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Interview with Anne Evens

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1 INTERVIEW WITH ANNE EVENS

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5 Chicago Anti-apartheid Movement (CAAM) Archive

6 Columbia College Chicago

7

8 BETH THENHAUS: So my name is Beth Thenhaus and I'm interviewing Anne Evens. The date today
9 is May 4th. And we are at her home. The years of Anne's anti-apartheid activism were roughly 1981
10 through 1994. And the locations of her activism were in Ithaca, New York, Mozambique, and
11 Chicago.

12 And then some few more things to state: Anne was born in 1963 in Berkeley, she was raised in
13 Chicago. Her father was born in Berkeley and her mother were born in Berkley. -No.

14

15 ANNE EVENS: My father was born in New York and my mother was born in ...or actually my father
16 was born in Albany but grew up in New York City, in Brooklyn. And my mother was born in Boston.

17

18 BT: Oh, okay, I made that up.

19

20 AE: It's okay.

21

22 BT: I apologize for that. Alright now we'll start with some beginning questions: First one is: What is
23 your earliest memory?

24

25 AE: I have two early memories. One is rolling down this hill next to a neighborhood church which is
26 now a Quaker meeting house. And the other is when my family moved from one house to another when
27 I was five and I remember sitting on top of the piano in the truck.

28

29 BT: What sort of music do you remember around your house as a child?

30

31 AE: Hmm, music around my house...My dad played the recorder. My, I think mostly classical music
32 when I was a kid. And our music, my brother's and sister's and my music wasn't that welcome in the
33 house from what I remember.

34

35 BT: Oh.

36

37 AE: It's okay.

38

39 BT: What did you like to watch on TV?

40

41 AE: Star Trek. Um, I don't remember watching a whole lot of TV, but I remember liking Star Trek, all
42 the stuff that's on MeTV now, I think, if you ever watch that channel.

43

44 BT: Nope. Um, what book do you best remember from childhood?

45

46 AE: Uh, All Creatures Great and Small, actually.

47

48 BT: Ok. What was the neighborhood you grew up in like?

49

50 AE: I grew up in Evanston in a neighborhood - first on the south side of Evanston, then sort of in
51 central Evanston. My, um, both my parents are academics. My dad taught at Northwestern University,
52 my mom at IIT, Illinois Institute of Technology.
53

54 BT: Ok, what did you do on the weekends?
55

56 AE: As a kid? Um, or now?
57

58 BT: Oh, when you were a child, yeah. Anything specific, or...
59

60 AE: I played. I spent a lot of time outside playing with kids in my neighborhood, and running to play
61 [unclear].
62

63 BT: How did you get to school?
64

65 AE: Walked. Or rode my bike.
66

67 BT: Who was your favorite teacher, and why?
68

69 AE: As a young child or in high school?
70

71 BT: Mm, I'm thinking elementary.
72

73 AE: Umm, Miss Fisher, was my first grade teacher and she was my favorite teacher um, because... I
74 felt like she believed in me.
75

76 BT: What role did religion or spirituality play in your childhood?
77

78 AE: None. None.
79

80 BT: Yeah?
81

82 AE: Yeah. We weren't - I'm ethnically Jewish but we didn't learn, we didn't I remember when I
83 was in high school I thought I should read the bible since it was part of everyone else's cultural context
84 except mine, but I didn't get very far. I didn't find it very interesting.
85

86 BT: Did you start it?
87

88 AE: I started it, I read Genesis..
89

90 BT: Well, that's more than a lot of bible...bible followers... What were some experiences in your youth
91 that influenced you later on towards standing up for racial justice and human rights?
92

93 AE: Um, my mom, um, I think instilled those values in me. I went to Martin Luther King Jr.
94 elementary school which was mix- um the first integrated school, and I learned a lot about Martin
95 Luther King, and the civil rights movement as part of that. I remember I learned how to s- I learned Lift
96 Every Voice and Sing before I learned the national anthem. So I think that was part of it... and then
97 later as I got older I got involved in anti-racism work.
98

99 BT: As a child? Or...

100

101 AE: In high school.

102

103 BT: Oh really, in high school. Ok. My next question is about that: What were some activities you were
104 a part of in high school?

105

106 AE: Um, I was part of a group against gun violence, um and I remember going to demonstrations in
107 downtown Chicago trying to um, work for stricter gun control laws. And I was part of a group that
108 worked against racism, and went on some marches after race related violence. And I, also, my sister
109 joined - we're ethnically Jewish and my sister actually is, she is more religious and spiritually Jewish
110 now, and she got involved in a Jewish youth group and - they were Zionist and I got involved - she got
111 me involved cause she was my older sister so I did everything she did. And um, I got involved in it
112 too, but as part of that I started to learn more about the struggle of Palestinian people and I thought it
113 was wrong to be Zionist and be - so I saw the contradictions of that, and as part of that I also learned
114 about the relationship between the Israeli government and the South African government, and um the
115 economic ties because the Israeli economy was so tied up in producing and selling guns, and sort of,
116 that whole, the whole military economy, and I learned - started to learn a little about South Africa and
117 apartheid then. And then also, my senior year the US government re-instituted the draft - registration
118 for the draft, so um, my friends who were young men at the time had - were faced with the choice of
119 registering or not, and so I worked with them on that issue a lot and they didn't register, and we
120 organized around that too.

121

122 BT: Oh wow, exciting...that sounds like a lot of activities in high school. Um, a few more, you know,
123 growing up questions - what was your favorite class in high school?

