

Simon was born in Soweto on Boxing Day in 1959 but grew up on a farm in Heilbron in the Orange Free State. When he started school there he had to walk 14 km a day to and from school.

At the end of 1971, he had completed Std 4 at the farm school and went to join his parents in Bophelong in the Vaal.

Despite an unhappy family life and the difficulties of adapting to a bigger school and a township environment, Simon performed well at school and obtained position one in his class.

When Simon began high school in 1974, he joined the Students Christian Movement (SCM) which ?? He also began playing tennis and sang in the junior choir.

At that time, he and a group of friends were constantly singled out for particular punishments and chores and there were no student organisations to deal with these problems.

Thus in the following year, when Simon was in Standard 8, he was among those who initiated the formation of the Lebohang Student Action Committee at his school. They sent a petition to the principal.

Simon was in Standard 9 in 1976 when students were forced to have some lessons in Afrikaans. They read in the newspapers that other schools were protesting against Afrikaans and so they also started complaining to their principal.

A boycott of classes began at some higher primary schools in Sebokeng. Buses were stoned by marching school children and our school library was looted. To Simon's surprise, he was detained with fellow students as suspects in relation to the looted library and taken to John Vorster Square in Johannesburg where they were separated, interrogated and assaulted.

Nevertheless it was at John Vorster Square that Simon first heard people singing freedom songs. After 105 days he was released.

The following year, Simon's parents decided that Simon should go to boarding school and sent him to a non-racial Catholic School where he was one of 15 blacks in a school of 800.

Simon changed schools again in matric, this time going to Santa Maria High School, where he joined the Young Christian Students (YCS).

In 1978, Johannes Matsobane, a activist from the Vaal triangle, died while serving his sentence on Robben Island.

YCS got involved with the funeral arrangements and in the course of making these arrangements, they came into contact with the Soweto Students League (SSL) and the Vaal Youth Crusade.

They went house to house collecting funds for the funeral and negotiated with shop owners and shebeen owners to close their businesses on the day of the funeral. The funeral was held on 28 August 1978.

In 1980 Simon attended a secretarial college in Johannesburg. In March that year, the Vaal branch of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) was launched and he became its general secretary.

Cosas began by concerning itself with the formation of SRC's in the Vaal

but soon became involved in the rent issue because there were no other organisations in existence. Cosas organised mass meetings which Simon addressed.

In September 1980, Cosas organised a protest march to disturb the visit of Mopedi from QwaQwa and joined in the protests against the replanning of Evaton organised by the Evaton Ratepayers Association.

Vaal students joined the national school boycotts in 1980 and Cosas organised sit-ins and boycotts as a result of which Simon was detained for 14 days.

In 1981 Simon was detained for seven months and held as a potential state witness. He was never called to give evidence and released on 29 July 1981. During his detention he was interrogated at length and tortured.

In October 1981 Simon was again detained for about six days.

In 1982, Simon moved to Johannesburg and got a part-time job at the South African Institute of Race Relations with their Operation Hunger Project. At the time of his detention he was still employed by the SAIRR as a co-ordinator of the Education Support Programme.

In Johannesburg, Simon became involved in the Detainees Support Committee (Descom) where he would help visiting the families of detainees, organising food parcels and seeing to it that detainees have legal assistance.

He was detained on the 23rd of September 1984 while attending a funeral of a friend, ? who had been killed in the unrest.

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