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Editor, Mayibuye

Member of the Military-Political Council of the ANC, 1987

Joel Khathutshelo Netshitenzhe "Peter Mayibuye"

Born in the Sibasa area of the far Northern Transvaal (now Venda), Joel Netshitenzhe was the third of the five children of Leah and Abel Netshitenzhe, a teacher. He grew up in the area and attended the Beuster Mission School and the Mphephu High School where he matriculated in 1974.

During his high school years Netshitenzhe became interested in the political issues of the day which included the process which had begun to create the Venda homeland in his area. In addition, pamphlets produced by the black consciousness South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which had strong support at the nearby Turfloop campus, were distributed and studied by the students.

In 1975 Netshitenzhe enrolled at the medical school of the University of Natal, Durban. He became active in SASO and in 1976 served as secretary of its local branch.

On the evening of 16 June 1976, the day the student revolt broke out in Soweto, SASO and the Students' Representative Council organised a meeting at the medical school hostel to discuss what needed to be done in response. It was agreed to distribute leaflets in the general community, at bus stops and at the stations. Some students were arrested and the student body then decided to embark on a demonstration march from the medical school to the city. They hoped to be joined by others en route. However, before reaching the city centre, approximately one hundred students were arrested, including Netshitenzhe who was detained for three days. After their release it was debated as to whether to pay admission of guilt fines or not. In the meantime the unrest had spread

7 throughout the country and Netshitenzhe and others began to feel that they were living in an ivory tower. He therefore decided to leave the country and join the African National Congress (ANC).

; , At that time Netshitenzhe felt there were no problems reconciling the black consciousness philosophy and the ANC.

It was generally accepted that there was a more senior liberation movement engaged in serious activities. Many black consciousness adherents listened to Radio Freedom, especially during the Angolan war when liberation movements were fighting each other and people needed clarification as to what was happening there. In addition, some of the senior people in the student structures were members of the ANC underground (although Netshitenzhe only discovered this later.)

Netshitenzhe had been in contact with people who had left the country and in September 1976 he left M it. He then spent about two years in military training in Angola before moving to Lusaka, Zambia, where he began work in the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity. He worked on

Radio Freedom and later on "Mayibuye" the ANC journal, eventually becoming editor in 1980. "Mayibuye" began as a small newsletter of approximately eight pages and then grew to double its size. Netshitenzhe maintains that they attempted to include as much information as possible on analytical pieces for distribution inside South Africa. At the very beginning the main emphasis was to produce bulk copies and send them through the movement's structures inside the country. However, later it was possible to send master copies for reproduction within South Africa.

From 1982-84 Netshitenzhe studied at an institute for social sciences in Moscow, Soviet Union, and this included courses on philosophy, political economy, psychology, propaganda and history. On his return he continued as editor of "Mayibuye" but also became responsible for internal propaganda in the Department of Information, including Radio Freedom. On this basis in 1987 he became a member of the ANC's Political-Military Council. In these years he was also active in youth structures and attended a number of international conferences on behalf of the youth.

Immediately after the unbanning of the ANC on 2 February 1990, the movement felt that the Department of Information and Publicity needed to be established rapidly inside the country and its members were selected to be amongst the first to return. Netshitenzhe returned to South Africa at the end of May, 1990.

At present Netshitenzhe is editor of "Mayibuye". In addition, he serves as Regional Chairperson of the Northern Transvaal Region of the ANC (which stretches from Messina to slightly north of Pretoria, including Pietersburg where the regional head office is situated). He is also an ex-officio member of the National Executive Committee and serves on its sub-committee dealing with the Natal violence.

Netshitenzhe is unmarried and lives in Johannesburg. W  
Interviewed 7 May 1991, Durban.