Spring 2010

Interview with Helen Shiller

Jacob Martin Lingan

JL: We are here in room 300 of City Hall in Chicago, Illinois. The date is April 22nd. My name is Jacob Lingan-

HS: 2010

JL: 2010. Um, and uh, alderman, can you state your name and spell it out?

HS: Yeah, Helen Shiller: H-E-L-E-N, S-H-I-L-L-E-R.

JL: Okay, and what is your occupation?

HS: I am the alderman of 46th ward in the city of Chicago. And that is- the 46th ward is on the north side. It represents most of uptown and the north east corner of Lakeview.

JL: Okay. Um, we're going to begin with just background, uh, background information. Can you tell me about- where were you born? And when were you born?

HS: I was born in 1947 in Brooklyn, New York.

JL: And, uh, where were you- where did most of your upbringings take place?

HS: Uh, on the east coast.

JL: East coast? In Brooklyn?

HS: No, I lived in Brooklyn, Queens, Long Island and then I went to high school in Vermont and college in Wisconsin.

JL: Okay, um, and what were, any- were there any significant times growing up, uh, that made you interested in politics?

HS: [pause] I thought this was about apartheid?

JL: Yeah, we're just getting-

HS: This is a much longer conversation so, why don't we get to it if you don't mind? [Laughs]

JL: Okay.

HS: [Laughs] I'd appreciate that.

JL: Okay, well I guess we can start with, um, we can start with-

HS: I'll give you a newspaper article to read. I mean, you should just read- really, I mean most of your questions would be answered if you just read The Tribune Magazine article that was written about me about [pause] in nineteen.. [pause] ninety- six I think it is. Um, but I can get you a copy- I'd be happy to do that.

JL: Okay

HS: And that will answer all of these questions.

JL: Okay, well, alright. Fair enough. Um, well I guess we can start with the, uh, The Anti-Apartheid Ordiance-

HS: Mhm

JL: -that you formed in 1990. Uh, what was your motivation behind that?

HS: The, um, I had made a [pause] I was somewhat familiar with, um, some of the, uh, independent struggles in Southern Africa. Um, largely throughout- I was a student of it and uh, um, throughout the uh, [pause] seventies. And um, and was- actually had direct um, communication with the people from Mozambique- I mean from Zimbabwe who were stationed and- who were stationed at Mozambique. And the Minister of Information for Zanu which was one of the, uh, one of the groups fighting for independence in Zimbabwe, uh, was stationed- was in Chicago and uh, had uh- I was an editor for a magazine , uh magazine in Chicago called Keep Strong. And he asked me if I would, um, do the typesetting and design and production of Zimbabwe News, which, um, he then took from Chicago and brought to Mozambique where they were stationed, uh where the troops were stationed. So, uh, this was in '76, '77, '78- in that range of time and uh, so I became very, you know, it was right in the middle of what was going on there, writing about it and I was typesetting it and hanging around and getting it printed. Um, and so I became somewhat interested in what was- additionally interested in what was going on in Southern Africa. And was a little bit disturbed about what was going on in Southern Africa because there was- everything was clearly impacted, um, uh by the colonial relationships [clears throat] and in both what was in Rhodesia and um, South Africa. It was a very clear, uh, it was- there was a system that was similar to apartheid that existed in Rhodesia, uh which then became Zimbabwe. Uh, they, Edison, who was a person who was here, was one of the, uh, negotiators- one of the people involved in the negotiating team that went to Lancaster in England and negotiated the agreement that created the independence for Zimbabwe [unclear] for Zimbabwe. Um, fast forward to 1989, I had an opportunity to go a conference in Zimbabwe. And, um, and a friend of mine who, uh, was, uh, had some involvement with the government of Mozambique also arranged for me on the same trip to spend some time in Mozambique. And- so in the cor- I spent a couple of weeks in Zimbabwe and Mozambique and South Africa because apartheid was still there. Um, but I spent some time in both countries and, uh, when I came back I was- I mean and my experience was- I mean, was very clear the impact and the negative impact that the, um, uh, the apartheid regime in South

