

Interview with Tim Oshodi by Angela Drinnan on 22nd August 2013 for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom

Angela Drinnan: background questions

Tim Oshodi: 2/12/65, Battersea, London.

Community led regeneration consultant. Mum was a cleaner, separated from Dad when I was about 9 yrs old, he wasn't really involved in our lives, I think my Dad was a printer but he wasn't really involved much in my life at all

AD: Moving on to more about the AAM... How did you first become aware of apartheid?

TO: When I was got to college, went to a state school but at college, London School of Economics, there were lots of middle class white people who had all these things up and one of the things was I saw a poster on the wall and it talked about anti-apartheid and I thought I was being original by agreeing to go and volunteer and I also, I think, set up the LSE Anti-Apartheid Group.

AD: And what did that involve setting it up?

TO: Just, I can't remember to tell you the truth! ...Just got the students together and eventually we led a divestment campaign from the LSE, I was involved, I led the group but I wasn't one of the key people in the whole divestment campaign, well not the intellectual side of it that's for sure. But I do know we had an occupation of the LSE and it forced them to divest and they actually agreed to divest and there was quite a lot of publicity about that and I definitely led the, there was a big argument because some people were watching some spy video I think it was called the Circon spy video and all of a sudden the police were on every landing on the whole building which we'd occupied and there was a big debate about...I think we were in there for 7 days and there was a big debate about whether we should stay in or go out and I argued that we should go out and people agreed and we went and I think that at that time one of my old professors he was a tutor, Professor Desai came in and talked to us about it and they thought that was good. I think he's now, was a Labour frontbench spokesman in the house of Lords. But the divestment, yeh, LSE divested from South Africa as well so yeh.

AD: So what was that like to have that kind of impact?

TO: Yeh it was good, it was more the talk and the speech, the speech I didn't prepare but I was a natural speaker so that was good. But I think more... we did stuff with the ANC youth choir and brought them over and they sung and we did some fundraising for them so that was something and that was good. But my main thing with anti-apartheid was being a volunteer at the Movement headquarters in eventually Mandela Street and that was brilliant. You'd just really get to meet people, like Mike Terry, see how Mike Terry and the rest of them operated. And then when I graduated I did some work for the movement, I was a researcher under Stuart Bell who was the main brains around divestment and I did all the ground work around the anti-apartheid divestment strategy which was identifying all the companies in the UK who had links with South Africa and so on. And then they did the intellectual work around who they should target. So that was good and good involvement, and getting to know a lot of the people.

AD: What kind of people were involved in the movement?

TO: Essentially it was a white middle class movement but there were student activists, so people from the NUS, people with very strong values around race equality and apartheid. It was more people on the Left I would say than a narrow community of interest people. So

people from CND, quite a few activists from CND and so on. But it was good and really great friends have come out of it, people I really admire. So I really liked Margaret Ling and Roger, oh his surname's gone, who set up AA Enterprises which was much more the first kind of trading and Fairtrade, a much more positive thing rather than just boycotting, actually doing something active and that way contributing to the Movement which was a really good idea and they built up AA Enterprises quite solidly, well ahead of say Christian Aid well before they did their campaign. So that was really good.

AD: So what was the kind of feel of the group that you were involved in?

TO: At LSE? They're students! Well people committed who thought they could do something and we did, and you invite speakers over so that was good. I would say, I mean I was involved in local anti-apartheid group as well and you did your campaigns and you went on boycotts so that was good and you'd get people down. The important thing was going down to South Africa house even though... there was a different group called City Apartheid who I think were a bit more radical and they were there 24-7. Anti-apartheid came along and wasn't there all the time. I did quite a lot of protests outside and I really enjoyed protesting outside and I was very good in terms of when we had chants and making chants which people got quite into...

AD: Is there an image in your mind's eye when you talk about enjoying the protests? Can you describe that to me?

