

Interview with Amin and Susi Mawani by Vida Scannell, 15 November 2013, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom

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Vida Scannell: It's the 15th November 2013, I'm Vida Scannell and I'm about to interview Amin and Susi for the Forward to Freedom Anti-Apartheid Movement history project. Please could you both give me your full names?

Amin Mawani: Right, mine is Amin Mawani.

Susi Mawani: And mine is Susi Mawani.

VS: And when and where were you both born?

AM: I was born in Nairobi, Kenya, on 27th March 1948, just over 65 years of age

SM: I was born 21st April 1950 in Heidelberg in Germany.

VS: And what do you both do – or did you do – for a living?

AM: I'm a carpenter/joiner, that's my trade.

SM: And I work in publishing as a production controller. I'm still working, just about.

VS: So have you both been involved in any other political or campaigning activity apart from the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: Yes, always. There have always been issues in relation to human rights and local activities in terms of things that affect the daily way of life for people in this country. So, for example, issues of education, health, trade union rights, etc. Yes, we always have been.

VS: Both of you, together?

SM: Well, in Germany I was very active in the peace movement and was in a trade union, and then when I came here I just looked around, you know, at what's happening, and was eager to get involved.

VS: So when and how did you first become aware of the situation in Southern Africa?

AM: I was brought up in Kenya. There was always an issue about colonialism and racism in Africa that was rooted in me, and so when I came to Britain in 1965 I was very keen to know what was going on in other parts of Africa, because in Kenya it was a bit difficult to know about South Africa. So when I came to Britain in 1965 the UDI in Rhodesia that was declared, and so there was a lot of issues that were quite coming to the surface, particularly the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. But I didn't physically get involved until about the early '70s, so it was a period when I was just trying to get my thoughts together, and that's when I started becoming a bit more engaged in issues around Southern Africa.

VS: And Susi?

SM: I came to Britain in '82/'83 and Amin was involved then and we had friends who were from different countries in Africa and from South Africa too, so I just got involved as well.

VS: Why did you feel you should do something about it?

AM: Well, it was a very important issue because it was what is termed as a 'crime against humanity'. The issue of racism, I mean it was worse than what it is was with the civil rights movement in the US. This is a country in Africa which was ruled by a minority and oppressing the majority and they had the privilege of everything that was going there, having the highest living standard in the world, while the majority of people were deprived and oppressed. So it was important, this issue needed to be tackled. So that's my view on it.

SM: Yes, I always was very conscious of what was happening during the times of colonialism everywhere in the world. And then coming here, and seeing what's happening in South Africa, was kind of a very strange form of colonialism. I was quite sure that we had to do something about this, this is a heinous crime, really.

VS: How did you first become involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AM: Well, I used to go to demonstrations outside South Africa House from time to time. I remember going to demonstrations outside Rhodesia House as well, because these issues were quite interlinked, because Rhodesia was supported by the apartheid regime for quite a long time. And do you know it was very much an issue that I wanted to undertake. So this was in the, I would say, early '70s, that's when I became sort of physically active in anti-apartheid issues. But I didn't get involved with local groups or nationally or anything like that. I was just standing up for things, going to the demos.

SM: Yes, I think at the beginning, there weren't really local groups, or only very loose networks. And we went to demonstrations, or sometimes even sort of assemblies or meetings, informing about the issue, when people came to visit and to speak about what was happening. And then slowly, everything gets a momentum and the local groups started and we started one here in Ealing with a number of people.

VS: My next question, were you on a committee or local group?

AM: Yes, well, Susi and I, we were possibly one of the founding members of the Ealing Anti-Apartheid group. It was done in co-ordination with the national Anti-Apartheid Movement, and we sort of liaised with them initially. So this was in the early '80s. Because there were people who were national members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the area, but there was no local group, so there were no local activities. It was important to establish one to focus on the issues but in a local way, so that's when we started it. I later on became involved in national committees, in the organisational aspect of things, because that's how the Anti-Apartheid Movement worked. They brought in people from local groups to co-ordinate some national issues that were happening, maybe demonstrations or pickets or whatever, at South Africa House and such things. So I was involved in that at a later stage.

