Interview with Alice Palmer

Katherine Elizabeth McAuliff

Columbia College - Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cadc_caam_oralhistories

Part of the Political Theory Commons, Race and Ethnicity Commons, Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons, and the Work, Economy and Organizations Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation

McAuliff, Katherine Elizabeth. "Interview with Alice Palmer" (Spring 2010). Oral Histories, Chicago Anti-Apartheid Collection, College Archives & Special Collections, Columbia College Chicago. http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cadc_caam_oralhistories/6
Kate McAuliff: Alright, hello. I am the interviewer, and my name is Kate McAuliff. And can you please state your name?

Alice Palmer: mm-hmm, Alice J. Palmer.

KM: And today’s date.


KM: Thank you. And, will you please state where we are?

AP: We are in the um building of the Black United Fund of Illinois. Which is a self-help uh- organization that is part of a federation of Black United Funds across the United States.

KM: And, what were your years of Anti-Apartheid activism?

AP: Hmm, let’s see. From the 70’s through the umm- I guess through the 80’s.

KM: And where did your activism take place?

AP: Primarily in Chicago.

KM: Okay, uhh, what year were you born?

AP: 1939.

KM: And where were you born?

AP: Indianapolis, Indiana.

KM: And were you raised there as well?

AP: Yes.

KM: And where was your father born?
AP: Umm- Cambridge, Massachusetts.
KM: And your mother?
AP: Indianapolis, Indiana.
KM: Thank you. Alright, what is your earliest memory?
AP: My earliest memory.
KM: Mm-hmm.
AP: My fifth birthday party, at which time I received a cocker spaniel umm from the, from Indiana Senator, State Senator, Brokenburg, Robert Brokenburg, who was the first black Indiana State Senator. And he and his wife, his wife’s name was Alice so I think that was why they gave me the dog.
KM: Was that the highlight of your fifth birthday? Was getting a dog from the--
AP: Yes, yes. There were lots of people there, and lots of activity going on but the dog was special.
KM: How did that make you feel? Really special to get such a big present from such a esteemed--
AP: Well I didn’t know he was esteemed he was just someone at the party who gave me a dog—
KM: That was the most exciting part of the uh--
AP: I didn’t know till later he was esteemed.
KM: Alright, uh can you tell me a bit about your family?
AP: Hmmm, Well I told you where they were born—
KM: Mm-hmm.
AP: And my uh grandfather was a slave, and came to Indianapolis-- umm in his teens and um, swept out stables and so forth for the doctors up and down Indiana avenue--
[Coworker1 walks past]
Coworker1: Hey there.
AP: Hi, how ya doin?
CW1: Good.

AP: And uh- one of them took a particular, he brought his mother with him out of uh after slavery, and one doctor took particular interest in him and helped him learn to read, he didn’t learn to read until he was twenty. And then sent him to high school, he finished that and then uh he went on to medical school.

KM: Wow.

AP: Uh, first he went to a um, in those days a- an- and interestingly, they have- it’s called pharmacognacy now and there is you can get a PhD. in it at University of Illinois, but at the time it was umm I’ve forgotten the name of it you learned to make medicines from natural uh roots and so forth. And then he went to what was uh Indiana University medical school, and he finished in 18- I think like 1892 or something. He and my grandmother, my grandmother was free black. She bo- interestingly both came from North Carolina but she had, her family had free papers and they were able to pass through the territories. Um, the governors of each territory signed it so they would not be arrested or enslaved. And uh her- her father was a cleaner and dyer, and they settled in Bedford, Indiana.

And then I don’t know, a lot if this is foggy. Uh I only know these bits and pieces because in my freshman um AP English class, I was the on- only black student in there, and the teacher said she wanted us to write about our families, but I didn’t have to do the assignment because she knew colored people didn’t have any history. And so I went to my grandmother in tears and that’s the only reason I even know this much about my family--

KM: So these weren’t stories that were shared--

AP: Yes right and just- just no, just because they had, the teacher had said we had no history—

KM: Wow.

AP: --So my grandmother pulled out the free papers, and showed me the goats horn in the den that my grandfather had brought from slavery, told me that my um, that his mother had denounced Abraham Lincoln because um she felt he had really not been sincere about freeing slaves.

So anyway, and then my mother, uh was born in 1910. My grandfather went to World War I. He um, my grandparents married in 1904, and they first had a son, and then my mother. And um, my grandfather put his age back and went to World War I. And entered as a major because you know that’s what you, if you’re a medical person and um he served in what amounted to a mash unit on the battlefield in France. And sadly during the time that he was gone, um my um they lost their son he died in the um influenza epidemic of 19- 19- 1920 whichever it was.
And anyway um they were very- very activist people. My grandfather was Madam C.J Walker’s physician. Madam Walker started her business in Indianapolis, and my grandmother took her around, organized for her so forth and so on. Um, my parents, when my grandfather came back um, soldiers were returning, black soldiers from World War I. And they were being mistreated. And Tuskegee had a veterans’ hospital, but black soldiers would be left out in the hall because white nurses weren’t allowed to touch them so forth. So, uh the then president of uh Tuskegee who had met with the black troops in France, petitioned the President of the United States to appoint a black person to head, the first black person, and my grandfather ended up being that person so my grandmother, my grandfather, my mother went to Tuskegee and he had to face down the Klan and all the rest of that did uh from all the reports that I have seen in newspapers he did a hell of a job putting it together the hospital.

So, my parents met there. My father came out of MIT with a masters in engineering in 1932 I think, and taught at Tuskegee, he met my mother, they married, he went to Howard taught there blah-dee-blah, then back to Indianapolis, and that was generally them.

KM: did you hear a lot about your grandfather’s activism growing up or was this all stuff that you learned later?

AP: Nope, later, didn’t know, these people did not talk about themselves

KM: Why do you think that is?

AP: Uhh, There was I think probably lots of reasons people just did with they had to do they did not think it was extraordinary they were not boastful people they just weren’t that way nobody was those who were, were looked down upon so.

KM: Umm who did you spend a lot of time with as a child?

AP: Hmm my grandmother, and um the families of my uh two friends. Um my grandfather delivered all three of us within days of each other so we had been friends our entire lives, our mothers were friends; so yea probably my grandparents and um mostly my grandmother and the families of my two friends.

KM: How do you think they influenced you?

AP: Oh in every way conceivable. Umm you were raised to be um considerate and giving and um I didn’t know the word activist then but uh you were supposed to, you were obligated to do for others and to uh um-set right injustices and so forth so.

KM: That’s a lot of responsibility for someone so young.

