

Interview with Jerry Dammers by Jeff Howarth, 20 February 2014, for the Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives Committee project Forward to Freedom
<http://www.aamarchives.org/>

Jeff Howarth: This is Jeff Howarth for the Forward to Freedom project. It's the 20th of February 2014. I'm here with Jerry Dammers. Jerry, could you please give me your full name?

Jerry Dammers: Yeah.

JH: And when and where were you born?

JD: I was born in India in 1955.

JH: And what did you do for a living?

JD: Well I've never done anything for a living [laughing]. Musician, yeah, musician. After I left art college I formed The Specials. So I've always been more or less involved in music and, yeah ...

JH: Have you been involved in any other political or campaigning activity apart from anti-apartheid?

JD: Well I first got involved with anti-apartheid when I was about 15, I guess in Coventry when the Springboks tour came to Coventry and I got involved in Peter Hain's campaign against the Springboks, the South African rugby team who were touring, and I put little stickers up round the school and tried to persuade people to go and demonstrate against that. And I think a couple of us went along – I was very young – but that was sort of the first demonstration I guess I ever went on. I can remember that there was a lot of chasing about, police chasing people about, people trying to run on the pitch and a lot of running about. And I think people got arrested and tried to disrupt the game. I can remember the people going to the match went through. All the demonstrators were lining the street and sort of booing them or whatever. I mean the one thing I do remember is that the police blatantly had a big gang of vigilantes, just, you know, normal people helping them [laughing] police the event, which was quite extraordinary to see that. And, yeah, so that's when I became involved with anti-apartheid first. I guess that was when? 1970 or something. Around that sort of time.

JH: And what made you first aware of the situation in South Africa and what politicised you towards ...?

JD: Well I guess I vaguely have recollections of Sharpeville. I can't remember when that was, but probably as a kid I was aware of it. It was on the news and stuff. And just being into anti-apartheid stuff just generally I was aware of it. But I got more aware because of the Peter Hain campaign and the anti Springboks thing. And that obviously raised the whole issue of sanctions and isolating South African and apartheid and trying to make people realise it wasn't a normal situation there. And I

guess that was the main thrust of the activity that people could get involved in outside of the country. That was the main thing they could do was get involved in the sanctions campaign, I guess.

JH: Why did you feel we should do something about it?

JD: Well it was, I don't know, you'd have to be fairly abnormal not to want to do something about it I would have thought. It was a sort of enclave of Nazism that somehow survived the Second World War and it had, you know, its links to that have been documented. It was blatant racism, it was more or less slavery by any other name. And it was just completely absurd that it should still be going on at that point in history. It was just an aberration really.

JH: Were you actually part of an anti-apartheid group in Coventry or ...?

JD: Not as such. I wasn't actually, I didn't become a member of any actual group or anything but I just sort of generally supported the cause and then I guess later when The Specials were formed there was Rock against Racism had been formed in reaction to, well, statements by Eric Clapton and David Bowie [laughing], unbelievably. And, yeah, so that had been formed. That was always growing and The Specials supported that and in fact it probably influenced the actual make up of The Specials. 'Cos when I formed The Specials it was definitely intended to be a multi-racial band, that was a conscious decision by me when I put the line-up together. It didn't just sort of happen. And it was definitely trying to combine punk and reggae initially as the two main sort of ... there was an affinity between punk and reggae, or supposedly anyway as kind of rebellious music or whatever. So anti-racism was always part of my make-up really. And so that carried into 2-Tone and that always had a strong anti-racist stance which wasn't, it didn't directly mention apartheid until after the first line-up of The Specials at, you know, the Fun Boy Three had left, but I'd carried on under the name of The Special AKA and I think in that album I made a fairly conscious effort to make that album a bit more international politically. I think there was a song about the situation with regard to Israel.

