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Interview with Jean Kracher

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Columbia College Chicago

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1 Interviewee:Jean Kracher
2 Interviewer:Michael Johnson
3
4 [Supplementary recording starts the transcript reference to pre-explored questions are present]
5
6
7 Michael Johnson: Here we go. Interviewer Michael Johnson,Interviewee
8
9
10 Jean Kracher: and my name is Jean Kracher
11
12
13 MJ: Date of the interview
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16 JK:March 31^s
17 ^t
18
19 MJ:Wednesday
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22 JK:2010
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25 MJ:Place of the interviewee
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28 JK :The Cross roads Fund in Chicago
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31 MJ:And Years of Apartheid activism
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33
34 JK: I started learning about Anti-Apartheid Activism in College in around 1977, I believe 6 or 7
35
36
37 Okay can you state your year of birth
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39
40 JK: I was born in 1957 in Chicago IL
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43 MJ: What was the place of your father birth
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46 JK: My dad was born in Chicago and lives in Chicago his whole life and my mom moved to Chicago
47 when she was about 17 or 18
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49 MJ:Okay, Okay Can you tell me your earliest memory, again

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JK:Earliest memory was have living my grandparents tavern-- we,my grandparents lived in an apartment with us, with my. I slept in a bed with my grandmother,infact cause it was a pretty small apartment and we had a great happy childhood. I had a happy childhood. I lived in a –the tavern was used for family events, so we had a lot of great parties and got to use the jukebox and the pool table at those parties,so that was fun.

MJ:Okay what was your fathers occupation

JK:My father was a Chicago Policemen

MJ:and your mother

JK: my mom worked in my grandparent's tavern for many years until they sold it and then she worked as a clerk in a drug store

MJ: okay,can you tell me of experiences growing up in your neighborhood,you mentioned the swimming pool

JK: Yeah Yeah Yeah. So I grew up in Chicago in the sixties and the everything that was on television, everything that was sort of in the civil rights movement. The – initially ad I was very very upset .My mother always talk about how upset I was as a 6 year old— even, about – with the images on T.V. Of you know dogs being sent out on kids in the South and fire hoses and I didn't understand why they are treating Negros this way and we had a pool in the neighborhood that we would go to and at some point they had started, it was an all white neighborhood, so we were all white kids in the pool and at some point they started busing kids in for like summer camps that were black and suddenly my friends couldn't go to the pool anymore and there moms start calling my mom and saying Helen why are you letting your kids go to the pool. My mother was really furious about this and said I grew up in Detroit Michigan, in Michigan we, I grew up with everybody, every race, every ethnic group people who didn't speak English people who did speak English and I don't believe your being so prejudice and this is a horrible and you call yourslef a catholic and this kind of stuff. – so we were really raised in a – the majority of the kids in my neighborhood were no longer allowed to go to the pool. We were still going and so we really raised with this idea that everybody should be kind to everybody and it didn't matter the color of your skin was.

MJ:Okay You mentioned you father and the neighborhood being made up of COP kids a nd things of that nature

JK: I lived in a neighborhood with lots of-- because we lived on the out, you know in Chicago Policemen have to live in the city. So we first lived in Jefferson Park and then we lived in Norwood Park and those are sort of like the furthest out neighborhoods on the North-westSide. A lot of police officers live in those communities because that as far as you can go before getting to the suburbds and so there were a lot of kids who were growing up in Cop families and had a really different, came with a

99 really different certain vocabulary around race and racism and were really being a different message
100 than what's happening in my home, around questioning the police for instance. My-- I had an older
101 sister who was seven years older than me and was very active in Sixt-Eight wanting to go to the
102 demonstration, wanting to be apart of the movement against the war in Vietnam and we have very very
103 heated debates at the dinner table, So I was like ten or eleven years old and my Dad and my sister were
104 really arguing and his perspectives was these kids shouldn't protest and throw things at the police but
105 he wasn't forbidding her from going he was also kind of interested in the debate, where as the other
106 kids I grew up with-- the kids come home with-- who were my age-- came with these horrible
107 language about protesters and they were just hippy scum and there a bunch a communist. My parents
108 really had a much more open open view of it. So in other words-- I don't think my father loved the fact
109 that we were questioning the authority of the police but I think he understood people have a right to
110 protest.

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112

113 MJ: During 68 in your-- What was your experience with the civil rights movement going on at that
114 time at such a young age

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117 JK: For me it was more about-- I didn't have anybody in except my older sister who I mentioned was
118 trying to be involved as much as she could as a teenager. But I didn't have anybody protesting in my
119 family. It was more about the images on TV for me and so I think a lot of people who are younger don't
120 understand is you literally come home from school turn on the T.V. The news come on and you would
121 see these images, you'd see images of what was going on in the Civil rights Movement, you saw
122 images of what was happening in Vietnam. You saw footage of people in battle in Vietnam or people
123 carrying dead children of that kind of thing. They learned from the war in Vietnam that you never show
124 that stuff anymore as you know there was a whole debate about showing bodies coming home from
125 Iraq and Afghanistan and who are they, the state, who ever is in charge of showing images, releasing
126 images learned that people are moved by seeing that kind of turmoil and of course people were coming
127 home and telling stories what they experiencing in Vietnam – soldiers who were like unbelievably
128 damaged by the war-- So that was part of our daily cultural experience of just mass media and you
129 couldn't ignore it in your life. An the movements were really, the protesters all of that was sort of in
130 the news.

131

132 MJ: What Role did religion play in the house hold

133

134 JK: My parents were Catholic. My mother in particular (moves in chair) was an active Catholic and we
135 went to Catholic School. I went to 12 years of Catholic education and I think my mother in particular
136 because she was more religious-- was as I said before, kind of Catholic with a small c instead of the
137 big C. Whatever the church was teaching about peace and justice, loving your and caring for your
138 fellow man she was embracing and trying to teach us. What they were sort of teaching about women's
139 oppression or you know what ever she just kind of rejected that and we didn't have to pay attention to
140 that. So she was really-- I think she really embraced and nurtured us around the best parts of
141 Catholicism and so if a nun later on in my early years-- I went to school that had really progressive nuns
142 they were great then later on-- there probably none of them are nuns anymore-- Later on I went to a
143 school that was conservative. And when those conservative nuns would come down on me for
144 something I said in class, my mother totally stood up for me and said you have a right to this opinion
145 and you know sister whoever you cannot persecute my daughter for having this opinion so she really
146 stood up for us.

147

148 MJ:How did this support influence you and your siblings?

149

150

151 JK:from my mom

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153

154 MJ: Yes from you mom

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156

157 JK: I think she, both my parents were very interested in other (clicking noise) kind of experiences. So
158 they encouraged us to travel. If we had an opportunity-- we weren't rich by any means it was a big
159 sacrifice from them for us to even go to college or to catholic school. I think their thing was like if we
160 had an opportunity – like in high-school I had an opportunity to go to England and so they helped me,
161 they encouraged me to get a job, to save money, here's someone you can borrow money from you have
162 to pay them back but go do that, go see someplace else. Hey were always telling us to go. My sister
163 was active in high school in program that went to these like social service agencies in communities
164 around Chicago – like on the South Side or far Westside and my mother was really happy she did that
165 because she sad it 'll get you out of your neighborhood,you meet people who you wouldn't normally
166 meet and she would allow my sister to bring us along-- So we spend the day at the zoo or at the beach
167 or such and such a place. MY brother and I being the only two white kids with this whole bus full of
168 black kids and play with them all day long and we had many experiences like that because my mother
169 would say you should go out and do these things and you should learn from other people experiences.