AP: Well it wasn’t put to you in that way it, it just that was a way of life, it wasn’t anything anybody talked about.
KM: Uh where did you play as a child?

AP: Oh, everywhere. Life was very free and lovely. There- I- I never had a door-key. Nobody I knew ever had a door-key. Um, my grandparents in fact um my grandfather had a hospital uh back in the- the days the early um 30’s and 20’s and so forth because black people were not allowed in hospitals in Indianapolis. And afterward later they turned it into an apartment building and their apartment was on the first floor there was no key to come into the lobby, there was no key to go into their house, their portion, none of it so you- I played, when um we moved to the one block street where I spent from age ten until I went to college we played in the streets, we played in- on peoples roofs, we played in backyards--

KM: Safe.

AP: It was - totally safe yes. Oh, and in parks yeah, everywhere.

KM: There were a lot of parks in your neighborhood?

AP: There were parks, yes. And uh in the winter you got on a sled, and you slid down a hill and had to swerve the sled before you uh flew into traffic.

KM: Uh where did you go to school, when you were young?

AP: Elementary School I went to George Washington Carver Elementary School. Superb school. Uh those were the days of so called separate but equal and uh in my school my principal was adamant about you made me have the separate we- you will give me the equal. So we had everything, we had French and art and um advanced math and theater everything you could think of -

KM: Wow, in elementary school?

AP: Yes, yes.

KM: Wow.

AP: So when the schools desegregated we were more than prepared.

KM: And how old were you when they desegregated?

AP: Umm I don’t remember I just remember that we were the fourth class, fourth or fifth class of black students to enter Shortridge High School which was, I don’t know if you’re familiar with the major schools in Illinois but it was like uh- a New Trier of it’s day or a Walter Payton or a- a superb, even more so probably. This school had an art gallery along one entire corridor on the second floor that could rival any small museum it had, we had a daily newspaper we had a radio station--
KM: Wow.

AP: We had uh at least five languages taught um people went of- uh- incredible theater
the uh- people would come from Yale and so forth ‘cause they were major drama
schools, they would um send recruiters to see the students and um these students went to
um Ivy League schools went to um – ya know were very sought after uh. Where are you
from where is your home?

KM: Uh, New York.

AP: Okay well I don’t know if you’re familiar with the name Senator Richard Luger but
that was his school. -

KM: Oh, wow.

AP: Yeah, U.S. Senator Richard Luger and to forth. So a lot of the uh- most of the uh
barrens of industry sent their kids there.

KM: How did you feel about going there was it intimidating because it was so big or
were you comfortable?

AP: Not at all. As I said we were very well prepared and as I said prepared not only
academically but to right injustices, as there were many of them as the school had to
adjust to having black students um for instance uh we had a- theater was taken very
seriously and we had a rule that um if you- you had to audition for- the- the senior play
was a big deal And uh if you made third cut which was the audition if you went though
three auditions and made it then you were automatically granted a role in senior play.
Well there were three of us um black women class mates who made third cuts but the
director called me and I don’t know why she chose me to tell me that uh she was sure I
would understand but the play was a family play therefore we three little lack girls
couldn’t be in it. I went to I said oh okay. I went to the the phone and called my mother
and the next thing I knew I was called down to the principal’s office and bless his heart
the principal was a Quaker and so he was uncomfortable with it in the first place and
there sat my mother with her legs crossed had a shopping bag beside her she said sit
down to me she said I have just told um uh forgotten his name now the principal that uh I
was a um graduate in theater at Denver University I have brought a bag of plays here and
I’m sure that they can find one that will be appropriate and they won’t have to worry
about it being a family play what could he do? Ya know he called the director down and
said she would have to choose another play so of course I was punished so I didn’t get
any lines in the play--

KM: You were punished by the school?

AP: No by the- the director who was furious you know that um I-- she expected me to go
quietly into the night I guess but uh that was a lesson and what happened was uh hey I
didn’t get any lines but my two fiends did and we had broken it open so that was did the

So, yeah. There were other instances of having to. I remember when uh Emmitt Till was killed and word, there weren’t a lot of us black kids, the word went throughout the school, walk out two o’clock comes walk out. And they were terrified, we all got up and walked out no violence, no anger, no anything, it was just it was time to make a statement.

KM: Mm-hmm. Umm what were your favorite subjects in school?

AP: English. Umm History. That was a lesson also, um about History, um Lisa Brock an so forth and Prexy will appreciate this. Um freshman year in English, uh I was always in AP classes, as I said we were very well prepared, and we were doing a- a paper on the French Revolution well I was just enthralled with Marie Antoinette and I wrote this flowery, well I was- I could always write well so the teacher gave it back to me and gave me a C and I wasn’t used to getting Cs but she had written on it she said never romanticize history and I thought good f- you know that- bingo I understood and I kept that with me for evermore. Never romanticize history.

KM: So interesting, and did you rewrite the paper and make it less dramatic?

AP: No, not that paper. But from then on I- I understood one researched history one researched, one did not romanticize.

KM: Uh what views of race were you raised with?

AP: None.

KM: Can you expand?

AP: What do you mean? Nobody talked about race, you just grew up. Uh, If you ran into issues um it was a matter of how dare these people treat me or mine or whatever but it was never I don’t ever remember anybody discussing race I mean I knew who I was. It was fascinating to me that when I come to Chicago and I hear my husband saying he never had a black teacher until, good grief I’m not- I think he only had one black teacher well see I wasn’t raised- I grew up in a we heard Marion Anderson sing every morning on PA or Paul Robeson we read Langston Hughes and so forth as a matter of course. My grandparents received the uh Ebony and Jet and uh so forth magazines every week in the mail the Pittsburg Courier so. I- being a black person was who I was it wasn’t – and there was no- no problem with that and so when I went to- and Indianapolis is very interesting and I think new York was like this too even more so, Chicago because it has such segregated pockets of how people live that when a group moves in i.e. black people in this area whites flee even in commercial areas we in Indianapolis they left the housing but they did not leave the commercial areas. So, in my grandparents neighborhood um there was a black man who was um who had the drug store, a Jewish man had the dry good store, and Irish man had the grocery store it was no big deal. So, it wasn’t as if I had
never interacted and because my grandparents were people who served the community
you know people you know could come and be waited on by my grandfather and charge
them you know, got hurt anything. Sometimes he was paid with bushels of tomatoes so
you know if I went to the store and I said who I wanted the food for then oh well yes you
know but nobody ever talked about race as race we were raised as a- who you were no
problem—proud to be--

KM: And even when you got to school and started facing more, different ideas-

AP: Umm, But see we had- we had always had uh a cross section of literature in my
home growing up. I- I knew who Shakespeare was I had read, my mother bought ‘Tales
of Shakespeare’ from the time I was a little girl so there was no, I didn’t have to be
introduced to something it was all of a piece, grounded in being a strong black person,
with a strong black family surrounding me and a neighborhood and a family and a
community.