TO: Well there was a thing about "Isolate Apartheid, Sanctions Now" (chants) and you got people going and toi-toying, the township dance which the youth led and doing that outside, that was a good thing I enjoyed that. And then also they put you in touch with ANC people and I found that quite inspiring. That was really good. Being outside and there was some slight fear as well because the apartheid agents were there, they had their security guards there, Thatcher's government loved them, so people were being followed.. Also I was very lucky because when I was at LSE the bishop Trevor Huddleston came to speak. He was invited for his spiritual work and one of the things he always said was that if you want to take action in the world you had to have a spiritual life and that had a big impact on me. I was moving more towards that and he said he couldn't do what he did unless he meditated for 2 hours a day. He gave a big speech which I didn't quite understand when he said "Am I my brother's keeper?" At the time I wasn't sure whether he meant a zoo-keeper, or a goal-keeper, I didn't quite understand what the phrase meant! But it hit home. And then he led this workshop which had the title "If action is a river then contemplation is the source", and the importance of going inside and really sharpening your values and finding what's inside you. And I remember him talking about the best use he ever saw for the communion wine was when some kids were given it because they were thirsty. He's very inspiring. What happened, at that time it was unusual but as a student I worked on a Thursday and all day Saturday to pay my way through University. And his workshop was on Thursday evening and I was supposed to get over to work in High St. Kensington and the priest asked would I walk Trevor Huddleston to the tube. And that meant I would be late for work. And I had a real dilemma! And I decided to walk him and at this time he was about 80 and walked really slowly and afterwards the priest told me that actually we were followed by the Secret Service. And it really struck me that there's this 80 year old man and all he does is just what he felt about the right things and the British state was afraid of him. People were saying look if he hadn't challenged them so much he might have been Archbishop of Canterbury, or something really high up in the church. But he was much more about his values and that really struck me, that the whole of the British state were just afraid of a guy who just had strong values. He prayed and just spoke at the people and that's his strength. When I read "Naught for your comfort" there's all this stuff about him giving a trumpet to Hugh Masekela, his first ever trumpet, and I remember at the hundredth celebration Desmond Tutu said that it was because of Trevor Huddleston, Trevor Huddleston was the first white man who

showed any respect to his mother and how that was an impact, to see little things which you don't know, but you act as a role model and what people see you do has as much impact as what you say. And that really hit home for me. Just the fact he believed... I remember something Mike Terry said he never quite got the difference between him being an optimist, Trevor Huddleston was never an optimist, I can't remember what he said, it was either optimistic or realistic and he said he was always positive something would happen but he wasn't an optimist. I didn't quite understand the difference but I just liked that, he was very human, and very approachable. He was a real role model, I've still got his picture up on my wall. The fundamental thing about what you really believe, he said he would say to his secretary, anybody was "find what's a passion in your life, doesn't matter what it is, just find what really goes into your heart and really try and live it out". Yeh, I think that's fantastic.

AD: Sounds like it's been a really personal journey for you, through your contact with the movement and the people you've met....

TO: Yeh, definitely, I mean the biggest thing which I haven't even talked about, for me the life-changing thing was, I was volunteering in anti-apartheid and I met the most fantastic woman, I should mention this woman called Joy Annegarn who was another volunteer and she was a white Afrikaner who, she said she didn't believe that apartheid was so bad because they got a TV in South Africa and when you saw the TV for the first time you think they can't fake it, it has to be real, and then it was only when she and her husband, I think they ran a mine, maybe owned a mine, and her kids, she said she didn't realise that when she sent her kids to summer camp they were being indoctrinated by the apartheid regime. When her kids came back she said she really realised how bad the situation was because she saw what was on TV and thought oh, these blacks are causing trouble and then Joy came over, fantastic woman, she taught me how to swear in Afrikaans, she was very committed, and it was her son, who was one of the few white guys who was in the ANC, who they had a raid in South Africa, and the apartheid regime said about him, it must be Paul Annegarn, he had this terrifying ordeal. Having done the raid the apartheid regime said that he had betrayed his colleagues which he hadn't, but then he couldn't go to any of the safe houses so he had to make his own way out. And it was her son that did that, she was an amazing woman.

AD: You said that was a life-changing experience for you?

TO: Yeh, sorry, the life-changing experience for me was that I volunteered in anti-apartheid and then I wanted to go and stay at the ANC school which was in Tanzania. And I asked Alan Brooks who was the number 2 at the AAM to give me a reference. Alan Brooks who was an amazing man himself his reference (laughing) was "Well I don't really know Tim Oshodi" because he couldn't be sure if I was a spy or anything like that, he just knew I was a student, "but he seems to be popular amongst the staff" (laughing) "And he's volunteered here for about two years" and that was his reference. Of course it didn't get me anywhere near! But what was really good about it was then, because I couldn't go to the ANC school in Tanzania, and from what I understand it would have been terrifying anyhow, probably not right for me, I ended up going to Zimbabwe and, the best thing ever, I had one contact in Zimbabwe, no I wrote to, I didn't want to do VSO, I wrote to one guy who told me to come to Zimbabwe and work in a school. Which I thought was good, I can do that during the...and then I went and he said "oh it's the school holiday", he didn't tell me that at the time! He said "Do you want to be my PA?" I thought I didn't come to Zimbabwe to be a Kelly temp and then I had one contact which was Grassroots Bookshop Pam Brickhill. And Pam's still up on my wall and her gorgeous daughter Amy, and I stayed with them. Grassroots Bookshop in Harare was this radical bookshop and they told me about this place called Simukai which is a co-operative farm set up by ex-freedom fighters called Zipra and Zanla armies. I ended up on the farm teaching at the school and it was life-changing, the best thing ever, it just taught me that there were these people who had very little education but they believed in, there was

