Interview with Anna Murray by Ellie McDonald, 29th September 2013, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom
http://www.aamarchives.org/

Ellie McDonald: Today is Sunday the 29th September 2013. I am Ellie McDonald interviewing Anna Murray and this is an interview for the Forward to Freedom Anti-Apartheid Movement History project. OK – could you please give me your full name?

Anna Murray: I'm Anna Murray.

EM: and when and where were you born?

AM: I was born in Leeds, England, in 1965.

EM: What did you do for a living at the time of your activism?

AM: I think when I first got involved I was selling advertising space – not in the least political – and I think in the later years I then worked for a campaigning organisation, the Electoral Reform Society, which not only wants to get rid of first past the post voting, but only wants there to be the single transferable vote – a niche campaign to say the least, but through being involved in anti-apartheid really, I got involved in more general campaigning work, as well as in my spare time.

EM: And that leads very well into my next question, which asks the political campaigning activities that you were involved in aside from anti-apartheid campaigning?

AM: Not much at all. At university I'd been aware of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. There was all sorts of other things going on at the time, like the miners' strike, but I didn't get involved in any campaigning round that, I think a little bit put off by rather posturing student politics – it was only when I came to work in London afterwards that my friends, who were mostly in the Communist Party, and seemed to be taking their activity to change the world very seriously, that I began to show some interest in going along with them to demonstrations for CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – which was pretty big at the time – and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and that's the one that sort of caught my imagination most.

EM: Why did the struggle against apartheid resonate so strongly for you?

AM: I was thinking about this before the interview, and it's a bit hard to say quite what it was. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was already very big, very active, and it was the year after I got involved, I think, that the huge 'Freedom at 70' concert took place at Wembley Stadium – all the work that had been done over the previous 30 years was really coming to a head. So I guess it was on a personal level such an exciting, vibrant thing to get involved with, and through that I learnt so much about the world, not just about South Africa, so it was very much that the Anti-Apartheid Movement was my education, rather than what I'd done before leading me to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So the short answer is probably just luck, with the friends that I had – but then it was a fantastic lively supportive thing to be involved in, where you really did feel you were making a difference.

EM: Could you describe one of the initial political meetings that you attended?

AM: I think the first thing I did was go on a big demonstration in central London, which was the first thing like that I'd ever been on – bit bewildering, but got introduced to people from the Hackney local group – that's where I was living at the time, having only recently moved

to London, so I tiptoed along to my first meeting, in a basement room of Hackney Town Hall – the local authority then, Labour controlled, were very generous in letting us hire rooms for free. So I went along, sat very nervously, and I can't remember much of what happened at all, except that the then secretary was somebody called Simon Korner, who – fantastic English and Journalism teacher – was then at the Workingmen's College. Now, I know, he's still teaching at City and Islington College, and the sort of person who you want to be running everybody's first meeting, asking people could they do a little thing, hand out a few leaflets, perhaps come along to the Tesco picket on Saturday. So I just got drawn in, and encouraged and supported.

EM: Do you remember if there was any food, or any music at those initial meetings?

AM: Definitely not, no, it was one of the things you learnt, in organisations like AAM, is how to organise with no budget. So there was never any money for room bookings, for printing, or photocopying or for refreshments, it was all the dustiest room – I remember us meeting in the dressing room at the back of the Assembly Hall in Camden, because it was the only room that was free – and I mean available free and cost-free. So no, they were usually pretty dingy, pretty dusty, but filled with pretty earnest people, and we did usually have money for a pint in the pub afterwards, so that was the only refreshment that I remember.

EM: So how would you compare the grassroots activism that you were involved in the, to the grassroots activism that takes place today?

AM: Not very different, considering how much else has changed – technology wise and socially since the 1980s, my experience of Stop the War local groups, my local Labour Party branch – they're still taking place in begged and borrowed small rooms. There's the same mixture of stalwarts, quirky characters and new enthusiastic people, somehow working together on a shoe string to try and change the world for the better, so the fact that now we use Twitter and websites as well actually hasn't made the process of meeting together in local areas very different at all really.

EM: How would you describe your initial feelings towards the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: Well, my very early ideas of anti-apartheid were formed at university, where I remember the cash machine at Barclays Bank being glued – with super glue – as part of the campaign against Barclays Bank's involvement with the apartheid state. But I didn't really understand much about it, I was aware of the protest but not really much understanding why – a friend and I who were completely not political stole a Barclays Bank banner from a horse show in the next field to the university and stuck 'Boycott' over it and hung it up on a bridge at college – that was a student prank with no politics, at all. So it was only as I started working in London, I began to realise quite – how, not just that there was a country with a bad government somewhere, but that this was part of a much bigger picture of how the world works, and felt drawn by the people who were trying to do something to change that. So my knowledge grew very slowly, but getting involved in Anti-Apartheid opened my eyes, and suddenly you were mixing with people from Southern Africa, both the African National Congress and people from South Africa who were in London at the time, many of them exiles, and working closely with AAM to keep the campaign building for freedom – and also those from Namibia, in SWAPO (the South West Africa People's Organisation). So it was amazing to be sat in the same conferences and meetings with people with such stature and such dignity, who were making London their home – because they had to. And on a local level, it was my first experience of how do you bring different people in a community together, meeting our MP, getting the mayor to come and stand outside Tesco's, helping us

to explain why you shouldn't buy fruit from South Africa – and engaging with everything else that was going on locally. There were women's groups, there were Black and Asian community organisations that we engaged with. So it was my first experience of all of those sort of activities – which I've carried on in one way or another, yes, ever since, for the last 25 years.

