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Public encounters: the negotiation of ritual, risk and relevance in the performance of Johannesburg's National Remembrance Sunday ceremonies

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KBZ: Can you give me just a little bit of background on your involvement in World War II – how you joined, where you served, why you joined etc.?

JM: I served in the Second World War. It started in 1939, it ended in 1945. I served in Africa, Italy and France. When I signed on it was June 1941 and then I was demobilised when – well strictly speaking, the war ended on the 8th May 1945. I remained on, however, until July 1946 when I was demobilised.

It was very interesting, and the times it wasn't so good. Well that's as far as the army is concerned. Well after the war well I settled down in civilian life up to now. I joined the South African… well at that time it was called as the British Empire Service League. But now it's South African Legion and I joined that at the end of the war, the British Empire Service League. When South Africa became a republic, then it changed from British Empire to the South African Legion. Well I've been with the legion ever since, up until now, and I'm the chairman of the Soweto branch of the South African Legion.

Let me say, we're coming now to Sunday Remembrance Day service. Now the First World War started in 1914 and ended in 1918. And then after the end of the First World War the Sunday Remembrance was established and it carried on I think for about 20 years because the Second World War broke out in 1939 and ended in 1945, and then it was also a member of the Sunday Remembrance. Now Sunday Remembrance emanated from those two wars, from 1914 to 18 and then 1939-45. Now the aims and objectives of Sunday Remembrance are to perpetuate the memory of those who fell in the line of battle fighting for the king and country. Now the event that is the Sunday Remembrance the event is celebrated on the 11th of November or the date nearest to the 11th yearly. These celebrations are held worldwide, as they are in the national interests. Now in 1994 the scope of the Sunday Remembrance was broadened to accommodate MK that is *Umkhonto we Sizwe* it is the armed wing of the African National Congress, and APLA. It was further broadened, when SAPS it was taken on board, and all other forces which fought for freedom, saw that there could be interracial harmony among of all people of the world, regardless of race, nationality, creed, social position and political opinion. So those are the aims of the Sunday remembrance service.

KBZ: I'd like to talk a bit about your personal experiences of the event. When was the first time you attended the Sunday remembrance service?

JM: Let me see… the first time I attended the Sunday remembrance service it was in 1946.

KBZ: As soon as you came back and were demobilised?

JM: Yes

KBZ: What were your impressions of the event?

JM: Well, my impressions of it are good, because it is out to see that justice is done to everybody. Now people must live together harmoniously, there must be better life for all people, we must work as a team as we did during the war. If we did not work as a team we would not have won the war. So, those are the aims and objectives of the Sunday Remembrance services.

KBZ: I wonder if we can go back to your personal memories of the event in 1946. Can you describe it? For example, were there many people attending?

JM: Yes! There were many! As I said it's country wide, worldwide. You must take it upon yourself one day, it's in November every year, on the 11th November, just go there and see.

KBZ: I attended the Remembrance Day ceremony in 2005 and 2006.

JM: There are just as many now as there were. In fact today there are even more, yes. There are even more now than before because you know the third generation have also infiltrated into it.

KBZ: I would have thought that in those days there would have been more World War II veterans…

JM: Yes it's true. There were much more World War II veterans because first world war veterans had faded out, they went out of the scene […]. Even now the Second World War ones have faded out, faded off completely there are not as many as there were. That is why in 1994, when the current government came into power they broadened the scope of it to accommodate even other forces which did not take part in war, but they fought for freedom. They were freedom fighters. For instance, even the police, the SAPS, they came in. All those organisations, or they call them forces, which fought for freedom, they were accommodated, they are part and parcel of the Sunday remembrance day. It is not purely for ex-servicemen. Though ex-servicemen were very much opposed to having these people taken board saying that they did not fight wars how can they just be taken on board, but well, of course, through negotiations they had to give in, cause it was said alright they did not fight the wars but they fought. For freedom. So in that way they are all included.

KBZ: I wonder if you can give me a picture of what the event looked like back in those days. For instance, has the format of the event changed over the years? For instance is it like today, where it begins with the parade, and then there's the religious ceremony, and then the wreath laying…

JM: That didn't change, it's the same. That didn't change.

KBZ: Going back to the question of attendance, my impression was actually that before there were much more people attending than there are now…

JM: Yes, because people were fresh from the war many people have died since so that reduces the strength of the participants.

KBZ: So there were more people then?

JM: Yes, definitely

KBZ: I imagined that there were hundreds, thousands of people… which would it be?

JM: Thousands.

[…]

KBZ: So, in the events back then, who paraded? Did the Traditional Regiments participate, like the Transvaal Scottish for instance? Did they look similar? Was the music played similar?

JM: Yes they were there… with their Scottish skirts.

KBZ: And with regards to the religious service, what language was the event conducted in?

JM: All the religious services were held in English not Afrikaans. Not vernacular but in English.

KBZ: And did you attend regularly since 1946? For instance, were you able to attend through the 60s?

JM: I had a break for a long time, and then I resumed in 1994. No 1993. And then I attended every year since 1993.

KBZ: From what I understand there were a lot of tensions around the war, because the Nationalists that came into power in 1948 had not approved of South Africa joining…

JM: No, at the outbreak of the war, it was the Nationalist government, the prime minister was prime minister Barry Hertzog. Smuts was United Party, he was not Nationalist. Barry Hertzog was the leader of the Nationalist party. Smuts was leader of the United Party. So at the outbreak of the war Hertzog and this group were opposed to South Africa participating in the war. And then General Smuts, we were a British dominion at the time under the governor general, the governor general at that time was Sir Patrick Duncan. So smuts in parliament proposed that South Africa should join the war effort. Hertzog said no. So the house of parliament was divided, there was a division and Smuts won the division. Most people supported Smuts that South Africa must participate in the war. So the governor general Sir Patrick Duncan ordered Smuts to form his government and Herzog must step down. So Hertzog stepped down Smuts formed his government and they went to war.

You see Smuts was the Prime Minister of South Africa under the colours of the United Party until after the end of the war. In 1948, it was the first election after the end of the war. The election was won by the Nationalist party under Dr DF Malan. He became Prime Minister. Then well, I think he was just there for two years although Smuts died. Then Malan also resigned as prime Minister, he was not outvoted, he resigned as Prime Minister. He was succeeded by JG Strydom as Prime Minister. Well JG Strydom died, and then he was succeeded HF Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid. It was Verwoerd. So Verwoerd became prime minister.

KBZ: Taking apartheid into consideration, were you allowed to attend the event after the Nats came into power?

JM: Well, in fact during those days, black people, because they could see that the atmosphere was not conducive to their liking, they decided to withhold themselves from attending. It was just a handful of us who attended in any case. Not in large number as we are now. The blacks were just a handful attending this.

KBZ: So in other words you boycotted the event

JM: Yes that's right yes.