170

171 MJ: You mentioned previously the influence of your sister,can you tell me more about that.

172

173 JK: Shewas very influential because my sister Judy becuae she was very interested in the emerging
174 movement of the day and was reading material that shae would receive,like underground newpapar,
175 The Seed, stuff like that. I would go and read them, when she wasn'tat home I would pull it out of her
176 closet and read them and she was also very open about who people were and explaining --she would
177 things to me about, you know, I saw – why did they kill Martin Luther King Jr and she would give me
178 her analysis of why that happened. Why are we against the war in Vietnam, cause what ever she was
179 against I was against (laughing) and she'd explain to me why we were aainst the war in Vietnam. She'd
180 take the time-- I was only 10 9 10 11 when she would do that, so she –really – it was really important
181 she was there and I had her as this little coach.

182

183 MJ: The experience at Lincoln Park Zoo?

184

185 JK: With Her

186

187 MJ: Yes

188

189 JK:O-Okay, we didn't get that

190

191 MJ: its a little scratchy

192

193 JK:Okay

194 So another way she was really improtant to me. Probably from the time I was 6. I realized I was
195 different and I wasnt like a normal girl in the sense I wasn't into boys and I wanted to be a boy and so
196 thre was something up. There was no real word for it because the Gay Movement had not progressed in

197 the same way as it has now. So I remember being on this bus – at some point I learned what
198 homosexuality was but again I wasn't totally clear on it. We were on a bus coming home from the zoo
199 on day and we were around Fullerton and Clarke street or something. This guy gets on the bus and he's
200 this total poofter ,completely gay man but very effeminate, purse, very frilly outfitI guess someone
201 would call it feminate in its construct and he gets on the bus and everybody starts making fun of him
202 and not everybody but a couple of people an people were laughing .I looked at my sister kind of for the
203 cue like why are they laughing and she looked at me and she said There nothing, really loudly matter of
204 fact she saud there nothing to laugh about. There is nothing wring with that man. He is a homosexual
205 and its perfectly fine to be a homosexual kind of that what she said and my whole kind of reaction was
206 like Oh my God this is so fantastic—yes I can pursue this it was a huge moment for me to experience
207 that with her. I've thanked her on multiple occasions for that.

208
209 MJ: To conclude what was you sister's role later on in your life in your activism

210
211 JK: It is interesting that you should ask that because when I was trying to be a film maker she was very
212 supportive for instance I went to film school and film school is really expensive-- you have to pay for
213 all your film-- back in the dya there was no video it was all-- where you got shot 16 milimeter film got
214 them processed. So it was really expensive you'd say 400 feet, you send it to this lab and You'd say
215 hold on to it until I got enough money to pay for it and look at it .So she wound up having a pretty good
216 job. She helped --my parent couldn't afford that and I had jobs trying to pay for myself. She loaned me
217 the money essentially yo go to Film School and loan me the money to make my first documentary. She
218 was really supportive in findng my own expression for how I sort of wanted to live my life in general. I
219 think she was really supportive of – I think I think she was afraid of how leftist I became but ultimately
220 wanted me to explore in ways I needed to explore. I think she was real helpful in terms of being a voice
221 of reason in my life. Somebody I could come back to and be honest about the things I was exploring
222 and maybe never totally embracing all the things and the extent I took them to but I think she was
223 always open to hearing what I was doing and what I was thinking

224
225 [The previous transcription was acquired through a supplementary interview to make up for lost
226 material in the initial interview,it's inconsistencies in method as well as reference made by the
227 interview are in part due to that]

228
229
230 [The following remarks are the from the original interview already in progress, In this recording JK has
231 elaborated on her involvement in Anti-Apartheid movement being limited to Southern Illinois
232 University where she helped flyer as well as deal with gender biases in the school's film program and
233 upon her graduation going to New York]

234
235 [Beginning of recording 2]

236
237 MJ:Sorry about that

238
239 Jk: We were aware of the Springboks- not because of the Olympics but thatbecame a big story that
240 became a big way and you ask that you would hear activist were trying to stop the Springboks from
241 their tour. I told this to the last. I can't remember the guys name. There was someone before you who
242 was trying to interview me but it didn't work out. I told Prexy this. There is a woman in town, one of
243 you guys should really hook up with her, Mary Paton, who was an ex-Girlfriend of mine and she spent
244 a year in jail in NYC for trying to stop the springboks from getting on a plane at Kennedy Airport and
245 this riot sort of ensued, a cop got thrown through a plate glass window and she wound up doing a year

246 in jail for that action. They were literal trying to stop the Springboks from walking up a ramp to get on
247 a plane or soemthing. That is what people were doing. I wasn'tlike that-- doing that but that what
248 people were doing.

249
250 MJ: You were in Newyork for this time or not

251
252 JK:I was not I just missed that I think I came to NewYork after that action because I think that action
253 occurred in eighty or eighty-one. Sometime in eighty-one or eighty- two and I arrived in Newyork in
254 eighty-three.

255
256 MJ: were you involved in any other activist groups in Newyork.

257
258 JK:No I was again trying to make a living and worked on my own film. So I was trying to get done I
259 was again starting-- T hat when I was doing my period of recording exploring I would go to talks about
260 topics. I'd go watch a movie, hear somebody speak about a variety of topics. But I really wasn't hooked
261 into a group until I came back to Chicago

262
263 MJ: Which group were you hooked up with--

264
265 JK: When I met my friend Ferd at this mailing party. He was involved with a group which was doing--
266 It was the New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism. It's a long
267 name (Laughter) DO you want me to repeat it(scribbling in note pad)

268
269 MJ:Yes

270
271 JK:Okay New Movement in Solidarity with Puerto Rican Independence and Socialism , New Movemnt
272 for short. So that group and the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee were both groups I got involved in
273 within the sense of going to meetings I started goiun to study groups. There was a Cadre(???)
274 organization. That was sort of that these groups came out of and that was called Prarie Fire
275 Organizing committee. It was named after a quote by I think its Mao a, a single spark can start a Prarie
276 Fire. They were the groups that created these other groups and so I started going there study groups.
277 That was when my realy education, my deeper education in Marx Gromchi (vacuum cleaner?) Kabral
278 (clapping noise) Malcom X, were I started having deeper discussion about what is the debate between
279 Martin Luther King and Malcom X, what was the difference between Civil Rights and human right.
280 Where does feminism, racism anti-imperialist, homophobia, where does all these things all hook up.
281 what are the contradictions. I was starting to get involved in that kind of leftist study. And that is where
282 South .Africa Started to elevate itself again. Because again as a feminist we would organize an annual
283 International Women Day events various kinds of events. Everything from we'd show a movie and
284 have a talk-- so now I'm putting on the things I was going to. Or an Annual International women's day
285 protest Downtown. Where we would go pick different targets of women's oppression and we would go
286 and do a little action in front of each of them. So South Africa was always one we were elevating. We
287 were big into recording different essays from South Africa. We were reading Bessie Had(???) and
288 trying to think of some-- some of the other writers we' read. And you know the famous quote Now that
289 you have touched the women you've struck a rock you have dislodged a bolder and you will be
290 cruched. Tht was one of the famous quotes from South Africa women. That we would repeat over and
291 over again at our demonstrations.