EM: Thank you, following on from that, could you provide some general context about that year – while you were meeting all these people, and attending AAM meetings?

AM: So I suppose it was 1987–88 when I began to get involved, so that's ten years into the Thatcher administration. I guess as a very young teenager I'd been like a lot of young women, quite excited at the idea of a woman prime minister, when Thatcher got elected – ten years later I was obviously aware of the downsides to having elected Margaret Thatcher. Industry had been decimated, local councils had been through huge battles about setting negative budgets, so they could carry on providing for local people even though the government wouldn't give them the money to pay for it. So that was a sort of political context. I guess I was lucky, I had a family who could support me through university, but through that I'd also met people who came from very different, backgrounds to mine, and it was working with that diverse group of middle-class campaigners and working-class activists in trade unions, Communist Party that was the blend of people that I was beginning to meet in my first days in London. So that was quite heady, for somebody of 22 in the late '80s – which seems a very long time ago.

EM: When you first became involved with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, how would you describe your feelings to those who felt differently than yourself?

AM: That's quite hard to answer. I think I was probably – I was going to say like a lot of young people, but I think I'm probably still a bit like that and I'm nearly 50 now. But once you've seen the light, you're very impatient with everybody who hasn't, and there's a downside to that, and I probably came across as very arrogant and very impatient. On the other hand, it makes you incredibly positive and incredibly optimistic, because you really do think you can change everybody's mind – and I think you really believe in your capacity to do that. I think I have much more doubt now – but yes, there were people who just yelled at you, the Soviet Union still existed then, so people would yell 'Go back to Moscow', and people who are just straightforwardly racist and would be very uncomfortable with why black and white people were working together in this way. But mostly, I think, people understood that apartheid was wrong, and certainly in Hackney in the late '80s you didn't get a lot of opposition. It was about trying to get people active rather than to convince them to change their view. I think the type of campaigning in different communities would have varied, yes, enormously, from that.

EM: What would have been an archetypal day of campaigning within your local group?

AM: I guess, the most common thing was Saturday pickets in Hackney – we were outside Tesco on Wells Street. All supermarkets stocked South African fruit – that was the main thing – and we focused on Tesco, so there was a campaign focus. They weren't necessarily that much worse than any of the others, but it became a central campaign, and we would stand outside, giving out leaflets, asking people to sign petitions, and very daringly sneaking into the shop and sticking anti-apartheid campaign stickers on the fruit. And I think other groups were maybe more daring with their direct action than we were, but mostly we were trying to get people to take stickers and not to buy the fruit, and to tell us that they'd done that. So we'd do that for a few hours most Saturdays, and occasionally we would co-ordinate

activity across all the local groups in the UK, and all decide, for example, to try and block people from going into Shell petrol stations – again, because the Anglo-Dutch company were massively involved in South Africa, having both that British and that Dutch colonial past. And one of my favourite photos is of our blockade of our local petrol station, with a policeman pointing his figure in my face, in what looks like an incredibly antagonistic exchange – in fact it wasn't, the camera did lie on that occasion, it was fairly friendly, partly because we did have the local vicar and a nun, who were very much part of our team. So that was probably the most typical thing that we did. Quite a few evenings, as I said before, sitting in dusty, basement rooms, planning who would do what, how we would get leaflets distributed, how we would fundraise to get an ad in the paper to tell people to come to things.

EM: So you've stated that you were on board in your local group in Hackney. Is this where you first became involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: Yes, in London most boroughs had their own local group, so there were – however many there is – 32 local groups. I got more and more involved, eventually became the secretary of the local group, but that meant I also then began to go to the London Anti-Apartheid Committee, which met once a month – as many as possible local groups would try and send someone, so we could try and co-ordinate action, try and do things that, sometimes we worked together, or that complemented each other. And also we would have speakers – or somebody from the head office would come along to, you know, teach us about the latest plans, or just to deliver some general education. And at a London-wide level, we did quite a lot that was about educating ourselves, as well as just doing the campaigning. We'd run a couple of sort of weekend schools or education conferences that were really good fun.

EM: What was so fun about these conferences?