124

125 AE: Hm, probably, I had this integrated science program that was chemistry and physics together, that
126 was my favorite. I am an engineer.

127

128 BT: Right, that's right. Um so, you've mentioned some things you've done in high school, that you were
129 involved in, but the atmosphere in your high school, in general regarding the then-current social
130 politics, what would you say that was?

131

132 AE: I don't think it was a particularly political time, I don't think, I think my generation is sort of
133 known for not being too politically active, I mean, in 1981, right? no I'm sorry 1980, Reagan won.
134 Then I remember thinking the world was going to end. Didn't know it could get worse, but, so it was a
135 fairly conservative time, I think. The 70's and 80's.

136

137 BT: Okay, when did you become politically aware? Can you answer that?

138

139 AE: I think I was always a little bit politically aware, I mean certainly political history and civil rights
140 history was very much a part of my elementary school years, and so I remember it from then, I
141 remember my mother was pretty active within the Democratic party. And so I remember, like, helping
142 her, being involved in electoral politics, as well. And then I also have a really strong memory when I
143 was, I don't know exactly how old, but, um, it was during the Vietnam war, and I went to a, I was you
144 know, just hanging around in my neighborhood which was close to Northwestern University, and I
145 remember going to a demonstration, it was probably, it must have been early 70's, against the war in
146 Vietnam, and I remember there were 4 caskets there which were the first 4 Northwestern students who
147 had been killed in the Vietnam War, and I remember sitting up like on this tree limb sort of over-

148 looking the whole scene and being very moved by that experience, so this really strong visual, was
149 those caskets.

150

151 BT: How old were you then?

152

153 AE: It must have been the early 70's or sixty-, I was born in '63, so less than 10. Around that age range.

154

155 BT: It's an image. What conflicts did you encounter with your parents when you were in high school?

156

157 AE: I actually didn't have a whole lot of conflicts with my parents. I'm the youngest of three and my
158 brother and sister did that, particularly my sister, so I just, I just kind of - I didn't talk to them a lot
159 about my political activity, um, so I didn't have much opportunity to have a lot of conflicts with them.
160 I had conflicts with them, with particularly my dad, later, more when I was in college.

161

162 BT: Oh, okay. What were your parents' political views or activities like?

163

164 AE: Umm, my mom was really active in the Democratic party, now they both are. So they, they're
165 Democrats. I used to consider my dad more of a - a sort of center, sort of a more traditional liberal, but
166 I think he's gotten more, either, probably my perception has gotten more accurate, um, or, or you know
167 I think, I was, I always considered myself more farther to the left than he was and I think that sort of
168 the natural tendency of kids not to - or to be - to challenge their parents and res-, be resistant to their
169 parents' goals made him seem more conservative than he probably really was. And he may have
170 changed, he may have come a little bit farther to the left, as well, I don't know. But I always
171 considered my mom to be more progressive than my dad. But both were Democrats, still are.

172

173 BT: Okay. How did your desire to be involved with activism or civil rights get sparked?

174

175 AE: I just have always wanted to make the world a better place, make the world right and I've always, I
176 always have felt like racism is one of the worst parts of our culture and our society that we have to
177 address so I have always felt like it is a critical thing to - um, a critical issue to work on.

178

179 BT: What's your earliest memory of learning about apartheid?

180

181 AE: It's what I described: I learned about it as I learned about, uh, Israel and Palestine and the
182 relationship between Israel and South Africa, so it would have been in high school, I think.

183

184 BT: How did you become involved in the movement?

185

186 AE: When I went to college my first day of school, which was actually my birthday because I'm born
187 in early September, um, the first day of school I went to this peace breakfast at the um, a place called
188 Annabelle Taylor Hall, at Cornell University, which was the location of where all the peace groups had
189 their offices and met. And, I heard about a lot of different social justice and activist organizations, and
190 I - including SADC which is South African Divestment Coalition which is the name of the group at
191 Cornell, and I joined it and I stayed with it for all four years.

192

193 BT: I forgot to mention that some of these questions are like, a list of like, ten that are necessary to ask
194 so I hope they don't sound too repetitive. The next question is why did you get involved with the anti-
195 apartheid movement.

196

197 AE: I think that, um again, working against racism is has always been critical issue to me, something I
198 really cared about, and I think the apartheid system was just such a horrific outrageous example of it,
199 and I also, I got involved in the anti-apartheid movement as part of the divestment movement, and as a
200 student at Cornell University I just felt like that was something very concrete that we could accomplish
201 if we could get our university to divest, that would have a positive impact. So I felt like it was, it was a
202 way that I could be effective.

203
204 BT: Well, I was gonna ask how you felt then about the issue, that issue of divestment.

205
206 AE: I thought it was really important to, um, I felt like it was a good tactic for helping achieve change
207 in South Africa. I felt like it was also a sort of a way to put your money where your mouth is. I mean if
208 you really believe in something and yet you have economic gain from a system that is unjust and racist,
209 that that was wrong, so I felt like, I felt it was a good and necessary tactic. [unclear]

210
211 BT: Did you feel like Cornell had, that, that um- [unclear]

212
213 AE: Cornell had big investments in the companies that did business in South Africa. Cornell's a big
214 university, um also a big engineering school and had a lot of, a lot of investments, big portfolio. And
215 was not adherent to the Sullivan Principles and so there was a lot of opportunity.

