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Spring 2010

### Interview with Zeva Schub

Lynette Marie Reid

*Columbia College Chicago*

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#### Recommended Citation

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**Oral History Interview with Zeva Schub**  
**Transcribed by Lynette Reid**

**Lynette Reid:** K. My name is Lynette Reid and I am interviewing Zeva Schub on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 on the third floor of the Columbia College Chicago Library. Would you please spell your name and state the years you were involved with the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Chicago.

**Zeva Schub:** K. My name is Zeva, Z-E-V-A, Schub, S-C-H-U-B. I was involved directly with the Anti-Apartheid Movement probably from the mid to late seventies, um, past the election in ninety-four we continued to be involved in things for, um, several years after that. I still have some connections with the Anti; there isn't a big movement anymore, but for a number of years after that, so I don't know, at least the late nineties.

**LR:** When and where were you born?

**ZS:** I was born in Chicago. In Oct—October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1951.

**LR:** Where did you live while growing up?

**ZS:** I lived in on the south side of Chicago.

**LR:** Where was your father born?

**ZS:** Uh, my father was born in Palestine.

**LR:** Where was your mother born?

**ZS:** In Cleveland.

**LR:** Can you describe what your neighborhood was like while growing up?

**ZS:** Uh, it was a neighborhood with lots of kids; it was, you know, small, I mean, everything's relative. I, it was a relatively small house, certainly by today's standards, but then again I knew people who came to the house who came from nothing who thought it was amazing, so um, it was basically a, I would say middle to lower middle class neighborhood, so yeah.

**LR:** What type of home life did you have?

**ZS:** I had a good one.

**LR:** What type of relationships did you have with your siblings?

**ZS:** Well, um you know, we were siblings, we, we fought and made up and defended each other tooth and nail, um you know, and we remain very close.

**LR:** What religious traditions did you practice while growing up?

46

47 **ZS:** Um, I was raised in Judaism.

48

49 **LR:** Where did you go to college and why did you choose to go there?

50

51 **ZS:** I went to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Um I chose to go there  
52 because I knew I had to go to a state school, that was all I could afford, or my family  
53 could afford, and um, at the time and I think probably still is con—it was like the best  
54 state school, so that was my goal.

55

56 **LR:** What was your favorite part of college?

57

58 **ZS:** My activism. [smiles]

59

60 **LR:** Why did you choose your major that you majored in?

61

62 **ZS:** I chose my major because it got me out of school the fastest. [we laugh] That's  
63 really, I got to the point where I had to choose a major and I choose chose one with the  
64 least requirements.

65

66 **LR:** Who was the most influential person in your life up until this point?

67

68 **ZS:** Up, this point now?

69

70 **LR:** Up until—

71

72 **ZS:** college?

73

74 **LR:** college.

75

76 **ZS:** Hm, um, I don't, I mean, it's. I don't that there's a specific person, I mean,  
77 obviously my family, my parents were influential in a lot of ways. Um, I was certainly  
78 impacted by the Civil Rights Movement, um, the Anti-War Movement, so you know, I  
79 was certainly impacted by people like King, Martin Luther King, um, but I don't, you  
80 know, I don't know that there's a single person. I was, uh, aware of what was going on  
81 around me, and so I would, at different times I would be impacted by what was going on.

82

83 **LR:** What happened that made you realize Apartheid was going on in South Africa?

84

85 **ZS:** Well, as I said I was active in, very active in college, I mean, basically that's what I  
86 did in college and, you know, I started to hear about things and, um, the big issue by the  
87 time I went to college was the Vietnam War and that, that was the big issue on campus.  
88 There were other things and we, I was involved in other things, but that was the biggest  
89 thing going on then. And then I started to hear things and then I came back to Chicago  
90 and, um, started hearing more and my sister was involved in the Anti-Apartheid

91 Movement more heavily in Chicago by then, so it just, through activism you start to hear  
92 about, and being interested in issues you start to hear about things.

93  
94 **LR:** Why did you become an activist?

95  
96 **ZS:** I just, from the earliest I can remember. Just remember, um, remember being  
97 outraged by people being treated badly, um, by injustice, so um, I remember being, you  
98 know, appalled by the things I saw on T.V., you know, regarding the Civil Rights  
99 Movement when I was a little younger even and, uh you know, the water and the dogs  
100 and all that, and um, just hearing about things and thinking, this can't be. Um, I grew up  
101 in a home where we talked about the Holocaust, so that, um and, I, then there were, you  
102 know, just walking on the streets and seeing, you know, poverty or there were things  
103 going on in Chicago, there was, uh, just all kinds of stuff going on in terms of, there was  
104 uh, contract homebuyers league thing, which I remember seeing people being put out on  
105 the street and I won't go into the details, but I just always remembered being very aware  
106 of, uh, what was going on. Being scared to death that I was going to be blown up by a  
107 bomb, you know, the nuclear bomb, the bomb, so, I just think I can't pinpoint a, a  
108 particular thing, I just remember always being conscious and aware of it.

109  
110 **LR:** What or who influenced you to stand against Apartheid?

111  
112 **ZS:** Um, I think, you know, once I found out more and more about it, just the injustice, I  
113 mean, just outrageous, I was, that's what influenced me, I mean people, as I said my  
114 sister was involved in CIDSa [Coalition for Illinois Divestment in South Africa], um,  
115 which was the Anti, the organization, uh, in Chicago already when I got back here and I  
116 was involved in various other things when I came back to Chicago, but um, you know,  
117 what influenced me was, it, just the outrage, the rage, so.