SM: I wasn't involved at the national level, only at the local level. But for some time I was the secretary and then I made the newsletters and leaflets, because I am a book designer by trade and I had access to duplicating machines and at that time I used typewriters, and I knew how to do layouts, so I did a lot of those things, and also in our group, to develop group life and a kind of togetherness. We had quite a lot of social events, so everybody was quite hands on with doing things together, being together in the street and then being together socially as well, to get the kind of backbone to be able to stand in the street. Because at the beginning if I remember right, it wasn't very easy, people could be quite nasty in the street. I remember in front of Barclays Bank, you know, someone would be spitting at us, so at the beginning there was quite a lot of hostility, and it took a few years for this to change.

VS: *Could you tell me a bit more about both of your roles?*

AM: Well, I played a leading role in establishing the local group. I liaised with the national AAM office on how to go about setting it up, and how we could work in conjunction with them. There was a degree of confusion at the beginning because in this area of west London you have a very large Indian community in Southall. There was the issue of the language barrier then. Today you won't find it, but earlier on there was a lot of issues of language barriers. And so therefore it was an issue to relay to people in that area. So we were much more active in the sort of leafy part of Ealing borough and some parts of Acton, that's how the group initially started off. So I tried to bring people together, from people I knew in the area, and I also looked at the list of members, national members, and spoke to them and tried to get them involved and it was quite a bit of a success in that way. I had a bit of a problem in a certain area, in Southall again, because there was an element of political, young political activists from the Indian and Afro-Caribbean background who were quite hostile to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, because they felt that it was just a white organisation, they weren't involving black people in this country. There was a bit of an issue with the ANC, that it was hijacked by white people in South Africa and abroad. So there was quite a bit of misunderstanding in that way. It was just an observation so they felt very much that they didn't want to associate with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. But they supported an alternative to the ANC which was the Pan African Congress, which was much more an exclusively black organisation, and the ANC wasn't. So there was that kind of an issue. So we struggled through that, I was a bit of worried about it. But once people gelled together in this part of Ealing, then obviously things became a bit more easier for us and we started establishing the group and I was the secretary for a while and then Susi took over after a couple of years, and then we had a chairperson, a treasurer and we had this group committee which met once a month and we also did quite a bit of fundraising. We had social fundraising events and things like that, so it was quite active, and we started making inroads into local politics as well, challenging politicians, political parties, questioning them about their position on South Africa, exposing them if they were negative or positive, whatever, their opinion on South Africa. So we did all that, and we also linked up very much with the local authority. At that time we were quite fortunate that we had a Labour local council – this is 1984/85 and so there was quite a positive support from the local council, and local councillors came to a lot of our meetings. And then you had the Conservatives, who were in the minority then, and they go to the newspapers and say that the council is spending taxpayers money on issues of Southern Africa, the ANC are a load of terrorists, etc. They were saying all those kinds of things that Margaret Thatcher was ranting from 10 Downing Street, so we had that locally as well [*laughs*], and you know it was quite interesting times, yes, it was very interesting.

SM: Yes, I think that is how it was, and we were very active. Most Saturdays we would be out there in the streets distributing leaflets, having a stall later on, selling brochures and books. And trying to have meetings and keep ourselves informed, have meetings and try and invite people to come to our meetings. And we tried to have topics to inform people about certain issues.