292
293 MJ:Can you describe one of the demonstrations

294

295 MJ: ca you describe one of the demonstrations

296

297 Jk: Well the one I worked a lot on, was the one I got arrested at the South African Consulate for
298 changing myself to the door of the South African consulate. (laughter)

299 I got areested at that. We were protesting the apartheid, that particular demonstration. The way
300 apartheid directly affected women. I don't know what else to say about it but it was one of many of a
301 menu. We'd go to—I don't know let me think of what we would do. We would go to a symbol of
302 Catholicism and we'd protest against the church and there role around abortion. We'd go to- let me
303 think trying to think-Oh of the Central American Movement we were all involved in anti-intervention
304 in Central America because the Contra War was happening. So we would go to some embassy of el
305 Salvador, go to the federal building- The federal buoilding always a big target we would stop traffic in
306 the middle of the street at the federal building. So they would be these little actions along the way. We
307 would protest the role of the U.S. In Central America at the Federal building in this particular action we
308 went to the South African consulate some of us chained ourselves others just tried to blockade the door
309 to protest the U.S. Role in its relationship to South Africa and the Apartheid government of South
310 Africa.

311

312 MJ: How did- what years was this- was it during the Reagan administration

313

314 JK: It was 80, I would say it was around, I'm thinking around 85,86,87. I'm very bad at dates Michael I
315 wish I was better but I'm not

316

317 MJ: It's okay

318

319 JK: It was all like that

320

321 Mj: How was the particlr group you were working with to protest the South African Consulate-
322 America at the South African Consulate organized

323

324 JK: How did we get people to come

325

326 MJ: Yeah how did you get people to come and how was the group organized and in like disbursing
327 information and things of that nature.

328

329 Jk: Yeah, kind the ways I've already talked about, we would have little events, Maybe a movie or a talk
330 or a cultural event and we would invite people to come and they come and we do education about a
331 variety of topics including lets talk about women in South Africa It wouldn't be necessarily specifically
332 on South Africa, it might be on international womens day and lets prepare for International women day
333 by understanding the particular situation of women around the world and what U.S. role visa vi those
334 women we would hand out leaflets or we'd go to campuses and hand out leaflets. It was different than
335 now because we didn't have the internet. We would go and try to meet with different collectives that
336 might have existed at the time. And there might be something like the Chicago Woman Health Center
337 or different groups of women who were meeting and we'd go try to talk to them about-- we are getting
338 at this demonstration do you want to have a contingent in the demonstration. That kind of thing. It was
339 very white anti-imperilist. I don't think we had-- we were all come out the same politics-- I mentioned
340 Prarie Fire-- we were coming out a politics that was about-- it was our role and our responsibility to
341 organize white people. So which you know has some merit, it also has some problems in that you are
342 then only working with white people – How much do you really learn from people who are struggling
343 around other issues and other identities and other realities. We did a lot of work around international

344 women thing there would be something that would be an anti-racist thing so you'd go to the police
345 station and talk racist cops that kind of thing There was always some multiple stops in one
346 demonstration.

347
348 MJ: You mentioned protesting at churches and police stations. What other companies and officials did
349 you aim for or target.

350
351 JK: Well the U.S. Government always being a number one on our list of being anti-imperialist (laugh)
352 later on, not in that particular grouping, I became involved, I don't know if I'm jumping ahead. Do you
353 really want a specific answer for that one

354
355 MJ: No anything you can think of.

356
357 JK: There would be companies, like people- there was a whole thing at Marshall fields because they
358 were selling cougar rands(???) So there was a whole thing at Marshall fields on some big protest about
359 trying to get them to stop selling the cougar rands(???)-- what other companies? Military bases out in
360 Arlington area. (Laugh) There was a base out in Arlington area there was the naval base up-- which no
361 longer – up on the Northshore there was a U.S. Naval base and then there was a base out there near
362 Arlington Heights so that would be a target of some of the protest -- the airport sometime-- if like Bush
363 was coming in and public officials-- If Bush Reagan or somebody like that was coming into town you'd
364 go out there-- the popular thing was to try to dress like the people in the fancy event and insinuate
365 yourself and get up and yell. That kind of thing

366
367 MJ: How – I may have mentioned-- How did you feel about Reagan and his politics

368
369 JK: I remember I went on a trip after – Europe for about 9 months-- Traveled with my friend Barbara
370 Lang who I mentioned — went and visited my relatives in Czechoslovakia and went to a lot of different
371 places and it's during the primary for the election-- that election-- he was not yet President. I
372 remember European saying to me-- what do you think about this Ronald Reagan guy. I'd go the guys a
373 joke-- I mean – He will never win, he was a cowboy, he was on T.V. When I was a kid selling
374 detergent-- there is no way this guy could be president-- which just goes to show how keenly in tune
375 I am with the people of this country (coworkers in background) I was in shock about Reagan . I think
376 later it became a bigger source of shock for me-- I started again with my friend Ferd (???) who had been
377 such an influence on me, Ferd got diagnosed as HIV positive and many of us started to have our
378 friends around us who were becoming positive and—we had never been politically gay-- I don't know
379 if you – let me try to flush that out a little bit. We were anti-imperialist. We did solidarity work with
380 struggles of people locally and globally-- we were white people in solidarity with struggles of people of
381 color globally and locally-- we were dealing with our own identities as political beings-- we weren't
382 really fully politicized around our queerness at the time—okay-- I mean we were but we were usually
383 pissed that people usually wouldn't include gay and lesbian stuff but was really understood that had to
384 take – at that time we felt it had to take a back seat. So we would always sort of shut up about it
385 eventually, ultimately. And much more so about sexuality than about gender, than about feminism--
386 okay-- when people started becoming positive-- it really shifted for us because the rhetoric of the
387 Reagan and our government was well it's just a bunch of degenerates. This population we can see die and
388 don't really care about them. It's a bunch of homosexuals and drug addicts. So really who cares about
389 them—you know in Illinois the Governor at the time Thomson was trying to quarantine people with
390 AIDS . So when that --Boom-- Oh my God-- we have to have a politics about being queer. You know
391 we started meeting as gay people—like this-- like group of anti-imperialist who-- we've known
392 each other for years and have gone and protest about the Klan organizing in uptown around the Puerto