And I also did a ... I went to Nelson Mandela's I think it was 65th birthday at the Alexandra Palace which was organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement. It was a concert with a lot of South African exile bands, Julian Bahula I can particularly remember singing a song about Mandela. And, to be honest, I hadn't heard of Nelson Mandela till then and it seemed to ... I was always working on a tune instrumentally which was kind of quite an up thing. I was listening to a bit of African music at the time and I had this tune and then I put the lyrics to this tune that I was already working on. And, I don't know, it just seemed like, you know, it was easier to relate to one person's story. It seemed to work on me. So, I don't know, I just used his name. But it did contain the line 'Only one man in a large army', so it was ... Rhoda Dakar contributed that line, which I think was important.

And, yeah, the rest is history. The song luckily got played on Radio One because the people who plugged records at Radio One were Specials fans so it was quite unusual for something as so-called political as that to get played. But anyway it did 'cos it had a very catchy tune obviously. And that became a hit and it went to number

one in New Zealand and it was a hit around the world. Incredibly it started being played inside South Africa in football stadiums and that was on the news. That was amazing to see that. It had been smuggled in to South Africa because I think the UDF, and probably the ANC as well, used to use football matches to make speeches over the tannoy systems 'cos that was the only place that black people were allowed to gather. And occasionally things would come over the speakers [laughing]. And that was incredible to see that on the news anyway. So then after that Dali Tambo, the son of Oliver Tambo the exiled President of the ANC, approached me to form British Artists Against Apartheid – there was also Artists United against Apartheid in America with Little Steven. I can't remember which was formed first but around the same time. And he had a song 'Ain't gonna play Sun City', which obviously was supporting the sanctions campaign and asking artists to observe the United Nations cultural boycott and not go to South Africa.

Anyway, so I then met ... Dali also introduced me to someone called Chandra Sekar, who was in the process of organising an anti-apartheid gig in Brixton, the Fridge, a small gig with the Potato 5 and that became Artists Against Apartheid's first concert. We also had a launch with ... you know, Bob Geldof came, various people came, and the aim of Artists Against Apartheid was twofold. One to try and persuade artists to observe the boycott of South Africa and not sell records there and not go there, not play there, to completely boycott anything to do with it, so this façade of normality could be destroyed. And the other was to organise concerts in this country to raise awareness, raise funds for either the Anti-Apartheid Movement or ANC and generally help the Anti-Apartheid Movement in its campaigning to free Nelson Mandel as well, obviously, and all the political prisoners.

Yes, so the concerts grew from this little small start at the Fridge. We did concerts with New Order and Billy Bragg in Sheffield. The Smiths, well it was originally at the Albert Hall, but I think that someone was hurt in a car crash and so it had to be postponed. That was at the Academy eventually with Pete Shelley supporting. Madness and Gil Scott-Heron, unbelievably, at the Academy in Brixton. That was a great gig. The Pogues and Elvis Costello, that was in France, in Paris. There's UB40 did a gig, Lloyd Cole and the Commotions, Working Week, James, the Bhundu Boys, the Communards, Terence Trent D'Arby and Smiley Culture. I think that might have been the Albert Hall. There was one in Edinburgh with Curtis Mayfield and Michelle Shocked, which was fantastic to have Curtis Mayfield on board. We got the Blow Monkeys to put our banner up but they were supporting Rod Stewart of all people [laughing]. So these gigs got more and more and bigger and bigger and it built up and built up.

And then we always worked closely with the Anti-Apartheid Movement on all this and then it was decided that we're going to do a huge event on Clapham Common, you know, which I personally put the line-up together and approached all the artists. And that was absolutely huge, with quarter of a million people or at least 200,000. It was a fantastic summer's day. We had Peter Gabriel, Hugh Masekela, Gil Scot-Heron, who was the sort of godfather of the anti-apartheid movement in the west really with his anthem 'Johannesburg', which we all knew about and that obviously inspired us all. You know, Peter Gabriel obviously with his song 'Biko', was another key Western anti-apartheid song which inspired me as well to write 'Free Nelson Mandela'. So that