KM: So do you feel like most people who grew up in your community had that same
upbringing, or do you feel like it was special to your family.

AP: Nope, yeah I- I think most of them did. Most of my- the people that I knew did,
absolutely.

KM: Um so what do you think your first experience was with racial discrimination was?

AP: In terms of looking at it was racial discrimination?

KM: In terms of looking at it was racial discrimination?

AP: Okay, ‘cause as I said I saw injustices, but we- we addressed those. Where people
may have said you can’t do this, but I didn’t put it on that context in any real way. Umm I
think uh let’s see I think the first one where it was really, it really hit home was when we
drove to Tuskegee. Grandfather was to be honored at Tuskegee again. And they were
older by then and so my grandfather hired someone from the neighborhood to drive us
down there; instead of- um well I didn’t know any other way, I never-. And um the first
hint of it was that night in Nashville, Tennessee. We had left fairly late, and pulled in, it
was dark, and um my grandfather told him to stop at the drugstore in a black
neighborhood. He came out and directed us to what amounted to a juke joint. And it
turned out that uh that was my first introduction that um black people could not stay in
hotels in the south; that you had to stay with a family or whatever well that, it happened
that that night all the respectable black homes were filled. So my brother and I had to
sleep on a pool table in a juke joint in Nashville, Tennessee. So my eyes were wide open
then. So I was- then we went on and we got to um, right outside uh Tuskegee. And it was
about to be I think it was a Saturday. And no respectable little girl in those days would
appear on Sunday without a hat and gloves. I was I think eleven. And my grandmother
had them stop the car on the square. And she grabbed my hand really tightly and marched
me into a department store And she marched up to a table with little girls hats, and she
put one on my head and put her hands on her hips and just stood there and glared at all
the sales people in there. And I thought oh my god you now, I didn’t know what was
going on I had never- because in Indianapolis things had integrated by then, there was no-
I had never experienced it. And she took the hat off my head she went up, she paid for it,
grabbed my hand tightly again and marched me back. It wasn’t until years later that I
leaned that it was against the law to try on hats, to try on clothes for black people to do
this. So my grandmother had preceded Rosa Parks in that kind- as I’m sure many had in
that kind of defiance.

And um I think also during the same period of time, I would visit a classmate of
mine at the elementary school her grandparents lived in Nicholasville, Kentucky. So we
would go with her sometimes on spring break. And I loved- I have always loved movies
so I begged let’s go to the movies. She said are you sure, and I said well why wouldn’t
we? Get to the movies, I’m about to walk up to the uh the booth you know in front of
where you uh- ticket booth she said uh-uh, uh-uh we had to go around the back, climb
these stairs, urine soaked stairs. And that’s when I leaned that black people could not sit
on the first floor of the movie theater in the south. So I was so infuriated that I marched
around the streets in that town. You know, I’m young and foolish. But I was so angry
‘cause that- those were the first kind face to face with uh that kind of stupid racism. And
you know there were other things along the way, but that’s when the eyes open ah-ha you
know this is what this is. But um I just uh you took it in stride and dealt with it.

KM: So who did you ask questions to? Or did you just-

AP: I didn’t ask questions. I really didn’t. Umm, I don’t ever remember asking questions
about it.

KM: You just, accepted it and-

AP: No it wasn’t accepting it; it was saying no this is not right and when the moment
comes I will do something about it.

KM: Uhh, what views of politics were you raised with?

AP: Hmmm, I- I don’t think anybody ever talked about politics per-say either. I realized
years later umm that I was- that my grandmother must have been a umm one of the
people on election day who sit there and ta- because I remember going with her and
sitting under the table with crayons and so forth; in the basement of some church. So I
assume that’s what she was doing. But other than that, it wasn’t so much people talked
about politics it was just the nature of the people who passed through our home that you
got a sense of big things stirring. Umm the national president Phyllis Wheatley
YWMCA, um the umm presidents of this and that and so forth and so on; there were
always during World War II umm the wax in and um soldiers, black soldiers in the
house; and my grandmother, very active in the one of the founders in fact in 1906 of the
colored, Indianapolis Colored Improvement Club. Umm and so lots of- lots of
organizations where you knew you were supposed to give back. Uh the METAFAR
Guild medical, dental, and pharmacists, the wives and daughters and nieces; you raised money. Uh, the Flanner House, umm my two girl friends and I had to be junior hostesses at uh international teas where you raised money to support umm help women who were umm you know who were poor. Nobody talked about politics it was again a way of life.

KM: And what about national and world events, how ere you informed about those

AP: I didn’t really I wasn’t focused in on any of that probably until its funny grammar school. Um Again the segregated schools and many of us had moved out of the neighborhood where George Washington Carver Elementary School was so the system provided buses to bus us back to the black school. We could not to go to the school four blocks from our- where we lived. And so every morning there would be lots of little black children standing on corners waiting to be bused back aga- which is and irony to me. You know you have to laugh at how stupid this stuff was. And I mention that during the uh Eisenhower - Stevenson umm election period. And my family, you know black people were republicans in those days and really in Indiana I mean you know the switchover came in general when uh FDR was president up to that time because of Lincoln and so forth back people, largely- well in Indianapolis lots and lots of black people were still republicans so I remember we didn’t know what we were talking about, we just heard what our families were saying. I guess my father was for Eisenhower and my friend one of the thr- two friends lived right down the street from me, her family was for Stevenson. So here we are little girls on the corner waiting to be bused back to the black school having an argument about Eisenhower and Stevenson neither one of us knowing what in the world, we wouldn’t have known them if they had walked up to us, but there we were.

