

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

“VOICES OF RESISTANCE”

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT PRINCELY

INTERVIEWER: M NTSODI

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PLACE: DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

MN: Good morning and welcome to the Documentation Centre at the University of Durban-Westville. My name is Musa Ntsodi and welcome to another session of our Oral History. Today we are talking to Mr Robert Princely. Mr Robert Princely, good morning and welcome.

RP: Thank you.

MN: Mr Princely, to start with can you tell us where it all started? Where were you born, in which year and your full name?

RP: My name is Robert Princely. I was born in Puntans Hill and which is a part of Durban. And yes, I was born on the 28th of July 1948. I have my late father and my Mum and I have two brothers and two sisters.

MN: Can you give us their names?

RP: My eldest brother, he is my stepbrother, it is two different fathers and one mother. His father died when he was three months old, so my mother met my father and we are four in that part of the family. So my eldest brother his name is Anthony John, and my name is Robert Princely and then I have a younger brother whose name is Bobby, and my two sisters are Linda and Monica.

MN: Your parents' names again?

RP: My mother is Telagu, she's 78-years old and her name is Achiaamma and my father was Radhai, R-a-d-h-a-i. And he was an activist with the Natal Indian Congress. And he just – well we were quite well-to-do at one stage in our lives, and because of his activism everything virtually was taken away from us, and because of the Group Areas Act we had to move. I had to move about eight times in my life before we were actually, I actually was settled in a house that I called my own, sort of thing. So ja.

MN: Where were your parents born?

RP: My father was born in Magazine Barracks. My Mum was born in Umhlanga Rocks.

MN: Do you know anything about your grandparents from both sides?

RP: I know a little about my grandfather. He was a bartender or a waiter in one of the hotels.

MN: From your mother's side?

RP: On my mother's side in Umhlanga Rocks, and then my grandfather on my father's side used to make these bamboo baskets and things like that and so that was his trade. Yes my father was a tailor.

MN: And the grandparents were born in the country or what?

RP: No my grandparents came from India.

MN: On both sides?

RP: On both sides yes.

MN: What were your parents' education?

RP: My mother is illiterate. My father went up to standard five and he taught in a school in Magazine Barracks. Well he taught adults in Magazine

Barracks who couldn't get into school you know, so ja.

MN: Your father is still, which ones are still alive?

RP: All my grandparents are dead. My father is late now, as well. My Mum is still alive, yes.

MN: How old is she?

RP: She is 78-years old.

MN: Can you tell us about your family, and how was life in the family?

RP: Well with my father being an activist it was very, very difficult. Because you know my father was a tailor by trade and we had a tailor shop in Grey Street and you know what it is? A bomb goes off in Cape Town and they arrest all the activists in the country and the ones that were arrested in Durban are taken to 'Maritzburg or taken to Johannesburg and they get locked up over there for a couple of days and then they are back. You know they have got to find their way back. And it was very, very difficult. Because I mean imagine you are getting married on Saturday morning and you have placed an order for a suit with my father and you get there on the Saturday morning and my father is locked up in some prison somewhere. I mean you will never want to go back to anyone like that and eventually my father had to give up the tailor shop. And he had to start working in the clothing factory and even then they used to pick him up after work. You know they used to go to work and pick him up after work they used to pick him up and we never used to know where my father was. You know he would have been locked up in some prison somewhere and it was very, very difficult. And that is how he lost his job

and things like that; and he became very, very you know; he became an alcoholic. And as a result we just, you know, battled along in life. My mother had to go and work and she used to be a housemaid working for Osman's Spice Works, one of the owners of that establishment. Work in their houses, and things like that. She used to get paid I think it was about R5 a month or something like that, you know. And ja later on she left that job and she went and started working for JG Ram who owned a poultry business; and she used to clean fowls; and she used to clean chickens; and she used to earn one cent for every chicken she cleaned.

So that is how desperate life became for us; you know; towards the end of my father's what's-its-name; you know? And the one time, my father I think he was arrested by the police and he was – we didn't see him for about three months. And an old lady came to our house and she said: "Look there is a man in King Edward Hospital; nobody knows who he is or anything; and, you know, he has been there; I don't know how long. This doctor told me to come and see you and just give you a message to come and see who he is, you know try and identify him."

So we got there; my Mum and myself; I was very young at that time; and we got there and we saw this, I saw this man with this massive head, you know. I was wondering what happened? Who is this guy? You know, I couldn't even recognise my own father and when this doctor came through and he told us: "Look all we know about this man is he lives at 62 Pastoral Road, Asherville. That is all we know because it was on a slip of paper. The police

brought him here about a month ago and we have tried to treat him, take him home, don't let him get involved in politics or anything." And you know, he became an invalid, not an invalid but I mean, you know, he could fend for himself. But because he didn't, wasn't active anymore he started drinking excessively and things like that and he became an alcoholic, in the end. But he lived for another what, twenty years and then he passed on, you know. They told us the police brought him there and we discovered later on that he had – they had hit him so badly that he was, there was a vein in his head that would snap, they said, within a days time; maybe a weeks time; maybe five years time. So just don't let him get involved in anything. So that was the end of his career.

MN: Judging by what you have just said about your father, he sounds like he was some sort of an activist. Do you know instead how involved he was?

RP: Very involved, I mean he was involved right from the word go with the NIC, Natal Indian Congress. So you know, he died when he was 57; in about 1978, I think it was. And ja he was very, very involved so Nelson Mandela was his hero, sort of thing. We couldn't speak against the Black man or anything, you know. Ja, my father was such an activist that he told me that if you are marching against the regime, you don't, if you see a stone and they are coming against you with guns don't even pick up that stone to defend yourself. Rather let yourself be, you know, killed or wounded, you know, because that will be on their conscience for

the rest of their lives. I mean he followed the philosophies and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, to the tee. And he never, and that is why I think you know he got injured in such a bad way because he didn't want to defend himself.

MN: Passive resistance?

RP: Hmm, that is it.

MN: Can you tell us about his contemporaries, his comrades, if you remember some?

RP: I don't remember much or don't know much of that. There is lots of photographs and things like that, that I will let you have. And, you know, you can see from there. I mean he marched with Yusuf Dadoo, Monty Naicker, and all of them. Those were all his sort of comrades, at that time, George Supersadh. Ja, people like that.

MN: What was the old lady's reaction to all his movements? Did she just comply or was she against it?

RP: My mother today, sad to say, has become, she has got Alzheimer's Disease. So she's forgotten a lot of the old stuff and things like that, you know. But looking back at her life it was very, very difficult for her, you know, to bring us up. I mean, for me, we never really had a father, you know; purely because he was so involved, and things like that. Only later on when he had to give up his job and things like that after he came out of hospital the last time. You know ja, he wasn't really active at all and he had to give up everything, and we had to just keep him at home. And it was difficult; very, very difficult.

MN: But he complied?

RP: Well he never complied, right up to the end. My Mum complied with the rules and regulations of the country; but not my father.