KBZ: Given that there were such tensions around South Africa's participation in the war, with some people not wanting the country to join and others…

JM: No the Afrikaners they didn't want us to join. For instance even the man who ended up being prime minister of this country… now who was he again? He was even interned during the war… he became prime minister. He was negotiating with the Germans he was in fact a German agent in this country… Vorster, John Vorster

KBZ: So upon returning from the war, did you experience these tensions as you walked in the streets…

JM: Yes! (remembering) yes yes yes... (laughing)

KBZ: Did you walk around in uniform?

JM: No, we didn't walk around in our uniform, they did not even want to see our uniforms! Because they did not believe in black soldiers. It was smuts who asked the blacks to join the army. So the Nats did not want blacks to be soldiers.

KBZ: How did black communities feel towards soldiers who joined the war effort?

JM: Well… they were powerless, because… the government was clever. It was done through the homelands and the chiefs. In the homelands they called the chiefs, they spoke to the chiefs and said that the chiefs must encourage their people to join the war. So the chiefs called all their people and asked them to join the war. So there was no opposition and they came in.

KBZ: so are you also from one of the homelands?

JM: No I was in the urban areas, I signed on here.

KBZ: So just to make sure I get it clearly, how was people's ambivalence about the war effort expressed?

JM: Well I won't say there were 100% ambivalent... People disagree to agree. Even those who are against but eventually saw the light and toed the line.

KBZ: Did perception of Britain change after the war? Do you think the war changed the way in which Britain and British people were seen?

JM: Well, in fact especially for the black people it did not change. They felt that they had been let down by the British government because they signed on to fight for the King and country, but after the war nothing was done for them, so they felt that they had been let down. They did not blame the Nationalist government

because they knew that the Nationalist government didn't want blacks to fight in the first place and they did not expect some good to be done for them by the Nationalist government. But they expected Britain, at least, to come to their assistance which the British did not do.

KBZ: I guess it took time for that to become apparent, for things to unfold. So what did attending the event mean to you in those days? Was it not still showing support for the British?

JM: To me it did not make a difference. Although to some people it did. What I mean is that to me it was the same, whether it was bad or whether it was good it was the same

KBZ: So why did you keep attending?

JM: To perpetuate the memory of those, my mates who fell.

KBZ: So how did you feel when you again attended the event in 1993 after all those years?

JM: It was alright then. Definitely it was alright… because the democratic government came in 1994… It was still only World War I and II only, the other people were included in 1994.

KBZ: Today, do you think that the two world wars are an important part of history in the minds of the majority of South Africans? Do you think South Africans consider it to be part of their history?

JM: Well it is important really to think of it, because, if we did not take part in that war, in those two wars, South Africa would not be what it is today. The Germans could have done anything they wanted to do with the country. So that is why we felt that we must fight the Germans and keep them out at all costs

KBZ: So there was a very strong conviction in the justice of the war

JM: That's right

KBZ: But do you think Do South Africans consider these wars as part of their history?

JM: No they don't. They don't. Even, in the schools, I don't know in white schools but in our black schools this history is not taught, of the world wars, both First and Second World Wars.

KBZ: There is a sense that the liberation struggle is more important

JM: That's right yes

KBZ: One of the most important changes that have taken place is that the event is now inclusive, and commemorates those who died in all South African conflict regardless of which side they were on. We remember all together, and we remember them as equal. Looking back at South Africa's history over the 20th century, do you feel that it is problematic to honour all deaths as equal?

JM: No, it's not problematic.

KBZ: So do you feel that the death of soldiers fighting for the SADF in the 70s or 80s are as significant as the sacrifices made by people fighting in World War II…

JM: No, no.

KBZ: Do you think it's as significant as the people who fought for freedom?

JM: No. What is significant really, it is the people who fought in the 1st world war and the 2nd world war, rather than people who fought for freedom. In fact, I don't know, I may be wrong but in my conviction I don't regard them as having fought for freedom. Having been a soldier for the war, I take them as cowards, people who ran away from the country.

KBZ: The MK and APLA people who were in exile?

JM: Yes, because they ran away. I rather worship people who did not leave the country, who stayed in the country. They were harassed day and night by police. Police wanting to know where their children are and so on. Those are the people who fought for freedom, those other people ran away.

KBZ: And these people who stayed are not included in the ceremony at all...

JM: No. but all the good things now are enjoyed by them – the exiles. Robben island inmates. Those are qualifications.

KBZ: So what you are saying is that you are willing to compromise and say they are veterans…

JM: Yes

KBZ: But maybe you would feel that someone else, like Steve Biko as an example, is more of a veteran and paid more of a sacrifice?

JM: Yes well Steve Biko paid more of a sacrifice, though he did not reach his goal. He was killed.

KBZ: But for instance some people feel that he is not a veteran because he did not fight in a conventional war…

JM: No, he was not a veteran but he was a freedom fighter.

KBZ: So do you think that the event should honour freedom fighters and veterans?

JM: They were taken on board now in Sunday remembrance

KBZ: But from what I understand, who has been taken on board are the veterans from particular armed organisations for instance MK and APLA but the Self Defense Units are not included.

JM: It says and all other forces who fought for freedom

KBZ: Do they participate?

JM: Well they are invited to come. Well the APLAs do participate, MKs do participate, SAPS does participate too.

KBZ: I understand that the participation of MK veterans in the ceremonies of Remembrance Sunday has been uneven.

JM: Yes. It is.

KBZ: Can you speculate on the reasons for this?

JM: Well as I said, I am the chairman of the Soweto Branch of the South African Legion. Now they have got what they call MKs veterans association. I went to them, on the advice of the then deputy minister of defence, Ronnie Kasrils. He said that I must go to them, they were at Lenasia, I must go to them, I must speak to them and they must join the South African Legion. So I went to them and I spoke to their chairman there and asked them to join forces with us, they must join the legion. Well, they were logical. They said to me that they did not see fit to join the SA legion because they were not soldiers, they did not

fight wars, they fought for freedom. Therefore it would make no sense to join the South African Legion. They would operate as the MK veterans association.

KBZ: I'd like to ask you about the ceremony in 2004. I don't know if you can recall it. During that year Rev. Carol Jack led the sermon and from what I understand some people felt that what she said was inappropriate. Can you recall these incidents? What is your feeling?

JM: (Laughs) No… there is nothing inappropriate that Carol Jack said. I attended that service I was there. But mind you, Carol Jack is an ex-exile. She was in exile (with MK)… maybe that's why people didn't just like some of the things that she said… because she spoke about the conditions which prevailed in the camps where they were in exile and so on. But anyway she gave a very fine sermon. Her sermon was very effective.

KBZ: What do you mean by effective?

JM: You know it was not one sided, you see. She covered all ground, all aspects of it.

KBZ: I wasn't at that service unfortunately is there anything else specific you remember about it?

JM: Well there were a lot of people there… and nobody complained about Carol Jack's speech…

KBZ: From what I understand some people felt that she over emphasised the liberation struggle… she spoke about the death squads…

JM: As I said she was from exile… she had to.

[…]

KBZ: I'd like to talk about the imagery of the event – the way the parades look, the symbols, the poppies, all that. What is your feeling regarding the imagery that this ceremony uses? Do you feel that it is imagery all South African citizens and veterans can equally relate to?