Africa had on the entire region. Uh- so before that I had read about it, I knew it, I was upset about it. I, uh, followed what had happened in the City Council prior- [office secretary sneezes] to being a member of the City Council and legislation was passed and, you know, I thought all that stuff was very, you know, it was a good thing we were doing those things but after visiting the region I was very passionate and really could connect to the actual impact on peoples' lives. So I was determined to come back here and strengthen our legislation but hopefully from a perspective of having a moment in time, uh, uh an impact that then could be- do something that then could be duplicated elsewhere and close some of the loop holes that were evident being in that region, um, the imp- you know, the need to be able to strengthen those loop holes that people were getting around in terms of investments, in order to be able to improve what was going on in the region. So I came back here, I actually- in those days there was a program- I was, I had just been alderman for a couple of years and there was a program on the Board of Education had, um that, uh, I can't remember what I was called but they basically invited legislators, including aldermen, to participate in the teaching, in eighth grade, teaching the constitution portion of the curriculum every year in the eighth grade so I did that every year, I loved it. And, um, that year when I came back in January- I usually do it in Jan- start in January- I said I'm going to teach the constitution here by talking about apartheid. And, um, [unclear] I also wanted to, uh, look at the apartheid legislation we had so I met with all of the- I took the legislation and then I met with all of the local advoc- the people that were involved with anti-apartheid activities and said 'Okay, help me figure out and understand what the loop holes are and what we need to do to, um, one: to deal with the- we had three banks that were- what I knew was there were three banks still in Chicago that was under investments in South Africa. So I- the goal was to figure out what to do to get them to divest and how to do that in a matter that would impact divestment in other parts of the country. And so that's what I got: these folks to help me figure out. And, uh in the process of doing that we… we met with- two of the three banks were willing to meet people- willing to meet with us and we also met with people who had large- a couple foundations that had a larger amount of money in one of the banks, which was a local bank. And, um, over the course of the next six months basically, [I] was able to put together a much- a piece of legislation that, um, would have- would had, that had all three of financial institutions required to divest by the end of the year or lose their ability to be a Chicago municipal bank depository or to participate in, um, uh, in, in um various different activities with the city of Chicago. Now two of the three banks worked with us to get there and, um, were already working towards divesting in the third, um, you know, just would've been- not been able to do any of those things if they had not divested. But, but I have to say that it was all- the timing couldn't have been better because it definitely dovetailed with the release of Nelson Mandela-

JL: Right

HS: Initially with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and then with his visit to the U.S. including, uh, Chicago, so that I was able to use that momentum to- and the awareness of what was going on- to be able to actually also get these things

accomplished. So, uh it was really- I was fortunate to have an opportunity to be able to play a very small part in a period of time when there was already momentum building to do that and to direct some additional attention, if you will, or activity that hopefully helped it along. I mean, the day after we passed our legislation, the, um, Port of Oakland did merely what we did but the idea was that even though Nelson Mandela was released and the country was moving towards, um, uh, towards, uh, eliminating apartheid- that hadn't happened yet and um, and the feeling here among activists was we really needed to keep the pressure on. Um, so that our hope was that by doing these forcing of these divestments that the message was being sent and was being sent over a period of time with action happening over a period of time- that we're not going to let up- that you're actually going to have to do the deed- undo the deed if you will or -eliminate apartheid- really change your system if, if in fact, the trend is going to change in terms of investment back into your country. And to do that we had to make sure that there was going to be ongoing disinvestment until such a time as apartheid was, was, uh- uh, banned from the country. And um, and so that was why it was, uh, both on the longhand opportune but on the other hand I felt really important and why it was valuable, I think, that what we did then gave the- then had a domino effect, where there were other, uh, locations like the Port of Oakland and the municipalities were able to take what they had for the strength of it.

JL: Okay. Um, and going back to, say the mid-seventies, can you describe, uh, when you- when was the first exposure of the- finding out about what was going on in South Africa-

HS: I don't know. I don't know how to answer that. I mean, I was very- I mean, I read about the stuff in Africa throughout the 70s from the time- I mean I was in college in the late 60s and was always, um, you know, so… my reading materials always included readings, information about South Africa, Southern Africa, other parts of Africa where, you know, I was very much familiar with the region and what was going on in the region. Um… that's all I can tell you.

