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Kenya Research project by Robert M. Press [see: Press, Robert M. (2006) *Peaceful Resistance: Advancing Human Rights and Civil Liberties*. Aldershot, U. K.: Ashgate.]

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Interview conducted by Robert M. Press (bob.press@usm.edu; press.bob@gmail.com)

Interviewee: Dr. Rev. Timothy Njoya

Location of interview: Ngong Town, near Nairobi, Kenya

Date of interviews: July 29, 2002

Transcription by Press includes research notations by the interviewer in brackets or parentheses; some emphasis is added in bold or underlined. BP= interviewer Bob Press; TN = Timothy Njoya. Multiple ?? indicates unclear transcription or unverified notation.

Introduction and Biographical information:

Dr. Njoya, who was one of Kenya's most active human rights activists from the late 1980s through the 1990s, said he had now retired from his church work and activism. Among other pursuits post-retirement, he was supervising a series of religious rock sculptures in this outlying town, where we met for this interview.

"I've been here, doing this creativity" he says. I had interviewed him once before, shortly after a political rally in the early 1990s which he and many others had had to flee the police. In 1997 he was attacked again in a local church by police and that time, he is convinced, the intent was to kill him. Only the quick and selfless actions of several Kenyan journalists who shielded him with their own bodies helped save him.

He takes his two visitors (Bob and Betty Press) on a tour of the small area in which already he had made a pyramid of stone, big enough to have a narrow walking path through the base of it. His son says Rev. Njoya, wants him to build an even bigger pyramid. It represents the ascension and desension of Jesus. Another sculpture signifies the wheat and tares parable. "God's kingdom grows with opposition," he said. After the brief tour of the sculptures, we sit on some of the rocks. Around his neck Rev. Njoya wears a cross made of two nails. "Everybody has opposition within each other," he says. Nearby workers are chiseling rocks. The tape recorder picks up the high-pitched, rhythmic tap tap tap as yet another stone is carved into its place in this slowly growing religious testament to the non-traditional, stereotype-breaking concepts of the now-retired activist.

His **biographical details** are quickly covered: profession (church minister), he holds a Ph.D. in political science from Princeton University. In 1987 and again from 1991 to 1997, he lived in Nairobi. But from 1988 to 1991 he was stationed by his Presbyterian church in Tumutumu, near Nyeri town, upcountry, far enough away from Nairobi, or so his superiors hoped, to keep him away from demonstrations for human rights and discourage him from making bold statements criticizing the authoritarian regime of Daniel arap Moi. He is Kikuyu, like many of the other activists. He is one of the few human rights activists who never joined a political party. He was married during the entire period this study focuses on to Leah and they were still married at the time of this interview.

Everyone knew about Rev. Njoya; but nobody seemed to have his phone number, though those who know him well also know where he lives. Calling for an appointment took several hours just to track him down by phone. Finally someone at his last Nairobi area parish had his wife's mobile phone and she advised him a call was coming that evening. The appointment was set.

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MOTHERS

[HR (Human Rights) TACTIC. Symbolic politics. First wives, then mothers against tyranny. **THEORY:** Framing the message (as motherhood instead of wivehood). Finding the right symbol to attract a larger support.]

Njoya began his activism for human rights in 1983, visiting wives of political prisoners. (tape one, side one, begins here)

TN At that time there were about 60 detainees. So my first thing was to call wives of detainees for prayers. I called [publicly] for prayers for wives of political prisoners to highlight the problems of detention without trial. And these prayers were considered [by the Moi regime] a violation of state sovereignty because the state thought it could not be questioned by the church. So that's [my] first action of activism on detainees. I used to pray for detainees. Then I saw it was not effective, so I started an action.

BP Did you gather the women around.

TN At that time I had free access to the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation [the government-run, monopoly radio and television system. So when I announced – and I used another magazine called *Beyond* [a publication of the National Council of Churches of Kenya headed by Bedan Mbugua [it was banned in 1988 after publishing well-documented charges of rigging by the government in the presidential and parliamentary elections that year despite use of queuing, a public line up of voters behind the candidate of their choice.]

So I said I would like to start prayers at Saint Andrews for the wives of political prisoners. And they started coming, which eventually became RPP [Release Political Prisoners, which stemmed from a hunger strike by some of the mothers of political prisoners to win their release – which they did, over a period of a year, during which some mothers continued their public strike living in the basement of Nairobi's All Saints Cathedral, near Freedom Corner in Uhuru Park where they had been rounded up by police and sent home, only to return quickly to continue their vigil. There are other versions of the actual origin of RPP].

We became mothers of political prisoners. We changed from wives because some wives are afraid of coming. But mothers were not. So we changed to mothers of political prisoners. Many university students registered as Mothers of Political Prisoners. People like Wangari Maathai joined, the Greenbelt Movement director [Maathai] joined as one of the 'mothers.' So the 'mothers' was broader than gender; it was all-encompassing. Even students, male students would join and call themselves 'mothers' of political prisoners. [??Did group have a formal name like this MPP?]

[HR TACTIC: Action, not just prayers: a clergyman's plan]

BP Why were the prayers ineffective?

TN You see ritual which you cannot translate into action is not useful in Africa because everybody prays. Eighty percent of Kenyans are Christians [??] and they pray every day. But

their prayers are ineffective. Even God's love for the world and mercy was ineffective until the cross. The cross made God's intention active and effectual.

BP So you were looking for what kind of change: release of prisoners?

TN What kind of cross to put in our prayers. In theological terms I was looking for an action which brings the state and our prayers together, brings dialogue to the violator and the violated. And therefore I brought the mothers of political prisoners together with the state.

[SA (State Action)- Police counter 'mothers' prayers

HR (the chess game) Njoya seeks a countermove: find a state-mothers connection; moving beyond prayers. Ratcheting up the stakes..]

TN We were doing [praying] in the church, but the state brought police and intervention. You remember one time we told mothers to strip naked at Uhuru highway [when police broke up the Mothers' strike after a few days in the Park. The mothers were demanding release by the state of their sons who had been detained, and in many cases tortured, as suspected dissidents. They were seen by the opposition as political prisoners].

BP I was there; she [Betty Press] was there, too

[HR: TACTIC : Use established traditions to fight tyranny.(stripping: an old Kikuyu?? Custom of last resort, a curse of sorts on the aggressor; details??]

THEORY – again, it seems to be the framing concept, but there may be other explanations.]

TN[the stripping was a tactic to] draw attention of the nation: here were mothers, missing their sons, and they were willing to strip naked to have their sons back. There were no women [in the mothers' group] detained.

BP The genesis was from Monica Wamwere, wasn't it.

TN Yes, she came to St. Andrews and because she had no front teeth, the church complained that I brought a woman to St. Andrews who has no front teeth [laughs]. That was the first complaint I had from the church. [laughs]. You see the issue was not front teeth but disgust with calling women all the way from Nakuru.

[Tactics explained: Symbolic politics: finding the right symbol. Njoya changes the symbol from wife to mother and the later catches on.]

BP So you tried prayers; there wasn't much change...

TN I tried prayers. I tried the wives of political prisoners. And I then saw the wives – the connotation of the word wife is not attracting non-wives. But the connotation of mother attracted people who were not mothers. They identified more with motherhood than with wifeness.

BP This is not something you started however, because I was there.

TN No, no, no. It's me who started it [emphasis]. It was very, very original.

BP Monica Wamwere went down the street and was yelling at the Justice Department, the courts.

TN Yes, after we had already conscientized her.

BP You met her before that?

TN Yes, she came to group with the first original prayers.

BP Before the mothers went to Uhuru Corner [in Uhuru Park].

TN We called them. The mother of Koigi didn't have any other forum other than the one we had provided at Saint Andrews. Then we left Saint Andrews to go to All Saints because I was banished from Saint Andrews. You remember I was removed from Saint Andrews, taken Tumutumu. So that's when we moved to All Saints Cathedral. [In between, the mothers had staged a strike that lasted several days in Uhuru Park at what became known as Freedom Corner from another activist move by Wangari Maathai blocking government construction of a complex for the ruling party that included a 60-story tower. The mothers, forced out by police, then moved to All Saint's Cathedral.]

...There were more than mothers, like Njeri Kababere, Muthoni [??] from University; Kiptuo Kitu, many many other people. They were many girls, some several girls, because the idea of mother –we brought even men into motherhood.

BP So “mother” was a more forceful symbolic pattern.

TN A man saying I'm a wife was more complicated than saying I'm a 'mother.'

BP Then what; what did you do after that?

TN When I went to Tumutumu [on orders of his Presbyterian Church which was not happy with his activism.]