393 Rican independence Movement. We started saying we have to talk to each other about is going on
394 around HIV and AIDS and that gay men are becoming target for the governments and we know this is
395 happening in communités of color we know a couple of people had know poepl—had known —like my
396 friend friend who was in jail for a year on Riker(???) Island-- a couple of her friends that she made on
397 rikers were dying of some like cough and some weird thing no one was really pin pointing what is was,
398 so we were really suspicious that this was—you know-- gonna be a huge problem obviously and
399 people were starting to organize nationally around HIV and AIDS in thr gay communités. So we
400 started shifting our activities started saying how do we start thinking about building building a politics
401 that-- I get back to this because one of the first marches we had- which was a national march-- Reagan
402 was in the Whitehouse—it was a national march on Washington of gays and lesbians. One of the first
403 banners I ever carried in a march like that was a banner of Africa with targets on it—because we were
404 already hearing from people who were doing solidarity work nurses-- that kind of thing—who were
405 gay --that epidemic was happening in those places. We are talking eighties late eughties early
406 nineties. There was no real discusion going on yet. We were starting toform our politics locally and
407 natinally but we knew there was a whole global dynamic to this. The first banner we made here in
408 Chicago-- we had a bunch of banners-- we made one that had African Continent with these targets
409 because out thing was we got to deal with our olidarity glabally as well our merging internal politics
410 but sort of wjat we understand about our identies and our own lives it was the moment where we
411 undersoof what ever we learned as anti-imperialist had to embrace a global perspective as well
412
413

414 MJ: How did that carry you back to South Africa and Anti-Apartheid
415

416 JK: For instance we organized some of us here in Chicago were part of organizing the first teach-in of
417 the AIDS movement --a national teach-in – in Washington D.C. And so right away we had workshopd,
418 we started phoning around-- whose been in these countries, whose been to Central America, who
419 knowswhat going on their, who can we get to talk abput HIV and AIDS are starting to affect thes
420 countries. So South Africa was one of the first countries we included in that teach-in-- So people
421 started being – I wasn't personally – but people I was around and people who all were in oranizing in
422 leadership of the emeing AIDS movement in the states. We were in coversation very early on with
423 activist in South Africa and South Africa was one of the most organized – It makes sense—of--
424 internationally-- South Africa, Nicaragua, there were activist who very early on were talking about HIV
425 and AIDs and it relationship to homosexuality and drug use and everything in those places. Now
426 whether or not leadership in those struggles were listening to them or embracing that , was another
427 story. But there were a lot of dialouge from the start about that.
428

429 MJ: Can you tell me more about the HIV?AIDS activism you were doing.
430

431 JK: We started an organization in Chiago-- pretty early on-- These leftist got together and said we got
432 to do soemthing we started a group called C.F.A.R. Chicago for AIDS Rights and as the emerging
433 national movement started it became clear that there ACT UP chapters, Aids Coalition to Unleash
434 Power was the name of this group that was forming around the country-- so we just changed our name
435 to ACT UP because it made more sense to have it national . We formally went to various-- I was
436 working with the Puerto Rican Independence Movmeent. We went and said this is what we have to do
437 now, we have to do this-- we see this is who we are – we have to do this – we see this is who we are –
438 we have to – no one else is going to do this for us and the Puerto Rican Inependence Movement also
439 took on the activites of trying to deal with HIV and AIDS and we all had an influence on each other. I
440 think it was a good thing and they did amazing work, they continued to do aamzing work here in
441 Chicago around that issue. We organized this group and we did local demonstrations, national

442 demonstrations – participated in global art conferences – All of the above for a number of years

443

444 MJ:How was the role of religion in this period

445

446 JK:For me personally

447

448 I stop being religious-- it was mandated in my home growing up that as long as we were living-- as
449 long as we were in highschool and livign at home we had to go to church on Sunday and the minute
450 that was over with we didn't have to go to church anymore. So out of the four kids of my parents onl
451 one of them still goes to church-- and its not me (laugh) – So I had no religous—formed religious
452 activity during that time.

453

454 MJ: What were your parent response to the activism you were doing at that time.

455

456 JK:It was mixed-- my father was a policeman-- we talked about that—my father learned I was a lesbian
457 by seeing in a demonstration on T.V. Yelling at the major – So in some regard-- yeah-- it was
458 interesting-- I wanted to-- I had come out to my mother at some point along the way in the my twenties
459 or something and then I said should I talk to Dad about it she said don't tell your father about it-- it
460 gonna really upset him (laugh)-- So I didn't and so then I'm on this T.V.-- they keep showing it over
461 because it was this crazy thing the major came to the Gay community and everybody sort of shouted
462 him down. And my fathers was so sweet – my mother called and said honey we saw you on the news
463 like three times. You were on every single news show-- I said how was that – and she said well I think
464 you should talk to your father,so I get on the phone and say – you know-- Dad I a m sorry you had to
465 find out this way and he said What, What, look, look I just want to make something clear, I don't have
466 any problems with you being Gay, I just want you to be happy. Okay, here is my problem my problem
467 is you don't get up in front of a bunch of people and yell at the mayor (laugh)-- So I said well dad I
468 wrote letters and made phone calls (laugh) and I did everything and he just wouldn't listen (laugh) So
469 anyhow—but he was- I have to say—they were amazingly-- they said all the things parents say like
470 what did I do wrong and stuff(???) like that but they didn't-- they were fairly accepting and certainly I
471 think have grown and did grow in our process together. I think of politics of – my father thing was – he
472 was a police man and you don't break the law and that really bothered him that I was breaking the law.
473 He knew I got arrested on a number of occasions and he knew I got arrested on a number of occasions
474 and he knew I was breaking the law and for him was sort of – I think he enjoyed the fact-- to the day
475 he died he loved having political discussions with me and he enjoyed the fact I was engaged in ideas
476 and were like that we all had minds of our own and were trying to negotiate the world – he really
477 didn't like the fact I was breaking the law. My mothers concern that I was going to get hurt. Which is
478 a classic motherly concern-- you gonna get hurt

479

480 MJ: How was the police response to you activism

481

482 JK: Do you mean how did the police behave

483

484 MJ: Yes(paper shuffle)

485

486 JK: It was interesting-- so I had gotten— I had been arrested — I told you about the South African .
487 The internatinal Women's Day arrest-- I had been arrested actually proir to that around an action we
488 did around Central America. I was arresrsted during an AIDS movement. We had a major action in
489 downtown Chicago about 20 people got arrested in San Francisco and I was-- This is going to sound
490 crazy and I was arrested in washington D.C. So I've been arrested by different Police Departments

491 (laugh) okay and the least professional of the Police department in these arrest for me were the Chicago
492 Police Department, I think the Chicago Police department had a mentality and sort of-- somebody gave
493 them permission, a licensenes to do what every they wanted to – to people and they didn't care. I never
494 got beaten up. I certainly got smashed into the wall and certainly got thrown I certainly got – Oops-- I
495 missed the door-- I'll hit the wall instead, I ot walked into the elevator and smashed into the back of an
496 elevator—handcuffed with my hands behioud me and smashed. That was nothing compared to some
497 friends, my friends really got brutalized by the police-- a woman my size stepped on—broken ribs-- and
498 in the beginning of the AIDS movement they were afraid of us. They thought we all had HIV-- so they
499 wouldn't touch anybody and then as those year went by – as they became educated more and more they
500 became more and more willing to start pounding you with clubs and doing all that kind of stuff—so I
501 was arrested in San Francisco by the police who were like unbeleivialbly professional (laugh) on how
502 they did it. It was amazing to me I remember thinking if this was Chicago they would be wailing on us.
503 They didn't-- nut it was an international AIDS conference-- they were trying to put on a –like-- we are
504 in a space, we people have a right to protest and we are going to be very diciplined. Chicago Police—
505 Oh my God—They would pull you off the sidewalk-- you are completely legal-- your moving—you're
506 picketing and they would pull you off the sidewalk and just start wailing on you—if they want to-- they
507 don't care. So I don't have a lot of respect for the police professionalism or dicipline that they show in
508 demonstrations and lately what I've seen –it just this crazy show of Millertism and force with these
509 outfits-- I don't know if you've seen it—if ou evert been down town as t – they ot these things on-- they
510 look like somekind of crazy cyborg or something. Its intimidating and crazy.

