INTERVIEW L10: MARTINA MCCLOSKEY

Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interviewee: Martina McCloskey
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Transcriber: Dr Barry Hazley

Textual Note: Annotations and observations appear in square brackets (e.g. [pauses], [laughs]). Partial, interrupted or unfinished utterances are denoted by a dash. False starts, filler words and non-lexical utterances (e.g. 'um', 'hmm') are not generally transcribed. Time codes appear at ten-minute intervals in square brackets in bold type.

FR: So that's, we're rolling. So just to start us off could you say your full name and today's date?

MM: So I'm Martina Mary McCloskey and today is the eighteenth of January 2020.

FR: Well, thank you very much for agreeing to, to do this. The first question I guess is where and when were you born?

MM: So I was born in 1974 in Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry, yeah, but I lived in County Derry, so I lived in Park, little vill-, hamlet called Park and also Dungiven, which was close by.

FR: And how long were you in Dungiven for?

MM: So I was between Park and Dungiven until I was seven years of age, and then we moved to Maynooth in County Kildare, in what we would have called the Free State at the time [laughs], even though it wasn't technically that anymore, and then we moved to Leixlip, which is a town up the road, when I was about ten, and then moved to Belfast when I was twelve.

FR: So quite a lot of moving around in that early part of your life.

MM: Yeah.

FR: Do you have many memories of that?

MM: Yeah, no, I do, really strong memories of every place. I really missed County Derry, so I, as much as I did settle in the South I always really felt quite like, I really, really missed County Derry. I suppose we were really close to all our family, lived next door to family, would've seen family all the time, went to primary school with cousins like, half the school were my cousins, kind of thing, that going down to Maynooth, where I had one set of cousins who lived in Maynooth, it felt like a big wrench, and then also I got called Brit a bit, the odd, as a kid, when down in, living in, down south when people were trying to be

horrible and you were like, but I'm Irish too, kinda, you know, it just felt really strange that I was being called a Brit, where it never even occurred to me that I was British, yeah.

FR: Yeah, is that just an accent thing or–?

MM: I think, I think it's just people being contrary when you're from the North and cos it is technically part of the UK, so you'd still get people who'd sort of, you see on forums and stuff, people would call, even like, people in the Republic would call the North Britain or UK and you're like, it is technically the UK, but you're like, hello, it's the island of Ireland and the Republic doesn't get to be all of what Ireland is, you know, it's part of, it's a state within Ireland, you know, so yeah.

FR: So a wee bit of a sense difference down south.

MM: Yeah, yeah, but I picked up the accent, by the time I left, it was funny cos my accent has really transformed over the years, I went down there obviously with a County Derry accent and by the time I came to Belfast I had a, probably a mixture, but sounded very southern and then, and then, by the time I came here I had more of a Belfast accent, and now my mum says I sound English, so [laughs], but–

FR: [laughs] That's what happens.

MM: Yeah, but my mum, my mum was a, she was a bit of a, you could write a book actually I think on my mum, she sent me to a Protestant grammar school, so we moved up, we moved, so it's mixed, it's a mixed school now, but when I was there it was probably ninety-eight per cent Protestant, so I, she was a single parent, I was living in Ardoyne and I was a Catholic, and she sent me to Belfast Royal Academy, so I used to go to Belfast Royal Academy from Ardoyne [laughs].

FR: Wow.

MM: [laughs] Yeah, so yeah, I stuck out like a sore thumb everywhere really at that point, but I was, I was sh-, I was a shy kid, but I, I was, I was quite a strong kid I suppose, so I think my mum knew it was okay to send me there, she knew she couldn't do that, my sister wouldn't have been able to do that, so she sent her to a Catholic school, so I think she just knew that I like, I wasn't a kid that was going to be bullied, so I was, I'd be okay, and I never had a moment's bother at BRA, I have to say. I found living in Ardoyne relatively horrible and was glad when we left there cos like, it, it's a real bullying culture like, the kids walk around with rubber ring guns like, and if you didn't have a rubber ring gun you'd get pelted, so you had to have one as, for defence, which was against my entire ethos in life, but you just, after you got pelted a few times it was like, yeah, get me a rubber ring gun [laughs] so I can go to the shop and, without getting pelted and stuff, so it was, it was quite a horrible place, so I actually found Ardoyne probably the worst place to live ever really.

FR: So you were, you were twelve, when you moved there?

MM: Yeah, and lived there till about fourteen.

FR: You and your mum and your sister, yeah.

MM: Sister, yeah, yeah, so, and we moved, there was, we'd cousins who lived in Ardoyne, so yeah, so my mum had left my dad, so he was living in the Republic still, he was living down in Leixlip still, so she basically left to go to somewhere where she had family, so that's why we ended up in Ardoyne. So then we moved, she got a council house then after a couple of years in like, another part of north Belfast, off Skegoneill, yeah.