But there we were umm yeah so that’s and then in high school of course being introduced to umm world politics through my dear friend Wallace Terry, who became a Neiman fellow, and um went brown and was the first uh black war correspondent for Time magazine in Vietnam. Well he was a year ahead of me, and he was always very focused. He knew from the time he was an infant I think that he wanted to be a journalist. And so he at the high school he joined the Model United Nations and became the first um black secretary general in Model UN in Indiana. And insisted that his girlfriend and I come and join the model UN. Well you know at this time I’m dating, I’m enjoying, he said you will come. We had grown up together; there was no denying Wally. And um we ended up much to the chagrin of the woman who ran it because she really would have preferred that here were no black folk in it. But lo and behold after he graduated, the next year we continued with model UN, Gloria and I. And that happened to be the year that British and French received their independence. Well the rule was that Model UN had to follow exactly what had happened in the UN that meant that each of us had to represent one of these countries and address the general assembly. So Wally sent us boxes of material from Brown, he helped us write our speeches, the whole bit. He was so proud that we had continued, and we had moved from being pages to being ambassadors anyway that was you know an introduction and um I think the way French was taught the way just the school itself was very much an international school.
Um, one other instance of lo- seeing a kind of racism and um tucking it away and
saying when the time comes I will see to this. I wanted very much to do a junior year
abroad, but and in the 50’s in my school black kids were not allowed to. But there was
one Asian girl who got to do this and I remember and when the rest of us had to come to
the auditorium and celebrate her doing it. I remember sitting there and saying him, we
don’t look that much different what is this you know what is this? And I thought u-uh
okay I got it know I’m getting it I’m not gonna be mad about it but I’m getting it. So, I
said alright that uh when the time comes I will address this as well.

KM: And where did you wanna go?

AP: I wanted to go to uh Paris of course. Yep and I have been many times since then, yes.

KM: Uhh, what were your aspirations when you were in high school; what did you
wanna do?

AP: I don’t know that I had any um, it was the 50’s and I didn’t, I didn’t have any umm
like Wally I didn’t say I’m gonna be this by ten years I didn’t have any like that. I knew
that I was going to college. And I knew that I was going to major in English and other
than that I don’t think I had thought about it.

KM: Uhh, did your family have any goals for you?

AP: Hmm in terms of being some particular something, no, mm-mm.

KM: And did you always know where you were going to college or was that a choice?

AP: I had wanted to go to umm Anteock but we couldn’t afford it so, I pretty much I
knew I would be going to Indiana University Bloomington the State School yeah.

KM: And what was your experience like there?

AP: Good, for the most part very good, yeah. Because an incredible President we had. I
will praise him forever um amazing man way, Herman Wells, well ahead of him his time.
Just as an example and this was before I got there, but I met a- um black man who had
been on the football team there in, I guess, the 1940s maybe or early, early 50s. And he
said he had gone into town into Bloomington, to a restaurant with a white um team
player. They sat at a table and the waitress came and she took the white guy boys um
order and just ignored him like he was invisible. And he said he and he looked up a little
while later and here came president Wells, sat down next to him called the waitress over,
and said why doesn’t this young man have some food in front of him? And she said oh
you know why we don’t serve them. And he said who are your main customers here in
this restaurant? She said oh, very proudly, oh from the University, he said yes that’s true
he said now either he gets food and anybody who looks like him gets food, or I will make
this place off limits and you will be out of business. So that was the way that he was, an
um so when I hear these people uh at University of Illinois and that uh a line a wick or
whatever it is in the year you know late 20th early 21st century with that kind of craziness
then I think with even more respect of Herman Wells. And his- his home was in the
middle of the campus and any Sunday you could go to tea there. Very open, very um; he
did the same thing in there in the student union there was some you know little attitude
about serving black students and he said the same thing either all students served or
nobody’s served. And he was an internationalist even then. Very active in the United
Nations we had an international house
(phone rings)
AP: Excuse me, my daughters on the road
KM: It’s fine.
(AP answers phone – hangs up - dials phone – makes phone call)
AP: My daughter finished her masters; he’s driving her in this truck and it costs $75
every time you fill it up; Toronto to uh New Orleans.
KM: Wow, that’s quite a trip.
AP: Yes it is.
KM: Umm, you were talking about the president of your college.
AP: Yeah, yeah that’s it; just an extraordinary man well ahead of his time. A lot of these
presidents today, instead of saying they cant do anything about these anti diversity and so
forth should take a page out of his book, well ahead of his time.
KM: And, were you involved in activism while you were in college?
AP: not really, I was um active in my sorority and um-
(phone rings)
(AP answers and talks on phone)
AP: Okay, sorry.
KM: Uhh, your sorority.
AP: Yeah, very active in my sorority, mm-hmm. And my sorority was uh- 100 years old
two years ago, and it was the first um African American sorority in the country. So, there
was a grand celebration in Washington.
KM: And what kinds of things did you do?
AP: Uh again, um our- black sororities are not like white sororities. Um, it is a lifetime commitment to service. And so you went to tutor children, you um raised money for things. So you, of course had parties and so forth but it was- I’m still active, got my scarf, uh still active. I’m on the scholarship committee in my chapter now. Raising money again for young women so, it’s a lifetime commitment. I’ve been um-

(phone rings)

(AP answers and talks on phone)

AP: Why is it that I have to be in charge of all of this stuff?

coworker2 enters

Coworker2: You’re great, you’re just great.

AP: no, I’m gonna kill you.

CW2: You won’t-, you don’t know how to say no.

AP: Lord have me mercy. 4- almost 40 years old, take care of your own business. Okay, I’m sorry.

KM: Did you need to call someone back?

AP: No, I do not need to call someone back.

KM: You seem to be the very center of everything that’s going on.

AP: Oh don’t even breathe those words!

KM: Uh, you were talking about how you’re on the scholarship committee for the sorority-

AP: For my chapter, mm-hmm.

KM: And what sparked you to join in the first place?

AP: Hmm, well in terms of sorority; um my- I’m a legacy for one thing, my mother was in the same sorority. My, so forth so, it just was assumed.

KM: Let’s see, uhh, tell me about your memory of Dr. King’s assassination. You were telling me on the phone.

(phone rings)
AP: Oh, what is it now, Yes?

(AP answers and talks on phone)

AP: Umm, Dr. King’s assassination. Um, I was supporting Bobby Kennedy for president. And he came to Indianapolis several times during his campaign. And this particular night he was going to appear and speak to people at a, uh public housing uh parking lot. And I had uh it was after school I think it was on a Friday night it was raining, this miserable day- night. But people really wanted to hear him, so we went to the parking lot we’re stand there in the rain, waiting for him to arrive. Time kept passing and passing. They had set up- I think it was a flat- bed truck, or some kind of platform. And this lone car pulled up, and he got out of the car bare-headed and walked up to this platform and of course people were cheering and so forth. And you could see that he was very somber. And then um without pulling any punches, uh he announced that uh Dr. King had been assassinated and of course the crowd just couldn’t believe it. Could- and I just I could believe it and so the next, that must have been a Friday because the entire weekend of course everybody was glued to television sets and watching this unfold and that was how I found out about- and of course shortly after that he was also assassinated. It was a very terrible period.

[Coworker3 Enters]

Coworker3: Hey, how are you?

AP: Hi there.

KM: And how was that experience for you, how did that make you feel?

