

Interview with Anne Page by Charlie Morgan, 3 March 2014, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom

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Charlie Morgan: So this is Charlie Morgan at South Africa House on Monday the 3rd of March 2014 conducting an interview for the Forward to Freedom Anti-Apartheid Movement history project. Could you just tell me your full name please?

Anne Page: Anne Page. But I was known as Anne Darnborough when I worked in the Anti-Apartheid office and some very old people still know me as Anne Darnborough.

CM: And could you tell me where and when you were born please?

AP: I was born in London in 1940.

CM: And can you tell me what you do for a living?

AP: I'm a retired person. When I did earn a living, I was in local government, research, education, London: London Docklands, London Research Centre. I also worked for the Parliamentary Labour Party as an administrative researcher and I had quite a long career as an elected person in London local government. Before I got married, I worked for the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

CM: And can you just tell me about your work for the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AP: I started there at about the end of 1963, early '64, when the Rivonia trial was underway. The Anti-Apartheid Movement in those days had one member of staff, paid, she was an administrative secretary and she had been there since the Boycott Movement, the previous body to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. There was a strong committee of volunteers; they were at that stage either exiles from South Africa, sometimes voluntary exiles, sometimes enforced. Several of them were students in London at the time and then there was a collection of British people, legal people and parliamentary people mostly. So they had not had a serious bureaucracy, and then came the Rivonia trial, which caused an explosion of interest in the UK and so they felt the need for a bigger team of permanent people to work there.

I was just returning to London from a period living abroad and I saw an advert for a temporary job to help out with publicity and information during the Rivonia trial, which was on already but not really underway, and so I applied for that. I thought 'Oh well, that's perfect, that will settle me back into London', and so they interviewed me, Abdul Minty, who will also have appeared in these archives, interviewed me and I was appointed on a short-term contract, and then I was subsequently appointed on a couple more short-term contracts while they collected enough resources and money to think about employing me as a full-time information officer.

Because what I was able to do during the trial period was help marshal media interest,

make sure that people were well informed to speak to the media, publish leaflets, organise demonstrations, help with the publicity for organisation, the campaigning on behalf of ... well first of all to raise consciousness about the trial and then at the same time really to ensure that there was a huge loud voice against the death sentence for these guys; and so that's what I did in the early period.

CM: So you mentioned you saw the advert and applied, was there anything in particular that drew you to the role when it was advertised?

AP: I was planning on a career in journalism, I thought I was going to be a great foreign correspondent or something. I had in fact worked for the African desk of Agence France Presse during an earlier period of my life. I was a student, I came from Cape Town to Europe after I graduated from UCT and found the political scene there so unappealing, and I thought best if I get out of here before I end up somewhere I don't want to be. So I went to Paris as a student which had been my intention longer term anyway. While I was there Agence France Presse opened an Africa desk in the English language and because I could speak French and English and because I knew a bit of Africa because I'd had experience as the campus correspondent of the Cape Town newspaper I was appointed as a very young reporter, editorial person at AFP in Paris. I had then gone to live in the United States, got active in the civil rights movement and stuff over there, and then I came back to UK, so I had a bit of experience that looked like journalistic know-how to handle the media background.

I thought they want an information officer so: a) I can be useful and b) that might be useful in terms of getting reintroduced to London or to London professional life in the media. And then of course it was South Africa and it was anti-apartheid and that's how I felt anyway, so I thought, well this is a good thing for me. And they appointed me, so I must have been a good thing for them. Subsequently they asked me to stay on as only the second full-time paid member of staff, to put a whole publicity/information service together. Because what was so clear during the Rivonia trial was that the Movement had tapped into an absolute wellspring of British feeling for the anti-apartheid cause, and the media were all over the place, but arranging leaflets and information sheets for people to be active about was also all over the place, so they needed someone to marshal all that and not to just be doing it on an ad hoc basis. So that's what I was hired to do and I did for the next best part of three years after that in the mid '60s.

CM: Do you think they had expected that kind of swell of opinion, of anti-apartheid opinion?

AP: Look, I don't think they thought it would be as big as it became rather quickly ... the Boycott Movement was the precursor and the beginning really in 1959, just a simple thing: 'Don't buy South African fruit, boycott South African fruit'. Outspan oranges were huge advertising ... there was a South African fruit growers association in the day, called Outspan, and so the original idea was, let's start a grassroots movement, because it was clear there were never, not in the early days, there were never going to be major state sponsored economic sanctions, not at that stage, so these guys just thought, well let's

have a crack at showing that the people care by not buying fruit in the supermarkets. And that took off so well because there'd been a lot of publicity for forced removals of people from the historic homes in the urban areas of South Africa to remote rural areas or to nasty developed township settlements and so the British press was already on the case.

You've got to bear in mind that lots and lots of British people had relatives and knew South Africans, so the groundswell took off probably a bit faster than most of those young activists and exiles thought it would. However they worked like the devil to make sure that it did, they really did, they were a tremendous group of people, Kader Asmal, Abdul Minty, Ros Ainslie, fantastic people, and so there we are. Then it was clear that people wanted to set up local branches of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in their town or their county, and so it was clear that something a bit organised was necessary and then all those people would want information sheets and briefing papers and so on, so somebody was hired to do membership organisation and I was hired to do information and media relationships.

CM: So with the role of the information officer, can you just tell me a bit about how you went about that role?