216
217 BT: Um, I'm sorry, what are the Sullivan Principles?

218
219 AE: The Sullivan Principles were, Leon Sullivan, they're named after Leon Sullivan, and he established
220 these principles for companies that were doing business in South Africa to sort of improve the, uh, the
221 conditions of workers and it was sort of a first step towards trying to use an international movement to
222 influence what was going on in South Africa. And so for companies that, for universities that didn't,
223 uh, wouldn't consider full divestment, getting them to invest in only companies that were doing, that
224 were adhering to the Sullivan principals was sort of a first step.

225
226 BT: Okay, uh what actions did your group in college take to get Cornell to divest?

227
228 AE: We did a whole lot of research on what Cornell's investment portfolio looked like. Um, we

229
230 [cd track 2]

231
232 AE(cont'): ..we held a lot of, um, educational forums, we hosted a lot of speakers, both anti-apartheid
233 activists in the U.S. as well as South Africans and other leaders from the front line states to come to
234 meetings. And we held protests at various locations on the campus.

235
236 BT: I read an article about those tents that they built.

237
238 AE: Shantytowns.

239
240 BT: Yeah, the shantytowns.

241
242 AE: Yeah, that was in 1985. Our group, SADC was fairly small, I was co-chair, and we had both
243 membership of - because we were a coalition - we had membership of organizations, but we also had
244 individuals who were members. I would say that most of our programs, if we were doing really well
245 we would get like maybe 100 people in our program, er, at a protest, and then in 1985 everything

246 changed because of the whole student movement just exploded.

247

248 BT: And were they all Cornell students generally?

249

250 AE: Well, there were, you know, there were divestment groups at many universities, and we were all
251 you know, engaged in sort of similar activity, and then the protests at Columbia University just really
252 sort of took off and that sparked a lot of interest in and excitement to the issue across campuses across
253 the US and so we went from calling a demonstration that would have, you know, 20 to 100 people, to
254 the next day after the Columbia demonstrations I think we probably had 500 people, all of whom got
255 arrested. So it was like a big change in level of activity. And then we held 21 days of protests in a row.

256

257 BT: Wow. And they were drawing from outside the campus or-

258

259 AE: They were students and community people, but most of the people who got arrested were students,
260 although, wait, no they were both, they were community people, as well. But we just got the attention
261 of people who'd never been active before so it really - a mix of students who got involved we would
262 have, like, whole fraternities show up who'd never been politically active, not to pick on the fraternity
263 system, but just like, groups of people who'd never been politically active, all now wanting to
264 participate.

265

266 BT: I just want to make sure this is good. Ok, great. Thanks. If you can remember can you describe the
267 first time you volunteered or got involved?

268

269 AE: The first time I volunteered?

270

271 BT: Hmmh, the function, first function you might have gone to.

272

273 AE: I remember going to meetings when I was in high school. Um, and I remember sitting at tables, I
274 remember sitting at a table at a demonstration against gun violence at Daly Plaza. It must have been
275 1978 or something like that. Generally at, sitting at tables talking to people. It was scary, I remember
276 that.

277

278 BT: You were young?

279

280 AE: It was just scary to talk to people about politics as a 15 yr old girl.

281

282 BT: Mnhm, because it was random passerbys?

283

284 AE: Yeah, I was handing out fliers.

285

286 BT: Describe any reasons you were hesitant to get involved specifically with the anti-apartheid
287 movement.

288

289 AE: In the anti-apartheid movement?

290

291 BT: Yeah.

292

293 AE: I wasn't hesitant. So. I was pretty excited to do it, so.

294

295 BT: Why did you continue to stick with the movement after your initial involvement?

296

297 AE: Um, I think for the same reasons I got involved in the first place, it was, I thought antiracism work
298 was really critical, critical work to be done, and critical work for me to do as a white person, as well,
299 and I think that I learned a lot in the divestment movement about how important it is to research and get
300 your facts right and really understand your issue, and I felt like we were somewhat successful, and we
301 made some progress, but the work wasn't done, and so when I finished the university and I moved back
302 to Chicago, I got involved in the, um, in CIDsA, the Coalition for Illinois Divestment from Southern
303 Africa, I think is what it was called, so I just continued it, it was natural.

304

305 BT: What kind of group institution or coalition did you work with or were you a part of? I think if you
306 even can name all of them...

307

308 AE: Sure, anti-apartheid or all?

309

310 BT: Um, specifically anti-apartheid.

311

312 AE: I was involved in the student organizations at Cornell University, South African Divestment
313 Coalition, and then after school I was involved in CIDsA which was a statewide group working for, on
314 divestment and then I was also, became a part of Mozambique Support Network. Because I learned, in
315 doing anti-apartheid work, I also understood, I learned about the frontline states which were the
316 independently, the newly independent countries that border South Africa that were getting attacked by
317 the apartheid government that was trying to destabilize them. So, and I got involved in Mozambique
318 work as a result of that.

319

320 BT: What was your role in the movement?

321

322 AE: Um, I was, um, I was, I did it all, you know, I - I was an organizer, I did phone calls, I did
323 research, I wrote pamphlets, I led demonstrations, I spoke at demonstrations. Um, I helped build the
324 shantytown, I slept there. Um I, um ...so I had a variety of roles over the years.

325

326 BT: Ok, what were your responsibilities?

327

328 AE: I was co-chair of the student group. And I was, of the state-wide group I was chair of some, a
329 couple different committees at different times.