118  
119 **LR:** What group did you join?

120  
121 **ZS:** Well, CIDSa. And okay, I'm so bad with acronyms and we changed our name later  
122 on, so it should [takes out piece of paper and a pen to write out acronym] Chicago  
123 Coalition, oh wait, (whispers to self trying to figure out acronym) Chicagooo, I think it  
124 was Chicago Coalition, oh, Chicago Illinois maybe Coalition for Divestment in South  
125 Africa. I don't remember anymore, but it was CIDSa, and uh, as I said I'm terrible with  
126 acronyms, but it was a coalition organization that was state wide, um, that was formed to  
127 actively fight apartheid in South Africa and specifically, um, to get the state to divest its,  
128 any financial dealings (clinking of bracelets throughout).

129  
130 **LR:** Describe the structure of the organization.

131  
132 **ZS:** Going back a lot of years, okay. Um, basically it was an organization, you know,  
133 we had chairs and, you know, officers and stuff and it was a lot of activists. It was like  
134 one of, the people in that organization are some of the most wonderful people I've ever  
135 met in my life. It was a very diverse organization, um, and it, but the organization itself

was a coalition also of other organizations, so a lot of what we did was in coalition, eh um, our actions were mostly in coalition.

**LR:** What was your role in the organization?

**ZS:** Well I was a member and I think for a while I may have been a treasurer or something. Something I was not that great at but, um, but basically I was just, I was very involved in the organization, I did lots of stuff, I was very active, but I was mostly a member.

**LR:** What other organizations or groups did you join?

**ZS:** Then? Or ever? Or?

**LR:** Well—

**ZS:** I mean, I've been active in lots of organizations throughout, um, I've been active in, um, organizations. I was active, very active in, uh, organizations opposing the U.S. government's policies in Central America which went on in the seventies. Another awful situation, I was, uh, involved in, um, I was involved in groups supporting, um, people who had been released from prison and helping them to get back into society and opposing, kind of, the whole system. I was involved in, uh, Anti-War stuff. I was involved in, uh, in something called Democratic, Democratic Socialists of America for a while. Um, I've been involved in more recently in, uh, in organizations well against various other wars that have gone on, and um, also I uh, uh, the Middle East, the Palestinians in support of the Palestinians. Um, and then for a little while, uh, I did one thing where we tried to connect, this was many years ago when I was involved in South Africa, put together sort of, it wasn't an organization it was just put together, an event that got us together that, um, and we called it One Struggle. Central America, South Africa, the Caribbean, so just to associate like that we're all in this. And then one of the things we used to do in CIDS we did a walk every year for Soweto and then we walked in sup—of the, uh, massacre and the whole uprising in Soweto and so, um, but we always connected it to something in the U.S., in a community in the U.S., so that the ideas that every, you know, were not in isolation. And I'm sure there were other things I've been in and involved in, um you know uh, that I'm just not even thinking of but basically things around race, class, war, justice, you know, all those, international oppression, those kinds of struggles. I'm just not—

**LR:** How did your parents respond to your involvement in the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

**ZS:** Um, well my dad was dead by then but my mom was fine, I mean she agreed, you know, once she knew about it she certainly was supportive of it.

**LR:** What type of support did the rest of your family and friends give you?

**ZS:** Well, my sister was in before. Um, I come from a very supportive family, and um, so I was not in a situation where people were opposing me on a personal level. Everybody was very supportive. I mean, everybody may not 100%, we don't always agree with each other 100% by any means, but um, we're very supportive of each other and basically, um, my family, you know, very much just in terms of Anti-Apartheid there would be no issue at all.

**LR:** How did your heritage or race affect your involvement?

**ZS:** I mean. I don't, I don't think of it particularly, I think that it, you know, I mean there could be arguments that having been raised with a consciousness of, um, opposing oppression or the Holocaust, you know, that kind of hatred, um, I think it impacted me in that way, but on the other hand, um, there are a lot a Jews who are on the other side or were on the other side, and what's going on in, in Israel now and Palestine is basically the same thing as went on in South Africa and it's the Jews who, it's Israel and people who are based in the Jewish faith who are doing it so I think in my case maybe it did have an influence, but everything's subject to interpretation I guess, um, there's a lot of evil that's also been done in the name of Judaism.

**LR:** So what factor did religion play in your activism?

**ZS:** I think, I think, I don't, don't know that I'd have anything else, I mean, I, in terms of my activism I don't, that it wasn't direct. I didn't ever do it through an organization or anything, religious organization and by the time I was really active in Anti-Apartheid stuff I was not practicing any religion, so I mean, I'm, I was born and raised Jewish but I'm not practicing, so I don't think that it has any role.

**LR:** Tell me about the first protest or demonstration that you participated in.

**ZS:** You know I saw that ques—I, I ah, can't think of the first e-e-even for South Africa. I'm not, I don't, you know, I sort of have a really good memory for some things and none at all for others. I don't remember my which was the first thing, I, I, you know, in terms of demonstrations. I started getting involved in some smaller stuff even in high school, nothing big, I was pretty quiet in high school, but um, wanting to be, you know, seeing the march on Washington and wanting to be there, and um, I, I, I remember doing, um, some smaller demon--, you know, I did some demonstrations in Chicago in high school. I don't remember what the first one was, and uh, just immediately in college got involved in stuff, so I don't have a date or a particular (we laugh) one to tell you it's all one, yeah.