MN: No, I mean, in the sense, did he give up his activism after the hospital incident?

RP: He had to; he had to. Because you know we put pressure on him and said: "Look just give it up." And he couldn't work for himself; he couldn't fend for himself. I think if the situation was different he would have gone back to being an activist and things like that. Because I think with the injuries that he had he forgot a lot of his what's-a-name? The activities and things like that, that he was involved in. So ja, that it is why.

MN: What can you tell us about the community you grew up? What sort of a community political-wise, socially, development-wise? What sort of community did you grow up in?

RP: For me every time we moved; as I said I moved eight times in my life; seven of those was when my father was still alive. And every time we moved somewhere there was always like a policeman living nearby or things like that, you know. And I think it was because they wanted to keep tabs on the activists and things like that, you know. Ja so.

MN: So you never – am I right in saying that you never really got permanent involvement in the community because you always, you were always moving?

RP: We were always moving, ja. We had never got involved in the communities and things like that. Now I am very involved because I am in Phoenix now for twenty-two years, so I am involved. When we were in Asherville, before we moved to Phoenix,

we were very involved because we were there for another twenty-two years, as well.

MN: You had stability?

RP: Ja.

MN: Can you tell us about your primary school; where you started your schooling?

RP: I began my – we used to live in Riverside, which is today the Umgeni Bird Park. And the closest school to us was Umgeni School, which is in Briardene, and we moved there, and that is where I started schooling. And when I was in standard one we got this house in Asherville. So we had to move to Asherville but I still continued my schooling at Umgeni School. And a year later I moved to Essendene School, which is today - I don't think it is in existence anymore, so. And then my high schooling I went to Centenary High. So that is where I completed my schooling.

MN: Still at primary school do you remember what, do you have any good memories about your primary school as to probably let's say your favourite teacher, your favourite subject, friends?

RP: Well because of my father's involvement I was, I hated the system that we were in and I was given a second-class education. I mean Essendene School was a State-aided school, so, you know, I think the teachers used to get paid and we had to buy our own books and things like that. So I used to go and work in people's gardens to pay for my school-books and things like that, you know. Even when I was in Umgeni School I used to walk to school from Asherville to Briardene so that I could save that tickey bus fare. Tickey was 2½ cents, so that I could

pay for my schoolbooks. Because of our financial situation at home; things were very, very difficult. And being the eldest in the home at that stage you know I had to do something. So I went and cleaned people's gardens and I sold newspapers as well. So you know.

MN: Judging by what you have just told me you are painting hardships and a very hard environment you were living in. Now for somebody who has just started school, did you like school? I mean with all these hardships?

RP: I loved school, you know, but I hated the system and, you know, what the Indian people were being put through. But the thing is this, we had to in order to get a decent education, we had to sort of go to school. You know, there was no money to go to a private school or anything so. But I loved school. I always did very, very well at school and I remember when I had to leave school in, when I was in standard nine, just starting standard nine, the teacher told me: "Why are you leaving school?" And I said: "Look, I have got to go and work." He said: "No I will pay for your books and things like that." And I said: "I've got to go home and starve for the rest of the day, only when my Mum gets home will I get a meal or something like that." And sometimes there was no food at home, as well. So we had to, I had to leave school and go and work.

MN: Your high school years can you tell us more about them? Any interesting - ?

RP: Well it was very, very interesting. I started singing just after, well while I was still in primary school, I

started singing in bands and things like. And...
[interruption]

MN: Traditional music?

RP: No, English music. You know, and so when I was in high school I started singing and I used to go out and sing at night. So during the day I used to be in school, at night I used to sing in the nightclubs. So that was my first job actually. I left school and went straight into the nightclub.

MN: But while you were still doing it, while you were still at school was it just for fun or were you earning something?

RP: I was earning something, ja. I was earning. I mean the nightclubs used to pay, not a good salary, but it was enough to get by sort of thing.

MN: It didn't affect your performance at school?

RP: At school no, no, no. School was still my priority because my father told me, "look you've got to get a good education," and things like that, you know. But then you know, when things are difficult at home somebody has to make the sacrifice, so.

MN: When was the year when you stopped schooling?

RP: It was in 1972. No sorry, ja it was in the sixties, about '62, '63, somewhere there.

MN: When you stopped for standard nine?

RP: Yes.

MN: When did you come back?

RP: How do you mean when I came back?

MN: I mean did you come back to do your Standard Nine again?

RP: No I didn't. I just stopped, ja. Because music was taking over my life and I was earning quite a good wage in the nightclubs and then some friends of

mine murdered a policeman in the road that I lived and they shoved his body down a manhole. And you know, because I was singing at night and had nothing to do during the day I slept virtually the whole day, you know. And so they arrested me as well, you know, because I was friends with these guys. We used to go to school together and things like that so. And these guys had no jobs after they finished schooling. So they murdered this policeman to get some money and things like that and I was one of them that was arrested. But I wasn't really formally charged because I had an alibi. I was in the nightclub when this happened and things like that. So they let me go, you know.

Ja but and then, it was there and then I said: "No I am not gonna really get involved with these guys because that was not part of my scene." Harming somebody or things like that. Because of what my father taught me that you don't harm your fellow human being and all of us were alike and all of us were equal in God's eyes. So that is where I was.

MN: Was that an Indian or a White policeman?

RP: It was an Indian policeman.

MN: And do you know the consequences for your friends?

RP: Well, I think they went to prison, and things like that and that was it. Because I lost contact with them soon after that because I wasn't interested in what they – they got into drugs and things like that. Which was not part of my scene.

MN: So where to from - you left school, you started singing. You sang until when?

RP: I sang until about 20 years ago. For 25-years I was in the nightclubs singing. I sang in all the nightclubs in Point Road and in all the nightclubs in and around Durban. I mean in those days, in the seventies, there used to be about twenty or thirty hotels in Durban and every one of them had bands. And now, when you look at it, from Isipingo right up to Stanger there was masses of, lots of hotels. And every hotel had a dance band or had a rock band and there was lots of work for cabaret artists and things like that.

MN: Were you doing originals or were you doing covers?

RP: Covers, only covers.

MN: The famous tunes?

RP: Ja all the popular tunes and things like that so.

MN: How did your father or your parents react to your new-found career?

RP: Well you know, when there is somebody famous in the family. We were like virtually unknowns, at one stage. You know, in our whole family set up and things like that. The moment my name started appearing in newspapers and my photographs started appearing in newspapers and my family started seeing what a famous guy I was becoming we became like the celebrity family amongst all the families sort of thing, you know. So ja.

MN: Am I right in saying that now with your newly-found fame and the fortune, I would say it was a fortune those days, you took the father figure role at home, providing?

RP: Yes.

MN: And the old lady gave up the job?

RP: Yes I had to, I mean I couldn't stand to see my Mum working like that, you know. So I told her to stop working. In fact by this time my sisters started working, my brother was working. So we said there was no need for both of them to go and work anymore. They had done their bit and so we asked them to stay at home.