JL: You don't- you don't have a particular memory of when you first heard-

HS: No, I mean, no. I was very much involved in, um, a lot of things going on and read a lot of stuff and when of the things I read a lot about was what was going in Africa. I mean there were- I read The Monthly Review- I remember the things that I read- The Monthly Review, The Black Panther and Communal News Service. There were a lot of sources of information that I had access to and utilized that, um, gave me that information. And um, and obviously it was during the mid- I mean throughout the 70s there were people in Chicago that were here from, largely- I'm thinking mostly the people that I knew were from Zimbabwe but from Southern Africa and the region that I interacted with, you know, I would interact with. I can't even remember or tell you how.

JL: Sure

HS: I just don't remember.

JL: Um, okay, and what was the journey to Zimbabwe like?

HS: What do you mean?

JL: Uh, I mean how, how long were you there? What did you experience? Who did you meet?

HS: Well I went to Zimbabwe for a conference.

JL: Yes.

HS: And was in Harare and spent most- I think I spent most of my time on that trip in Harare. And, um, so it was the city and I got to go around the city and, you know, the conference- I don't even remember who the conference was with. But I knew people- Edison Javogel who was the person who was here was still there, so I saw him, and, um, [pause] uh and [I] had an opportunity there to get some, uh, have some tours around the city and learn and meet different ministers and things like that. There were also members of the press- I think I went there with, it might've been a newspaper [pause] related conference. It wasn't- I didn't go because I was alderman- I happened to been alderman. But I went really based on my previous news reporting experiences and, um, so we, you know, there were people from news- various newspapers that I was- also interacted with. And we went- when we went to Mozambique, we were there as a guest of the government of Mozambique. So they set up all sorts of tours and activities and things that got us out into the country's- we were in Maputo, which is the capital. Uh, but we also got all out into the, um, community over there and um, into the, uh, outlying areas and uh, visited with a large number of different co-op's- agriculture co-op's. [We] Saw a lot of schools. And, you know, we went to several, um, refugee camps. I mean there were a lot of- that was during- went to some- Mozambique was hugely impactful from my point of view. Um, we went to some hospitals. It was during a period of time- this was 1989 and the end of 1989 and, um, Renamo, which was financed by the South African Secret Service, um, was a rebel group that was established explicitly to create violence and disrupt the, um, independent government of Mozambique. And, um, and they would just go into villages and take the young men and boys and force them to commit violence against their families and then take them away until they never could- basically kidnap and tell them they could never come back because they had done this violence. But, you know, a point of debt- they were forced to do this. So they either died along with their families or they went along with the killing of their families and it was just unbelievably vicious and unbelievably cynical and, um, and it was totally orchestrated out of South Africa. Um, and so- and there were landmines and other things all over the place. So we found people who had either their arms cut off or their legs blown off or whatever and- so I spent- I actually am a photographer too so I took a lot of pictures, um, and brought them back and did a lot

of stories. But I, um, we did a lot of interviews, uh in Mozambique with people in hospitals and things. Now, I returned a year and a half later, um, in 1991 and spent a month in- mostly in Mozambique, but about a week of that was in- well, no, mostly- I think I spent a week mostly in Mozambique and [pause] Anyway, I spent a month between Mozambique, South Africa, and, um, Zimbabwe. And, um, that was after what I worked- everything else I've already talked about. And, um, and while they were going through the constitutional convention process in South Africa. Um, but, uh, but I think that most of the visits that we made to the hospitals and to the, um, to the, uh, co-ops was in the first visit.

JL: And on a daily basis, how often would you encounter these acts of violence?

HS: What do you mean on a daily basis?

JL: Like during one day, how many times would you see this?

HS: I don't understand your question. I was there- I went and saw people in the hospital or I went and saw people- talked to people who had been victims of the violence.

JL: You've never seen- you didn't see firsthand the abductions of young boys-

HS: I wasn't- no, I don't think I would be here to talk to you if I had been in a village when they came in. They would've killed me too.

JL: Um, but, uh, did you [pause] Alright. Did you, uh- what was it about teaching the 8th graders- what was that experience like?