AM: I mean we also used events like musical events in order to get support for the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So we had local musical festivals in Ealing where we invited Indian music groups playing bhangra, I don't know if you've heard of it, it was quite a thing then, bhangra music was very popular then. And so quite popular groups from Britain agreed to come and play for free. Ealing Council funded the cost of the stage and funded the leafleting

and the PA system. It was only about, I would say, a couple of thousand pounds and we had all these musicians come over and play. We had Jonas Gwangwa, who is a very famous trombone player from South Africa. So we tried to do all that locally to highlight issues around South Africa. That was quite a success. We advertised, we used to go around fly posting, we used to do all that, it was fantastic. And we had different age groups and we had young, very young people, especially a young student, he was 16 or something, and he was very active and so he did all this stuff.

VS: Can you describe the general dynamic of your Ealing group?

AM: Well, we had active people who were there, the majority of us were couples who were of mixed race. We also had people who had been national members for a long time, individuals who came in who were in their 40s, 50s, I don't know if they're still around. People were from different professions, different backgrounds, we were a mixture of diverse groups. I think that was something that possibly wasn't explored yet by the Anti-Apartheid Movement nationally, how to engage people from different backgrounds. There were the trade unions, obviously, who supported us and helped us with things like printing local leaflets. We also, what do you call it, one of those ...

SM: Duplicators

AM: Duplicators. A machine that somebody donated

SM: You know, the ones which you have to turn by hand, with a kind of a stencil which you typed.

AM: We used to print leaflets in one of those bedrooms, and then sometimes when that used to break down, we used to get the trade union here in Acton to do printing for us, thousands of leaflets. As far as things like religious organisations were concerned, I think the only truly, to be fair, were Christian organisations that supported us. The others didn't say, 'We aren't supporting you', it's just that they didn't want to get involved in taking a political stand, because it didn't sort of affect them, I would say. So we had our local Methodist church that was quite actively supporting us, they gave us a hall every month as a venue at a very nominal rent. So we also made sure there was young, older, male, female, all that kind of dynamic within the group, that made up the group. We didn't look at everything like professions. But trade unions were very important, because the trade unions played a very leading role within South Africa, so it actually reflected it here as well. So they wanted to be seen as playing that active role.

SM: I think we had a variety of people, different professions and different races as well, because we were quite a few mixed race couples. If you think of [inaudible] people who were here in Britain from other countries, born here or had come here to study, and then carried on living here, working and I think these people they were, at the beginning of it all, much more aware of issues because their history, their past, was sort of linked to colonialism. And so generally they were thinking much more politically about what was happening internationally, and that's probably why they were more involved and active in the earlier days. And then later of course, when the knowledge about it became much more general knowledge, then people knew and could get outraged about it, easier, because they didn't need so much courage any more to stand up against the major tide, I think. Then we got

different people involved as well, and it became easier in the street, and then with the years of course it was sort of like, people were very sympathetic, very supportive, would donate money and would take bundles of leaflets or brochures, and say they would take it back to their workplace and things like that. But that was later on, wasn't it.

VS: So could you tell me about the campaigns that you were both involved in?

AM: Well, locally I think we've described some of it, which already involved the local council and things like that, but we also did things like fundraising, for example, when the South African miners went out on strike we did a fundraiser here, in conjunction with the local trade unions. So it was quite an important thing for us to do, but I think also during that time when we did that was also the British miners who were out on strike in 1984. The South African miners were very much supporting the British miners as well. Now the British miners felt very strongly about the South African miners who were working in more terrible conditions than the British miners and so there was a lot of British miners who would be supporting the South African miners who were out on strike for their issues in South Africa. South African miners leaders came over to Britain to support the British miners, whilst in South Africa their circumstances were worse, so it was quite emotional for people here to see this. But I think Susi already described about street leafleting we did quite regularly. We also had local demonstrations where we actually started a march somewhere in Hanwell all the way to the Ealing Town Hall. Hanwell is about three miles or something from the Ealing Town Hall. So we would have an assembly there and do a lot of leafleting and fly posting. And we would have a march through the main road, which is the Uxbridge Road, which leads from Hanwell to Ealing Broadway. And we would get something like 300 people maybe, maybe more, I can't remember, with banners, with trade union people, just ordinary people coming from the street and joining our march and it was quite good, and challenging, because a lot of times when you get loads of people coming from different parts of the country to demonstrations in Hyde Park it only shows a national kind of perspective, but locally you don't know what's happening, and this was a good demonstration that we were doing things locally, bringing attention to what was happening in South Africa.