MN: And your siblings, did they go all the way at school? Because now you gave up in standard nine?

RP: No, none of them went all the way. My younger brother was the pet in the family so he being the pet really was spoilt. So he just did his own thing right through his own school life and things like that so ja.

NM: So he didn't complete?

RP: He didn't complete. Even my sisters as well, they didn't complete their schooling, purely because they wanted to go and earn some money, and things like that.

MN: Even your elder brother?

RP: My elder brother went, he went to university and he was being reared by my aunty who gave him everything. She couldn't have children, you see, so she adopted him and he went to varsity and things like that. And he just fell short of his final exams purely because what happened was when he was in matric a snake bit him between the eye over here and he virtually lost his eyesight. And so but he battled on. Well he never got his degree but, you know, he got quite close there.

MN: What is your favourite music?

RP: I used to sing all – Elvis; Cliff Richard; you know, all the popular songs of that era and things like that.

MN: Can you tell us more about your musical career?

RP: Well I mean although we were earning some money in the White nightclubs and things like that I used to still sing in the Indian nightclubs. Now those days the Indian nightclubs used to, Indian hotels used to run from eight o'clock to twelve o'clock and then at twelve o'clock we'll go to the White nightclubs and we finished at about four or five o'clock in the morning. And the White nightclubs we were the only non-Whites in the nightclub so you know we were being watched as well. And we had the vice-police behind us all the time watching to see if we were going out with any White women and things like that. So I mean that is another – the police, the vice-police in Durban, at that stage, oh it was another story. Lots of friends of mine got caught and things like that. I was one of those fortunate ones that didn't get caught so, you know.

MN: What did you - wore costumes I mean doing the Elvis?

RP: Yes.

MN: Hairdo's?

RP: Mmm, all that, ja we had that.

MN: Please tell us about the bands you played in, you played with? The names of the band or?

RP: Oh, the names of the bands.

MN: Or were you a solo artist?

RP: Well I was a solo artist. I was a cabaret artist and ja I started singing in a hotel in Point Road called Drumtree Hotel. Which later became the Pussycat Nightclub. And then I sang at the Smuggler's Inn. That was a notorious place in those days. Mostly seamen used to come there and at the back of the

hotel used to go into the harbour. And there was only one entrance over there and there used to be fights in these nightclubs virtually every night between the different nationalities of seamen that frequented the place. And with the result we all used to just the moment a fight breaks out we'll, the fights normally used to take place on top of the tables and things like that. We'd put our heads down and under the tables we'll be out of there. So you know that was part of it.

The Pussycat Nightclub was another notorious place. No South African man was allowed in that nightclub only South African women were allowed, well prostitutes. And all nationalities of seamen came in there. Ja, that was it.

Then I sang at another club in, a Greek club, El Greco with a band called La Palomas. At the Drumtree Hotel I sang with a band called The Valentinos and later when it became the Pussycat Nightclub I sang with a band called The Storms. And then I sang with a band called the Stepping-stones, which used to play at a nightclub called Midnighter Club in South Beach Avenue. Then in Morrison Street there was a club called Upstairs and Downstairs. There I used to sing with a band called Outsiders.

MN: I am interested in that you sang in a variety of nightclubs and which were across the racial lines. In those days am I right in saying there was this division? There was this curfew that said that the people what was called then the 'non-Whites' were not allowed to be in town at a specific time? How did you go through all that?

RP: Well those days that law really was brought about you know that was a curfew for 'non-Whites.' How we got round it because, you know, we had proof that we were working. So if you were working, serving the White man at that time, it was okay. You were allowed to do that. I mean we used to walk down Point Road those days at five, four, five o'clock in the morning and nobody used to harm us or anything.

MN: But how did you manage it? When was the rest? Because you said from a certain period you were working at this place, then from midnight up until five you were working at another place. When did you sleep?

RP: We slept during the day, you know, and then you know after this policeman incident with my friends I got a job during the day. So at that time I used to sing only three days a week at night – three nights a week. You know Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. That is in the White nightclubs. That is from twelve o'clock to four o'clock in the morning and then on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday from eight to twelve I used to sing at the Indian hotels. And then during the week I had a job. I was in the printing industry and later on I went into the newspapers and that is where I started working for The Mercury. And then later on worked at the Daily News.

MN: When can one say you started being politically conscious? Being aware of the situations, as they were, and your political life, all the divisions? When can you say you really started being aware of that?

RP: I was always aware of it. Because I had a priest who came to Christchurch, Overport and he you know, he is today the Bishop of Natal, Bishop Rubin Phillip. And he, you know, the 1976 uprising he – the students from the university and the College of Education didn't have a place to meet. They couldn't meet because of the activities of the police at that time. So Bishop Rubin, at that time he was an ordinary priest in our church and he gave them a place to meet. So the leadership met at our church hall, at that time. And when I saw what the police, I mean somebody let the cat out of the bag that these people were meeting at our church hall. I mean when the police got there it was I mean chaotic. You know with these guys running around with machine guns. I mean you know these were children who were trying to resolve the issues by meeting in a peaceful manner and they were not even given the opportunity, at that stage.

My real involvement – how shall I say? My life changed when my father, when we had to bring my father out of hospital, and I saw what they had done to him, and you know it started to change at that stage. You know and there was a stage in my life when I was still in school when I decided to run away and to go and join the liberation struggle. But then my Christianity didn't sort of allow me to do that. And my father's teaching that, you know, I was not allowed to kill someone or something like that. And that was the fight that was going on within me all the time. Whether I should become fully involved. Right next door to us Vasu Gounden used to live, his parents lived there and Vasu and them were still very, very young. And I

saw what the police were doing to his father and with him being an activist and things like that. It was difficult. Very, very difficult. Two doors away from us there was policeman living over there as well. So you know, we knew were being watched around the clock, you know.

And it was at that stage when I decided let me run away and join the liberation struggle and you know come back and just blow them all up. But you know my Christianity didn't allow me to do that. And so I became involved, quite involved in the church through the leadership of Bishop Rubin. And he is my mentor actually, and I am where I am in the church today because of him. You know he taught me that there is a way out and things like that.

When I heard what they'd done to him, soon after he came to our church he became the priest in charge of our church. When I heard what they'd done to him when he was arrested and put in prison. I mean for the government of the day to do something like that, I mean here is a man who had never picked up a brick or a stone or even held a gun in his hand, and they had to treat him like that. I mean I was astounded and I said no I want to be somebody like that you know. And he worked within the system and he was opposed to the system you know. There are lots of ways even today you can work against something that you don't believe in and yet be an active part of it. You know I don't think we need to be silent about what is going on in the country today. We need to do things. We need to, there needs to be, but there needs to be that passivity as

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well you know, resistance to changes that you are against.

I mean for me today abortion is wrong. For me abortion is murder, you know. For me keeping people apart is wrong. Like the system that we have just come out of. And I believe a lot of the problems that we are faced with today is as a result of what we were put through. You know: "You are a Black man you stay there; you're an Indian you stay there." We were told all the time what to do in our lives, with our lives, which schools we should go to and things like that. For me that is wrong.