[THEME: Individual activism within an organization. Njoya is the perfect example of individual activism within an organization. Although he was a pastor in the Presbyterian Church in Kenya, his church hierarchy not only did not support his activism for human rights but was opposed to it and eventually banished him to a rural church for it.]

[HR TACTIC: Direct confrontation]

[Njoya decided to openly and directly challenge the government by organizing a prayer crusade that would attract people across lines of faith and denomination and, without doubt, criticize the government, as he consistently had done for a number of years. This was the year during which Moi made his last and strong resistance to multi-party politics, breaking up a major rally intended to promote the idea in Nairobi, and using a variety of TACTICS to instill fear in people to challenge his authoritarian rule.

This kind of direct confrontation has several advantages and clear disadvantages.

First: clarification of issues. The crusade would put Moi on one side, upholding authoritarian rule, stifling dissent to the extent he could get away with it without disproportionate penalties from donors or the risk of rebellion. Njoya would be on the other side, calling for democracy, openness in government, competitive elections and (for good measure) a better economy. The issues would boil down to freedom vs. tyranny. This clarification of issues would undermine the defense Moi was making about multi-party elections stirring tribalism. This was already a weak argument since as Kenyans were well aware, Moi himself had been fanning the tribal flames for years, including putting a disproportionate number of Kalenjin (his own cluster of tribes) into high government posts. The issue was obviously a sensitive one for Moi, who detained?? activist Gitobu Imanyara in ??for writing about this imbalance.

Second. Framing the message. The confrontation would take place on a religious platform. Those organizing and attending the crusade would be doing so under the umbrella of faith in God, or in this case, God and Allah. The principle of framing the message was important here (see social movements author on framing). The message of democracy would be framed as a God-given right of people to control their own destinies, to not be subjected to the arbitrary

rule of any tyrant. Biblical and Koranic illustrations in speeches and in the voices of those attending the crusade would help solidify this framing.

TN I decided to have the first (emphasis) defiance.

[activists could argue long and hard, if they cared to, about what was Kenya's first post-independence act of defiance, but certainly Njoya's act was one of the early ones as pressure mounted for Kenya to return to being a multi-party state.] There was somebody called Bonke [spelling?? a European evangelist] who used to have crusades in Uhuru Park [in downtown Nairobi].

And I condemned the crusades because Moi was attending them and ...saying he's been saved and he's Christian while detaining people, and [allegedly killing people – Robert Ouko [the late Minister of Foreign Affairs [?? Verify title] And so, at least his government was killing people if not himself.

HR: TACTIC – find ways to “eliminate fear” of speaking out. Show that the government can be challenged, as Njoya did. The event is not as important as the theatrics surrounding it. Symbolic politics **THEORY**: Symbolic politics

CRUSADE [details not verified]

TN What I did was, **to eliminate fear**, I called for a Gagatika [1991?] crusade...where the [Kenyan] press for the first time in Kenya were beaten [historical verification not done]. The first time a Kenyan member of the press was to be beaten was at Gagatika. [Several members of the international press] were beaten together with the local ones. I said we are going to have open air crusades in the rural area. You know, open air crusades were mainly in Nairobi [and some of the most prominent were led by Europeans], so I said we are going to have one at this shopping center, at Gagatika for three days...Muslims rode busses from Mombasa. It was supposed to just be a crusade for evangelism [irrespective of faith or denomination]. But people came by matatus [mini-van taxis], by every way.

HR TACTIC: (an old one): let your enemy do your publicity. Like ‘banned in Boston’.

TN Moi was at Limuru meeting; he said if this crusade takes place he will use all the instruments of the law available to him to stop it. That publicized it. The media wanted to know whether it will happen or not. And the media put fire in it [the issue. The event was shaping up, as Moi must have anticipated, into a confrontation with the state led by a man who already had been banished to a rural area by his church for his outspokenness against the government.] Moi, the Provincial Commissioner said it would not take place. The DC (District Commissioner, who like the Provincial Commissioner was appointed by the President) said it will not take place. And then the Chiefs (lower-level, presidential appointees) brought the letter to me all the way in Nairobi. I was working in Tumutumu but still sleeping in Nairobi. We were having a General Assembly (of his Presbyterian Church) and I saw the Chiefs coming in uniform of that area, bringing a letter to me saying that the crusade is banned: you cannot have it.

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BP: Why were they so upset with it?

TN Because nothing has ever happened [like this] since Kenya began. [Rev. Njoya tended to speak in broad historical terms. Whether he was accurate or not, the point is that his open

challenge to the government before Moi had reluctantly agreed to allow the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya was bold and the President was determined to stop it.] Since the state of Kenya was founded, there was never a defiance of the Governor [during colonial times there were some instances of rebellion, including the Mau Mau campaign and earlier resistance on the coast] or the President by anybody, direct confrontation.

BP But why did they want to stop it in the first place?

TN Because we had put the first crusade in Kenya these posters, other than Billy Graham. We put [up] posters, and I had signed them, on the streets, on the shops of Gगतिका, everywhere, saying there will be this crusade. The media announced it, saying there will be a crusade. The others were foreign; this was the first by a local.

BP So what's wrong with a local crusade?

SA-TACTIC: Banish your foes to the hinterland; out of the capitol to an isolated rural area.

TN [laughs quietly] [He explains that he had been “deposed” by his church for two years for his outspokenness on political issues] It was agreed that the President would like me to be in Kirinyaga [away from Nairobi] And my Church was so silly as to put in the letter [ordering him to transfer from Nairobi] that the President has required it [the transfer], that the Moderator of the General Assembly [of his Presbyterian Church] is required by the supreme head of state to take action against Njoya. And the condition was that I should take – the Church said that the President wanted me to go to a station outside the city. In the rural [areas] nobody would follow me [or so the President hoped. In Nairobi Njoya was in close contact to the media and his calls for democracy and change had stirred up obvious resentment against him by the authoritarian regime. Njoya had attracted considerable publicity and a loyal church following.] It was to quiet me down.

HR TACTIC (Chess Game), when one avenue of attack is blocked, find another

[Njoya was irrepressible. You banish him from the urban area to the rural and he invites the urban people to come to the rural area. You block him one way, he finds another opening.]

TN Yes, to quiet me down. So now I'm inviting the urban people to come to the rural [area] by having this crusade. So it was contradicting a church and presidential decree.

BP Because of several statements you had made earlier on...let multi-party come...

TN Yeah.

BP... let pluralism come to Kenya, and starting in 1988, I think.

TN No, I started in 1982, 83, 86. Oct. 5, 1986 [??see archives], that was the height of me calling for multi-party. You can read it in the papers Oct. 6 [1986].

BP So it wasn't just after the Berlin Wall fell?

TACTIC: seeking to break fear of speaking out by speaking out in bars.

TN We were talking about it in publicly. What we did was to dissolve fear among communities particularly among Nairobi, we selected a few pubs where would go in and talk loudly about what was happening in the country. [There was deep fear]. And out of every five Kenyans, we had an informer or a policeman, and it became very, very difficult. But nevertheless we still tried, and we were able to move into **slum** areas where some of us opened pubs and bars and moved to existing bars which were owned by friends. But we also discovered that it was going to be very difficult because when people knew what we were doing they stopped coming to those

pubs for fear that they would be arrested. And so something happened without any formal organization but I believe in consultations.

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[Bishop Okulu, of Kisumu and pastor O. Reverend T. Njoya, spoke out at the end of 1989; that may have been when he made his famous “winds of change” have come to Africa after the fall of the Berlin, a phrase used by others in Africa as well] because so much was happening (one talked on the eve of 31st Dec. 1989 and the other talked on the 1st)to say that the **wind of change that** was running across from the North and that African Governments, particularly our own, **[error: would] should** admit that changes are simply unavoidable. And so that was a new entry point for us that we were going to follow up what the clerics were now saying.

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***TACTIC: Public announcement of plans to form a new party: the famed 1990 press conference by Matiba and Rubia calls for July 7 meeting at Kamakunji to promote multi-partyism.**

TN Immediately after that, and this is the time now we were putting together the manifesto for change which was calling for multipartism and we had already proposed a party which we call The Kenya National Congress (KNC). But, we were pushed back because of the death [murder]of [Cabinet member] Robert Ouko in February 1990. We feared that somebody, somewhere may want to use this against some of us because we have seen how our system works here. And we were very happy when we knew that Ouko’s body had been discovered [after initial disappearance], being dead in that place.

