

**Interview with Joni McDougall by Reena Dayal, 19 September 2013, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom**  
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*Reena Dayal: Hi, my name is Reena Dayal and today is the 19th of September 2013. It's 10.30am. I am here to interview Joni McDougall and this interview is for the Forward to Freedom Anti Apartheid Movement History project. Hi Joni, how are you?*

Joni McDougall: I'm fine

*RD: Would you like to begin by giving your full name?*

JM: My name is Joni McDougall. And I was born in 1956 In Glasgow, Scotland

*RD: And what do you do for a living now?*

JM: Now I am artist, a community artist. I work within the community. I do several projects and also make my own work. So I teach and make artwork. When I was in the Anti-Apartheid Movement I was a teacher and a youth and community worker.

*RD: Have you been involved in any other political campaigning event apart from the Anti Apartheid Movement?*

JM: Do you mean now or in the past?

*RD: In the past.*

JM: I was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and like a lot of people of my generation was politicised around the miners strike in 1984, so that was the main campaign. I had been involved in other campaigns but this was the time of Thatcherism and there were tremendous clampdowns. So I was really politicised by the miners strike of Great Britain in 1984. At the moment the only campaign I really work on is on Palestine. And I have been involved to a small extent In the Lewisham Hospital campaign because they are trying to make cuts in the NHS and close down our local hospital. But the Anti-Apartheid Movement as a campaign was the only campaign I have done wholeheartedly in my life and it became my entire life for about six or seven years.

*RD: When and how did you first become aware of the situation in South Africa?*

JM: OK. I think I had always been aware of what was happening. Steve Biko had been killed, there were some things in the press. We knew apartheid was bad, black people didn't have the vote, black people were being incarcerated for making statements against the government. I remember when I was really young, when I was a teacher, I taught a comparative comprehension exercise and we compared the National Front Party in Great Britain, the Ku Klux Klan and South Africa's institutionalised racism, and I did a class on it when I was 22 years old with secondary school children. I got slapped down by the headteacher first of all and then the Board of Governors, saying my job was to teach comprehension and not

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politics. But actually the kids loved it. So I was aware of it then. I boycotted South African produce but it was all in a sort of low level way and although I was a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and I used to get the newspaper, I wasn't an activist. I was a supporter, but I was not an activist in the way that I later became after 1984. That was a period of intense political activity in South Africa and for activists in this country, members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I would go on the occasional demo or go to an occasional meeting. I knew about the injustice. I did small low-level things but wasn't really fully engaged as an activist until 1984.

*RD: Why did you feel you should do something about it and be more actively involved?*

JM: At the time – this was the period of Thatcher and things were really bad for people in this country and there was the miners strike. I am from a working class community. I was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and I used to go to an open forum organised every Sunday by *The Leninist*, where there would be discussions on domestic policies, international policies, and I was really inspired by their analysis. The miners strike caused suffering to mining communities up and down the length of Great Britain. It was also the time of the state of emergency in South Africa. I think it was called in 1985, which gave the South African government unprecedented power in terms of censorship and they would round up whole groups of people. There had been Sharpeville ... the Sharpeville Six were imprisoned and were due to be hanged and it generated a lot of press and there was that draconian measure deployed by the South African government that you just thought, this was the worse situation ever and you could see it getting worse. It was escalating and it felt criminal not to do something about it. And so I think I had started actually working as a volunteer with the South African Congress of Trade Unions, which was one of forerunners to COSATU – the Congress of South African Trade Unions round about 1985, and had been doing things through the National Union of Teachers. And then there had been acts of international solidarity that I found really inspiring. There had been action taken, but not by the TUC itself, the TUC were fairly abysmal throughout this period. Although there were individuals and unions within the trade union movement who were exemplary, the TUC itself were not very good. I can come back to that later. But at this time there had been action taken by dockers in Barcelona, who had absolutely refused to handle arms that were in transit and these people downed tools at the risk of their own jobs and livelihood. And the same had happened here in Southampton, where workers had refused to take off goods that were coming from South Africa. We were a great trading partner with South Africa at that time. In fact the British government were really complicit and aiding and abetting South Africa, along with America and the Israeli government. And I just thought this is the time to take action. And all around about this time in 1984 Jerry Dammers had brought out the song 'Free Nelson Mandela'. Do you remember the song 'Free Nelson Mandela'? And I was younger then, so you would go to clubs and you would hear 'Free Nelson Mandela' and it was sort of in the air. And because I was a Communist I hung around with other political people so we would always be talking about, you know, what we could do. And then I remember going to meetings – it would have been with *The Leninist* in the Sunday meetings and people would say you should get more involved in your local group. I should have said right from the beginning that I think I played a small part, I really really played a small part, but I

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played that part collectively with other people and there was that unifying thing of people coming together. I was really inspired by so many individuals within the British Anti-Apartheid Movement who were really fantastic and really unstinting, really generous, there was a real feeling of camaraderie.

Within South Africa itself there were a lot of grassroots organisations that were coming up and people had had enough. They had taken it to the United Nations, they had taken things to the International Court of Justice. People had pleaded with governments to boycott and implement sanctions and the South African government was just intransigent. I think it was under Botha and then it later became de Klerk. Although there had been armed insurrections that had taken place within South Africa it was getting nowhere. And what they did in 1985 was because they could see all these groups getting up, within townships people refusing to pay, there was a rent strike, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, I think they were under the leadership of Cyril Ramaphosa or he may have been from the National Union of Mineworkers. Now those mineworkers as well, in South Africa, black mineworkers in South Africa, even though they were paid a pittance and they were treated so badly, had come out in solidarity in 1984 with the British working class. You know they refused to send coal to Great Britain. They sent money to the striking mine workers in our country. Now that's a fantastic thing to do. So that was really inspirational.