MN: Your father was an activist. How did his political involvement mould you politically?

RP: Well, at that stage, you know, I wasn't really involved. You know it didn't, I didn't see any motivation in that, you know. Purely because he suffered as a human being, you know, and I said I won't want to do that. I remember when my children grew up and they were still in school and there was that stage of, I think it was about '82, '83, my – I told my two daughters. I had two daughters at that time, I told them, "let's go and fight against this system." And those days I think the Indians were ruled by Amichand Rajbansi and the South African Indian Council and I said – I mean this is an abortion. It shouldn't really happen. We need a government that's equal for everybody, not just get a bunch of yes-men, to rule us. You know, if the White man said: "Let's put a road over there for them." They agreed with that. They were just a bunch of yes-men and I say that without any hesitation; that he, Rajbansi and his group, at that

time, they were just a bunch of yes-men. They really were, you know. And we, my two daughters and myself, we were nearly arrested because we were handing out leaflets to say don't vote for the South African Indian Council, don't vote for them.

MN: When can you say you started being involved politically? Being directly involved?

RP: Directly involved? It was roundabout 1976. Previous to that I was involved but on a very – it was very minimal, you know. If I was called to do anything I just went and did it but, you know, no real motivation behind it or anything. But after 1976 I said, 'no, we need to stand up for our rights.'

MN: Was it because of the uprisings?

RP: Yes, yes it was and I was very unhappy with what went on in Soweto and things like that. And there were certain priests who were in Soweto, at that time you know, including Bishop Rubin. And ja you know, that changed my whole lifestyle and I decided there and then that something needs to be done.

MN: You said when you started being directly involved, you told your daughters that it is about time that?

RP: It is about we start doing something about it. You know, to bring out the injustices and things like that.

MN: When did you get married?

RP: I got married in 1971.

MN: 1971?

RP: Ja, in fact, I got married in 1968, my first marriage, my wife died two months and three days after I got married as a result of a brain haemorrhage, ja and then I got married to my present wife in 1971.

MN: Her name?

RP: Yvette.

MN: And how many children do you have?

RP: We have three children. We have two daughters and one son.

MN: Then after 19 – just before 1976 you said you were not involved directly. You were involved but not as committed as you would become after this, after 1976. Were you still continuing with your music? Were you still very much doing the nightclubs or you toned down?

RP: Ja I think I wasn't involved as much prior to 1976 because I was working during the day and I was singing at night, you know, and I had a small family to run. I think that sort of stopped me from being involved fully in the struggle, sort of thing. And I didn't – I could see what was happening to activists and things like that and I said I have a family and you know I don't really want to get involved in this. But after 1976, I said, 'no, something needs to be done.' You know, I got involved with Bishop Rubin on a few occasions and things like that.

MN: And did the passing on of the old man have any effect in your commitment to the struggle?

RP: To the struggle?

MN: Yes. When did he pass away by the way?

RP: Roundabout 1978, ja. No it didn't really affect me in any way. It didn't motivate me to do any more. As I say I was battling with this thing about having a young family. I didn't want my family to suffer as I suffered. For me it was a learning experience because I had to pick up the pieces quite a lot.

MN: Can we pause please?

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

RESUMPTION ON TAPE 1 SIDE B:

MN: Welcome back.

RP: Thanks.

MN: You were just telling me about the beginning of your real involvement or shall I say more active or visible involvement in the struggle, which is after 1978. Can we go back a little bit and start by, go back to your musical involvement? You said that you performed in different venues of different races and you mentioned that in the White establishments you were guarded closely because of women? Can you tell us more about that?

RP: Well for me I didn't want to get involved with a White woman, and things like that. I mean I had lots of girlfriends, and things like that but, you know, everything was done very discreetly. I mean there was a Sergeant Visser, he was in charge of the Vice-Squad in Durban. This guy used to go and hide in people's [car] boots, you know, and watch musicians making love across the colour line. You know, they used to hide in bushes, in the boot of the cars, in, you know, watch them from a distance and things like that. And these guys had a cell where if you are an Indian or Black person and you got caught with a White woman there was a cell in Point Road Prison, where they'd go and throw you in there. And White prisoners used to come and rape these Indian or African men who were involved across the colour line. You know, I mean, some friends of mine we went to bail them out like you know the next day or something; they couldn't even walk. That is

how bad it was, you know, and these guys were responsible for that, you know.

And I mean if I go back to the newspapers, of those days, of the number of men that got caught with a White woman and things like that. I mean to some of the musicians, you know, it was a famous thing you know getting your name in the newspapers and all that. You know, I am singing in such a nightclub and I caught with a White woman, you know, it was like status symbol. You know, and the consequences was that they paid with, agh, it was mind-boggling, really. When I saw that I said, 'no, that is not for me.' You know I had lots of White girlfriends and things like that, but no I wasn't prepared to get caught, you know, through that. But there were so many different ways to get around the system sort of thing. You know, the White woman that – well we all had White girlfriends so we used to meet like in Asherville, in the Asherville grounds and things like that. They used to come by taxis and we used to get there by ourselves in other cars and things like that and meet up there and after the night was over, you know, they would go back in the taxis and we would go to our houses. You know, that is the way we got around the system. But some of the guys got caught and as I say they wanted the fame and fortune – fame. So they got caught and things like that. Ja so.

MN: Your music career, did you ever go to a studio to make records, or you just ended in the nightclub?

RP: No, I just sang in the nightclubs; and I mean there was no real scope; there was no outlet; or there was no opportunities for 'non-Whites' to record. And 'non-White' bands, if they wanted to record and

things like that they went to people like Raj Music Centre who would record the music for them and they were paid a pittance. Their music is still being played today, the CD's and the recordings that they made, those many years ago, is still being sold in the record shops and yet none of the royalties the musicians collect today. All the bands are dead and gone. Musicians some of them are still alive and things like that but they don't get any royalties and things like that. So even there these guys were making a killing and you know. I mean you look at the system today the other day the one lady from Joy died and she died virtually a pauper and yet she made such beautiful recordings. The system has to change. There has got to be equality and things like that, so.

MN: Now how did you juggle the musical and you said that you were also working, and the family life? I mean how did your new young family adapt?

RP: Ja, as my Christian commitment and, you know, where I was going in the church Bishop Rubin's wife asked me the one time, you know, she said: "If Jesus came tonight while you are singing in the nightclub, do you think he would be happy with you and the lifestyle you are leading?" And I immediately said: "Hey, that is a tough question." But I knew the answer but I didn't want to face up to the reality of the answer; that I had to give up my career and things like that. Because, you know, my life started to become one of wine, women and song. You know, and I didn't want to go there because I loved my family very much. And, you know, my daughters were doing very well in school and things

like that so I decided no I have got to give up, make sacrifices in my own life and things like that. And so I gave up the nightclub just like that. That was about twenty to twenty-five years ago, ja.