AP: Well, in my first temporary period at the time of the Rivonia trial, it was a question of trying to make sure, we weren't even, you see it wasn't even a focus around Mandela at that stage, although he clearly was accused number one and people were already to starting to register a considerable leader there, but these, what were they, nine others, were not known people, so what we were trying to do was get information about them as individuals so that the press could write about all of them. And they were very different, there were two or three white people, there was one bloke who was accused just by accident really – [James] Kantor. In the end he was acquitted and sent away because clearly it was a mistake to get him involved. So we had to try and marshal information about these people so that the press people could recognise who they were. We had to get information from South African sources so that there was context and background well understood by the media; we had to get the media interested in our various demonstrations, rallies, meetings convened here in Trafalgar Square and all round the country. We had to marshal individuals to go and speak to people like Birmingham City Council or the Conservative – no, not the Conservative Party, the Labour Party in Sheffield or the trade unions, all over the country, and we had to marshal individuals to respond to requests for a speaker to come and talk to them about South Africa, and then we had to make sure those guys were briefed.

I mean they were mostly South Africans newly arrived and they were pretty strong characters and they knew what they were on about, but you know there were various points we wanted to get across about, for example, a huge rally would be coming up so make sure you tell them and they can bring all the dockers down from Yorkshire or what, dockers from Yorkshire? miners from Yorkshire. You know the trade unions were very important at the time, they needed information, the church groups were very important, up and down the country. Reverend persons would write in and say can you let me

know... so we had to manage information flow to a multiplicity of audiences and right up to the absolutely gigantic rally that we held just outside here in Trafalgar Square when the sentencing, when it was a question of would he [the judge] give the death sentence or not.

And we had two individuals who were related to two of the men on trial. One was then a student at Sussex University, Thabo Mbeki, who went on to become the President of South Africa, but his father [Govan Mbeki] was one of the trialists with Mandela, and a very old comrade on Mandela's and a very senior person in the ANC, bit older than Mandela. And then there was Dennis Goldberg, a very young white man and engineer, I mean very young, like 30, and his wife Esme didn't want the strain of being in South Africa with her very small children at the time of the trial. Because you've got to bear in mind that a white man in that trial was a very unusual creature and his family were the object of a lot of hostile attention from white people supporting the regime, so Esme came here with her children. So we had two people that we could focus information and media around who were very closely connected, so they both spoke. Esme didn't want to at all, but we made her speak along with British luminaries of the day, the ancient philosopher Bertrand Russell, he was so old we had to have a little crane like a fireman's lift so get him up on the plinth outside there because he was too frail to manage to clamber up the stairway.

Thabo was about 21 at the time and he gave an absolutely electrifying speech, he was, you know, there was another fellow that if you were looking for young leaders you could see future presidential material, except that in those days of course it didn't cross your mind that we would see such change.

We were working for a change but it didn't appear. It seemed very clear by 1964 that the winds of change that Harold Macmillan famously noted were blowing down Africa to Cape Town, where he spoke, were not in fact. They stopped at the Zambezi more or less, and so we were clear that there wasn't going to be any quick resolution. The regime was intensifying its hold on the people and so it was a very important moment, that trial, because it galvanised world attention; but it was a very difficult trick to follow on from, once the men were sentenced and tucked away safely in jail apparently for evermore.

It was hard work, and that's when it was agreed that I should come on board full time, it was after that really and it was very hard work for a number of years to keep the momentum going that had been stimulated because of the trial.

CM: So you mentioned the rally, the big rally you had the time of the trial. Is there anything else you remember from that day in particular of the rally?

AP: Gosh. I mean, one just got up fantastically early, we were down here [Trafalgar Square], the people were assembling, and there were great piles of placards, we printed off slogans and signs on boards and we were handing out placards, you had to handle people who couldn't walk so well and make sure they weren't being crushed to death. It

was a huge do and it was nothing like organised, like, I mean yesterday afternoon, was I here yesterday? Yes, I was here Sunday, there was a rock concert or something going in the Square with a proper stage up and loud speakers.

We had to organise it all, I can remember actually, curiously more than the actual electrification of the event itself, I can remember the organising and the worrying about it and getting the Square ready and would the loud speakers be loud enough and would people be able to hear if they were stuck halfway up, you know, the road out of the Square? Because it was that sort of thing, people had indicated that they would be marching in from, maybe just Hyde Park Corner, or from Cambridge or the North, and so you knew people were going to be coming as we got closer, so it was; and I was – what was I? I was about 23 or 24 at the time and I'd never had to do any major event organising or anything like that. I wasn't solely in charge of it by miles, of course not, but then making sure, in my case making sure the media were, you know, properly handled and had got a special place and didn't have to fight their way through to get to the front or to interview people, make sure the right people were ready to be interviewed and all that, so I had a lot of running around being a press officer, that's what they do.

But the things I can remember are hoisting Bertrand Russell up to the plinth, because that hadn't fully been understood, and Thabo's very dramatic statements as the son of one of those in play. But what he never did and never did right through to the end, nor his father, was play the family. It was never, 'It's my dad we're talking about', it was never that, it was always very political and very principled, they didn't do personal.