FR: And was that better? You said you–

MM: It was a lot better than Ardoyne, it was still, it was a, kind of at a flashpoint, it was where the top half of Skegoneill was Catholic and the bottom half was Protestant, and we lived right at the flashpoint, and our street was mainly Protestant, so you kind of always had a sense that you had to be nice quiet Catholics, but, and not cause a fuss and keep your head down and there were times in the summer someone, one of the neighbours would let us know someone was thinking of putting us out, so we'd sit up all night waiting with, and have your letterbox taped down and me and my mum and my aunt would sit there waiting on them to come, and then you'd get it maybe a few days later, stand down, no, you're alright kind of thing, you know, so the, our neighbours were fine with us, but you kind of had this thing that they were very proud of themselves at being fine with having Catholics living in the street, so, and that they were very tolerant of, to allow you be there, you know.

FR: It was an opportunity for them to show their tolerance.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so.

FR: And was that, were you frightened? I mean, that's quite a frightening story though, about staying up all night with your letterbox–

MM: Yeah, it was I sup-, I suppose, but you kind of, you just saw it as what you just had to do, I mean, when you look back like, when you just walk round the corner and there's soldiers on your walk home at night-time, with the helicopter's spotlight round you till you get to the front door and you kind of wave up at them and be like, hi, that, it wasn't, I think it wasn't till it all stopped that you kind of realised how crazy it all was, you know, and like, when I moved over here, and because where I lived it was constant flags and the kerbstones, twenty, you know, like, every day of the year like, they were never taken down, it wasn't like they were just up for the Twelfth, that when I moved here and you'd maybe see something with the British flag you'd have that, or a band, I remember one time going down a street and seeing a band and my heart just was like, oh my God, what is it, what is it, do I need to go another way or is there going to be trouble, then you're like, no, no, you're in London, it's fine, it's just a band, you know, and it was cos it was near the Lambeth, what do you call that, Imperial War Museum, so there was some band doing some commemoration thing, walked up along the, the road and I just, it was like I was transported back, and I still, if I hear a helicopter, I'm, I'm straightaway like, transported back to Belfast, you know, and the like, late eighties and nineties I suppose, yeah, and just, it's like, right, what's, what trouble is there, and I, I can feel anxious if like, if there's a lot of helicopters

and things, and I work at London Bridge, so any incident then there's loads of helicopters, so you're just like, alright, okay [exhales heavily], you know, it does, it does bring you back to, to that, cos it was just, it was twenty-four-seven noise in Belfast back then, so whenever that stopped, when the helicopters stopped being there all the time I think half of Belfast couldn't sleep for a week, cos it was like, silence [laughs], so yeah, so I think it, at the time, you just took it in your stride, you just didn't really, nobody even spoke about it, it just was what you did, and it was just the norm, you know, are you, maybe you heard little bits of stories about things like, I remember people mentioning stories about the, the very start of the Troubles about, you know, round the Oldpark, people getting burnt out as a concerted campaign, but it was never spoken about like, properly, it was more you heard wee snippets or, and things, or, so yeah, I think, yeah, it was, it was always, it was always a kind of a tension that was always there, but because it was always there you were just used to it, you didn't know what it was like to not have it, so it wasn't till it was gone that you kind of went oh and this is what it's like to meet someone and not have to judge how, whether you're safe or not, or what you can say to them and, you know, where, if you, do I need to lie about what school I went to or where I grew up, that you were al-, it was always that making a judgement call really, really quickly, you know, and I can still like, you still do it, you meet someone from Northern Ireland and you still automatically are sizing up different things, and my boyfriend, who's English, it's funny, if I meet someone from Northern Ireland, and he'll be, he'll pick up like, I bumped, there was someone in, in a restaurant and he, I heard a Derry accent, so I said to him oh, you know, you're from Derry and we, they, we had a bit of a chat and he was like, ah so you asked him if he was from Derry, not Londonderry, so you knew, and I was like, oh yeah, I knew to look at him, and he was like, but how did you know, and like, I don't know, you just do, you know, and I just need to look at him and I knew I could say Derry, whereas if I'd, wasn't sure, thought he might have been a Protestant, I would have said are you from Northern Ireland, you know, I would have left it more vague, and you'd do it without, you know, a, sort of really sub-, you know, unconsciously, that you, you size up what you can and can't say, so.

FR: It's a very strange thing that, isn't it.

MM: Yeah.

FR: So how did you get to school, I was thinking?

MM: Yeah, so when I–

FR: Was that, was that–?

MM: So from, I walked, when I lived in Ardoyne I used to get one of the black cabs in, because Ardoyne, I don't know if you know this, they kind of had their own public transport system, so you paid fifty pee and, to the black cab, and they did a set route and they just did it constantly, so you would just flag one down if, and if they had a spot in it they would fit five, six people in, so–

FR: I, I, do you know I do, I do know about this, but I never entirely understood why, was it because buses didn't, wouldn't have gone to the Ardoyne?