511
512 MJ: What do you feel challenges were building community and getting people active.

513
514 JK:Challenges?

515
516 MJ:Yeah

517
518 JK: In all of this

519
520 MJ: You can pick what ever your particularly

521
522 **JK:** I think some of the challenges are the ability to sustain long term dialogue with people and really
523 the ability-- this is true of all of us-- to have really the opportunity to talk to really deepen all over
524 analysis together of how these things are interconnected. So what happen to a lot of in general, it may
525 be particular thing that moves us like becoming HIV positive and that a really frightening thing for
526 somebody. Certainly back in the Eighties when it was happening, it meant you were gonna die. That
527 kind of what it meant in your head and in reality many of those people did die. So its before the drug
528 cocktail and all that kind of stuff—so how do you sort of work with—how do we look at that person
529 who has a problem-- that maybe hier lives were just fine and all of a sudden their's something-- maybe
530 they were gay—but they were able to manage that because they had great jobs and whatever—but now
531 they are HIV positive and their insurance gets rejected and suddenly are becoming a target of the state
532 in a way they never imagined. Their either going to do something with that and deepen their analysis of
533 how that happened to them and how its happening to other people and go out and make those
534 connection or their just gonna deal with themsleves. So I think that one of the challegenes is how do
535 you-- how do we all sort of deepen our understanding of how issues are interconnected and a lot of the
536 things-- that a number of the problems of a latina single mother—latina is experiecenceing around
537 being HIV positive may have some connection to this better -off gay white man. How do we brings
538 those two people together to form a movement.

539

540 MJ: Did you have experience with that happening?

541

542 JK: Yes I did have an experience with that happening and I've had experience not happening. I had
543 both things happen-- There people-- all of us who grew politically by opening up a connection to
544 somebody we wouldn't normally connected to

545

546 MJ: Can you tell me about this experience

547

548 JK: Well I think the one I just raised—when we started doing the AIDS work—the HIV and AIDS
549 work-- we were able to go to those we started off just being who we were-- these white anti-imperialist
550 and then started meeting kind of regular gay men who would come-- we had to protest outside Governor
551 Thomson's house-- it was a Twenty-four hour protest- we announced all over the place, all these guys
552 came from the bars-- you know because the Governor lived not that far from Halsted street and so all
553 these bar guys came after the bars closed and joined in and sat around on the street with us-- and these
554 guys who never came to a protest-- Mr. Windy-- like the gay Mr. Windy -city it was this title they used
555 to give back in the day came to the protest—he was like a beauty queen. So that was one layer of
556 people-- who as anti-imperialist we never went to the bars-- we didn't believe in drinking (laugh)
557 Suddenly we are meeting those folks-- then some of us- some of the women had been involved in
558 reproductive choice struggles around the city and we know this woman who was running an program for
559 HIV positive women-- Chicago Women Aids Project-- we call her up and we are like –Hey we are
560 doing these meetings it would be really important to have the voices of women who are HIV positive
561 because all we got are men here-- gay men. So we go and start talking to the group-- it was a long
562 process the women didn't necessarily feel safe coming-- they were barely able to come out as being
563 HIV positive-- a lot of them in their own communities but a couple of them started going-- Hey this is
564 great we want to be at—we want to be out—we want more women to be – to come to our project so
565 they started coming to our meetings. So now you get a mother of three, someone who was a former sex
566 worker, somebody who is a drug addict-- black latina meeting our predominately white gay man group
567 with some lesbians thrown in and suddenly we started expanding. What are the issues affecting people
568 differently in different communities who are HIV positive and we started expanding our political agenda
569 with ACT-UP Chicago Some of the men who thought this was about me and drugs in my body and I want
570 drugs in my body were not happy with that and didn't understand why all of the sudden we were talking
571 about women with children but some of them did-- they embraced it and said of course we have to deal
572 with all people who are HIV positive. How do we deal with this. It was a struggle—I don't want to
573 paint a rosy picture. Then we started to be in relationship to the black forces in Chicago. There was a
574 group called ALCOBONA (???) network and they were trying to get adds that were specific to
575 African-Americans around HIV on the buses-- on the CTA. So we did a campaign with them-- we go
576 to the Puerto Rican Cultural Center where we had all been solidarity workers-- some of us-- so we start
577 expanding out—the idea of how do these things intersect-- what are some of the—then it became this in
578 not just about HIV this is about our national health care, we need national health care in this country--
579 again expanding the political terrain-- and then the intersection question-- what are the relationships to our
580 forces in South Africa or Nicaragua. How do we support material aid to go to those places for people
581 who are HIV positive, that kind of thing.

582

583 MJ: You mentioned the lack of-- you mentioned a lot

584

585 JK: I'm sorry

586

587 MJ: That's why it's recorded so we can always review back-- no problem. You mentioned it being
588 mostly male dominated originally-- How did gender play into your activism.

589

590 JK: For me its a very complicated question because I think the whole way we talk about gender now--
591 as a femminist it was about woman liberation for me-- to some extent its still about woem liberation but
592 in a different way—I admire some of the younger activist who are really trying to complicate gender
593 and for me as a self discarded butch lesbian-- I think the whole idea of gender has always been
594 complicated for me. I really deepl believe that when I was a child I wanted to be a boy not in anykind
595 of way that I want to have—take hormones or have an oppertation but just from the persoectives boys
596 got to do much more stuff, back then. Hey had more power—my brother go to go on an airplane –went
597 to a soccer tournament with my dad and I couldn't go because girls weren't allowed in the locker room.
598 I had to wear a dress-- I hated wearing dresses-- I felt like I was being tortured everytime a dress was
599 put on me.Those are simple but they form your idenitty—form--I think gender and the role of gender in
600 movements that I was apart of was really complicated a number of thing I was involved in – the
601 women were really really powerful—like in some ways more powerful than some of the men who were
602 around me. Good?,Bad?I don't know that just an observation. What was great was the queer politics I
603 got involved with-- that suddenly people could express themselves more in terms of who they really
604 were around gender politics and cetainly around gender expression and so that was freeing to me, to be
605 able to—again express gender and express sexuality in much more open way-- I think whats appealing
606 to us, in a romantic and not neccesarily—I'll never know the truth-- I think we had a romantic notion
607 about revelutionary struggle around the world and the role of women in those struggles and we really--
608 a lot of us would have photos, posters on our walls with women carrying guns all the time, you know
609 like you'd have African women carrying guns (laugh) Central American women carrying guns-- with
610 a baby on one arm and a gun in the other-- this is what meant(???)Particuary the revelutionary struggle
611 in Nicargua that had all these women in the leadership of that struggle—who were very very visable
612 and when people did solidarity trip to Nicaragua they would be meeting these women and they were
613 Comindante Dora Maria, Comidante Gladis Bayezz (???) They were comidantes in the liberation army
614 {paper shuffle} I think there is a way that we embrace that as the strong image of women but I don't
615 think we really know the whole truth of what—How much of that was really absorbed into the ultimate
616 struggles of these revolutionary movements and the outcome-- for instance now I would be interested
617 in knowing the role of women in South African politics. I don't really know and there was a lot of talks
618 about that back then and – I tihnk it really organized a lot of us who were feminest and not quite sure
619 where it all stands now.