something inside them that said "look our country can be free". They left home at the age of 10, 12 years old and left their country and went and learnt, having had a crap education, went to Russia, came back and fought to liberate their country. Even though they fought hard they didn't hate white people. [inaudible] were afraid but they didn't hate white people. They also took responsibility, they wanted to own their land and work it. They wanted to work hard and change and create a good society. They were just phenomenal. Andrew Nyathi, the leader of the whole thing, phenomenally bright, fantastic, big heart, always talking. These people... Barbara, one of the freedom fighters with her gorgeous son. I mean these people, this is my picture of the kids from the school (gets up to show photo), this was taken 25 years ago, these kids were called Noble Cause and Charity. I ended up being in one of their houses where there was one kid called Fortune and another kid called God Knows and Anthon Nyati, they were beautiful, beautiful children, lovely, I had a really good time teaching them but the political education that I got was phenomenal, I was really understanding the way the world worked and how people have to organise to get change and it doesn't matter which government it is, if people want stuff they have to organise it. Like these guys they fought for the freedom of their country, they wanted to continue to fight on for the liberation of South Africa, that's what they wanted to do. The British government did a deal with SA, and the apartheid regime told the Rhodesians to do a deal because they didn't want Rhodesia to be completely overthrown because they knew SA would be next. They wanted to continue fighting then the British army retrained, they were trying to get the corrupt election process, then Mugabe got in. And then they convinced Mugabe to retrain his whole army, get rid of all the people who liberated their country and they were treated really badly. They clubbed their money together and the government didn't want them to buy this land, what the government did they put loads of extra land in to try to encourage all of the white farmers around to come and buy it. It was a really good deal and they just told the farmers "look we ain't fighting anymore, that's our land, you go into that land we're going to have a fight and you better understand that" and the white farmers understood these people weren't looking for trouble but they were going to stand their ground. And they ended up buying a grape farm, but it just reminded me it's all about ownership of land and just allowing people to have frameworks that they can then grow. They grew tobacco, they were great exporters, fantastic meat. We really showed that if you organise people... and for me it was eye-opening and it was really important to understand the political stuff but then the challenge for me was - if people at the age of 12 can do that in Zimbabwe, what's happening here when the guys I was at school with, from state school, were getting sent to prison by the time they were 13 or 14. So what, and that led me on a journey for about 30, 25 years, I'm still on that journey about what is it that you need to do to enable people to fulfil their potential? And it comes back to why I live here, in terms of we set up co-operative housing, all my work 25 years has always been about people taking control. So not the state having control over people, they can support it but people have to take responsibility for their lives and they can be supported in the co-operative. Those who have greater talent help those who have got less talent but everyone can have something that's fantastic.

AD: It does sound like it was an amazing life-changing experience, when you came back from that were you still involved with the AAM?

TO: Yeh, yeh. All the way through. Unfortunately I can't tell you about dates... But yeh for 20 years. I stood for the National Committee, was involved in setting up the Black Solidarity Committee within the AAM...

AD: What was that like?

TO: (Laughs) That was very interesting! The, essentially, from what I could see, Mike Terry, brilliant man, and Alan Brooks, his number 2 ran the AAM. Now I'm not sure if they were Lefties, I don't really know much about Stalinists, Lefty whatever. All I know is that Mike Terry was a very bright guy but he was a control freak and not necessarily that well-

organised but very committed, did ridiculous hours about 18 hours a days working. And so when, they didn't quite, I don't think they quite understood the new politics of how people coalesce around communities of interest. So you've got things like 38 Degrees now campaigning. People aren't necessarily interested in party politics but they're interested in an issue. They didn't understand that at all and they saw Black Solidarity as some kind of, they wondered if it was going to be infiltrated, whether they'd get some South African spies in there. And so, we just wanted to make sure that black people would come along because a lot of my friends said that anti-apartheid was for white people. And so we wanted to say no actually black people have a role to play, if you come together you can organise and we can make it more accessible and we should target it at the black community

AD: What was it like getting interest together for that?