One of the things I can remember, I think it's from then, Paul Newman, the famous Hollywood film actor, was in London at the time and he was a good-hearted man, and he had read about all this and he was very sympathetic to the cause and he'd read that Esme Goldberg, the wife of Dennis Goldberg, was a physiotherapist and a masseur. It had been in the press that she needed, you know, we were playing up these personal stories as best we could, and it had been in the press that she needed to raise the family and earn the money because her husband was on trial and probably not going to be returned to her quickly. They were not a rich family and she was setting up a practice in London as a masseur come physiotherapist. So Paul Newman asked her to massage him in his top hotel, and then he let it be known to the press that he'd done that, so of course Esme didn't have to wait long for a crowd of clients to be lining up [laughs], I can remember that, and Esme's ever after admiration of Paul Newman [laughs].

So what else do I remember? I remember personally being very moved when we heard the radio recordings of the speech from the dock, I remember sitting there, were we hearing recordings or were we reading? I can't remember now. I just heard a recording the other day so I can't now recall whether I heard it or read it but I remember being terribly moved and thinking about my life and my own commitment to stuff on the basis of that.

Then of course shortly after, four of us were arrested at Lords cricket ground in the middle of the night for illegal bill sticking on the walls of Lords just the night before the

Test in the then South African tour. This is not the famous one later where everybody ran on to the pitch and dug it all up and Peter Hain became famous, this is a tour before that, before sports boycott was in the language.

But we'd printed off these stickers and people stuck them all up the underground as you went up the escalator, they were nifty little stickers, 'Stop the South African tour' or something like that. So we were sticking these things on, two young men from South Africa, the brothers Pahad, one of whom went on to become the Deputy Foreign Minister many years later [Aziz Pahad] and his brother the Special Minister in the Presidency [Essop Pahad], But these two lads were about eighteen and twenty and they'd just come from Cape Town; and then there was Selina Molteno, who was a young activist with us in the Anti-Apartheid Movement office. She'd come from South Africa where she was one of the first white women to be detained under the 180 days, but not for very many days, thank goodness.

We were all arrested and the police in St John's Wood couldn't make their minds up whether to charge us or not. We had been seen being arrested by a colleague from Anti-Apartheid so she knew to alert everybody to the fact that we were in the police station. We were singing freedom songs, two women and two men, in adjacent cells in St John's Wood.

Upshot, they charged us, because we teased them so much about not being out catching the great train robbers, who were at large at that stage, and yet holding us. So we were charged and we appeared in Marylebone Magistrates Court the following morning with a famous QC that Ethel had rustled up, Sir Dingle Foot. We had agreed that as my surname was the first on the list, I was accused number one, and we had agreed that I would make a big statement from the dock, as it were. When it came to our turn he called me to stand up and say whatever I had to say. So I started making a big statement and the magistrate interrupted me: 'It's bad enough I've got Dingle Foot QC sitting here in my magistrates court, but to have someone making a speech from the dock as if they thought they were Nelson Mandela, I mean please! Sit down, I fine you all £1'.

So he showed he thought the police were mad to have charged us by giving us a derisory fine, and of course the press were all there by now. Ethel had been stirring up a storm overnight and by the time we got back to the office people had phoned paying our £1 by the zillion, I think they raised several thousand pounds for our £1. I'm sorry that I can't tell you anything more heart lifting about what I remember, but there you are.

CM: That's interesting. Just going back briefly to the trial, what was the general expectation about what you thought the outcome of the trial was most likely to be?

AP: Oh look, we thought it would be death, we did, and I think the British parliament had by then abandoned the death penalty here, but they hadn't there. One of my first recollections of being at the Anti-Apartheid Movement was being outside here [Trafalgar Square], just down outside here, because a political prisoner had been hanged for

political, obviously political crimes as seen by the then government. So they were big hangers, the apartheid government, oh my word, so we didn't think they would hesitate ... it's clear that everybody thought that and the prosecution were a bit shocked when the judge did not offer the death sentence.

They were shocked and cross with him, he was terribly hostile to the accused and to their arguments, the judge, he was very old school Afrikaans. But he had been known as not keen on the death penalty. He'd not campaigned or anything, but he hadn't done a lot of death penalty. In fact I don't think he'd done any, and it was clear that as a judge he didn't think that was necessarily a very good way of resolving things. He was under very heavy pressure from the prosecution to give the death penalty, and that had been a theme right from the off, from the arrests and the ... you see the chaps were arrested with all incriminating documents all over the place.

The fact that they were planning the armed struggle and therefore, as the South African government saw it, violence against the state, was prima facie treachery and treason, you know, death penalty-bearing crimes. So we were, as the prosecution was, very much expecting death penalties and we were already in preparation for how to campaign to get a reprieve, and the United Nations were being girded up and so on; so of course we were all madly relieved when that didn't happen.

CM: So you were all very relieved when it didn't happen, the death sentence wasn't passed, can you remember anything else about the reaction and the feelings at the time that it was announced they wouldn't hang, there wouldn't be a death penalty?

AP: Oh, there was jubilation and services of thanksgiving all over the place, and people in this country, you've got to bear in mind that at that stage the, what became the worldwide anti-apartheid campaign was really focused in Britain and Ireland. Ireland because Kader Asmal had finished his studies here at the London School of Economics and he'd gone over to what became a 30-year tenure at Trinity College in Dublin. He went on to become a Minister in the Mandela and the Mbeki governments, and he and his wife stirred up a complete storm in Ireland, and Britain was very alert to the trial, so people were quick to be relieved and to think about 'Well now what?' in this country.

So I think pretty much people didn't relax, but it was hard work to keep the same intensity of interest from the media and from big political leaders and so on because things went quiet after that; and necessarily things went quiet in South Africa, because no sooner had – oh actually come to think, not long after, Bram Fischer, one of the trial lawyers for Mandela and the others, himself went underground and was arrested, and part of a sort of mini Rivonia trial a few months later.