**LR:** What was the most significant event that you participated in?

**ZS:** (sighs) Event or protest?

**LR:** Either or.

**ZS:** You know, It's a, I think picking out a particular most significant, cause very often different things have different, um, impact or significance, and um, you know, there may be a little piece, you see somebody or you talk to somebody or something happens and an event that isn't that big, but that little piece of it is significant, I, I mean you know, certainly a significant, um, there were many, many significant events. Something that, the, that had obvious significance would be, um, doing monitoring the first election in 19, uh, 94 and I would say the most, something that just had an enormous impact on me was that. The election was three days and the first day, um, was for people who had, uh, challenges or, or particular, uh you know, people who were older, or had disabilities, you know, that was a little harder and they, and, and, even the, and the second day was more general, and both those days, I remember seeing people line up and to vote, and, and just people who had absolutely nothing, I mean you know, they really had nothing monetary, um, or material. And, but they would, they had come putting on their, obviously their best clothing and their best outfits. This was so important for the blacks in South Africa, um, and the pride, and um, the dignity peop--, you know, people who, um, couldn't read, couldn't write, um, knew what, you know, they knew more than people here know about elections, um, who can read and write. But just, and the courage it took, I mean, there were people in that first election, cause there were farm workers whose master basically brought them to, uh vote and they were very afraid that they would see and that they would be hurt for their, I mean, just the pride and the courage and what, eh, these, eh, people had gone through and, you know, that was momentous, I mean, that was life changing.

**LR:** Were you involved in, um, any protests that you were ever arrested?

**ZS:** I was not arrested, I um, I just didn't happen, I uh, and I'm a lawyer and so what I would often do is go to make, you know, to be the person to try and help the people who were arrested, so I went many times to assist people, so that was more my role.

**LR:** Were you, um, ever used as an undercal, undercover ally?

**ZS:** Um, no and I don't, you know, I'm not sure exactly. I mean, I know what an undercover ally might be, I'm not sure exactly what it's meant in this context, but I think what, which much more, what common than people from the movement infiltrating other, um, organizations is the government, um, and it's well established during the period, you know, the whole, mmm, that activist period infiltrated leftist organizations. It infiltrated, uh, the Black Panthers really well known, um, it infiltrated the Central America, particularly El Salvador stuff, but other organizations. It infiltrated, and you know, when we would do protests whether they were Anti-War protests or Anti-Apartheid protests there would be cops, uh, taping us. So that's more the infiltration, I, I don't, I wasn't and I don't know of anybody particularly. I mean, we would go into places, um, as a white person I could go into places and try and um, you know, advocate and educate in a particular way or in my community, but um I don't know, I wouldn't call that infiltrating. You know, it's, it's a different kind of thing so there's a different role I think as a white person you, I do have a role to educate within my own community but I don't think I wouldn't call that infiltrating.

273  
274 **LR:** What was it like coordinating events for your organization?  
275

276 **ZS:** Oh, um, you know, it was a very collective group, and um, you know, there, it, there  
277 was often, um, you know, some chaos and getting things together and people who were  
278 very organized and very together, but I, I mean, working in the group to me has only, you  
279 know, good memories basically. I mean, I shouldn't say that, I'm sure there bad  
280 memories and if I could pull them up, but and you try not to, but it, it was a very, um,  
281 overall it was a group that, um, got along and worked together and supportive, uh, and  
282 uh, had a good sense of cooperation, uh within the group, you know. I think there things  
283 all of us could, could've done, um, to cooperate better outside, and we tried to do that, but  
284 um, yeah, I, I don't know how, I don't, you know, we would put things together and, you  
285 know, you learn more as you go on and do more, so yeah, I don't remember any real  
286 specific events.  
287

288 **LR:** Where did you go to speak out against Apartheid?  
289

290 **ZS:** (sighs) We would go to like schools and churches, and um, where I went  
291 specifically. I was always a little shy as a speaker and I've gotten better, um, but in that  
292 period I was much more shy, and um, but I would go with people a lot, and um, so it  
293 would be going to, um, to I think churches and schools and, uh, you know, just any, go to  
294 other organizations to get support for events and things like that.  
295

296 **LR:** How did you stay informed?  
297

298 **ZS:** Um, well we would do that somewhat in meetings, you know, people would, um,  
299 say what was going on. You'd try and read the papers but it's hard to understand now,  
300 it was, the internet wasn't a big thing then and I remember, um, one guy Basil Clunie,  
301 who somebody I'm sure has interviewed or is going to.  
302

303 **LR:** mmhm  
304

305 **ZS:** He had some, you know, he did some computer stuff with people we had, um, a  
306 sister, uh, community in Alexandra, and he, there were connections and this and that and  
307 he'd say they say they find things this way and I was like what?, you know I didn't know.  
308 So I mean it's kind of ridiculous when you think of it now cause you can just go to the  
309 computer, but of course there people, lots of them didn't have it, but even things like fax  
310 machines were, not for us but for them, so um, you know, you just, people would, we  
311 would tell each other what was there and people at meetings would say, oh I found this  
312 out or that out. Um, we even had a newsletter and stuff, so um, but it was different than  
313 now, you know, and no cable T.V., I mean, maybe there was but not like you would have  
314 it now.  
315

316 **LR:** So um, how did you earn a living during this time?  
317

318 **ZS:** I was a lawyer. Is that what you mean like what was my?