SM: Well specifically we were in front of Barclays Bank to inform about the activities of Barclays Bank and to put pressure on Barclays Bank and we always had to have permission to be able to have a little stall nearby or just stand there as a group. We supported the Shell campaign. We had a banner and were leafleting near a Shell petrol station. And of course we were involved in the boycott campaign, we were outside of mainly Sainsbury's, then Tesco, wasn't it?

AM: No

SM: Waitrose was just starting, wasn't it, but mainly Sainsbury's. We were always out there leafleting and having a little stall on Saturdays and making people aware of what was happening and we had a variety of ways, activities, I think we collected some of the South African food in a basket and would leave it standing there in protest against it and people would become more and more responsive and say yes, we won't buy South African goods.

AM: We had this Shell garage that was on the A40 going towards Oxford. And there was a bridge, a footbridge across the A40. And we had this banner on the side of where the petrol station was, so when people came towards that petrol station, we put this banner up, so they

would see our banner and then carry on and not fill up at the garage. We went there several times and we just put the banner right across the bridge. It was a long banner about Shell, and it showed you petrol and blood and how 'Shell supports South African apartheid'. Unfortunately there was a couple of bumper-to-bumper crashes as a result of people looking up at the footbridge. They didn't realise the person in front braked and slowed down or something and hit them in the back. Unfortunately that happened as well, which wasn't our fault.

SM: But I think then we changed ...

AM: We changed tactics.

SM: We stopped doing that. We went to the Shell petrol station ...

AM: ... on South Ealing Road. Yes, we went there and we stood outside there a few times, and unfortunately we lost the banner. The banner was made by a woman who worked for the film studios. And she did all the graphics of the stage design work. So she was very good at those kinds of presentation – bold presentation. What was her name?

SM: Diana Walker.

AM: Diana Walker had three children and she still could be so active in the group. It was a fantastic banner, and it got stolen.

SM: Yes, we had put it up at the fence and there were two people standing with it, and we later found out that one of them was a dodgy person.

AM: A plant or something like that to cause negative impact within the group – I'll come to that. Well, what happened was that, I would say about ten years ago, there was something that came out in the national archives, you know there was this law, the Freedom of Information Act. It came out in the *Guardian* newspaper that the secret service had infiltrated, the British secret service had infiltrated, some of the local anti-apartheid groups in Britain. And one of them was Ealing. And so we know, I know actually who that person was. And he deliberately misled it [the banner], and it disappeared. He came in from nowhere, into this group, and he said he lived in east London. Sounded a bit posh to have come from Poplar. The information that he gave is recorded, it's not very correct anyway, because what he told the MI5, or whoever it was that he was working for, that the secretary of the group was this young man who was 16 years old. I was in fact the secretary. He gave wrong information. And there was a few other things that he said. But there's no doubt that these things do happen. I don't know why the police were wasting their time on us. We weren't doing any harm to anybody, but if they want to find out, or disrupt any activities, they were doing it on behalf of the apartheid regime, you know, and so there you go [*laughs*].

SM: I find it very strange that energy is wasted on something like that because we always had people joining our meetings, or turning up at the stall to challenge our views, and you knew what they would say, and you sort of primed yourself about what you can answer back. And also we were always a group, so we knew which people would come and do what and then we would sort of stay a bit more together and argue with them, but in the same way. And I can't see what it helps for somebody to pay somebody to find out what we are doing,

they could have just been an ordinary member, and throw their sticks in, as many people did anyway. It's quite strange.