HS: Well I was in a classroom that was; most of the students were, um, 60% of the students were African-American. About 30% were Latino and the remaining students- there were one or two white students- and the remaining ones were from India or from Africa. And I could count on two hands the students- maybe one hand- the students who knew, um, anything at all- who had any [pause] idea that were a. people that lived in Africa or b. even knew what apartheid was. Or, I mean, literally. On one hand: who knew what apartheid was and on one hand who knew Africa was more than just a bunch of exotic animals. I was striking. And so I started to- so I pulled out their social studies book and went through it. And the only reference in the entire social studies book to South Africa, actually to Africa was in a phrase that said 'African Slave Trade'. One phrase that said 'African Slave Trade'. So I was a little upset about it so I went to um, the librarian and asked about books in the library [about Africa and/or apartheid] and she got really upset. And decided- and started- and started a campaign against my being- questions I was asking because the questions I asked also led to the local school council wanting to know- I had some questions about how the curriculum- I mean how the books were decided and why there was nothing in the books that dealt with these questions that, you know, whatever. And this was a social studies class. They were dealing with the world and

world history and why wasn't there anything about this? And I actually really only wanted- I mean, I was teaching the constitution so my idea was- I was going to talk about race as a way to parallel in the, you know- One-Man-One-Vote concept with a parallel to what the constitution required here. But whenever I taught the constitution prior to this anyway, I would start with how- my point about my constitution is that it's a living document and it changes and it changes because the demands that people make. And those demands have been historically based upon people demanding, uh, equal protection under the law and, um, and civil rights. And so, uh, and so I would start with the fact that when the constitution was initially written, that the only people that were considered full citizens in the country with a full vote were people that were white, male, and owned property. And then in fact women couldn't vote but at least they were one person. But for purposes of counting people, Africans- African Americans or Africans, um, anyone who was not white, essentially but essentially slaves, specifically, were considered to be three-quarters of a person for purposes of vote. So that- or for the purposes of, um, determining, uh, for the census determined the, uh, the allocation of representation which determined the- who got to vote. And not just who got to vote but how their vote was counted. I mean it- it's not a voting thing, it's a consensus and therefore who you get to vote for. So when you draw a legislative district, it's based on the population. Um, and, if you- so the people who- so the slave owners were able to count their slaves as three-quarters of a person in terms of being able to- which gave them a lot more representation, uh, than their competing, um, uh, their competing citizens in the north who- every person was counted as one but they were each a person and they could actually vote. So they got to be able to vote themselves for a lot more people, if you will. Um, but- but the real point being at three-quarters of the vote- I mean one person was considered three-quarters of a person as opposed to one if they were a slave and they didn't have any rights to represent themselves or have any representation. Um, they came from- they never had any uh, um, what do you call it, um [pause] They didn't have any rights. And so that over time, people organized and, um, things changed. So the women got to vote, there was suffrage and, you know- well first, you know, if you- if people were able to vote, the property rules were changed and then, uh, the section- the rules for gender were changed and then ultimately the roles, uh, everybody then- there was universal suffrage and then there was improvements on the poll tie and then there was the Civil Rights, uh, legislation that led to the Voting Rights Act so that you could actually really be allowed to vote. Uh, so I think that's really an important part of the story- about the Constitution and that I always taught that. Um, and, so this was another way to get at it but to also put the U.S. in context or, um, the Civil Rights struggle in the U.S. in context. And I felt that was really important because one of the things that I saw in, um- ultimately- that I saw happening in South Africa. And it was really clear right away- there was a discussion for about releasing Nelson Mandela, um, turned into a reality- even though apartheid had not been ended and he- but he had been released- what became clear and it was always clear from him- was that because of the, uh, of the character of The Man in large measure had an impact on the character of the movement in South Africa. It was clear that they were going to take- they were going to break new ground in the path that they went into, where