319

320 **LR:** yeah

321

322 **ZS:** I worked at legal, at different kinds of non-profits mostly.

323

324 **LR:** How did being involved in Anti-Apartheid affect your job?

325

326 **ZS:** It didn't.

327

328 **LR:** Describe the most memorable person that disagreed with you while you were  
329 fighting against Apartheid.

330

331 **ZS:** Huh. I can't. I mean, I can picture people yelling on the streets and stuff, um I  
332 can't, I don't have a person I can think of.

333

334 **LR:** When did you lose hope in the cause?

335

336 **ZS:** I wa—never lost hope in fighting Apartheid, I mean, I knew, there were moments  
337 when you'd get frustrated and disappointed, um, but I didn't lose hope.

338

339 **LR:** What songs do you associate with the Movement?

340

341 **ZS:** Well the most is, uh, the national anthem is probably the one I associate most.

342

343 **LR:** What other movements did you participate in?

344

345 **ZS:** I think we kinda went over that right?

346

347 **LR:** yeah

348

349 **ZS:** So, I mean, I can repeat it but I don't want you to have to type all that again (we  
350 laugh).

351

352 **LR:** How did you keep all your activism efforts straight?

353

354 **ZS:** Oh, you know. Some of them were sequential to some degree, um, a lot of them,  
355 but I think we all tried to support each other and I think of all of these as one, as one  
356 struggle, you know, that they, um, I don't think of things in, uh, uh, issues in isolation, I  
357 think that that's a mistake, so I it wasn't a question of keeping them straight from each  
358 other, um, and you know, I tended to be, I learned that you can't be totally immersed in  
359 everything all the time; you're gonna burn out. Um so, you know, there are various  
360 levels but even if I weren't completely immersed in this particular issue I would go to  
361 support, um, you know. Like immigration now is another thing I've been somewhat  
362 active in, um, you know, because I may not do it all the time, but I'm active in groups  
363 and I, you know, will go to support, uh, movements, demonstrations, issues, so, um,

organizations have events so that's it. So that's the other issue I've been active in, I forgot.

**LR:** How did the killings at Sharpeville affect your opinions about South Africa?

**ZS:** Well, you know, Sharpeville, Soweto, the killing of, the assassination, murder of Steve Biko. All those kinds of all these events, um, were part of my, you know, I didn't know about everything at the time, um, or if I heard about them they may not have been as clear, but you know, the U.S. Press didn't cover stuff at all, I mean, there was so little press on, um, South Africa at that point, so a lot of stuff I didn't know about until later, but it all, became when I started to hear about it and I started to read it, it all, you know, was apart of what motivated me and convinced me more and outraged me, so they all apart of the, uh, horrors, uh, of Apartheid. The human rights violations of all of it, you know, to put it the language of, you know, sort of the human rights lingo.

**LR:** Would you like to describe, um, the walks that you did to remember Soweto?

**ZS:** Okay so every year we did a, um, a walk on, a around June 16<sup>th</sup> and, um, we would raise money and um, we, you know, it it's like all those walks and we'd walk through different neighborhoods in Chicago and so we would raise consciousness and raise money and then donate it.

**LR:** How did other assassinations affect you?

**ZS:** Well, I think, you know, they were just more things that made me aware, and um, just very conscious of how messed up the world was, you know, that people would be assassinated, and you know, I remember, I mean, King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated just a few months, a couple months like April, June, you know, the same year and I remembered just like kind of my head going like what? You know, and just trying to figure out how all this fit in, um so, it wasn't, I mean, I didn't it wasn't like I revered particularly, it, it wasn't the particular even person, um, I mean, you know, I respected Bobby Kennedy, I Jack Kennedy I was much younger but it was like shocking cause I was in elementary school, um, so I think it just is like part of the, um, vulnerability of people and the recognition like I just even if it isn't conscious, when that, you realize that everything is tenuous, so, I think it, it just. And because things like that get lots of press it, you know, just makes you, even as a little kid, I mean, you know, we all knew John Kennedy was assassinated, you couldn't miss it even in elementary school, so.

**LR:** How did you participate in trying to fund the schoolchildren in Africa?

**ZS:** How do what, I'm sorry?

**LR:** How did you participate in trying to fund the schoolchildren in Africa?

**ZS:** Fund the sc--

**LR:** Fund, yeah for the, the children in Africa while in school.

**ZS:** We didn't, I mean, we would raise money and we would give em to organizations and stuff but um it wasn't, our was really movement to, um, support groups in South Africa that were fighting Apartheid and were supporting, um, the black struggle and the coloured struggle and in South Africa it was both, you know, they made that designation, um, it, we didn't, I mean, we would give money to, you know, like, you know, when we'd do the walkathon or something we might designate it but it was, it was more movement oriented and changing the system because part of Apartheid was denying education and so, you wanted to support kids getting education but really the way you did that was to tear down Apartheid cause you could maybe educate a few kids if you got some money but you needed the, the focus of our attention was not so much like there's much more focus now on service, and um, and direct giving in that kind of, uh, now that's, I wouldn't call it activism but that kind of involvement and, it was, that, it's a very different kind of thought process and mentality. Yes you wanna help people individually and we'd do that but it was much more focused on changing the whole system so all kids could get the education because Soweto was around education, the kids, you know, that was the uprising of the youth in protest to how, their inferior education and the restrictions and the requirements and all that, so um, it wasn't so much giving money for kids and their education.