was really those three songs were kind of linked in that way in terms of inspiration. Yeah, and we had Hugh Masekela there, Sting, Sade, Maxi Priest, a reggae artist obviously. We had a Sir Coxson sound system round the back of the stage. So it was a very ... it was ... every effort was made to make sure there was plenty of black music and black people involved, which there were on the day. Style Council, Lorna Gee and other reggae artists, Boy George, Big Audio Dynamite, Gary Kemp. I guess it was interesting that there were two people on this stage who'd been given their first instruments by Trevor Huddleston and one was Hugh Masekela, who Trevor Huddleston gave his first trumpet. He gave him his first trumpet and he also gave Gary Kemp his first guitar. So Trevor Huddleston's spirit was very much part of this. You know, his importance in all this can't be overstated. Princess was there, Elvis Costello, Junior Giscombe and, yeah, it was a huge day. It was the proudest day of my life really. I can remember it. I played some records and we also all got together and sang 'Free Nelson Mandela'. Nelson Mandela was obviously still in prison at that time. It was an amazing day. I can remember it was funny 'cos there was a fashion for dayglo tops at that time, especially among the black community, and I can remember looking across Clapham Common and a quarter of a million people and for some reason I was just reminded of that X-Ray Spex song 'The day the world turned dayglo' [laughing]. It was such an amazing sight.

There's also ... did I mention Big Audio Dynamite? I think I did. At the end the police wanted to close it down and Big Audio Dynamite was still playing and they were saying, 'You've got to turn this off. You've got to turn it off'. But Big Audio Dynamite had only been on for five minutes or something. So we locked the door of the generator and pretended we'd lost the key and we were all running round, 'Where's the key? We can't find the key, we can't turn it off'. So that was quite funny. And, yeah, it was just an amazing day and I think it's true to say it was the largest anti-apartheid demonstration anywhere in the world at that time that had ever happened.

So that was my proudest day really because I did put that all together myself, the bill, and I invited all those artists personally. And it's also worth mentioning that we also had an amazing club going. All through these two years that this was happening we had a little club down in the basement youth club in Covent Garden. We had some of the hottest kind of hip hop DJs at the time and House, when all that was really happening, and exciting new music. We had Tim Westwood, we had Jazzy B twice, later from Soul II Soul. Cold Cut, Rhythm Dock, Derek B, Adrian Sherwood from On-U Sound, the Wild Bunch who later sort of mutated into Massive Attack. And so that was an amazing little thing and that's how we paid our expenses. We ran all this from a tiny office, I mean, which was in the Institute of Education and we just paid for the cost of it with this little club that ... I never got paid at all for four years work. Chandra only got paid the last year from the proceeds for this club.

So there was a lot of hard work involved. And all this time we were sending out leaflets to artists urging them to boycott South Africa and not to sell records there, to put a clause in their contracts when they signed contracts not to sell records. And I think it did have an effect on that. Some artists did stop selling records in South Africa and it became, you know, that obviously made the situation, put pressure on, because I guess, the white South African youngsters wanted a normal life and it would help focus their minds and get them to support the struggle to end apartheid,

which to some extent of course some of them did, to varying degrees. And some ... I think it all helped. Similarly with the rugby boycott, there must have been the feeling amongst white South Africans that this can't go on and we want a normal life. And that all helped put pressure on, hopefully. Yeah, so that's the story really of Artists Against Apartheid.

And then from after Clapham Common we'd decided that, well, I can remember saying 'We can't go back to small concerts or Academy size concerts, we've got to go from here to something as big if not bigger. You know, we can't be seen to be taking a step back', although I think there was one small concert that someone organised. And very shortly afterwards Tiny Wheeler, who produced Clapham Common, put together a proposal and we decided that we wanted to do the next ... Well, the Clapham Common concert had actually cost the Anti-Apartheid Movement, I think it was about £30,000. So they were pretty much out of pocket and it was decided that the next concert would have to be a paying concern.