MM: Mmm, yeah, yeah, and, yeah, I think that, yeah, it probably was and, and that was just, yeah, so it was kind of like, your own little community public transport, yeah, it was kind of **[00:10:00]** cool actually, but of course I didn't want to be seen getting out of one of them at BRA, so I used to get off up the road, but when we moved to Skegoneill I walked to work and back, but the funny thing was, because it was a Protestant school and seen as posh, and you, you used to, it, BRA's close to the New Lodge, so all the boys that would go to Bearnageeha school used to walk, I used to be walking in opposition to them, to and from school, so they'd be coming from and to New Lodge and I'd be going the opposite direction, so every day like, basically I'd get chased, I got beat up one time by boys from Bearnageeha, you know, cos like, in their mind I was a posh Protestant and I wasn't gonna tell them, I thought it's none of your business what I am, so yeah, I used to wear DM shoes to school, so that if anyone like, so basically like, that one time like, I got beat up by two boys, I was able to give as good back as I got kind of thing, and I didn't play hockey after the first term because I was a good runner, but I used to walk home with a hockey stick and just try and look like, not scared, so that, yeah, so you just, I'd, I'd basically zig-zag my way home, there'd be a bunch of Barney guys, Barney boys coming down, bunch of them coming down this side of the road, I'd walk to, cross the road to the other side of the road, sometimes take wee detours down back streets depending on how rowdy they were looking, so, so yeah.

FR: And the uniform I guess marks you out.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Although how complicated that you're getting beaten up on the assumption that you're a posh Protestant.

MM: Yeah, and I was working-class Catholic, yeah, but I just thought also it's none of your damn business, I'm not going to justify myself to you, so yeah.

FR: And you said you got on quite well at school, you liked school.

MM: Yeah, I loved school, yeah, also it was, I did running, I was good at running, so if you were good at sport then you were kind of, you were in, you were totally grand, it was one of those schools and, you know, you got a different blazer and stuff if, yeah, that was, all that type of nonsense, but yeah, I mean, I, I always liked school anyway, so yeah, school was kind of almost like a refuge, you know, it was probably one of the few things I liked in life at the time, so I'd never, yeah, I'd never any issues at school.

FR: No, the question of religion and the question of class never–?

MM: No, I think because I, I just never raised it and the, my, my, the people I made friends with never raised it, just never became a thing, it was just we never spoke about it, not even once, you know, it was never, just the way kids do, you can just ignore entire topics you know, it just never ever came up and never spoke about it. I only had one friend that I would have brought to my, to my house cos, not that I was ashamed of where I lived, cos my mum

had a really lovely house, but it was, but I just knew a lot of them, their parents probably wouldn't have let them come to where I lived, cos it would have been seen as a quite rough area, so I'd one friend who would stay at my house, but the others, I suppose cos a lot of people lived quite far out, they travelled in to go to the school, so you just saw each other at school really and then when you got older you met in town, so you didn't particularly go to each other's houses necessarily, but, but yeah, I got on well with the teachers, I enjoyed school, I was like, I was above average, but like, I wasn't the smartest, but I would have been in, maybe in the second top class, so, and the teachers liked me, yeah, I got on, I got on really well, so, and I think yeah, I never had any bother, so.

FR: And what did your mum do?

MM: So she was a barmaid, yeah, so she married quite young, she married when, just before she was eighteen, so she was a secretary when I was quite young, but then she was just, she was a housewife when we lived in the Republic and then when we moved to Belfast like, she didn't have any qualifications as such, so she worked in a, she worked in a bar-restaurant, so, and she stayed there. God, she must have worked there for about twenty-five years.

FR: Hard work.

MM: Yeah, yeah, but, you know, she enjoyed it too, you know, it was quite social sort of and flexible hours and things, so.

FR: And you, you have a sister.

MM: Yes, she's six years younger.

FR: Six years younger.

MM: Yeah, and she's still, well, she's in Belfast, so she's married with kids there, and she's married to a Protestant and they, so they bring their kids up as no religion, so they're not, haven't, but because of where they live they happen to have gone to Protestant schools, so they would identify, not necessarily as Protestant, but they would identify as British then, because they've never been told they're Irish, so, because that's just what they've heard at school, they don't really get told anything at home and my sister doesn't want politics ever to be talked about, so, but I'm learning Irish, for example, so the kids know I'm learning Irish, so one of them, they'll be like, oh so are you Irish then, and I said to him and so are you, and he was like, what, and I went well, you're half, you're half, you're at least half Irish anyway, and he was a bit confused, and I just thought I'll leave it there and then you can see if you want to talk to me. He's fifteen now and I kind of think, at some point he might ask some questions, but I just sort of see, could see him sort of frowning and going hmm, hmm, you know.

FR: You've sort of planted a seed of, of enquiry.

MM: Yeah, yeah, and just even the fact that I'm learning Irish, and to be fair my, my niece because of one of her friends plays Gaelic football she did go and play for a little while, but she stopped, she stopped doing it just cos kids lose interest in things, but she was playing Gaelic football for a bit, so, cos in their house the, it, noth-, you know, not, they don't care one way or the other about either side, so it's just like, oh one of your friends playing Gaelic football, on you go, you know, and whereas my nephew played for like, a socc-, for a Shankill soccer team, do you know what I mean, so, it's, it's a way you'd hope most families would be nowadays where none of that comes into it, but I know like, my nephew, his history teacher basically says all Catholics are evil and things like that and they get taught, they, they get doctrinised at school, so, and their friends like, his friends, because they're all from the Shankill, of course they've got a perspective and then they're feeding that to him, so, you know, you kind of just hope he'll be able to figure it out himself that, you know, it, one side is never right, you know, there's always wrong on both sides, so.