JM: In my experience they enhance the occasion... For instance you are able to see the difference between a normal sermon and the Remembrance Sunday service.

KBZ: Do you ever feel, for instance, that with regards to uniform the MK vets are disadvantaged because they march in t shirts?

JM: well… I'm not going to pin the MKs down because they had no uniform unlike we, soldiers. So those T shirts, I take them to be their uniforms.

KBZ: Do you maybe think that people get the sense that they were not soldiers?

JM: They were not soldiers. No definitely not they were not soldiers.

KBZ: But I've seen pictures of MK parading and they do have uniforms in training camps…

JM: Yes they lived in those camps where they were…

KBZ: Do you feel that the imagery of the event, like the poppies for instance, is something all South Africans can relate to?

JM: Yes. For instance the MKs they did not know or relate to those poppies. It's only now when they joined the Sunday Remembrance day that they related to it

KBZ: But the ceremony, as you mentioned, is an international one, and one which is of the history of the commonwealth. The South African ceremony looks very much like the events that are held all over the world. You don't feel that maybe this alienates people? You don't feel that maybe the ceremony imagery should be more 'local'?

JM: Who will make it more vocal? Nobody can make them more vocal than this. That comes from them themselves, to be vocal.

KBZ: You don't maybe think that the way the ceremony looks, for instance when they see the Transvaal Scottish march in the street, might make people feel like they don't belong?

JM: I don't think so. When they see them, they just marvel at them. Some see them for the first time, they just wonder where do these people come from what's going on here, See?

KBZ: Do you think that maybe people see them as foreigners?

JM: Not as foreigners. Not as foreigners. I mean if you meet people for the first time and you have not seen them before you will not say that they are foreigners. You just don't know them you haven't met them you are seeing them for the first time.

KBZ: But these are uniforms that are well known and are associated with Scottish people

JM: Yes yes those are well known. Everybody knows about the Scottish.

KBZ: So do you think some people think they are from Scotland? I spoke to some spectators at the parade and they said they think the Transvaal Scottish are foreigners…

JM: No… no. They are not. Even during the war they dressed as you see them.

KBZ: even when they were in the trenches?

JM: yes!

KBZ: I'd like to talk about the cenotaph. Some of the MK/ AZANLA people I spoke to feel that it is like the monument of the 'enemy' and they found it difficult to participate in an event that used as its focal point something they had associated with the apartheid government for so long.

JM: No. I don't know. The cenotaph as far as I know, is a grave, which has no body inside it, that's why it is called a cenotaph

KBZ: Yes. But people have seen it for years, standing there next to the city hall, in what was a white area with ceremonies that served white people, and now they associate it with the apartheid government, their previous enemy

JM: It's a misconception. Because I know what the cenotaph is.

KBZ: What is your feeling about the idea of having the service at another site, like the Hector Peterson memorial?

JM: Well for the youth they can hold a memorial service at Hector Peterson's what do you call it, the museum, there's a slab there for Hector Peterson. Youngsters can hold their memorial services there because Hector Peterson was shot there at the museum on the 16th June 1976. It will be a fitting place to hold a youth memorial service there.

KBZ: But a Remembrance Day Sunday ceremony? For 1 year?

JM: No. People will start questioning why we are having a Sunday Remembrance Day at Hector Peterson's. Hector Peterson was never a veteran, a soldier.

KBZ: Well he did pay the supreme sacrifice…

JM: No… It would not be proper to have a Sunday Remembrance service there at the Hector Peterson.

KBZ: Thinking about the poppy, I recall that 2 years ago they had it made of fabric and last year some were made of beads. Do you feel that the imagery of the event needs to become more diverse?

JM: Yes, I mean we are facing many challenges you know therefore we've got to make changes here and there. Like the poppies which were fabric and then they were made out of beads that's a change.

KBZ: So you feel that that was a positive change?

JM: That's right.

KBZ: Looking at the present, what do you feel the successes of the Remembrance Sundays have been? What have they contributed to you and other veterans?

JM: well there's nothing really materially which I can say has been contributed, but by way of a fellowship, they've gone a long way contributing to the good of the country and of the people. Fellowship.

KBZ: So now there's a fellowship between APLA and MK vets, SADF vets, and World War vets…

JM: Yes.

KBZ: Some AZANLA and MK veterans feel that it is not appropriate to have a fellowship like this, where people who fought with conviction are being made equal to people who fought in the SADF during the 60s and 70s for instance. They feel that everyone can be remembered, but the ceremony must not pretend that everyone contributed equally, it must be honest about what roles people played. Do you feel that the event is dishonest and covers up unpleasant aspects of the past?

JM: Well the past will not guide… no, the past can not rule it can only guide. It cannot rule but it can guide see? We get our guidance from the past see, we can't say that the past is no good. The past will guide us but it will not rule us.

KBZ: So you think it's ok to make this compromise? It's ok to overlook some aspects of the past and people's roles in it in the spirit of reconciliation?

JM: Not overlooked… they are not being overlooked. I don't agree that they are overlooked.

KBZ: But surely, if you acknowledge World War vets, SADF soldiers from the 70s and 80s and those who fought for freedom, their convictions were not equal.

JM: No they were definitely not

KBZ: Some people contributed more, some people were formally soldiers, some people fought with real conviction...

JM: No it was not equal. For instance, the freedom fighters did not fight a war.

KBZ: But they fought with conviction

JM: Ah well, I don't know how but…

KBZ: So what is more important in judging someone's contribution, the conviction or the battle?

JM: Well in fact they are both important. But the battle is more important than the conviction. Because people die in the battle. But in the conviction no people die.

KBZ: But MK people died in exile…

JM: Well who killed them? They killed themselves. Yes.

KBZ: But they had SA government killing them… there were the death squads and so on

JM: Well, that is what they say. But where. That is what they say.

KBZ: What about the battles in Angola?

JM: Fighting who in Angola? Who were they fighting in Angola?

KBZ: The SADF were supporting UNITA and Savimbi and MK was supporting the MPLA.

JM: Well Jonas Savimbi was in charge, I don't see how SANDF got into it

KBZ: Not the SANDF, the SADF. They were fighting with Savimibi

JM: Well maybe it was Savimbi who invited them to come and help them, See? To me it makes no sense I don't know how to answer that really but to me it makes no sense.

KBZ: So in the events everyone's death is equal and everyone has made the same contribution

JM: No.

KBZ: But the event pretends that everyone is the same

JM: Yes. The events pretend that all people made the same contribution with the same conviction. It does pretend.

KBZ: Looking into the future, what do you feel are the dangers and challenges to the holding of Remembrance Day Sundays?

JM: Now the challenges are that the youth must be mobilised they must be taken on board if we want to see a future for Sunday Remembrance Day succeeding. But once we leave youth out we don't take youth on board there's no future for Sunday Remembrance.

KBZ: What are the ways of getting the youth involved?