620

621 MJ: This is a little skipping around- you mentioned Prexy Nesbitt-- How did you meet Prexy

622

623 JK: I had heard about Prexy for many years before I actually know him. I think my getting to know
624 Prexy was my getting my job here because Prexy was real good friends with –Prexy's a bit close to—
625 Prexy was on the first board I bleeive of the Cross Roads fund, se he goes back with th Cross Road
626 Fund before I worked here. He was real good friends with a former staff person here-- Karen
627 Candelaeria (???) so he started calling up more and more and stuff and I started talking to him-- we just
628 sort of became more friendly in the last 10 years.

629

630 MJ: You mentioned you heard whispers of Prexy previously what was the context of that.

631

632 JK:I think everybody understood there were people at the time who were-- we all understood they
633 were-- we all understood they were the leadership of the effort in Chiago around South Africa and
634 Africa-- issues around Africa and there was sort of like – I worked with a guy who was involved with
635 a more nationlist—tendency around – he was a teacher where I was working-- I taught at an Alantic
636 Highschool—We sort of represented some sort of African Nationlist incrumaue (???) kind of
637 nationalist faction. And then there was Prexy the more internationalist approach I think. So he was well

638 know in his profile in leadership and his relationship to struggles in South Africa—Another thing I
639 want to say about South Africa that really had a big impact on my generation—who were coming up
640 activist-- was the cultural-- like the Artist Against Apartheid stuff was really big and I grew up—just
641 because I was interested in music knowing about Miriam Mkeba and about Hugh Masekela. In fact
642 Hugh Masekela—my grandfather-- we had this tavern and my Grandpa was like pretty strict about
643 what songs could be on the juke box—so no Beatles-- no rock and roll. You could have like Trudy
644 Lopez(???) Which you have no idea what that is-- do you?-- she kind of soft pop stuff or like the
645 Polkas, Eastern European Polkas: Who Stole the Keshika, Franky Yankovich and the Bear Barrel Polka--
646 so the jukebox was really kind of his terrain and he would pick, like play the music then put it on there--
647 the one song we all loved, that he on the jukebox was Grasin in the Grass which is Hugh Masekela, so
648 at a young age I sort of knew a little about his-- but when all that stuff came out like [begins to Sing]
649 Bring Back Nelson Mandela, Bring him back home to Soweto-- do you know that song. All that kind
650 of stuff came out and we were all listening to that-- any sort of activist movement Bruce Coldburn (???)
651 around Central America-- what his name?-- Jackson Brown were these kind of like artist of my
652 generation-- he was doing stuff about Central America and then this Artist against Apartheid thing. It
653 really resonated with us. That was a mass a mass-- a more mass manifestation—kind of like stuff
654 around Haiti-- were people responded to it a little more. Stevie Wonder refused to play in South
655 Africa-- that kind of stuff- You'd pay attention to that.

656
657 MJ: How was-- were you involved in divestment and Boycotts in South Africa.

658
659 JK: Just the stuff in College and then of course paying attention to the way it would roll out in the
660 newspaper about this group of students or this group of corporations-- about putting pressure on-- just
661 really as it appears in the news.

662
663 MJ: What were—I'm sorry lost my place-- How did you feel about the sports-- The South African
664 sports boycott.

665
666 JK: You mean about-- describe what

667
668 MJ: The Springboks

669
670 JK: I think I thought it was cool that people were trying to get them to -- trying to use these sort of
671 popular-- pastime of the masses to elevate the issues about South Africa. It's even now-- the soccer
672 player who are doing these protest on the field around racism-- I don't know if you (???) any of this
673 but you got all the black players from various parts of the world playing like in England and you got
674 fans or you're in Italy—Italian or English team and you got fans making ape noises and monkey noise in
675 the stands in this horrible racist way and so you get a bunch of players—who are either wearing protest
676 signs to stop the fans from doing that—all that kind of stuff I find anyway using a mass activity—like
677 sports—if there is a way that sports can elevate some sort of politics. I kind of see it as a good thing-- it
678 get people to thinking a little about -- what are we all engaged in here and how what we are engaged in--
679 How does this relate back to the politics of the place. I think it is a good thing.

680
681 MJ: How—where--First--Where you in Chicago for Harold Washington election

682
683 **JK:** You know I wasn't, I was here when he died and I actually went to this amazing event that took
684 place at the UIC Center which was public—it was an amazing experience to be in there.

685
686 MJ: Can you tell me about the experience

687

688 **JK:** It was just-- the sort of—first of all it started with people singing the African National Anthem —
689 which you know I don't know the words—but I know the melody. (hums African National anthem) –
690 do you know the song—so-- I was like holy shit—this is really about—this is a national—this is the
691 biggest national display of Black nationalism I ever seen-- and I've been around Black Nationalist but
692 this is mass-- it's like however many people fits in that arena as it started with that tone and people
693 were really in mourning—in a kind of a way I had never really seen—so there is more to the story but I
694 rather not tell it—but--on tape.

695

696 **MJ:** Okay—alright[laugh} - No problem

697

698 **JK:** But was everybody from very leftist folks who were on the stage, who were participating in it to
699 Dorothy Tillman and that sort of range—as sort of-- I was sitting there going man the possibilities around
700 this sort of level of mourning and grief could be channeled into something really positive right now.
701 This is a movement in here-- but I think it was more of an opportunity to mourn and grieve which is
702 fine too.

703

704 **MJ:** Definitely

705

706 **JK:** But I wasn't living here when he was alive

707

708 **Mj:** Where were you at that time

709

710 **JK:** New York

711

712 **MJ:** You were still in New York at that time

713

714 **JK:** I was here while he was major for a while but O wasn't here during the election

715

716 **MJ:** Did you find any changes that happened in Chicago at that time-- like the political sphere
717 (???)

718

719 **JK:** Yeah sure – I worked at that time-- I was working when I came back—I was working at the –for a
720 while at the at an alternative High school in Uptown which was part of the Alternative High school
721 movement at the time and so we met with folks who were at alternative High school all over the city
722 we have regular meetings around benchmarks and what we were doing and it was because of Harold
723 Washington and a level of ability to sort of rise to leadership who would have never have risen to
724 leadership in communities and programs that would again be able to get resources they weren't getting
725 before.