So we continued again to have meetings [and in April [??**Murungi says MAY; check archives**]]1990 they announced plans for the Saba Saba [rally on July 7 for multi-partyism that was disrupted by the use of great physical force by Kenyan security agents.] And the new party would go to Kamakunji [a popular cite near downtown Nairobi for political rallies] and mobilize the people about the formation [of the party].

[numbering picks up at 170 without a gap in the transcription]

170. TN Something happened which I would call stupid.....Matiba moved away from the group to try and recruit other people. So when he announced the multi-party campaign we got very affected because we saw a division coming. Now that division did not go for long because the police started following Ken [Matiba] and ourselves, separately. And from the time that Ken announced multi-party now, he also decided that he was not going to [be] meeting us. He would be meeting Charles Rubia, Paul Muite’s lawyer, Gitobu Imanyara and – I think –[Gibson Kamau] Kuria. So for us, we were still left and decided to support that announcement because we didn’t want to appear like we were getting divided. So we said: fine, we will support the multi-party now, but we want some discipline in this thing. It wasn’t quite ready: they jumped the gun. Rubia wasn’t involved, but Matiba was, so Matiba went to recruit him. And they came to the press conference.

Nevertheless, we thought now that he has let it out [plans for multi-partyism] we continue doing it [promoting the idea] And so, when the Saba Saba was announced on the 23rd of April, we went out ourselves to mobilize for the Saba Saba, but still warning Ken that arrests now [were going to happen]. We knew [how] Moi would perceive it. We continued [to prepare for the rally] and by the 4th of July, after running up and down with the police, Matiba was arrested with

Rubia and Raila. But we went on ourselves to prepare for Saba Saba. We went to the Saba Saba [planning??] meeting; we went there first to prepare the envoys for [football??] Then after that everything cracked.

We went there ourselves [to Kamakunji July 7, 1990, despite a heavy police presence aimed at disrupting the rally. Matiba was already in jail.]

BP Who went with you?

TACTIC: Saba Saba 1990: a week of mass action

TACTIC: “liberation music” and some 4,000 [??] arrests. [See Ngonya Wa Gakonya of the Tent of the Living God at Kariako market roundabout Sundays 3-4 per Mugenda

TN Myself, George Anyona, Ngotho Kariuki [now a professor in Namibia]. Physically we were there. We pulled out of the stadium at the Kamakunji ground [?? No stadium at Kamakunji but one nearby; pulled “out”??] And we took positions in the city. We had already established an office just next to Kamakunji. We placed ourselves so we would be able to control [??what] and know what was happening in Mombasa, what was happening in Kisumu, and so forth...the activities in the week developed into something called mass movement. For about seven to nine days there were lots of activities: youth coming out in big numbers, and a lot of music, liberation music on the streets. And the police decided to arrest all these people. A total of about 4,000 young people were arrested. It has always been there but it wasn't played every time. Songs sung during the '50s; songs sung during the years of Jomo Kenyatta; songs sung about how the African was going to fight the colonialists and so forth were on the streets in about three days time. **People really got mobilized by it [the liberation music]** And the police went out there and they arrested lots of people – and 4,000 [??] young men were put in.

BP. Cassettes? How was it distributed?

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HR TACTIC. Non-violence in the face of state violence.

[The crusade harkens back to the non-violent tactics of Gandhi in South Africa and later India, to Martin Luther King in the American South, though Njoya's participants were not trained in non-violence as many of King's crusaders were. In the civil rights marches in the 1960s, the march from Selma, Alabama, initially blocked by the police using force against John Lewis and other marchers on the first attempt to reach the state capitol in Alabama, got widespread publicity. The use of police dogs on women and children in Birmingham helped stir a reluctant John Kennedy to action and later a proposal of civil rights legislation that passed under President Johnson.

Njoya's crusade in rural Kenya was met with police force. It was an early show of defiance of state repression using non-violence (not because of any preparation but by de-fault: the participants simply were not organized to do anything but run away. Question: was there a real confrontation – or just a potential one? See archives; he indicates it ended without violence by the police, though he says here there was violence....]

TN So, this crusade, I was saying, in Gagatika...was the one that brought down the one-party system because everybody in the world saw in on TV, in the media, three columns of police attacking old men and women, children. They did attack, to disperse the crusade. And the crusade succeeded.

[Note: the above is Njoya's enthusiastic description of the impact of a single crusade. It may have had an impact but it certainly was not the only factor in bringing an end to the one-party state in Kenya. I suggest that rallies in Nairobi had a major impact on the President's decision to reintroduce multi-party elections, and that, despite the timing coming just after a major aid freeze, it was domestic unrest, not international aid cuts that pushed the President to allow competitive elections.]

BP So people showed up for the crusade?

TN By 10 o'clock there were over 6, 000; by 12 o'clock there were more than 10,000 [??see archives]. A small shopping center on the way to Nyeri.

BP So what happened on that day?

TN What happened on that day is that I went to preach in a certain congregation in the morning because the crusade was to start at 2.

BP This was 1991

TN [1991] May. So the crusade had gone on in the church compound but had decided it was to go out. So on that morning when I woke up, I already knew that the [government] troops are all over the coffee shambas and the banana shambas...soldiers, military, everywhere [including the General Services Unit [a para-military force used for crowd control and repressing dissent in Kenya.] They had been poured all over the local maize plantations, banana plantations; they were there, waiting to stop the crusade from happening.

BP Why weren't they just standing in the shopping center?

TN ...military strategy

BP They didn't want to be seen, but they were all around.

TN They didn't want to be seen. But I knew they were coming on Saturday; they started coming on Saturday. But my watchman came and informed me. My watchman coming to work from his home, he found a lot of soldiers in the banana [plantations] just hiding and waiting for the crusade to come out. Then I had to go very early in the morning and preach in a certain station because the crusade was to be at 2 p.m. So when I left the church door, my car was sandwiched by both CID [Criminal Investigation Department] and the police vehicles, not knowing where I was going, waiting for orders to arrest; but they didn't receive the orders.

I reached the crusade site. We were with another American, called Laura Jurnigan, [?? a minister; see Archives; husband a professor in Atlanta??] So, his wife was a minister, my co-minister. So we came to start the crusade at exactly 2.

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Njoya confronts the police

TN Then at 2:02, 2:02, the police came in land rovers without calling the others hiding on the road; they came with the land rovers. I know Nakeri [??] came; Nakeri was the police officer and Kuria [??] was his deputy...They came and stood in the middle of the rally. 2:02 exactly. Then we stopped. We had just lit the candle to start the crusade. So we marched to them [the police officers] You know Kenyans fear white people. So with this Rev. Laura, Laura Jurnigan [??], we went to meet (emphasis) the police. We met them. **They had police dogs and they were wearing tear gas masks.** Two land rovers. **When we went to confront them, they withdrew; they turned back and went away.**

The Minister of State for Home Affairs was at the roadside, near the shops. The Minister of State was already there. He was called Kigoro [??]. He was already arrived to come and direct

the police... he's the man in charge of security. Imagine, a whole Cabinet Minister was already there to insure the President's orders are obeyed. So when they withdrew to go for further details, we started singing. So exactly at 2:30 we prayed... We had read the scripture, we had sung the songs; we had praised... We were singing the last song.

HR TACTIC – Try to upstage your enemy; rob them of their strength: preempt their move. In this case, end a meeting before the police can end it as illegal.

Now the police appeared in full gear: tear gas masks, and handles, batons, guns cocked with bayonets. So they appeared and came to the field of the crusade. Now it was exactly... 2:32. [Njoya walked directly up to the senior commanding officers, whom he knew by name.]

When I went, I deprived him of his role [of the one confronting] because they had never seen anything like this. So, I went to meet them and asked them what they wanted. But when I knew they were going to declare the... I had read the law; it had been researched by [Gibson] Kamau Kuria and Kiraitu [Murungi] about the law on meetings. So when I knew they were going to declare the meeting illegal, I cancelled the meeting. Before they opened their mouths, I opened my own and told the people to go home, that we have finished the crusade, we have prayed, we have sung.

[laughs] I took the microphone and stole the thunder from them, I stole their fire. I told the crusade it's declared closed: people go home.

BP Why did you do that?

TN To steal the thunder, to steal their fire.

BP To avoid violence?

TN No; to upstage them... I've never seen so many soldiers in all my life. I wanted to upstage them.