they went down. Um, the whole notion of reconciliation that they developed was clearly going- was a new path that no one had really done before and- or that I had not- wasn't aware of. And for me it seemed that there would be th-th-the path- the paths that they, that they forged would be areas we could really learn from in this country. So I was trying to, sort of, raise that interest so that as that happened, it would be more people engaged in that. And that was important to me. I think that still is important and we haven't taken advantage of it. I was actually just talking to some people in South Africa yesterday from a council because they were doing something up by us this summer and, um, and, uh, and we got into this conversation because I-I just don't think we took advantage of it. And what I do know historically happened or at least from my point of view- my interpretation of this was that, um, of some of the things that happened there was the whole, um, you know, the whole- the whole myth of work that South African Secret Service developed when they did Renamo and they had done something very similar- I think they were some kind of scout- I can't rem- that they did something very similar in, um, what had been Rhodesians in Zimbabwe, um, before independence there, um they did that in conjunction with the Rhodesian Secret Service. Uh, there were all these, um, kind of counter-insurgent, um activities that were really based on creating violence that then also was done with Incata- which I thought was the genesis of Incata and Southern Africa- South Africa that created a lot of the violence there as a way to challenge and to trip up this new government that was going to, you know, really turn the country around. So I- to me it was the [Old guard?] really trying to, um- acting on their own cynicism and their own racism, uh, uh- putting everything they had behind. Creating the, um, the dynamic that they wanted everyone to believe was going to happen. And they did that through violence and pointing the finger, saying 'See, these people are violent' or what have you. But they were creating it. And it was a challenge and it undermined- you know, it was not only undermined the stability of the development of a new country but just objectively on an everyday basis by making people fearful and other things. But they also had their own death squads and went out and killed real leader- you know, the leader- or tried to kill him and succeeded in some cases the leadership of the new South Africa. So, the struggles that had to go through, um, are not unexpected and in some ways parallel to struggles that people go through anywhere in the country including- in the world, including here when there's change. But the level of violence was, you know, really [pause] they raised it to a whole new level. And I think that, as we see in the, uh, in the decades that had followed, that there has been violence- we never saw before, that bad in countries again and again, uh, throughout Africa, um, that I think are particularly modeled off of the activities that were really initially generated by people who were trying to preserve very racist and institutional structures and legal structures in both- in first in Rhodesia and then in South Africa. And the fact that those are the legal structures that don't exist anymore and the struggles that people have gone through and the different ways of which has been attempts to address them are lessons that we should be learning from. And all the reconciliation efforts in South Africa- we don't know half as much about that as we should in this country where we clearly have our work cut out for us. And, you know, in Mozambique, um, which I hadn't been back to in a long time but where I know there's a lot more

stability than there was 25 years ago, um, I think that is another example of- there's got to, you know- what I remember- I thought of something- what I remember from 25 years ago being there was thinking- or however many years ago- it was 20- somewhere between 20 and 25- was, you know, "I can't even imagine what it's going to take for these young people, who have come back"- because you know, they- they were [pause] Renamo was doing all that stuff but it wasn't like the government wasn't fighting back and communities weren't fighting back. So there was some effort to- and some success at recapturing some of these young people and working with them to rebuild their lives. And, um, I couldn't even begin to imagine what that would take. And the kind of effort that was- and clearly after, um, uh South African apartheid was eliminated. It was going to be a whole different set of dynamics in Mozambique because you didn't have a whole- such a powerful government supporting this resistance that was trying to destroy your, um, your own independence. And, uh, so I know that there have been things that have happened over the course the last two or three decades that, um, are really infor- can be informative to us. And we have so much violence, for instance, going on in some of our communities and, um- by young people- by and for young people- um, creating some real serious kinds of impacts that are not that unrelated to things - that are different but similar- that other places people have gone through and- I've had more- I have a longer experience with- um, and that maybe they figure out some things that we could learn from, it seems to me [pause] I was reminded of that yesterday. Uh, but, you know, sometimes when I see the violence here and been inside of some of the schools or talked to some of the kids, I'm thinking, 'What were those lessons? This feels familiar. There's got to be that there's some kind of lessons in here."

JL: Right. And is there a particular reason why you haven't been back to Mozambique for a while?

HS: Um, the opportunity hasn't presented itself. I'm pretty busy here. [laughs]

JL: Yeah, yeah. I was just wondering if there was, like- if you did- if you had just a- if it was a place you didn't want to go back to personally-

HS: Well, no. I mean, the last- I always- I mean, the first time I went I was in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The second time: Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. And, um there's no reason I haven't gone back except there hasn't been an oppor- reason to do it. I mean, there hasn't been something [pause] there were things that were happening that I had an opportunity to participate in.

JL: Right.

HS: And I could, based on the time. Those circumstances haven't come together since then.

JL: So you would visit, uh, if you had the chance and opportunity?

HS: And the time and, you know, all the straws lined up? Sure. [laughs]

JL: Okay. Okay, um-

HS: Why, are you planning a trip? [laughs]

JL: Oh, no. [laughs] Um, but, uh, let's go to around 1994 when, uh, Mandela was elected president. Um, this is a pretty-

HS: He wasn't elected until '94- no. It had to be before that.