We were able to keep some momentum going around that, but then when those accused also went down for life, the momentum had slowed. But a number of people had got the bit between their teeth, so we had to keep thinking and Abdul Minty, who was very young at the time, he's now Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy body in Geneva, he's very big in world nuclear discussions and getting non-proliferation

treaties properly implemented — Abdul was a very clever, very young man with brain power, along with others like Vella Pillay and Tom Kellock, we got going with the international campaign for the release of political prisoners and we were able to campaign for the next couple of years on conditions for these guys. It became quickly clear that they may have been reprieved, but they were sent away and were being treated like common criminals.

Of course, conditions were not good enough for common criminals, but these were political prisoners and they were not being treated as such, so a huge campaign got underway from here and that's when it started to spread around the world, for upgrading and then releasing them.

And it took a while to get better conditions agreed. Visits were dreadful, so we were arguing that the Red Cross, International Red Cross, should be allowed in to see them and so forth, we were making a lot of noise around those kind of issues after the trial.

CM: Again, just before we move on, just the last thing, is there anything else about the Rivonia trial in particular you'd like to mention or anything else we haven't covered?

AP: Not really. It was very ... look, one was young and energetic and naturally an optimistic sort of person. One was very clear, and being well schooled by the people in the Movement, that you were just part of a huge body of people against apartheid.

But it was on your mind, I mean it did prey on one's mind at night. You worried about them – were they alright these chaps? Personally, looking back, it was terribly important to the development of my own thinking about human rights. I mean I had been earlier in the civil rights movement in California briefly and indeed had wonderful anti-apartheid experience that I'll tell you about in a minute there.

And I'd been alert and active as a student at Cape Town University during the years when the university was being segregated. Black students were there, mind, but they lived a segregated life, couldn't live in residence or go to balls or anything, but they were in the classroom with us and the government didn't like that. They weren't meant to be, they were meant to be 'hewing wood and drawing water', as the then Prime Minister said. So I'd had a consciousness but I was quite a young thing and I was naturally a buoyant and optimistic person.

So that period for me, the Rivonia period, really helped me focus on what was important in life for me. I still had a vision of myself as a reporter about all these things. I subsequently modified into thinking of myself as a political activist, but it was a very intense period and it was good for a lot of us in thinking about what should I be doing with my life? And so when people talk about 'Mandela, he was such an inspiration', for us those statements from the dock were contemporary, they spoke inspiringly immediately. I was inspired and I used to say if somebody would say, 'Who's your hero?', for years before everybody in the world said 'Mandela is my hero', I would say 'Mandela is my hero'. And quite a lot of people would say, 'Oh, you mean that terrorist

from South Africa?' Because it wasn't yet understood why he would be inspirational by everybody, not by miles.

Especially not on the political right wing in this country. And one had to do ... I had to spread myself around quite a bit. So not everybody was an anti-apartheid person that I knew, or as the years unfurled necessarily particularly interested. Because you've got to bear in mind that was in '64. Phew, you know, it doesn't take long before a new generation comes up. However, that said, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, people will have recorded what went on afterward. So that was Rivonia.

For me it was inspiring, but it also taught me tons of stuff about organising, detail, not to leave threads unravelled. You've got to tidy things up, you've got to write stuff clearly. I learned how to present. I had to go and give talks. I'd never been a big platform person but I had to go about and make a speech or try and persuade a group of people that they needed to do this to help us. So I learned about personal presentation, I learned about not being frightened to talk to Cabinet ministers or bishops or top people. I learned, I developed self-confidence. And look, I had a lot of it anyway. But I learned ... and the other thing I learned from my South African comrades was self discipline. Just defining what it was you wanted to do and getting on and doing it. Those early people at the time of the Rivonia that I had a lot to do with, the very early ANC people here, taught me so much about how to behave. They were representative of the movement at home in the sense of discipline, focus and big strategy, but implemented properly. I learned a lot from those guys, I learned a lot. And I was meant to be helping. They helped me, they motivated my whole life really. Yes.

CM: OK, yeah, if we can just go actually probably backwards in time but you mentioned previous or political activity at Cape Town and the Civil Rights Union in America.

AP: Yes.

CM: Could you just tell me bit about that please?

AP: Look, I was taken to South Africa from here because of my father's work. My father went there as the chairman of a company then called Reckitt and Coleman, a big food and pharmaceuticals company, it still exists under a slightly different name. And I was about 15 then, and I knew about South Africa because the head teacher of my school here in South London made it a project to make sure that I was well informed before I got there. So when I got there I didn't have blinkers on my eyes about what I saw as absolute paradise – gorgeous, gorgeous place. I don't know if you've ever been but it's heavenly, Cape Town, and when you arrive by sea, which we were lucky enough to do, very few people do that these days, there's Table Mountain comes up out of the horizon. Ah! And it was sunny and lovely, lovely. And Cape Town is the focal point for mixed race people... I wasn't used to seeing black people of any sort at all in London of those days, especially suburban London where I grew up, you didn't see many black people at all in those days. So it was all exciting. There were marvellous exotic flowers and Mediterranean climate I wasn't used to and it seemed like heaven, but I knew that it

wasn't, because of the preparation that I'd had.