Oh, hang on. I want to just big up someone before that. For the Clapham Common concert we went to various DJs and Radio One and asked them to publicise the concert on Clapham Common and one of our most adamant supporters, it's got to be said, was Tony Blackburn, who had the morning show on Radio London. And I think John Peel mentioned it a couple of times on his show and he supported it, but Tony Blackburn every day for weeks he went on and on about this concert and how appalled he was by apartheid. He had the soul show on Radio London and it was very popular, especially amongst the black community. And I think he played a huge part in making that event as big and successful as it was, especially amongst the black community. And, you know, maybe people wouldn't think [laughing] of Tony Blackburn as a particularly political person, but on that particular issue he was really strong so I can't emphasise enough the thanks to him for that. I think he did ... It was funny because, you know, the old rivalry between ... he was supposedly the straight guy and John Peel was supposedly the rebel, but actually he [laughing] he supported it much more than John Peel, although John Peel did support it, I'm not dissing him, because he did give it a couple of mentions, but nothing like the extent to which Tony Blackburn ... That was interesting anyway.

Yeah, so back to the story. After Clapham Common it was decided in conversation with the Anti-Apartheid Movement – we always worked very closely – that we wanted to do something and it would have to be a paid gig. So we were either going to fence off a park and charge people to come in or it was going to be in a stadium, a sports stadium either in London, possibly up north, possibly even Scotland. And the first person I remember suggesting Wembley was someone called Geoff Wilkinson who later had a band called Us3, who was sort of involved. And then this idea was circulated and I was saying 'Well, that's a great idea but we have to have an artist, you know, big enough to fill Wembley Stadium or more or less fill it', because I can't remember – the deposit on Wembley Stadium was something like £70,000. Nobody had that kind of money. So we had to get an artist. We approached various artists for that year and for the year after Clapham Common. The original date was about a year later. And Dire Straits said they supported us but they weren't in touring mode. And they were very friendly and they said they'd like to do something but maybe come back – next year they might be in touring mode but they couldn't do anything at

that time. And we kept sort of circulating and asking people. Simple Minds, Jim Kerr, did eventually come back but it was too late for that year, but anyway he said he really wanted to do something. And that's really where the ball started rolling for Wembley. Then around that time Tony Hollingsworth appeared and he had some money which, as far as I remember, he said he had had left over from the GLC [Greater London Council]. 'Cos obviously Margaret Thatcher had closed down the GLC. So he said he had possibly some money to pay the deposit. And, yeah, so we went back to Dire Straits then and I can remember signing the letter and this time we said that Simple Minds were on board, it looked like a possibility. And I was still saying, 'Don't pay the deposit until we've got an artist big enough to fill it'. And, yeah, but Dire Straits came back with a positive, and I know that they spoke to Simple Minds behind the scenes and they said 'If you do it, we'll do it'. But they said they wanted to be top of the bill, Dire Straits [laughing], which was fine by Simple Minds. They were a huge, huge band at that time, Dire Straits. So then the ball really started rolling and I think that the Anti-Apartheid Movement and Mike Terry were very involved in all these discussions. So once Dire Straits came on board then it became feasible to put down the deposit. I can remember saying that the next important thing was really to have a major black artist so it wasn't just a rock gig, because that just would not have worked. So I was still holding back. I was still saying, 'Just wait a minute', just like, 'Let's get a really major artist'. So I think Tony Hollingsworth said BB King, which was great, and I love BB King to the max, but I can remember saying that we needed someone of an equal kind of standing to Dire Straits, you know, a Stevie Wonder or somebody. And I think that various contacts were made with the American Artists Against Apartheid, Harry Belafonte and various people over there. And eventually Whitney Houston came through and that's when it ... right, now all the important parts of the jigsaw were in place. Now this can really go ahead. And it was already moving ahead, but I can remember putting that pressure on. I can remember persuading the Eurythmics who I think were a bit reluctant at first. I spoke to Dave Stewart on the phone. Anyway by that time I was more or less totally exhausted and I kind of ... you know, Tony had been taken on as producer and I more or less handed over to him. And the rest is history, as we know. But in that very first Tony Wheeler proposal, I mean I've still got it, but straight after Clapham Common it was he said from the beginning that TV should be definitely involved, wherever it was. Whether it was in a fenced off park or another stadium or, you know, it was felt that, you know, really it was a shame that TV wasn't involved in the Clapham Common thing, but that was part of the plan from day one.