330

331 BT: In the beginning of your college years what were some of your plans and desires for when you
332 graduated?

333

334 AE: Well, I was an engineering student, and I hoped to do something with alternative energy at that
335 point in time.

336

337 BT: How did your activism co-exist with your studies or your employment if you were employed when
338 you were in college?

339

340 AE: I was employed, also. It was a challenge to fit it all in. I mean, certainly there were a lot of social
341 aspects to activism, as well. And it was hard to fit in with academics, I mean both in terms of just time,
342 but also I didn't feel like, um, most of the other engineers were, shared my political beliefs and I was
343 often sort of in conflict with some of my professors because they didn't support divestment. Their, you

344 know a lot of engineering faculty get support from companies that we thought should divest and also
345 that were involved in other issues that I was working against. So, you know, we were also working
346 against militarism, and the military industrial complex in the United States and they were employed by
347 it, so there was that conflict.

348
349 BT: So how much of your schedule did your activism take up?

350
351 AE: I think I spent, you know, a couple hours everyday as an activist and sometimes more, and it
352 depended what was going on, if we were, during that period of time which was the spring of my senior
353 year, when the anti-apartheid movement really took off and we were doing daily demonstrations and
354 building shantytowns and it was a lot of my time. So a substantial part of my time.

355
356 BT: How did what you studied in college directly affect your involvement in the movement?

357
358 AE: Not at all. It was separate. I mean I did get to take some, some classes, but they weren't
359 engineering related but...

360
361 BT: They were liberal arts classes, or...

362
363 AE: Yeah, like - I actually took a lot, I was interested in labor, and collective bargaining, and Cornell
364 has a labor relations school so I took some things there that were somewhat related, and interesting,
365 particularly to the divestment movement, but most of my classes were science and math, and
366 engineering related.

367
368 BT: Can you tell me about any personal backlash you received from faculty or other students in
369 response to your activism on campus?

370
371 AE: Well, yes, when the CIA was recruiting pretty openly at that point on campuses and we opposed
372 that, and I was able to get into the recruitment sessions because I was an engineering student, and they
373 wanted to interview engineering students. And then I, me and a few others, uh, disrupted the
374 recruitment session by talking about what the CIA had been involved in, in many parts of the world,
375 and my professors didn't really like that very much, and there was some backlash associated with that.
376 And then, actually, we were holding these - in the spring of '85, we were holding these daily
377 demonstrations at the administration hall, which was really not - the administration was trying to end
378 those, and so at one point they identified some students and expelled us. So that was some backlash I
379 guess.

380
381 BT: Yeah, for how long?

382
383 AE: But then they - well they tried to expel us, they didn't do it right, and then they tried to change it
384 from expulsion to suspension and at that point the faculty actually got really involved because they felt
385 that it was wrong for the administration to take action that had an impact on academics, and they got
386 really involved and represented us and so we got reinstated. Which I was very happy for because it
387 was right before I was supposed to graduate. But my faculty didn't - no one from the engineering
388 faculty was part of that.

389
390 BT: Ok, what did your family say about your activism?

391
392 AE: Um, they were worried about it, and I don't think, I didn't talk to them very much about it, but they

393 were worried about it, and then as I began traveling and working internationally they got more and
394 more worried. They were scared for me.

395
396 BT: Did they ever become more comfortable with it, or is it - were they just glad you came back?
397

398 AE: I think they eventually- I mean I lived in Mozambique for seven years and my daughter is half
399 Mozambican, so I think they've gotten used to it.

400
401 BT: Um we're back, we just took a brief pause. Okay what national or international, oh no I'm sorry,
402 I'm going to back up. What liberation movement did you support in South Africa?
403

404 AE: You know, I, at first, didn't support either the ANC or the PAC, I just was – uh, supported an end
405 to um, anti-apartheid, but then I moved, I don't know that I ever - I think I - but then I moved to then I
406 moved to supporting the ANC. I didn't think it was appropriate for me to pick one liberation movement
407 over another. So I looked for ways to support the anti-apartheid struggle in general.

408
409 BT: What national or international organizations, coalitions, or groups did you work with or support?
410

411 AE: The Mozambique Support Network, the Washington Office on Africa, the American Committee
412 on Africa, TransAfrica.

413
414 BT: Why these organizations and not others?
415

416 AE: They were leaders in anti-apartheid work.

417
418 BT: Tell me about conflicts or tensions among anti-apartheid activists you worked with.
419

420 AE: There was a lot of conflict between those that supported the ANC versus those that supported the
421 PAC. There was a lot of conflict about tactics, um people who thought it was - the role of civil,
422 nonviolent civil disobedience was an issue, conflict, I remember mostly.

423
424 BT: Describe a time when you considered leaving your work in the anti-apartheid movement.
425

426 AE: I never did.

427
428 BT: What sort of clashes with the law did you have involving your anti-apartheid activism?
429

430 AE: I got arrested many times. I think I got arrested related to anti-apartheid work about 23 times. I
431 spent some nights in jail.

432
433 BT: Were they usually just nights, like a night or ...
434

435 AE: A few nights. I never got any, you know it would have been a few nights, maybe was the longest,
436 3 or 4 nights.

437
438 BT: No serious charges? -That's still a long time.
439

440 AE: They were all trespassing charges, so - there were some at federal facilities which were sort of a
441 higher charge than at the university, for example.

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BT: So what ended up happening with those cases?