Then I went to the University, very young because of the education systems not dovetailing. I had it in my mind to be a journalist so I went to the Cape Town newspaper, the Cape Times, and they said, 'We'll give you holiday jobs and we'll pay you linage for any story that you file from the university'. Well I was filing stuff a lot because the time was coincident, as I said, with the legislation that was being proposed, and subsequently enacted, to segregate the University. That politicised a lot of students of the day, with the Vice Chancellor leading marches in full academic dress through the centre of Cape Town. It was pretty exciting.

I went teaching at night school – the University runs a health and education centre then in the nasty township of Windermere. But in Freshers' week I went on a bus to that township. I came home and I actually vomited. My mother couldn't think what had happened. Because of the conditions that I saw people living in, and I taught there at the night school.

I was doing the reporter thing, so it was always on the one hand and on the other, you know. But you couldn't help but see the way the country was going. And it was like breathing to me that you wouldn't want to support these people and you wouldn't want to justify or defend them – ever. It was like breathing. And I always feel touched when South Africans, as Archbishop Tutu did in Westminster Abbey, they say, 'Thank you, thank you, for giving your time and energy, you guys in the solidarity world', and a little tear comes to your eye and you think 'Mmm, that's nice'. But it didn't occur to me not to.

Subsequently, lots of the young people, who came after me, at reunions like 40 years of anti-apartheid, 50 years of anti-apartheid, say things like, 'Well, sorry to say, it was actually the best time of my life running onto that cricket pitch or charging through a rugby field and causing mayhem and standing shouting, you know, throwing eggs at people's cars' [laughing] and stuff like that. So in a way it was ... look, it's dreadful to say ... enjoyable when what you're doing relates to people who are having such ghastly time. But if you're an activist sort, to have a really good cause to be active for was really something and so I got that straightaway from being a student in Cape Town and from being a teacher in the township.

Then I must just tell you because I've never told anybody and it's unrecorded. I went then to study in France and while I was a student the Algerian war was coming to an end and it was a hugely painful and dangerous period in France with bombs ... a bit like when the IRA were very busy here. Plastic bombs blowing out café fronts and such in Paris. And you couldn't help but be alert to the end of French colonialism just across the water in Algeria.

I fell in love with an American fellow then in France and I went to, as I stupidly thought, get married to him in California. By the time I arrived a few months later it was quite clear that the passion had cooled on all sides. But [laughing] he fixed me up to go and live in what you would call a commune, a huge, 13-roomed house, with all kinds of wonderful

and interesting people living in it.

Now, by now a certain kind of activist in California was alert to South Africa and I got to know a member of the American Communist Party and he was very close with trade unions. And the stevedores, the dockers of San Francisco, said, 'Look, there's coming in a ship from South Africa carrying bananas and we think it ought not to land here and that those bananas ought to be boycotted'. It was ... the boycott movement was understood by a certain kind of person. Because the union was so involved, they were brilliant, they knew the church people, and we got a permanent picket going. Only about 24 people at any time on the dock at San Francisco where the ship was due. And the stevedores said they would not unload it if it docked. Meanwhile these 24 people were just walking in a circle with their heads bowed and 'Boycott South African goods' signs. And that ship could not unload ... it had to go to Canada in the end. None of the ports on the US West Coast would receive it, thanks to the Longshoremen's Union.

But for me it immediately gave me a clear understanding of how the South African cause appealed to people far, far away, not all black civil rights people, far from it. But you could see the empathy people felt and then the quick way in which they correlated the South African situation with the situation in the southern states and wider, 'cos we're talking pre-Civil Rights Act in America. So that was a very good lesson: for me to understand the international ramifications of the South African case. So I arrived, if you like, well prepared for Rivonia.

CM: Ok yeah, so going back to – that's a really great story – you said after Rivonia you then went on to take a full time position afterwards in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Could you tell me a bit about that, the role that was then after that?

AP: Yes, as I said, after the trial it was clear that we needed to marshal our resources so as to be able to make a long-term anti-apartheid push. By now we were clear we were in it for the long run and there wasn't going to be any quick change in South Africa. So resources were ... and the Rivonia trial helped to bring resources, I mean cash. If there was a lot of Moscow gold, which was mentioned a good deal at the time, including by my own father accusing me, if there was a lot of it, it certainly wasn't hitting us in any large measure. Money was always an issue. However, we moved into slightly bigger premises from Endsleigh Street into Charlotte Street, just north of Oxford Street there, and it was convenient in a number of ways, apart from being central.

The African National Congress also opened an office in London at the time very nearby and there was a good deal of interaction. It was absolutely clear that the Anti-Apartheid Movement should be a non-party body, whether in British terms or in South African terms, but the ANC's strategists were seeing the importance of solidarity movements and they were definitely the most prominent. But AA was also ... we saw Unity Movement people and PAC [Pan-African Congress] people in there from South Africa, we saw the Namibian groups, both of them, we saw the Mozambique and Angola groups before separate bodies were set up in solidarity with them. And we realised that we needed to just get resources marshalled properly. So money was found for two

members of staff at least. And then there was a huge army of volunteers who'd been energised by the Rivonia campaigning.