AP: Hmm it was um, up close and personal introduction to the violence of this country that uh- there are those who are willing to turn race into uh violence. But it steals you again just like in high school, that’s what that is deal with it when it comes

KM: Was that a shock and it changed how you viewed things, or was it just kind of reinforcement?

AP: It was a shock but it uh it just reinforced didn’t change things. See you can’t afford, as a black person, you can not afford to get mired in anger and um. You cannot become the enemy. You have to think strategically, you have to think rationally. It doesn’t mean you’re not passionate but it just means you don’t waste time or energy on um- you have to figure out how to win it; not- not how to be angry about it.

KM: And how did you learn that philosophy?

AP: As I said, you heard me describe how I was raised. That was the way I was raised.

KM: Just ingrained.
AP: Absolutely, a way of life.

KM: Um, how did you first learn of Apartheid?

AP: Umm, I think it was through, it was through one of the black magazines that my grandparents subscribed to, it might have been Ebony. In which, I remember an article ad I was in I was young then, I remember an article that talked about um hair texture as some kind of measure of whether one was colored, these rankings in South Africa whether you were, which was a nasty word, if you were a Kaffer meaning about the same as nigger, a colored or a white person and something about hair texture and- but it was such- so far removed from me at the time I just read it. And then um, uhh I guess later on at um, when I was at North Western and we began to organize, well actually before that because, as I had mentioned before, my friend Fannie Rushing was active in the anti-Crujerand campaign so I joined her in that and that was before I became active in the anti-apartheid movement.

KM: And was that the first organization that you were a part of?

AP: It wasn’t an organization, it was just people um trying to stop the sale of the Crujerand in the United States. And I think I mentioned that; I think it was on Clark Street there was a coin dealer who was trading in um Crujerands. So there were demonstrations in front of that store against the Crujerand. But it- that wasn’t a movement.

KM: Right.

AP: Mm-hmm

KM: And- so there was that, before that, were you active in any other sort of way, against anything or-

AP: Hmm lets see, yeah umm school stuff, education stuff. Things like that, yeah.

KM: I’m gonna kinda reiterate this question a little bit but; why did you become an activist?

AP: It’s a way of life. It’s ingrained.

KM: And how did your family react to your activism?

AP: But they’re activists too, so.

KM: Was it openly discussed or was it-
AP: Well, when everybody’s an activist then you just talk about what you’re doing, you know there’s no; it’s not separate from who you are.

KM: Um, okay which-what organizations were you a part of?

AP: When?

KM: Um, during the Anti- Apartheid Movement.

AP: Um, well several of us put together the uh Chicago Free South Africa Movement. So that wasn’t the only one, you know there were other- other people who put other organizations together, kinda flowed in and out of each other. But that’s the one that I was particularly; and at North Western um opposing the um the boards continued investment in South Africa. That preceded putting the Chicago Free South Africa Movement together. And the Chicago Free South Africa Movement came on the heels of when um Randall Robinson and others um sat in at the South African Consulate in Washington D.C. that uh week whatever that day was. That kinda set off a domino effect across the country where it kind of galvanized what had already been in motion. And um we several of us met at a hotel on North Michigan Avenue across the street from the South African Consulate, that was the embassy I meant Randall Robinson they went into the embassy, across from the consulate in Chicago and laid out our plans for what we would do in similar to what Randall Robinson and Mary Frances Barry and others had done, and that was the launch of it.

KM: And what was the structure of that organization?

AP: We didn’t have a structure we had a focus on what was to be done. And that was that we were going to demonstrate and get more and more people engaged in demonstrating in front of the consulate every week. And um to do so until they uh- Apartheid ended. And you know other kinds of things, I think I mentioned to you um my friend Fannie and I in particular challenged the uh pictures in the south- in the Chicago Tribune showing how wonderful it was for little children in South Africa and we organized particularly against the Tribune, and brought in um a member of the um women’s division of the African National Congress and we just had her read the names of the children who had been killed and uh we had a coffin, built a coffin and we just walked up and down. And this- the Tribune is also across the street, catty-corner from where the South African Consulate in Chicago was. At first people thought it as hilarious, that we were doing this, they’d come out of the building, laugh and point and so forth but we kept it up, day after day. And finally it got to be embarrassing to them. And the- then I don’t know if he was the publisher, editor happened to know my husband, the men stood on the curb, that was my husband, um Donald Mosbey who had been the reporter for the Defender for a long time, Slim Coleman, maybe somebody else I don’t remember. Publisher, whoever it was, knew my husband, and he said why don’t you come on in, my husband said no, no, no, you talk to them they’re the ones that. So Fannie and I, and I’m sad to say I don’t remember the sisters name who was from the ANC, we were invited in and taken up to
board room for the Tribune, sat down. And I don’t know if we were supposed to be impressed or what but, they said well what is the problem don’t talking to Fannie we said uh-uh no don’t talk to us, tell her why you are publishing photographs saying how wonderful in the midst of Apartheid; tell her this woman represents the mothers and, sisters and, daughters who were murdered tell her. So that was the end of that they never printed any more of those photos and we shut down the demonstration.

KM: How long did that take?

AP: Uh it took uh about a week or so, it might have been longer, memory is not serving well, yeah it was not overnight by any means.

KM: And how did you encourage people to join you?

AP: Um, well as I said lots of people were in motion at that time, and so we happened to be the ones who mounted the- the demonstrations so folk could come and join ‘cause there we were you know it was very clear and the culmination of that-

(phone rings and continues to ring)

AP: -the culmination of that um part of it was on January 15th, 19- was it ‘84 or ‘85. It was after Harold Washington had been elected, yeah January, 1985. When we had about a thousand people in front of the consulate including Pete Seager, um members of the African National Congress and so forth. And we had had we had decided that just like in Washington we were going to have a sit in. We had had one earlier attempt that had been um batted down, um we had, again we’re still meeting in this hotel across the street. So we had asked umm what’s her name um- hmm Jackie Jackson, Jesse Jackson’s wife, then Congressman Gus Savage, uh State Senator Richard Newhouse, and yeah I guess the three of them and it might have been somebody else I don’t recall. We asked them if they would sit in and they had agreed to do this, so a, one of our group of organizers uh Aura Shoo, who’s an attorney and very active and had been active in this for quite a while, is now at Northwestern I think in some kind of law institute. Anyway, we asked her to go in and act as if she were going to get a visa to go to South Africa. This is a, you know, it’s a business building. And we had alerted the press, I think it was Art Norman in fact, so she went in and her- her task was to go in and then hold the door open so that these three could come in, which she did brilliantly. Art Norman was there he had his- his camera from whatever channel he represents. And indeed they were arrested, but the consulate refused to um charge them you know these were tree notables so they refused to charge them. so that fizzled we said well we better do this again this time we organized um as I said on January 15th, 1985. we had about a thousand out there and we had selected or we asked in the crowd so we’re not looking for notables we’re looking for those who are willing to go the whole distance.