AE: We always had good legal representation, which was important. And I think most of the cases were thrown out, sometimes I had to pay fines. They had different outcomes.

BT: How did you become involved with the Mozambican government?

AE: When I was doing anti-apartheid work I met the Mozambican ambassador to the US, Ambassador Furau [sp?] was his name, and he was very interested in engaging with Americans as people, and sort of building off of the solidarity movement model that was pretty successful in engaging people in solidarity work with Nicaragua against the con-

[cd track 3]

the US government support of the contras that were fighting the Sandinista government. And there was the same concern with Mozambique and Angola that there was with South African and potentially US support for the groups that were trying to destabilize the independent Mozambican and Angolan governments. And so they were really interested in engaging Americans to tell the sort of real story, because both Mozambique and Angola were uh, socialist governments and you could never see them, at that time in the press, every time you saw Mozambique in a newspaper article it was prefaced with "Marxist", "Leninist Mozambique." So there was definitely this attempt to characterize Mozambique, the newly independent frontline states, as Communist and bad, and you know that was still sort of the end of the Cold War, before the Soviet Union collapsed. And so they were really interested in bringing Americans to help develop a solidarity movement within the US. And I had worked also at, with a group called TecNica in Nicaragua, bringing technical people to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Nicaragua.

BT: You went there and worked on it?

AE: Mhnhh. And so they were interested in bringing the same organization to Mozambique, and so I was asked to come in and sort of figure out if it could work, if the TecNica model would work in Mozambique. So I went in the summer of '88 and I really liked it, and um, found the work to be very rewarding, and so I, um I actually was already enrolled in graduate school, so I came back to the states and got my graduate degree and went back at the very end of 1989.

BT: What year did you go to Nicaragua?

AE: I was there several times between '85 and '88...'87.

BT: What was your job title and position working for the Mozambican government?

AE: I was, for most of the time I was in the Provincial Department of Construction and Water, and um, my title was...Rural Infras- Rural Building Engineer. And I worked with a counterpart who was a Mozambican engineer, um, Mr. Gibante [sp?]. And we built schools and clinics, and worked together on road projects and water projects and a lot of latrines and built whatever infrastructure was needed in rural areas.

BT: So did you say your job title?

491
492 AE: I think my title was Rural Building Engineer. Something like that. I have it on my resume, I should
493 look.
494
495 BT; How long did it take like-minded people to work with politically after moving to Mozambique?
496
497 AE: No time at all, I mean everyone there was there because they wanted to support Mozambique, and
498 believed in the policies and models that were being developed in Mozambique. And were also - I also
499 worked with a lot of South Africans who were exiled in Mozambique, so no time, day one.
500
501 BT: What was it like working in a country at war?
502
503 AE: Um, it was challenging, it was stressful, it was sad. It was, um, scary sometimes. It was also very
504 motivating, um, and you know, amazing to see what people lived through and didn't, and they didn't
505 give up their dreams and hopes and attempts to build a better society, more humane, more just society.
506
507 BT: Were you ever in any physical danger in Mozambique?
508
509 AE: Yes.
510
511 BT: Do you wanna describe that?
512
513 AE: Um, sure, I was in one of the districts in Manica Province. So I was in one of the few rural areas
514 that you could work in at all, because of the war. And so you couldn't, you couldn't um, it wasn't ever
515 safe to drive at night. You had to be, you had to, um, your movements were very restricted, because - a
516 lot of times I would travel with military personnel, so there were guns around everywhere all the time, I
517 guess kind of like Chicago, but, uh, it was, um, it was... that was scary. There was shooting, I could
518 hear shooting pretty often. Most nights there was shooting and missile fire. And there was a time
519 when in the house I was living, I shared a house with some other people that, there was an attempt to
520 kidnap one my colleagues and they came to the house. They came to the house with, um, with guns
521 and tried to kidnap my colleague. But they got scared away by a dog, fortunately. And I, and then the
522 military came. So that was the scariest.
523
524 BT: What were some activities you participated in outside of your employment in Mozambique?
525
526 AE: Everything, life, you know I lived there. I did a lot of hiking, I lived in the mountains, so I did a
527 lot of hiking. A lot of parties, a lot of dancing. Mozambicans like to dance. I studied the local
528 language. I, you know I was part of the community, so I went to a lot of traditional ceremonies,
529 learned a little bit about local culture and beliefs. [unclear] Made friends.
530
531 BT: When working for the Mozambican government, how much did you agree or disagree with their
532 policies and views?
533
534 AE: I agreed with many of their policies and views, I think that they were really supporting
535 community-led economic development and I really learned a lot and enjoyed participating in that.
536 They were very supportive of - the women's organization was really strong and they were good about
537 promoting women and, including giving women political power so I was very supportive of that. So I
538 was generally supportive most of the time I was there.
539

540 BT: To what extent were you in a position to work against apartheid in Mozambique?

541

542 AE: Well, I hosted a lot of solidarity tours, I was one of the - in the area I lived, I lived in one of the
543 few places you could go to that was sort of rural and see the impacts of war, so, you know, see refugee
544 camps, and see schools and clinics that had been destroyed during the war. So I hosted a lot of
545 solidarity groups that could see the results of the aggression that was sponsored by the South African
546 Defense Force. And also because I was one of the few English speakers I hosted a lot of groups and
547 press. So I would translate and take groups around, pretty, very frequently, you know. A few times a
548 month. And then, you know, I also worked with South Africans who were exiled, who were exiled in
549 Mozambique, also in Zimbabwe. And so I, you know, we did the same work to - rural development
550 work, but we also worked on anti-apartheid activities, so, you know, going to meetings, writing things.
551 We tried to write, and get stories placed in the international press a lot, that might, you know that we
552 might have access to as internationals, that the South Africans or Zimbabweans or Mozambicans didn't
553 have access to.

