

## Tony Openshaw

[00:00:00]

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, my name is Tony Openshaw, and I was born in Bolton, 15 miles from Manchester, so I've not travelled very far, really.

[00:00:16]

**INTERVIEWER:** Well I'm from Bolton myself.

**PARTICIPANT:** I've lived in Bolton, Salford, and Manchester. Um... I realised I was gay when I was a teenager, about 16, but at that time the age of consent was 21. And, you know being a law-abiding citizen [smiling], it was very difficult for me at the time, you know to be openly gay. Bolton was a small town, not very many gay venues, and most of them were quite, um, private really. There was a pub which had a room upstairs but it said "private party" on the door, downstairs, and you had brave that, and there was another pub which had a Sunday night only, mainly women's, disco. Um, so, I started coming to Manchester when I was [a] late teenager, and I got involved with the Lesbian and Gay Centre, which was up Rotterly[?] [00:01:17] Place on Oxford Road and I, um started to become a member of the befriending team, and it was a telephone answering service, where we supported people and answered questions that people had. So I got involved with that from [my] late teenagers, beginning, early 20s.

[00:01:43]

**INTERVIEWER:** Right. So obviously you— that was something you enjoyed?

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh, definitely, yeah of course. I was still living with my parents at home, but I was coming out to Manchester at the weekends and also to help— be on the switchboard.

[00:02:00]

**INTERVIEWER:** And, what sort of age did you actually come out to the family and people?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, I— I told my parents that I was gay when I was... maybe 20? They didn't accept it. I was born in the Roman Catholic family, there was a lot of guilt, I felt a lot of guilt about being gay, it took me a while to accept myself. But um... my parents just didn't accept it. They told me it was a phase and I'd be changed. And of course since the age of consent was 21 at that time, and also bearing in mind that, um, homosexuality was considered a mental health issue, and it wasn't removed from World Health Organisation until 1980, so my parents sent me to see a

psychiatrist, and I went, and I had one session with this psychiatrist for one hour, and he told my dad that I wasn't gay.

[00:02:59]

**INTERVIEWER:** Right, ok.

**PARTICIPANT:** So that made things even worse, because I persisted on, saying, "Well I am gay," but you know, my dad thought I was just being a rebel as a teenager, you know, ill mam[?] [00:03:12], and it never got resolved. My parents—well my dad died a few years ago, but my mum is 93, hasn't spoken to me in 35 years, except for once. Um, and um, what I found most difficult was I was in a relationship for 31 years, and when my partner died they didn't— nobody came to the funeral from my side of the family, just friends came. Um, so... I've had some difficulties with those sorts of issues, you know but, I've—

[00:03:49]

**INTERVIEWER:** I can imagine, yes.

**PARTICIPANT:** Sometimes adversity makes you stronger.

[00:03:53]

**INTERVIEWER:** Well obviously you said you came down into the Village and did the uh, the switchboard and the helpline, obviously and that must have helped you, a lot, especially—

**PARTICIPANT:** Oh yeah.

[00:04:04]

**INTERVIEWER:** —you know.

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, [I] made friends, being involved with the Gay Centre.

[00:04:11]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**PARTICIPANT:** Also the Gay Centre at Sidney Street, and uh, Bloom Street when it moved. We became involved more with politics, and people you know, you understood more about you know women's issues, and anti-racist issues, and gay issues, all those sorts of things. It seemed very exciting you know, to get involved in. And um, you could see the challenges. I mean it was obvious, you didn't see gay people on television, um... I've never told anybody this, but when I was— when I was

21, I tried to place an advert in Bolton Evening News: "Gay guy, 21, seeks similar" and they refused to set the advert. So, it was difficult meeting people in Bolton, so that's why I used to travel to Manchester. Um, and I met a lot of friends through the switchboard, and through the Gay Centre there.

[00:05:08]

**INTERVIEWER:** Can I just ask um, what kinds of calls did you get at the switchboard, what kinds of things were people phoning in with?