And so it was ... the first Wembley concert was an Artists Against Apartheid event and it was under that banner. And so all credit to Dali Tambo for starting it, and there was a definite link through from Clapham Common. And then obviously it snowballed and went global, which was fantastic. And all this time it was helping build the campaign, it was helping popularise Nelson Mandela's name. And I think it's definitely true that once it was on the TV for a whole day, the politicians around the world had to take note. They could see there were votes in this thing. They could see how popular it was becoming, so they had to actually take action and go and tell the apartheid regime that they had to change. I think, you know, it's hard to quantify, but I think it all helped. But I always say any campaign is like a clock, the smallest cog is as important as the biggest cog. And obviously what we did was absolutely nothing compared with people giving their lives in South Africa. And I mean this was ... In

fact, you know, I don't look ... There were some fantastic moments obviously and it was ... it worked in the end, but I was also very much aware ... I don't look back on that period as ... I've got mixed feelings because you were aware that you were supporting people who were putting their lives at risk and facing gunfire more or less unarmed. And we were supporting them from a distance. Our lives weren't in any real danger or anything. And likewise with the sanctions campaign, you were aware that the people you were helping would in the short term be suffering from that and so that was, it was almost like a ... well, it was a war situation. So I don't have any nostalgia for that. I don't have, you know, there's no such thing as anti- apartheid nostalgia in my book because it was an extremely nasty regime and people had to face up to it more or less unarmed and they were getting shot and killed, and Dulcie September, the ANC rep in Paris, someone walked in the office and shot her through the head. The ANC offices in London were bombed. It wasn't ... it was really an unpleasant period, you know, so I've got mixed feelings, although obviously there were great achievements in getting rid of it. But it should never have been there in the first place.

JH: Why was Clapham Common more important to you than Wembley? Did it feel more personal cos it was more your, or it felt more authentic 'cos it was free or ...?

JD: No, I just mean that for me Clapham Common was my personal ... because I was so intimately involved there. I mean I personally organised that, so for me it was my greatest day. But the Wembley concerts were fantastic as well. I mean the second one obviously was when Mandela came out, you know, at the second concert. I went down in the audience to experience that and the standing ovation he got, it was about nearly ten minutes I think, eight minutes of standing ovation. That was an amazing experience as well. I mean that ranks with Clapham Common as one of the greatest days of my life and most amazing experiences, I guess.

JH: Did you meet him?

JD: I met him briefly, in a queue with hundreds of other people. I mean he was in auto pilot basically [laughing]. Because it must have been incredible for him because he was sort of mobbed wherever he went. He'd gone from Robben Island, this horrible prison, to, well obviously he had that time in the flat, you know, to reacclimatise, a couple of years, but I mean then he came out and he was one of the most, well he was probably the most famous person in the world. He was mobbed wherever he went. And I guess he coped with that really calmly, because there were queues of people wanting to shake his hand wherever he went. And I stood in line and it was just ... I don't know how important [laughing] that sort of thing is really. But it's ...

JH: I just wondered if he sort of said anything about the record or ...?

JD: Not really, no. But the important thing for me was the effect that it had and hopefully it helped coagulate public opinion. And I think it definitely ... the two Wembley concerts definitely had an effect. It's hard to quantify what it was, but what I always say is really important is it all started from small beginnings, it didn't just happen. I mean it started from me hearing a song by Julian Bahula about Mandela

and then obviously that inspired me to write a song and then that grew and then the concerts became bigger and bigger. So I always say if you want to write a song, you just don't know what effect it could have. It could be maybe just one person hears it. I always say that to kids, when they ask me to talk on this subject. It doesn't ... you don't know what effect it can have, one person might hear it, they might be inspired to write something. And Mandela himself said that any attempt to get rid of apartheid would be appreciated. And I think that behind the scenes there were as many different ideas on how to get rid of apartheid as there were anti-apartheid activists. So there was a lot of stuff behind the scenes that ... Mandela kind of managed to override all that somehow, possibly partly because he was in prison. But he did manage to bring all those different elements together in an amazing way. And that ... part of his legacy, that all those different approaches on how to get rid of apartheid he had to kind of get them all under one umbrella which is not easy because some of them appeared quite different. Obviously there were pacifists involved, there were people who wanted to get involved in the armed struggle, there were people who supported sanctions, people who didn't support sanctions [laughing]. You know, there were all sorts of different elements that somehow had to work together, with apparently different views. But that's what apartheid does, it divides people up, that's the whole point. So you have to kind of try and overcome that.