554

555 BT: To what extent were you in touch with or still working with the anti-apartheid movement in the
556 U.S. while living in Africa?

557

558 AE: They would come visit - I would host. And when I came back I would always, you know, be
559 doing slide shows and hosting, attending meetings. So I was very in touch.

560

561 BT: What were some specific apartheid-era laws you worked toward countering?

562

563 AE: The Passbook Law. Really so many. The laws that authorized moving whole communities. You
564 know really all the apartheid structure we worked against.

565

566 BT: When might you have had a hand in changing the mind of a specific politician?

567

568 AE: Specific politician in the United States, about apartheid?

569

570 BT: I suppose anywhere.

571

572 AE: Well while I was in Mozambique my politics were pretty in synch with Mozambican politicians,
573 so I won't say I changed their mind, they did more educating of me. Um, but - I remember working
574 with the Chicago City Council, to get some pro-divestment, anti-apartheid language passed. That was
575 probably the most effective I ever was. I don't think, at that point in my life I didn't do a lot of legis-
576 well, I did do some letter writing campaigns. But divestment work was all focused initially on the
577 campus and the university administration and board of trustees, and then we also did do some work to
578 try get the City of Chicago to divest, and the State of Illinois to divest. But I don't know if I have a
579 better answer for you, sorry.

580

581 BT: What leaders in the movement in Africa were you in a position to meet or work with?

582

583 AE: I met a lot of South Africans who were involved in the ANC who later after the apartheid regime
584 fell were, became leaders in the South African government. I've met Nelson Mandela, I've met his
585 wife, Graca Machal, many times. So I knew a lot of Mozambican leaders. South African, I could name
586 the South African leaders, but I don't know if you would recognize them. The other thing is while they
587 were living in exile, they were living under assumed names, and so they took back their names after
588 apartheid fell, so the names that I knew them by were different than what they use now.

589

590 BT: Well if there is anyone you felt like mentioning I'm sure, you know, it might be beneficial to
591 someone doing research someday or something whether you - I know it or not.

592

593 AE: Okay.

594

595 BT: Thank you, okay. It was interesting, it's interesting that you met Nelson Mandela, what was that
596 context?

597

598 AE: Oh, he was in Moputu, this was after he had already married Graca Machal, and it was just in a
599 big, I think it was like a youth delegation, that I was loosely affiliated with. Somehow, I just got to
600 meet him, shake his hand.

601

602 BT: Okay, what brought you to Chicago?

603

604 AE: Well, I'm from here, so I came back here. I mean my parents, my dad got a job at Northwestern
605 University. When I was one.

606

607 BT: So you came back home. What was the movement in Chicago doing differently from the places
608 you had been working in before?

609

610 AE: Um, I think the Chicago movement had a really broad base, a lot of different kinds of people, and
611 was really racially diverse, and also had a lot of South Africans involved in the work here. So that was
612 different for me because there weren't so many South Africans when I was in school.

613

614 BT: On what level of involvement did you participate in Chicago's anti-apartheid movement when you
615 first moved here?

616

617 AE: I was involved in, um, - since I was active in organizing demonstrations, also keeping in touch
618 with the student movements, that was one of my roles as a recent graduate, and working with students
619 who were organizing on UIC's campus.

620

621 BT: What was your opinion of the effectiveness of the Chicago, United States, movement?

622

623 AE: I think we were effective at bringing a lot of people into the issue, when they, again they were
624 becoming activists for the first time which I think is very important and exciting to get to meet people
625 and pull them into activism because it's scary to do at first for most people so it's a really - and it's hard,
626 so I think the Chicago group was really effective at that, and the Chicago group has really stayed
627 together. I mean even though, you know, apartheid ended, a lot of the Chicago activists still know
628 each other, are still active on other issues, like the Palestinian struggle, are still in touch with each
629 other, still work on Africa issues, many work on restructuring the debt, and also still work against
630 racism, so. I think we made - we learned a lot and we made a lot of strong ties.

631

632 BT: What was a new organization to you upon moving to Chicago, and -

633

634 AE: Excuse me?

635

636 BT: What was one of the new organizations and then what was one that you were already familiar with,
637 as far as organizations in Chicago?

638

639 AE: I think the Mozambique Support Network was new, it just got established, so that would have
640 been new. SIDA had already existed, so I already know about SIDA ,when I came here.

641

642 BT :Please recall any favorite posters or signs, or other visual images you remember from the
643 movement.

644

645 AE: Actually, that's one of my favorite, up there. "Apartheid's Second Front" - "Mozambique:
646 Apartheid's Second Front." I still have it up there...

647

648 BT: Can you describe it for the um...

649

650 AE: Sure, it's a traditional African painting, I believe the artist is, um, Malan Gatana [sp?] who is
651 somebody who we brought to the U.S. to tour and tell the story of Mozambique as apartheid's second
652 front, and that is, the poster is part of an information pack that the Canadian solidarity Group put
653 together and that was really beautiful and effective and we used it a lot. And then my other one was I
654 had this red t-shirt and I gave it to the archive. A red t-shirt with images of women marching against
655 the passbook law, and it was - and it said on it: "When you strike a woman you've struck a rock." And I
656 always thought it was beautiful, and it was very hard for me to give up, so I hope it's still there, in the
657 archive.