726

727 **MJ:** Did it affect your activism, like with ACT-UP

728

729 **JK:** He wasn't, that was prior to Act-UP. What it affected in terms of my activism was a different
730 understanding of the relationship-- look I gonna be really honest with you –I came out when I was
731 involved with anti-imperialist politics we had a position around voting—we didn't vote, we thought it
732 was—like voting was a colonial –someone like Harold Washington might be seen as a neo-colonial
733 tool—like you don't participate in mainstream politics—you only participate in revolutionary politics—
734 right and I think Harold Washington—what that whole thing for me-- was a real education about the
735 importance of being able to do both and the importance of being able to do both and the importance of

736 having insider and outsider politics in some relation between the two and the ability of the two to have
737 an influence on each other. I think Harold Washington would have been the first person to say I need
738 these groups on the outside to protest, to come down to City Hall and raise a ruckus. Because if I
739 walk into city council and say I want this thing that's about me. If these groups come and all about it –
740 they got my back, they are the ones that are gonna push these other politicians and push me into doing
741 what I said I'm gonna do—so I think I started to understand that relationship of insider outsider politics
742 in a different way-- a more maturing politics for me

743
744 MJ: I guess my follow up question—not follow up—Leading to Nelson Mandela election what were your
745 feelings about that period.

746
747 Well I couldn't believe—look it's a funny thing-- I really feel like one of these people who does not
748 believe in the cult of personality. I've tried to do this thing about—it's nuts about this particular leader,
749 it's about the whole thing—I got to tell you when I'm asked that question about, who would you ever
750 want to meet—Let me—I've met a lot of famous people in my life—I have a brother in law whose
751 film critique so I've met Hollywood stars-- I'm like one of those people whose like their just like you
752 and me you shouldn't be impressed with these people—I mean they're just --we all-- there are no
753 exceptional people. It's the circumstance that lead us to do exceptional things-- Nelson Mandela [laugh]
754 is somebody I have such a huge—I'd got to say he like one person whom I'm like—when they say who
755 would you like to meet or who do you admire most and I said Nelson Mandela is like one of those
756 people for me because of an—I don't have allusions of he's this perfect person but my God the guy is
757 like a – he's a revolutionary in my life time who has figured—has had to make compromises and be a
758 leader in more ways--- I think he's amazing-- the guy like—I fell sort of a bad for him actually because
759 I think he's like—he means so much to people at this point— My greatest hope in the last period of
760 time is that he would live to see the World Cup – like I got to the point where I just wanted Nelson
761 Mandela to have the World Cup in his country and live long enough to see the World Cup because I
762 know how much he likes sports—so I want him to have a nice thing to happen in his life—I know that
763 sounds crazy-- why—who am I to come up with that for Nelson Mandela-- that was my little thing with
764 Nelson [laugh] I just want him to be able to sit at the World Cup games and enjoy a good game but --so
765 what did I think of him—I think he came out of this like extraordinary—The funny thing about Nelson
766 Mandela is he has managed in the main stream politics public eye to be a freedom fighter—which is what
767 he was—but it's kind of that—somehow the United States decided they could be okay talking about
768 him now—when we know in fact that he was actively engaged in revolutionary actions and politics that
769 on any given day would put him on a terrorist watch list in the U.S—so world opinion and world – and
770 movement forced that to be true about Nelson Mandela is like this symbol of defeating a racist
771 system—I'm not saying it's perfect but he's a symbol of turning a system around-- which doesn't happen
772 that often in our lifetime —I think the idea that somebody could come out of prison, endure what he
773 endured and then still be able to lead in a way that's about—we still need to include these people in our
774 lives—who held us as captives—and who does that

775
776 MJ: During – I guess—between the 85 and 93 did he really rise to become an icon for—let me rephrase
777 that question—What were your feelings and action Anti-Imperialist or HIV/AIDS of South African
778 experience with Nelson Mandela and things

779
780 JK: I think he did become an icon in good ways and bad but I think that is true of all leaders Malcolm X
781 is an icon in good ways and bad ways. Martin Luther King is an icon in good ways and bad ways—
782 there just men—I think Nelson Mandela probably had the opportunity in different ways like Malcolm X
783 and Martin Luther King—I just bringing them up—or Ho Chi Min or—I don't know I'll think of some
784 other—because of the times that he lives in --because of the nature of media and communication and

785 peoples proximity to him in a different way I think has more of an ability to clarify that he is just a man
786 –I think he tries to do a good job of that and he tries to do a good job of that-- I kind of think he's a – I
787 don't know him—I've never met him—have you met him.

788
789 MJ:No

790
791 JK: He's kind of interest—He seems like an interestingly humble dude but I don't know if thats
792 necessarirly true but thats my impressin of him. But I do think he is an icon to a lot of people.

793
794 MJ:Just to et into—What were your most challenging and inspiring conversations during—even-- What
795 were your during that time during your activism period

796
797 JK:Like?

798
799 MJ:I would say during your HIV/AIDS, your Anti-Imperilaist involmnet with SIU

800
801 JK:Well there were so many-I can't—they continue to be challengeing—right--the idea—I don't even
802 know how to pinpoint one—I think this stuff around—who is—how oou—This whole idea of the
803 hiearchy of oppression and when you start talking about the intersectionality of issues—how do you
804 find leadership amongst a complicated—how do you find leadership amongst a complicated-- how do
805 you find leadership and clarity around somebody who may have a complicated set of identiteis or in a
806 group where there is a complicated set of identities or in a group where there is a complicated set of
807 identites and this idea that Audry Lorde talked about the hiearchy of oppresin but when you sitting in a
808 room really coming in from different realites—where do you look to for leadership and experince in
809 that—I don't want to use it again-- clarity I think that is a huge question-- how do you again-- how do
810 you sustain lengthy and complicated discussion that lead toward analysis that ,then lead toward
811 tangible action in day to day solutions for peoples – for people lives-- there are the big picture systems
812 and then there's today – I can't get this for family and I need it-- or I can't get the health care I need at
813 county because they are back logged systems bad— so how do I do that ,compared to how do we get
814 sinlge apaer health care and how do you as an actist oranize some set of activites toward both of these
815 things because people need something today but they need something bigger years from now—I don't
816 know what to me is like the on going challenges about sustaining—the sort of level of stategy in
817 organizing it takes to do the immediate and the future dream.

818
819 MJ:Let read another one. How was being active in the movement changed your life in a way.

820
821 JK:I think its just been-- it just lead me down—being active in—you know-- all the way from my
822 sisters early comments to me that opened up my thinking and being aware, just being exposed to
823 places I wouldn't normally have gone to—given where I came from the northwest side of Chicagoin a
824 working class nieghborhood—white neighborhood—its just taken me down many many different
825 pathes and I don't think I would have gone down and given me a lot of privelege in the sense of just
826 having access to people who I wouldn't normally have access to.

827
828 MJ:Okay—How does the spirit of activism with you today.