JM: We have to embark upon campaigns of going to the youth and asking them to come on board and going to the youth we go round the schools we go the schools we visit schools and we address students there in the schools

KBZ: But if the youth are not interested in the history of the World Wars, do you think that will be successful? Can they relate to it? They live in a different world.

JM: Not all but some will. Not all. I don't think it will be 100% success no. But even if we can get 25% of them it goes a long way.

KBZ: but then going back to my question of the site of the event, it seems that June 16th and Hector Peterson is very important for the youth, so wouldn't having the event there connect you with the youth?

JM: For instance if we have quite a number of youth in this Sunday remembrance we can hold the event, not permanently, occasionally, at the hector Peterson museum occasionally. For the sake of the youth.

KBZ: Can you tell me a little bit about how you became involved in the Remembrance Day service, and the role that you play?

ST: The name is Strike Thokoane. I'm from the Azanian People's organisation which is a political party that participated in the liberation struggle of this country. It was formed after the philosophy of Black Consciousness, Steven Bantu Biko is the founding father of the organisation. Personally I participated in the liberation struggle at the military level for about 20 years in exile. In coming back into the country, 10 years thereafter, there was a need to organise the military veterans of different political organisations, including that of the old of South African government – the South African Defence Force, but organise these to become one, because they were constituted differently. We have the AZANLA, which is the AZAPO BCM military veterans which I represent. We have the MK military veterans association, we have the APLA military veterans association, then we have the former South African Defence Force military veterans organisation and alongside it you have the TBVC – the Transkei, Boputhatswana, Venda and Ciskei military veterans. So we are involved in that type of association. So I'm instrumental in the process of trying to bring together these military veterans. I also look at some of the programmes that other countries do. In fact, we actually attended the World Military Veterans Association a few years ago which was held in South Africa, so we are partners to that. As a sequel, a result, to these activities is that we were invited to observe the military commemoration that was held in Johannesburg and organised by the Johannesburg Mayor, Amos Masondo. I think in the past the white South Africans have been having this ritual, and in the spirit of reconciliation and unity, we also did not become averse and negative to the idea of coming together. My rule was to say I'm going to lay a wreath, symbolically to the fallen heroes of our struggle, much as I know that there are lots of people whose role is not pronounced, recognised or mentioned, but we do have lots of the unknown soldier there who took part in the liberation, in wars in this country. I'm more interested in the liberation, that is what is close to us because it is informed by politics. And I represent my organisation in that. And when I lay that wreath, in my mind I think of all the other people, but in particular, the AZANLA people who laid down their lives for this country, and of course, the innocent children and people who laid down their lives, and their blood flowed for this country. That is what informs our participation – I represent the organisation and I report to the organisation on these activities.

KBZ: So is the veterans association a national association?

ST: The veterans are a committee that is a national association, but it has not taken that shape yet. It is still struggling to form itself into a national association. It is separated by politics, it is divided by politics, but the desire is to have it launch as a national association.

KBZ: So what are the issues, the politics dividing it?

ST: I think it's going to be easy to cross the political Rubicon, because there's not much question of ideology now. But the issues that are a problem to the country, like reconciliation, those are still part of the issues. Materialism – that we have assets, and if we want to do this, it means that the investment that we put in this, and the assets – they must be shared, and there are people who don't want to do that. In the same way as it is happening in the economic field. Not everyone, who amassed wealth then, is prepared to share it, hence, programmes like Black Economic Empowerment and so on and so forth. And just sheer politics of power. White people versus black people. In the army those struggles exist. Where the white commanders would not let you go into certain positions – if you check how many black pilots do we have in the army, how many black generals do we have, and those kinds of things. So even in the veterans, you still have these kinds of problems. Within the liberation movement itself, you have the PAC, you have the ANC, you have AZAPO – they are still politically divided. When we go to the polls, the ANC is not united with PAC and AZAPO.

KBZ: Or even within itself

ST: I don't want to go there, it's their problem. But there is still that divide. So when it comes to the veterans you still have those divides. But also resources. Because others are more known and recognised and get assistance. They can appeal to the international world, or to their erstwhile supporters. And that support can continue, and they will not want to extend that to the others, who are lesser known or lesser resourced. So even there the question of resources still plays a part, it divides us. But as I said, politically there is willingness to say 'guys let's form one association'. The government wants to come up with programmes that will assist veterans, but it comes difficult when they are disorganised, and when they are in disarray. Those who are well and better organised will benefit, because they know their story. If the government says well 'I want to give this tender to veterans' and what I want is a business plan, it's the constitution, etc. So those who are better organised and better resourced can present and benefit. So the government does not want to do that. It says guys get your act together first, then we'll be able to assist. There's an advisory board, a military advisory board to the minister of defense, we meet with him from time to time just to suggest things.

KBZ: What was the relationship like between AZANLA and MK during the years of the struggle?

ST: There was no relationship whatsoever. Each organisation operated… well as expected, military activities are secretive by nature. They are secretive they are clandestine, they are a conspiracy. So no one would like the other person [to know], unlike politically, where it can be easy to do that kind of cooperation.

But it was not untoward. You would not go and compromise an MK cadre, remember that we are all from the same base, we are all from the townships from the rural areas, we know each other, we went to the same schools. So when we meet, we know each other, we talk to each other, and if there is an assistance that can be given, that assistance is given, if you come across someone that time. The 'competition' did not override those things. Because it was a question of life and death, life and limb, and it was going to be your brother that was going to be killed, not an MK… But in terms of formal cooperation there wasn't any.

KBZ: What were your initial feelings regarding the event the first time you attended? What convinced you that it would be beneficial for AZANLA veterans?

ST: Not only the first time, even the second time. You go to a monument that was erected for people you regarded as your enemy, and their names are written there, that these were the people who were on the other side of the divide. But you must go and still do the bowing there. So you have got to be spiritually and politically entrenched to understand what you are doing. Because you have to keep in your thoughts the memories of your own comrades and cadres. It would be easier to just reject it. Some people have tried to do that. But then are you not marginalising yourself? When people don't see you there and they see others, and they do not know the history, you have no instrument to say the reasons why you did not see us there, are the following. So in the end you marginalise yourself. People will say 'no, you never took part in any struggle'. So you have to go there, and symbolically go through the ritual, and keep in mind that I'm doing this ritual for the benefit of those. Time will come when we will correct this picture. So the gut feeling initially is 'why here?' we have been passing there for years. In fact there was a time when I wanted to bomb that thing. So now you must go there and bow before it. But as I say when you lay that wreath, you are thinking of Thami Mcerwa, Tsietsi Mashinini, Isaac Motsweni, Shaun Rapitse, Steve Biko and so forth… those are the people you go there and you think about.

KBZ: Is this the feeling that has accompanied you since attending in the 90s?

ST: Well the 2006 event was the 2nd one we were invited to.

KBZ: So you attended for the first time last year?

ST: The year before last. I'm taking into account that it is now 2007. So the first year was 2005, because the activities of trying to bring the military vets together were now intensifying. So I think to some extent there was a hand that said well guys, there are certain things that we can do together. And the invitation then came. I was invited in 2005. We were not invited before, and we didn't worry.