**LR:** How did you feel about the banning of our teams from playing sports against South Africa?

**ZS:** Yeah, I mean, that was a no brainer to me, I just, they, you, we had no business playing to, to play with the South African teams would be to accept Apartheid as being okay. They didn't let blacks play, they didn't, you know, it was a totally segregated, more than segregated it was an Apartheid system, so, you know, I totally supported that.

**LR:** What was your reaction to Regan's election in 1980?

**ZS:** I was not pleased. I was very angry.

**LR:** How did you feel about the Regan Administration's policies towards South Africa?

**ZS:** The same, I mean, outraged, fury, rage. All the above.

**LR:** How did you participate in divestment?

**ZS:** Well, I think, I think we've kind of gone over that. That the organization was really focused on getting, um, the city and the state, and, and unions, and college, and all, you know, get as many major player, universities, whatever to divest their funds from South Africa, so that, that was a major focus of the organization. It wasn't the only focus but it was the very major focus. We also wanted them to divest steel, which was coming from South Africa. But basically that was the main tactic, I mean, we're not, you know, taking

up arms against the government and saying okay, you know, whatever, um, the tactic was, um, to get as much divestment as possible to undermine the, um, the government of South Africa, and so you know, that was how we felt we could be most, um, productive and useful. In addition to supporting we'd have demonstrations at the Consulate there were all kinds of things, but um, you know, in South Africa people would take up, you know, that became a whole part in um, I didn't really mean to be flippant about taking up arms because that was a serious issue, and uh, South Africa, and uh, and a legitimate one in my mind, but um, you know, here thinking of what we could do that's how we thought we could be most effective in, um, in pressuring the government, and there was a whole issue here, um, and there was a struggle around that because people there were, there were, some people who said if you divest the people you're hurting are the people in South Africa, the, the people who live in South Africa, the blacks, and, and we shouldn't be doing that, we should be engaging. There's this Reverend Sullivan and this whole struggle around this, and um, from our experience in people in within our group and had many had been to South Africa others, you know, we had contact and we were engaged in and from everything we knew, and I firmly believed this, that um, people there supported the divi—divestment because they were never getting anywhere, and so the government had to go, so, that's what we did.

**LR:** What did your organization do for Dennis Brutus?

**ZS:** Um, you know, we supported him, um, when he was here and his struggles but we were part of a coalition that supported him.

**LR:** What were your feelings towards Harold Washington's election?

**ZS:** Oh I was ecstatic. I was part, I mean, I worked for Harold Washington. I, uh, very much supported him all the way through, you know, you don't get a sense of it now but after he was elected I, you know, wearing his pin, I had people walk up to me and call me a traitor and, you know, absolute nonsense, you know, racist nonsense like that but, um, yeah I was thrilled. I was at McCormick Place both times, his primary and afterwards, so, and I worked for him, so I was thrilled.

**LR:** What did you do for him?

**ZS:** Ah, I mean, I wasn't, I didn't do as much as many people, but I, you know, I, I, I campaigned for him.

**LR:** How did—

**ZS:** And I worked Election Day too, I mean, I campaigned in the campaign and worked Election Day.

**LR:** How did Walter Sisulu's visit to Chicago impact you?

**ZS:** Well, that was really, I mean, what impacted me about that was he, he was. Here's a man who is a major player an incredible leader of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa and he's released from prison after, god, many, many, many years and then he, he's, he comes to Chicago, he's invited and, and he's an unquestionable hero and, and by that time, um, you know, lots of big names and people and organizations wanted to meet, you know, want him to come and even the Mayor, I mean you know, it was just big deal and he did that stuff but what impressed me is he said No one thing I am going to do is I wanna have a small, I wanna have a meeting just with the activists, people who have been struggling with us, who've supported us throughout this, I wanna meet with them not in these big events and, so um, he, you know, in the in the middle of all this he took some time, he, he made sure he had time to come to I think we were in the basement of a church like in a community room, and just to, to talk to us, come and shake, you know, shake our hands and talk to us and thank us, you know, he said I couldn't come and not personally thank you for this is what we, you know, this is what sustained us, and your efforts are what helped us become liberated, I mean, I was just blown away that, that he really thought grassroots, he was amazing.

**LR:** What did Mandela's release mean to you?

**ZS:** Oh, I mean that was just a, it, it's an inexplicable highlight because he's a symbol, you know, somebody becomes a symbol, I mean, of course all, you know, Sisulu, all of them, um, were symbols too but he was the symbol, became them symbol and I have a big poster that I still have on the wall that it's a beautiful poster Free, um, Mandela and all the South African political prisoners, right, so he was sort of ah the icon so to speak and for I think probably like twenty-four years no one even had a picture of him, I mean, there were pictures of him when he went into prison but this is a drawing kind of in shadow, uh you know, like not a, um, and I mean, you can see his face but its, but its from when he was, you know, like in his forties when he went into prison and you, no one just had any idea even of what he looked like for all those years so it's kind of incredible he was, he, um, was a symbol so seeing him walk out was like such a monumental milestone of freedom, you know, it was just (electronic feedback) unbelievable and then shortly he came, he went to Detroit, hmm I, I think it, like not long after that big, we were in the baseball stadium and I, I went Detroit just to see him in, um, and then to Chicago and so we didn't see him after that but it was like and then we had parties that was great, you know, a party to celebrate his release in Chicago, it was amazing there's some, uh, videotape of it, you know, just all the different groups were there and, but I, you, I can't explain it was like the most incredible high (chuckles) I mean, i—i—i—there are certain moments which are incredible you know even at that moment they're incredible moments in your life and they're incredible, um, like, I, I can't think of another word now but like highs like you gotta like oh my god. The night Harold Washington won the primary in when we were all in, um, McCormick Place, and you know, lakeshore people were parked along Lakeshore Drive bec—and the cops weren't doing any—it was just this incredible thing and it's the moment of ecstasy that you overcome this incredible, um, obstacle of the city and the racism and it's still there but if you, you just this struggle came th—you triumphed in this moment of struggle and its before, you know all the complications of being in office, so it was amazing and but