JL: It was-

HS: Whenever he was elected- we can go there but I-

JL: Or '93, '93. Um, where were you at that time?

HS: I-I watched it on TV. I have no idea where I was but I was in front of a TV.

JL: Okay.

HS: Very, very happy.

JL: Of course. And where were you- or-

HS: I have no recollection. I remember watching the whole thing. I watched from beginning to end and that's what I remember.

JL: And do you have any recollections when you first heard about him, uh, winning the election?

HS: [pause] No, my memory is not that great. I don't remember- I know people always say "Where were you when…"

JL: Right [laughs]

HS: Um, and, uh the- I mean there are some things I remember explicitly where I was because I was right there. But, um, I just remember in each step of that process being very happy.

JL: Okay.

HS: I do- I do remember being in South Africa, in Johannesburg for a huge march and rally for a constitutional convention. That was extraordinary.

JL: What was that like?

HS: It was just- I've never seen so many people and the streets were completely full and we ended up [pause] The rally was the- As I recall [I] ended up being in an area that was surrounded by many- it was sort of in a park, but was surrounded by many buildings or maybe it felt like a park because we took over the streets. But one of the buildings was a prison. And so people were- as we went by, people were hanging out the prison and had signs and things that were related to the demands- it was just extraordinary. And, you know, uh, that- I was th- Nelson- I don't recall that Nelson Mandela was there but- we were- I don't think he was. Um, uh, I'm trying to think of the names of people. It was other- other leaders- there were almost every other person in leadership of the ANC at the time was there, um, and spoke, um, and then later on- I think later, if not earlier, I think it was later- we did see him- we did go to a stadium where- in South Africa- in Johannesburg, where he- where Nelson Mandela spoke. And, um, and I recall that. But, uh, mostly- but I really- that demonstration was extraordinary. And right in the middle of it, because it was still apartheid and still the South African secret police and blah, blah, blah-

JL: Right.

HS: There they were, with their camera sticking up in the middle of the street, in the middle of the demonstration taking pictures of everybody although apparently- clearly they were not as fearful as they were previously. I remember the yellow vehicles which is- was the representation of the South African police. And, um, [pause] and that was very symbolic of apartheid. Um, I spent a lot of time in Alexandra, which is a township outside of Johannesburg [pause] with people from Alexandra and, um, and that was fascinating. That was great because there were so many parallels between Alexandra and what was going on there at that time and uptown [Chicago]. Um, and, uh, so- and they were struggling with, um, the development of the civic society and the changing of South Africa. And I was struggling with heavy, you know, sort of a how-do-you-create a more active civic society, essentially. And a community that had been neglected for years. And I was just newly elected alderman. It was in my firs- I had just finished- When I was in South Africa, I had just finished my first term. And, um, so it was- there were a lot of parallels and um, and uh, and it- but it was very exciting because there was so much going on. But you still some- but the old was still there. You just had the hope and expectation for the future and people attempting, in a mass way- in that demonstration, it was a mass demonstration- to in an attempt to define the direction that things were going to go on. So it was- that was pretty dynamic. But I tend to remember things that I'm involved in more-

JL: Sure.

HS: than I hear around me.

JL: Okay. Um, so let's talk about, uh, South Africa today. And what do you think – have you seen any progression since, say, 1994?

HS: I can't speak knowledgably, I don't think, about South Africa today. Take me there and I'll tell you about it. But I don't feel-

JL: I mean, from what you read or-

HS: Yeah, but don't really feel like I know enough to talk about it.

JL: Okay.

HS: That's what I was saying earlier. I think that, uh- and one of the conversations we were having yesterday is that I- you know, my point was that I'd really like for us to engage in that conversation because I think- they were asking me to be part of a- of a meeting with some people who were trying to do some civil society stuff in South Africa. And, um, that they wanted to learn from us. And I said, 'Great, I'd love to do that.' But I really wanted it to be a two-way street because I think that there [is] many things that we ha- I've had so many hopes and expectations of learning many things from the work that they had done and kind of dropped a ball on it. So, I wanted it to be a two-way street where we could really also learn some of the lessons, uh, from their- all their reconciliation activities. And, you know, their- what it has taken and the lessons they've learned in the process of creating a- basically a new state because it's a completely- you know, out of a completely different ideal that had existed for many years.

