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Interview with Anne Evens

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INTERVIEW WITH ANNE EVENS
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Oral History: Art of the Interview taught by Dr. Erin McCarthy
Chicago Anti-apartheid Movement (CAAM) Archive
Columbia College Chicago

BETH THENHAUS: So my name is Beth Thenhaus and I'm interviewing Anne Evens. The date today is May 4th. And we are at her home. The years of Anne's anti-apartheid activism were roughly 1981 through 1994. And the locations of her activism were in Ithaca, New York, Mozambique, and Chicago.
And then some few more things to state: Anne was born in 1963 in Berkeley, she was raised in Chicago. Her father was born in Berkeley and her mother were born in Berkle.

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

BT: Oh, okay, I made that up.
AE: It's okay.
BT: I apologize for that. Alright now we'll start with some beginning questions: First one is: What is your earliest memory?
AE: I have two early memories. One is rolling down this hill next to a neighborhood church which is now a Quaker meeting house. And the other is when my family moved from one house to another when I was five and I remember sitting on top of the piano in the truck.

BT: What sort of music do you remember around your house as a child?
AE: Hmm, music around my house...My dad played the recorder. My, I think mostly classical music when I was a kid. And our music, my brother's and sister's and my music wasn't that welcome in the house from what I remember.

BT: Oh.
AE: It's okay.

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

BT: Nope. Um, what book do you best remember from childhood?
AE: Uh, All Creatures Great and Small, actually.

BT: Ok. What was the neighborhood you grew up in like?
AE: I grew up in Evanston in a neighborhood - first on the south side of Evanston, then sort of in central Evanston. My, um, both my parents are academics. My dad taught at Northwestern University, my mom at IIT, Illinois Institute of Technology.

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

AE: As a kid? Um, or now?

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

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

BT: How did you get to school?

AE: Walked. Or rode my bike.

BT: Who was your favorite teacher, and why?

AE: As a young child or in high school?

BT: Mm, I'm thinking elementary.

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

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

AE: None. None.

BT: Yeah?

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

BT: Did you start it?

AE: I started it, I read Genesis..

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

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

AE: In high school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: How old were you then?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: How did you become involved in the movement?

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

BT: I forgot to mention that some of these questions are like, a list of like, ten that are necessary to ask so I hope they don't sound too repetitive. The next question is why did you get involved with the anti-apartheid movement.
AE: I think that, um again, working against racism is has always been critical issue to me, something I really cared about, and I think the apartheid system was just such a horrific outrageous example of it, and I also, I got involved in the anti-apartheid movement as part of the divestment movement, and as a student at Cornell University I just felt like that was something very concrete that we could accomplish if we could get our university to divest, that would have a positive impact. So I felt like it was, it was a way that I could be effective.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AE: We did a whole lot of research on what Cornell's investment portfolio looked like. Um, we [cd track 2]

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

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

AE: Shantytowns.

BT: Yeah, the shantytowns.

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

BT: And were they all Cornell students generally?

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

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

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

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

AE: The first time I volunteered?

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

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

BT: You were young?

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

BT: Mnhm, because it was random passerbys?

AE: Yeah, I was handing out fliers.

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

AE: In the anti-apartheid movement?

BT: Yeah.

AE: I wasn't hesitant. So. I was pretty excited to do it, so.
BT: Why did you continue to stick with the movement after your initial involvement?

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

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

AE: Sure, anti-apartheid or all?

BT: Um, specifically anti-apartheid.

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

BT: What was your role in the movement?

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

BT: Ok, what were your responsibilities?

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

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

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

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

AE: I was employed, also. It was a challenge to fit it all in. I mean, certainly there were a lot of social aspects to activism, as well. And it was hard to fit in with academics, I mean both in terms of just time, but also I didn't feel like, um, most of the other engineers were, shared my political beliefs and I was often sort of in conflict with some of my professors because they didn't support divestment. Their, you
know a lot of engineering faculty get support from companies that we thought should divest and also
that were involved in other issues that I was working against. So, you know, we were also working
against militarism, and the military industrial complex in the United States and they were employed by
it, so there was that conflict.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: Yeah, for how long?

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

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

AE: Um, they were worried about it, and I don't think, I didn't talk to them very much about it, but they
were worried about it, and then as I began traveling and working internationally they got more and more worried. They were scared for me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: Why these organizations and not others?

AE: They were leaders in anti-apartheid work.

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

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

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

AE: I never did.

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

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

BT: Were they usually just nights, like a night or …

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

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

AE: They were all trespassing charges, so - there were some at federal facilities which were sort of a higher charge than at the university, for example.
BT: So what ended up happening with those cases?

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

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

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

[cd track 3]

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

BT: You went there and worked on it?

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

BT: What year did you go to Nicaragua?

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

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

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

BT: So did you say your job title?
AE: I think my title was Rural Building Engineer. Something like that. I have it on my resume, I should look.

BT: How long did it take like-minded people to work with politically after moving to Mozambique?