FR: And you said that when you lived in the South you thought of yourself as Irish and you were confused when Irish kids would call you a Brit.

MM: Yeah.

FR: So would, was that something that you would have talked about at home? Was your mum political, was it–?

MM: No, my mum tried to keep us away from politics, she would say things like, she was really against republicanism, my mum's a, a weird beast, she's a, she is a Catholic unionist [laughs], so, but she didn't really talk about things other than maybe to like, slag off Sinn Féin and slag off the IRA and stuff like that, so, but sh-, you know, and then my, so my, God, my mum and my dad, it's such a weird like, the, of, it was one, the case that they never, didn't know each other before they got married, those days you just married your boyfriend and my granny would've always been there, so never really got to know each other. So my dad was republican and he ended up spending a year in jail for, not, because again, things are not ever talked about, I'm not actually even sure what for, but obviously something relatively minor if he only was in for a year, but he was in Long Kesh for, for a year, so, and my mum was mortified like, she was totally, wanted everyone to know that she was not, did not support him, she got him a Protestant barrister, stood up in court and basically told the judge to [laughs] lock him up and throw away the key, and the judge kind of intimated that he would let my dad off lightly and said that you'd probably have a harder time at home than you will in jail [laughs]. So my mum was again, and that was why we moved to the South when he got out, to make sure that he wasn't, you know, wasn't caught up in anything then, cos Dungiven was quite a republican town, so, and my mum spoke out against the hunger strikes and we, there was a hunger striker in our town, Kevin Lynch, and it was people like, signing petitions in support of him and she was basically shouting at them all, saying I'm not going to support an eighteen-year-old killing himself and, so she got shunned by the town, shops wouldn't serve her and things like that, she used to have to go out of town to buy groceries and things, yeah, and then because, when my dad was in jail you, you could have got money from the IRA for support, she refused to take it and also then he, the prisoners were refusing to eat prison food, so you were meant to be bringing them in stuff, but she was then earning very little as a secretary, so, you know, she saw it as,

you know, it's brought us a lot of hardship and she was forced to go visit him and then she was forced to bring me to go visit him, so I don't ever remember being in the jail, but I remember being traumatised at going to the jail.

FR: At the prospect of, yeah.

MM: Yeah, cos I remember, cos mum used to call it going to the Shetlands [laughs], so I remember crying going I don't want to go to the Shetlands, but I don't remember actually being there, but I, I hated it and, but mum would kind of get forced into, to bringing me, it was kind of this thing, you will bring, you know, his daughter to come see him and it was like, he doesn't give a shit, but it was, had to be seen to be doing it.

FR: Yes, performance.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so.

FR: She sounds like an independent-minded woman [laughs].

MM: Yeah, yeah [laughs], yeah, yeah, a bit unique, yeah, it was kind of like, kind of weird being brought up in a republican environment with a Catholic unionist mum [laughs], so yeah, so she was always, yeah, a little bit different, so, we, like I wouldn't [pauses], like I would be more republican in my mindset than my mum would, so my mum does be a bit disgusted, she's like, how did I bring you up, you know, so, and you're like, well, you just learn history and, you know, make up your own mind, so, she does be a bit disgusted, where my sister just doesn't think about it, doesn't go into it at all, it's just not anything she's interested in and wouldn't give it, any of it like, a thought, it's not something she considers and she wouldn't read history books and things like that, whereas I'd, would, you know, read, you know, try and read a bit around it all, you know, **[00:20:00]** just cos, also then you find out like, the little snippets you heard like, there's that book called *Burnt Out* which I've got, I haven't read it yet, about all that stuff in the Oldpark, and you were like, oh right, so it wasn't just stuff that people were making up, you know, or, you know, that it did happen, so, but then like, when you speak to my mum about Bloody Sunday, she will be like, oh that was terrible, and, you know, so, she kind of, she's a real dichotomy like, you, you can talk about things and she'll see how the British government were really wrong in things around Bloody Sunday, but yet, cos friends of hers were killed at Bloody Sunday, but yet she can still be a unionist, so I kind of find her thinking around certain things a bit strange.

FR: I guess it's, yeah, you know, Northern Ireland's complicated.

MM: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, yeah, there's no easy answer.

FR: Did you stay in contact with your dad in that period or–?

MM: I, I'm not in contact with him now, I would have up until about eighteen, simply because my mum made me and my sister go down, because it was a case of–

FR: He stayed in Ireland?