and Mandela it was just like you don't wanna lose hope but I didn't know that I would ever actually see his release ali--, you know, him released alive, I mean, before that I, a little bit before as it lead up to it so and what it symbolized, um, was, you know, I knew this was like, um, a moment of rare, uh, just a rare, rare glorious moment.

**LR:** How did it, how was it decided that you got to go to South Africa's first election?

**ZS:** Oh, I mean, I had been in, uh, involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and um, and the folks in South Africa particularly the ANC [African National Congress] and people knew our group, you know, and different groups and they, um, asked that we send international observers so I wanted to go. I actually, um, at that point I think we were CCISSA [Chicago Committee in Solidarity with Southern Africa] cause we stopped being so much coalition and I forgot what it's, Chicago something in Solidarity with Southern Africa we broadened it not just to be South Africa at that point, um, but I, um, so I, I think I actually ended up going with the National Lawyers Guild just because, um, the way it played out in what they had set up and I went with time but it's all the same thing. I was I got to go, I went because I'd been active in Anti-Apartheid work, and um, I expressed an interest in it, and you know, they screened you, I mean like, we talked when we, we sent a group of people through CIDsA or CCISSA whatever, um, but we, like I was in the sorta group that screened folks who wanted to go because, you know, it b—it by the end it became it's one of those things that by the end, the very end of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and when Mand--, after Melon, when Mandela was released and shortly after it's like you would think no one had ever supported Apartheid and every body had been part of, you know, everybody was jumping on the bandwagon which is alright, fine, good but, you know, we didn't want people going who didn't really know what was going on and who, you know, whatever, so we did talk to, you know, we kind of screened people, so I was part of the screening group, um, but I actually ended up going through the National Lawyers Guild.

**LR:** What was that screening process like?

**ZS:** We just, um, for CIDsA? [I nod yes] We just, um, people, you know, filled out a questionnaire I don't remember the exact things but we talked to them just to get a sense of people, I mean, some people we knew, you know, but if there were people who hadn't y—you know been that we didn't know like there could be people like, you know, kids, youth in, um, universities or colleges or people who had just come out, you know, they may have been active somewhere else or whatever neyih, and I, I don't know that there was anybody we said no to. Um I can't honestly remember but uh I remember we just kind of talked there a few people I think we kind of questioned a little more cause to go for the thrill it's fine it was an amazing thrilling thing but, you know, you had to have some, we wanted people to know what was going on and understand and, uh, not be, the idea was not to impose the consciousness or the will or the ideas of white middle-class U.S. on South Africa. The idea was to support people and to make sure that there weren't any, um, huge violations and you know, like were I was, um there were definitely pro-apartheid folks, you know, the farmers, I was in a more rural area wh—where I served, um, and others who were definitely trying to influence uh, I, I didn't really, I didn't see

593 any violations by, um, the ANC or anybody to any signif—you know, any thing eh, eh,  
 594 eh that they were violating anybody's rights but we definitely had people try to influence  
 595 their workers and stuff, so that's we want to make sure people knew what they were  
 596 doing.

597  
 598 **LR:** What did it feel like to be at the first election?

599  
 600 **ZS:** (laughs)

601  
 602 **LR:** When you were actually there.

603  
 604 **ZS:** I think I answered that but it, it was a phenomenal as I said life changing experience  
 605 pe—I was so moved and so impressed, you know, people who had like, we stayed for the  
 606 counting and there was all of a sudden three South African er I think it was like three  
 607 South African military guys started to take out one of the guys from the AN, I think he  
 608 was from the ANC, but a black South African who was an observer of the counting who  
 609 had been challenging something or, and they're walking out with this guy, we didn't what  
 610 happened and so we followed just, you know, like No way you're taking this guy out and  
 611 he's, and he's go--, we, we tried to ask him h—what happened and what was going on  
 612 and he said I don't care there's no way, they killed my father, they killed my brother, they  
 613 killed my uncle, I mean, he, just I can't even remember may, uh, they can kill me I'm not  
 614 gonna let them get, do anything to mess up this, I will speak my mind and they let him go  
 615 and, you know, we diffused got him out and they were, but just things like that like  
 616 people wow, you know, what people had gone through and, and I told you before like the  
 617 people waiting for hours and people just the pride and, um, and we went, uh, I got there a  
 618 little early and we talked to the different groups the PAC [Pan Africanist Congress] and  
 619 the ANC and different groups and human rights groups and it, it, I just was so inspired  
 620 and moved and impressed and respected everybody, so yeah, it was amazing.

621  
 622 **LR:** So what were your actual responsibilities of being an election observer?