I never went off and did things on my own, there were always other people. There was an American woman who was a filmmaker who I was very close to and who was also involved with *The Leninist*. Her name was Lin. We joined Camden Anti-Apartheid movement and I think we were all full of young revolutionary fervour. We thought we could storm the embassy! You know, take direct action and we went and joined the Camden Anti-Apartheid Movement along with another comrade from the Communist Party called Malcolm. And this group of old women met us. You know they were all in their 70s and they were fantastic. We were all thinking we were part of some international brigade ... and we were actually the Cookie Brigade! And these women were amazing and one of the women who I found most inspirational and who really just inspired me to do more and more was a woman called Det Glynn, and Det was a white South African. I can't remember what changed her when she had lived there. But she'd said she'd led a life of, sort of, privilege and there was some turning point for her and I think she was imprisoned in South Africa and then she had come to live in Great Britain. She must have been a woman of some means but she lived really humbly. She had this house in Hampstead Heath and her house was open to political prisoners who had just got out of prison or who'd escaped from South Africa. There was always three or four people living in her house and she ran these meetings. And we thought we would be doing politics, solidarity, and the first thing we were handed was a used Banda copier. A lot of people did not have photocopier, there was this sort of machine called a Banda where you could duplicate things, carbon copies of how to make Bakewell tarts, how to make fairy cakes.

What they would do every other Saturday was go to this area in Hampstead Heath to sell these cakes, and this is why we called it the Cookie Brigade! And then they would fundraise money. And it was a quite a modest amount that they raised and everybody did it as a volunteer. Everybody would turn up every Saturday with a cake. They would sell these cakes in this church hall and we would go out and hand out

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leaflets outside local shops saying, don't buy South African fruit, don't buy South African veg. And then at the end of the day Det would phone every single person who donated either cakes or time or money and tell them exactly how much we raised. And she always made you feel that you had done something really fabulous, and we had done something really small, and she was really inclusive in that sort of way. She was a magnificent woman. She was intellectual in her own right. I am making her sound like a doddering old lady but actually she was really brilliant and she was a co editor of *Sechaba*. She became ill and had a pacemaker fitted and she said to Lin and I, would either of us take over being Secretary and we thought that she would be a really hard act to follow because she was great at organising and inspiring other people. One day as we were walking up the road, and she could walk faster than me, she said, 'It's just that I am really getting tired now. I don't have as much energy as I did'. And later I said to Lin why don't we become Joint Secretary and Det can become a sort of patron of Camden Anti-Apartheid. So Lin and I became joint secretaries of Camden Anti-Apartheid. So we organised a lot of activities. Det, although she was no longer secretary, she never really retired. She guided us and managed everything behind the scenes. So we would do every Saturday, we had a stall that was at the entrance to Camden market. Now Camden market has always been really big. Now it's really huge and people come from all over the world. At that time it was much smaller but a lot of trendy people would come on a Saturday and a Sunday and we had got permission from – I think at the time it was a cinema near Camden. It's all gone now. And we got permission from the management, which was very kind of them and we had the stall there every Saturday. So either we were there or we organised a rota so people could distribute the newspaper or petitions, and for us it was made easy because we were just round the corner from the Anti-Apartheid Movement offices, which were also in Camden Town in Mandela Street.

OK, I am just going to talk about the Cookie Brigade again. Throughout the 20th century there was a history of international brigades. Most notably, the brigade who went to help out the republican side in the Spanish civil war, and so there has been a long tradition of international solidarity. So this is where the name Cookie Brigade came from – and it was only Lin and I that called it that, and then with affection, and I don't want to sound disparaging but they did so much more than just make cakes. It was just that as younger people and as revolutionaries we wanted to take direct action and change the world and we were full of this youthful passion of what we could do. Our first meeting with the Camden Anti-Apartheid Movement, the secretary then was Det Glynn, who was instrumental in me getting more and more involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement because she was so supportive. We were given a sheet of how to make all these different cakes, which we then sold in posh Hampstead Heath in a church and in a local market, but we didn't just sell the cakes, we had political campaigning literature. We always had a petition to sign and Det was always formidable. So we were politicising people alongside selling of cakes. But for Lin and I what we did was when we became secretaries after Det Glynn, this is 1985, we actually moved where we did most of our campaigning to Camden Town, because it was a more working class area and also because there were a lot of young people who came to that area. And Det and Berry and Dorothy and I can't remember all of the other names. They would still sell the cakes in Hampstead Heath and Lin and I would run stalls in Camden Town.

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Sometimes you think, you make assumptions, of how people look or dress. So you would assume that this person is quite trendy, they are young they will sign our petition and they would be like 'Fuck off!' you know, 'Get back', you know 'those people are all terrorists'. And then there would be a working class woman who would go, 'I'll sign that, I never buy South African orange juice'. So we learnt really quickly not to make assumptions. We learnt not to make assumptions that every black person or Asian person was going to sign it, because often they would be very conservative. So it was a real mixture. You could not predict who would sign the petition, who was going to put money in the collection box, who was going to buy the newspaper. And initially when we started in 1985 there was still quite a lot of hostility. By '88 people were almost queuing up to sign the petition because there had been so much publicity, especially there was a lot of positive publicity round about the Mandela concert around 1988 and there was this state of emergency which started in 1985. I think it was extended in '86-'87 and the South African regime were totally brutal and the incarceration and murder of children. This was coming out in our media although I think Thatcher and her government did nothing and I think they did a quite a lot to suppress the news. Because a lot of news did not get through but by 1987-'88 the measures they were taking and the atrocities were so bad that you would have to be not of this world not to realise what was going on. And because of those dreadful measures that they took and they were really awful, they were in a way almost escalating their own downfall because then people in South Africa were more willing to put their lives at risk to change the situation. And people in Great Britain were more willing to become more active to support these people. So actually their move to clamp down in terms of censorship and imprisonment and shooting more people was actually counterproductive in the country and out of the country, I would think.