**PARTICIPANT:** Um... it was mainly, um, issues about isolation. Um, people who haven't come out, who were maybe single, maybe married, um but people who did want to meet other gay people, but they weren't simply asking for names of venues and pubs and clubs, they wanted to, you know have a bit of a chat really with a gay person. Um, so you met people um— well, over the phone you'd talk to people of different ages, um— I would say mainly isolation was the biggest issue, and wanting to get involved in more social things. So we used to tell people, you know, about the Centre activities, there was a group called Ice Breakers which, you know, continues I believe, and, um, you know there was also the venues which [we] used to tell people about. But I think people wanted a chat, you know, quite often, to talk to another gay person.

[00:06:27]

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the— was there any safe sex teaching or literature, or was it just something that wasn't talked about, safe sex [missed] [00:06:37]?

**PARTICIPANT:** Not in those early days, no, not at all. Um... I mean, I wasn't going to get pregnant, so— I mean I had no sex education, at school or through my parents, you know so, but— um, the idea of sexually transmitted diseases was um, something that I didn't really think about or consider, you know, it was, um... a really a no-no, you know.

[00:07:13]

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh, so then, even if you don't mind— obviously so the mid-80s when HIV made headlines, how did that impact on you personally?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well... those rumours were going round, you know, things like— I mean I first heard about the H-disease, you know about the H-disease? Well it was this disease in America that was affecting people from Haiti? Haiti? Heroin users, and homosexuals. So, it— it was like, if you were in one of those categories, you know you better watch out. So, we were... interested in finding out more, we wanted to know more, and then the next we heard it was called GRID, Gay-Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome. And, you know we used to try and find out more, but there was a lot of prejudice you know, it was like "Don't have sex with an American,"

like, was one of the things people used to say, um you know, because it was like, this disease is over there, it's not over here yet, you know we have to be careful, really.

[00:08:24]

**INTERVIEWER:** So obviously, things— so obviously with your, uh, volunteering and work on the switchboard, I take it obviously you used to have to get a lot more calls and— you know I mean, did that affect—

**PARTICIPANT:** I—

[00:08:41]

**INTERVIEWER:** —how you'd feel about that?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, really I'd moved on from switchboard then, and personally, you know I was involved with things like Section 28, and I was very much involved in campaigning, and going on demonstrations. Um, there was a demonstration against the councillor— or council leader I think in Trafford, you know who said that, you know, I can't remember the exact quote, but you know, "Gay men should have a bullet in their heads" and we had to demonstration there, and there was, you know, Section 28 demos, I went to London, and— I actually spoke at the rally in Manchester in front of 20,000 people. Um, and I got involved also at that time with a lot of anti-deportation work.

[00:09:27]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**PARTICIPANT:** And that's been a passion of mine for a long time, and I'm still involved with asylum seekers now, especially gay asylum seekers. Um, so, I wasn't really involved with switchboard at that time; still very much involved with like, gay campaigns.

[00:09:42]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**PARTICIPANT:** And, a lot of the campaigns were, you know, "Here's a petition board, sign this" and um... "Come on this demonstration", you know, or "Come on this walk" and it was, you know, it was very similar types of campaigning, there wasn't new ideas. And then, when ACT UP started, it was like, a breath of fresh air because it was new ideas of how to campaign, and you know, doing stunts and doing things like that, it became something quite exciting.

[00:10:17]

**INTERVIEWER:** So obviously, what start— how did you, how did you get involved with the ACT UP, was it just through— through seeing something in the Village, or?

**PARTICIPANT:** Um, I can't remember the purpose of it now, but there was a big meeting in the town hall, where um, lesbians and gay men who were, mainly were called to action to come to this meeting, and it was basically, some people had had the idea of launching ACT UP in Manchester, you know, following stories about ACT UP in New York and so on. And, um they were basically looking for people to get involved and start an ACT UP in Manchester, [to] set up a group. So I went along to that first meeting, and you know fit myself in with, "You know, this is great, yes I want to get involved". So, I started going to— we had regular meetings, we— did events and so on.