MN: Tell us now about the period after your conversion or after your commitment to the struggle? Have you ever stepped onto the toes of the government? Is there any incident where you feel you have stepped on the toes of the government, where you clashed with the securities?

RP: Well, the one incident that you know during the elections for the South African Indian Council. That was the one time that I did step on the toes. We were called names and things like that, as we were handing out the leaflets and things like that. But we, fortunately, we gave out the leaflets before we finished but my younger daughter who is today working for the Daily News, she bore the brunt of that. Because she was victimised at school, she was top of the class every year. Both my two daughters were top of the class every year. And she won the South African history speech contest here at the university when she was in Matric and right throughout her schooling career she was victimised. She wasn't the head girl in the school; she wasn't chosen as the head girl in school purely because the principal of the school, Northmead, he supported Rajbansi and clique. And so - but what she achieved outside of her schooling career spoke volumes of what she was able to do. And today she is senior sub-editor of the Daily News.

And my older daughter, my eldest daughter, she is the manageress of Liberty Life, the pensions payout

department. She has done quite well for herself, as well.

MN: You spoke about your pamphleteering, you giving out the pamphlets. Can you remember the people whom you were working with, who were anti?

RP: Well it was our priest who was at our church in Phoenix. You know, purely because of my stand of non-violence and things like that we just went and handed out leaflets, you know, and that was it. I felt comfortable with that, you know; that you were voicing your opposition to the system in a passive way. There was no violence involved or anything. The violence that was involved in it was the police that came arrested those people. But then the violence also was in a different form whereby they victimised my two daughters in school you know, so ja.

MN: And can you tell us about the period after – when was the elections held again, the tricameral ones?

RP: That was in roundabout I think in '83, '84 somewhere there, roundabout there.

MN: And now you lost the cause, how did you feel?

RP: Well as long as I made a stand. I think you know, somebody somewhere will pick up that leaflet and say: "Hey, you know," and I'm proud to say hey I made a stand. Although it wasn't picking up a gun and shooting somebody and things like that but I made a stand and for me that's where it all was.

MN: Were there any conversions because I'll imagine you were going through the line giving pamphlets? Were there any conversions with somebody you were giving pamphlets?

RP: Oh yes. I mean we were talking to people constantly, you know. I mean when these guys were canvassing they came into our road, you know, canvassing and when I saw them I mean I chased them out of there so fast. I said: "You guys are only in it for the money." And up to today most of them are still in it for the money. They are not interested in standing up for rights and things like that. I mean when you look at the areas how can they say – they have become fat cats – how can we say we are working for the people? What have they done? What have they achieved? There is still the crime. I mean crime has escalated even more now today. You know, when you look at it crime has escalated more. I mean virtually every day you hear of hijackings and things like that right outside our house. Actually two doors down from my house, in Lenham Drive, there is a tuckshop and a guy came he was sitting in his car and two guys came and they shot him dead and took his car. You know, and we are faced with that kind of violence everyday, you know.

MN: Were you ever politically affiliated?

RP: I am a strong supporter of the ANC today. Not actively involved but I support them.

MN: When did you?

RP: Well that is from a long time ago. That is from before my father died, you know. He told me you know when we saw that the Natal Indian Congress wasn't getting involved after – they were involved in a roundabout way with the ANC so I decided there and then, you know, the ANC would be one that I would support.

MN: What was your – that is before you joined the ANC, did you have a political philosophy of some sort? Where you say this is the way you want life to be lived or the government or the party that you will be affiliated with should be this and this philosophy?

RP: I said I will support any government that will bring about equality for everyone and democracy should be democracy. Ja, that is where I am. In the full sense of the word democracy, where there is equality for every person. If the White man is getting a pension of a R1 000, the Black man should get a pension of a R1 000. In fact, the Black man should be getting more purely because he is the one that had to suffer more than the White man.

MN: Yes. During that time that you say because you were talking about the seventies, the ANC and all other political organisations were banned and the only organisations that were the BCM and the Natal Indian Congress was still in. Where was your political home, where you just simply said you are NIC and you are staying NIC, though it is not there?

RP: Well, I supported the ANC from inside the country although they were outside the country. I supported all that they did and say. I remember the one time when Bishop Rubin asked me – this was just after the 1976 riots – a priest was jailed in Bloemfontein and he had nowhere to go and he came to Christchurch, Overport and Bishop Ruben. This was a Black priest and he came, I don't know how he got there but he just got there. And Bishop Rubin asked me to take him to Fedsin, that was the theological college outside 'Maritzburg, in Edendale and on the way I could see he was feeling

uncomfortable in his seat. And so I asked him: “Are you hurt or something like that? Because I see you wriggling around in your seat.” So he said: “No, the police hit me so badly and the sores are still open and things like that.” When he opened his shirt and he showed me the scars on his back I said: “Hell!” You know, I knew that this system had to be done away with. You know, for me, that was another sort of point against that present-day government that was so oppressive and it just wanted to murder people that was against the system.

MN: Then in the eighties the formation of the UDF, which was used a vehicle for the ANC, did you join it?

RP: No, I didn't join it. Purely again I think I was thinking of my family. For me, Steve Biko was a lay Minister in the Anglican Church and when you see what was happening to people like him. I didn't want to become something like that. You know, I have never been afraid of a challenge and things like that but this was just a system that was out to kill anyone who opposes it and for my family's sake I think I just didn't want to get involved.

MN: From that period then, from 1980 onwards, can you take us through what was going on in your life?

RP: Well I'd just finished singing in the nightclubs and things like that. I was getting involved quite a lot more in the church and things like that. I mean even the churches in those days were racially apart. You know, I mean when I look at the Anglican Church from which I come there were churches being built for the Africans over there, for the Indians over

there, for the Whites over there and things like that you know. Ja, even there was Apartheid in the church as well and I was out to virtually destroy the system. And I fought against that in the church all the way under the leadership of Bishop Rubin and I mean for me, at the moment, there is no better man to lead the Anglican Church in South Africa in Natal. And his choice was a unanimous one. I was there when they elected him as Bishop. I was a member of the synod that elected him and yes under his leadership. I mean he doesn't look at you as being a Black man. He doesn't look at me as being an Indian. He looks at us as being children of God and we need to have that equality and that is what he has fought for. And for me that is what I have been fighting for, as well. And as a result today we've managed to bring the churches together. I was saying a while back there was Apartheid in the church. There is a priest in Ntuzuma, who lived in KwaMashu, ten kilometres away from his church and he used to travel everyday to the church. They couldn't even afford to build a house and the Indian church, you know, so-called Indian church in Phoenix put up most of the money to build him a house right next to his church, and today he has got a beautiful house in what's-a-name? And those are the things that I have fought from inside the system. You know, we tramp on a few toes and things like that but it was worth the struggle. We had to make the sacrifices. We didn't have all the facilities in the Indian church, you know, and here was an African church that needed a house for its priest. He was driving an old car that broke down

and things like that and people in emergencies and Inanda and Ntuzuma those days were very, very troubled areas. There was lots of faction-fighting. There was lots of political fighting. And so we worked within the system and we got him a house close to his church, right next to his church.