JL: Okay, and um, have you seen- I know it's- you say you can't speak knowledgably because you haven't experienced it firsthand, um-

HS: And I haven't spent that much time- I mean, it happened- I mean, I'm not- it's not like a I read everyday what's going on.

JL: Right. But from the people you've talked to from South Africa, um, who you communicate with, uh, talking from- talking to them, do you see some signs of any improvement?

HS: I can't- I think that we're- I can't [pause] I don't have the knowledge you're asking me for.

JL: Is it-

HS: I can't answer this, okay? [laughs] You have to hear what I'm saying. You're trying to get information from me I don't have.

JL: Okay, well, it was more of an opinion-

HS: I don't have one at this point.

JL: Okay. Um, I guess that will do it. Do you have anything to say about, um, just the world? Like how far we've gone, do you think? Like what do you- what advice would you want to give to the youth today? Like, such as when you were teaching 8th graders in Africa-

HS: I wasn't teaching 8th graders in Africa. [Interviewer's note: one of my many mistakes in the interview, I meant to say 'about' instead of 'in' When she corrects I go with the act of clearly being mistaken] The teaching I was doing was here in Chicago.

JL: Oh, okay. But what would you want to tell the youth today about maintaining peace and, uh, keeping the anti-apartheid movement strong?

HS: Well [long pause] Um, the anti apartheid- I mean, apartheid is gone. Knowing the history, like any history, is important, you know. The actual- the actual government that was based on a legal system of apartheid- what was legal at that time is no longer legal and no longer exists as it shouldn't be- as it should be. It should be illegal [gently hits table] and it shouldn't exist [gently hits table again] and that's the current status. Um, that it was based in a notion of the color line and that part of it is a, uh, racist- racial approach to the division of people in our society based on race and attributing value to that. I totally up hoard and think that is something that is-is- there's nothing positive contributory in a positive way from that perspective in any society. And we have it permeating our own as well as others throughout the world. And so I think- to that extent- it's something that, um, we need to continue to, uh, to address and to challenge. Um, the mo- and you know- what's happening with young people today in this city, um, concerns me a great deal. And, um, I-I think that we have, uh- I think a few things. One is we tend to, um, draw very broad strokes and, um, and that's, you know, not helpful. Um, and secondly I think that having said that, that as we-we live in a world where often there's different levels at which people live in and consequently fail to communicate. It's almost like we have people occupying the same space and not knowing the others there. Or not acknowledging the others there or certainly not respecting the others there. And, um, and the consequence on that, on the world around us, includes- in my belie- view, some of the levels of violence we're facing now in Chicago which I have, uh, which I'm describing after having said and I don't think we should draw broad strokes because I don't think it's something that every young person is involved in but which I think in fact impacts young people more than it impacts other people. But I think that it impacts them because the world in which they live in has already been impacted and has created a dynamic on which they have lived and have grown and gotten to this point. And how do we address that? Honestly, I don't know. And I'm struggling- mulling, I guess I'm in a mulling mode and I'm struggling with that and am concerned about it and, um, and-and that's really what I can begin to say about say on the subject. I-I think that it is very important that we remember that we are human beings and that human beings are living, breathing creatures