[00:11:20]

**INTERVIEWER:** So what sort of— what sort of things did you do? I mean I've seen the film, where in America it was very very, you know, proactive and you know, getting in and protesting and disrupting things. Was it, quite as bad over here or was it more petitions and marches?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, it was a different type of campaign, that's what made it so exciting really. Um, I mean I think one of the first things we did was we made two 30 foot banners, we snuck into the town hall, went to about the 3rd or 4th floor, and you know, no security stopped us, and threw two banners out of the side of the town hall. So one said, "Silence = Death" with a pink triangle, and the other said, um, "Action = Life" and um, they were there for a couple of hours before you know any security sort of tried to move them. And um, that was one of our first actions we did. It was about raising awareness, really, about um, getting the idea out. And we used— we had people in the group who were really good at doing, um, artwork and press releases and so on, but we usually only send the press release at the last minute, because we didn't want people to— you know, we didn't want the police turning up, basically.

[00:12:38]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, to disrupt. Yeah, yeah. So, would you— would you say that when you, obviously, campaigning and making people aware, would you say you got more hostility than just the fact of you being homosexual? You know, was there a lot of hostility from, you know, the public when you were, obviously, marching, or making—

**PARTICIPANT:** It— it depends what we did. Um, I can give a few examples. One, most of the group were gay men.

[00:13:12]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**PARTICIPANT:** There was heterosexual people involved but mainly heterosexual women, and there were lesbians involved, but there were a lot of gay men within the group. We did things which were trying to raise awareness, or perhaps complaining about some issue or things that were wrong. We did a protest about Benetton, which was a fashion shop, and they did some promotion of— they had a picture of somebody who looked like Jesus and who was dying of HIV. And... we made all these leaflets which were the size of a £5 note, and at one side it was a photocopy of a £5 note, and then— on, you know, awareness information on the other. And this was like a silent— a quiet protest, we just sort of went into Benetton in ones and twos and ruffled up the jumpers a little bit and put these notes inside, so um, you know, basically, stuffed Benetton's full of leaflets, but where they wouldn't find them until somebody picked a jumper up and they'd be flying— you know, the leaflets would be flying out. So, we used to do things like that, that was one.

Um, we um— we made a zebra crossing, a huge piece of white plastic, and we put black plastic— sticky black plastic stripes on it, the size of a zebra crossing. It rolled up to us like— you know, like that, and we— on Deansgate, we unfurled this zebra crossing across the road, and then stood on it, and people kept walking up and down, some people sat down but some people kept like, walking up and down. That got a lot of hostility, because the taxi driver who was stood— was stopped for an hour, kept pushing forward until he was actually touching people, you know, and, we blocked the road from both directions, for about an hour. Um, with placards, just walking up and down this zebra crossing. And um, the police couldn't reach us by car, because we blocked the road. So they turned up on foot, and— it was— we used to have fun, really. You know, we used to enjoy it.

And um, and the one we did which was on television, we got um, we were filmed, we went to Strangeways, and we were protesting about the fact that, condoms were not allowed in prisons. And it was mainly to do with the issue of, people who were drug users, or people maybe having sex in prisons, but you know, condoms were not provided. And, we got a lot of tennis balls and we slit them, and put the condom inside, and then we stood outside Strangeways with tennis rackets and knocked them over. [both laugh] And uh, we sent— we did a press release, you know, like, as usual, at the last minute, and the TV crew turned up, um and you know, filmed us batting tennis balls over Strangeways prison. And um, we did an interview on television explaining what we were doing, and it was a lot about raising awareness, you know in those ways.

[00:16:39]

**INTERVIEWER:** Sounds very very interesting—

**PARTICIPANT:** And it was good fun, you know, we really enjoyed it, you know.

[00:16:44]

**INTERVIEWER:** So did you, obviously you— do you feel your message was getting through to people? You know, did you feel it, I mean were you changing people's attitudes and opinions towards... not just homosexuals, but obviously, HIV—

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, we felt so, we felt it was a different way of campaigning, rather than just going on a walk, going on a demo, collecting petitions on a sheet of paper. I mean things have changed completely now, obviously with the internet and social media, but at that time, it seemed a bit stale, and we thought we were doing like a fresh— fresh ways of doing things, it felt really exciting. This was about 1990, '92, when we were involved in all this, and you know, it felt really... exciting times really.

[00:17:38]

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh...

[00:17:38]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** How did it— how did you feel it related to other campaigns that were more, conventional, in a way? Was there— did you talk to each other in Manchester, because obviously at that time I think there were— probably was MESMAC Manchester, was it? MESMAC [missed] [00:17:55]

**PARTICIPANT:** Yes.

[00:17:55]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** —and, how did they co-exist, the different— because obviously you had different strategies in a way, and different approaches.