AM: Basically, although those kinds of things happened, you know, it raised your blood pressure a little bit into thinking 'Right, let's see who's who', but you actually, at the end of the day, the group dynamic was that we worked together, and people did put time and effort to try and achieve what our aims were. And I think the result of what we did was very profound, in the sense that we actually did have an impact locally. That the local Tory councillors were jumping up and down when on Namibia Day we got the local Council to invite the representative of SWAPO in London to Ealing Town Hall to meet the mayor, and invited the press and raised a flag of Namibia on the town hall. That was incredible. And we also had Neil Kinnock's wife.

SM: Glenys ...

AM: Glenys Kinnock, she and Sally Mugabe, Robert Mugabe's late wife, came to Ealing and they spoke in Ealing Town Hall at meetings. The Tories would be jumping up and down saying, 'This is a waste of taxpayers money, these are terrorist organisations, why are we wasting money on them?' I would like to see what they say about that terrorist who is sitting in South Africa today, 93 years old. I mean they would all eat their words now, because it was a different era, you know, they were very hostile. And we had to face that kind of hostility in the press as well, because the press was voicing these kinds of things as well. I mean, we have all the information in these folders, the cuttings of the newspapers and all that. So it was quite interesting, it was challenging and we knew that we were doing the right thing, yes, that was the commitment that was coming from all of us. We were on the right track. This wasn't something that we weren't too clear about, the issue about racism, apartheid in southern Africa, was an issue that everyone took to their heart, and we fought for that.

SM: And I think if you think of some of the issues today, like the struggle of the Palestinians, it was easier for us being in the Anti-Apartheid Movement, because there was a continuous change that you did experience in the way how people perceived you and reacted. There was a growing sympathy for the cause, continuously growing, and internationally the impact – you could see that as well. There was always something happening and it was positive. But if you think of the Palestinians, there hasn't been for many years positive news, and you always think their situation is so bad it can't get worse, and miraculously it does get worse, and the lying and cheating gets worse about it, but in the Anti-Apartheid Movement this was very different. You could see that what you did had an impact. And also we were not the only country, it was all over the world. And there was a strong movement inside South Africa, regarding us as one of their pillars of their struggle. And you could see how the situation changed and headed towards change, and irreversible change.

AM: I think continuing from that, one of the fortunate, very fortunate things that we had at that time was the political direction that the African National Congress gave us. And I think their political programme and their political thinking was very crucial in how we would approach the whole issue of campaigning. Because reading things the ANC produced, publications and so forth, they actually gave us a lot clearer definition of what South Africa, of what apartheid in South Africa, was like. Because what Susi raised about the Palestinians, you know, it wouldn't have happened, it would have been a similar position to what the

Palestinians are today. Because there is a problem in their perspective of how they are portrayed internationally, particularly in the West. So the ANC was giving us a political direction, we felt a lot more comfortable with what they were saying. And there were no embarrassments about what they did, because it was very clear-cut. The apartheid regime obviously had some people infiltrated, you know, in all aspects of things here in Britain to try and disrupt the campaign against them. But you know these people, they were either exposed or they didn't fit in.

SM: They were neutralised

AM: Yeah, they didn't fit in. Because what it was basically is that the ordinary people, as I said to you earlier on, that a lot of the activists in our local group came from all different backgrounds. There was quite a number of mixed couples, who felt very strongly because of their particular experience of racism perhaps in Britain as well. So these people who maybe tried to sort of bring in some other ideas didn't work, because you are working against people who are experiencing a similar thing, and who have got it in their hearts. So we were very fortunate in that way, that we could actually have this raw commitment from people and that was very, very good.

SM: I mean, even so the struggle, I would say, had a continuous line of success at the time. Of course it did feel like you needed the long breath and it goes on and on, because it did go on for quite a number of years. But I think what always kept us going was that most of the people in the group, sort of more continuous circle of the group, we were really friends. And we met a lot and we would always discuss things.