who learn by making mistakes. And that, um, and that does none of us any good to think- to act in a manner and to act out a manner that either feeds on anger, feeds on a belie- forgets that we can mistakes as wholly as than now, as hypocritical or any of those things. I think we have to really- it is- life, in many ways is a search for, um, is a search. You know, people are searching all the time. And when that search is cut off- it's a search. It's a process of development. And when that development is cut off, and people are left with no place to go, then, um, or feel that they are- have no place to go, they'll find a place; that's our nature. And, um, and they'll move around or they'll move under or they'll move through. And, um, when, um, people are able to collectively come together to attempt to redefine that and make something better, I think we're usually in a good place. But when that's exploited and exploited through anger and frustration and those things are encouraged and people- encouraged to feel like they can't do anything, rather than collectively they can together, but rather than together they can't and therefore shouldn't and therefore collectively should be angry as opposed to productive. [laughs] I think we have what we face in the world today and I'm a little bit concerned about it, quite frankly. And, um, when you asked me at the beginning [about] my history and I told you to read the magazine and you should. But there is one piece in my history that is very important from my point of view, which is when I was very young, um, in nursery school, my father kept me home from school and had me watch the TV, which was, uh, you know, early versions of TV, so it was like one room in the house, it was a study. And, uh, it was [pause] we had a lot of stations and the only thing that was playing on the TV that I got to know about was, um, these hearings which was the army and navy hearings in front of HUAC, the House of Un-American Activities committee for the congress and they were dealing with the, uh, this was the end of the McCarthy hearings where John McCarthy was going after everybody in the world who didn't like him and calling him a communist. And he had gone a little too far and went after the army and they were having these hearings going on. And this was really the turning point. But basically he operated by, just, I mean, he operated by just making accusations and putting people of the defensive. And, um, and they were often outrageous accusations but they were based on a fear of communism and based on that, he would basically ruin people's lives. Or with his actions. There were, you know, there were a lot of people going along with him. Um, but he used the act- he used Congress for awhile to do that and there were a lot of hearings in front of Congress when people brought in front of him and there's a lot of history about that and people know about it or can't find out about it. But my father had me sit there when I was very young and said, 'I know you aren't done-' he made me sit there all week and he said, you know, ' You're not going to remember- I'm doing this not because you'll remember what you're watching," so all I'll remember is a TV screen and people sitting at a table and yelling at each other, speaking loudly, 'But hopefully you'll remember that I made you sit here because I thought it was very important and what I think is important is that you remember that there is something called fascism and that you always have to be vigilant and address it and make sure- and that the- and be willing to fight it because it's the most insidious thing that could destroy a world.' Although, obviously, I'm using my words today for what he said. And I said, 'Okay, whatever' [laughs] I remember it, I was sitting on a very warm

floor because the heat came through the floor, in front of the TV, and that I wasn't in school and I was hanging out with my dad and that was kind of cool, and uh, a little boring. And when I turned 18, that movie 'Point of Order' came out, and um, and that was about the McCarthy hearings. And it dovetailed with another argument- an argument I actually had with my dad over that summer, when- this is the year between my first and second year of college. And he was outraged that I wasn't involved in any kind of anti-war activity and wanted to know why I wasn't involved. And, you know, I said, 'Well, I don't know.' And we had this huge fight and I went back to school and watched 'Point of Order' and [he] told me to get involved. So I got involved in the anti-war movement. So that was- by doing what I knew how to do, in which I think is the lesson- you have to do what you can do. So I got back to school and I used to sew all my clothes. And I love to sew and I went to the- there was a group called The Committee of the War in Vietnam. And, you know, I'm not interested in meetings. I wasn't particularly interested in any meetings but they were- it was a group that was putting on fundraisers- plays to raise money to support the activities- which were going on for the war in Vietnam. So, the play they were putting on- so anyways I offered to be in a play, and the play they were putting on was called 'The Hostage' by Brendan Behan. [at this point her secretary has accidentally dropped a few things and laughs about it, which is captured on the recording making it hard to hear for a few moments] And, um, now this is something you should read. This is a quintessinal [quintessential?] and moral debate. And so this is a play about- written by Brendan Behan- about, uh, an English soldier- about a group of people in-in Ireland, in Dublin, I think. Dublin, well one of them, probably Dublin. And they have kidnapped an English soldier and [unclear] And they are trying to figure out what to do because they've held him as hostage because the English army has, um, arrested a young man who is- they're both 17- uh, for being a member of the IRA and they're getting ready to hang him. So they're in England. And so in London. And so in Dublin, they're trying to figure out- they're holding this soldier hostage to try and stop them from killing the, um, the IRA soldier. And, um, and they have to decide what to do if he gets hung. And so it's all about that moral dilemma and really ordinary regular folks and- it's just terrific. I mean, I'd just- from a point of view of really, sort of 'what do you think in a humanity verses-' you know, just a zillion kinds of ethical questions that I think is always good to look at-

JL: Right.

HS: because you have to put yourself in different people's shoes. And you have to think of things from everyone's perspective if you really want to solve problems or make it a better world. [pause] So there you have it. [laughs]

JL: That was a beautiful closing note. [laughs] Thank you very much

HS: [laughs] You're very welcome.