TO: From the black activists I thought they were interested. There was a great guy, a Union guy, Glen Watson and Chitra Karve was our Secretary. Lela Kogbara was interested. I can't remember where Chinyelu Onwurah is now but Lela is now the Chair of ACTSA the follow up organisation and we've stayed good friends for 25 years now. Chinyelu is now MP for Newcastle. Chitra is involved in some stuff. But it's good we had access to Lee Jasper who was leading the black movement and I think at one point we got Jesse Jackson to come, there was something going on, and who else was there, there was stuff like Benjamin Zephaniah, event which he would come along and then more black people would come. I was able to get a few more black people involved in the movement but the ironic things was that at every meeting, every Black Solidarity Committee meeting Alan Brooks would come along to it. Alan Brooks is a white guy! And the thing that would make me laugh is also that Alan Brooks would also go along to the Women's Committee! So he was black and he was a woman! He just didn't understand, or more to the point, they were fearful that they were going to be infiltrated, and it makes me laugh now when I think about it. So for me it was good and for a lot of us it was just a recognition, that it was important that we organised it not as an exclusive thing but more as a recognition that people come together around communities of interest. And like the big Mandela concerts were brilliant...

AD: What was the atmosphere like there?

TO: Yeh, really good. There was a lot of, there was a bit of resentment because I think they'd commercial, the music people took the piss, there was hardly any money went to the AAM from my memory. And I'm going to say it as well, Sian Bakewell was a fundraiser, and Mike Terry took her along to some meetings, and Sian never understood why she was in that meeting, because she wasn't asked to say anything, I think that one of the music guys might have fancied her, and she was just there, she was a pretty young woman, and I know that pissed her off. But she was at that meeting and she could never understand why she was never asked her opinion on anything, but they got what they needed out of it. That's just something that's stuck in there, and Sian's gone on to be a really top fundraiser, I think she worked for Terrence Higgins Trust and stuff like that. There were lots of good activists, like they did some bike tour thing and lots of different ways with which to engage people. For me, a very good political lesson about campaigning, around doing what's in your heart, what you really believe in. And you can get rewards, you can learn so much. I mean I wouldn't have known really anything about African history, about people in Mozambique, about Cuito Cuanavale. No matter how strong the South Africans were they got defeated because they built allies and when ordinary people come together and organise, they can be defeated, so that was a really big lesson for me. And then, international politics the fact that, how can Israel which suffered its own history, then link up with apartheid South Africa who were Nazi supporters? But because Botha went to Israel, they just said strategic interests you know, and then you find out a bit more, a lot of the African groups then linked up with Palestine. They could partly see why Israel but I think subsequently Israel have apologised to South Africa for what they did because it was against everything. But you know, people for me

when I was at LSE, people like Denis Goldberg, absolutely amazing leader, speaker who came from, he was 20 years in prison and as soon as he got out of South Africa he spoke at LSE, fantastic speaker. Just hearing him he's an electric guy, very committed. Joe Slovo, real inspiration, Beyers Naude, people who really inspired me. And also a very good friend of mine, Father Michael Lapsley, who was a white priest, I met him when, I went back to Zimbabwe four or five times and I met him when I was in Zimbabwe. I don't know how we met, he was doing services with a young black priest which was unusual in itself and we got on really well. And then I lost touch with and then about, this was around when Mandela was being released from prison, a lot of celebration. In fact I was at the last ever demonstration to release Mandela. We got pictures of him and there were these posters, we were outside No. 10 Downing Street, de Klerk had been visiting John Major I think it was. And Paul Brannen who was one of the campaign guys who now works for Christian Aid. And it got messy because he threw a pot of paint which landed on de Klerk's car, walking around with an orange pot of paint so he got arrested for that.

AD: What was the atmosphere like at something like that?

TO: It was good actually. It was joyous, we were singing. And also the fact that people knew that change was coming. It was a question of pressure. I wish, I hope someone has got this, there was a picture in the Independent, which I can't get, and they took a picture of me and the poster of Mandela that we'd had for about 25 years, or 20 years, and that was the last poster because the next day it was announced he was being released so that was the last ever protest to release Mandela. Must have been February 1990 so if anyone has got that in the archives please, please I would love, because the Independent can't find it, on the website they don't go back that far, that'd be great.

AD: And what was it like when you heard he'd been released?