KM: Mm-hmm.
So about fifteen people agreed to this. And they went in just before the doors closed in the building, and they went upstairs, they sat in. They were arrested and this time they were indeed transported to the uh the jail I think it was on Chicago Avenue wherever. And uh they were asked if they wanted to bail out they said no. There were notables but the arresting people didn’t know there were they had I think Addy Wiatt, there were fifteen people, Bob Lucas, my husband, Heather Booth on and on. And they um chose to stay in jail for the night. And then the next day my husband went down to see umm um Mayor Washington and um you know it was a minor infraction really when you came down to it my husband said no, no, no we want a trial on this one because that’s the point of this.

AP: And so we had a trial. We brought in Marge Benton, the late US Senator Paul Simon, um all kinds of folk to testify to the heinousness of Apartheid. And the defense that we used, I think I mentioned that to you before, the law of necessity based on the British, um and I’m certainly not a lawyer but this is how it was explained to me. Um way back in the dawn of time sailors, British sailors, were adrift at sea, three of them, one of them died the other two ate him. And when they were rescued and they were of course charged with murder or whatever. And the courts found them not guilty based on necessity, because of their circumstances. And that’s the defense that we used. We had brilliant lawyers who raised this defense, and we had a- a jury. And they acquitted these people and said yes that this was so heinous that they had a right to um object and to um sit in and do what they needed to do. So and one woman in the jury in the front row leaped over the fence said she wanted to know where were marching so we could- she could join the- the movement. Now that pretty much ended um my particular work in that phase of it. The demonstrations were continued. Dr. Conrad Rural in fact he’s a member of the board here where is his photo, somewhere up here, uh where is Dr. Rural where is he, oh there he is with the dreads right there.

AP: He and his group continued the demonstrations for several years in fact, at least a couple of years, day in a day out.

AP: Um, I was busy with other stuff by that time. Mm-hmm, it didn’t mean I wasn’t you know I wasn’t uh I was still because at North Western as I said we had this issue of uh the board umm investing – so the investment thing became an issue. And Carol Braun who was then a State Representative, she was out and about challenging the um then Governor Thompson here for using South African steel in building the State of Illinois building those kinds of investment kinds of issues.

KM: Uh, what was your reaction to um Reagan’s election in 1980?
AP: Umm, well you kinda knew what- what was about to happen and if you had paid any attention to his tenure as Governor of California, what he had done against um the University of California system and students and the anti-free speech and the anti-education almost. So it was not unexpected um at that time, I was active in um peace organizations. And I what I would do if I spoke the congressional black Caucous had an excellent, I don’t know why they haven’t continued this, they should go back to this, they had developed an alternative budget. And I would use that budget as my uh the launching for talking about what else we could be doing if we were not in the wars and the- the stupid star war kinda thing whatever it was he was promoting you know that shield you’re gonna put up in the sky, so anyway that’s what I was doing at that time. It really was a brilliant budget, I wish somebody would be smart enough these days to bring that approach back again. Particularly in this period of time, people were able to grasp how their money could be used in very different ways.

KM: Do you know why they did away with that system?

AP: Well you know, people. The people who were there changed, and the people who in the congress in that period of time the black Caucous members were largely activists coming out of the civil rights movement or some kind of movement. People who are there now that’s not necessarily so, some still are, but there are many who did not come out of nay movem

KM: Umm how did you feel about the Reagan administrations policies toward South Africa?

AP: It was appauling but, he got slapped because umm it wasn’t in South Africa so much but it was um, was it Reagan or Carter I’ve forgotten which one was promoting uh Boudelaisian so forth and yea it wasn’t South Africa. But anyway you have to look at South Africa as more than just South Africa as more than just South Africa things we happening in Zimbabwe, in um Angola and South Africa so that whole southern tip down there. And uh some of the places were going to have elections and so they had the boudelasian and all this and American uh government officials were supporting these backward reactionary people and anyway we- we raised up against that and they had to have a second election. So you know those kinda folk lost out in the end and that was a good thing. All of these forward motions uh led to an ending or participated in um and complimented I would never take uh you know that we were complementary to what the African National Congress and others were doing in Southern Africa.

KM: And how did you feel when Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990?

AP: Umm joyous of course, but also saying wow I never thought it would happen in my lifetime.

KM: Really.
AP: Yeah so just absolutely. Said okay, I’m so glad to have been a part of whatever it was that- that helped umm; because his release was symbolic yeah. And what an extraordinary man to have endured twenty-five years of that, and prior to that the oppression and all the rest of it; and to step out of there to being a fully formed um world figure umm diplomatic, tactful, knowledgeable, all of that extraordinary.

KM: Do remember where you were when you heard that he was released or?

AP: No I don’t, and it’s interesting, I remember where I was with Kind, Bobby Kennedy, JFK. I don’t remember where I was, I just remember watching him walk out of the Robbin Island they opened him walking out tall, elegant, erect man.

KM: And how did you react to the Truth and Reconcilliation Report and Conclusions?

AP: Well ya know you- this goes back again to what you asked me earlier. About growing up and so forth now, as a black person, as a person who experiences racism, oppression, whatever, you have a choice. You can figure out how to be vengeful, or you can look at it and say now where do we go from here uh King asked that question in one of his major books. Where do we go from here? Chaos or community. And uh while there’s a part of you who would like to uhh you know that’s angry and would like to take it out, does that move you that doesn’t mean that you don’t want to put some things into place that punish some of it at least. If you spend your time wholly focused on that you can’t move it forward. And it’s strategically, politically everything else. If you want to take hold of the power, if you want to take hold of it and do some things for people who have been left out all this time you gotta come better than that. So of course you have a certain ambivalence because you know that some regard its smoke and mirrors as a thorough political person, I understand why it was done that way.

KM: Um you had told me on the phone that you were Dean of African American student affairs at Northwestern. You talk to me a littl e but about your experience in that position?

AP: Hmm, in what way?

KM: Hmm, well let see, how were you active with the students?

AP: Oh yes very active yes.

KM: How so?

AP: Oh there were always issues coming up. Um, one in particular I recall the- the black student athletes put together an organization, the acronym was pronounced BAUL and it the acronym said Black Athletics United in the Light. And they were particularly um unhappy about their treatment, you know, Northwestern is a top light school and so athletes are considered scholar athletes they were particularly unhappy about their treatment in the athletic department as a whole; um and so they were meeting in the
living room of the black house. And uh I you know would just shut the door that was
their business to deal with it.