THEME: insiders cooperating with the activists. Soldiers help Njoya drive safely away

TN And so, since my car was across the road, sandwiched by police cars, everything... [illustrates with his hands the position of his car that day and the police cars in front and behind it that prevented it from being driven away]. It cannot come back to the road because of the cars in front of it and behind. But the road is clear. And that's where the soldiers are standing. **These soldiers [put] their guns down, down; and they lifted my car and brought it in the road. And they saluted.** Now I assumed the command of the soldiers, not [the senior police officer on the scene]. They [the senior officers] were angry (emphasis) because now – I wanted to get my car because I have declared the crusade [closed] And it is off the road. Therefore the soldiers put their guns down and lifted my car, like a paper, and put it on the road for me to go. They were very happy because they didn't want to have to beat people. They didn't want to have to beat people. GSU, ordinary police, the administrative police; all of them [lifted the car], even the Inspectors, everybody. Only the [commanding officer] and others were gazing at it. [laughs] They [the senior officers] were angry.

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HR TACTIC explained: take charge away from those you oppose; seize the moment; steal the thunder.

TN It's usual for me to take charge of a situation, even in my church...I shift the focus from the Moderator [of his church] to myself when I am in a meeting. I know how to do that and when it is important to do that.

BP What was the political symbolism that you were trying to achieve.

TN I wanted to show that Kenya...has people who have sinned... We wanted to pray; we have finished our prayers. We are praying to God.

BP This is symbolic politics

TN **This is symbolic politics.**

BP And it worked.

TN **And it worked.** Now, after they removed my car, I went. Drove home...about four kilometers from there. And I saw myself followed by a pickup. (Someone had tipped him off that the Minister was angry with the para-military force.) He was asking them: what are you doing? How did you allow Njoya to escape? Do action; they cannot get away with it.

So this man drove his pickup to my home, gave me the pickup and took my car. He was going to Nairobi. [He told Njoya to take the back roads to Nairobi, telling him there would be security road blocks nearby to stop him from going to Nairobi. The man swapped vehicles with Njoya to fool the police.] He was a businessman. [Note. Do not use his name without his permission.].

Now, I escaped. There were roadblocks. [The businessman] was stopped. Every time they would stop the car – they would see my number, and they would see someone else [driving]. They would feel stupid, as if the police gave them the wrong number...[His friend was stopped] about ten times. And I made it through to Nairobi.

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More **symbolic action**: showing you are not under the control of the authorities: prayer for 30 minutes.

TN They came the following morning to command me in my home to report to Nyeri. Then I [went with] my lawyer [Kiraitu Murungi]. Kiraitu was thrown out [literally]; he was thrown up in the air and outside the District office in Nyeri. [He was thrown out] physically...They wanted to interrogate me. [The police took his photograph and informed him he was under arrest.] **Then I prayed, deliberately, for thirty minutes. They got bored.** They wanted to stop me physically from praying [laughs]. But I continued at it. At five minutes they wanted to stop me from praying; but I continued [emphasis]. At ten minutes they were all desperate for me to stop.

BP Were you praying out loud?

TN I was just shutting my eyes. But I was praying. God hears the silent [laughs].

It was a deliberate action, **symbolic action**.

BP What was the point of that action.

TN To show they [the police] were not in control.

BP Civil disobedience

TN Yes, God was in control. As I prayed, the [senior police officer] was [ordered] by the DC [District Commissioner]: would you stop [Njoya]; this is not a temple [laughs]. The D.C. was telling the [senior police officer] to stop me from praying, telling him: this is not a temple. Then I burst out at that point. I said: "The heaven is God's chair and the earth is His footstool. So the whole universe is God's temple," I declared. [laughs]. You see that was how I talked. Again, I took over.

BP Which you tried to do in those situations, rather than be a helpless...

TN **I move on the offense. So I took over completely** from the DC

BP What did you do next.

TN I asked the DC: what's your name. I knew him...He told me the name. Then I asked the [senior police officer in charge]: what's your name; what's your rank. Then they said: you've not come to interrogate us. And I said, this is our office; this is not a government's office. We have given the government this office for use to serve. [laughs]... I want a cup of coffee. I told them I want a cup of coffee.

BP What did they say?

TN He said, I've never seen anything like this. This is when he told me: do you know you are here in the name of the President? I asked him: which President. I told them, what President are you talking about. I told them there is only one President in Kenya, my (emphasis) President: Moi. I asked them: which is your President? I don't know him. I only know one President in this country: Moi, my President.

BP You claimed him rather than let him claim him. Ah, that's good. The effort there is to turn the tables.

TN The dynamics. They never knew anything like that. They were all paralyzed...

Then another one would talk and I'd tell them: Go bring tea. By then they had thrown Kiraitu [Murungi, his intended lawyer and human rights activist] out. [laughs]. Anyone who was not sitting I told them to go and bring tea... Then they said, why did you defy the President? Which one, I asked? ...Because there are not two Presidents, other than mine.

BP And you hadn't defied [the President] because you hadn't held it illegally. You said it was over, right?

"God is in control....reason is in control."

TN Yeah. So, now they were completely unable to handle the situation. Then I told the DC: anytime you are in this office, you know you are here temporarily; we'll have another DC. They told me: go. I said I'm not going without having a cup of coffee. Without coffee, I'm not going. Actually, I had no need of coffee, it was [a matter of having] the last word.

BP Now the drama is evident there; but your thinking behind the drama; the purpose of this..

TN To show who is in control. **They [the officials] are not in control. The people are in control; God is in control. To show them that reason is in control, not brute force; not brute force.** And I made the point. So in the end, they allowed us to go. And the media, everybody, thousands of people [had come to the area where he had been questioned, or rather where he had questioned the officials]. I could not even move. I've never seen so many people in Nyeri. [They were] everywhere (emphasis); there was no room. There was no room anywhere you could stand. My own parish (about 15 kilometers away) had [used] all vehicles to transport themselves to Nyeri.

BP Why were people so excited and happy about that?

A broader sense of "governance"

TN Because [at that time] people had never talked publically [against the government]. People were always silent [or] talked in the kitchen. And now there was someone talking [openly] about their rights. About being human, not property, and saying that the government is the property of the people; people have a right to hire and fire the government. That was the message. And they do it every five years – by elections, but they have never appropriated the concept behind

elections: that they are not ritual. Elections, governance, is not about MP's [Members of Parliament] and Councilors, governance is about even choosing a husband or a wife; it's about even being in charge of your coffee, in charge of your tea, in charge of everything. People were upset because now they heard the message of the Gospel in a very different way.

BP So it was to tell them that in fact they didn't need to be subject to abuse and be helpless.

TN No, they were never subjects; they were always 'property.' You see we were never subjects of the British Empire, we never voted in Britain. Kenyans had just assumed that we were still property, overseas property of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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SABA SABA [seven seven in Swahili; meaning seventh day of seventh month: July 7; the big anti-government, pro multi-party rally of 1990]

BP What was your **next activism**?

TN That actually brought the single party to an end; that crusade was the death knell..

BP Well, there were other events. There was the Saba Saba of 1990.

TN 1990, people credit Matiba, but he was in prison [detained for his role in planning the Saba Saba rally for multi-party]. The credit is for those who went. But it is Bedan Mbugua] and I who arranged Saba Saba.

[Note: others also claim credit for arranging it, including Paul Muite. Review the transcripts; compare and check the history further; important discrepancy. Ask Bedan in second interview?? Njoya quickly clarifies his actual role in response to further questions.]

It's us who hired the vehicles [for Saba Saba]. These politicians don't know where we got the vehicles. 1990. We are the ones who made sure that Matiba does not [unclear], and that's why Bedan works for Matiba. Matiba knows that the other politicians were not for him. The matter of Saba Saba would not have happened if it were not for Mbugua and I.

BP What did you do to make it happen?

TN You see it is my wife [name; spelling??] and others who had gone to recruit Matiba into the multi-party. We had recruited Matiba and Oginga Odinga [a former Vice President of Kenya]... We recruited all these politicians into the pluralism debate. Kibaki and all these people came because we created multi-party. So when they came...

BP What did you do to organize Saba Saba of 1990?

TN When preaching, to say it will still take place. We were saying: it's on; it's on.

BP OK, because others, they were planning it, and you were preaching it.

TN No, they had just declared that it will be there, but they went to jail; but you could not continue with it. There was nobody – no speaker, no leader. So we continued saying it will take place. After Matiba and Rubia were in jail. And Oginga Odinga and Raila. They were in jail. So we said it will still go on.

BP So that was your contribution to keep people convinced...

TN ...going on alert. Every Monday [??] they would read the Njoya sermon saying everything is on schedule.

BP The actual organizers of the event of the original Saba Saba of 1990 were...?

TN No (emphasis), there was no actual organizer, only the media.

BP ...Well Matiba was calling for it [multi-party] in the press...in 1990.

