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**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee:**

**Project: Voices of Leytonstonia**

**Date of interview:**

**Language: English**

**Venue:**

**Name of interviewer: Length of interview:**

**Transcribed by: Polly Rodgers**

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*Can I start by asking your name?*

I’m Rachel, Rachel Boyd.

*If you don’t mind me asking, what’s your date of birth?*

9th of 9th 76

*How old were you when you first started getting into action?*

Er…17…16…17

*What made you think about doing that?*

Er, cos I had an older brother and he was at university in Guilford, which was just where , just by where the Twyford Down was, which was like one of the first road protests, so he was involved in Twyford Down and then erm..he was involved in an organisation called Earth First and there was a local group in Birmingham so he was talking about itand he took me along to a XXXXX group.

*Did any of your friends get XXXXXX?*

Errr, not friends from school but I became part of the Birmingham Earth First Group so we would do things together and they would XXXXX.

*What was the first thing that you did?*

No idea. Er.. first thing we did …first activist thing I did was ..well the first activist thing I was probably going to CND marches with my mum and dad and all the family and other sort of anti-war marches , so partly with the Woodcraft group….erm….but I don’t know what it was with Birmingham at first but early on we were protesting at the M11…so we’d like…hire a mini-bus and all go down together.

*Erm how long have you been involved in protests?*

Yeah, since I was 17, so that’s 22 years.

**[Interruption] Maybe ask her a bit.. to tell you in a bit more detail about what she did when she went down to the M11 in the mini-bus.**

*Could you tell me in more detail about your XXXXXX*

Er…I think, yes so one of the early ones was visiting…erm…..what they’re called… Wanstonia..so there was..er that road of houses that were going to be knocked down and that formed..like sort of autonomous sort of country and you got a passport for going there..er so kind of remember just going and sitting round in squatted buildings and reading flyers and Zines and stuff and being a bit taken back at how weird everybody was..erm and then also there was a ….I don’t know if it was a.. I might have gone… I went down on the train a few times as well and there was one day that was erm..the day that the tree was ..that they were going to cut down the tree on George Green…so they put erm.. they put fences round it ..and er…and the idea was to take down the fences so it was a big action and there were loads of local people involved like the local lollipop lady got in trouble for going on this demo in her like.. full lollipop lady gear.. she was quite told off for that..er yeah so loads of local people kind of surrounded the fence and they were trying to pull the fences down…erm …so that was a …yeah ..the first time I got arrested…erm…and then later on going to Claremont Road..erm…and I stayed there for the eviction so..that ..yeah.. I think I just ..got a train down south for that.. and I met my brother there.

**[Interruption]I was going to say you could ask her to tell you more about how ..about getting arrested and what she was arrested for.**

[Laughter]

Er …so *…*yeah , it was like..I was really young and stupid basically, so erm ..the..everyone was trying to get these fences down by jumping on top of them so there were loads of us sitting on top of the fence and kind of using our body weight to sway it one way and the other to bring it down and …er… and it looked like it was coming down so someone shouted, ”Everyone jump!” Erm and because I was stupid and didn’t really think things ahead, I jumped into the compound whilst everyone else obviously very sensibly jumped outside the compound so I was just sitting all by myself [laughs] in this compound and er… and then someone kind of goes to me…”Run!” cos …you know I could have just jumped back over the fence but I was just so meek and er.so bad at kind of ..going against authority..er..even though..yeah..I guess I wasn’t an anarchist back then but…erm..yeah..found it really hard ..just to..just felt really naughty…so I had to wait.. so I waited until the security guard came and ..like did a citizen’s arrest on me…and just sat down with him and he offered me some custard cream biscuits and waited until the police came…I think that.. I think that I was the only person that was arrested that day..I was very embarrassed about it cos also when I was sitting with the security guard people just carried on shouting, “Just run!” and I just like….just didn’t have the courage basically…so yeah then I got arrested I was all by myself..erm and my brother brought me a book..erm which they let me have..and err.. and then later on…somebody said to my brother that that was.. cos the fences didn’t even fall down then… the fences stayed up for like three or four hours later ..erm and then they all came down later… and I was charged with criminal damage to a fence post ..erm ..yeah…and somebody later said that it was the best day of their life, it was just like the feeling of like..cos they got all the fences down and everyone was like dancing round the tree and the tree was saved and.it was just like this massive feeling of euphoria that I completely missed cos I was in a prison cell all by myself…erm and also because I was really stupid…that erm…was it then?..I think it was then that the.. the policemen were chatting to me ..like asking me like..er..so what do you do….what school do you go to..yeah.. I mean like…after I had legal training a bit later on as an activist I knew that you just don’t talk to the police …you just don’t say anything..but I was all chatty..so I ended up telling them what school I went to …and then….yeah then I was just really stressed that they were going to tell my headmistress on me basically…and then I felt like that I had to tell my headmistress before they did…very awkward.