AE: No time at all, I mean everyone there was there because they wanted to support Mozambique, and believed in the policies and models that were being developed in Mozambique. And were also - I also worked with a lot of South Africans who were exiled in Mozambique, so no time, day one.

BT: What was it like working in a country at war?

AE: Um, it was challenging, it was stressful, it was sad. It was, um, scary sometimes. It was also very motivating, um, and you know, amazing to see what people lived through and didn't, and they didn't give up their dreams and hopes and attempts to build a better society, more humane, more just society.

BT: Were you ever in any physical danger in Mozambique?

AE: Yes.

BT: Do you wanna describe that?

AE: Um, sure, I was in one of the districts in Manica Province. So I was in one of the few rural areas that you could work in at all, because of the war. And so you couldn't, you couldn't um, it wasn't ever safe to drive at night. You had to be, you had to, um, your movements were very restricted, because - a lot of times I would travel with military personnel, so there were guns around everywhere all the time, I guess kind of like Chicago, but, uh, it was, um, it was... that was scary. There was shooting, I could hear shooting pretty often. Most nights there was shooting and missile fire. And there was a time when in the house I was living, I shared a house with some other people that, there was an attempt to kidnap one my colleagues and they came to the house. They came to the house with, um, with guns and tried to kidnap my colleague. But they got scared away by a dog, fortunately. And I, and then the military came. So that was the scariest.

BT: What were some activities you participated in outside of your employment in Mozambique?

AE: Everything, life, you know I lived there. I did a lot of hiking, I lived in the mountains, so I did a lot of hiking. A lot of parties, a lot of dancing. Mozambicans like to dance. I studied the local language. I, you know I was part of the community, so I went to a lot of traditional ceremonies, learned a little bit about local culture and beliefs. [unclear] Made friends.

BT: When working for the Mozambican government, how much did you agree or disagree with their policies and views?

AE: I agreed with many of their policies and views, I think that they were really supporting community-led economic development and I really learned a lot and enjoyed participating in that. They were very supportive of - the women's organization was really strong and they were good about promoting women and, including giving women political power so I was very supportive of that. So I was generally supportive most of the time I was there.
BT: To what extent were you in a position to work against apartheid in Mozambique?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: I suppose anywhere.

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

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

AE: I met a lot of South Africans who were involved in the ANC who later after the apartheid regime fell were, became leaders in the South African government. I've met Nelson Mandela, I've met his wife, Graca Machal, many times. So I knew a lot of Mozambican leaders. South African, I could name the South African leaders, but I don't know if you would recognize them. The other thing is while they were living in exile, they were living under assumed names, and so they took back their names after apartheid fell, so the names that I knew them by were different than what they use now.
BT: Well if there is anyone you felt like mentioning I'm sure, you know, it might be beneficial to someone doing research someday or something whether you - I know it or not.

AE: Okay.

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

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

BT: Okay, what brought you to Chicago?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AE: Excuse me?

BT: What was one of the new organizations and then what was one that you were already familiar with, as far as organizations in Chicago?
AE: I think the Mozambique Support Network was new, it just got established, so that would have been new. SIDSA had already existed, so I already know about SIDSA, when I came here.

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

AE: Actually, that's one of my favorites, up there. “Apartheid's Second Front” - “Mozambique: Apartheid's Second Front.” I still have it up there...

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

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

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

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

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

AE: Sure.

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

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

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

AE: Very, you know all the Chicago activists I worked with, um, Carol Thompson, Kevin Thompson, I worked with then all closely, and I still work with them today. And then, I described that one
experience for over a period of a year, I did a lot of speaking like once a week with this gentleman, I can't remember his name. Uh, I think I was fortunate to get to work with a lot of really great people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: Uh -

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

BT: The FBI, no.
AE: The FBI was not supportive of my work, they were trying to, they were, uh – but my, the organization I worked for was supportive. So my bosses were not upset when the FBI came to visit them but I had colleagues that worked at more traditional engineering companies that lost their job as a result.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: Looking back what are you most proud of?

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

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

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

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

AE: I guess I got involved in civil disobedience pretty early, and I thought it was a really effective method. I was involved in a lot of civil disobedience and actions, and I still think it's really important and effective. I myself don't do it as often, mostly because I have to be home with my kids, so I can't go to jail as easily. But I think that maybe when I was younger I thought it was the most effective strategy and now I think of it as one of many effective strategies. I also felt like I think when I was
younger and actively participating in civil disobedience, I felt so strongly passionate that I had to do
something to end apartheid that apartheid was so horrific and people in South Africa were suffering so
and had committed so much to this cause that I had to do as much as I could, and civil disobedience
was as much as I could do. Or was one thing that I could do that I felt was a significant statement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BT: Has your work affected your family life?

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

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

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

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

AE: The people I mentioned earlier, the activists from Cornell, who I am still friends with, and now we
are all on Facebook together. And activists and friends from Chicago who are still my friends today.
And my African friends who I - that's the main reason I'm on Facebook is because it's a way to connect with people all over the world. That and to keep track of my teenage daughter.

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

AE: Do it, go for it.

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

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

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

AE: No. Thank you.

BT: Okay. Thank you very much.