Njoya claims credit for first opposition "party" in push for multi-partyism (MAP – 1990)

TN You see, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD), these people were still in the hands of myself, Wangari Maathai, and others, and Bedan Mbugua who were organizing.

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MORAL ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

HR TACTIC: (1) Framing the message; (2) use humor; (3) ridicule the enemy: new ‘party’ was “registered in heaven”

TN We had a committee called MAP, the first organization in Kenya – maybe you came to Chester House (headquarters for many of the permanent international journalists based in Kenya where many press conferences were held). The very first meeting in Chester House ever [of multi-party promoting groups] was for Moral Alliance for Peace (MAP). The Moral Alliance for Peace is the one which organized the Forum [for the Restoration of Democracy]
[not verified]

BP 1990?

TN 1990. It is the first ever in Kenya political party to be declared. **And we said it was ‘registered’ in heaven.** [At that time, only one political party was allowed, and even societies of more than nine members had to be recognized (registered by) the government. Among its members were] Martha Njoka (later Karua), Wangari Maathai, Bedan Mbugua and Duta [??] and myself. And with e-mail support [etc] was JBM Kariuki. He was the first lawyer ever to be in the activist [role for human rights and pluralism. ??Again, I am cautious about such a definite statement of his being “first” in activism. John Khaminwa, for example, was active in the early 1980s. When was JBM active?]. He was supporting us with material, faxing, and so forth.

BP Was that before Saba Saba 1990?

TN That is the group that was behind everything, called Moral Alliance for Peace. And it was the first party ever in Kenya to be declared openly [in the period leading up to the adoption by Moi of multi-party elections]. It was treason to declare a party at that time, because of the Public Order Act.

BP You held a press conference in Chester House.

TN In order to declare that there’s a Moral Alliance for Peace and we’ll continue with those activities.

BP Who formed the Moral Alliance for Peace.

TN I went to recruit people. The first person I recruited..

BP Was this your brain child?

TN. Yes. The first person I recruited was [names a University professor of whom he says would not like his name mentioned] I went to recruit him, saying that I want to form a Moral Alliance for Peace Party, registered in heaven. [laughs] [The professor told Njoya] ‘I want to join the Alliance, but as long as you use my middle name, or I will lose my job at the University’ [whose Chancellor was President Moi]. I told him you, you are safe: you are born again...

BP Why did you form a Moral Alliance for Peace.

****HR TACTIC. Organize to move beyond individual activism: An argument for the importance of organizations at some point in the process of pressing for change.**

Clerical “quartet” promoted reform from the pulpit

TN Because I saw that without organization, without organization and mobilization, things would not happen and it was so individualistic because from the Church on the pulpit it was

myself, [the late Bishop Alexander] Muge, [Bishop David] Gitari and [the late Bishop Henry] Okullu – four people. Okullu is dead and Muge is dead. Muge was killed on the road. [And in August 2002, retiring then-Archbishop David Gitari’s car collided with a police car that suddenly swerved out in front of it. The car was badly damaged but Archbishop Gitari escaped uninjured. He later accused the government of trying to kill him. Bishop Muge’s death in a road accident raised similar questions of intent.]

TN Bwana Nzeki had not appeared, the Catholics, had not appeared. He appeared during the time of crisis (ethnic clashes in the Nakuru area where he was a Bishop??) At that time it was the “quartet” [of Njoya, Muge, Gitari and Okullu]. We were the ones talking from the pulpit.

BP As early as 1989?

TN Even before. We were...anti-corruption before anything. But now, I wanted an organization because we were not organized [and] that does the work, the political work.

BP Because from a political science point of view, having statements wasn’t enough.

TN It wasn’t enough.

BP So you had to move from words...

HR TACTIC (Organization continues) Moving beyond the ‘war of words and wits’

TN Translate words into action. We were fighting the war with words and wits [up until then, without the benefit of any organization]. That’s what the media was calling it: Njoya’s war of words and wits (WWW) [laughs]. I wanted to remove the word Njoya...I wanted to change it from a war of words and wits into-

BP Something solid.

TN Something solid. Then the second person I recruited was Martha Karua. I went to her office. I had written a one-page document. When I went to take it to Martha Karua we had never met before. That was my first time ever to see her, face to face, the way we are talking. So, I went to Martha Karua [who signed along with Nduta??...]

So we said at 4 o’clock we are going to announce it at Chester House. There was another Martha.

End of side one, tape one

Begin side two, tape one.

0

HR TACTIC – a theological justification for democracy

BP So what was the strategy behind [MAP]?

TN The strategy was that the missionary had already preached that God saves by grace. The theology of Christianity was that salvation is by grace...What in secular terms does grace mean? It means that people must be ruled by consent...God is calling us; let us come reason together [Isaiah I, verse 13?? Verify]. And [God] even gives you an advocate, free, like Jesus Christ so that you can be heard. We should be ruled that way. So people knew I was coming from a popular theological position, which even the Muslims and the Hindus could buy. He said if we can prepare for God, we go to God by consent. Prayer is participatory, and I said prayer is participatory democracy. We have to ask God. We have to ask God for things, even though God knows we need them because God does not want to take us as fools. People who are given things like animals or pets, God wants us to pray so that we are participating; we are stake holders in God’s kingdom. We are not simply there like potato buds.

Human rights (universal) defined in terms of the physical senses

BP So for you, what are human rights.

TN Human rights are what everybody owes everybody. Each [person's] obligation to each; what one owes the other and must owe the other. I owe it [to you] to listen to you. That's why you have ears, as natural things. And I have ears, too. So if I want to hear, I must allow others to hear. That's God-given. But we are created in a way that we must listen to each other.

BP Are they [human rights] universal?

TN They are universal human rights. Listening and talking are universal: freedom of speech and expression are the way the head is made, with the eyes and ears and mouth. So to be human, you have to be listened to and to listen.

BP So it almost starts with the body

TN With the body. There's nobody without human rights. [You] become a vegetable if you cannot listen and be listened to. And I said the government has denied the right to hear and talk.

BP Yes. Now, going back to the Moral Alliance [for Prayer]...

TN Then I went to Wangari Maathai at Green Belt. By noon I was there because I started the whole thing in the morning. And I was saying we are going to have a press conference at 4 o'clock at Chester House.

BP So you mean you signed up everybody in one day?

TN Yes, one day. I didn't want to be arrested in the evening for being discovered [trying to form a 'party.' Anything [could happen]. You go to an office and the person refused, it means, in order not to be called collaborators, or conspiracy to overthrow the government, it means they might report you, or be detained. And people would be followed by the police. Because I [was] always followed by nine men per day. So wherever I go, the police were there. So I didn't want to waste time. So I went to Wangari Maathai. I asked her: are you going to sign. She signed without reading. She said, I'm going to sign and I'm not going to read. [He told her:] It's not what is in the paper, it's what we share together. It's what we stand for. Then we went to Chester House and Bedan Mbugua [signed]; he didn't even read [it]...

BP So you held your press conference. We [journalists] weren't quite sure what to think of this.

TN We said Kenya is going to get pluralistic; Kenya is going to have freedom of speech; it's going to be ruled differently; we're going to make sure that multi-party succeeds and we want to make sure that Kenya is governed differently because we have never been governed since Africa was discovered. We have been dominated; we want to be governed now.

BP This was before Saba Saba 1990?

TN Yes. We said we want to be governed now because we have never been governed, we have always been exploited. We want now to start being developed. We have always been exploited, we want to be developed. We had a lot of ideological, captivating words, very captivating.

BP And what was the political strategy here? What tack were you trying?

TN We were trying to say that we have not violated law because we are not more than eight because the law prohibits a meeting of more than eight people. [The law at that time required registration by the government – which meant approval – of any group with more than nine members. When FORD formed, the plan was to have a maximum of nine members, though only six participated in the initial launching.] And we have not violated... We were five [three ladies and two men plus the backing of Martha Koome and J.B.M. Kariuki; they did not come but] came to the subsequent meetings.

BP So what happened; did you all get arrested that afternoon?

TN There was nothing in Parliament but condemnation of us. But they could not arrest us because we had not violated any law. We were registered in heaven, not in this world. [laughs]. People who are religious – we were capturing the religious mind in Kenya. Eighty percent [??]. People who were religious. Our strategy was to capture – to pull the carpet from underneath the state. And we succeeded.

BP Would you categorize that as symbolic politics?

TN **It was symbolic politics.** Saying you are registered in heaven. And everybody believes in heaven. You are giving heaven substance, earthly substance. You are incarnating...

BP So it wasn't civil disobedience; it's wasn't a mass demonstration that was illegal it was – symbolic politics.