*RD: How did you think the mood was within the group for which you were Secretary? What were the dynamics?*

We were quite a big group. Sadly there was one person in the group who was the Treasurer and he stole money from the group. Isn't that bad, that's really bad and it was a real shock to people. He didn't only do that, he actually stole money from the national Anti-Apartheid Movement and was expelled from the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But apart from him there were people who did a lot and were unstinting, and there were people who did not do a lot. They would come for meetings and not do that much. Actually as a group we had a good laugh. There was a lot of camaraderie. There was another one called Jess Cooper who was about our age. Then there was the tier of older women who were in their 70s and they had been part of Camden Anti-Apartheid Movement for about 20 years. And after 1985 there were a whole lot of young people who joined at the same time. And there was a real mutual respect and we learnt so much from those older comrades, as well as having fantastic cake recipes. I think I still have one in the cookery book. I will give you one. But they were really great and they were really good company to be with. But what we did, the younger people, I did not really ever do anything on my own, I know when we say 'we' did it – it was always 'we'. It was hardly ever me on my own. I would have an idea and this woman Lin Solomon, we worked in tandem for about four years. She would say, 'OK, let's get your coat, let's do it now' or 'Ok, let's go write it down' or

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'Let's write a letter' or 'Let's do this' or 'Let's put this to the committee'. So I would come up with an idea and maybe I would not have carried it through but because of Lin's impetus we would do it together.

Jerry Dammers had brought out 'Free Nelson Mandela' around '84, round about the time of the miners strike. It was really popular and he had already started Artists Against Apartheid. Artists Against Apartheid was in its formation and because Lin and I lived in the centre of town and both of us were quite hip as well, we did club nights. We would get over 500 people there and we used to have these club nights in Camden Town Hall. We negotiated through the Local Authorities against Apartheid that they would waive the fees. They didn't always waive it and sometimes they would give it at a reduced fee. This was a huge place and it would take up to, I don't know, 600–700 people. But it was actually a really unwelcoming place. It was a bit like a dance in a big bar room. And I lived in this community short-life housing and we had an old hall at the end of where we lived, so we held events there too, and we had to turn people away. We would have them once a month and we made thousands and thousands of pounds. So this was my idea, this was I instigated, but Lin was right behind me and then all the young people that were in Camden Anti-Apartheid would run the bar, which was all illegal because we did not have a licence to sell alcohol. Two or three people would be at the door, they would take the money. Somebody would run the bar, someone would be DJ, someone would know a friend who had a band. We all came together and worked collectively. And I remember one time having all this money. It was about £700 in a kind of pannier on my bicycle to take it to the Anti-Apartheid Movement so that was really great. And Det was – she just loved this. She loved that we were doing something that was young and she was great. So yes, we did things like that.

Then we went to Jerry Dammers and we spoke to him about organising for us to do bucket collections at the end of concerts. Again, this was because we lived in Camden where there were a lot of music venues, we started organising bucket collections. So quite a lot artists and recording artists like pop stars would let us do collections. I remember Aswad. Then there was another band that we'd actually hired for Camden Town Hall. It may have been Eddy Grant – he had a song out 'Gimme Hope Jo'anna'. He had this big hit over the summer and we were like, 'Oh no! Now you will never do the concert now you are really famous'. And he went, 'Yes I will do it and now I will do it for free'. So things like that were really, you know you were just really moved by people's generosity. We started this bucket collection. If there was going to be a gig then people from Camden Anti-Apartheid Movement would go with buckets. And we would get a message to ask the person who was 'headlining that night if they would make a short statement that we prepared about the situation in South Africa and that we were from the Anti-Apartheid Movement and there would be a bucket collection on the way out. And that had come from the miners strike where the miners would have buckets round about the underground.. I think one of the big roles we played in Camden was the amount of money that we fundraised and that was because we were right in the centre of town and because we were very young. So we did that. We organised pickets. We had our weekly stall where we handed out literature and we went to local schools to do talks. And then we were involved in what we saw as national campaigns – the Shell campaign, the Barclays campaign. We weren't pivotal in instigating them or we weren't behind the theory that goes into a

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campaign as to why that would be the campaign, but we carried out national campaigns or instructions from the national Anti-Apartheid Movement.

*RD: Can you remember any such campaign you would have done?*

Not specifically – we would do pickets, bucket collections and leafleting. I remember we did the Shell campaign because Shell was quite big in South Africa and Namibia. So what we would do is organise the local group and we would go. They would have a day of action and it would be ‘target Shell’. And on that particular day I remember the petrol station that we used to go to. We had a big Shell station at that time which was up from Camden Town near Camden Square. We would turn up there with banners. We would picket the Shell station so the drivers would be aware of Shell’s connections with the exploitation of workers in South Africa and the South African people and try to get them not to buy from Shell. So that was the kind of activity we were involved in.

And then it was the same with Barclays. There would be a day of action on Barclays and it was orchestrated so other people were doing it up and down the country for major impact. So then it would become a news story not just in the local news. Although we actually found that, we built up really good relationships with the Camden New Journal. And they would regularly produce reports on what we were doing and why we were doing it. It was much harder to get the *Guardian*, for instance, or any of the tabloids to produce a news story. In fact I think it was zero. There was something else we did with Shell. We bought shares in Shell, we all bought individually which allowed us to go to shareholder meetings. And we would disrupt the meetings by asking questions about Shell’s involvement in South Africa. I think I still have a share, one share. So as a multinational they would have an annual general meeting and because you had a share you could go the meeting. We bought shares but it was strategic and then we would go to the meetings and ask pertinent questions about Shell’s involvement and what Shell was doing in South Africa.

*RD: Did you feel you personally were connecting with any other local groups apart from the Camden group?*

JM: In London?