AM: I think, I suppose, people really trying to not just go out there and give out more leaflets and hope that it would change the world – but how we could deepen our understanding of the bigger picture, what was going on. The world was changing very fast around us, in terms of what happened in eastern Europe, the downfall of the Soviet Union – and that made a huge difference to the big politics picture of what was affecting Southern Africa at the time. So trying to understand the implications of world change, that was happening in one place, on the Southern African region, and therefore what did we do in Britain to influence our government, to try and do the things that we, you know, to help those in Southern Africa, who were obviously at the sharp end of the fight. But what could we do to change the odds, if possible, either through the European Union or United Nations – things like, how did we get our government to put some leverage on. So it was just exciting thinking that hard, and taking world issues that seriously, and the fact that what we did might have some influence.

EM: Was there also a social aspect to these weekend conferences?

AM: Sometimes there would be European meetings where people from all the different anti-apartheid campaigns would meet there together, and there were very interesting meals after that. We did make an effort and would spend some money on some food on those occasions, and that was just amazing – to meet the same kinds of people, but from Greece, or from Norway, and have such a shared understanding and comradeship. Mostly the London based things we did were terribly unimaginative and it was almost always the Dolphin, at the back of Camden Town Hall, where we went for drinks – and how I did it, when you went to several meetings a night, or several meetings in evenings during the week, and the pub afterwards and occasionally a pint before, and had been working all day

– I don't quite know how I kept up, but that was because we were young, I expect. There were, I suppose, cultural activities that we would organise, fundraising events, we organised – I say we, the London Anti-Apartheid Committee – it wasn't me that actually did most of the organising, I'm glad to say. I just took the minutes for the meetings – but I remember a really good week of all sort of cultural activities across London, in the hope that people would come and see a particular band, or a particular type of poetry performance, and therefore get exposed to the messages that we were trying to get out. So we got quite good at doing some of those things. It was never my area of expertise – I enjoyed going to them. I remember Hackney Anti-Apartheid sending a message up to be read out on stage, and being very embarrassed when Billy Bragg said, 'What idiot has done this, written in red ink so I can't read a word of it under the stage lights?' I was a bit embarrassed because I rather liked Billy Bragg at the time – so there were lots of these opportunities to get to meet musicians that you wouldn't otherwise do. And we had a campaign when the Royal Shakespeare Company celebrated Shakespeare's birthday every year, and at their celebration at the Barbican they invited the South African cultural attaché, or whatever the title was, and we objected to this – you shouldn't be involving such a pariah state officials to the celebration. And quite a number of the cast and the stage crew, through their trade unions, objected, and there was a big debate about whether the show would go on or not. In the end, the performers and crew agreed they would go ahead with the show, but they would make a statement from the stage to explain their opposition to the South African ambassador or attaché being there. I was part of a team that were leafleting the audience beforehand, explaining to them what it was all about, with an actor called Josie something, who was in *Cry Freedom*, which was a film about Steve Biko, another of the great South African campaigners. aAnd after the show, we were all – us campaigners – were invited to Antony Sher's dressing room, which was all terribly exciting and glamorous, and definitely the sort of thing that I would otherwise never have been, you know, and had the opportunity to do.

EM: How would you describe the dynamism within the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: I wasn't part of the huge political conflict with a group who called themselves the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, and who were associated with a very small, ultra-left group, and they opposed the mainstream Anti-Apartheid Movement in many ways. There was a notorious AGM at what was then the Town and Country Club, which is now The Forum in Kentish Town, and that gives you an idea of how big anti-apartheid AGM's were in those days, places that are now major concert venues – and that ended up in quite a lot of disruption, and chairs thrown, and people who were stewarding the event remember it well. I was never part of that really big conflict – I got involved shortly after that. So there were – but there were always some, as in any political campaigning body – some differences of opinion, some differences of emphasis, and they were usually done in a pretty comradely way. There was debate but by that point, I think, the sort of sensible heads had won – who were really serious about changing our government's position on South Africa and taking the majority of British people with us. It had got to the point where women's magazines would have 'What's my dilemma of the week – my friends who are anti-apartheid campaigners are coming round, and I realised I've got South African orange juice, what shall I do?' It had become a mainstream question by then. So I would say that the dynamics weren't huge in terms of political conflict. I think it was an organisation that embraced a very wide range of people – and that means some very strong personalities, some very eccentric personalities, so looking back, what an odd bunch we were in some ways! But also what a stalwart, steadfast bunch of people – some of my best and long-standing friends are from that era. The chair of

the Movement at the time, Bob Hughes MP, had an 80th birthday celebration just a couple of years ago, and to see everybody then – and as I said, we were a quirky bunch probably. Here we are, 20 years later or so, still almost everybody is involved in things that are positive, things that are about changing the world for the better – slightly older and wiser, but still as passionate as ever. So there was a really good dynamic, but looking back I think we were all very tolerant of each other's irritants – maybe we all wouldn't be quite so much now.

EM: Just to clarify, by AGM do you mean Annual General Meeting?

