free books.

DS: Yes.

KG: Then we have got to buy the school books, you know. And I used to go to Stationery people in Grey Street here and all that. And I asked there, and they said they should pay. So that is why I used to like them, African people.

DS: Okay.

KG: And one day I told one of my friends in the Natal Indian Congress office. I had all the friends, African friends. They are poor, but they pay it up, but I am just standing here and watching, you know, I talk to them I used to like. I have so many papers people gave from Zululand Universities.

DS: Okay.

KG: They all give me, Buthelezi, I have a lot of addresses and all given to me too. So what happened now, I used to tell these people "Why don't you form a body, you know. We got a body hey." They said, "Where could you have formed a nice body?"

It was like that, what I said. Somebody said they did not like me. I said, "Look here, we Indians, we cannot come and tell you we are the leaders, you will follow me, we will teach you and you lead now and I am the leader. I do not want that" I said. "I want a star to be the born in your community, and you must lead your side. So we Indians, we come one side, so we all come together."

DS: Okay.

KG: You follow what I mean?

DS: Yes.

KG: I do not want Africans to say, "No we are the leaders, we are doing everything and you follow us."

DS: Okay.

KG: "No" I said. I told them they all come to talk, the young people they used to come talk to me. I said, "I want you to be better, a better star must be born in your community, you must lead the thing, not the Indians. We will give you moral support or finance your support but not as leader."

DS: Okay.

KG: That is what I said to them.

DS: Are you a member of the ANC?

KG: No, I did not vote. It just came, that is when I am retiring.

DS: Oh

KG: Before then, I was old, you know when Mandela came in and all.

DS: Okay

KG: But we gave moral support and we...I did not you know, I wanted to. I had to... I was alone on my business. I had to see to my business.

DS: Okay.

KG: I was tied up.

DS: What do you think about our new Government?

KG: Well, I won't say, but we'll have to still see how things are going on. You follow what I mean; I cannot say everything is rosy. Now we want to see the financial side, unemployment is there, the investment is lacking; you follow what I mean.

DS: Yes.

KG: You see, we ... They lost tension, stabilise the country economically. At the moment we haven't got

enough factories to employ the people. There are millions and millions of people unemployed now. So these people, it is up to the ANC to get investment, foreigners investment in this country, and then if you establish big factories here, like motor industries and steel factories, even working here to absorb the old people.

DS: Okay.

KG: Do you know what I mean?

DS: Yes.

KG: You see that is why... if that is what is lacking now, that is lacking for the ANC we have not got enough investment in this country, you see. This is what I... the way I look at it, you see. If we get lots we have business all over, everybody will be employed and all will be happy. Not starving. I get here every day people are coming here, you know, you see, I feel sorry for them. Because I worked for it; and I am a man that I tear for people.

DS: I think we have come to the end of our interview.

KG: Now?

DS: We have come to the end of our interview.

KG: Alright.

DS: We are very appreciative for your participation.

KG: Yes.

DS: We do hope that your input will make a difference...

KG: I hope so.

DS: ... to the history of South Africa.

KG: Ja, all that you are trying to do is to improve the conditions of the people.

DS: Okay.

KG: You see.

DS: Okay.

KG: That is all we want, they all must live nice. And they all - what I like now is that we all must work together as one family, you see, and we must create that, you know. When I say, when you pass the road, try and say hello, you know. You don't know how many that will say hello to you and smile.

That is what I am thinking, you know. If every day people can do that, you don't know you are getting all the friends and you know, you make it all like one family life, you know. And we feel happy that is why all intention is that all must live. We all got a life. That is why one day I said, 'do not judge a person by the color of their skin. It is like a passing shadow.'

DS: Yes.

KG: Your real colour is your soul. We all got the same life. If maybe your mind may be different, your body different, your colour may be different, but when we come to the life it is the same, you know. That is why I say we must respect all the life. You got a life, I will cry for it.

You see that is what I like. That is my message, we must all work towards building one nation and one family. We must all be happy as children and grandchildren, and all.

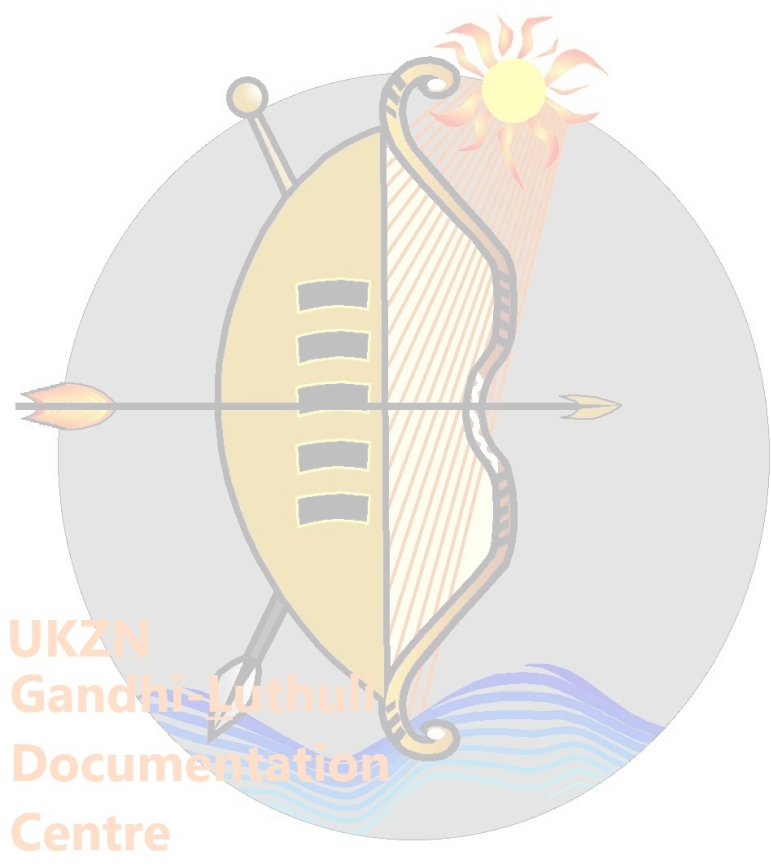
We must not talk about you know, you are a different race, that is your private matter.

DS: Yes.

KG: When it comes to public then we must all remember that you are my sister; you are my brother; you are my father. That is my message.

DS: Thank you very much Mr Govinthu.

INTERVIEW ENDS



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