AM: Some of us do keep in contact with each other. It's amazing you know, we still know who lives where, and we see each other maybe once a year or whatever, bump into them in the street, because they still live here.

SM: Or we meet at demonstrations.

AM: Yes, sometimes

SM: And we meet in other groups and activities and bring in our experience which we had during the work in the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

VS: When you look back, what particular incidents stand out, and can you describe them?

AM: Loads of them. I think from what I can remember one of the things that I felt very happy about was this big concert in Wembley, Mandela's 70th birthday. He was still in prison, and I don't know if you know of that, it was one of the biggest concerts ever held. And following that we had a local event in the town hall to commemorate his 70th birthday, and we had local groups coming to play music. And they came together, jammed together, you know, there was a few people around. And it was very, very good, it was very memorable. Do you remember that? They were mainly jazz musicians, but they were very happy to do it for Mandela, and I think it was the beginning of that period of time when a lot of black people particularly, Afro-Caribbean background people began to get engaged much more in the activities of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, from what I could see, because what you had in Wembley was people like Whitney Houston coming and singing, and you had all these other

groups from the US and Britain who came and sang. And you had Benjamin Zephaniah and who's the other guy? Who's that black comedian, he had a TV programme, what was his name?

SM: Lenny Henry ...

AM: ... Lenny Henry. So there was all kinds of people at Wembley, and that actually was a very high point of that time, because I think actually it gave a national influence to the campaign against apartheid, and it made life much easier for us. You know in the street, because you could see people relating to musicians and it was moving. That was a very interesting point, and the campaign became much more stronger.

SM: As I mentioned earlier, we had quite a lot of social events to be together, like parties to raise money. We had quite a few events in the local Labour Hall, the Sherman Hall, which is like a little church hall, and they had a little kitchen there, and a few of us, we cooked very big pots of curry and rice and we brought it there and we could keep it warm there in the kitchen, and people would come and pay an entrance fee or a donation, and that's how we made money and we had music there and danced, and all the children of the people would be there, and it was great fun. It was very, very good and we did it year after year after year after year.

AM: We did a lot of fundraising and we raised money for the Anti-Apartheid Movement nationally, so when we had a certain amount of money we gave it to them as a donation. And we also had local membership that was growing all the time. We couldn't keep track of it. So that was very interesting – to see the graph going up, I think in '86/'87 or something like that, when we had the concert and the aftermath and all that. That was a very good period.

SM: And we had friends, South African friends, and because of that people had given our address to people who needed to stay in London and sometimes arrived at the airport and would ring us from the airport and say, 'Can I stay with you for a few days?' – or sometimes weeks. And two of them came on the eve of us getting married and they joined us on our wedding celebrations the next day. It was very funny.

AM: I think the other high points, I mean personally, not the local group but myself, in a way, what happened was because I was playing quite a big role locally, the national office asked me to work nationally and I think that was the area that I want to talk about. I was organising national demonstrations, one of the big ones that started from Trafalgar Square and went all the way to Clapham, and that was a long, long demo. That was one of the biggest ones ever, and Clapham Common was just absolutely packed. They had pop groups there playing music. And it was quite hard work, it was very hard work to organise a national demonstration. I mean I was actually the co-ordinator, the marshal, as they called it. So that was quite a skilful thing to do, that wasn't something I knew all about but I learnt. And then we had another demonstration where Oliver Tambo, Jesse Jackson, Archbishop Tutu, there was several others. There was the 75th or 60th anniversary, I can't remember which, of the founding of the South African Communist Party. It was held in Conway Hall, and the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the ANC asked me if I could do the security because Joe Slovo, who was the General Secretary and then he became the Chairman of the South African Communist Party, was going to be there. I don't know if you know of Joe Slovo. He

became the Minister for Housing in the post-apartheid South African government, when Mandela became the President. He was a target, of the South African regime, I'm talking about, you know, assassination target because his wife was killed by the South African government in Maputo, with a parcel bomb.