*RD: Yes.*

JM: Sometimes with the Hackney local group. No, not really, is my honest answer. Really we, no, I am trying to think, there was a forum. The local groups organiser was somebody called Mick Flynn and one of his many jobs was to work with the local groups. So as the secretary you would phone him up and say, ‘I want to buy eight T-shirts and I want this amount of leaflets’. You would buy this from the Anti-Apartheid Movement on a sale or return basis. So you did that though Mick. Mick would then phone people. This is before mobiles and computers and the likes. He would phone or write to people and say, ‘There is going to be a day of action’, so there would be some kind of unity, especially when there was a campaign like Barclays or Shell. As a local group we mostly worked on our own as Camden. We did a couple of joint ventures with Hackney. We would come together in a forum. There was an umbrella

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group that brought all of the London local groups together. I can't even remember how many there were. But we didn't really do a lot of cross-fertilisation. We would occasionally all get together to do something outside the Embassy. But I can't remember anything other than that or if there was a big picket of something in town but that would be organised not by my local group getting in touch with another local group. It would be coordinated at a national level by Mick Flynn. So we did come together to work on national events, but we solely tried to sort of change the opinion of people in Camden and get more and more people in Camden to join. Because many of us worked in Camden and we lived in Camden or we had some influence with Camden councilors or we knew people who were in local bands. We worked locally. It was very local.

*RD: How many people do you think you had in your local group in Camden?*

JM: Activists? We had 10 hardcore people and maybe another 15 who would come out and be active. Yes, so we had 25 people who would come to a local group meeting. I think at the time that was quite big. I think Camden were one of the really important local groups. I remember Sheffield really growing as well and you would read stories in the *Anti-Apartheid News* about what people had done and how much they had fundraised, so you knew that other local groups had been active up and down the country. I remember Sheffield as being particularly brilliant. They did lots of really great things. Glasgow as well but that was under the Scottish Anti-Apartheid Movement. Then they got the Royal Exchange Square name changed to Nelson Mandela Place. So you were aware of what people were doing up and down the country and at times you thought, 'Oh our group can do that or we could do this'. But no, mostly we kind of worked on our own. And then we would all come together at the Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM. But by and large we were really good at taking a direction from the national offices and the national offices were based in Camden so we had a very very close relationship with them.

*RD: So as a secretary what was the biggest challenge you personally faced in being part of this group and running the group?*

JM: Just recruiting more people and then organising those people you recruited. As I said, sort of like '84-'85-'86 there was still quite a lot of open hostility when we campaigned in Camden. And then there was mild hostility in the form of 'Could these black people govern themselves?' You know, people would say 'They are necklacing each other'. By that point if there was any news in the media at the time it seemed to be because there was a lot of violence in the townships in the early '80s and then there was a kind of fight between the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress. And then there were a lot of splinter groups within South Africa and they were actually starting to fight each other. The African National Congress had kind of hegemony but there were a lot of groups who were being disruptive. This always happens, this is what people do. You don't all say, 'Oh this is a good idea, let's all follow this one leader and we will make it nice and easy for ourselves'. And what the British media did was they would focus on things like necklacing – where a tyre would be put around your neck and it would be full of petrol and the tyre then set alight. It was known as necklacing. And actually Winnie Mandela didn't help matters either because she made some such statement. I can't remember what it was –

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something like 'With our matches or necklaces we will lead the revolution'. So it was 'Thanks Winnie – that will set us back about ten years!' And so having like no news and then there is news of these horrible things that were actually happening within the country. People would say, 'Oh this is lawless. These people are crazy'. So our job was to try and say 'No, that's not the right answer. Read the *Anti-Apartheid News*. This is what we are doing. This is why we are campaigning.' And I was really really passionate and I believed in it wholeheartedly. So for me it wasn't something that I would think on a Saturday, 'Oh God I have to go to that picket that supermarket!' You just thought you were angry by that point because it was such a tremendous injustice. Because the African National Congress or its predecessors had been trying to get change since the 1900s. And they had tried every peaceful means in order to achieve that. And what was happening in the '80s was there was such a tremendous clampdown that you just thought 'Can you blame people when they resort to so-called violence?' If you have tried all other peaceful means then you have a right to pick up arms. But the media only concentrated on this aspect, not the fact that there had been this long fight for democracy, petitioning every single system known including the United Nations. So people that I worked with were really passionate about it and they were really easy to work with. We had a telephone tree where one person – this was before mobiles – so I would phone Lin. Lin would phone Malcolm, Malcolm would phone Det, so there were these things called telephone trees where you would phone if there was an emergency or action. So you didn't have to phone everybody in your local group. And then you would all turn up. And you would be like, 'Yeeahhh'.

OK, it would be really nice if you could just remember all the great things – the camaraderie I have told you about, the inspiration. If anything signified the Anti-Apartheid Movement it was the collective efforts of lots of people coming together – that was just beautiful. It was magnificent, but that would be too romantic. There was a tremendous fly in the ointment in our local group. We had somebody amongst us, I can't actually remember his name and in some ways I wish I could, because what he did was he stole money from the local group. And he was actually the Treasurer. There was a tremendous amount of trust, so these big dances, big club nights, just came about the time just before the rave culture had actually started. Everybody in our local group, all the young people, would work on the event. Some would staff the door, people would be handing out flyers. We had them about once a month. The money would either go to the South African trade unions or the Anti-Apartheid Movement or the ANC. Whoever we decided we would donate the money to, and some of these events we were bringing about £700, it involved a tremendous level of trust. Also Det Glyn, one of the great unsung heroes of the Anti-Apartheid Movement as far as I am concerned, had always taught us about the necessity of book-keeping, so anybody was owed anything they would put in a receipt.. I worked at the Anti-Apartheid Movement national office and we had an account with a cab company. The number of our account was secret. I had noticed when I was going through the books that this guy had been taking a lot of cabs, which I thought were unauthorised. I said to Mike Terry and they investigated it and we realised he had been stealing off the national office and the local group for the duration of his time there. He was there for about four years and all that time he was stealing money.

There were a lot of other people – there were some people involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, I didn't know at that time they were careerist. I was not even aware you could do such a thing. You could belong to a campaign or an organisation and cut your teeth on it – your political teeth and make contact with sympathetic MPs and then end up going to work for them. There is nothing wrong with being a careerist, having your eye on the prize, but some people did it for ulterior motives. But some people would do lots of work and did not take any credit and there were people who did not do a lot of work and took the maximum credit for it. You were working with a whole array of different people. I am trying not to be romantic about it but by and large there was a tremendous amount of trust and camaraderie that made it possible, but there were always people who had political motivations or egotistical motivations that were involved in the movement. Sadly.