**PARTICIPANT:** Um... I mean we considered that we were working in conjunction with other organisations but we were doing, you know, the activism part. You know, there were groups who were, maybe distributing condoms in the Village, you know, that wasn't our role, that was the role of, you know, more statutory sector or voluntary sector organisations. Our role was to highlight issues. So we were sort of— we— we had contact with, um, staff members and people— with our friends, anyway, in different organisations, and we felt we were working together, but we didn't actually do joint work like. It's... officially, sort of, we didn't set up joint work like that way, but we did work with people.

I mean I think we also influenced other things I've done, like in the anti-deportation campaigns, I was involved in a demo where we blocked the streets— blocked the Princess Road in Moss Side. You know, one busy morning, by pressing the pelican

crossing and sitting down on the road. You know, it sort of encouraged other campaigns to be more proactive and learn new ways of doing things. So I— part of ACT UP— I mean we learned a lot from the things they were doing in the States, we were [a] much smaller group than New York, but we felt we were learning things from the way they were doing things.

[00:19:43]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Where did you used to meet, and how did you decide what actions to kind of pursue?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well, we, I think we just met in a committee room in the town hall. Um, people came up with— it was all quite democratic really, people came up with ideas, and, you know, it was usually the following weekend, we would do those. It was all quite spontaneous. I mean that's why I felt so good about it, really, it was, you know, it wasn't six months of planning, it was like, "Yeah, you know, we don't need the police permission for a march, we're just gonna go out and do this", you know? And I think we came in contact with the police a lot. But, the police— very few people got arrested, in fact I don't remember anybody being arrested, because I think the police were a bit frightened of us [small laugh] in a way. Um, they assumed we were all HIV positive, and, you know, I remember in the film that we saw, the police were all wearing gloves, um, I think I saw similar things in Manchester. The police were a bit weary of us. Um, but, we— you know, we met in committee rooms, we organised things very quickly, and we just went out and did them.

[00:21:03]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** What is your strongest memory of that time, of being in ACT UP?

**PARTICIPANT:** Um—

[00:21:15]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** What do you take from it, that time?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well the event I enjoyed the most, which I remember the most was at Strangeways, you know. There wasn't a big crowd to see us, you know people don't pass in that area, but we did get on the television so a lot of people did, you know, see that event. And, it was really about raising awareness, and trying to get facts out, to the whole community really, not just gay people, but you know get facts out about HIV which people could understand. You know, that's what I take from it. I thought we were doing something new, something exciting, we all enjoyed what we were doing, and, and we were raising awareness.

[00:22:13]



**INTERVIEWER 2:** [missed] [00:22:13] question I have. I can keep going if you like.

[00:22:15]

**INTERVIEWER:** Well no just obviously that, obviously, I mean did you, you said that the police were... nobody got arrested, but, they were obviously fearful, uh, of you, taking things obviously like— people at the council were... how did they react? You know and obviously, and I'm thinking with the policies they were making, especially within schools, you know I mean, did you try to influence how, maybe, the children would talk HIV and AIDS and stuff?

**PARTICIPANT:** Not— I don't especially remember any campaigns about schools. I mean we used to do things like die-ins at Piccadilly.

[00:22:58]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**PARTICIPANT:** And, this is what I remember, the police were basically saying, "Go on, get up please", they weren't dragging us away, you know, so I mean, they were— they were quite weary of touching us, or you know. So they were like, encouraging us to, "Come on, you've done enough now, everybody's seen you, get up now", and we— you know we used to do things like die-ins on a regular basis. I don't really remember any campaigns aimed at schools, or education, or—

[00:23:25]

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh it's just— to be honest, I was thinking, because like yourself I went to a catholic school, so I— I was at school when HIV [made] headline, so I was thinking obviously, obviously at a catholic school you wouldn't talk about— you wouldn't talk about any sex, know what I mean? Homosexual sex was a big no no, and obviously contraception.

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah.

[00:23:52]

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you find that was another big hurdle? About, you know obviously the fact that the younger generation weren't being taught about safe sex, or homosexuality?