623  
 624 **ZS:** Okay, well. We weren't supposed to interfere we were just supposed to watch, but  
 625 that didn't happen, um, mostly we did but, you know, I, I mentioned before, I mean, we  
 626 saw these workers who came standing in the back of a truck and their boss w-and they  
 627 were like shaking really, I mean, I saw people going into the vo—voting booths, I mean,  
 628 some just from the sheer pride and it just, um, joy, um, and some from fear, and you  
 629 know, when we saw like a boss or somebody going back, or, or a worker a election  
 630 worker trying to tell people what to do, you know, even though we were just supposed to  
 631 observe we'd just say no, I mean, you cannot do that you have to and I don't know if that,  
 632 if we were or not supposed to do that, I think we could some but it, there was no way we  
 633 were gonna let that happen, so we, we observed we interceded when we thought it was,  
 634 um, appropriate, you know, to keep people safe to some degree, I don't know how much  
 635 we could keep safe, but at least let them vote in private, um, in secret and then, um at the  
 636 end we wrote a report that we gave to the government.

637  
 638 **LR:** How did it feel to be in Africa for the very first time?

639

640 **ZS:** Well that was my first time in Africa so it was amazing I love Africa, it's, it's, the  
641 people are amazing, the spirit, everything about it's astounding and it's a beautiful  
642 country, so yeah, thrilling, inspiring.

643

644 **LR:** What other responsibilities did you have while in South Africa? Did you have any  
645 other?

646

647 **ZS:** I, I don't, I mean, I was there as an observer, like I don't know what, like.

648

649 **LR:** How long were you actually there like uh?

650

651 **ZS:** I was there like three weeks, so we went like a week before to talk to different  
652 groups and see, um, you know, just hear what the cause there, I have a have a whole  
653 poster of all the different parties, there was a soccer party, there's a kiss party, there's all  
654 kinds of parties, and we didn't talk to all of them but we talked to a lot of the main  
655 players and um, and then we, I stayed for a while, we stayed for part to for the counting  
656 cause here, you know, it's the same night and there it took longer just a few days, and  
657 then I stayed a little bit longer with some actual with some of the folks I met on the trip  
658 we just, uh, traveled a little bit, so I didn't have any other duties.

659

660 **LR:** How did you react to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and  
661 Conclusion?

662

663 **ZS:** Well, huge report lots of conclusions, um, I think it was obviously important, eh,  
664 and an amazing thing to do, um, I very much believe in reconciliation and, you know, one  
665 of the things in there was something about, you know, reconciliation, forgiveness are  
666 important towards moving forward but there also has to be, um, uh, reparations and  
667 restitutions and stuff, so all that, um, I think it's, you know, a huge thing, I, I don't know,  
668 I haven't read it recently to remember all the specifics but, I mean, it was an amazing  
669 thing and, um, I'm just, you know, they had it, have had them other places too in Central  
670 America and Rwanda, um, and I am impressed just so, I mean, Rwanda's kind of  
671 restorative justice but they're all, reconciliation is also based on restorative justice and  
672 that's something I'm very involved in now, um, involved in working on the issue and  
673 implementing restorative justice with adults and with youth particularly I work with  
674 school and do, um, peace circles and different youth things, um, youth summits and stuff,  
675 I mean, that's something else I'm involved in. But, um, so I totally believe in this, uh,  
676 and I think it's important to move forward and it, it's based, you know, on the idea, it  
677 comes from very indigenous kind of practices, restorative justice and reconciliation and  
678 things but, um, and I'm impressed that people can do it, I mean, I'm impressed that  
679 people are able to move forward with someone they know tortured and murdered  
680 someone they knew or didn't know or just did it, I mean you know, my one question  
681 about the truth and reconciliation is it, it only goes to people in crimes, and uh, human  
682 rights violations committed in the course of Apartheid on both sides but really focusing  
683 on the system of Apartheid and, uh, the perpetrators of Apartheid and the most atrocious  
684 stuff was, you know, there were violations cited in there by other, by people fighting



Apartheid, groups fighting Apartheid but by far the most, I mean, first of all the system itself and then the most. When I, the one thing that bothers me a bit and is that it doesn't, so people who committed these horrific crimes, um, they come forward they say and then it's basically okay that's it you won't be prosecuted and there's reconciliation but what about the people who maybe stole food, um, were caught up in something where a crime is committed which is a result of having been under Apartheid system but they're not covered by the truth and reconciliation in the same way, so because it's not apart of the, uh, struggle against Apartheid. That is my one issue with all of these, is that I think that there has to be a way that people who did things to survive, you know, people who may have committed crimes can also have a way to start over, to um, be re-integrated into society and made whole again, so that's, I, I, totally support it but I would like somehow to address in aw, in South Africa or anywhere I would've liked them to address these other folks.

**LR:** So, what event or person was the most influential in your experience as an activist?

**ZS:** I don't have, um, a person. I would say the people what is most influential have been the grassroots on the ground people, ev—you know, so called everyday people who are struggling in their own lives and, you know, have kept up this fight, the grassroots people who have struggled for, in any of the issues I've worked on those are the people who impressed me the most where they, uh, you know, A lot of times famous people and people who are leaders they do, do remarkable things and I do respect what they do, but the people that move me and inspire me the most are the most grassroots, uh, kind of people.