During the period I was secretary of the local group I worked full time for a campaign organisation for young people. I was a youth and community worker and at that time I was also a volunteer with the South African Congress of Trade Unions, that was under the leadership at that time of Zola Zembe. I worked in their archive library and they were brilliant. They allowed me to go to their meetings every week where I could learn so much more about the situation in South Africa because at that time my knowledge of it was surface. Then what happened in 1987-'88, there had been a conference in Harare.. The conference organised under the auspices of Archbishop Trevor Huddleston brought a lot of leading people, figures from political life in the UK like Glenys Kinnock, Victoria Brittain, Janey Buchan and Bob Hughes together who'd gone to a conference in Harare hosted by Mugabe. They brought children out of South Africa into Harare, which was a safe place then, and also people who in their professional life had a duty of care towards children, like lawyers, teachers, social workers, paediatricians, who gave testimony on what was happening to children in South Africa. People from the United Kingdom who were part of the delegation who had taken affidavits off the children came back to the United Kingdom and formed what was then called the Harare Working Group. At this time I was kind of Anti-Apartheid Movement 24/7 and a job came up for three months. Everyone thought I was crazy as it was just half my salary and it was only for three months. I thought I want to do this, I want to be the organiser. And Geoffrey Bindman and Mike Terry interviewed me and I was successful. I got the job as co-ordinator of the Harare Working Group.

That post was funded by organisations such as OXFAM, CAFOD, CIIR and Save the Children. In those days those organisations could be more political, whereas they can't now, but they could at the time, The Bishop Ambrose Reeves Trust was set up, which was a charitable arm of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which did educational work. We organised a conference on children and repression in South and Southern Africa in London and from that organised two national speaking tours. So although the funding was originally for only three months they got extra funding, so actually I worked in the offices of Anti-Apartheid Movement for four years, but not as an employee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I was the only one who was employed by the Bishop Ambrose Reeves Trust. I was responsible to the trustees for the work that I did. So I started work at the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. We had a meeting every Monday morning, which was almost sacrosanct. It would set out what we were doing for the week, the big things, the priorities coming up and there was a

kind of discourse – there was quite a lot of disagreement as well. This was all under the helm of Mike Terry, who was absolutely fantastic. He had tremendous clarity of vision and a tremendous energy, a tremendous energy and always with Alan Brooks, who was the Deputy General Secretary, who had been a political prisoner in South Africa and he had a real Marxist understanding of the situation in South and Southern Africa. I think about eight workers worked there and we were allowed to disagree with Mike. I had lots of disagreements with Mike round about petty things like why have we ordered so many envelopes, why are there not enough stamps, why isn't there anyone to staff the phone at 8 o'clock in the morning. I have always been frugal and was always nitpicking about the price of things. But on my first day at the office we were all handed this piece of paper which said, 'Do not say anything. There will be a private meeting that will take place in the pub at lunch time'. And I was like 'Crikey, this is like, you know, working for some underground organization'. And when we got to the pub It was revealed that there was going to be a like a big expose on a TV programme. I think the program was Panorama' – I can't remember. But somebody who had infiltrated the Anti-Apartheid Movement who worked with the trade union committee for the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and somebody from this TV programme had become aware that he was actually working for what was then called the Economic League. This was a register of people who were political campaigners or who worked in the trade union movement, who were then blacklisted by the Economic League and employers could buy into this organisation. They could check your files for X person 'Jo Brown' and they would say he is a trade union agitator, he is in CND, he is in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and then that named person would be barred from working. And so the television crew came in, they filmed people working at their offices, at their typewriters, although I think we did get those funny old computers when they came out with green screens. They did this expose this guy who led this double life.

Around about this time there was a bomb that had been planted at Mandela Street. I think the offices became Grade II security alert with Special Branch because we were the target of a lot of hate mail. Somebody called Dulcie September of the ANC had been assassinated in Paris and there had been an assassination attempt on Jeremy Brickhill in – I think he was in Mozambique. So anti-apartheid people who were in the leadership were now being targeted by BOSS who were South African secret police. They were targeting pivotal people in the Anti-Apartheid Movement outside of South Africa and that was in the first couple of weeks of starting there.

My remit was ostensibly to make people aware of what was actually happening to children. There were a lot of children who were being held, some as young as six, who had been throwing stones or involved in some disruptive activity. But it was more the South African Defence Force's way of getting back at the people. So what would happen was, they would arrest a child under 16, under 18, some as young as six, as I have said, round them up and then take them to prison, and their parents could not get access to them because then they would be breaking the Group Areas Act. So if you lived in a township, you were only allowed to live in that township. You may have a permit that allowed you to go into work in the centre of Cape Town, but you could only go into work and come back out. But you couldn't, even if your child was in prison, you couldn't get into prison to see your child. They were absolutely isolated in that prison without access to their parents or a lawyer and some of those

children were tortured. So my job was to write and produce materials that would highlight the situation facing children and work under the direction of the other people who were in the committee.

The first time I went to a meeting of this committee, I was just really inspired by the individuals and how unstinting they were. We had these really successful conferences who then formed the Lawyers against Apartheid, Teachers against Apartheid, Social Workers against Apartheid, 'Probation Workers against Apartheid', and from that we got additional funding where we rolled out the campaign up and down the country by organising national speaking tours. They were each a month long and we covered almost the whole of the British Isles, so we have three people from either South Africa or Mozambique or Angola. They would come for a month long tour and we would do meetings in the mornings, meeting with media, and every evening there would be a public meeting – in Glasgow, next night we would be in Edinburgh, next night it would be Inverness and then there would be an all-day seminar on a Saturday. We did two lots of those, it took two months, so we covered the issue of children up and down the country.