TN And nobody could fight it [criticism was strong from Moi supporters in Parliament, but the police did not arrest them because they had broken no laws.]

The context here is enlightening. Moi was coming under greater international scrutiny for corruption – the donors cut off new funds for that reason in late 1991; there had been challenges to the government's use of detention and an international outcry against torture used on detainees. So Moi could not simply arrest these church and attorney and other activists: he had picked fairly prominent people, not unknowns, to deliver the message of rights and pluralism with a group that barely ducked under the legal size for having to register with the government.]

BP You were not arrested and neither was anyone else.

TN No, and no one else.

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IMPACT of MAP: lessen fear; inspire courage. Immeasurable but probably true.

TN What was the impact. Over 100 and 1 percent.

BP No, I mean how do you measure the impact?

TN That Saba Saba was going to succeed because things are allowed by God – they are arranged in heaven.

BP But what was the impact of the Moral Alliance for Peace. What effect did it have?

TN The effect is that politicians got courage to come out and go to Kamakunji and do many other things. [This seems to be a reasonable assessment. MAP was another stepping stone for activists and sympathizers to ratchet up the pressure on the government for change. Each step probably did give people more courage. When Kamakunji did come, there were a credible turnout of people despite the government's declaring it illegal.]

People were not interested in religious things and things in heaven. Not interested in registering them or not. So Oginga Odinga went to court to register his party or not. But he was defeated [see archives]. You know the courts were all, all on the side of the Executive. The effect was spontaneous; it was great. Because here people now wanted [parties], not registered in heaven, and that's what we were aiming at.

BP The aim was to break the ground so that you don't get parties registered in heaven, but downtown Nairobi.

TN Yes [laughs]. So, we got that.

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(back to mothers strike)

BP – 1990 mothers' strike. What was before the mothers sat down on the ground under the trees that night; what was the planning that went into that event?

TN The planning was symbolic again. Mothers...I quoted one of the books of Jesus..if someone takes your outer garment, you give them the shirt. I didn't know they would take it literally. I was shocked. I was shocked.

BP Well, you don't have to encourage a Kikuyu woman to use – it's a tradition that's been around for generations.

TN But the idea..

BP It's used in other parts of Africa, like Nigeria, as a threat.

TN I was shocked...because I didn't think they would have the idea of stripping when I said when Jesus said if someone asks you for the outer gown, give the inner one. So that's what we were going there to do. I was not literal, but those ladies are very literal and believe that since this is the word of God, in the Bible there is nothing wrong with taking our clothes off.

TN You were there to support them and most people never even went there. But what I was asking is, what I understand the sequence of events: when Monica Wamwere as an individual was standing in the court yard, and actually in the streets and talking out loud about how they are going to kill my son, that some women invited her over to an on-going conference of women at the Kenya [International] Conference Center. She was introduced and talked about her hardships. At that point, she and some other mothers who were somehow gathered wanted to have symbolic protests – or a protests; they didn't see symbolism. They were planning to go to Kamati [prison] but Njeri Kababere and a few others said look it's not very symbolic out there; just do it right here in town; its more effective. And so they did it. Is that accurate so far? Is that genesis what you recollect how it started.

TN Yes.

BP So they came to that park. You showed up...

TN Not showed up (emphasis). We had arranged the meeting – already planned, a thing which the City Council came and banned it. We had a plaque. The soldiers (para-military) came and stopped it.

BP At what point did you become involved with that activity?

TN Throughout the night. Preparing the plaque for Wangari looking for trees to plant. Looking for cement.

BP So you joined right away, right away; no hesitation.

TN We were ready; mass minded.

SABA SABA PREPARTIONS WITH PRAYER

Preparing for Saba Saba with political prayers

BP ..going back to 91. Saba Saba came. What was your participation in the preparation of Saba Saba?

TN Meetings at All Saint Cathedral to make sure it happens. That's why I started seeing people like Shikuku, Bahmariz and many other people appearing.

BP At All Saints. Was Njenga the Minister there?

TN Yes, Njenga. That was a neutral forum. ...Now I started realizing that politicians were feeling jealous of us; they wanted to take over the 'fort.' We were too herbivorous. We don't need political power. We were simply herbivorous; they [the politicians] are carnivorous. ...we were not being political. We were not real – practitioners.

BP So you were participating or leading meetings at All Saints Cathedral.

TN Yes, and with prayer always

BP Who was leading those meetings; do you remember?

TN Myself. I was the one leading. **They were called prayer meetings. They were all prayers. But the topic would be political.** I was asking [Peter] Njenga [Provost of the Anglican All Saints Cathedral in downtown Nairobi, and a strong government critic on issues of human rights and democracy] to allow me to have prayers. Because my Church [the Presbyterian] wouldn't allow me. Oginga Odinga used to come to those meetings... That was a time I was already back in [my] church [after banishment for two years to a rural area.] The church had transferred me from Tumutumu to Kenyatta Hospital. After the [crusade] in Gagatika I did not stay in Tumutumu. The Church met and took me to be Chaplin as Kenyatta hospital. So when I was doing this political activism, Freedom Corner, all those things, now I was a Chaplin at Kenyatta Hospital.

BP Well, in one sense it's a good place to be because you saw people brought in who had been beaten up by the police.

TN Yeah.

BP After Saba Saba, what activism did you have?

TN After Saba Saba we had forums. Moi declared also end of [1991] for multi-party. By then the state was defeated, there was no need of mass activism.

BP Your next big activity was in '97?

TN No, there were many activities. [1992] – the first week we arranged for a symposium at Limuru because even though we are in the majority vote – '92 – ...[cites ngos working on human rights and mentions Maria Nzomo] things changed.

BP That's a new stage – where organizations [became] active. But...individual vs. organizational activism.

TN I was a member of FIDA [an international lawyers organization] when it began; I was a member of the National Commission on the Status of Women (Maria Nzomo).

[Individual vs. Organizational Activism]

BP OK, we'll do that next. When you were doing this early activism – before multi-party, were you acting as a representative of your Church or primarily on your own?

TN Not on my own; on the idea of democracy and human rights. I was acting on (pause) this idea that the way God rules we must be ruled. That was the criteria.

BP OK. But there was no human organization behind you, really?

TN No, no. But I was *using* forums that [were part of] organization: the radio, the papers, the media, the Church. I was using formal organization to enact [human rights challenges to the government]

BP Right, but those ...

TN Those tools were not mine, but they were available to me.

BP And your use of those tools...

TN Was very effective.

BP Yes it was very effective, but was it primarily an individual action? Or was it as a representative of the Church.

TN No, the people, the media understood, always said – *The Weekly Review*, the *Washington Post*, which cuttings [clips] I have, the *New York Times*, the Kyodo [News Agency from Japan]...all those papers said it was the church father's estate?? So the perception of the public was that ??

BP I want to be a little more precise on this issue, because I'm not convinced that that was an accurate characterization. Because to say that means that the full weight of the Church was

working. And I'm not aware of whether that was or was not the case... You're Presbyterian; was the Presbyterian Church supporting your activity or were you acting as an individual within the Church.

TN The [Presbyterian Church] hierarchy was not [behind me] but the members were -99.9999 percent... The members of the Church were 99.9999 percent [behind me].

BP Did you speak as individual or as a representative of the Church?

TN I spoke as a Shepherd.

BP OK

TN So – Corporate speaking; Corporate speaking. I'm using their ideology, it's not mine. I started in Princeton, I totally removed... The ideology I was using was theirs, even though I was putting it differently.

BP To be very specific, you had that [crusade]: did you get clerical help from the Presbyterian Church, publicity, legal assistance, physical protection..

TN The Presbyteria was all behind me...

BP So the local Presbyteri ..

TN ..was behind me. Not the head office; the local.

BP What kind of support did you get? Did you get clerical?

TN The clerical support I got was [from] Jacob Wachira... who was the clerk of the [local] Presbyteri . He made a statement which was very, very strong. He said: the ...crusade is our march to heaven. It's a march not against Moi, but we are marching to heaven.

BP In terms of clerical help, did you get any?

TN [Yes] from the local church council

BP Did you get any publicity help?

TN I had more publicity than I needed. [The papers and electronic media flocked to the story. He got it] by the media coming to my house, and knocking. Every media, national and international, even when I went to Tumutumu they were always there.

BP Did you get any legal assistance?

TN Yes, from [Gibson] Kamau Kuria, not from the church. I got legal... also when I was arrested [from Kuria's law partner Kiraitu Murungi].

BP Did you get physical protection from your own church?