TO: Good, well what was amazing for me was how the news all of a sudden, because you'd been campaigning trying to get apartheid on the news, and then when he was released the news for the first time actually told you the real story of apartheid. Before this so-called neutrality, which was a load of bollocks, always favoured the status quo. They never really explained it, they showed you shots of youth throwing stones, shouting abuse, but they never really got into the background story. But when Mandela was out I was really shocked because it was the first time you really saw that they actually told the story. I think it was Michael Buerk who really went into detail about what apartheid was like and Mandela coming out. And the whole story. And it was really shocking to me because that was what I would call proper neutrality, actually explaining the real history. I mean that was fantastic, just amazing. But also, I should go back, the things around the killings and so on, they were quite big things and the protests and learning about that. So that I would say was the big thing, so you had your massacres but you really learnt that people were very, very courageous. There was a conference on Children of Resistance and there were these stories and it was organised I think by Victoria Brittain in Zimbabwe, and you heard the stories of these kids and it was almost impossible to, amazing, they would walk 300km to get a message to people. These kids were some as young as 6, 7, and the apartheid regime specifically targeted young leaders. And in my work one of the things we do as well we work with young kids who are excluded or at risk of being excluded from school. And one of the things which we always do is, really get them to focus in on themselves and their values and always reflect on what's going on. This thing about getting in touch with your emotions and the spiritual side which Trevor always mentioned about, and this thing about really finding out your inner strength even as a very young person. You've got something inside you which you know you can really release and it really came across with those kids, they were just phenomenal. And there was a saying which we also teach the 12 and 13 year olds which is that with every new generation they always, the teenagers always think they can do better than their parents, and teenagers, young people don't know the risks. But their parents are

well aware of the risks, and every generation the teenagers always believe that they know better and can do something better than their parents and they're always right, because they always do. I didn't realise this until very recently there was this thing about, the human race wouldn't have survived if it wasn't for the fact that teenagers are rebellious. During the ice age the only reason the human race survived was because the younger generation did something very different from what their parents were doing. While the parents were staying in caves and froze and died, they were doing something different. So this thing about teenagers being different and youth being different is now recognised by psychiatrists and biologically as an important part, but we in society usually see them as rebellious whereas in African societies they have this whole thing about initiation and celebration of that. And those young people from the front line really showed you what young people can do.

AD: Sounds like that was really inspiring for you, but I wanted to go back to what you were saying about when you heard about killings, massacres that were happening in Southern Africa, what was that like for you?

TO: For me that was kind of a shock, but also Peter Magubane's pictures of....and how everything can be termed in terms of pain can be termed into political things so this always got me, the funerals became a political thing. So even when they massacred people, people's desire, yes you should grieve, you should express your emotions but everything could be used to turn around. Learning from people like Amilcar Cabral who said "No fist is big enough to hide the sky". Yes, your opponent can crush you but the biggest determinant of any situation is internally, what you do. And learning with people, there's an exercise which Paulo Freire, this thing called Training for Transformation, and then what could you do. No matter what happens, what they do, so there was the shooting of Hector Pieterse, horrific thing. And some people are going to be cowered, but also you've got the fact that then what do they do, because they've got the desire to live because of their love for themselves and their love for their family is stronger there is a response. So it's not just, that happened, what did they do, they've got a choice, you've always got a choice about how you respond. Now I know at a deeper level things like Logos Theory....no matter what goes on and what happens to you, if you can develop a reason for why you're going to survive, some positive reason you can always turn any situation into something positive. And his thing was he'd been tortured by the Nazis and his thing was he wanted to tell his grandchildren.... "A Man's Search for Meaning", his name will come back to me...Victor Frankl. That's a formal thing but these guys were living it and showing that even in the worst, Hector Pieterse, you would celebrate this and that would be a rallying cry in itself because there was still the desire for life and justice and a belief that you have the right to live. So there's two things, there's the outrage but then also the fact that what you're fighting for, that you want a community, that you should go out and do things and you can. And the worst thing about apartheid, apartheid needed black people to be coerced to survive it, so the thing is it could be changed. So even though my Mum was saying, I went to LSE she wanted me to go into the City and earn loads of money! No, you've got to do what's in your heart. And it's turned out all right. I've got friends who were in the occupation who would then go and work for Goldman Sachs and then de Klerk was invited into Goldman Sachs. And all that time all those banks like Barclays, they didn't invite Mandela it was always de Klerk and the apartheid regime. These people who were meant to be neutral. There's no such thing as neutral, they made their money and they're still making their money.

AD: So what was it like for you when apartheid and the movement came to an end?

TO: Well two things really, it didn't really come to an end, it changed, the nature of thing changed and also for me – one, it was fantastic Mandela being released but more importantly on the day, well there's two things, on the day he came to Britain a few of us knew about it and I was lucky enough to be asked to do something around security, outside it was Churchill Hotel and there was about 100, 150 activists outside quite early and then

Mandela actually came out and talked to us and I mean forget about holding back from [inaudible] and that was fantastic.

AD: What did you say to him?