SM: Ruth First ...

AM: ... Ruth First, and so you know he was a target, so that was very difficult for me to organise because I wasn't experienced in any sort of combat or guns or anything like that, you know [laughs]. So I had to go out of my way and look for the skilful people who could [inaudible]. I found about 15 guys who were quite experienced, in making sure that nothing happens to him, and they weren't from this country. I remember Susi and I had to discuss this, at home, and I was sort of scribbling things on pieces of paper and whispering to her, and I wouldn't talk to her loudly in case there was a microphone planted in the house or whatever, I wouldn't take any chances, because Joe Slovo was a very important person. He was the first one, Joe Slovo, he actually led the first military campaign against the regime, when they destroyed electrical pylons in South Africa in the '60s, that was the first campaign and Joe Slovo was the military man. And so he was definitely a target. So that was a very difficult one. When that finished it was like a sigh of relief. Nothing happened to him, you know, we couldn't take chances.

VS: So, you've spoken to me about the high points, what about the low points of the campaign?

AM: I think the low points were obviously ...

SM: [laughs]

AM: I don't know, you want to say something?

SM: It's just, you had to keep at it, you know, and the length of time it took, but generally, looking back, it looks like we always knew that we would succeed one day, but that's of course looking at it with hindsight. I think you just really had to keep the long breaths, and keep at it, and continue, but as I said before, looking at other movements today, it seems to have been an easy ride. I think low points were probably when we had problems in the local group, like people would come in and because the dynamic of a group can change with some individuals who are a bit more dominating, or have their own agenda which they think is much more important and you always have that happening, and you have to give it space to run its course, and fight it, and hope and do everything till reason prevails. And we had phases like that in the group of course as well, sometimes people who were very good, they had personal reasons, family reasons that they couldn't continue in the same capacity, and would have to withdraw a bit, then other people would come in and it would change the dynamic and it would maybe create a problem. But in the end, we stuck together and we kept the group together.

AM: For me, I think the low points were particularly poignant – perhaps that's the wrong word, particularly during the time of the hangings that went on, the Sharpeville Six you know, the brutal force that the apartheid regime went about in Southern Africa, killing, assassinating, all that, was a very, very disheartening period, in a way. I can recall we used

to go outside South Africa House, and stand there all night, when these people had been taken to the gallows and they were going to be hung, the Sharpeville Six, and then it was postponed. The British government then, led by Margaret Thatcher, she would refuse to say anything, she wouldn't budge, and the British government in general just wouldn't say anything. It was a very difficult time, and what made us still want to continue, as I said before, was the leadership of the ANC. I remember Oliver Tambo, he came to the Institute of Education in central London at an event. He said, 'When a lion is injured, he is the most dangerous', and that said it all. That was a point of hope, because the lion was injured, the campaign that we were carrying out was having an impact, in Europe and America it was having an effect, and so therefore that lion who is injured has gone crazy, you know, hitting here there and everywhere, because his death is near. But we still felt that was still a low point, because they were going around killing people en masse, you know, rounding up, imprisoning, all kinds of things like that. So it was a very difficult time.

In the Anti-Apartheid Movement we had problems, as I said to you earlier on, there were people in the black community who didn't want to associate themselves with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Because a lot of black people looked at their whole lifestyle was different, you know, the majority of the black people in this country during the '70s and '80s weren't engaged in professional jobs and middle-class lives or anything like that. So yeah, things were difficult, things were tough, and then you had some young people who had a different outlook, different approach to deal with things, and in that, during that time, I'm sorry to say, but a lot of the British white people weren't too familiar, particularly the middle-class white people, with the black culture in this country. So whenever there was a black congregation of black anti-apartheid activists wanted to join the march, I realised what was happening, but there were people above me that were saying to me that I must try and control them, and I refused to do that because I wouldn't, because I think that they are misunderstood, how black people express themselves in a different way. So I had a falling out with some of the people in the national office, and within the national organisation, on issues as such, and I was very critical about it, and that was one of the low points.