658

659 BT: Can you name any music or other art that you remember?

660

661 AE: Oh sure, I mean, just lots and lots of music. Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Oh, there's just so much.
662 A lot of Zimbabwean music as well. Uh, I have it, we can look at it. I can't name one particular song.

663

664 BT: Okay. Um, I'd like to stop and change the tape cause it's about to run out.

665

666 AE: Sure.

667

668 [track 4]

669

670 BT: Please talk about some of the people that influenced or inspired you in the anti-apartheid
671 movement.

672

673 AE: Um, Julian Bond, who came to speak, when I was in Manica - I remember bringing him. Lina
674 Magaia was a Mozambican poet. Um, there was a South African, and I'm forgetting his name at this
675 moment who I worked with, he was in exile in the United States. And I went to graduate school in
676 Philadelphia, and I worked with him, and we would go out and do these speaking engagements
677 together, and he would talk about the effects of - what it was like to live in South Africa under the
678 apartheid government and I would talk about Mozambique. And he really influenced me a lot. I'm
679 sorry I can't - he has since died. I can't remember his name at this moment. All the activists here: Lisa
680 Brock, Prexy, probably the people that are organizing this, Basil Clunie, Rachel Rubin, lots of local
681 activists, and international, Ambassador Furau [sp?], he's the reason I moved to Mozambique.

682

683 BT: How closely did you get to work with some of your greater influences?

684

685 AE: Very, you know all the Chicago activists I worked with, um, Carol Thompson, Kevin Thompson, I
686 worked with then all closely, and I still work with them today. And then, I described that one

687 experience for over a period of a year, I did a lot of speaking like once a week with this gentleman, I
688 can't remember his name. Uh, I think I was fortunate to get to work with a lot of really great people.

689
690 BT: What were some activities you conducted that would have been impossible without the help of
691 other like-minded activists?

692
693 AE: Oh just everything we did, ha ha, you know, you can't stage a demonstration by yourself, so you -
694 all of it, building shantytowns. I remember the experience of running these demonstrations that were
695 day after day after day, and they were so big, and people were getting arrested for the first time, so we
696 had to do all this really quick education. Um, and, I think working with people who were very
697 passionate and motivated, and trusted each other was really important, so, we were, you know, in the
698 hallways explaining to people, you know, if you stay here, you're going to get arrested and this is what
699 happens as a result, and this is why you're doing it, you know, this is what - these are the conditions in
700 South Africa. And so that was really a time that we had to - we were a fairly small group of people who
701 were suddenly running this big effort, and it was, you know, it was the eighties before there was email,
702 and easily - technology that made it easy to create information and do research on the internet and all
703 that kind of stuff so, we really relied a lot on each other.

704
705 BT: Identify any movement collaborators you knew that fell victim to the violence of the apartheid
706 regime.

707
708 AE: That I knew personally... Um, There was a man who was killed and, a South African who was
709 living in Zimbabwe who was killed by South African Defense Force in a bomb. There was Albie
710 Sachs who was victim of a car bomb in Moputu. He survived but he lost his arm and an eye. There
711 was, you know I knew a lot of Mozambicans who died at the hand of, or of you know with the support
712 of the South African Defense Force in RENAMO which was the contra group working against them,
713 many. So - I did not know Utha Furst [sp?] she died before I got there, but I certainly read a lot about
714 her.

715
716 BT: Identify any times when your own work was affected because you experienced conflicts with the
717 law or superiors.

718
719 AE: My own work...um, my anti-apartheid work?

720
721 BT: Uh -

722
723 AE: Or my own work? Well, the experience I described about being expelled from school. That was
724 and impact, um, that was kind of scary because I, you know, had invested a lot of time. And university
725 wasn't as expensive back then as it is now, still some time and money, and I did want to have a degree.
726 That was important to me. And this was not related specifically to anti-apartheid work it was more
727 related to solidarity work in Central America, but there was this investigation into the group I was part
728 of TecNica which I mentioned that provided technical assistance, technical and humanitarian assistance
729 in Nicaragua. We were all investigated, there was a grand jury investigation or indictment and the FBI
730 came and visited all of our work places. But - some members of my, of this group lost their jobs as a
731 result, I did not, but that was because I worked for a community-based organization, they didn't - they
732 were supportive of my work.

733
734 BT: The FBI, no.

735

736 AE: The FBI was not supportive of my work, they were trying to, they were, uh – but my, the
737 organization I worked for was supportive. So my bosses were not upset when the FBI came to visit
738 them but I had colleagues that worked at more traditional engineering companies that lost their job as a
739 result.

740
741 –break -

742
743 BT: What aspects of anti-apartheid work did you enjoy the most and then the least?

744
745 AE: Work - achieving, creating change that resulted in a more just society in South Africa, and an
746 example of - that could give hope for other struggles that I was involved in so I think, the opportunity
747 to meet so many inspirational people, I liked that as well. I loved working in Mozambique and being
748 part of a society that was led by a government that believed in social justice and developed it's
749 economy in a just way. So all of that was good. What I liked least: the violence. That was the hardest
750 part for me.