And one day they asked me to come in to the meeting. And they said to me that
uh they were going to march on the administration building on campus. And I said okay
and I said do you want we to go with you? and they said you would? I said yes I would
be happy to march with you. I said now let me tell you what I’m going to do I am going
to call ahead and tell them we are coming. And they kinda you know, I said no trust me
that is the best way to do this. So, before that, that was a little later meeting, before that I
had called my friend, my husband’s and my friend, very noted black journalist Vernon
Jared who had a column I think at the time in the Chicago Sun Times. I told him what as
going on and asked if he would be interested in interviewing these young men he said
absolutely. So he came in and did a column on these athletes then uhh- that situation and
I-

I knew that that’s the way it should be done because when I had been appointed to
be Dean of African American Student Affairs, my predecessor had said to me always
keep Vice President Carlton informed. He was Vice President of Student Affairs, no
matter what it is you do not- don’t blind-side him. He had the only black secretary in the
administration building, lovely woman, terrific woman so I knew that was the right thing
to do.

So I called up I said this is Alice we’re marching on you. She said fine I’ll clear
the way. And so we marched over there no police no nonsense. We got right up to um
Vice President Carlton’s office. Sat down, be had been a football player um I cant
remember Oklahoma or somewhere. So he had already a sensibility about um athletes
and so forth. And these young men were scholar activists um you know scholar athletes.
And their spokes-person was indeed very well-spoken, Ben Butler. He explained to Vice
President Carlton what kinds of things had been happening to them. Vice President
Carlton listened very carefully and said I will look into this. And the next thing we knew
the um, athletic director had been fired. Whole new crew brought in.

And this is how Dennis Greene, and I don’t- you know he’s a big time coach now,
black football coach. This is how he got his big time start he was brought in to the new uh
athletic department at Northwestern.

And I was um I was really pleased because years and years later, I was invited
back to the black house for some celebration they were having. Fifteen years later twenty
years later after this. And one of the athletes walked up to me, has got his son with him,
you know, growing up. And he said dean the brothers have not forgotten. I said well that
you I appreciate that.

So yeah, those were the kinds of things there were always that had to be dealt and
dealt with in ways that um could help the um student prevail. Um and there were we did
proactive things as well. Um we started programs that um we had Sunday suppers. Were
discarded because a young woman one day was said to me had said at orientation she had
been told never to go south of one of the streets near Evanston. And I thought okay I’m
not gonna argue with that so I got to bring Chicago to them. So Sunday suppers there
were four of us women in the house, and we would cook for them. And we would do it
thematically, journalism, engineering, so forth. And I would bring some prominent black
person there who would have supper with them and talk about it.
I brought Lois Martin for example, he was, most people never even heard of Lois Martin. He was probably one of the most influential black people ever. He was an assistant to four democratic Pres- US Presidents. Always worked in the wings, you never heard about him. I brought Vernon Jared, Carol Braun, Harold Washington, on and on to uh spend Sundays with them.

And we had um evening with our elders, one of our- our counselors started that. He brought Alberta Hunter, he brought blues people little little um Willy Montgomery whatever, and to introduce students to their heritage in terms of music jazz and blues and so forth. So yeah we did a lot and I joined forces with the women’s department and we would bring women to campus. Um, the alphas worked with them to have the Martin Luther King lecture series each year. So yeah, a lot of stuff going on, good times good times.

KM: Do you feel you experiences and what you learned from being an activist really came over into that position?

AP: Oh, absolutely always, it’s a way of life.

KM: Exactly. Um let’s think. Can you tell be about what the things that you do today things that you’re active with.

AP: Umm some of them I’m not doing now in a direct way, um but I was for years on the board of, I such deep respect for them, Access Living. Which is here in Chicago its the board that supports the independent living for people with disabilities. I just think that’s extraordinary. I remember being on that board, and this is just- I didn’t have time anymore for all of this. I remember being on the board with a woman who could not move more than one finger, and I thought this is is really incredible no one should give up on life. I such respect for the founder and CEO Marca Bursto amazing woman and amazing work that she’s done.

Um as I said I’m active in my sorority in terms of scholarship committee this year. What else, umm stuff doesn’t come to mind now, well here well here with BUFI doing a lot in terms of education in the area. And also kind of solidifying working with BUFI in terms of an acid based um way of looking and being in the neighborhood.

KM: You had mentioned something on the phone about reactivating relationships between African Americans and Indians can you tell me a little about that?

AP: Yes and that’s kind of on hold right now but a um a uh someone we got to know fairly well was the um the um what do you call it umm he was under um Secretary General Cofianon the head of the um public affairs for the United Nations. And we got to know him fairly well, it his cooperation and that of the Secretary General’s office we did three things.

Um met him by happenstance we were friendly with the European Union Ambassador to the United Nations. Once he invited us to his home in Washington DC to- in New York, I’m sorry, for lunch. And he wanted us to meet uh some of the other ambassadors. So when we were at lunch, this man walked in late and sat down and
listened quietly my husband was talking about all the kinds of things we have been doing over the years and afterward he said to us I like what you’re talking about you know do you think you can come and talk with me in my office? We said sure who are you? So that’s when we found out who he was. So, we went there and we talked to him about um that W.B. Dubois and other black people who had been in at the beginning of the foundation at the founding of the United Nation and we were dismayed and there had not been that this relationship had not been kept up. And that particular time I think Cofianon was under tremendous pressure so he said um let me see what we can do to kind of reactivate that. And um so he said um well let he talk to um the S-G that what they call him, Cofianon, and see what he says about it.

Got back to Chicago and he called and said S-G says can you, um we had suggested that we would bring journalists because then they could go back and write about it if they chose to. And they said can you do it in 10 days? My husband said hmm- hmm and, so he- he did. He got several Pulitzer Prize winners, we had um quite a few journalists um who came. And it was very interesting because they assumed that we wanted to hear about AIDS or something. And um Ellis Coast, one of the Pulitzer Prize winners, you know interrupted, politely, and said I wanna about- and he laid out. They realized this was a very well informed group so they them they went back hmm they changed it all together.

We went to lunch with Cofianon and he was so enthralled with these ‘cause they were you know, they were asking him very intelligent you know, informed kinds of questions. He was only supposed to stay with us about only fifteen minutes well forty minutes later these people got to go- go and he’s still you know into this.