VS: Looking back, what are your feelings about your involvement in the anti-apartheid campaigns?

SM: Well, this is one movement where one can say one had a result. Of course it's not all golden, and they have their problems, and in South Africa it's not surprising, because when the apartheid regime fell, this is a very big ship, a country like that, with so many people, you cannot turn the ship around just like that, it takes years, it takes generations, it needs the thinking being changed of generations. And also the international situation in the whole of Africa isn't that terribly good. A lot of African countries have a lot of problems, and South Africa trying to grapple with their problems, compared to other countries, people there are better off, and they get a lot of refugees from other countries and these are a lot of problems this country has to deal with. But despite that, there was a result and one could see that an effort in one country, in the whole world, in so many countries, can lead to something, can lead to results, and it's fantastic to have experienced that.

AM: Yes, I think I feel very proud that I was involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. It's a movement that I think worked brilliantly in the West, particularly in Britain. There was a hell of a lot of people in Britain who despised racism and apartheid, it was something they couldn't come to accept. You know, they hated it. I remember in the early '70s when I used

to hang around with a group of people who weren't politically active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement or any other organisations, they still said it just made their stomach crunch when they thought, when they heard news which portrayed the white minority as the legitimate government in South Africa, so there were those people around, ordinary young people who were thinking, who actually had some idea what was going on around the world. Then there was a lot of people in the churches, because of Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, his continuous work that he did for the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the struggle of the South African people, that actually brought in a lot of church people into the dynamics of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. And that actually had a profound effect, and I really feel that Britain really deserves that positive side of things to be seen as a vehicle that actually helped the campaign in this country. I think it was brilliant that I got involved in it, and you know, I'm proud to say that when Nelson Mandela was released and he became the President, it was such a great thing to happen. We took our daughter to Trafalgar Square when he came here and we saw him walk around Trafalgar Square – that's where we used to have demonstrations and the South African Embassy is there. It was so good to think about those things and feel very happy that there was a result at the end of it. But as Susi said, South Africa wasn't a revolution, so things didn't change like the administration, the way of thinking, everything didn't change, the apparatus didn't change. So what happened there is that there was democracy, in the sense of a majority vote, and that's what happened. There's a government there which is voted by the majority, not a minority of four million. And the changes that will happen in South Africa will take a long time, it's not something that's going to happen overnight. And I still feel very positive about the things that are happening in South Africa, that people are able to challenge, people are able to go about their whole lifestyle and what not, and you know I think nothing is static in South Africa, things will change, and South Africa as a result of our campaign in Britain and the South African people's campaign to bring down apartheid, has brought South Africa into a world leadership status. So they are a member of BRICS, the nations that are an alternative to what the western economic systems are, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, so they are a powerful force now. And that is a credit.

VS: Is there anything else both of you would like to say?

SM: I think in a way it shaped a very long time of our lives to be active in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and we made many friends, and with many of them we are still in very close contact, even if they live in other countries and we go and visit them and they come and visit us. It was a fantastic experience, it was an amazing learning curve also to be able to see how things in the world can change, or why they don't, and to be able to look at politics in general today, and see how things shift or don't shift, and to recognise the factors. It was just a very enlightening experience to have been part of that. You know, it carries you, your whole life really.

AM: Yes, well, I think basically picking up from that is, where we are today, Susi and I as well, it is as a result of being engaged in something that we strongly believed was a just cause. And it's that cause which brought fruition, it brought results that gives us, the two of us, a kind of a confidence in reality out there in the world. And you know it's those things which I think are very helpful. I hope that people in the future will learn that we can never go wrong if we have got our focus on the right things, on the things that we strongly believe in, which is a just cause, and a cause that is based on human equality for human beings. So I think it's something that I feel very confident about and very proud of.

VS: *Thank you very much.*

AM: You're welcome.