AM: I do, that's right, yes. The annual general meetings, where local groups would put in their ideas for what could be done better, or sometimes they were discussion of the political line the organisation should take, sometimes they were very practical – 'Why don't we have plastic bags with the Movement's name on?' 'Why don't we have more, better quality leaflets?' 'Why don't we have a full-time press officer in head office?' All of those sorts of things, but also a very good opportunity to hear from each other what's been working well for them, and share experiences and ideas. So there's a bit of the boring old motions and debates, and minutes of the previous year's annual general meetings, but they're actually really lively, brilliant events – and yes, everybody really enjoyed them. We'd all traipse off to Sheffield or Glasgow or wherever it would be, and have a really, really stimulating – and pretty useful – weekend.

EM: So you spoke about taking minutes at the meetings, what was your specific role within the London Committee, was it?

AM: Yes, I ended up as Secretary of the London Committee, and I think yes, all my way through, I have been the sort of person who ended up doing the minutes, which is a role I've then carried out in numerous jobs since. It's a skill and once people know you can do it, they keep asking you, so darn, the Anti-Apartheid Movement for giving me so much practice of doing that! So yes, the Secretary's job I suppose is a balance between doing that, having a record, so that you show that you're accountable to the local groups, but also those minutes being a useful thing for those who weren't at the meeting, to share the information that we needed all the other local groups to do, but it was also about carrying out what the committee had decided, so making contact with other organisations, and inviting people to speak, or setting up arrangements for a particular meeting or event. And I guess those jobs – you make of them as much as you want. You can do the bare minimum or you can do an awful lot with it, and at that time in my life it certainly was the main thing that I did. I did join the Communist Party, very much because of my work in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the people that I respected most were the people in the Communist Party, and so I was involved in that, but London Anti-Apartheid was the main thing that I did, and all of it – and this is in pre-email days, so you couldn't sneakily do all of your emails from work at lunch time, and pre-mobile phone days, so you couldn't do anything until you got home and could use your landline – trying to organise, all done in your spare time, with your own energy and no budget to spend on it. So looking back, it's quite amazing how much we did manage to achieve.

EM: Can you remember any logistical difficulties that you had at the time?

AM: Scrounging photocopying, that was the thing that took the most time and energy, finding a local union branch who would allow you to go in and use their photocopier, or somebody working in a Council's – in those days a lot of them had race relations units, or women's units, who had small budgets for equality type campaigning. So you would have to go and try and make them the argument that campaigning against South African apartheid actually

had a direct impact on race relations in London – they were therefore wise to let us use their photocopier, as part of making Hackney a better place. So that was definitely the main logistical task.

EM: You spoke about the differences between the campaigners involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, how would you describe the campaigners in five words?

AM: [*pause*] Earnest – I was going to say high-minded but that sounds too stuffy, but very, very principled – so earnest, principled, stubborn. I suppose optimistic, and I think what we'd probably now call inclusive. I don't think it's a phrase we would have particularly used then – but very genuine about how can we connect with as many people as possible, who are different from us, to find a common language to speak, and try and say we're all part of the same struggle. So that – adventurous – it was adventurous, and how can we do this in different ways.

EM: How would you describe the conflict within the Anti-Apartheid Movement – you spoke of the City of London Group – contributed to the progress of the Movement, or impeded the progress of the Movement equally?

AM: Yes, I think there was a … there was some division in Southern Africa between the African National Congress and something called the Pan-African Congress – and there were ultra-left or Trotskyist groups here, who picked up on that, and therefore were – what appeared to me, in a fairly simplistic way, they were wanting to take sides with those who were attacking the ANC, as being the legitimate voice of the majority of South African people, which it was. So I was very comfortable accepting the ANC's leadership, and rather impatient with those who didn't – and obviously, it was for the South African people to decide who they felt represented their views and the best chance for change. And I therefore wanted to be part of supporting the organisation that they very clearly, in their huge numbers, had chosen. And whatever people feel about the less than perfect administration in South Africa now, it is on a – you know, there isn't apartheid there any more, capitalism isn't overthrown and inequality isn't overthrown and big business isn't overthrown. The ANC governments have done some good things and, plenty would argue, not done enough to change some of those things. But nevertheless, that's for the South African people to decide. In the apartheid era, our job was to support the ANC trying to overcome apartheid, so that all seemed quite simple to me, and I have very little interest then or now, in the minutiae of the sort of breakdown of the Left into various little factions and groupings. It's incredibly important, but it's not where I spend my time and energy.

EM: Did you believe there were many links between your work with the Anti-Apartheid Movement and your work with the Communist Party?

AM: Yes, because the Communist Party in South Africa, the SACP, was a very strong organisation – very much part of a three-way organisation in the anti-apartheid movement there, with the ANC the sort of political wing, the more military wing of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the trade union movement and the South African Communist Party – they all worked together, whilst having their separate roles. So there were very direct connections, and of course because of the number of people in exile here, there was a very real and living day-to-day link between Communists from South Africa and those of the British Communist movement. So I think that helped to have a bigger understanding of – it wasn't just a few bad guys in South Africa who'd got it wrong, it was a more structural problem in the world, and South African apartheid was one bit of that. So getting involved in – my getting involved in the Communist Party helped me to understand what lay behind the immediate situation, and

have a view of how change should come about, could come about, and how to try and organise for that. But I would say, it wasn't a simple, 'If you're in the Communist Party, go and do this in Anti-Apartheid'. It was about informing your approach, not telling you exactly what to do. Whereas I observed people from other traditions, where it felt very much like they had been told, 'Go along to this meeting, say this, try and win that', and then report back. My connection with the Communist Party was an educational one, a supportive one, one that gave you the political tools, but then trusted you to go and do what was right for the organisation you were in, and a very genuine involvement there.