TO: Oh nothing really, everyone just ran and he spoke a little about and I can't remember to tell you the truth. There was me holding people back and he was there and that was just amazing. But even more so, a good friend of mine, Nad Pillay, he took Mandela round, escorted him around Britain and he was just telling stories about how amazing he was. And then there was this thing, on the day of his inauguration when he was inaugurated as President, 3 days before that the ANC had managed to get it ok that they could invite anti-apartheid activists to South Africa house. Now we had been outside there for 18 years and then we were actually being invited in, it was brilliant because you had the ANC ambassador or High Commissioner there and you had the apartheid Commissioner. And the ANC one was really welcoming and really warm and the apartheid one was [speaks through gritted teeth]. But it was fantastic to be inside for the first time, can you imagine, we'd been outside for 18 years. And it was brilliant because they had a live recording of Mandela, couldn't even remember half of what he said. And then there was I remember Jon Snow from Channel 4 news, Paul Boateng was there, there were all these fancy people and there were just us, toying, the township dance, it was fantastic.

AD: How would you describe the atmosphere?

TO: What can you say? Euphoric, deeply spiritual, amazing, just a fantastic celebration. And this thing about people saying well done but there was the fact that the underlying belief that social justice can be brought about, that all that pain, people that died, there's something that, you can change things, against the harshest regime, but supported by America, supported by Britain, supported by Western powers. Still transformation can come about, change can come about, so for me it was phenomenal, one of the best days of my life, absolutely fantastic.

I don't know why I lost it, Michael Lapsley, the story about Michael Lapsley, he was outside the demonstration after Mandela's release but before he became President. And I saw Michael at a demonstration and he came round and he gave me a hug and I felt these metal clips on my back. And it turned out that 3 months after Mandela had been released the apartheid regime sent a letter bomb to Michael in Zimbabwe and it was an attempt to assassinate but he lost his eye, he lost both of his hands. And it was really interesting because myself, and I think it was Bob Hughes, Lord Hughes, Chair or Anti-Apartheid, it was his son, John, we went with Michael afterwards and we were talking, he was a very inspiring guy. I remember Michael was very calm, actually it was quite frightening how calm he is, and then I can't remember what it was but John and myself got into a debate about something and Michael was staying really quiet and it was only later on I really reflected on that. We were talking about the struggle, there's this man who himself had really put his life on the line and then there was just us, Western youth, just chatting away, and he just allows us big egos to go on! And Michael has now become very famous around forgiveness and healing past errors and he does a lot of work with youth and gangs in Cape Town and he's world-renowned. And he's a very inspiring man but again he says he couldn't get to where he was without the spiritual side of his life and that practice. And for me that's an important side, for myself being able to transform the anger, whatever I feel, into something more creative. But also in terms of the work which I do, underlying that is a psychological approach which encourages people to look at and develop their natural spiritual side by meditation and self-reflection, that's very important, because that's the way in which people can really tap into something that's deep inside them. Yeh he had a big impact on me, but sorry, I forgot, let's go back to what you were saying?

AD: Well the last question I was asking was about what it was like when the AAM came to an end but you were saying it didn't come to an end...

TO: Well there's two things really, it didn't come to an end because it was about Southern Africa, it was also about the fact the ANC isn't a socialist organisation. And to a certain extent the ANC failed the youth, even in the struggle because, my understanding, the reason why the people who ran apartheid decided to change was because they got messages like, for example, Barclays Bank, big supporter of apartheid, and they were to go into America. Now Barclays, we were strong activists, we went to every single one of their AGMs, I was lucky enough to go to a few. One Barclays share they treated us particularly mean, disgracefully, security guards on you, they were trying to humiliate you. But eventually when they wanted to go to America they knew the anti-apartheid movement in America would hammer them. And no matter how much money they spent there was no way they'd be building those student accounts in America. Forget about it! And they said to the Governor of South Africa "Look, you've got to do something." Shell complained about the fact the Shell boycott and said "Look you've got to do something". It was hurting those multi-nationals pockets. So consumer boycotts and so on, and you see the antecedents of that now in something like Starbucks, all of a sudden they're going to pay some tax because when people find out and they get organised, things change. So there was that and that was a bigger lever, the fact that multi-nationals were saying this is costing us too much. So now when they massacred people there was a worldwide reaction to it and all the embassies were calling in. They realised that there was a PR battle that they were losing. And the sports boycott was really outcoming, that was the thing that changed it, not the fact you had youth throwing stones and youth were prepared to take arms and the ANC didn't do that. So there was a failure there in terms of meeting that need. So when it came to negotiations I don't think the ANC were really anywhere near tough enough around stuff they needed to. So for example, the first budget, Mandela's budget, I remember after Mandela did the housing budget, the Jo'burg stock exchange actually went up. Now that's an indication that they were very happy. I heard whispers that when the ANC met the IMF, the IMF people were a bit stunned at how market-orientated the ANC were prepared to be. The social justice agenda needed to happen, and I think apartheid murdered, this was the time when they murdered Joe Slovo, a South African communist. And my belief is if he'd been alive still the ANC policy around housing would have been much tougher and focused around meeting the housing needs of the poor which hasn't happened at all and from my insight isn't going to happen at all. Because if they follow the same policies that happened in England, poor people get excluded from housing, they just create a middle class, a professional cadre who do not know and aren't accountable to ordinary people. One of the greatest things for me in my professional housing work was that we were able, there was an organisation called Plan-Act, architects and planners from South Africa who knew about community organisation and they did some really good community engagement stuff. Particularly around Jo'burg and there was the Seven Buildings project was a great community, in what is now Hillsborough but at the time it was a fantastic open area and the first South African activist that was ever invited to a housing organisation, I was able to do that, I can't remember his name... Sandi Mgodlana, he came from the Seven Buildings project and via Plan-Act we were able to bring him over to the National Housing Conference where he spoke about community organisation and stuff like that. And I was very pleased with that. For me it was much more important that he spoke to tenants and people really learnt about what the real struggle was rather than having the South African government invite over the housing corporation, the housing professionals who think they know best but they've got nice houses and they don't know what ordinary people, their daily struggle. So for me it was great thing to be able to bring over real community activists and so on. I can't remember how I got on to that!