And that led to two other events. The second one I didn’t really have to do much with, it was more somebody else’s work. The third one, we took uh well actually arranged for eighty-one civil society, people from civil society, umm black leaders to go and have a day at the United Nations, hey paid their own way. It was an incredible experience and um.

So anyway all of this is the prelude, then he left. He- he was going to run, this was Shashi, ran for Secretary General after Cofianon’s term was over. He did not win, Moon won, and Shashi went back to India. And lo and behold, ran for office, ran for the parliament, Moon won a huge amount. And because of that was appointed the um Minister for external affairs. So it’s with him, that, it’s kind of on hold. A lot of things are going on now, swirling around in India. So that’s kind of on hold, but we are looking for an opportunity to take a delegation of black Americans in the same spirit as reconnecting black Americans in the UN as reconnecting based on um Howard Thermon’s visits back in the 1930s with um Neru, and then um Martin Luther King’s, I know Howard Thermon with Ghandi, and Martin Luther King’s and Mrs. King’s with Neru and they how all of that informed the civil rights movement and this is where the whole thing was a peaceful non-violent approach to it. You know have it philosophical groundings.

KM: Umm are there any other events we haven’t touched on that you’ll never forget, that’ll be in your mind forever?

AP: Probably.
KM: They’re in there somewhere.

AP: They’re in the somewhere, yep.

KM: Umm, what challenges do you think South Africa faces today?

AP: Umm, in particular for all the people to realize um the benefits of having won against Apartheid. That means economically, educationally all of that. To share- and in other words to have for well- being for their lives, that is a challenge.

It’s not just exclusive to South Africa. I mentioned before, you have to look at what’s going on in all of Southern Africa. You have to look at what’s going on in Zimbabwe. I was in Zimbabwe and- you know what you- the reality of being in the world is a very difficult thing, because you may win- you may win the skirmish but then how do you actually deliver?

And that is- that is a serious problem, I was in Zimbabwe. I’ve never been to South Africa, but I was in Zimbabwe. And I saw exactly what I’m sure is true in South Africa. That the people who are still the tellers in the banks and the this and the that all the money is still under the control of the people who were part of the Apartheid movement. And there you are, they knew how to manage the affairs of government. And it’s a very- it’s a dilemma, it’s a dilemma. And um so it requires that you somehow in some instances you step in and intervene. At the same time –see ya- at the same time you also have lay the path for the education of people who will be the next generation to run things and be prepared so all this has so move forward at the same time. And all of that in the midst of, as you said, reconciliation, anger, horrible disparities, and so forth. It is um it’s very difficult.

KM: What was it that you did exactly when you were in Zimbabwe?

AP: I was there for a conference, yeah. So I didn’t- I happened to know someone and I was staying with that family that why I got more engaged than other folk did.

KM: When was that?

AP: Oh well that was back in the 80’s, mm-hmm.

KM: Umm you brought up a lot how you were in touch with a lot of very prominent, very influential people in all aspects of what you did. How do you think- how did you have so many contacts? How did you reach all of these people?

AP: In terms of what?

KM: Umm, you were talking about the Sunday dinners; and how you got so many people to come in and speak. How is it that you had those connections?
AP: Well my husband was the founder of the Afro-American Patrolman’s League so he knew people. I had been umm-well as I said active in lots of things so um, you know just in the course of the work and activism you come into contact with people.

KM: And we’ve touched on a lot; and how much of a family business activism has been for you and how it is such a way of life. How has that um-how has that been passed down to your children and your family now?

AP: It is, my son is here and he is um very active with BUFI, and in particular with what they call the mash unit. Where they work with um young brothers out on the streets and you know work to bring them in from the cold so to speak.

My daughter is um just finished her masters in museum studies. And she, her work is on the um displacement of um- um Acadians in Canada and how they got to New Orleans and how they got to New Orleans and became Cajuns and all of that so. And when she was in high school in fact and what was that the- this was the first gulf war and she led a demonstration out of the high school and into the streets against the war. I think she was fifteen at the time.

KM: Did you know that was going on?

AP: I didn’t know till later that she had done this, no, no.

KM: Were you proud or were you like what he hell are you thinking?

AP: No, I was, I was proud of her, said wow, who knew.

KM: Did she get a lot of support from her classmates?

AP: Yeah she did, mm-hmm. And she was dancer she was not- you know. She was the uh dance performing arts program; so I said wow okay.

KM: Umm, how have you- how have you taught them about activism?

AP: By example. Again just the way we were, you know we have the people who come to our home. Umm we during the um Anti- Apartheid movement we frequently and members of the ANC staying at the house; we had um the first uh fundraiser for Harold Washington was at our dining room table. First, you know, home kinda fundraiser. Paul Simon has been a guest. All kinda folk have been in that house. And have just been there you know, so the same way I was raised people would just- there they were.

KM: Umm how to you encourage others to become active?

AP: By example, mm-hmm.

KM: And how has being active changed your life?
AP: No, as I said its always been, its away of life. So there was no change its just continuation.

KM: It is your life. Always been and always will be.

AP: Cradle to the grave.

KM: Is there anything you would have done differently in your experiences with activism, up till now?

AP: Mmm, I’m not sure that I could say yes or no on that because I always try to act on what I knew and the people around me that I respected. And to make decisions based on that, so I’m not sure that I could have, really.

KM: And what was your biggest contribution to the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AP: Oh, I don’t know, I don’t look at it as being an individual thing. I look at is as being a part of a group of people who successfully put together the Chicago Free South Africa Movement. And worked with those who were in the Mozambique movement, in the Angola movement, the so forth and so on. That’s what movement means. It’s not you know, you aren’t looking for praise and glory for yourself you’re part of a movement, you movement to be successful and you want to win in the end.

KM: We had discussed on the phone about um the movement being form many different angles. Can you discuss a little about that?

AP: Well just what I was saying. You know, for example, Prexy while he was working on Anti-Apartheid in South Africa he was also very active in creating the Mozambique Movement. And worked with those who were in the Mozambique end of it umm- umm you know, the Anti-Crugerand the this the that.

It was clear that this was a whole package that uh South Africa was maintaining this racist, oppressive form of government, because many forces were in operation at the same time. And so it meant being hydra-headed, if you will, being like an octopus. You know, you had to deal with it on all kinds of levels, because you had to chop off each arm of it in order to end it. That was- that’s what a movement is.

KM: Is there anything else we didn’t get to that you would like to add?

AP: No, I don’t thing so, I never talk this much about myself.

KM: I’m very glad you did, very glad.

AP: Thank you for your patience.

KM: The archives are very glad you talked about yourself this much, for as long as you did.
KM: Ok that’s the end of all my questions, thank you so much.

AP: All the best to you.