JH: On that sort of subject, was there a ... can you describe the dynamic of Artists Against Apartheid? Was there a good sort of comradeship?

JD: Oh yeah, I mean it was fantastic. Everybody just supported the cause. There was no ... there was very little prima donna kind of behaviour and people just got on with it. And not everyone involved sang actual songs with a particular message mentioning apartheid or anti-apartheid, they did their thing in support of the cause and under the banner – just lining up to be counted. So, yeah, I've got to put in a word for the artists, because a lot of people do actually forget to thank the actual artists [laughing] at those concerts. There's a lot of people thanking each other, but the concerts wouldn't have actually happened without the musicians taking part. And if it falls to me to thank them then I'll thank them here publicly [laughing]. You know, because that often gets forgotten I'm sorry to say, but it does.

JH: Again, on that issue, you mentioned people being persuaded to stop selling records. Can you remember off your head who ...?

JD: Who did and who didn't? Ah.

JH: Or just who did. It doesn't have to be ...

JD: I can't remember to be honest. I know that ... Oh, I honestly can't remember.

JH: Elton John was he ...? Cos I remember I talked to Mike Pye about them trying to persuade people who visited when performing in Sheffield and ... it doesn't matter if you can't remember.

JD: I can't remember. I know for a fact that 'Then Jericho' put a clause in their contract, but I wouldn't like to say. I mean some people did it maybe without ... It was

very difficult to achieve. You know, if you'd already signed your contract, if you were already famous, to then go back to the record company and demand that they didn't sell records in South Africa ... Unless you were a mega artist with a lot, lot of clout, the record company wouldn't listen. So we concentrated on newer bands. And I know that 'Then Jericho' were very ... they weren't that well-known, but it was a very brave statement to put that in their contract from the beginning. Other artists tried and it was more of a gesture and it was raising the issue. All these things just made people aware that South Africa was not normal, you just couldn't carry on normal business with them. And that was the whole point, it got people thinking about it. Even if they didn't agree it made them think.

JH: Did you do any work in campaigning against Paul Simon or was that the American Artists against Apartheid?

JD: No, we did. I mean it was very clear that that that issue became so ... there was such a confused debate after. It was very, very clear that Paul Simon broke the boycott. You know, his kind of ... he flouted the boycott, the UN-backed boycott, and his argument ever since was 'Well, because I flouted it then there shouldn't have been a boycott' [laughing]. You know, that's his basic ... it seems as though he's been going on about it for 30 years. You know, which I tend to think, that phrase, is it Shakespeare? 'Methinks he doth protest too much', he's still going on about it now. Other people who broke the boycott had the common sense to just shut up about it – like Malcolm McLaren. And he more or less got away with it [laughing]. But Paul Simon just goes on and on for years about ... It's not even clear what he's saying. Is he saying he didn't break it? It's clear that he did break it but then he seems to turn that round, 'Therefore there shouldn't have been a boycott' and that doesn't make sense. I mean, whether you like the record or hate the record is not really that relevant to the issue. And I don't know how it got so muddled up 'cos it was just really straightforward. But, yeah, we did, like everyone, we asked him not to go to South Africa. That was part of ... you know, you can't have one rule for one person and one rule for another. It doesn't make any sense. You've just ... once you start making exceptions then where do you draw the line? And like any sanctions, campaigning is not easy because the people that you're trying to help in the long term ... in the short terms some individuals might suffer because of that. And that's not easy and nobody enjoys that, but the leadership of the South African people had made it clear that's what they wanted, and that's what we were asked to do. And it wasn't feasible to start, for them, when they're in prison, to start saying it's alright for this person or it's alright for that person or making this exception. It's just completely impractical. And of course it would be used by the regime to undermine the sanctions campaign. And Paul Simon did cause an incredible amount of upset and confusion and division and it did start to undermine a little bit ... the whole sanctions campaign was sort of brought into question by what he did, I think. And that was the danger, it's not about one pop record, it's about having a clear policy that applies to everybody, that is going to actually work. And I think there can be absolutely no doubt that sanctions are one of the major factors that brought apartheid to an end. I don't think anybody can argue with that. And so it's unfortunate if there seemed to be anomalies in that or contradictions, but you have to look at the bigger picture. I can remember being booed by the entire Hull Students' Union for my stance on Paul Simon, so I knew I was doing something right there [laughing]. But no, it wasn't, I don't have any ... it