So, as I said, we needed a formal information strategy. And it became clear that there was enough demand for running news from both South Africa itself but also about campaigning, for a journal to be thought of. And so we established a monthly newspaper, which was called Anti-Apartheid News. I think the first issues were probably in '65. I was very much assisted, I was the founding editor. The then ANC representative in London, Mazisi Kunene, who eventually left politics and became a professor of African literature, he was a poet [laughing]. He was at SOAS, he was doing postgraduate study in England and he'd been an ANC bloke back at home. He was a literary, historical, very creative, imaginative bloke. But he was also very good at what modern parlance has as networking, he really got about. And he was very media friendly so journalists liked talking to him. He introduced me to Gus Macdonald, who is now Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, a former Clydeside ship worker who came here and became a journalist at the then Tribune newspaper. I've no idea if it even still exists. And Gus and I set about putting the AAM paper together. And I also knew my now husband, Bruce Page, who was an editor on the Sunday Times in those days. I had known him a bit before I went to France.

We knew we needed professional help, so Bruce pulled together a number of media friends from round Fleet Street and they became our editorial advisory board, but the editorial content board was controlled by the Anti-Apartheid Movement's committee and they found us a bit wild sometimes, and we found their prose heavy handed.

We were trying to make the paper readable and accessible to a wide British audience, you know. My Fleet Street friends were always full of laughter over the South African press. We used to get the then Rand Daily Mail, the Cape Times and all of those and they were terrific. I mean even during those bad days the journalists down there in South Africa were feisty, as they remain today, thank God.

Lots of stuff used to get reported, like policemen up in trees peering in to catch reverend persons with their African maids in bed; or policemen themselves in plain clothes going into prostitute areas and then having their way with the ladies and then charging them. And all these nasty but [laughing] chaotic, funny, notions of how apartheid was working itself out. The British Fleet Street crowd saw these kinds of stories as illuminating, if you like, at the interpersonal level, of the craziness of apartheid. I mean obviously the black women were all getting charged but your priest was very often just moved to another post. It was happening all the time at one stage. After a bit, the Dutch Reformed Church seemed to get a bit of a grip and those kind of stories were less. But the police were endlessly at it and of course they never took any penalty — they just said, 'Well we were doing our duty. She was transgressing sex across the colour line.' Because all that was banned, you see. You couldn't have sex, you couldn't marry.

So there was lots of social apartheid that made stories for us in the Anti-Apartheid News, as well as important articles about the struggle and as well as news about the

campaigns — you know, if Chelmsford Co-operative Party had established a boycott South African goods meeting, then how had they done it? — so that Sheffield could do the same. And then local authorities started saying ‘Goodness, we buy ten tons of oranges for our children’s homes or our school meals or old people’s homes. We’ll not do that.’ So we were able to report this, and because we were sending the paper all over the place more and more influential people in organisations that could do something were able to read what others were doing and build the campaigns. And then people saw that these ones are having a meeting and this speaker had made a terrific speech so, ‘Let’s invite them and we’ll do that here’. So rallies were going on.

The galvanising force of information was very important in the struggle. Having the newspaper meant that we didn’t always have to be writing briefing letters and stuffing them, sending and then next week, ‘Oh heavens, we didn’t tell them so and so’. We had this monthly communication. Armies of volunteers arrived, folders and stuffers. We used to look out for printers all over the place, cheap as chips. I mean where was that Moscow gold? We were always looking for a cheaper printer.

Then of course technology started overtaking us and we had to learn different technologies. We had a really busy time getting that paper going in the first few years, but it was good. We got lots of support from advertising people who helped us with graphic design, we got lots of professional support, terrific photographers — Jurgen Schadeberg, David Goldblatt.

And that’s what started to happen: professional groups formed. Architects against Apartheid ... Graphic Designers against ... associations of them and then they would think, ‘Hang on a minute, should we be going there ...?’

So the boycotting got going, like the academic boycott. Should university staff from here be going taking jobs down there? That was very difficult because are we not all in favour of the free flow of information? Should we not all have access to the brains of the world? Won’t that help us be better people and overthrow our own government? We took the view ‘No’ — that you were reinforcing. The regime were able to say, ‘Our universities have teachers from all over the world. Our students are exposed ...’

And we had two novelists of the day helping — that was a big campaign with the press — a lot of people took ages to be convinced it was right. Iris Murdoch and Angus Wilson. They were big, big novelists in the ‘60s, big, big. They opening the Academic Boycott campaign and saved the day. I remember I was in a fuss! ‘Oh, they’ll lose the plot. They’ll say: Freedom of Information? Oh gosh, we didn’t think of that, oh no actually we’re pulling out.’ But of course they didn’t. They were clever, they’d thought of everything. So information and media and publicising stuff was really, really important at that period.

And we were on the big campaign for signatures, the Worldwide Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners. A petition was going to the United Nations. Everybody was getting all their local top people to sign, so we could keep reporting that

the Mayor of Newcastle and Lord this and so and so had signed. And we started going to the party political conferences and confronting Cabinet ministers. I remember Harold Wilson's Minister of Transport, Richard Marsh. I stopped him as he was going into the Party Conference, 'Please sign the World Campaign petition?' He tried to brush me aside and he said, 'Do you not know who I am?' So I said, 'Of course I know who you are, that's why I'm asking you to sign the ...' [laughing], we were doing that all over the place with everybody.

By about 1966, I felt that we'd got the information service well founded, and I went to work at the *Sunday Times*. The volunteers were well organised and I had no intention of not continuing to be a volunteer. Indeed I continued to edit the newspaper until 1970 when my first baby arrived and Christabel took over. I left AAM to work for the *Sunday Times* as a researcher and I went on their great presidential election coverage in 1968, which was a hell of a year to be in America, I can tell you. And that's when I realised I didn't want to report on stuff, I wanted to do stuff. So that's really the end of my time as a full time paid worker. But there is more.

CM: It's fine.