AD: So how do you see the legacy of the AAM as being?

TO: Yeh, ok, so the legacy is the fact that social change can be, my understanding is it was the most successful social movement of the twentieth century. So irrespective of how big the enemy is ordinary people can come together and organise. The fact that many countries in Southern Africa are closer to democracy and experience democracy. And people forget this, Zimbabwe got its democracy in 1980. 30, 33 years ago. Namibia, I can't remember, not too far beyond, Mozambique only came a few years before then. Angola, all the stuff around the gold mines, all of that. The whole of the Western world and all the multi-nationals suck out the wealth and ignore the people. We showed you can do something, you can change it. So that thing about when people tell you "No"...one of my best friends who was actually involved in the divestment campaign, he [inaudible] in the occupation of LSE. I saw him the other day, he's made over a hundred million and he's a very wealthy guy and he just said to me "well you can't change the world" and he looked at me and stopped, because he knew that I could just say to him "Actually you can". Because if you look at apartheid you can, and you used to believe that, but now you say to yourself this is how you justify being wealthy. We can. When anybody says to you "We can't", you can just point to that. I went away with my nieces and nephews to Centre Parcs and one of my nieces, she's lovely, but she's quite cheeky, she just said to me "Well Uncle Tim, you're weird. We can't really take you that seriously". I did point out to her that she was the one who wanted to campaign against the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, and she herself, I loved it, that at the age of 12 she's a campaigner in her school. I did point out to her that "actually you do realise that what you did there was a great thing". And similarly I was involved in anti-apartheid and you can't argue with it. They think "he's a bit weird because he's built his wooden house and he lives with other people but he doesn't own the house and he does this co-operative stuff and he went to LSE but he's not in the mainstream". The whole point is that we got how many people free, and everything that everyone said we couldn't do.

AD: And how does that make you feel about your part in that?

TO: Great, but also as well as very proud, also there's an obligation to say ok, what do we have to do here in this country to bring about social justice? So for me, particularly for Zimbabwe, and in SA actually, the fight is for land, land rights, allowing people to have their basic rights so they can live their life. That's the same thing that's going on in this country where poor people are being moved off land, whether it's say Tottenham Football ground, all the people suffered from the riots, at the moment they're being kicked off the land, being forcibly removed, poor people, low income people and it doesn't matter whether it's Tory or Labour. I was involved in a successful project which got £25 million from central government. Labour Local Authority in Greenwich, the Labour regional government under Ken Livingstone, and the Labour national government under Tony Blair, they moved out every single black family from Eltham. The whole black community out of Eltham with no right to return on the back of Stephen Lawrence's death. Because they wanted to create a middle class village where those people lived. They put those people in the worse housing and then they just got rid of them. And the legacy for me is that people, it's not whether it's Labour party or Tory party, people have to organise and to fight for themselves. That's the real legacy of apartheid. There's a book called "None but Ourselves" which tells a pictorial history of liberation in Zimbabwe particularly but it relates to the Southern African struggle. And that's what people need to learn, you can say that Tony Blair should do this, the bottom line is – you've got the power, you've got to come together and organise. I was involved in with the people who took on Lady Porter when she was dumping the homeless people into asbestos housing. What happened in that campaign is exactly what happened in the Zimbabwe Freedom Fighters in Simukai co-operative whereby the Tories had legislation where they were going to let Lady Porter buy all this land and really cheaply for the developers. And the community got together, people like Neale Coleman organised the community and they themselves used that same legislation and bought the land and now they own 800 homes all bought for the community. It's safeguarded, it's one of the most successful housing organisations because people were accountable, they've improved the

lives of many, many people. All my work is a legacy from the fact you can change, you should go and do it.