EM: You've spoken about the structure in South Africa that allowed apartheid to take place. Could you elaborate a little further about this structure?

AM: I suppose in terms of Britain's involvement through the colonial, imperialism and through the colonial period is fairly obvious – one of a grab for minerals and the riches that that part of the continent has, and the reliance that Britain has had on that sort of exploitation around the world, and not just in a straightforward, 'They've got gold, let's have it' way, but also a way of organising labour, and organising ways of squeezing the most from people. There's a very direct relationship between Britain's success economically and the methods, as well as the resources, that it managed to acquire from places like South Africa, and some very direct – I remember some occasional campaigns about small companies in the Midlands, where manufacturing was almost dying on its feet, but what could it do, it could sell stuff that is really repressive, tools of state oppression in South Africa, whether that's plastic for passes, or weaponry, or mines. So there's a very direct relationship between Britain's economic success, if you like, and the terrible things that were going on in South Africa.

EM: So did you feel perhaps more compelled, as a British person, to act?

AM: Yes, I think so. I think I felt that it was very important that British people understood why British capital, if you like, the British ruling class, had something to gain from the status quo in South Africa, so that our campaign wasn't just because we saw something and needed to say it was wrong, or felt sorry for those being oppressed, it was the slogan that the anti-war movement has used very strongly – 'Not in our name'. And in the same way that we, most people in Britain, do not want to see wars, in the Middle East or elsewhere, in our name, nor, in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, did we want people to allow the continued oppression and killing of black people in South Africa to be done in a way that our industry, our bankers, our ruling class, were benefiting from. So I think part of what we felt was – we have made some of this mess, British colonialism has caused some of this mess, is still profiting from it, and that's why we've got an obligation to try and change it, to try and stop it.

EM: So you've mentioned your involvement in the picketing outside of Tesco's, and the campaign against Barclays Bank, and also Shell – were these all of the campaigns that you were involved in?

AM: They were probably the main ones. There were sports campaigns – something I wasn't particularly involved in, apart from a rather sad – as in small numbers of people joined the demo – at Twickenham, and I can't actually remember what the rugby authorities were doing at the time, but there was some rugby match at Twickenham, maybe South Africa were playing, or maybe the Rugby Board had done something to annoy us. I can't even remember now, but I remember getting some white drainpipes, and making a sort of model set of rugby posts that we carried along the road, and it looked terrible, there weren't many people on the demo, and I wished I'd never done that one. But I'm sure there a good reason at the time. And the NatWest bank came in for a lot of flak, they were very much taking the lead in a

group of banks that were essentially agreeing a refinancing deal for the basically bankrupt South African state. I guess nothing compared to the banking crises now, that we've lived through, but there was some 10-year deal that was up for renewal and what terms were they going to do it on. Why that involved me and another colleague from the London Anti-Apartheid committee dressing up as if we getting married, outside NatWest's head office, I have no idea, but that was the sort of thing we would do. Some people go into very specialised areas of campaigning, like about finance or about particular types of boycott, or sporting links or cultural links – I was a sort of generalist, and very much involved in running committees, rather than being a specialist in any of those particular areas.

EM: It sounds very interesting. Do you think you could elaborate on the dressing up as if you were getting married campaign that you did? [laughs]

AM: I assume that there must have been some, you know, why is NatWest wedded to this apartheid regime? Or – I'm really struggling to remember what the slogan could have been that involved me standing in some very badly fitting wedding dress in the middle of the City, in the middle of the day, outside the AGM. So no, I think that one is lost to history. But maybe David Kenvyn might remember, because I think it was him that I got married to – but annual general meetings of those sort of companies, where shareholders would be present, and the Shell AGM in particular, was something that we did quite a lot of. And again, there were specialists in trying to deal with these companies and in trying to teach the shareholders. It was bad business, some people ended up learning an awful lot more, about the work of shareholders and how should pension campaigns take their money away from certain companies. So we ended up being quite good on the appropriate stuff, none of us having known much about it before we got involved in AAM. So most of us had one single share in Shell, or in whatever other company, and we would go along to the AGMs, wearing our best suits or our frumpiest business dresses, to try and blend in. We probably didn't, but we thought if we put a smart suit on we would – and we would go along and try to get questions asked, and if we looked like we weren't getting anywhere we would just sit down and sing, and that irritated them quite a lot. They would do almost anything to stop us singing, so eventually they said we would rather allow you the space to ask questions than for you to interrupt our AGMs any more. So luckily for Shell shareholders, they didn't get to hear either me or David Kenvyn**,** who was the keenest singers at these events, ever again, I don't think.