KBZ: So what kind of participation was it? Did the AZANLA veterans parade?

ST: In 2005 it was just a symbolic participation in laying the wreaths, and in the 2nd year a few more people came around. But we had not gone to an extent of bringing our own to participate, I think it will take a little bit of time, because then we must be able to politically explain to them why do we have to march. So if it gives me a problem as a person in leadership position, how much more would it be for cadres who would be brought there and they have to march and they don't understand. We want to take them through political understanding, why we are doing this. So that if they are confronted, they can be able to answer. Because this can divide the veterans. It's got the potential to do that. So we are taking it step by step. I fortunately, am able to explain and accept, but you never know when the knives are out in political organisations. Someone can just say but you are going out with this and that. But for now everything is stable, it's just symbolic representation.

KBZ: So you are not on the technical task team that organises the event?

ST: No, I just go there as a dignitary. We would like to be involved as participants, starting from the beginning, in the task team but we are not part of the task team, we're just there as dignitaries, on that day. We don't even buy the wreath. We don't know where it comes from. So we would like to buy the wreath, we'd like to put the words on the wreath, and be able to put it correctly.

KBZ: How would you want to change the event?

ST: We would like to change the entire complexion of the event. And give it a more representative and dignified style. The way it is done, you see people running up and down, they bring the food, they bring the wreaths, they bring the programme, they bring the priest and everything. And you are just there. We would like to be hands on and change the programme. We have talked about it. As MK and APLA and AZANLA. We've talked about it, and we said that this thing needs tempering with.

KBZ: Well, the event has been running for over 80 years… The most interesting questions by far about these ceremonies are questions of culture. Although the event is about community building and inclusivity, and is very much of an international event, it seems to me to come from a European, or at least a commonwealth tradition. It first and foremost refers to wars where Africans have largely been invisible, and makes extensive use of symbols and imagery that do not immediately bring Africa to mind – e.g. forests, meadows for the green, red poppies and the Flanders fields etc. In addition, it often feels like the customs of the Traditional Regiments, with their fancy uniforms and paraphernalia – lend themselves more easily to the practice of parading than the practices of the liberation armies. What is your feeling about this? Is it appropriate?

ST: Certainly not. I think in an endeavor to try build some unity and reconcile, you compromise certain values and principles that you have. And you hope time will come and you will be able to change things. I don't know what the poppy symbolises, I wear it on my jacket, but I don't know what it symbolises. But when they bring it there, I am not hostile, I don't say what is this, I don't want it. It's another flower it's red and black and so on. For the day we cooperate. The musical. I'll call it that, the cultural thing that takes place there, the bowing and all of that. We are completely in the loss. We go alone, the taking off of the hats and wearing them again… we completely are in the loss. Now as soon as we start I start taking part in that, I'll be able to ask certain questions when we draw a programme. I'll be able to ask what is this. What does it symbolise. And I'll probably be informed to such an extent that I can reject certain things. If I know what they actually represent. At the present moment we are just nice guests. You don't want to spill the teas and so on, you're simply sitting there as a guest, and you are told the toilet is this side and you say ok. It's fine. But it's not an untoward activity. It's not insulting. Until we understand. If somebody insults you, in a language you don't understand, you can't react, you don't understand…

KBZ: Can you tell me a bit about the different traditions or practices that were followed in AZANLA during the struggle? Specifically, were there any particular customs for memorialising fallen soldiers and if so what were they?

ST: It's basically the political rituals, the army solutes that you have, there are recitations that are political and also show the sacrifice, you have the anthem of the soldiers, that talks about sacrifice… we call it the song of the soldiers... There are ways that a soldier should follow, sacrifice, talk nicely to the people, must explain to the people, the ways of living, he must not go and steal among the people when they are involved there, he must not be involved in adultery and things of that nature, he must basically be a disciplined kind of cadre, so there's a code of conduct. This is what we stood for. And there are salutes that we do, and then we also sing the national anthem as we know it, not this mish mash. Our proper national anthem. And also try to say we are on this thing politically and we honour the spirit and so on. We don't have rituals that are cultural. We don't have cultural rituals like burning the incense, no we don't have that kind of thing. But you must also remember that it must evolve. When we were in the war of liberation there was no time to go back. You pass on. You move on when the others have fallen…

KBZ: So there are no other commemoration ceremonies that are particular to AZANLA?

ST: There was not much memorialisation practiced except there are days when you have to remember, remembrance days. We remember the killing of Steve Biko, on the 12th of September, we commemorate that, we remind ourselves what happened, speeches and so on. There is no ritual per se... We remember some of the people that we regard as our martyrs, like Onkgopotse Tiro who was killed with a parcel bomb in Botswana we remember the day when he was killed on 1st of February, every year, we remember the

days when Tsietsi Mashinini was killed, June 16th and those kinds of things. But that is also more political than military. So those are rituals we keep.

KBZ: Steve Biko is barely remembered…

ST: It is hardly remembered but it is political, it is party. We do it within the party. If I go to Israel with my wife and family, and on that day, if there are some political friends there we come together. To say can we say a prayer or something like that. We wouldn't let it pass. We'd come to congregate, to say guys, we are not at home we are far away but remember this is the day that something is happening. If you are in South Africa and you happen to be in Durban or Kimberly or somewhere else, on that day you must find out what we have organised so that you can go there and pay your respect.

KBZ: And that has been practiced since 1977

ST: That's what we pride ourselves in. Even when they put a statue, and want to hijack the event because it's 30 years to June 16th and all of a sudden, people are saying that they've got resources. Or they say that it's 30 years, remember this year, it's 30 years of Steve Biko's death. Government will be popping out monies and so on, and being on centre stage, we will not be anywhere near that. Even when that is happening. We know that they are doing it now but they will forget about it next year. We'll continue. We'll do it in our own way, but we will continue… Sometimes we have people going to the stadiums and they are giving condoms and beer and so on, and then we go to take the family, we go to the graveyard, and we honour properly. You know the story in the bible about Solomon and the child? And the other one was saying this is my child, and the other one says no this is my child, and the one who's child it was, when it was suggested that it be divided, she said no give it to the other one. I don't want to see my child being hurt. And the other one was happy to do that. So this is in that fashion. They can do as they like if they don't know what the event stands for and so on. But we say let them do that, but we won't do that.

KBZ: What is wrong with the way the government is doing it?

ST: There's lots of wrong. First, it should be a solemn occasion, and people must go there with conviction. People must understand what it is they are doing and what happened. So we don't want to cloud it with bands – you can play music but the proper music. Solemn music. Struggle music. Church music, prayers… people can be encouraged to do that. Children can be encouraged to go to church, meeting places, and we ask the priests on that day to speak about the event. Preach about the event. To educate on that day. And it doesn't have to be a big meeting where everybody is there. Those who decide not to go will catch up with time when we do the education. But to attract people with drinks, strong drinks, that is ridiculing, and it's a blasphemy to the occasion. You would understand what I am talking about because we always make an

example with the Jews and the holocaust. They don't have to have a stadium filled with people, they do it, everyday. They are committed to it year after year. That's the commitment we want. Dignity, respect and recognition for the people who died. It must be different from a festival. People must come there with a message, if they have to stay home, let them stay home. But let them get the message. So there's everything wrong with making this an enjoyable and entertainment kind of thing, with kids doing all sorts of things, and sometimes even hurting each other, and we say we've spent millions, because we have millions, and then we go home thinking we've done something. That's not it.