MM: He stayed yeah, so she had sort of said oh you have to go see him because if you don't then he'll tell people that I, I'm not letting yous go to see him, but we didn't want to go see him particularly, but we kind of had to, so we'd go down at least once a month, but to be honest with you like, he'd drop my sister off at our cousin's and he'd drop me off at my friend's, so we were performatively going to see him, but we'd spend the weekend with other people and then he'd pick us up again and drop us at the station, so we'd very rarely spent any actual time with him, so yeah, no, he's not, he's just not a very nice man, so we were just like, and then after that we just didn't bother really, and then weirdly he moved to London, but he moved to London before I did and then it turned out like, he was living in Leytonstone, so I was actually only a couple of stops away from him on the tube, which I always found a bit strange, but yeah, so, and I've got aunts that I would see, his sisters, and they would, there's one in particular who would be like, oh you should see your dad, and I'm just like, I have no interest, you know, just, he was a violent alcoholic, so I just was like I don't want to, so I don't have to [laughs], you know, but he's moved back to Dungiven now actually. I don't know whether he thinks he's going to relive his glory days or something, you know, I don't, I don't have a clue, but I also don't care, so not interested.

FR: Fair enough.

MM: Yeah.

FR: So I'm, I'm trying to get dates in my head, so you're living in Belfast in the eighties?

MM: '86 onwards, yeah, so yeah, so it would have been–

FR: So it was still, still the Troubles, still, yeah.

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and I c-, until, cos you had all the stuff that happened around the, the marching season and, you know, down in, oh was it Banbridge, yeah, so we, there would've been riots and stuff around the corner, so we were lucky we lived in a little cul-de-sac, so it in itself was fairly quiet, but you would, you'd come out in the morning and there'd, you'd just see signs of rioting from the night before like, actually just around the corner, and you'd have to navigate your way around burnt out cars and stuff like that, so that type of stuff went on in the summertime like, at least in the late nineties, you know, so it's still, actually even when I was at university, cos I went to university late, so like, even in 2000 there would've been riots and stuff around the corner from me, so like, you would've been driving, trying to drive to work or to university and having to go, go around burnt out potholes and stuff, so, and remains of buses and things, so it kind of still felt there, and also would've been even around then that I still would've been having to tape down the letterbox and stuff, so yeah, summertime was always, yeah, till, till quite late would've been still an issue, so, but yeah, you would've had less I suppose like, when things started being scaled down like, the searches going into the shops and things, when that stopped, you know, so I kind of was there for that period of time when you would've, every shop you went into you had to get your bag searched, and then when that stopped you'd be still walking up the security man and then went oh yeah, no, you don't have to do that, and the

people, the security people getting on the bus, you know, and you had the barriers, you know, going into the city centre.

FR: That sort of, yeah, around it.

MM: Yeah, so–

FR: The ring of steel.

MM: Yeah, so then it was, when those type of things stopped you were like, oh, you know, but living in Ardoyne you kind of had that big wall around it, you know, people always go to that one that's sort of Springfield, you know, the big corrugated iron one, but it's like, nobody really talks about the big giant brick one that was around most of Ardoyne, and Ardoyne had only a few entrances, so they really could keep an eye on who was coming in and out of the community, and they really, really did, you know, cos you knew, cos my mum started going out with a Protestant guy and he would come into Ardoyne and you kind of think God, he was brave actually, he would've worked in Shorts, so, and my mum marched around to the Sinn Féin office and told them that she had a Protestant boyfriend and they were not going to have anything to, to do about it, and it was none of their business, and they were like, it's alright Pamela, we've already checked him out and he's not connected to the army or the police, so it's fine, he's absolutely grand, we've no problem with you seeing a Protestant, [raises voice] I wasn't asking your permission, and they were like, but it's fine, [raises voice] no, you're not getting the point [laughs], she, so, but if he had, I mean, if they knew already and they had him already checked out, yeah.

FR: Well, I was going to say that they'd pre-emptively–

MM: Yeah, they were like, who's this, we don't recognise this car, who is it, you know, so absolutely everybody going in and out was known, so, so yeah, and she was, she was absolutely disgusted at that like, I thought it was hilarious, you know, but she was, she was pure disgusted that they had given her permission because she was like, I'm absolutely not asking for permission, and they were like, well, if we'd a problem he'd be dead, love, you know, so you do want our permission actually, you know, so maybe you would be too, do you know what I mean, so, so yeah, so she's lucky that he wasn't involved in anything, cos she, to be fair she wouldn't have asked him, overly, you know, that, not, she wouldn't have wanted to go out with someone who was involved in loyalist paramilitary stuff, but if, say, if he'd a link to police or army it wouldn't have, yeah, it wouldn't have mattered to her and it wouldn't have occurred to her that, you know, but then he wouldn't have come into Ardoyne if he had been, so he would have known not to.

FR: He would probably have known.

MM: Yeah, he would have known not to go in, so.

FR: But quite surveilled I suppose, or you must feel quite watched.