AP: One of the things that occurred to me during several months as a temporary reporter for the *Sunday Times* on the enormous presidential election year coverage year which started with the peace campaign of Eugene McCarthy, and then King assassination, the civil rights activity, the cities burning, the Vietnam protests. Robert Kennedy finally entered the lists late, took all sorts of risks. He was in open-topped cars through huge crowds. The security were having a nightmare with him. He was a senator already and, of course, his brother had been killed. So we were stunned but not totally surprised when he was assassinated, and my husband was actually right there at the time.

This all made it clear to me that I would want to be an activist rather than a reporter, an observer. And I saw a differentiation there. Because I'd been inspired some years earlier to do things properly as far as race and South Africa were concerned, I thought since I was around Islington anyway with my small children, and since I was getting increasingly interested in political life as how you can change things, I thought, 'OK, let's demonstrate to the regime in South Africa that they can't say that London is just a city like their cities where everybody is segregated and people fight on racial grounds'. They had loved it when the Notting Hill riots were on in the late '50s. The South African white political class loved it.

Black people fighting white people, rioting in the streets in London and in Washington – 'People who are rude about us'. They loved seeing that and said it just shows that people aren't meant to live together. So I was wanting to demonstrate tolerance and liberty – a rather grand approach! Not many people ran [laughing] to be a councillor in Islington in order to save South Africa. But that was in my mind as well as doing something about the schools, of course. So I had these twin objectives. And in any event I had always seen education as the most important element in teaching people about South Africa. That all fits with information journalism, of course it does.

Because of South Africa, I became active when public bodies here had to think about themselves as the Race Relations Act 1976 was passed. This specifically required local government to be responsible for ensuring no racial discrimination either in their services or in their geography. And I was by then Chairman of the Social Services Committee in the borough and I was also the borough's member on the old Inner London Education Authority.

Then I chaired that first Islington Council Race Relations Committee – in about 1979, this was. Ruth Mompati was the ANC's chief representative at the time. The ANC had been given a building in south Islington. There's a plaque on the wall today to commemorate it. And also in the borough were the offices of the Defence and Aid Fund, which was the group that raised money to support political prisoners and their families paying for lawyers and such in South Africa, and SWAPO, the Namibian freedom movement, the FRELIMO solidarity group — the Portuguese group, I think they had their offices in the borough.

We thought we could produce some media publicity. So we had the Mayor invite the African National Congress representative to tea in the Parlour and then she came to address the Race Relations Committee. This wasn't tested ground yet. It became so, people picked all that up big time later. Ruth came and she gave, as far as I'm aware, what must be one of the earliest speeches to a race relations committee in any town hall.

They were lively times in local government and people were helped to see how local authorities could end their own discrimination against British people, but also assist in what might be thought to be foreign affairs and nothing to do with town halls at all.

So I just wanted to record that early part of Islington's development because I met one of the councillors of later years, just this morning, and when I told him what I was doing he said, 'Oh well, I've been interviewed already about the '80s'. He said 'I did mention you, I did', and then he said (whispering), 'But not very much' [laughing]. So he reminded me of that South African–Islington connection. I think today London shows more or less and with all the caveats we know about and recent instances only too clear in our minds, by and large this city has become racially tolerant. And the fact that a policeman shoots a black man because he claims he thought he had a gun, is headline, headline stuff, because everybody knows that's out of order.

But what I'm saying is by and large young Londoners don't ... it's not an issue. It's a different city than it was when I turned up from Cape Town with 'No coloureds' and 'No Irish' signs all over the place. Things do get better. And, God knows, they've got better in South Africa. And even though we may moan about certain things we see in South Africa today, 20 years is not long to eliminate 300 years of colonial oppression followed by a brutal modern apartheid regime. Twenty years is not a long time to get through all that and to develop the very hard work of making democracy work. Anyway, we're not exactly brilliant at it here.

CM: Yeah, no, yes it is [inaudible]. So when you were in Islington did you still have contact with people in the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AP: Oh yes, yes I did. A personal friend for years and years was Ethel de Keyser, who if she isn't in headlights in this archive seriously should be. In fact Christabel asked me to find a photograph of her the other day, which I did. Ethel was ... people always assume Ethel was the beginning of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but by my standards she was quite late in the day [laughing]. She came immediately after the Rivonia trial, when there was a general election here, in November 1964. We decided to have a fundraising and a consciousness-raising event using all the film stars and celebrities of the day who had signed and marched and done their bit. So we put on a variety show at midnight in one of the big West End theatres. It was to mark Barbara Castle's elevation to the Cabinet, which meant she had to retire from the Anti-Apartheid Movement. As a Member of Parliament, she had been the President of the Boycott Movement and then the Anti-Apartheid Movement in its first era. And she became Secretary for International Development in the first Wilson government and that meant she had to give up honorary posts, and David Ennals MP he took over, and then he had to give it up a couple of years later because he became a minister too. But that's another story.

Ethel was working for the London Symphony Orchestra at the time and her brother was in jail: he had been working for the ANC illegally, and was sentenced to 18 years in jail. Ethel had been in and out of South Africa trying to save him and then was banned herself. I think she was just deciding did she go back to the LSO or not when somebody hooked her in and said, 'Well temporarily come and work for us and put this show on because you know about performance and artists and music and all that stuff'. So she did. And Ethel blew into the Charlotte Street office ... you've got to remember it was "swinging London" in the '60s. So simultaneously amidst all this doom and misery about South Africa there were new things going on all over London, fashion, music, art. Ethel wore a little black leather dress with a big scoop neck and no sleeves. And heels, high, high, she was a very short woman. As a younger woman she looked absolutely stunning. And she'd hustle into the office and bustle round, 'What, what! Look at those shelves, you haven't even got your boxes organised. How the hell do you expect ...?' She was a complete dragon round the place [laughing]. And she took over this event and got all sorts of people involved.