MN: What went through your mind when you heard in 1989, 1990 when you heard that political parties were to be unbanned? I mean how did you feel?

RP: Well, I was overjoyed. I really was happy that, you know, these things were happening and things like that. I mean and I was hoping that it would be a thing that would benefit the whole of South Africa. And when you look at it since 1994 lots of good things have happened in our country. You know and there are still other good things that's going to happen. For me sadly, most well some of the Whites have not sort of climbed on the bandwagon and said: "Hey, hold on let's make this county beautiful. It is a beautiful country already but let's work towards bringing about the equality and things like that." And there is still that rich/poor divide that's there and we need to bring that parity down. Look the rich people need to give up something and the poor people need to be lifted up.

MN: Do you, considering the violence that you saw being directed to the people by the State, did you expect the change to occur in the manner that it occurred or were you expecting a coup?

RP: Well I was expecting a coup. I was expecting war, civil war to break out in this country. Had the government not changed its stance, at that stage, I think there would have been a coup in this country.

But you know, thank God there were people of all religions that were praying for a peaceful end to the situation. And that for me was – I mean we are a religious country, we really are. You know, when you look at the number of churches and religious organisations all around the country. There is a lot of good in this country and we need to exploit that. You know I worked for the newspapers for thirty years and I tell you even the newspapers those days were not allowed to publish certain photographs and articles. Everything had to be sanctioned. And that is how oppressed even the newspapers were in those days. I remember the one night. I think it was roundabout the 1976 riots I was working at The Mercury, I was working night shift. I used to start work at two in the afternoon and finish ten at night. But that night I had to finish at roundabout two in the morning. So I was working a twelve-hour shift. And at about I think about twelve o'clock I was working on a page of the Mercury, which was a political page, those days. And, you know, you work in sort of little cubicles, you know, little areas and all the pages that I was responsible for, that I was working on, and I was working on this thing. And suddenly I just was aware of a presence, you know, and I turned around, I mean I am quite tall, there was this guy his head was like about here, he was taller than me, he was a policeman, Secret Police and I looked straight like into his chest. And I said: "Can I help you?" He said: "No, I am just looking at what you are doing." And they took away certain pages at that time to destroy it because they didn't want those articles to go in. And that was another

experience with how oppressive the system was, at that stage.

MN: What makes you think or what do you think made the National Party to start negotiations?

RP: Well they were up against a dead wall, a blank wall and they were up against it right through. They knew that they couldn't change the system, they knew they couldn't change the country if they didn't change their own attitudes and thinking. They had to change and the only way they could change was to release Nelson Mandela.

MN: Do you think this was a one-man act or a minority group act? I am saying this because even today FW de Klerk is still being vilified for starting negotiations. What exactly do you think? Do you think it was just a random act or was it thoroughly planned?

RP: Well they could see that the unions were getting more and more violent in their stance. They were prepared to die. They could see that the children were prepared to die for their freedom. They could see that the Black man wasn't going to sit down and take it any longer. The whole world was against them. There were sanctions in place and it was getting more and more. There were more and more sanctions coming against the country. So they saw it coming and I think when they saw the writing on the wall they said: "No we have got to change, and change now otherwise we are all going to be thrown into the sea." I mean look at these four guys that are locked up and their trial is on in Pretoria, at the moment. I mean that is the ultra right-wing.

They want to chase forty million people into the sea. They will never do it.

MN: Do you believe that white people really did change, did have a change of heart? Considering what you have just mentioned now the four that are being tried. Don't you think probably some people are just paying lip service?

RP: Yes they are. They are still paying lip-service, purely because look if I am a White man that is living in the Northern Province or something like that who is oppressing the Blacks and things like that, for how long is he going to carry on? The system is changing by the day. I mean now we have this domestic workers who are getting a better salary and the White man has to pay, well anyone that employs a domestic worker will have to pay the new set salaries, you know salaries that have been set down. And that for me is a step in the right direction. I mean I don't blame young men today in this country for going and wanting a better life. You know what I mean?

When my mother used to earn that R5 a month, when she used to wash people's clothing and things like that, you know it made me – how shall I say? It made me angry at what we had become, and when I saw her going to work and standing in knee-deep water; cleaning all these chickens and getting one cent for every chicken she cleans; you know it made me angry. And today some of us pay our domestic workers R100 a month; farm workers are being paid R100 a month. Where, I mean how can you live in a system like that? I mean, how can you be a part of a system like that? Something has got to change. I

mean those children of those maids who earn R100 or 200 or R300 a month, I mean they must be saying: “Wow, what can we do? How can we change the system?” And the only way is to go and rob somebody that is rich.

MN: Coming back to the talks. What do you think, or what was your thinking on the combination of the people on the table? You had the Bantustan leaders, you had the Rajbansis’, you had the government, you had the exiles or the unbanned political organisations. You had people who wanted the change of the status quo and the people who wanted to preserve it, but now who were claiming to have changed. You had people who occupied land; who wanted to defend the land owners; you had people who wanted the land. I mean were you satisfied with the combinations especially the involvement of the Bantustans and the Rajbansis’?

RP: Unfortunately, we have still got Rajbansi in the system, and people like him. You know, I would have thought that there would be more people in the calibre of Fatima Meer, IC Meer, George Sewpersadh and Billy Nair. You know, people like that who really struggled for the system.

Rajbansi never struggled. And you know, he was just part of the system all the way. He is getting as much as he can even up to today, and there are cronies like this that are involved in the system. I mean, at that stage, when the talks were going on and things like that it was okay because those are the people that were nominated or elected to be there and things like that. But I would have thought there should be more of the liberation struggle, the

people that really suffered, there should have been more of those people there. Not the people who were comfortable within the system because they were earning fat cheques, but people who really struggled for this whole system.

MN: So you shall I say – am I right in saying that you were not happy with the composition?

RP: Look, I wouldn't say I was not happy. I was happy to a certain extent with the outcome that we have got democracy today, but I think we could have achieved a lot more, at that stage; purely because the White man needed to give a lot more than what he is (giving up). We have got to stop a system like what is happening in Zimbabwe from occurring over here. We have got to do it. And there has got to be that give and take where the rich man has to come down a peg or two, he has to, in order for us to all, all of us to achieve equality. There shouldn't be this divide where the rich man gets richer and the poor man gets poorer.

MN: There is this opinion that said that the parties on the left or the freedom organisations or whatever, compromised a lot at the table. Some people usually mention the job reservation; the people who got the positions; and all those things; because mostly White people got their jobs or their positions through; the fact that there was this guarantee that they will keep their positions; people saw it as a step backward; because now how can somebody who has been supporting a system, defending it, all of a sudden promote the system or the programmes? For instance, the RDP and the Affirmative Action, those are some things that went against what they

believed. Some people feel that we compromised a lot. What is your opinion on that?