EM: What songs would you sing?

AM: We would sing the – what became the South African National Anthem – and there was also a song 'Senzeni Na'**,** which I think means something like 'What have they done?', and it was a song that was sung, I think, after the massacre in Soweto, at a particular time when people would just sit and sing this kind of mourning song, about what have they done, shooting down our young people. And the advantage to us – not very good at learning languages – English campaigners, that just kept singing 'Senzeni Na', we just had one word and we'd keep singing it. So we would, it would quite often be South African songs, and we would try and learn them as best as we could. I don't think the British Left, or the British campaigning movements, are terribly good at putting their campaigns to song, it's not something we really excel at, a few short chants and that's about it – but we took our lead from the South Africans themselves, and used their songs.

EM: It seems like music, both of the musicians that you had involved in the movement and also the South African songs that you sang – it seems as if music was quite a big part of the movement, is that a correct portrayal?

AM: I think it was. I think – you asked earlier is campaigning different now to what it was then, and I was at Glastonbury earlier this year and Billy Bragg was performing in the left field tent as he does, and he was saying how different things were in the '80s, how there was an organisation then of musicians and artists supporting the Labour Party, who were called Red Wedge. And he was reminiscing that at the time – it was the Tory government, it was the *Daily Mail*, it was people like that who were against musicians getting involved in anything other than singing, if you like, for the Left, or for anti-racist campaigns, or for progressive causes – whereas now, his sense was that certainly for younger musicians getting involved in politics, that almost straightaway get a huge amount of flack, on Twitter or on social media, in a way that you didn't feel you did then. So in a way it feels a bit harder for musicians now to get involved in politics – obviously there are lots of exceptions – but at the time, I think, people did feel part of wanting to be part of a world that was changing. And the Margaret Thatcher Conservative government from the late '80s united almost everybody else. So yes, there was a lot of music and a lot of those in the sort of acting communities again, who would support the cause. My particular joy was the band The Specials, who I'd been in love with since I was a teenager, and Jerry Dammers in particular who wrote a song called 'Free Nelson Mandela', which was our sort of house anthem – getting to meet him on demonstrations, at anti-apartheid AGMs was very exciting, and I still remained slightly star struck when I met him. There was lots of that, and I think here certainly have been people involved from music and the arts in the Stop the War coalition – probably in AAM we really did have that huge force on our side.

EM: When you look back at your time campaigning, do any particular campaigns or demonstrations or picket, stand out for you?

AM: I think probably one of the early ones – and it's awful to say now, that I actually can't remember which political prisoners it was, who were due to be hanged, any time, by the regime. And having an all-night vigil outside the South African embassy in Trafalgar Square – and that was very moving, because it really was a vigil with the thought that any minute now we would be getting a message through that these people had died, they had been put to death for their campaigning against apartheid. So suddenly it feels very real, it feels like real people's lives are on the line, and what a luxury we have, of just being able to stand in Trafalgar Square, and the worst you're gonna get is a few drunks yelling at you. So I think those very sobering moments are probably what stand out – some of the fun events, the campaigning where you thought, 'God, we can actually do this' – we are making a difference, people do support us, and getting to meet – yes, your sort of, idols of the music world, some of that wonderful feeling, certainly as a young person, to be part of all that. But when Mandela got released, I remember it very well, it was a Sunday morning, and from whatever you were doing, everyone drifted down to Trafalgar Square, where you awaited the news, and I remember bumping into friends as we converged toward central London. And certainly for those who had been involved, much much longer than I had, and in many more campaigns than I had been, to say 'Anna, we've actually won something, this is the first time ever in my life that we've been on the side that's come out on top'. So that's incredibly important, because it doesn't often feel like you're changing the world anything as fast as you want to, but Mandela being released was one of those golden moments that don't happen many times in your life. And for us to be lucky enough afterwards for Mandela to come to London, to speak to Trafalgar Square from the balcony of this huge fortress of

apartheid that had been right in central London all those years – had been filled with really quite terrifying forces. We knew that their secret service had planted bombs against the ANC in London. We knew that as an organisation there would be people spying on what we did – it was very very real, and then suddenly it changed, they were our friends on the inside of that building, and that's an incredible memory to have.

EM: You've spoken about some of the strong characters that you met whilst you were campaigning – could you elaborate on maybe several of those characters?