Later Antony Sher became a great friend of hers, she dragged him in to help, and many other prominent people. Ethel brought a whole breath of air into this place and the Committee then said to her, 'You're not going back to the London Symphony Orchestra, you're coming here as General Secretary. That was the first time I think they'd had a proper organising General Secretary. But I made it clear ... from the off I could see this force of nature. I said, 'Look, I'm here already as the Information Officer and I'm not going to be made accountable to this woman' [laughing]. 'I'm keen to work with her, but I don't want to be in line management.' So they said, 'That's fine, we're not ...', you know, they were very early with the collective way of work ... Anyway, we were all accountable to the Board. That was fine.

Ethel and I became fast friends for the next 30 plus years. She went on from the Anti-Apartheid Movement to the British Defence and Aid Fund, which Canon Collins founded. And then to the Education Trust that seemed to follow naturally from it. Canon Collins was a tireless fundraiser for it. He was a force of nature himself. I remember going down with [Mazisi] Kunene, into the Crypt to the memorial for Canon Collins, who was a dean of St Pauls. Here's this poet, a completely secular non-religious person, standing there in front of the memorial speaking to Canon Collins. He was so important for people at the very beginning.

... Anyway, that's by the by. Ethel was a very important element in that early period and in the middle years of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. What was that question about?

CM: It was about whether in the later years when you were active in Islington ...

AP: Oh, was I still in touch ... yes, so Ethel was always making sure that anybody who'd ever had anything to do with anti-apartheid and loads of people who never had anything, were... But I was very, very busy in my life. By now I had interesting and quite responsible work which Ethel found quite hard to get a grip on, because she always assumed that for everyone she knew, their first priority would be the same as her first priority — South Africa. She made sure I was kept in touch. Anyway I by now had good friends amongst the liberation movement generally and so ... the ANC always had a meeting on January. Somebody was always either here or was brought in from Africa, where the struggle was now more intensively being waged.

So people like the subsequent President Mbeki whom I'd known, as I said, from when he was a student at Sussex, and lots of others, the Pahads and others, remained my friends and I was in touch with them and if they needed stuff they knew to ... we lived in Islington half a mile from the ANC's office, so they used to use our house if they needed a private meeting space.

We were asked to put up a young fellow once who had exited clandestinely from South Africa, he was a leading light in the UDF [United Democratic Front]. He stayed with us for a while, and later he became ... the first Minister for Local Government in the first Mandela government [laughing]. We couldn't believe it when we saw each other in some town hall here. He subsequently left politics. You see, a lot of people were in politics because they had to be. But they weren't necessarily willing to be always in politics.

But, no, I did stay, I stayed completely in touch. Meanwhile my own parents were still living in Cape Town.

All this – I'm 73 now – has made my ... South Africans helped me see what to do, how to conduct myself... I've been a very privileged and lucky person. Things haven't always been quite straightforward, but I've always had guiding principles and they've not least come from my South African experiences. I go as often as I can now and my father lived on through the first years of the change, thank goodness, to 1998 so that gave me a lot

of reason to go backwards and forwards and now I go anyway.

And then the government made me an Honorary Consul, which is a tremendous privilege. I mean it's honorary, there's no money [laughing]. You know Brian Filling from Scotland, he's the Honorary Consul in Scotland and his anti-apartheid experience is very long also.

CM: Yeah, no, I mean it's been pretty comprehensive. I mean are there any other ... I mean in a general sense, you know, about the past are there any sort of general other feelings or impressions you take from your whole time of being involved?

AP: No, look, what's unique to me I've more or less tried to cover. We all feel, those of us who've had anything at all to do with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, it has been seminal.

But there was a young fellow last night, about 20, he said, 'As far as I'm concerned Nelson Mandela's always been free.' And he said, 'But the point is that my school had a link with a school near Johannesburg and when I was 14 we did an exchange'. He said, 'The visit made me concerned about South Africa's development for the rest of my life'. He used the phrase I often use: 'I fell in love with the country'. And that's what ... I was trying to describe to you about when I first got there, and I've noticed it with person after person, South Africa exerts a strong hold

So yes, there's nothing more. The struggle, it was so clear about man's inhumanity to man and it was limited, so people could focus on a dreadful circumstance that should not be allowed to be spread in any way at all. It was a brilliant thing to be able to be a part of it and from my point of view to still be alive at the time of the change — I couldn't believe my luck. A lot of people I knew had died by then. Or become disabled through old age. I mean Oliver Tambo couldn't live to enjoy knowing that his friend for whom his whole life had been spent, was President. They were like twins, Tambo and Mandela, they were young men at Fort Hare University. Oliver Tambo had the worst of it in my opinion. People wouldn't say that, because Nelson was locked up all that time, but Tambo's life was hell, it really was and... he could not enjoy the fruits of it.

I feel very privileged that I've lived long enough to help to build the new world. I feel very privileged and lucky.

CM: That's great. I mean I've asked everything I want to ask but just before we end is there anything else you want to mention before we end? That's good. Thank you very much.