RP: I don't think we have compromised a lot. I mean look, for me, affirmative action will work. You know, in the system there's a lot of greed that's why we are seeing so much of white-collar crime in this country. And for me there has got to be the right person for the right job. We've got to select the people that we need in the system, the right man for the job. We can't get somebody that is uneducated to fill a position where it needs a level of education to fit into that system or to fit that category of employment. We've got to take it one step at a time. What we really need to do is to train people for the position. To identify positions and say: "Right we need an admin manager in this position over here. What have we got at the moment?" To put people in that position there that have the qualifications and then to train people to fill that position. Then we will get the right man for the right job. Otherwise it doesn't mean because I have had a terrible past, I've had to lead a terrible past and I can become a manager. No I've got to be trained to be a manager. The suffering that I've gone through in my life doesn't mean that I can get a top job today. It means I need to be qualified for the job and be trained for that job.

MN: What do you think of the opinion that the new government took the office but didn't take – what can I say? But doesn't have all the powers? Referring to the fact that some people say we only have political freedom but economic freedom we

haven't got. We're still what we were before '94.
What is your opinion?

RP: Ja, for me there the unions need to give a little bit more. They need to tell the people look we can't go on earning R2 000 a month and then claim R2 500 next year and R3 000 the following year. Purely because our, the economy of the country is not going to sustain that. There needs to be grading of jobs. If you are a person who's in the assembly plant of a factory in the what's-a-name in the car manufacturing business we must realise that we need more investment in the country in order for this country to survive. But if we're going to become radical and start pushing the limits, getting as much out of it just now we are going to be out of the job market. I mean the commodities in this country will be so expensive that nobody will want to buy from us. We've got to be competitive. We've got to think of the outside world. We need that investment and let's create a climate where there is equality for all and there is a decent living wage for everybody, and not sort of just be unrealistic.

MN: What do you think of that then? Because that is the excuse that the trade unions were putting (forward) in the recent strike. Saying that: "you cannot tell us that we cannot have a raise while you have fifteen percent increase." Meaning those, the managers at the top of the ladder.

RP: That's what I mean - you know I mean for the top earners there should be a freeze on all wages, on all salaries. Purely because I mean it needs to start with the politicians themselves as well. I mean when you

look at what the ordinary councillor is earning at the Itekweni Municipality. I mean an ordinary councilor, he's a fat cat already, and his living standards are right up there and yet he is governing people who are right down over here saying he's fighting for them. He's not giving off anything over there.

Something beautiful happened. The tornado that hit the Limpopo Province. I mean the Premier of that province said: "From my own funds I am going to give a R1-million towards these people that are left homeless and things like that." Now can you imagine if we had more people like that in this country what would happen?

MN: You being ANC, you said you were an ANC member, the ANC believed in the nationalisation before getting into office but as soon as they got inside the office they've changed their tune. Judging by the macroeconomic policy and also judging by the privatisation that is taking place. What is your opinion on that?

RP: Well, I think you can't just come into government and change overnight. Change has got to take (place) gradually. You know, it's got to come gradually and for me that's where it's all at. That change in this country will have to take place gradually. There's got to be radical changes in some ways, in some areas but in other areas there has got to be gradual. You know, the thing is this I can't - we mustn't be like the Nationalist Government, whereby they dictated what went on in the country, at the detriment of the majority of the people, right. I mean majority of us were unhappy with the

system, right, and I am hoping that the ANC, although I am a strong supporter of them, won't stoop to that level where they bring about change and say: "You will do this." Like the Nationalist Government did, but rather they would bring about change gradually and you know, look if I tell you this is a good system over here, you know this computer will cater for all your needs and things like that; I've got to first show you that that system will work. And bring you on board to make you happy with what is going on, and then we can sort of gradually - you will accept and people around you will accept it and the people around that will accept it. But if you come here and say: "Use this system, you will use it because this is what we have got" and carry on like that. You become a dictator. And we were in a dictatorship with John Vorster and the rest of them, you know Verwoerd and all that, but now we are not in a dictatorship. We are in a democracy, where the will of the people needs to be seen to be done by the government.

MN: The gap between the poor and the rich was wide during the Apartheid and the wider it is becoming now or the status quo remains. Don't you think that privatisation is going to promote this since the richer will combine and have the monopoly of these businesses the Telkom and whatever the other state businesses that are being privatised?

RP: I don't know. I am against privatisation purely because it's going to be, you know, like what is happening in the rest of the world. Wherever there is privatisation, the big corporations they start dictating. You're forced like the telephone,

Telkom, you're forced to buy into this system because you need a telephone. And if Telkom was privatized, it would be owned by a group of people who will then dictate to you what the fees should be. Your call can be anything. It might be twenty cents today tomorrow he can stand up and say, "hey you know what, it will be forty cents, and the day after that, one rand." What happens to you? You've got to pay because you've got to use the telephone. So that's why I'm against privatisation.

MN: Are you happy with the transformation in the country?

RP: Yes, yes I am happy but more needs to be done. When you look at it you know again the whole system needs a revision. We are eight years into democracy now and we need to be showing the fruits of the struggle. If we are saying we are truly democratic, then we need to be truly democratic.

MN: Can we pause please?

RP: Ja.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

RESUMPTION ON TAPE 2 SIDE A:

MN: Welcome back.

RP: Thank you.

MN: Well I just asked you about the transformation, whether you are happy and you said you are happy. Are you happy in all departments, including the judiciary?

RP: Well you know, for me, I'd like to see more happening as far as crime goes. The sentences need to be stiffer purely because I mean the thing is this it doesn't mean because I'm unemployed I can go and rob somebody. For me, the crime in this country

is unbearable. Lots of innocent lives are being lost purely because of the economic climate, I'm sure. But then there are some people who just don't want to work; who think that they can rob somebody and get away with it; for me that's not on. You have got to work to at the end of the day to say: "Hey, you know what, I earned this. I worked for this." And transformation doesn't happen overnight. It's a process that needs time and it can never be achieved overnight, ja.

MN: Moving to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. What is your opinion on that?

RP: Well I am disappointed that some of those that were behind bars and they were not given, they were not allowed to, they were not given amnesty they were released by presidential pardon, and things like that. I think that was a tragedy. It undid the work of the Reconciliation Commission. It really did.

MN: You mean the ones from the freedom fighters or?

RP: The freedom fighters. I mean some of them were legitimate they needed to be behind bars to suffer for what they did. But I mean like this guy Barend Strydom, he's walking around; he's still a right-winger; it hasn't changed him; you know what I mean; he still wants to go and kill Blacks. When you look at that; I mean especially the right-wing in this country; they need to be treated like those that were involved in the liberation struggle were treated, in those days. You know, you've got to fight them on their doorstep with what they are comfortable with. Most probably it's violence with violence. Because look they are perpetrating a violence that has been in the system for a long time

and they need to be shown that the Black man will not stand up for their right-wing activities.