wasn't pleasant, I don't have any ... it wasn't enjoyable, because who wants to be set against another musician, especially South African musicians. But that's what apartheid does, you know. If people could think of a better strategy for getting rid of it than sanctions, then the only other strategy would have been out and out civil war as far as I can see. So sanctions was the least bloody of the options, I think.

And I've said before that one of the saddest things ... obviously Trevor Huddleston had the hard job of implementing the cultural boycott because that's obviously not the most popular aspect of it all. And I think he had a ... he campaigned for that, and he gave Hugh Masekela his first trumpet. So I found it a bit sad when Paul Simon really quite obviously used Hugh as a PR shield. And also Paul Simon could very easily have worked with the exiled musicians if he'd wanted to do an album on the subject of South Africa. And actually the lyrics don't seem to – apart from one song – don't seem to bear any relation to the political situation in South Africa. I mean there's one song, 'Homeless', that seems to relate, but as far as I know none of the rest seem to have anything to do with it. So he could have worked with Hugh Masekela easily without breaking the boycott. He could have worked with Jonas Gwangwa or any of the exiled musicians. And that to me would have been a far stronger, and it could have ... he might have learned more as well and some more could have been put in the lyrics as well. And it was just ... it was a wasted opportunity and it caused a lot of divisions that weren't really necessary. Anyway, I don't really want to ...

JH: Well then, so on a more positive note, you mentioned basically you dedicated four years of your life. I mean was that eating, sleeping and drinking anti-apartheid for four years?

JD: It was more or less, yeah. I went into the office more or less every day for four years and, yeah, organising, getting leaflets done, just generally, you know, phoning people up. We had a huge roster of artists and we kept sending them these clauses to put in their contracts and asking them to do gigs and, yeah, and just sort of generally supporting the gigs and getting the right ... We always tried to do everything professionally. We got professional teams of producers producing them. Tony Wheeler was very helpful, from LMS. I always had a real thing about professionalism and getting a good sound and, you know, very good quality of show. I mean, how can I say it? It's one of the things that we learned the hard way and this is what in fact ... this was what I passed on with the Wembley thing. A lot of people would be very enthusiastic about organising a benefit concert, all for the right reasons. They'd book a venue and then there'd be ... this happened to a few people round the country ... and then they'd be asking the artists, and then the whole thing would go horribly wrong because they couldn't get the artists to fill the size of venue. So the golden rule – and I've got to say I put this into the Wembley thing – you know, people were all rushing ahead to book Wembley. I'd get the artist first, then get the venue [laughing]. That is the golden rule of benefits which we learned the hard way, or a few people who were very well-meaning learned the hard way. And that was ... that was part of what I was saying about Wembley. It's like, 'Alright everyone just calm down, we've got to get the artists that can fill Wembley first, otherwise you're heading for disaster'. So I was probably at the more cautious end of things, but I think I deserve credit for that actually 'cos it could have gone really badly wrong. And, you know, that was the golden rule that we learned from all that stuff. And I always

wanted to keep the standard of the music up there as much as possible. Yeah, it's not easy because, I mean, I'm probably slightly out of ... it's a bit controversial, but Rock against Racism ... in the end it kind of petered out because everybody [laughing] was doing little Rock against Racism gigs. A lot of bands that weren't actually that good. Sadly, with the best possible intentions, Rock against Racism turned into a bad night out. I was aware of that. I was aware of what had happened with that and I was very anxious not to let that happen with this. Which is not easy, you know. But because there are a lot of very well-meaning people, and there's a lot of tension there, and people did organise small gigs and all the rest, that's great. But I tried to keep it really as professional and make sure that people going to support the cause got a really good night of music as well, you know – of the highest standard, 'cos it can slip away, you know. But that's probably controversial. That was my kind of take on it all.