KBZ: So who do you classify as a veteran? Who is it that paid a supreme sacrifice?

ST: First it's those who were fighting for a democratic order, those who came from the liberation movement, those are the ones who have paid a supreme sacrifice for the struggle. Anyone who died for fighting against the liberation movement, I'm not comfortable with. Somebody can say but it was a situation of war, so it's a war veteran, but I am not comfortable with an arrangement like that. I'm not comfortable for instance, with putting IFP people on the wall in Freedom Park. I have personally raised that question, and I said that if we have to put them on that wall, we must explain their role, historically, so that we don't confuse the picture. We don't say to our children, they were freedom fighters. They weren't freedom fighters. So, I am against a situation where we put a blanket and paint everybody with one brush. It misrepresents the history of our country.

KBZ: even if it contributes to reconciliation?

ST: Reconciliation does not suggest distorting history. In actual fact genuine reconciliation suggests that I need to know where you come from, you need to know where I come from. And if are able to reconcile when we know each other that much, that is genuine. If we brush it on the surface, and it doesn't go deep enough, it is papering on the cracks, and one day it will break asunder. So genuine reconciliation it's actually recognising the roles we played in the past. And if we can agree that, those roles not withstanding, we are going to reconcile, that is fine, we are prepared to start a new life, to open a new chapter.

[…]

KBZ: Do you think that in present day South Africa, at a point in time where many feel that the TRC did not go far enough…

ST: I am one of those who felt it was wrong in fact…

KBZ: Has the opportunity not been missed then?

ST: It's a process. It's not an event. As long as we regard it as a process, it is fine. The process of apartheid and the subjugation of our people, took many years and many forms. You can't say a prayer that it will end, we have to understand that there are therapeutic processes that must take place for it to go away. It might not completely disappear in our lifetime. But it should not resurface when our children are my age. And they want to go look back. And some methods that are being used they are quick fix, they do not solve the problem. They become too quick fix and we play to the gallery. So that we can benefit certain things but it is going to be momentary. It's just going to be a thing of the moment. It's going to break again. It should not be that way. We must follow it step by step. Somebody must say, look, I'm sorry. Can I give you back what you gave me. I took it by mistake. I'm sorry about it, and I say please, I accept it, then I cry and cry and it's genuine… but when your own people go to the TRC and they cry and they believe that if they can cry louder, somebody is going to give them money. They don't heal. And when you give them the money, then it's not enough or they eat it and after tat they want more. It should not be motivated by these kinds of things. Somebody should say I'm sorry. I've done one two three four… I know I've hurt you, I'm sorry. I'd like you to forgive me it will not happen again. And because they are genuine as they move forward, they also, not necessarily having to be sensitive about each and every thing, but they can show their intention. That's genuine.

KBZ: So that does that mean that you are no comfortable with equalising all deaths? Is there a point in time when it will be ok?

ST: At a certain time it will be alright to equalise all deaths. At a certain point in time. It will be ok.

KBZ: So you've touched on many aspects of this already, but can you tell me what you feel the successes and the dangers of the Remembrance Day parade are?

ST: The good thing is that we are all together there, to honour our heroes, even when we have not had the opportunity as different veterans associations to do the honouring for our own, we are given the opportunity to come and pay our respects and symbolically do something about that. It is good. It sensitises the community about people who fought for the liberation of this country. In another respect, it sensitises the community about people who fought in World War I, who fell in world wars. So they were also fighting other countries and further. For the people who see things from a different view, they are also looking at sacrifice. I might not agree with that type of sacrifice, but they are also looking at sacrifice on their part. So, that is fine. The only negative, it's not much of a negative, is that we should be open enough to be all inclusive from stage one when we do the preparation, also to welcome suggestions. When people have been doing this for over 50 years, they might be stuck to the ritual. So it might not be easy to bend. But they must try to bend backwards and do it. Bring other people, welcome new ideas, we need to be sitting

down now, preparing for next year, now. The committee set up, and thresh out issues and suggest a style that will suit all. And a style that will make everyone want to participate. We want to have something where we want to close all the streets, and everybody must come. And maybe we'll also have to suggest what other place can be utilised instead of the current site. When we do that we are inviting our population, we are inviting our communities, to something that is honorable. And it's done nationally and everybody is there. I think if we can do that.

KBZ: And what did you think of the police participation in 2006?

ST: I think that was good. They have suffered so much. I think it was good because they are dying for the country now. Their families are losing their members for the country now. And before, lest we forget, when things are still fresh, I think it is important that they are remembered now. That's a good development. That's a good thing. It's taken another shape, it's improved.

KBZ: Can you tell me a little bit about how you became involved in the Remembrance Day service, and the role that you played between 2002-4?

CJ: I was introduced to the organisers by a college of mine, Rev. Des Plint, who was the person leading the services for Remembrance Day. He was moving to East London so they needed someone else to do the service. That's how I came in. I wasn't sure what I was coming in for because I was not even aware of the Remembrance Day service before. I attended some meetings, then I was told that my part was just to preach. I had to do a little bit of research – to find out why Remembrance Day and so on. As you saw in my sermon – the copy that I sent you I had to do a little bit of research. Then on the day [in 2002] I went there and preached. It was a very very big service well attended by both blacks and whites… But I realised that my predecessor was only dealing with the two world wars. He touched a little bit on South African history, just a little. Having been involved in the struggle, I knew what had happened before, and I decided that I need to include that in my sermon, because many people died in Lesotho, Botswana, Moçambique, even here in South Africa. So I had to include that. Actually in 2002 I did not include much of that, but the following year, 2003, I added a lot of our own struggles – to say that now it's time for us to come together, and we've come a long way, and I was happy that now we're coming together both as whites and blacks remembering our struggles, so that's how I came in.

KBZ: Were there other initial feelings regarding the event?

CJ: As I say, in 2002, the event really touched me, and I was very happy that we're doing something of this nature. But, I may be wrong, but my observation was that things changed in 2003, because black people thought this was a white thing and my other perception was that white people no longer attended as they used to, because we had come in. I don't know if they were unhappy with me involving our South African history, I don't know. But things changed. But my first attendance of the event, I was very touched, especially when laying the wreaths. It really touched me it reminded me of people who had left – because I was in exile as well – so it reminded me of all those people and I was so happy that we could still remember them. I was very happy initially.

KBZ: So you're saying that attendance by both blacks and whites dropped in 2003?

CJ: It dropped by both. Because the black people felt that this was too white. You know black people like song and singing, and [in the Remembrance Day ceremony] there was this order, everything was done in an orderly way, so they felt *boetie*, it was not for them. They felt that they could not sing those freedom songs and so on.