MM: Yeah, well, absolutely, cos even when I moved to Ardoyne, obviously I was green as anything cos I'd always lived in country places, cos even when we lived in County Derry it was country, when we lived in the Republic it was, so my cousin, she was a year and a half younger than me, was like, right, you're gonna get killed here just cos you're green, you don't have a clue, so she kind of took me in hand and like, you'd be going past soldiers and they'd say hello, so I'd say hello back, [imitates her cousin] don't you, no, you're not allowed to say, and I was like, but you can't be rude, [imitates her cousin] Tina you'll get, get tarred and feathered if you're seen speaking to a soldier and like, but, and that just made no sense to me, you know, so I always found that really hard, and I was like, I'm not going to be rude, and mum was always like, well, they're some mother's son, and they're, half the time they were like, kids, like, nineteen-year-olds absolutely keeking themselves, so I kind of always tried to have empathy with that, that this is some lad who's been sent here and he doesn't have a clue what it's about, I don't want to be rude to them, you know, either, so I, yeah, I kind of found you were constantly, and everyone was watching everything you did in Ardoyne. So it definitely felt more free when we moved to Skegoneill, that, you know, it wasn't, you didn't have that same scrutiny, it was, and also because we weren't part of the, that community in Skegoneill, that the people didn't have as much of a vested interest in what we were doing, other than making sure we were being nice quiet Catholics and not, you know, cos we like, we had a guy in our street who was in the Orange Order and he like, one year had the Orange Order started one of the marches from our street on the Twelfth of July and it, you know, you were just, and everyone would fly their flags on the street and you just didn't say a word about it, and we were just like, do whatever you want as long you're not intimidating, you know, or causing us bother, so, you know, I suppose we knew we, you would never be able to say oh I'd prefer if you didn't do that, you know, you just were like, oh yeah, yeah, no worries, grand, fair enough, so there was always that, you know, you were tolerated as long as you kept your head down and didn't express any [pauses] opinions I suppose [laughs], yeah, like, I did, there was one time guys came around collecting money for flags and I said no, and mum was like, what did you do that for, they'll have mark, mark our door down as someone who said no, and they did take a note of, I did see them sort of going right, number seventeen said no to the flags, but nothing did happen, but it was one of those things I, knee-jerk reaction, I was like, no I'm not giving you money for flags, fly them if you want, but I'm not giving you money for them, and then it was afterwards I was like, shit, are we gonna get burnt out now, you know, but thankfully didn't, yeah, so much of it was fear in your own head, you know.

FR: But it's, it's a kind of intimidate, it's, it's a sort of low-level intimidation, isn't it?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: And did you have friends on the street like, friends you own age, I mean?

MM: No [pauses], I think [pauses], no, I just had no real interest, I was a real bookworm and also I just kind of, yeah, I felt like a fish out of water I suppose, so I had my friends from school who, I just saw them at school, so in between times I just sat, I was in my room, read books like, I probably read about three, four books a week, so I didn't, I wasn't out playing in the street or hanging about with anyone in the area. It was when I turned seventeen I would have gone to the Limelight with, with the–

FR: Ah yes [laughs], I know the Limelight.

MM: Yeah, with friends, so you would've met people in town or you would've met people during the day in town when, probably from about fourteen maybe going into town with friends from school and then we got our respective buses home, to dander round the, in shops and stuff like that, all the wee stalls in there and then, and Saturdays doing the same, and then, yeah, like, out **[00:30:00]** on the Saturday night to the Limelight, so yeah, so other than that I didn't hang out with anyone in the area. I always said hello to everyone and tried to be friendly and polite, you know, but people apparently thought I was just stuck up, you know, so whereas, yeah, I mean, I wasn't, I wasn't a snob, but I just knew, I just didn't have anything, I think also having always come from the country and stuff and the real, a different sort of city attitude about stuff, I just didn't feel I'd have anything in common with anyone where I lived, so I just kept my head down really, and my mum wasn't too keen on, didn't want me hanging about on the streets I suppose either with people, and then I suppose getting up to bother, so, and especially cos where we lived it was a flashpoint, that then, it kind of, she was always afraid that you'd maybe get lifted by one side or the other, you know, so.

FR: And so when you were seventeen going out to the Limelight, which I know, is the, I've been to the Limelight, still going [laughs], what was Belfast like, kind of in that sense then?

MM: It was fine, as far as I'm aware the Limelight was mixed, but it definitely did have a large Catholic contingency in it, it just felt like, in that scene, the indie scene, people didn't care and it just never became an issue and people were just there to have a couple of pints of Purple Nasty and dance, you know, and it just, again, it was like a little lovely enclave of it not mattering. I think if you were out in the city centre the understanding was that you, you weren't caring about that, if you gave a shit you stayed out in Ardoyne cos like, the likes of Ardoyne had their own bars and nightclubs, which of course were all barricaded up, you know, so yeah, so I think if you were really of that mindset you stayed in your own area, but people, the understanding was if you were in the city centre it was mixed and I, I never, I only saw things a couple of times, but that was more if it was someone that was sort of on the edge like, up around where the Crescent was, up near Lavery's, it was quite close to quite a rough Protestant area, so we did see balaclava guys coming around and knocking in the windows of a like, a takeaway shop, and we just kind of ran the other direction, so we saw a couple of things like that, but it wasn't, it was more, I think the shop hadn't paid their protection money or whatever, you know, it was that type of thing, but it was just weird to see it at like, two a.m. on a Saturday night, which, you know, normally I, I was just lucky I suppose the places I was going to, it was always the indie places that nobody cared, you know, so never, never had any bother in the city centre, yeah.