**PARTICIPANT:** Well also, I mean, in 1988, Section 28 came in, which was the, you know, schools primarily were not allowed the teach that homosexuality was an accepted form, it was a pretend family relationship, so. We didn't feel that— well I didn't feel that schools would— going to teach anything positive around those issues,

so I don't think we, um, spent a lot of energy on that issue at that time. I mean we campaigned a lot against Section 28 at the time.

[00:24:35]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yep.

**PARTICIPANT:** And then eventually it was repealed, but I think a whole generation of people missed a lot because of that law.

[00:24:47]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Could you say a little bit more about those campaigns that you were involved with, and you mentioned that you actually spoke at the Manchester rally?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, um, well, um... Margaret Thatcher wrote in a [laughs] um, under the local government act, brought in this clause, which, it changed from week to week. You know, one week it was Clause 27 then it was Clause 28 then it was Clause 29. We were making new banners every weekend. But, um, I remember going to Leeds and London, and I think Leicester, and Manchester, um, with a, you know, a banner, saying, um you know, "We're not a pretend family relation, we're real", um, "Ban this clause, ban this", but it did become law. At the demonstration in London, I think there was about 10,000 people, but in Manchester it was the biggest demonstration, it was about 20,000. And at that time, I was very much involved with a campaign, it was called Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, and that helped set up Lesbians and Gays Support Viraj, which was, um, I don't know if you know about him— he was a Sri Lankan asylum seeker who was uh, went into sanctuary in a church in Hulme and he was there for two years. Eventually he was deported. But we, um, it was a very active campaign with lots of people involved in it, and me and Philip, my partner at the time, we used to sit in the church on a rota basis every week, and we used to get involved in the demonstrations and we set up this group called Lesbians and Gays Support Viraj. And, um, I was invited to speak at the Section 28 demo linking the issues around discrimination against LGBT people, and also anti-racist issues, so I was talking about those two issues, and you know, "Viraj cannot be here, he's in a church, but I'm speaking on his behalf and it's important that we unite", those sorts of— that sort of speech. Um, I was shaking like a leaf, 'cause it was so many people, um, but you know, I gave my speech out. I think, you know, a lot of the campaigning I've done in my life I've felt has been quite... you know, it's given me strength, it's something I've really looked forward to. I mean later I went to work at George House Trust, from 1996 to 1999, and um at that time was when protease inhibitors first came in, but during that period I knew about 100 people who died. I mean, some friends, but mainly people I knew through George House Trust as a staff member, but also some personal friends. And so, HIV's had a big effect on my life, because um... I've met gay men who, a similar age to me or older than me and they say, "Oh I don't know anybody who's HIV positive" and um,

there's people in the group, but you know obviously you don't disclose. I remember [laughs] "You don't know anybody who's HIV positive, there's somebody here, you know, who's HIV positive" but obviously you don't disclose that because of confidentiality. So, you know, I feel that it's had such a huge effect on my life.

[00:28:36]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Could you describe a little bit, I mean obviously... what, what that was like, I guess, living through that period where friends and colleagues and people you met through work were passing, passing away—

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah.

[00:28:53]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** —and in terms of personally how you dealt with that, and how it affected you.

**PARTICIPANT:** Um... I mean, I still know a lot of people who are HIV positive.

[00:29:08]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Mhm.

**PARTICIPANT:** Uh, because I work with asylum seekers, I know a lot of asylum seekers— African women, and men, who are HIV positive, as well as, you know, gay men. Um... and it has been difficult, you know seeing— losing people. And I've been close to people who I've lost. I haven't attended 100 funerals, you know, I've lost people and not gone to their funerals, you know, I've been to some but not that many. Um... I don't know, it's something I've built a resilience to, it's something um, I wasn't expecting to do when I was a young man, um... it has been difficult at time. And, you know to lose so many friends, it makes you feel isolated at times especially because I don't have a family backing me up, my own partner died— we were together for 31 years— he died um when he was only 54. Um, and that's been a difficult period for me, you know being on my own. When you're in a couple, you know, you feel much stronger, even if you know "it's you and me against the world", even when—

[00:30:38]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah.