829
830 JK:How dose it what

831
832 MJ: live with you today

833

834 JK: Live with me today—well that a tough one there—Michael (laugh)--well this job I have an amazing
835 job—because I work here at Crossroads fund and we give money to social justice groups in the Chicago
836 Metropolitan area—so again I'm given the amazing experience to meet people who are trying to think
837 of all these issues and trying to come up with all these answers for their particular issues in their
838 communities—my job is this amazing sort of place where I came into contact with activists – so that is
839 one of the things-- where I still intersect—I'm less—which is my frustration personally less of an
840 activist myself these days for a variety of reasons that I'm probably not gonna go into on tape but-- I
841 see opportunities that allow me to still-- luckily know when to show up – if then something-- an activity
842 that I want to participate in and so that how—where I'm at right now

843
844 MJ: what would you consider to be your biggest contribution to the movement

845
846 JK well currently right now – its trying to raise money and increase resources for activism so that's
847 what I do here-- try to increase resources — raise money so that some reason-- some activist-- will have
848 resources to do the work with . So I think that is my current contribution.

849
850 Mj: What-I didn't ask this one-- what were the music played at eventually

851
852 JK: Oh yeah

853
854 MJ: This is sort of going back.

855
856 Jk: Well I remember we had an event about (paper shuffle) the Congo and –God it was some anti-
857 imperialist and myself and we sang that song—which was-- I don't even know where it came from but
858 other people will know it and it goes-- its a song about imperialism and it comes from Guinea Bissau—
859 I don't know-- it goes (sings) Imperial-- you sing it in rounds (sings) Imperial, Imperial imperial is
860 mun(???) and that's all I can remember-- (sings) Colonial Colonial Colonial Colonial is mun (???) and we
861 would do this and we would teach every body the song—there was a song we all use to sing—which
862 cracks my co-worker Jane up-- Jane is from Kenya and she thinks its hysterical cause you know-- it
863 goes(sings)-- The children of Africa—they are determined to be free-- Africa—they are determined to
864 be free-- a heavy load, a heavy load, a heavy load and it will take some real strength—a heavy load, a
865 heavy load-- and it goes on it has all these verses like (sings) we don't care if we go to war-- it is for
866 freedom we surely go and it goes on like that. We had these little movement songs we sang. Harriet
867 Tubman a song about Harriet Tubman songs about-- from the old days . The old labor days-- like the
868 history of leftist song—I have a very funny story—I remember getting arrested and being in jail down at
869 State street-- downtown and we were there over night-- there was like a gaggle of us and this woman O
870 was in jail with-- who was from our group-- we were all in different cells—were in jail and there
871 are all these other women in jail—who are in for what we called social crimes and this woman I am in
872 jail with whose from my group starts singing this Harriet Tubman song (sings) One night I dreamed I
873 was in slavery about 1850 was the time and all these women who are like in for prostitution, drugs or
874 whatever there in for-- started going – shut up we hate those songs (laugh) that was really funny and
875 then we-- I mentioned all the songs of the time-- all the popular-- Artist Against Apartheid we play that
876 music you know the music of South Africa, the township- Hi-Ly(???) or whatever it is called and their
877 would be bands that specialize in – we would have them playing –some other African-- But much of it-
878 - when ever we did like-- there would be a lot of singing on buses and stuff-- all the kind of movement
879 songs-- Is that were you were getting at-- You don't know what you getting at (Laugh)

880
881 MJ:(???) any information you have—here's one – what carried you through your toughest days of
882 activism

883

884 JK: That's a really tough question-- I think having a real desire to see change made-- you know-- I think
885 I am one of these people who really—somebody could probably a psychiatrist would analyze me as
886 being-- having some sort of problem or something. I kind of-- I'm one of the people who has to read the
887 news paper while I'm on vacation cause I would like to know what is going on in the world-- not in an
888 obsessive way-- but well something bad could be happening and we should know about it. I believe you
889 should have a T.V. Because then you can understand what they are saying on the news and that the
890 popular cultural trends are—which we should know about as leftist—I know there are these leftist that
891 think-- you shouldn't have a T.V. Cause it's bad for you but I think you should know what going on in
892 T.V. And have some relationship to it—so you know what regular people think so I tend to be fixated
893 on maybe this perpetual how do we make it better thing.

894

895 MJ: What event or person was most influential in your experience [paper shuffles] -I know you
896 mentioned

897

898 JK: I'm sorry an event or person what?

899

900 MJ: Most influential in your experience as an activist

901

902 JK: Well a lot of different people from the early days—I mentioned my parents my sister, I had a couple
903 of nuns-- before I had the bad nuns-- I had good nuns-- when I was little kid I had these progressive
904 nuns-- they were great. They said good things in school. They said the right things-- later on I
905 mentioned my friend Ferd-- different people-- informal collectives-- I had people who I studied with
906 over the years, people in ACT-UP who were hugely influential to me. My current partner is hugely
907 influential to me around political thinking—colleagues here, lots of people-- people I have regular
908 conversation about life (???)-- the people I met in ACT-UP were really struggling around their own
909 issues around HIV trying to broaden their analysis —those were really important examples and people
910 for me to be around.

911

912 MJ: Actually can you tell me more about-- I'm not sure if I explored this deeply enough—tell me more
913 about ACT-UP- like how the group was organized activities and agendas.

914

915 **JK:** We were organized as the handful of Anti-Imperialist who were doing anti-imperialist work-- we
916 started having conversation at my friend Ferd house about we need to do something about HIV and
917 Aids and the fact people are being diagnosed people are dying and this-- people are talking about
918 quarantine gays-- people are really talking about-- this is really gonna come down on the gay
919 community in a way that is going to be really oppressive-- we need basic services within the gay
920 community that don't exist yet-- So we started talking about that and then we put together a couple of
921 actions got ourselves in the Gay press-- had the action at the Governors house-- where all the guys from
922 the gay bars came—started having weekly meeting and then had like any organization had meetings,
923 regular meetings had work groups committees, started getting involved in national work-- had people who
924 were representative who went and did that national work. Does that make sense

925

926 MJ: Yes make sense-- How do you feel about South Africa having the World Cup this year

927

928 JK: I am crazy about it – I know it's complicated I have been reading it in the paper. You know about the
929 fact so much money is going towards the world cup. The same issue we had here about the Olympics--
930 I'm happier—This is the contradiction of me I'm happier about-- the World Cup in South Africa than I
931 am about the Olympics coming to Chicago and I'd probably-- if I was living therein South Africa I'd

932 feel opposite—I tihnk-- everything I read about Nelson Mandela-- he loves sports he really wanted the
933 world cup in South Africa for him and I love soccer and I love the idea people will go to OSUth Africa
934 and be in South Africa at the very basic level spend maney in South Africa-- Hopefully become more
935 engaged in inderstaning more about South Africa becaue they go tthere-- I have no illusion that soccer
936 fans will do that but some might and I hope the African teams do well in the tornament-- although
937 brazil is my favorite team (laugh)

938

939 MJ:Is there anything you would like to add

940

941 JK:No-- I felt like I went on and on—I appreciate you trying to coral me with your good questions-- so
942 thank you for that-- I hope I didn;t-- exhaust ou

943

944 MJ: No no problem, So I guess this will be wrapping up

945

946 JK:Okay

947

948

949