KBZ: So most of the black people attending were attending the service for the first time?

CJ: That was their first time. And most of us were impressed actually. So they were saying to me if it could change a little bit…

KBZ: What were your aims in formulating your sermons, and what were the messages that you were trying to get across?

CJ: My message really, as a Christian, was that we are one. In god, in Christ there's neither Jew not gentile, there's no female, there's no male, we're all one, there's no white there's no black, and it was time now for us to come back, and to become one, and remember those who have died. That was my main message, that we all belong to god and we are all South Africans. And we needed to unite.

KBZ: Were you briefed before services, and what was the content of the briefing?

CJ: No. Nothing.

KBZ: So there was never any attempt to direct what you were going to say and the themes which you would address?

CJ: No, no directions at all. The only thing – the meetings – were just meant for organising… we'll be starting at point A to point B, at such and such a time we'll be doing ABCD… we'll be having busses from metro whatever… that was the data of the meeting that I attended. I was not briefed at all. The only thing I had was a sermon from my predecessor, I went through it, that's all. So I decided to follow my own instincts, and what would Christ, what would god say, what message would Christ convey if he was present.

KBZ: I'd like to talk about the 2004, sermon, because that seems to have been quite significant. From what I understand some people felt that your sermon over emphasised the liberation struggle and Christian imagery. Do you agree with that? Do you feel that your sermons were not in the spirit of inclusiveness?

CJ: I can't remember what my sermon was in 2004, but, in all the sermons that I have conducted in that service, I would begin with the history of the two world wars. That's what I would do, and than I would link that with the liberation struggles. I would then give a sermon on what god says, I can't remember what my text was on in 2004…

KBZ: I have it here…

CJ: Yes, that's the one. You can see from this, there isn't much, actually about [the liberation struggle]. As I said, most people were not used to this kind of sermon. They were just used to talking about the two world wars. Nothing would be said about the liberation struggle. And for me, those people were important, they were also human beings, they were also South Africans, we needed to remember them. So that's why I say the number dropped the following years, because I thought they were not happy with me mentioning the South African struggles… You can see there isn't much. It's just this part… but I was aware that most people were not happy with that. So I was no longer interested to go back. Because I wanted to be myself. Not to be a photocopy of anybody else, but just to be me, just to say things as they are. There's nothing that is fiction about this. It's real, it happened. So I had to mention it and we had to remember these people.

KBZ: So do you feel that the event is truly inclusive? Or do you feel that certain deaths and certain soldiers are honoured more than others in this event?

CJ: Well, the efforts were there. Efforts were there to make it inclusive, but deep down I still feel, *boetie*, it's not inclusive. And I don't know who's doing the services now,

KBZ: Now it rotates every year, so the Chief Rabbi did it in 2005 and the police chaplain did it in last year

CJ: I don't know but I want to tell you boetie… I'm sure hat they're not going to say anything about the liberation struggles. They'll concentrate more on the two world wars.

KBZ: Well, since the person rotates it's hard to tell, but I do think they have mentioned the liberation struggle so I've been trying to figure out what was it about your address that raised objections…

CJ: Perhaps I might have come out as emphasising more on the liberation struggles but I tried my best to include everything, every struggle.

KBZ: Perhaps it was particular words… the mention of the death squads for instance

CJ: Which is true. My predecessor, as I said to you, I looked at his sermon, the one I came after. He mentioned something about a bomb that was placed at a Johannesburg railway line. He mentioned that. And it was placed by a Fredrick something, a white guy who placed the bomb there. So I said, ok, this will be my foundation, but I will mention some of the things that are not here. So I tried to follow in his footsteps, perhaps I went too far, I don't know.

[…]

KBZ: So, to go back to my question, do you feel that certain deaths are honoured more than others?

CJ: Yes. The very fact that they were not happy with me mentioning some of the black people who died shows *boetie* that their deaths mean nothing to them… it meant nothing to them. And even with some of the organisers, I could see that they were not happy with me…

KBZ: Do you remember who was there that year? or on the task team?

CJ: There were quite a number of people. Mostly white. The blacks never… the first time there were quite a number of us black people. We were representing the ANC, the PAC, but somehow they never attended the meetings. I think they felt that this is not ours, it's for them.

KBZ: I'd like to ask you the same question in a different way. The most interesting questions by far about these ceremonies are questions of culture. Although the event is about community building and inclusivity, and is very much of an international event, it seems to me to come from a European, or at least a commonwealth tradition. It first and foremost refers to wars where Africans have largely been invisible, and makes extensive use of symbols and imagery that do not immediately bring Africa to mind – e.g. forests, meadows for the green, red poppies and the Flanders fields etc. In addition, it often feels like the customs of the Traditional Regiments, with their fancy uniforms and paraphernalia – lend themselves more easily to the practice of parading than the practices of for instance MK. Can MK veterans relate to that? Do you feel that this is a transformed event?

CJ: No. the event has not transformed at all, not at all. And it is obvious that it has not transformed because those guys would come and parade and parade, but the black people after the parade would just disappear. They would not even attend the actual event. They'll just parade then go home. They have never felt that they are a part of this.

KBZ: Have you heard people saying this? Have you spoken to them?

CJ: Well, it has never occurred to me to… Except for a few who said no, this is for white people, it's not for us. Even the kind of music that is sung there, it's not for us. We want something african. That's what they said.

KBZ: So why do they come?

CJ: Well, is it not duty? I don't know. Because they were told that we have to do this, on this particular day.

KBZ: So you are talking of the troops who parade as part of the Traditional Regiments or the SANDF?

CJ: yes.

KBZ: and what about the MK veterans? Have they attended?

CJ: Not at all. I've tried to speak to some of them. I've invited quite a number of them, they never pitched up. And even from the SANDF, the chief of stuff attended in 2002, but that was his last. I thought the following year somebody else would come. They never turned up. Never turned up. The other thing that worried me was – I don't know whether it's because the invitations were sent out late, I don't know, I remember at one point they wanted to invite the president, but you can't invite the president a week or two before the event… you have to invite him early, because he's got other things to do. So it was never well attended. Even from the ANC side, even from the PAC.

KBZ: I met with someone from AZANLA two days ago who was only invited to the event 2 years ago, but he is not on the technical task team. So there are inconsistencies there. Back to the question, do you feel that liberation struggle veterans could relate to the event?

CJ: Not at all. If you do something you must own the thing, it must be yours, you must feel that I am part of this, you must feel it. Even with myself I could feel *boetie* that I'm just doing it, but I do not feel that I was *part* and parcel of the whole thing. At the back of my mind there was a voice saying: you need to be careful as to what you say here. But I am a Christian. I cannot lie. I cannot hide some of the things that happened to black people. They happened, they were there. And god was hurt because those things happened to those people. For me it was important that we also remember them. We had to remember them.

KBZ: Can you tell me a bit about the different traditions or practices that were followed in MK during the struggle? Specifically regarding the memorialising fallen soldiers?