TN **My [Presbyterian] Church was on the side of the government – the Church hierarchy, not the [members].** But when the Church [??] took me to court to hand over my house and the car [a friend said:] 'Njoya, you were given this house, car, office, for preaching...' [The courts refused to hear the Church case against him, describing it as a domestic issue.] So I won.

Civil Society emerges in Kenya: shift from individualism to organizational activism

TN We started saying that since multi-party has come without constitutional change, without a multi-party climate... we had a symposium to have that [constitutional reform]. Then the parties cheated us. So civil society was now already emerging. So the civil society... I started seeing people called Kivuthia Kibwana, [Gibson] Kamau Kuria, Maria Nzomo. The civil society emerged... Kenya was full of donors... like swarms of locusts, supporting civil action and civic education. Then other elements started coming in which I never knew: money, organization, groups, all competing for attention.

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BP Did the hierarchy of your Church ever begin to support you in your human rights efforts?

TN Not until now; even now [they don't]. They have supported the Ghai Commission [the Kenya Review Commission drafting a new constitution under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal Ghai in 2002]. But you know I'm not for it. I'm for...[NOTE: poor interviewing: I ignore what might have been an important point in the middle of his answer. Why was he not for constitutional reform, after such personal activism against an authoritarian ruler benefiting from a constitution that gave him so much power?]

BP So you never did get the Presbyterian hierarchy behind you

TN Not to today; even today. And I don't need it because it will make Muslims and others alienated. We need a lot of other people of other religions [in the human rights struggle in Kenya]. But it's good for them to know I'm coming from a constituency...

BP So you held these symposiums; civil society emerged; and then in the build-up to '97 there was a...

TN And I became the Chairman of one [ngo]: Center for Governance and Development at one time. Then the other which emerged was the National Convention Assembly [NCA] which I chaired at Limuru [Kenya] and I am still a Co-Convener. ...Even for women they wanted me to be a woman cause. I'd already called myself a mother for political prisoners, a wife of political prisoners. Even women groups organized; I was gender sensitive. Everything I did, I did it comprehensively – gender, minority, gender, disabled, all that kind of thing. I had already infused those ideas through my sermons into society and the media was willing to infuse those ideas.

BP What was the symbolic importance or strategy behind holding a constitutional convention assembly and working outside of Parliament instead of inside.

TN The moral behind [it] was that political parties came and were registered within the framework of a one-party constitution. Therefore they could not play pluralism politics because they were like chicks. All the new political parties were genetically produced by one cock [KANU, the ruling party]. Therefore we wanted to have new politics...The sperm for KANU the law which existed....we wanted [something] different [a fresh start].

BP So you were trying to reach political change outside the political system.

TN Yeah. A paradigm shift. We did not really want to change the structures and the management of the country. We wanted to enact the principles for which we stood for earlier: of pluralism; pluralism being the framework, not singularism allowing multiplicity; not multiplicity of singularism, which is the present situation. We have many parties.

BP What?

TN Multiplicity of singularism, factionalism within a single. Internal factionalism. Because we have multi-factionalism, not multi-partyism.

BP Factionalism is a part of politics in American history; it's always been there.

TN There may be factionalism within democratic or within [a] Republic. But ours is factionalism externally...

BP Madison dealt with factionalism, as you know. He said you can never get rid of it so you can only control it.

TN But the problem with Kenya is that they had no priorities of their own or independent positions. They were always governed by one of them. They were like factions of KANU.

BP So what you are saying is in 1997 or before the elections, although you had multi-party, you were still basically following one set of rules that were designed for a one-party system. Do you think it made sense, looking back on it to try to effect political change from the outside rather than to win over enough delegates [Members of Parliament] to change the constitution?

Njoya makes some big [and inaccurate] claims about his own role

TN No, no. We wanted to reform and change the constitution....I was the one who came with the idea.

BP Which idea?

TN Of reform.

BP Reform is a general idea.

TN You read in the paper: No reform, no election [a slogan used by those supporting constitutional reforms before the 1997 elections.]

BP That's a slogan you thought up?

TN Yes. No. Even the word "mass action" is my own invention. It was never known anywhere else; I have never read [about it] in any of the political books in the world. What there was in the political books in the world was civil disobedience. So when we entered the move[ment] and people wanted civil disobedience, I said if we call it "disobedience," and I am a Christian, I might not disobey. So what we are going to do, we are going to have mass action, and the word got to the media.

BP You mean it had never been done anywhere in Kenya?

TN Not anywhere; the word mass action was not known. The word "mass action."

BP What about the civil rights [movement in the U.S.] in the '60s.

TN The civil rights movement was not called mass action. I am talking about the name; it was nowhere in the books before we coined mass action, in 1997.

BP You have a PhD in political science [??], looking back at this now, do you think that...you were trying to get constitutional change by people who didn't have a vote in Parliament?

TN Because the constitution even in America was not made by Parliament. It was ex-Parliament [outside of the Continental Congress]...The Parliament job description is written by the constitution. Executives and states are formed by the constitution. They don't exist prior to [enactment of a] constitution. Kenya is not a state, it's a *conquistador*; we are conquered and colonized; it [the state] is an occupation force. We want to make now a state that is a legitimate state; that was my contention...Kenya has always been occupied; it has never been governed, neither developed, neither had a constitutional state. People have never come together and said: we the people of Kenya want to constitute the state.

BP So it's never been a nation-state.

TN No. It has always been an occupied state; the state is still an occupation force. It was started by Lord Lugard [??] and the Imperial British...And that was my first lecture. I said we want to start anew. And we want it to be people-driven. And we must go to Kamakunji. And I read; and we fought. You know I had a red Bible, and it was taken away. We fought hand to hand combat in 1997, first of all on May 3, at Kamakunji, then 29 [May] at Central Park[??City Park], then on 7 July at All Saint's Cathedral. These three meetings are the ones which led the Kenyan government to accept reform – and to steal it. Not only to accept it, but to co-opt it. And that's now what the NCEC [National Convention Executive Council] is fighting against.

IMPACT of 1997 mass action protests: formal success, not substantial

BP So, did the effort fail or was it successful?

TN It achieved what you call formal but not substantial reform, result. Formal result. We wanted reform; government agreed, but it...had not substance because the government, again, co-opted

it and formed the IPPG [Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group] to...negotiate with [the political class] [hard to hear tape here]

SA-Government woos reformists from civil society group back to Parliament & passes reforms.

The government's tactics won by pulling the political class out of the [civil reform] movement, which we created. We created the political class. But it [the government's cooptation of Members of Parliament into the IPPG] took away the political class from us. [The MP's moved out of the civilian reform process back to the reform process begun in Parliament.]...

BP Mutunga's book has a critic in it that says the NCEC had become an elitist group with no grass roots attachment.

THEME: Civil Society: Can it sustain long protests using the (impatient) middle class?

Theory: See social movement protest theory....

NCEC alienated middle class by reforms disrupting their daily (middle class) routine, Njoya claims: argument for why middle class makes poor activists in the long run.

TN That one [criticism] I said myself. The NCEC...at that time, alienated the middle class because the middle class is very impatient anywhere in the world. The middle class cannot do without business. It is in mortgage; you cannot sustain a struggle when you have to pay high [costs]. So the middle class takes the children to school...so if you block the road by mass action, the middle class will not have its own children in school. The children of the peasants, and the poor, and the workers, go to their neighborhood schools, they have neighborhood shops. The middle class shops by transport, they go to Uchumi, which is not in their neighborhood. They go to a school which is high class at a distance, or middle class. So if you have mass action that goes for more than a week, it means that the middle class family will get destroyed because they do not have food; they don't use charcoal, they use gas. You have to go to buy gas to cook. They use toilet paper. The lower class can go to the toilets in the bush. The middle class uses toilet paper – they have to go and buy it. The NCEC lost touch with the middle class because the middle class economy and life was disrupted. We disrupted the middle class.

BP Where did the NCEC go wrong?

TN It had not done a good analysis of the dwindling middle class in Kenya...[Njoya said the NCEC also lost the support of the media, which is run by the middle class.] We alienated the middle class; therefore we lost our favor[able] coverage because **the middle class was impatient, very impatient with the prolonged mass action.**

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BP What is the best strategy after a country has gone multi-party, like Kenya to get them to go the next step, often called consolidation.

TN The problem with the middle class organizations, like the Teachers Union (NAT??) is it was promised a ten-times increase of salary to vote for the government. It cannot hold a strike for too long...to go on a strike is to kill its own interest. The same with matatus, they cannot go on strike too long because when they don't carry the passengers, the passengers are antagonized. So they fight against themselves without knowing [it]. So **the government utilizes internal contradictions of the middle class.** All the time.