And then when I was at the national office we did other things. I remember de Klerk came and visited the UK on an official visit and this was really funny. I had a flat mate at that time and he was called Paul Brannen and he worked for SATIS, which was Southern Africa the Imprisoned Society, and Geoffrey Bindman was the Chair of that. We got news that de Klerk was coming on this tour of Great Britain and I remember we got this friend Tom to follow him wherever he went with his fleet of cars, on his motorbike. And somebody phoned and tipped us off and said, 'I want to remain anonymous but I work for this theatre company and deKlerk and a whole lot of people are coming to see *Phantom of the Opera* on the Wednesday night they have bought a row of tickets from the South African Embassy'. So somebody else who was a volunteer went and bought two tickets and me and Mick Flynn went to the theatre that night. So we had to get all dressed up as if we were going to the theatre to watch the *Phantom of the Opera* and in this bag we had a loudhailer and we'd agreed it with the stage crew, we had worked it out with them that there was this point that was least disruptive, but it would be really disruptive where we would get up at this point and walk down the aisle and say we were from the Anti-Apartheid Movement, this was F W de Klerk sitting on row D number 5 and this is what he was guilty of. We had also organised a mass picket. Everywhere de Klerk went he was just dogged by the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And when we got to the theatre there was this huge picket of like 200 people outside the theatre with placards and part of the audience were really sympathetic and they were going, 'You know, this is dreadful, de Klerk is going to be here'. And other people went 'This is outrageous, we have come to the theatre'. And here was Mick and I all dressed up in our Sunday best. We had this huge handbag with the megaphone and I was so nervous. And then we had to go through this picket line and people went 'That's Mick and Joni – what are they doing? That's Mick and Joni – why are they going into the theatre?' And then we went into the theatre and I was totally trembling, thinking although I really wanted to do it, you thought a lot of people there had just paid for a good night out. We were probably going to be arrested. And we were making a noise, talking to each other throughout the performance, because we were like, 'when will the part come when we do this?' and then somebody came and said actually de Klerk had

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not turned up because he had not gone through the picket line. So, in the end we did not have to disrupt *Phantom of the Opera*.

In that time de Klerk was going to see Thatcher in Downing Street, I would think. We made up paint bombs, but we did not actually know how to make them. . We thought we could make paint bombs by blowing up balloons and filling it up with paint and when you threw it they would snap and cover his car full of paint ,but then we tried them outside our flat and they did not work. And then Paul had said we can try condoms and we can pour paint in those. And we just ended up with paint all over the back yard. And in the end – it just makes us sound really twee – we ate all this yoghurt out of these wee yoghurt pots in the fridge and we covered them up with cling film with a loose elastic band and filled them up with paint and we tried it out and they worked a treat We got to Downing Street and Paul threw two of these paint bombs and he was arrested and I had to scarper. I had to run away and hide. Now it's all cordoned off but at that time you could go right up to No. 10 Downing Street without going through any security. We threw all these paint bombs at de Klerk's car and Paul got caught and I got away. This was – I don't know – 1988, I think, but I am not sure when it was exactly.

*RD: So 1988, Joni. The Freedom at 70 campaign took place. Were you involved in it and can you tell us a bit more about it?*

JM: Yes, at that time I worked in the office where ostensibly I worked for the Bishop Ambrose Reeves Trust. I was still the secretary of the Camden local group. Although I was really privileged by that point to be working within the offices of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and along with organising the work for the Bishop Ambrose Reeve Trust, I also looked after quite a lot of women who came over from South Africa, including Archbishop Tutu's wife Leah. So when anyone came over I would take them about and look after their programme, take them to interviews, and I remember Leah was really brilliant. There was some actual, you know, again there were some leaders and some of their partners who were incredibly patrician, but there were some people, namely Albertina Sisulu and Leah Tutu, who were absolutely brilliant. I would go back with Leah in the evening to make sure she was OK in her hotel and we would have a coffee and I remember Desmond had sent her a huge bunch of flowers to her hotel room and there was this really nice card which she read out to me – she was a lovely woman and it just said how much he loved her. So touching. And then the next day she went, 'Will we have any time in our schedule where I can get a pair of comfortable shoes because I just end up walking everywhere. And can we go anywhere where I can get nice purple socks for Desmond as a gift – to go with his robes!' And that was just really lovely.

Anyway ... but one of the big things that I did in this time was that I was part of the 'Freedom at 70' campaign. So this was a huge campaign. Nelson Mandela had been imprisoned at this time for 25 years. I I went to planning meetings in Glasgow where we met with Jim Kerr from Simple Minds and at that time we were putting together a sort of a year long campaign. At that time Mandela wasn't really known as a figure really in the way that he later became. There were photographs of him when he was younger. I remember one of him in boxing attire or from the Rivonia trial, but people did not actually have an image of what he looked like now. He'd been in prison for

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almost 25 years and so we worked with his lawyer who was I think called Naidoo who did a sort of artist's impression, you know, like one of those police sketches – and that was drawn together by artists over here so we had a kind of artist's impression because there were no pictures of Mandela as an older man. I think in many ways he was against the cult of the personality. He wanted specifically the campaign to be about all political prisoners but there was a decision made amongst the ANC and the international Anti-Apartheid Movement that if they personalised it and showed this one man's fight and this one man's resistance and this one man's fortitude, it would be a way that people could identify with the campaign. So in that way he became the figurehead of the campaign and we pinned it on the 25 [years in prison].