FR: Okay, and then you, did you, you did A-levels, did you?

MM: Yeah, yeah. I messed them up the first time around, just I'd no self-confidence and also I didn't know what I wanted to do with them, so I kind of, I just totally messed them up, but I ended up doing the exact same A-levels again at night class in BIFHE when I was, between twenty-four and twenty-six, so I didn't, I worked full-time, but did the night classes three

nights a week for two years and then yeah, got all As and then went to Jordanstown to do the therapeutic radiography degree. But it was kind of a case, once I knew what I wanted to do then I was like, right, I've got a goal, how do I get it, get onto this degree, right, I need science-based A-levels, so I was like, well, I may as well just do the same A-levels I did last time, and actually ended up getting it all, whereas I think my school was, the teachers weren't good teachers, so it was a posh school, but the teachers were just, they would just put the periodic table up and expect that you would just look at it and know [laughs], what it all meant, whereas when I went to BIFHE they actually explained it and you were like, well, funny how when someone explains something you understand it [laughs], you know, so whereas I used to just sit in chemistry and be like, I have literally no idea what yous are on about in BRA, whereas at BIFHE it was just like, it was like, a eureka, it was like, wow, this is actually easy, you know, but it was because they'd actually spent, they bothered explaining to you, you know, whereas in BRA I think, I don't know whether they thought you already all knew it all, that you'd a certain level of training from home, or it was just such a level of snobbery that if you can't just look at it and get it then you're not worthwhile, you know, so I don't know.

FR: Just bad teaching.

MM: Yeah, yeah, I can't say, we had very few actually what I would say would be decent teachers like, in physics GCSE, I taught myself from the book and things like that, like, literally a couple of weeks before my physics GCSE I was like, I literally know nothing, so I got a like, one of those help you guides to GCSE physics and got a B through just teaching myself, you know, so yeah, the teaching quality was pretty woeful, yeah.

FR: That's interesting. So what did you do then after you, after your first round of A-levels?

MM: So I did a like, a couple of like, I worked in GAP for a while and me, with my skin, I worked in a sunbed salon for a while [laughs], and then I went to America for a year, so I started doing an HND in business just to try and be like, I need to do something, and through that there was a scholarship in a, in colleges in America that they were doing a scheme cos it was, it would have been '95, yeah, cos I was twenty-one when I did it, so it was this whole thing, take poor Northern Irish kids out of Northern Ireland for a year, give them a year away from the Troubles, and we were like, oh yeah, whatever, but hey, if you're going to pay for me to go to America for a year, I'll, I'll do it. So I went to college in America for a year, but by this time I realised I didn't want to do business, so when I got back, did some temping jobs and then got a job as a medical receptionist in a GP surgery and that [pauses] made me realise, so the year, so the year being in America made me realise that actually it built some self-confidence, it made me realise I wasn't stupid, cos I've always liked downing myself, telling myself I was too stupid to do anything, kind of made, gave me a lot of confidence to then go well, you're not stupid, maybe you could do something, so then did the medical receptionist for four years and that made me realise I really enjoyed working with patients, I was good with the patients and made me, it kind of gave me a focus to, what to start looking at, so then I took days off work to go and spend time in the major hospitals, doing, you know, different departments and then went to Beaver Park Hospital for the therapeutic radiography and realised oh this is what I want to do, then found out

what I needed to do to get onto that and I was like, right, I need to do the exact same A-levels that I did, and did them then at night class because I had a goal then.

FR: And it gives you a bit more of a focus I guess if you're like, if you know why you're doing them, which is sometimes hard when you're eighteen, you just kind of think you have to, but you don't really have a reason or a goal.

MM: Yeah.

FR: That makes sense. Where did you go in America?

MM: I didn't get to choose where I went, so I was in Dover, Delaware [laughs], yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely not somewhere I would have chosen to be.

FR: Not the, not the most glamorous–

MM: No, cornfields and Amish people and, yeah, it was a bit backward, yeah, so even like, me coming from like, Northern Ireland like, it was like, going back a hundred years to, just people's attitudes to stuff, it was a real eye opener, but it gave me a lot of confidence in many ways, kind of, it was the first time I had any inclination that actually maybe I did have half a brain I my head and could use it and, yeah, just cos it's like, right, actually you, you do, you know, you are a decent, you know, you can do things and so, so yeah.

FR: And I guess it's an independence thing to go that far away, yeah. Do you remember then the sort of the end of the conflict?

MM: Yeah–

FR: So, I'm trying to think sort of '95, '96, the, the ceasefire.