CJ: Oh, we were so busy back then I don't remember us having remembrance services for people who died except that we would commemorate June 16th those big events. I remember June 16th, I can't think of any other event, because I was in Zambia, and most of the soldiers were in Angola. But I've never heard of any particular day put aside to remember those who have fallen.

KBZ: And their funerals? Were there any particularities that were followed?

CJ: Oh that was a sad thing. Because we had no ministers. It was just us and people were just buried. They would die, and they were just buried, without any prayers, without anything, just buried. Then in 1990 – I was not a minister then, but I was still a committed Christian, we decided to do something when people died. We can't just bury people as if they were dogs. So, a group of us, those who were Christians, decided that we need to do something. Fortunately there was a Father who came from Botswana to stay with us in Zambia. So we joined with him and we would have prayer services, we would give them decent burials. Otherwise, the burials before then, before 1990, were not so decent for me as a Christian. Just putting someone in a grave, just singing freedom songs. But from 1990 in Zambia we came together as Christians to give them dignified burials.

KBZ: So freedom songs were sung, it was a political event?

CJ: yes just singing freedom songs, toy toying and so on. That was it. No burial rights were done. Just get to the grave, lower the body, and close the grave.

KBZ: Do you feel that the Johannesburg cenotaph, which is in effect a monument built to remember not just those soldiers who died, but also those who disappeared and are missing and unknown, could come to act as a monument for those who disappeared during the liberation struggle?

CJ: Well, for me it would be inappropriate really. I would rather have this one in Tshwane, at the Freedom Park. That one you feel *boetie* like it belongs to you, you have been part of this. [With the cenotaph] it's like we're gate-crashing, it's something that belongs to other people. And people don't even welcome you. People do not see anything wrong with our history. So you feel like you don't belong here. It's theirs.

KBZ: What would it take to change that feeling?

CJ: Well if we could have people from all political organisations being involved in the organising of the whole thing. And then I think things could change. Because as it is now, we are just following what has been done the previous years. Everything is done exactly the same way. No change nothing. So if all political parties could be well represented in the organising structure then I could think perhaps things could be change. Change the face of the whole event.

KBZ: What exactly would change? What would the event look like if you were to organise it?

CJ: The parades would change a little bit… I haven't thought about it how they would change, but for me, I don't know, I haven't thought about it. But I would love people who were involved in the struggle

themselves to be part of that. Even the veterans themselves. Most veterans do not know about this event. They do not know at all. So, if it can be well publicised, everybody will become aware that there is this occasion. The aim, what is the purpose of this occasion. Only a few people know about it. I don't know whether that is done purposely, I saw that they tried to advertise this with posters, but the posters for me were not saying anything, they were just saying remembrance day, and the date was given, and that was it. And if a person looks at this, and I got some of the posters, and when I looked at them I said but if I put them up, it doesn't make sense. No explanation nothing. I don't know whether that was done purposely or not, but people need to know about an event like this. There's only a few who know about it.

KBZ: From what I understand the attendance of MK veterans has been uneven due to organisations problems within the MK vets organisation

CJ: I doubt that very much. I spoke to one of the people at Luthuli House, veterans at Luthuli House, they knew nothing about it. And I told them, I said ok, there's this event, and they said to me, can't you ask those people to write us a letter of invitation to inform us? The secretary-general of the ANC did not know anything about this. If the secretary-general doesn't know a thing about this, how do you expect the ordinary people to know about it? Only a few people knew about this event.

KBZ: What do you feel the successes of the Remembrance Day Sundays have been and what do you feel are the event's dangers and challenges?

CJ: Well, the success has been the attempt to bring all parties together. Trying to unite South Africans in an event like this. Well, much while I say it was a success, I don't know if it was 100% successful. Because people still come out feeling uncomfortable with the whole thing. But the effort itself, it's a step forward, in a positive direction. And to make South Africans aware about the world wars – not everybody did history, they do not know anything about the world wars – but it can open people's minds to know that such a war did take place. And South Africans were involved in this. Many South Africans died. I think for me that was important. Because as South Africans, they are our brothers. So I think that was good for me. Even for people who don't know anything about history. The failures have been that though you are part, you still feel that you are not part. There are things that you cannot say because you will hurt certain people. I mean, we are not honest enough to say things as they are. We need to cover some of the things so we can make other people comfortable. And as for me, I know that the Christ I serve, never made people comfortable, he would say things that would make people uncomfortable, because he would want people to change. People have to change. You can't keep on trying to nurse people's feelings by hiding the truth. So I think that one is still lacking for me.

KBZ: Do you think that the event affords people dignity? People who were not involved in the event before say that they have found something meaningful in it and that is that it gives people dignity… the veterans and those who died.

CJ: I am not sure about that. I am really not sure.

KBZ: Do you think that in present day South Africa, at a point in time where many feel that true reconciliation has not taken place, largely due to the lack of efforts by white South Africans, Remembrance Sunday is problematic in the sense that it 'equalises' all deaths and all wars?

CJ: It is a problem, but it should not be a problem. Because death is death. These people died fighting for a good cause. Irrespective of which side they were on. So those deaths should be treated equally. The purpose of the event was to try and do that.

KBZ: So do you feel that people in the SADF in the apartheid era died for a good cause?

CJ: Not at all. Well, in their minds they thought they were fighting for a good cause, just like they would say that the ANC was not fighting for a good cause, they killed people, you see, so...

KBZ: So you are ok with event making the deaths on the ANC and the SADF sides equal?

CJ: Yes. I would rather we would just make them equal. Because they died.

KBZ: So in that sense, does the event contribute to reconciliation?

CJ: Yes in that sense it could. In that sense it does. Even if politically it's not about… the aim, the purpose, it's good. It's to bring about reconciliation.

KBZ: Last question regarding Freedom Park. There is a wall therewith names commemorating those on the ANC side who died in Angola, but there is not any mention of SADF soldiers who died in the same battle. Some of the event's organisers feel that this is at odds with the idea of reconciliation, and they feel that the names of the SADF soldiers should be on the wall. What is your feeling?

CJ: That is a difficult one. Because I remember someone saying to me there's one guy who was in MK and was an informer. And they were arguing, debating whether his name should appear there, on the wall, because he was an informer. So I don't know what they did finally. But now I would say I like the wall as it is. Because those people had to sacrifice a lot. They sacrificed their lives, they sacrificed their families,

they sacrificed everything. And the SADF people went there to kill them. They went there with the purpose of killing them because they did not want the people to be free. So I don't know… I think the wall is ok as it is. They should not be included there. There should be a separate wall for them.

KBZ: Any last thing you would like to mention?

CJ: I said most of what I have to say … when I first attended I was impressed, but I realised *boetie*, we're just doing it. I don't know whether you read the bible the father says they will do things to be seen by people to be doing good things. But deep in our hearts I don't think we're genuine enough, if we're honest enough. The very fact that people were not happy with me, it shows *boetie*, that it is false. And that's why I withdrew. Because I felt *boetie* I don't want to live a lie. I want everything that I do to be based on honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness, not on lies. And I don't want to make people comfortable by hiding some of the stuff.