So there was an idea that there would be a really big concert in Wembley arena from that there would be 25 marchers who would leave from the concert, go up to Glasgow on the overnight train, be seen off by a huge rally in Glasgow Green. For me personally, because I'm from Glasgow, I thought it was an absolute privilege to work with people and to be a member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and indeed to be employed with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But one of the highlights was for me being seen off by my entire family from Glasgow Green on this march. So have I not told you yet that I was a marcher? Oh right, so there were to be a series of activities leading up to the Free Nelson Mandela concert and then there would be the marchers. We'd march from Glasgow to London, but via a circuitous route, not by the most direct route. It zigzagged across the country and took in different places. It was organised very closely with Local Authorities Against Apartheid. So everybody was working together – working all their networks to make sure that everything happened. From that the march would move from Glasgow to London by this circuitous route and would culminate in a massive rally in Hyde Park where we hoped the marchers would be joined by tens of thousands to celebrate Mandela's birthday. I was asked to be one of the marchers and was officially sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union, who were my union at the time. So 25 marchers were selected to try and represent the broad spectrum of people whose organisations were behind the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So there were people organised by the trade union movement, people organised by churches, Christian Aid sent a marcher. There was somebody from the Church of Scotland, there would be young people represented by NOLS, National Organisation of Labour Students, somebody from the Woodcraft Folk, a young people's organisation, somebody from the Drumchapel Unemployed Workers Centre. So not political parties per se but from different groupings of people and there would be one for each year Mandela was in prison. So there were 25 of us.

As for the concert itself – I was at some of the meetings – I wasn't one of the instigators. I don't want to take any credit for that work. A lot of this had come from, there was somebody called, I think, Tony Hollingsworth and there was Jim Kerr from Simple Minds who I remember as being very pivotal. People who thought from the anti apartheid – Artists for Anti-Apartheid – that Jerry Dammers had started to formulate – I think there was an Artists Against Apartheid movement in the United States as well. So people were taking inspiration from what people were doing in different countries and so workers in – you know taking direct action in South Africa and the Netherlands and New Zealand – the things that people did were quite

amazing. At the time there had only been Live Aid, but to have a concert in a big stadium was not a common event, so the Mandela concert was like a really big deal. My memory of that time was that it was difficult to get people onboard, there was difficulty in getting people to sponsor it, and there was difficulty from the BBC. I think it was only Alan Yentob was maybe then was the Controller – I am not sure, we'd have to check these things out, who then said 'We'll give it a five hour slot', but that was only if they had these big headline stars Dire Straits eventually played but they weren't going to be allowed to play because Mark Knopfler was doing something else and it was like – Dire Straits said they would like to play but only if four other big acts would play, but you were not allowed to say that Dire Straits was going to play if these other people weren't in place yet. So there was loads and loads of political work that went on behind the scenes and concessions as well.

Mike Terry – when I was in this meeting with Jim Kerr, I remember them saying they wanted this to be really political. It was not just seen as Free Mandela but free all political prisoners and use it to broadcast what was actually happening in South Africa at that time. Sharpeville had happened – there were a group of people called the Sharpeville Six and they were going to be hanged for treason and although their case had been publicised all over the world the South African government were out to get them. So Nelson Mandela was not going to be hanged, but the Sharpeville Six – people were being hanged at that time – political prisoners were actually being hanged. So the campaign was not just about Mandela.

I don't know how many members we had in the Anti-Apartheid Movement at that time, but we kind of knew lots of them personally and there were maybe only about eight people who worked in the office who were trying to organise a campaign of this kind of magnitude, working with, you know, headline stars, hiring the Wembley arena and trying to kind of keep the politics intact. I remember there was a lot going on behind the scenes and people being there till midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning.

Anyway, I was asked to be one of the marchers, so I was one of the 25 marchers and what we did was we then went to the concert in the day. We'd gone earlier in the morning to get all the gear. I think we had four T-shirts, two pairs of trousers, one waterproof. We had our kit bag and we all got to sort of get to know each other and then we set off for the concert. We stayed for most of the day and then at one point we were moved, all of us 25 of us, I was a kind of pissed off because I thought I want to stay watch the concert. But actually we were moved into the Royal Box and we watched this concert with all these acts. But the highlight of it for me – the whole thing throughout that period was Jim Kerr singing 'Mandela Day', because I just remember him being really unstinting. When I met him he was like a big superstar and very handsome and I was just so in awe of him, but he was like the nicest man and wanted to do the best job possible and again he is one of those unsung heroes. He didn't behave the way Geldof did round about Live Aid which made me feel sick actually because that was a concert absolutely stripped of all of its politics. People like Jim Kerr were really trying to keep politics actually part of the concert. That's what it was about.

We got the overnight train up to Glasgow, and went to meet the Lord Provost. So this is in my home town. Then we went to another huge concert. It was one of the biggest

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concerts that had ever been held in Glasgow. Jim Kerr must have got the plane up there because he led it all off with 'Mandela Day' and from there the 25 marchers left. The Namibian SWAPO leader Toivo ya Toivo, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, Alan Boesak and Oliver Tambo were there at the concert. Also Janey Buchan, who was an MEP, a Scottish MEP was there too. Simple Minds invited all the marchers up on stage to sing 'Mandela Day'. It was incredibly moving for me. My whole family were there. We were all seen off and then we started the march.

We had these really big banners – a banner in the front that said 'Nelson Mandela Freedom March', a banner at the back and pennants – sort of on poles saying 'Freedom at 70'. We set off on the march from Glasgow Green and thousands of people followed us to the outskirts of the city centre and then we were on the walk. We had a van at the back of the of the march which was the support vehicle driven by Patrick and there was also somebody called Nick and a woman from the office called Vanessa, and what they would do is they had all of the overnight stuff in the van you know our sleeping bags, and our change of clothing, our clean pants, our toothbrushes and things like that in our kit bags. But they also had all the merchandise for the shops. So what they would do is they would go on ahead of the marchers. My sister Jaki took three or four weeks off from her work and she became part of the support vehicle. They would go on ahead and would set up a campaign shop in that local city. I mean there's a diary which can accompany this which gives details of what all the people did, but my memory of it is that we would get up really early in the morning. The day usually went like this – wherever we had stayed the night before the local group there or a local church group would organise a send-off reception which was usually attended by a municipal dignitary, like somebody from the local trades council or the MP or all of them. And they would all try to get as much local media as possible. So we would have breakfast and there would be a reception where we would be interviewed and seen off. Then we would march to somewhere till about lunchtime and then there would be another reception, but it was all to get publicity. I don't want you to think we were just trying to get a reception, drinking beer and having a big farewell! The reception was – we would make a statement from the Town Hall or a balcony on the Town Hall.