**LR:** Did you have any specific grassroots people that influence you or just as a whole?

**ZS:** Nah, I'd say just, as a whole, I mean, there are lots and I think I go and I go wow, I'm just so impressed that these people sit and struggle, and you know, they go thr—many times in places like South Africa or Central America or anywhere people are subjected to horrors for doing it, often and they still do it, I'm just s—and, or they just it their struggle is so great, their life struggle is so great, yet they still do it, and they have a v—excuse me, a very long life perspective, you know, a lot of times, I've read interviews I think this man was in, I think it was in reference, this particular interview was in Central, in El Salvador, but you know, I've read similar things and this man said yeah I don't know what's gonna change if this is gonna even impact my life maybe it'll be my child's life or my grandchild's but not to struggle is not an option because I'm looking to the long distance future to make sure that things change this can't go on and the long term perspective th—that just always impressed me, yeah.

**LR:** What repercussions did you experience for your involvement in this Movement, if any?

**ZS:** I don't think, I really, I mean, I gained so much. I'm lucky, you know, I have a family that's supportive, friends, um, I have, was in the kind of work that I was able to do

730 it okay without there being a big issue, you know, I had to juggle it but, yeah I had no  
731 repercussions.

732  
733 **LR:** How has being active in the Movement changed your life?

734  
735 **ZS:** Um, in the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

736  
737 **LR:** Mhm. Or the one struggle (we chuckle).

738  
739 **ZS:** I th—I mean, i—it, it inspires me it has helped me keep my eye on the prize as they  
740 say to, um, it helps make me who I am hopefully better, made me hopefully a better  
741 person and, and it also helps remind me to k—you know, to keep pursuing it that things  
742 can change, I mean, there are new struggles in South Africa and that's always a  
743 frustration but, um, it, it nurtured me and it helped make me the person I, hope to be and  
744 struggle to, uh, strive to reach to become.

745  
746 **LR:** How did participating in the Movement help you grow as a person?

747  
748 **ZS:** Um, I think I kind of answered it it's sort of the same question, I, I gained  
749 knowledge, respect, uh, wi—some wisdom, I mean, I'm not I don't claim to be wise but  
750 it contributes to whatever wisdom I have, um, I learned how, you know, a lot about  
751 organizing, I learned a lot about different people and cultures, and it just helped me grow  
752 in everyday.

753  
754 **LR:** How do you feel that your involvement has made a difference?

755  
756 **ZS:** Um, I think just being involved is necessary, I don't know what difference I  
757 specifically made, I am part of a Movement and that's where I make a difference, um, to  
758 not add your voice in some way to protest to struggle is to, to support whatever it is, um,  
759 your t—you know, whatever struggle whatever you're opposing whatever you disagree  
760 with, um, so I think if I hadn't I would've been saying I support it and I didn't, I you  
761 know, not in anyway sense so I, I don't think that I personally, I, I don't but I think it's  
762 being part of the struggle is what being part of the Movement is what was important.

763  
764 **LR:** So, what was, um, your biggest contribution to the Movement?

765  
766 **ZS:** Was being part of the Movement.

767  
768 **LR:** How would you have what would you have done differently?

769  
770 **ZS:** Oh, I mean, I, you know, we're talking many years ago in part, but I mean, there  
771 sure there's things I would handle differently, do differently, um, and but they're all part  
772 of the growth process, so I mean, one thing I think that I would do more now is reach out  
773 to more of the different, um you know, there were different groups in, in the Anti-  
774 Apartheid struggle and I there was some reaching out but I think that I would do even  
775 more in that and, um you know, the different groups and, and I think that sometimes we

alienate and marginalize each other and I would work harder against that but, you know, I figure I learned and grew from everything, so, I don't have a s—other than that, I don't h—that would be the biggest difference I think.

**LR:** What challenges does South Africa face today?

**ZS:** Ugh, South Africa has lots of challenges today, um, you know, economic there's still huge issues of poverty and housing and, um you know, there there've been this big, um, major increase I think in the middle class but still the poorest people are still extremely poor, um, there is still so much to be done in all the, um, in all the different, you know, communities that are just devastatingly poor and there aren't just the opportunities that there should be and there's just so much and there's all kinds of struggles around AIDS which are, um, getting somewhat better, so there's there are a lot of struggles in South Africa now and, um, particularly for the poorest and the most the people who are most disenfranchised.

**LR:** What else can be done to help South Africa with their challenges?

**ZS:** Well, I mean, I believe that what, what we in the U.S. and particularly myself as a white person in the U.S. need to do is to support struggles within South Africa, I'm not there to impose my will on, oh this is how you should do things and that, so what I think is important is to find groups and people who are, you know, who are struggling there who are, um, working and building and doing all kinds of things and support them.

**LR:** What activisms are you still involved in up to this date?

**ZS:** Well, I still do I am active on Palestinian issues on Anti-War issues, um, occasionally something comes up on Southern Africa and I support it but I, you know, would like to get more into that again, I do, um, work on restorative justice, I, I, uh, immigration, I'll do some stuff to support groups that are doing it, and um, workers' rights here, so I do bits of stuff, work with kids, um, so yeah, Did I say Palestine, yeah.

**LR:** So is there anything else that we didn't get to that you would like to share at all?

**ZS:** I can't think of anything.

**LR:** All right.

**ZS:** Can you think of anything?

**LR:** I don't know, I don't think there was any—

**ZS:** Well, you know what if you think of anything call me.

**LR:** All right, I will.

822    **ZS:** Thank you.

823

824    **LR:** Thank you for sharing your story.

825

826    **ZS:** Well, thank you for interviewing me.