**PARTICIPANT:** —you don't have family backing. Um... I remember one occasion I went to visit somebody at the Manchester Royal Infirmary who was HIV positive and he was in the renal ward because he's had renal problems, and they refused to let me see him, unless I completely covered up, and I said— I think this was— thinking

back on it I think this was about 2002, so it's not that long ago— and the HIV wards were different. I mean I've been on the HIV wards a lot because I visited people who were asylum seekers or gay men when I was up [at] George House Trust, or asylum seekers in later life, and um. Anyway I went to visit this guy who was Nigerian, and um... I was quite shocked because the views were like, a few years behind like the HIV wards really, but they absolutely refused to let me in unless I completely covered up in plastic, and um, you know they said— the first thing I did was I went to shook his hands, they said, "We don't touch him", you know, it was quite... quite scary really.

[00:31:56]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** It's surprising that it's so recent.

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah to me that's quite recent, it's about 15 years ago but it's, I think the view— that particular ward, have a lot of people who are used to HIV, you know, it was a different— slightly different than what you would expect at Monsall Manchester.

[00:32:14]

**INTERVIEWER:** I mean how did that make you feel, did that make you feel—

**PARTICIPANT:** I felt terrible.

[00:32:18]

**INTERVIEWER:** Angry?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah!

[00:32:20]

**INTERVIEWER:** Upset, or just disappointed?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah!

[00:32:22]

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, I can imagine. Did he say, obviously—

**PARTICIPANT:** I mean I argued with them, I said, "I just want to go in like this, I'm fine" and you know... but they said, "Well you don't go in unless you— you put all this on". So um, I didn't think it was necessary but I complied because I wanted to talk to the guy, and um, I was giving him some help and advice about his situation. Um, he

was used to it I guess because all the nurses and people who come in were like that, so he didn't complain about it but I felt quite angry, really.

[00:33:13]

**INTERVIEWER:** So, how do you feel— so obviously going back to how it was when HIV first started and now— how do you feel about the situation now with knowledge and education?

**PARTICIPANT:** [deep breath] I mean the only cure, isn't it, is education and, in that, you know you don't want people to become HIV positive, you want people to be uh, practice safer sex and not become infected. That's the only way forward and, so, the campaigns I was involved in, either by good chance or whatever sort of realise that, that the cure was going to be a long way off and that education or awareness was the best way forward. So, I've felt that I've played a part in trying to do that, you know. I'm disappointed that, you know so many people have become HIV positive and um, you know, there's obviously many improvements. You know I once knew a woman who took 72 tablets a day, you know, most people now have, you know, one tablet a day. You know, but, you know, there's been many improvements in people's lives in that way. You know, compliance and so on is much easier because of that.

I think schools now, you know, 'cause we talked about, earlier, are much more willing to talk about LGBT issues. Um, you know, trans issues are much more talked about than ever— than they ever were, it seems, so I think um. You know sex education is talked about much more than it was ever in my day and I feel that, you know, there was a role to play there that, you know... George House Trust runs a positive speaker's course you know, I think they go into schools and so on. Um, and I think that's important, you know, to educate people from an early age.

[00:35:29]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** I was just gonna ask a question about going back to you ACT UP days. In the film *United In Anger*, it was quite clear that it was obviously an activist organisation, but it was also where people made friends, maybe had lovers, um, you know had relationships as well, and I was just wondering if that was similar in Manchester, whether they became your friends in a way, this group of people and the kinds of relationships or intimacies were there at the time.

**PARTICIPANT:** Um, yeah, we were a much smaller group than New York, but—  
[laughs]

[00:36:09]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Right.

**PARTICIPANT:** Um, I've still know people from ACT UP now who are still my friends, which is, 20-odd years— 27 years later? 25 years later? So I'm still friends with people who I met in ACT UP. A couple of people. Um, you know so that's like an ong[oin]g— an enduring— that. I was in a relationship for 31 years so I wasn't particularly looking for new sexual partners but I'm sure people— um, there was lots of gay men involved at the time, I'm sure lots of people met each other and made some friends that way. Intimate friends. [laughs]

[00:36:53]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah. Cool. Um. Did you have—

[00:37:00]

**INTERVIEWER:** Umm...

**PARTICIPANT:** Could we have a coffee break for a sec?

[00:37:02]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah, of course we can.