So this was tremendous organisation – all of these local groups up and down the country, church groups or local organisations, all trade unions – all came together. What the march enabled people to do – not just publicise Mandela, it wasn't just about us, the marching was a small part of it even though we marched 600 miles. It was all of the activities that happened in the morning when we were seen off, at lunchtime when we got into a local group and the local group would then have a fundraising disco. And in the night we would drink copious amounts of alcohol and often dance till two in the morning, then get up really early in the morning. Then go to a reception to be interviewed by the local press and then at night we either stayed with people from the local community or we would stay in a local church hall, we would sleep on the floor of the church.

Along the way we met the Bishop of Durham and the Bishop of Coventry washed the feet of the marchers. One day Jerry Dammers came out to meet us – these would get local press involved. However there was one place we went to where there were two horrendous Tory MPs who were seen as being pro-apartheid. They thought

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blacks should not have the vote – I mean they were just racist people. They sent us, in an ironic gesture because we were part of the sanctions and boycott movement, a crate of South African wine, which was just such an insult. What we did was we invited Joan Lester, Diane Abbott, Glenys Kinnock, I think – MPs to come up from London when we ceremoniously poured it all away with a kind of ‘fuck you’ attitude, so we won that publicity war.

Then what we would do is some of us on the march would go off the march to speak at other meetings. I remember going to speak at Fords Dagenham. I remember also when marching say from Durham to Newcastle but you may go off for two hours to address a local college. So that happened and all of that was timetabled from the national office. Often what I would have to do is jump in the van and get taken to the next phone box which is in the middle of nowhere to be dialling up the office – you know like ‘S\*\*\* it’s engaged’ and you would see the marchers coming towards you. You were trying to make the phone call before the next thing to do – this is happening, this is really urgent or are the press waiting for us where, whatever. Alan Brooks did a lot of that. Simon Osborne was the march organiser and I in fact ended up doing a lot of this because I was employed by the office.

The march was brilliantly planned and it went from local group to town hall or somewhere that we actually wanted to recruit more people within the Anti-Apartheid Movement. In terms of walking there were some days we would walk 30 miles and in the middle of the march we were averaging about five miles an hour – that’s fairly fast, so we were kind of zipping along. But there were some people who were really whingy, like ‘My feet are really sore and I have got many blisters’. There were a couple of people who were really moany – they will remain nameless as well. That’s seems really unkind but there were real characters, you know.

So the march was five weeks, around 600 miles, and it ended in a huge rally in Hyde Park. Again Jim Kerr was there singing ‘Mandela Day’ and Jo Beck, the NALGO marcher, was elected to speak on behalf of the marchers, probably because she was brilliant in every way. Actually what happened because of the concert, not so much because of the march,,although I think the march just added another political layer to it, was I remember when we got back to the office there were sacks and sacks and sacks of mail, as thousands of people joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So we were going from a really small but really brilliant organisation to suddenly we did not have the people to open up the envelopes – we could not process the correspondence. That was just an amazing sort of achievement. Yes, it was great and it was a great laugh as well.

*RD: Do you remember the actual concert when you came back or the welcome that you got when you came back from your walk, when you had finished the walk?*

JM: Oh yes, that was in Hyde Park and I think there were 200,000 people there, it was a tremendous welcome, and because I was on the march I got closer to Alan Brooks, who then became my partner and the father of my child. So yes, it was success all around! What I thought was, I remember actually thinking ‘When Mandela is free I am going to have a baby’ is what I thought. And I did in 1990, so she is a Mandela baby.

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*RD: Thank you, Joni.*

JM: It was one of the most productive periods of my life. I had the real privilege of working with brilliant folk, albeit a few exceptions, and I do mean a few exceptions considering how many people were involved. I had the opportunity to go up and down the country with the speaking tours and also with the Mandela march and just to see the absolute wealth of collectivism and goodwill, work with some people who were famous but most people were not, and there were so many unsung heroes. People who never took any credit for anything that they did and all chipped in and worked to the best of their abilities. Sometimes in the office we would be there till midnight or later. I remember setting off the alarm, because we were on high security, on Christmas Eve. So on Christmas morning at 2 o'clock in the morning I was in the office having to prepare this report and I set off the alarm and Mike Terry had to come out and get me out of the office. I mean people worked really long hours and it became everything that they did and so if you went to a fundraising social it was also your way of socialising. You know I made so many good friends at that time who are still my friends now and so I look back at that period and I do – I can't stress what a small part I played, but I look back at it with tremendous pride. Tremendous pride that I played a part. But I feel really angry now as well because I think people in South Africa did not get the government they deserved and I think you can see that now. I think there is corruption, there are still people who still live in those townships and they have the vote, but nothing has changed because it was all about capitalism. It was all about power. And so the overwhelming majority of the people who lived there were surplus labour and they were used then and they are being used now. So I look back with pride, but I now feel angry that the people of South Africa, the working class people of South Africa, be they black or white, did not get the socialist government I had really hoped they would get and I think they deserve to this day.

*RD: Thank you for that. I really respect the feeling and emotions that you are feeling. I am feeling we are almost drawing to the close of this interview. Anything else you would like to add or say?*

JM: No, nothing. I mean I have probably said it about 60 times though, the argument is that I think the achievement of the British Anti Apartheid, the international Anti-Apartheid Movement ... You look back at what happened in New Zealand along with the All Blacks Tour, that was an inspiration, Kodak workers in the United States, I have already mentioned the dockers in Barcelona and in Southampton. You know the solidarity the South African trade unions showed – the respect they showed when people were on the miners strike is that all of those achievements – and in some cases there were people who were absolute geniuses like Mike Terry – were done by people coming together and working together with a really clear vision and a tremendous amount of commitment. It was about being together.

*RD: That's fantastic. Thank you so much Joni for your time. This is Reena Dayal with Joni McDougal ending the interview. Thank you, Joni.*

JM: Thank you.

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