MN: Were you satisfied with the goal set or shall I say do you think the TRC achieved its goal?

RP: I don't think it achieved a hundred percent of its goals. Here was a system that was set up by the government and the government went back and said: "Hold on, the Truth and Reconciliation erred, they erred in this area so we will release this guy." And the guys came out and they started committing the crimes again. And for me that's not on. So they needed to listen to what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said and to follow those instructions. I mean you don't set up a system and then go back and say, "No, no your system was wrong."

MN: Do you think it was right for them or those who designed the TRC to say that you tell the truth, the whole truth, then you will be immune to prosecution? Do you think to allow them in like that?

RP: My feeling goes out to the victims of that violence on both sides, what really happened and things like that, if they were talking the truth, then they should have been given amnesty. But if they didn't then, if they didn't tell the truth, then they should have been locked up, and that's where I'm at with that question. And then on the other hand, my feeling goes out to the victims of the violence. I side with them no matter who it is you need to think about wives, children, families, and things like that. I don't want what happened to me to happen to someone else. So ja, the TRC was a good organisation. That's why in different countries they

now sort of want to start up the same kind of TRC in their countries – like the Congo and things like that. But it is going to take time. You've got to think about the victims.

MN: As an ANC member again, what is your take on the ANC stance on the HIV/ AIDS saga?

RP: There again we have got to preserve life and as much as I am an ANC supporter I am against the stance that the government has taken. The anti-retroviral vaccine should be given to all women, everyone. I mean I visit the hospitals quite regularly as part of my ministry and I see what HIV is doing, and I see the children that are suffering. And it is mind-boggling, it really is. You know, I mean the statistics that we have got at the moment about HIV/AIDS is I think 75%, right. I think in all the provincial hospitals there is over 80% of the patients that are HIV positive, over 80%. And that needs, the government needs to take careful note of because when you look at it because that means there is only 20% people in the hospitals that are there for other illnesses. And if we are not going to find ways and avenues to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS we are not going to have workers in this country. And that is a fact.

MN: What does Mr Robert Princeley do in his leisure time for relaxing?

RP: What do I do?

MN: What do you do?

RP: I sit down I listen to music, mostly Christian music, and ja, that is or I sit down and watch TV.

MN: Do you still play?

RP: Music?

MN: Yes.

RP: No I don't. I don't.

MN: You are not even tempted to play the piano?

RP: Sometimes, sometimes very little, actually, of that.

MN: What is your favourite group or musician?

RP: Now, at the moment?

MN: Yes. I want your current and your all-time?

RP: My all-time favourite is Elvis.

MN: What did you do on his anniversary recently? Did you play him all day?

RP: No, no, I just listened to. In fact I had a record collection of about 400 records which I gave away and, you know, and ja on his anniversary I just sat down and listened to the radio and things like that. There were lots of good things said about him and lots of nasty things said about him. So ja that is how I spend my time. I listen to records.

MN: And your favourite, currently?

RP: My favourite currently is a group from Australia called Hillsongs. They are a Christian group and I think they are making very, very good music. You see, my passion is for young people and you've got to meet them where they are and things like that and as a result of people like this Hillsongs and things like that a lot of the young people are now starting to live pure, good lives. You know, not going to nightclubs. I mean when you look at the nightclubs and the nightclubs from my day compared to the nightclubs of today, it is worlds apart. And in my days guys used to carry small knives and things like that, which we used to search for, you know, if we suspected somebody. I mean those days, guys used to walk into the nightclub

with suits and ties. If you didn't have a tie on you know, no tackies and everything. You used to walk in with a suit and tie, you know, properly dressed. And today you use tackies in everything, you just walk into any nightclub. And so and today the guys don't walk in with small knives and things like that. They walk in with big pangas and things like that, you know, so ja.

MN: What is your favourite, favourite Elvis song?

RP: The song that I like and I sang quite a lot was 'I Just Can't Help Believing' and then there is another Trini Lopez song that I sang quite a lot was Labamba, and ja it became famous again just recently. Ja, those are the two favourite, favourite songs.

MN: What is the book that you are reading currently, and your all-time book, or should I say, your favourite author?

RP: There is a book by Benny Hinn that I – you know, it shows you about lifestyle and things like that. You know, how when you are in tune with God how the Holy Spirit sort of motivates you and moves you forward and things like that. I don't read novels and things like that. I only read religious books. Before I used to keep up with the times, you know, because I was working at the Daily News and I used to get the Daily News free of charge and things like that. I just buy the daily newspapers occasionally now but I read a lot of religious books now.

MN: Your favourite quote from the Bible?

RP: Well John 3:16 says:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

That is what I'm hoping for and preaching at the moment; that's what I'm doing.

MN: Who is your role model in life? Who you have been modelling your life on?

RP: Bishop Rubin. Again it comes back to the same old guy. You know, he's been my mentor. I've seen; I've been a part of his struggles in life and things like that. I mean up to today although he is the head of the Anglican Church there are still certain priests in the Anglican Church who don't like his style of leadership. You know like the government. I mean I am ANC, but not everything that the ANC does am I happy with. So he too has got the same struggles, where the church tells him this is what he should be doing. And then, he although he's uncomfortable with it, but because he is the head of the church, he has got to do it. And ja that is, he is my role model he really is.

MN: Are you still in contact?

RP: Yes, very much so.

MN: Looking back to your life and through all what you have gone through and all that, what can you put your fingers on and say: "This is what I've done wrong, which given a second chance, I'll do right." Is there anything?

RP: I am achieving part of, you know, I do that on a regular basis where I look at what I've done wrong and I evaluate my whole strategy and things like that and I do that on a regular basis. At the moment our church is involved in an outreach programme in

Ntuzuma, sorry Mahoti, which is a shack land area and there is, we help to run a little crèche over there with about forty children. And so I help to feed on a regular basis over there whenever I have money sort of buy a bag of mealie meal and give it to them. They have very little resources and I want to see that grow into hopefully a building soon. But I haven't been very, very successful in getting the finances to get that off the ground.

MN: Now if one were to ask you for advice what would you tell a young person who lives in South Africa today? What words would you say?

RP: I would say education. You know, getting the best education that you can. Today everything is free although it really, really be free I mean the school fees and things like that in the schools are mind-boggling. You know, I think the government needs to put more money into the system, into the education system. And really make education accessible to all. And I think if you have got a good education, if you are motivated enough that for me is the burning issue. The moment our children learn to learn more, you know you can never stop learning, and the moment you learn to learn more you have a passion to acknowledge; to receive further information and things like that then you are on the right track. I'm 55-years old; I don't know it all. I'm still learning. For me life is a learning process. I make mistakes every day, and so too, the youngsters need to acknowledge "Hey I must learn. I must get an education so that I can be the best that I can be." You know, all of us need to be the best that we can be.

MN: Mr Princely, thank you very much for coming through and thank you for your time.

RP: You are welcome.

MN: Thank you.

RP: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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