[00:37:06]

**INTERVIEWER:** How long have we got left?

[00:37:09]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Um, it is... maybe five minutes?

**PARTICIPANT:** Ok.

[00:37:18]

**INTERVIEWER:** No, just— just one thing. How do you, obviously, how do you feel about uh, the future, or to obviously, to sex education, you know things like the developments with things like PrEP as well. You know, do you think we're getting there? Or do you think we still need to do a lot more work to get the message of safe sex across to people?

**PARTICIPANT:** Um... I'm a person that believes that change is possible, otherwise I wouldn't be, you know, an activist or a campaigner throughout my life. If I didn't believe that positive change was possible, that it was futile, you know, I wouldn't have got involved in the different campaigns that I have been involved in. And, you know in... Unfortunately though, there's still a lot to do. You know I'm getting older, and you know, not as active as I used to be, but there's um... There's still a lot to do.

But I generally have a positive outlook on life, in that I believe that um, we're not always given our rights, we have to fight for them, you know, but if we fight hard enough, we'll get them. And, and quite, um, on a general issue, not just about HIV, but on a general issue, the way things have changed for LGBT people during my lifetime, where you never saw gay people in television, um, you couldn't get gay books in the library, um before the internet you know [laughs] Things have become much more open and accepting. And obviously we still have lots of issues, you know like hate crime, and so on. But there've been so many improvements, you know. Gay marriage, and so on. So I'm... hopeful for the future, really.

[00:39:27]

**INTERVIEWER:** Good.

[00:39:29]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Um, I have one more— one question. Um, you talked about your anti-deportation work a little bit—

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah.

[00:39:37]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** —I was wondering if you could say a little bit more about that, and the connections you see between your kind of, your ACT UP work, your kind of— and, anti-racist work, and kind of your work on Section 28, and if you could just, say a little bit more.

**PARTICIPANT:** Right, ok. Well. Um, as a human being who is a gay man, I couldn't understand why anybody should discriminate against women, disabled people, black people, it doesn't make any sense to me at all. You know, why build a wall, we should be building bridges. It just didn't make sense. These issues are all linked together. And, you know, poor people, homeless people, all these issues I think should be linked together. So, I've always felt that campaigning on one issue can be highlighting something else as well. And, I've— as a career, you know for 20 years, I was involved with helping asylum seekers. Since I've retired, I've sort of concentrated on helping gay and lesbian asylum seekers in the main, rather than uh, generally people from all countries, I've just been trying to help particular people. Um, I mean, last year I set up an online petition; over the weekend we got 15,000 names, and a man who was due to be deported— we started on a Saturday, he was due to be deported on Monday, he got released from detention, you know the following week. And, you know, this is still current, we went to court yesterday and his case is still ongoing.

So, um, I felt that I've learned and contributed different things from those different campaigns, you know. I've been quite open as a gay man to many asylum seekers,

and I think as a... a lot of them naturally accept gay people— you know, people from Iran, Iraq, don't naturally see gay people as their ally, but when you meet somebody, you sort of say, "Oh, he's alright, and he's helping me, and gay people, perhaps they are ok", so I feel so— like an example, to many um, Black people and people in the Middle East and so on, who wouldn't naturally have accepted gay people, um, so that's one issue which I feel quite proud about, and I feel that I've contributed a lot in that field. Um... I think that's it.

[00:42:43]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** What, when you say it's your career, what was your role? Were you working for the George House Trust?

**PARTICIPANT:** No, I worked for George House Trust for three years, and then I was a services organiser, so it was organising things like welfare payments and organising transports for people to hospital, and doing a newsletter, I used to do those sorts of information-giving and so on. Um, I later became— well, I was manager at Immigration Aid Unit, Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, and for the last um, 10, 12 years of my career I was working for an organisation called ASHA[?] [00:43:23], which was supporting asylum seekers to get housing from the Home Office. So it was making applications, going to court. I enjoyed taking the Home Office to court for breaching human rights. We used to win, you know, 80% of cases, so, it was quite satisfying really. Um... and, through that work I met quite a lot of LGBT asylum seekers who I've kept in touch with since I've retired, and I've helped individual people with the cases and supported them and so on. And I've really enjoyed doing that.

**[00:44:01] End of transcript.**