751
752 BT: Okay so now we are transitioning into the reflection questions: What did you learn from being in
753 the anti-apartheid movement?

754
755 AE: I learned how to work in coalition. I learned a lot of - how to work with groups to develop
756 consensus. I learned how to articulate my ideas. I learned how to speak in community meetings. I
757 learned how to challenge myself.

758
759 BT: How did it affect the person you have become?

760
761 AE: I think it made me a lifelong activist, I mean, I don't know if I would have been anyways, but I
762 think, yeah, I think it made me a lifelong activist.

763
764 BT: Looking back what are you most proud of?

765
766 AE: Um, what am I most proud of...I am, I don't know. I think the things we achieved as groups. I
767 can't... I think bringing, I think I'm most proud of all the people I helped bring into the movement,
768 helped learn about activism.

769
770 BT: On what level have you maintained an involvement in South African social issues and politics?

771
772 AE: Pretty active. I still work on Africa issues, mostly I've worked on debt related issues, forgiving the
773 debt, getting rid of the debt, because I think that's what keeps African nations poor. And then I still go
774 to Mozambique every year, my daughter is Mozambican and so I'm still very active in that fight, in that
775 work.

776
777 BT: Since you began in the movement have your views and ideas on civil disobedience or protest
778 methods changed?

779
780 AE: I guess I got involved in civil disobedience pretty early, and I thought it was a really effective
781 method. I was involved in a lot of civil disobedience and actions, and I still think it's really important
782 and effective. I myself don't do it as often, mostly because I have to be home with my kids, so I can't
783 go to jail as easily. But I think that maybe when I was younger I thought it was the most effective
784 strategy and now I think of it as one of many effective strategies. I also felt like I think when I was

785 younger and actively participating in civil disobedience, I felt so strongly passionate that I had to do
786 something to end apartheid that apartheid was so horrific and people in South Africa were suffering so
787 and had committed so much to this cause that I had to do as much as I could, and civil disobedience
788 was as much as I could do. Or was one thing that I could do that I felt was a significant statement.
789

790 BT: With the experiences you have now, what would you have done differently in your work with the
791 movement, with the experience you have now?
792

793 AE: I think I would have tried to be focused on divestment but linking it more to other important issues
794 in Southern Africa. Because I think there was so much focus on divestment that once we were
795 successful a lot of people left the movement, and I think that I would have tried to tie it in, I would
796 have tried to understand that dynamic a little bit better.
797

798 BT: How have the events in South Africa and Mozambique unfolded in ways that were unexpected
799 from the point of view of an activist at the time of Apartheid's collapse?
800

801 AE: I say this with the naivete of my youth. I didn't – I was surprised by corruption, I don't know why,
802 because all governments are corrupt, because power breeds corruption. But I was surprised by
803 corruption that developed in both governments. I knew that it would be really hard to rebuild South
804 Africa so I wasn't so surprised by that, but by then I had already worked in Mozambique and worked in
805 development and I knew how hard it was to rebuild a society with, you know recognizing that there
806 were not necessarily enough skills, and sort of rebuilding a government structure is just a huge
807 undertaking. And I think that mostly it. And then I was, again, this is with naivete, and also because
808 I'd worked in Mozambique and Mozambique's public health policies were so strong, I was really
809 saddened by this uh – by the new South African government's policy about HIV and AIDS, I thought
810 that was wrong. But I think now it's coming along and improved. So that's nice.
811

812 BT: Do you feel like the history of the anti-apartheid movement is generally told accurately in
813 contemporary discussions?
814

815 AE: I don't know, I don't know the answer [unclear].
816

817 BT: Has your work affected your family life?
818

819 AE: Yeah. I have a, you know, my family is part African so yes. This probably wouldn't have
820 happened if I'd never joined the anti-apartheid movement. Who knows but...
821

822 BT: How do you feel apartheid still needs to be addressed as a global issue today?
823

824 AE: Most immediately, the Palestinian struggle. I think in many ways the - for many years the Israeli
825 government policies were not that different from the South African government policies. Things have
826 changed somewhat, but I think that's a critical issue to work on, and with respect to how it continues
827 and - or the legacy of apartheid South Africa, is - you know, a lot of work still need's to be done, a lot
828 of work to address poverty, um, poverty, violence, there's so much work that still needs to be done.
829

830 BT: What are some lasting relationships that you developed from your involvement in the movement?
831

832 AE: The people I mentioned earlier, the activists from Cornell, who I am still friends with, and now we
833 are all on Facebook together. And activists and friends from Chicago who are still my friends today.

834 And my African friends who I - that's the main reason I'm on Facebook is because it's a way to connect
835 with people all over the world. That and to keep track of my teenage daughter.

836

837 BT: What advice would you give to a youngster beginning a career in political activism?

838

839 AE: Do it, go for it.

840

841 BT: How has your experience made you view President Obama's call for citizens to participate in some
842 sort of service to their country?

843

844 AE: Well, I think I'm very supportive of that, I'm supportive of community service and activism and
845 getting involved. I'd love to see it tied to education, in the concept of, like, I think the university, the
846 way the university and college system has developed you have to be pretty wealthy or, and live a very
847 difficult life in order to study and get a degree in higher education, and so I'd love to see community
848 service tied to paying off education costs, so that more people have better access to universities and
849 colleges and can pay it back through community service.

850

851 BT: Okay, any last comments you'd like to finish with?

852

853 AE: No. Thank you.

854

855 BT: Okay. Thank you very much.