AM: The ones that come to mind first are the people who I am still friends with – Gerard, who worked in the office, he's involved, just down the road at Islington's People's Rights. Lela Kogbara was one of my – she was a vice-chair of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in its later days, as was I – she's now deputy chief executive at Islington Council, and so on. So I feel very much still part of a network of those characters. But the key person running the organisation was Mike Terry, who sadly passed away just a few years ago, far too young and a loss to all of his friends, and to those that he was a great teacher for, at Alexandra Palace School, which was his first career choice. The Anti-Apartheid Movement took over his life for 30 years and then he went back to teaching. He was an amazing character, very very driven, very very demanding – of all of us, those of my friends, like Claire McMaster and Sue Longbottom**,** again still really good friends. They worked in the office – and he drove everybody quite hard, because it always felt like if you didn't do everything you could, right now, this week, we would lose an opportunity to change things. So that dynamism was incredible, quite exhausting, to work with – but he was also a very very supportive person, and I think that was a resounding feature of the organisation as a whole. It did look after people, people tend to get a bit burnt out, full of youthful enthusiasm, trying to do too much, and you need sometimes permission to step back for a little bit, rather than just walk away and never come back. So Mike played a great role for me, in being encouraging, driving quite hard, but knowing when you needed a bit of tender love and care as well, and permission to skive the weekend off as well, rather than going to yet another meeting. Bob Hughes was the Chair, he was a Member of Parliament at the time, and is now in the House of Lords – my main memory of Bob is probably smoking in offices, where of course you now absolutely wouldn't be allowed to do – probably good for Bob and the rest of us, that no longer are we allowed to do that. But, you know, a great character, quite caring, and quite – his child John is a similar age to me – and he was there as a kind of guiding hand to us youngsters – and through Bob's involvement, of course, we had lots of meetings in his office at the Houses of Parliament and at meeting rooms there. So I've got lots of memories of sort of, 'Wow, I'm going to meetings in the House of Commons – how exciting', and never the sort of thing I would have imagined being able to do, growing up. So they were, they were absolute leading lights to me, and big guides to me of how to campaign and how to support people.

EM: Could you elaborate on one of your happiest memories during your activism?

AM: I can't particularly think of a happiest memory. I mean, one of my favourite stories is about a thing I didn't do – which was when Mandela was released, and obviously had gone from being called a terrorist by Margaret Thatcher because the ANC did have an armed campaign – and when everything you do that is peaceful gets you shot or gets you locked up for life, then you don't have many other options left – so it was odd to go from Nelson Mandela being referred to like that, to Nelson Mandela, the President of South Africa, being in Britain on a state visit, and staying at Buckingham Palace. And the Anti-Apartheid Movement received an invitation for a couple of people to go along and have breakfast at

Buckingham Palace, I think with Prince Phillip or Prince Charles, and I think Margaret Thatcher – a slightly odd breakfast meeting! Anyway, I think we were gonna toss a coin, but I really didn't think I would feel comfortable at such a meeting. It would have been an amazing thing to say that I'd been for breakfast with Nelson Mandela, but I would have just not known what to say and would have found it excruciatingly uncomfortable, so I nominated Leila to go instead. So that's my favourite story of not going to breakfast at Buckingham Palace. I think the most exciting thing I got to do was actually to go to South Africa at the time of the elections in 1994 – through being Secretary of London Anti-Apartheid, we had sort of twinned in an informal way with the ANC region based in Johannesburg. So the woman who led that, Barbara Hogan**,** who then became a Minister in the South African government, she was then running the region, she came to visit London and we set up various meetings with people who would be useful to help their campaigning. So campaigners in the Labour Party, who of course have a fine system for how do you know whose going to vote for you, how do you make sure people actually come out and vote on the day, and all the machinery that a large political party uses – we set up introductions with people like that, and I had a couple of weeks off, in between one week and another, and she said, 'Well, why don't you try and make that a little more time, and come and help out in the office during the elections?' So I was very lucky to be able to do that, so I was there when the voting took place, and when Mandela became President.

EM: That's amazing, could you also describe some of your low-points within the Movement?

AM: So I guess that would also be when I was in South Africa, and I arrived a couple of weeks before the voting took place, and I guess the far right in South Africa were wanting one last ditch attempt to try and derail things – how much of that was stage managed by the military, or how much it was the existing regime, or whether it was those actual far-right groups, who knows. But there'd been a shooting in Johannesburg the day that I was arriving, and then just a couple of days before the election, a bomb went off just round the corner from our office, something most people will never see, luckily. But too many people in the world probably have got quite used to bombs going off in cities and seeing people die, and running to escape cars that were on fire. I think it was a very difficult moment, because of the horror, and also of your need to just get on with it. Because I could get on a plane and get out of there later that day if I'd chosen to, I didn't have to stay, but you're there because you're trying to change the world, to try and change the odds, for that sort of thing going on, so you feel you can't be too squeamish when you actually see some of it first hand. So that was definitely an odd, difficult, time – but I think by that point we were all fairly sure this thing would keep going in the right direction and it wouldn't be stopped. There were those occasional moments where you think the worst, and this could deteriorate into a really bloody civil war, and things will get far worst rather than better. So there were those occasional flickers of doubt that you were on the side of right and that progress was inevitable – there were moments like that.

EM: Could you describe how you felt at that low point, in a few words?