AD: Thank you, it's fantastic you've shared all these experiences. Is there anything that I've not asked you about that you want to tell me about?

TO: There's a couple of things which I should have mentioned, some of the other activities, especially with Notting Hill Carnival coming up. One of the best things was, Christabel Gurney, one of the great things was, for me it was brilliant, you'd take loads of leaflets, stand in Cambridge Gardens and there was Norman Jay, this DJ who played lots of rare groove stuff and he would just have these family functions, set them up in Cambridge Gardens, at the start there was nobody there. I didn't have to go about giving out leaflets I could just stand there, listen to really good music, enjoy the Carnival, give out 100 000 leaflets to people about apartheid but also the funky music, and it was fantastic. And it's just funny, you're interviewing me and Notting Hill Carnival's coming up. For me that was a brilliant thing, and the thing which I really love, no matter how busy people are, people have strong values, people really do. More importantly, black people have incredibly strong values. They're not organised well enough and it's not converted into things but, I would say, maybe I'm wrong, but, ordinary people have strong values, but ordinary black people have very strong values around social justice, born out of their experience and then the challenge is for those of us who want to be their leaders, is how to convert those values and show them how to do concerted political action so they can achieve the justice that they want. For me, this is what these projects that I do, there's lots of other stuff that we can do. So yeh, it's a good thing. Anything else?

AD: Actually what you're saying makes me wonder, how did people tend to respond when you were leafleting?

TO: People liked it. I think there was T-shirt – Solomon Mahlangu. He was the first black man who I think was hung and I didn't even really know who he was, but I always remember having this "Boycott Shell" yellow T-shirt and I remember always wearing that and people would really look at it and I you almost felt like you could carry that around. And what I found interesting was that when you give people a leaflet most people definitely read it. People assumed that I was involved in anti-apartheid because I was black and it was a race thing but it wasn't. For me it wasn't, it was about social justice. And I thought that was always interesting. I can't remember coming across anyone who didn't think it was wrong. I know there was an MP John Carlisle, there was a vote in Parliament and 6% of the Tory party thought Mandela should be hung. And then Thatcher met him, I mean how nasty can you be, that someone so warm and she was so cold. And that is progress in itself that even though the Tories might still be nasty if not nastier than they were before, at least Cameron has to pretend that he cares about race equality and at least they're now open to gays and a lot of young people forget or don't realise that all of those things were obtained by hard, hard struggle. And people always forget, people say, "oh I'm not a feminist", young girls, they don't even know the fact that they can even talk about girl power, the fact they can expect to be treated equally was the result of hard, hard struggle by people.

AD: So what advice would you give to any campaigners for social justice now?

TO: I mean, they're doing it right... Always allow people to focus on their values, and their contribution always needs to be appreciated but I think they do that now. For me, something like CND, they want to campaign about nuclear disarmament but you've got to relate it to peoples' ordinary lives. So rather than saying a big argument, it should be, in this area if you want your local hospital saved then we shouldn't spend money on, you know 10% of the nuclear budget is maybe spent in 10% of this area, £10 billion and we could spend it on hospitals, schools. The campaign has to relate to peoples' ordinary lives and what people

want. And you've got to respect their priorities are important and when you can organise around that people will come out. We did that locally with the local hospital here, people came out for that, and people will come out when people can see that their action is going to lead to something and that you respect them, you reflect the importance of their priorities, people will take action, that's what I would say. And people do want change. No matter what anyone, what the papers say, people want change, people want justice. It just needs to be explained to them what the issue is and how it fits into their values and they'll do that. I mean this whole thing about immigration, I really think ordinary people, when the poor guy Lee Rigby who was hacked to death, all the papers were talking about "Oh this is going to lead to race riots". For most people, from my understanding, they can see it's wrong for British soldiers to be dying out in Muslim countries. We did wrong in Iraq, and we should some out and come back now. Most people had those values, and they didn't kick off. There is trouble in Woolwich, you do see a working class community, people get a bit of grief, but generally with most people there is not this racial stuff, most people just want to get on with their lives and live life and they believe everyone should have the right to. So that means you can build on that thing and I really believe in Ed Miliband. They've lost their guts, so for example, Gordon Brown lost it, he didn't have the guts to say "Look we believe in investment and community", because this is what the Tories are doing now they've messed up their own policy, they're investing. But if we had spoken louder about investing in communities and investment and believing in people and separating that out from government expenditure then I think that argument would have won through because people want that, good schools, not just private schools and you've got to show them how you can do that.

AD: Thank you very much.