BP OK, how do they do that in Kenya?

TN The internal contradictions of the middle class is dependent on the market, the formal market. The lower class is eating food they have grown [not in the city they don't]. They eat their own vegetables, they grow their own maize. The middle class [and urban poor] depend on the market.

BP Specifically how, here, did the Kenyan government demolish the non-parliamentary effort and pull it into Parliament – IPPG – and you get a little bit of reform and then it's over.

TN IPPG is drawn not from the poor and the peasant, it is drawn from the middle class. Their wives are middle class, so they cannot sustain a struggle for too long.

BP So they were not supporting...

TN ...a prolonged struggle.

BP The Members of Parliament and their families..

TN ...could not support [prolonged strikes] because of their class interest.

BP Because you were having strikes. Everybody was supposed to go out on strikes.

TN Yes, we were closing the market.

BP There was talk of a civilian coup, was that one part of the planning.

TN We had done that; we succeeded in a civilian coup because we had shut the government [??see archives; shut for how long; which part shut; why] We had paralyzed the business in the whole of the country: transport...we paralyzed everything. By that paralysis we paralyzed both the middle class and the government.

BP So it wasn't just strikes in downtown Nairobi: you had strikes all over the country?

TN Yes [??see archives] Twenty-one people were killed on Saba Saba [July 7, 1997; I do not have figures; see the *Nation*; Mutunga says (p. 180) that 14 Kenyans were killed as a result of the violence on and around Saba Saba 1997). We had paralyzed everything. What do you paralyze when you paralyze the government; you are really paralyzing the middle class. We were killing the middle class without knowing it... We paralyzed the whole economy. We paralyzed the transport; we paralyzed the government, together with the middle class. And since the middle class owns the media by which we announce our meetings...

[Mutunga also recounts how he and Kepta Ombati were attacked by police in the All Saints Cathedral during the July 7, 1997 demonstration. "The pictures of both Njoya and Kepta bloodied and writhing in pain were carried on the front pages of most of the influential papers in the West." Thus by his activism and being attacked he publicized the abuses of the Moi regime.]

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BP Translate what from spiritual into physical?

TN That God's government, the way God governs is translated from the straight spiritual realm into the physical realm. So my first sermon was this; my testimony in public, in 1956, in school. I went to school on Monday, after being saved on Saturday: I said, God who is almighty, omnipotent allows all of you to go to hell, willingly [or go to heaven]. Now, if God, who is almighty, omnipotent creator, allows me to choose to be saved, or not to be saved, prefers that I go to hell...then to heaven, ashamed, crying, why don't you choose to be governed that way by the school.

BP What did that mean politically to you.

TN That was school. Intermediate school [where the students were told to come on Saturday and plant coffee on the school farm]. I said from now on I will not dig coffee holes [for the coffee

plants] because it's not part of the curricular, unless we meet and decide we want to dig coffee holes.

BP Where did that leave you in the school?

TN The teacher took a twig [curled it into his hair and pulled some of his hair off]. And I fainted. I fainted.

[The teacher shouted:] Leave your salvation at the gate (emphasis). That salvation of yours, you are not going to incite the students. You are a Mau Mau [pre-independence freedom fighter]; your dreams of salvation are at the gate. We don't want salvation within the school gate.

That drove all the students to be saved. My whole class was saved. My whole, whole class was saved. [They came to the revival] because of the treatment I was given by the teacher.

BP This was not a religious school"

TN No, it was a secular school in Mukuremo [??] South Tetu DEB (District Education Board) Intermediate School.

(tape stopped briefly here) At the age of 15 or 16 he organized prayers in his house against the forced communal labor in his village, a custom the British used. He was arrested for it.

(tape resumes)

BP You were arrested?

TN Yes, I was arrested, at age 15 or 16.

End of tape one

Start of tape two, side one

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BP You were taken to the police station?

TN They were called headmen at the time; I was taken to the headman. The Roman Catholic father was white, was there to make sure I was beaten because they...thought the revival was an African-initiated thing so the Presbyterian Church was against the revival. And the Catholic Church was against [it]. There were only two denominations in that time in my area.

Already the Catholic knew I was stubborn, because there was a cinema in the evening. One time, just before I got saved...this cinema was showing about the story of creation. And I asked the Catholic father, he asked: anybody with a question. I put my hand up. I was a boy. He asked: what do you want to ask? I told him, since Adam did not have daughters, whom did Cain and Abel marry?

BP [laughs]

TN [laughs] So I was beaten by the [person who guarded the father; it was the time of the emergency, as the British called it, the uprising by Mau Mau fighters.] I was beaten very well. So the government people were [unhappy] with me because they knew I was a nuisance.

BP You've been a nuisance a long time, haven't you. [laughs]

TN It wasn't even original of me to ask that; I've heard boys ask each other questions like that. But I decided to ask it.

BP Why did you choose political science as a major.

TN It was not my major; theology was my major. In Princeton you can take courses in seminary and you get a degree which mixes the courses you want. So for Masters and PhD I did half political science and half theology. But it was all political science because I was [seeking] to translate theology into political science, to cross the boundary. The degree is called PhD in

theology but actually the majority of my classes were political science. If you go to the University you'll see I was registered in the political science department.

BP You got an actual earned degree? It wasn't an honorary degree.

TN It was an actual earned degree. It was not honorary.

BP So did you have the idea of coming back from your studies and becoming politically involved?

through the church?

Njoya's first banishment: to Princeton "because I was not wanted."

TN No. I was being given a scholarship to go away from Kenya because I was not wanted. In 1968 I went to the United States under an exchange program, to make me mellow down. Because they thought I was a socialist, or Communist, Marxist at that time. And so I was being taken to America where there is no Communism, no socialism, to come back not like Nyerrere, not like Nkrumah, to come back...more docile.

BP I think you surprised them.

TN...they accentuated my calling."

Individuals organized the organizations

BP Would you agree that from 87-97, to somewhere around 91 or 92, individual activism was coming up [earlier]; organizational activities didn't really get high until later when individuals didn't have to stand on their own because organizations...

TN And it is us, the individuals, who organized the organizations. But encouraged by donors. I say encouraged by donors because I went to Germany many times for training, Neumann Foundation...

Donors gave human rights activists international credibility

BP What was the role of donors in advancing human rights in Kenya?

TN They had a big role. They gave credibility to what we were doing...international credibility. Moi would say that we went there for money, for living in hotels in Europe, all over the world, giving lectures. Because I went to America giving lectures many times. Moi thought that. But ourselves, we had our own agenda; not the donor agenda.

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TN My own agenda was to give credibility, to give more currency to my activism, to give an international dimension [to the issue of human rights], to show that this human, it's not simply Kenyan. So the donors were feeling guilty for having colonized us. And they wanted to rectify their record. Because we didn't know how to get donors from India or Japan, we didn't get donors from Russia. The donors were our former colonial masters, who by then were junior masters. America was the main paternal, responsible donor. So I got associated with the [Robert F.] Kennedy [Memorial] for human rights.

BP What did they do?

TN They sponsored me to go and talk to Congress and the Senate and to talk to many universities in America for about 60 days. [He also had contact with the National Democratic Institute, Amnesty International and Africa Watch.]

BP Did Amnesty and the other international organizations play a part in the advancement of human rights in Kenya?

TN I've written about that in my book [which he was working on]. The way you are writing, I am also writing.

BP Well, you are doing your own word, which is very credible; I can only hear the words of others, second-hand.

TN The transition from personalism into corporate activism was done with the encouragement of donor funding.

BP About what time did that change take place?

Activism by German and American Ambassadors to Kenya

TN And also we got diplomatic support; [then-U.S. Ambassador Smith] Hempstone; [former German Ambassador] Mutzelberg [??] Mutzelberg was a good friend of mine. You know we became personal friends (emphasis) with many Ambassadors at that time. Because I was alone, I got to draw the attention of the Ambassadors. [Njoya was one of the few prominent human rights activists in the 1980s and early 1990s, though hardly alone; as he himself noted, there were at least three other prominent church leaders speaking out on the topic.] So they used to come to visit me in Tumutumu [Where he was banished by his church for two years in rural Kenya.

When he got a human rights award at All Saints Cathedral, Ambassador Multzelberg was there. Ambassador Hempstone went to see Njoya at his rural posting.]

TN For me, I've never received or seen any donor money.

Donors' moral pressure helped as much as financial pressure to advance human rights

BP What about donor pressure on governments?

TN By giving us [activists] credibility, it deprived the government of credibility. It worked more morally, than pressure of money.

(End of interview and transcript.)