JH: I mean you've been involved in ACTSA to some extent?

JD: Not really no.

JH: Have you been involved in any other sort of campaigns since anti-apartheid or have you been tempted to? I mean having dedicated so much of your time to ... it was a relief to ...?

JD: Well, I still do things for Love Music Hate Racism, which is obviously a follow-on from Rock against Racism, and I suppose I've come more back to home, because I went through that international phase. But obviously the situation here has deteriorated and I suppose my focus is ... you know, I can't say I've done that much because I've just done little DJ-ing things. But the situation here is not good, with immigrants being scapegoated all the time. Apparently this has become one of the major supposedly political issues, immigration, which is absurd because it's just not a problem at all. It doesn't impact badly on anybody's life as far as I can see whatsoever. If we as a country can't welcome, I think it works out at 400 people – welcoming one person every year to this country. You know, if one of the six richest countries in the world can't do that, then there's something very wrong with us as a nation. It's very depressing that people seem to get so adamant and think that that's the cause of all their problems, when it clearly isn't. It has no impact whatsoever [laughing]. You know, people have ... they might be fed up about their lives, but it really has nothing to do with immigration and it has nothing to do with money not being spent on the health service or schools or building houses. All those things have got nothing to do with immigrants. I mean when you think about it, if we're welcoming one immigrant a year amongst 400 people, then if you say that's three people in the house, you know, that means if 1,200 of us can't build one house in a year. What is the matter with this country? That's got to be the government. There's absolutely no evidence whatsoever that density of population has any impact on levels of unemployment – probably precisely the opposite. You know, more economic activity probably happens, the denser the population is, the more jobs there are. That's why people have been flocking to cities for the last 2000 years. So it's all based on misconceptions that have no basis in facts or reality or anything. It's just people seem to want to find somebody to blame for the government's inaction. And the government, of course, loves it 'cos it lets them off the hook. So I guess, you know,

my focus has been more back on this country. 'Cos I think we won great victories against the far right, but unfortunately it's gone back and the far right have taken on a much more bland image now with UKIP. They're not so easy to identify, but in some ways that's more dangerous. And the right is gaining in Europe all the time, so my focus is on that. But I admit that I haven't been able to do as much as I would have liked' cos I can only really do DJ-ing at the moment. But, you know, we're working on it [laughing].

JH: One final question, you mentioned the influence or the inspiration for 'Free Nelson Mandela' being Julian Bahula's song. For the record can you tell me what the title of the song is?

JD: The title of Julian Bahula's song, I can't remember, I just know it was ...

JH: Is it a single or an album song?

JD: I don't know. All I know it was about Mandela, it mentioned Mandela. So I can just remember ...

JH: OK, I can Google it.

JD: Yeah, I hope so. I hope Julian gets the credit for that. It was kind of embarrassing, 'cos obviously I was in a position to get mine played on the radio and get it to more people, but that's what it's all about isn't it? Passing on the message to as many people as possible. But these things grow from small seeds, you know.

JH: It's a genius song so ... Is there anything you'd like to say to finish?

JD: Well, yeah, I had the pleasure of working with some of the nicest people that I've ever worked with in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. There are a lot of unsung heroes who obviously never get any credit, who aren't famous and probably won't be famous, but they were very dedicated and did a lot of work. And all over the world there were people ... and obviously ultimately it wasn't any of us who got rid of apartheid, it was those people who were mown down and even the children who were killed at Sharpeville, they were the people who got rid of apartheid ultimately, because they inspired the world to take action, although it took years and years and years but it all came from their sacrifice. So that's what you should never forget.

JH: That's fantastic, thank you very much.