*So did you tell your headmistress?*

I did and then…so I think that that was the George, the George Green action and then…a bit later when…like all that had been cleared and the protest had all moved to Leytonstone and it was like from Wanstead to Leytonstone… and then…the…then there was Claremont Road…the Claremont Road eviction, there was somebody who was like you know before it was happening people were going Are you coming down? Like everyone was trying to get as many people as possible to be in these houses for the Claremont Road eviction, erm…so this guy Paul..er, he was like …are you going to come down for it and I was like…no I’ve got to go to school…cos the George green one I think it was at the weekend..or in a holiday…and he was.like ”You don’t need to go to school, you should come, you should definitely come”. And he gave me like all this pressure that I should bunk off school and I wasn’t the kind of kid to bunk off school at all, er..certainly not without my mum and dad’s permission, so I was just kind of like put the pressure on my mum and dad until they um….like they didn’t mind…but they’re ..they are Quakers…so they had to like worry about …how they were going to write a note excusing me from school without actually lying…but they agreed to do that..and that was all fine…I can’t remember if I got arrested for that….but I’m sure… yeah the story with that was that erm…the headmistress… I think maybe I did explain it to the headmistress…maybe that was when I got arrested… God it’s so long ago I can’t remember anything….erm but I do remember that I have a claim to fame now that erm…the headmistress was actually quite impressed that I’d done that…that I’d bunked off school to go for a demo…like you know .. doing something that I believe in…so she mentioned the story to the..like the school must have had a vicar, I guess…they do that don’t they , schools…..some sort of vicar that was connected to the school ..or she mentioned it to him…and then later on became Dean of Bristol Cathedral and apparently this was mentioned in sermon at Bristol Cathedral that was like.. that was an example of school children doing what they believe in, bunking off school to go to demos..so that’s my claim to fame XXX sermon.

[Long pause with people moving around]

*Erm…OK…Do you have any like more stories….about you know…XXX going there…during whilst you were still at school.. before we get on to like what you are doing nowadays?*

Erm so I was also…yes just to say about like.. how weird I found everyone…like the con sort of like…that’s my world like…those people are all still my friends..like the views that those people have are kind of my views now…but at the time it was just such a contrast from like seventeen years as a little girl in Birmingham …erm I just remember really well reading this pamphlet and it..it having this thing put…so.. so it was like a little article that was ten reasons not to wear deodorant ..I remember just thinking “These people are all weird.” What is that about? and er…yeah like five years later I stopped wearing deodorant…it just like to me….to me wearing deodorant now is a really weird thing to do like why would you do tha tbut at the time I just thought that was the weirdest thing ever… erm…what else? I spent some time up a tree, got a little bit attached to a particular tree ….er there was this little site called the Bender site where everyone was …er.yeah lived in benders which are like sort of tents made out of wood and tarpaulin…erm and er..it was just a really nice place to be with everyone living with nature even though it was in London and there was a woman …er lived up a yew tree.. erm …it was yeah ..like amazing, amazing tree houses that I just kind of adopted, this tiny little tree and I could make it myself so .. if I was going to get a bit XXX I would come and sit up this tree …

*OK erm so what kind of XXX activity are you involved in nowadays?*

Errrrr nowadays….so since then I went to Palestine a couple of times…erm so…I mean a lot of my activities now are more through work …so I work for an organisation called Zay2 which imports things from Pal…like oil and olive oil and dates and things, from Palestine to support the economy so I was working there until recently …erm and now I’m also working at er..a little social enterprise that ..erm…it’s to… it’s about sustainable agriculture and making it more …erm…sort of …economically possible for people to live on the land and grow vegetables and live sustainably on the land ..er.. so the idea is that it buys up land and puts in like infra-structure like solar electricity, wind electricity, waste water stuff …and then sells off little plots that people can live in communally and that’s actually with two people that I knew from the M11..that’s that job…yeah…so a lot of it’s still connected to those days .

*Do you still.. so.. maybe go on demonstrations and XXXXX?*

I really hate demonstrations … I mean I kind of liked them when I was younger but dancing.. like the whole ending in Trafalgar Square….and getting into the fountain and dance and drums and that ..but er..I just..I don’t know why I hate them so much but I just hate them now .. though I like.. I feel guilty very often for not going to demonstrations..I do go to some like particularly around erm …stuff around..migration.. like stuff around …yeah little ones like don’t all go to Yarlswood which is a detention centre for women so ..erm…that sort of thing and …I was in Lesbos recently on holiday and I did a little bit of erm supporting people that were arriving on the beaches ….[clapping] …and I’m going to go back to [clapping] Demos to do some more of that and that’s quite a common thing like people that have been….there’s a lot of people that have been involved in pro-Palestinian activism erm doing stuff….[noise –incomprehensible]…..

[Long pause with noise]

[Some background noise prompt give to interviewer- not clear ]

*What was it .. got you into sort of like that Palestine support XXX?*

So yes I guess that did come through environmentalism ….yeah so when I was involved in Earth First ..erm there were people nationally that were doing activism around timber ..around hardwood that was coming from the rainforest, particularly, I think Malaysia …like…sort of east Asia …erm so rainforests were getting logged for valuable hard wood that was then getting sold in the UK so one action we did was XXXX the world first was this thing that this group in Norwich was really trying to get everybody to do nationally where you’d go into like a sort of B &Q shop and you’d take out the timber and you’d just walk out.. walk out the store with it and you’d say that you’re.and you go to a police station with it and then you say “I’m reporting this timber as stolen from the indigenous people of XXXX whatever it was …erm ..so yeah I thought that was a really good in action and really great organisation and a woman that was really, really involved in that I got to know later and she went from that sort of activism …she went to Palestine and …like maybe 98 or 99 …er no 2000…and then she wrote a long article about it that I read and that inspired me to go, so it was about knowing people I guess that then talked about their experiences

*Are you clear on what Earth First is?*

**Er…what’s Earth First?**

So Earth First was an environmental movement that started in America and again.. again it’s kind of quite focussed on logging at the start, so ..er…particularly ancient woodlands or redland… redwood forests … erm people would start doing direct action so it was about …er direct action to protect the earth basically so ..people would ….kind of protect the trees with their bodies basically and that started in America and it was a particular sort of ethos that then was important to Britain so people… yeah just thought that the environment was something that was so worth protecting …[noise]

[17.59]