AM: Very aware of my own luck, and privilege, you know, in coming from a country and a background … by and large, my world is pretty safe, and that really brought it home to me that I don't have to stay in this and how luxurious that was. I think I didn't get involved in anti-apartheid because I felt some sort of middle-class guilt, or some responsibility to make amends for what my government was, but I probably got more like that as I went along, more aware of how lucky we are. I keep using the word luck, but that's probably not the right word,

but of how you have to keep doing the right things in order to stop the wrong things happening – and I think my sense of that grew and grew.

EM: What were some of the unique challenges that you faced?

AM: I don't know about unique challenges. I think never having enough time to do everything you would like to do, I think that sense of always falling short, because if you'd got the capacity, you would have done that other meeting, or contacted that other organisation, or printed an extra 1000 leaflets, or done whatever it was you were doing better, and therefore got more people to get involved, if only you could do that, it would all get sorted out quicker. I guess that's just how campaigning is, you can never do as much as you would want to do – so I think that sense of urgency, and of desperately running as fast as you can, felt like the biggest challenge.

EM: Looking back, how would you describe the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and your grassroots activism, to a 10-year-old?

AM: Well, that's interesting. I guess I think trying to explain to a 10-year-old that there were countries in the world where black people are not allowed to vote, black people are only allowed to live in certain parts where there was land that you couldn't grow anything on, and no proper housing, and not even allowed on the same beach or in the same post office, never mind the same school – I think that's a really easy message to tell, and for 10yearolds to be absolutely outraged by it. Particularly, obviously I've lived in London since I left college, and it is such a multicultural, mixed, diverse, wonderful place – almost everybody would find it very odd to try and describe, 'You're not even allowed on the same beach, or the same queue in a post office'. So trying to explain that what we thought we would do about that was to boycott the fruit that was grown in that country, or to campaign against the banks that were profiting from it – probably a bit harder to explain to 10-year-olds 'cause you would hope that 10yearolds, just through their school council or whatever, would have a faith in democracy; that you just have to go along and say the right things, and you can choose to vote for who you'd like the be your leader. So trying to explain the harsh realities, that sometimes that doesn't work, sometimes that's not enough. Obviously you do have to explain that to 10-year-olds, and to everybody older as well, that sometimes you have to support an organisation that is going to take up arms, and sometimes you have to take a stand where you're not popular. But I think most 10-year-olds would get the hang of that quite easily and understand what we were trying to do.

EM: What resonates with you the most, looking back on your experience with the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: I think how I realise now how very very young I was then – and so that's quite funny to look back at your 21-, or 22-year-old self and realise actually how much you achieved. And it really did, and I'm sure I'm not alone in this, it helped me become a grown-up. It was a fantastic organisation to be a part of, very inspiring, whilst being very serious. It was – we did have, a lot of it was conducted in a fairly informal and fun way … to get to work with people who had been doing it for years, who'd come from very different parts of the world, but were part of London, to be inspired by their individual stories, and that very general sense of comradeship, of very different people working together with a common aim is something I feel very lucky to have learned, and has shaped who I am. And if it hadn't been for my involvement in anti-apartheid, I guess it could have been something else, but it's hard to see what that would've been, that would've made me the person that I've become. I think the Stop the War coalition in more recent years has been a similar thing in terms of its size and

scope, and diversity and vibrancy, and its success that wasn't always apparent, but I think recently that sense that we might not have stopped the bombing of Iraq, but we'll definitely make it hard for them to ever do anything like that again. And I think the fact that they've pulled back from bombing Syria has got a similar sort of feel to it to what the Anti-Apartheid Movement achieved as well – that giving voice to what most British people think, despite the fact that their government is not saying it, is a really, really important lesson to learn in life, that you can make that happen. And that's what the AAM did for me, and I'm very proud of my little bit in that huge network of people that did contribute to apartheid coming to an end in South Africa – even if the inequality that's left behind is gonna take much much longer to clear up.

EM: Thank you, and before we finish is there anything you'd like to add, any last memory or anything else you'd like to explain?

AM: I'm very conscious that most of what I remember and think about is in relation to South Africa – and I think that's probably the thing that we all remember and that we all focus on. But actually a lot of what we did was about the region of Southern Africa, so there were campaigns about what was going on in Angola, and there was a time when something like a thousand people a day were dying, and we were trying to tell the world this is not just two bad sides of an argument, this is something that the Americans are very much behind – the side that is doing the majority of the killing here. This is not a situation of parity that you can just stand back and ignore. And we did a lot of work over what was going on in Mozambique at the time too – and I think with the situation in Zimbabwe over recent years people have demonised Mugabe, and there are all sorts of issues still going on where Britain's view of how things should be in Southern Africa … I think we've still got to get away from that sense that this is our sort of colonial background. We still think we can say what goes on in Southern Africa, and that isn't for us to say – that's for the Southern African people. So you know, I'm proud that we had that broader than just South Africa approach, and I guess we must keep trying to remind people of that, and I'm as guilty as anyone for just thinking about South Africa, and about Mandela. It was much, much broader than that.

EM: OK, thank you very much.

.