MM: Yeah, yeah, I mean, it was [pauses] like, it was, yeah, you were just like, about time, it needs to happen cos like, the, like a lot of, there's that stuff, I'm terrible with remembering names and things like, those women who were doing the marches and stuff, that, you know, I think well, Mo Mowlam, there was many factors for me that what it felt like, you had the, where they started bring, enforcing the equal rights things for jobs, whereas before you just knew as a Catholic you weren't going to get jobs in lots of fields and you, yeah, those adverts came out about, you know, anti-discrimination adverts, where the two guys on the golf course and you're just cringing going oh my God like, that's us, and you're having to actually tell people oh you should be hiring Catholics, you know, it just felt like, embarrassing that you were like, I'm in my own country and people, I'm having, people are having to be told not to discriminate against us, you know, it was just, it just felt really strange, but you knew it was changing and then Mo Mowlem when she came in and immediately was listening to everybody, and the thing that really got me about her was that she got that it wasn't about power, it was for some people, but for the majority of people it was about human rights, and whereas any other people like, the Tories never got that it was about human rights, they, they didn't give a shit either, and it was like, well, no wonder no one is listen, you know, engaging with you because you're not, we're not being heard,

whereas she came in and was like, she, you got that she understood what it was about, so I think it was like, a collective sigh of relief that actually, finally here's someone who's gonna actually listen and understands and, you know, she read up on it before she went over, so it was clear that, and also just really pragmatic and really down to earth, so then, and then I think just when you started having Catholics who had a hope and a future for themselves and for their kids, it just kind of meant that people weren't, didn't want to be involved in violence, cos you could get away from it or you could have a car and a house and a life that wasn't so shitty that twenty years in jail seemed a viable option, so yeah, it felt, it felt really hopeful, you know, it felt, yeah, it was, you were really happy that it was, you know, you could see a gli-, there was glimmers of hope for the future, so, and that actually, **[00:40:00]** you know, we, our side will get listened to and be, you know, yeah, like, I mean, I was obviously over here whenever that whole relationship was being built with Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, but, so watching it from over here a little bit, so you were just like, wow, that's just–

FR: Those pictures, yeah.

MM: Like, just that like, people called them the Chuckle Brothers [laughs], so yeah, no, it just, I just remember it, you know, I mean, I was, at the time I was like, a, a silly, a girl more worried about going out and, you know, just, you know, working and going out on a Saturday night, I wasn't paying a massive amount of heed to it, but what you would've been, you did just feel hopeful and happy and, you know, and you didn't want things like the Omagh bombing to happen again, but you were also like, well, we now feel like we're in an environment where we'll be treated equally now, so it's okay going forward, you know, so there was that real, you don't, you don't need like, especially after the Good Friday Agreement, you don't need a united Ireland whenever you kind of technically do, and if you're being recognised as being Irish like, the idea of not being able to get an Irish passport before that just seemed utterly beyond ridiculous to me, you know, so, cos like [pauses], yeah, cos I was always like, well, I'm as Irish as the people down south, so, you know, and, you know, my, McCloskeys have been in Dungiven since 1197 like, way before any of it, it's like, how am I not Irish [laughs], yeah, so yeah, so it just, yeah, it just felt like it was all going in the right direction really, but also you didn't need it to go at that point to a united Ireland because we had equal rights, we were part of something bigger, Europe anyway, and if your identity was being recognised and the border physically wasn't there anymore, it kind of felt that the important bits had been reached, you didn't need the rest.

FR: Which is kind of the concerning thing now I guess.

MM: Yeah, exactly.

FR: Just, and this is a question from a different angle, were you living with your mum throughout this period, so sort of after school?

MM: No, my mum moved to America actually with her husband, so yeah, so what age would I have been when she moved, I probably would have been twenty-four [pauses], but she had already been living, had moved out, with was living with him anyway before she moved to America, so I'd been living on my own from when I got back, from–

FR: In the same place, in the same flat or–?

MM: No, she, she, yeah, so I stayed on in the council house, I stayed on there and she moved, she, they moved to a nice part of Belfast actually [laughs], but I wanted to stay where I was, so yeah, I, I lived there from twenty-two, so I'd lived at home up to that point and then when I was, I think when I got back from America I lived there by myself then and, and my sister lived with my mum, but would have stayed with me a lot, and then she got her own place, cos my sister was quite, a bit of a wild child, so she like, yeah, like, moved out of home, you know, way too early and things had gotten, was just, she was always, she was always wanting to be my age, so she was always behaving as if she was six years older, so like, she was living with a boyfriend as a teenager and stuff like that, but then, you know, got her own place and was working and stuff, but probably would have stayed half the time with me anyway, so like, we would have done everything together like, I brought her to her first festival and, and stuff like her first gig and, you know, we would have done practically, so I kind of nearly half raised my sister you could say, cos even whenever like, I was at school and stuff, my mum was working long hours in the bar, so I did all the food shopping, cooking, cleaning, parents' meetings as well, stuff like that, so I kind of was, probably that was also why I wasn't hanging out with people in the area because I was doing all the, I was doing all the cooking and cleaning [laughs], and my mum's a real clean freak, so the place had to be spotless, you know, at all times, so like, place hoovered every day and, you know, fridge cleaned out every week and like, she was a real proper clean freak, so.

FR: And she moved to America with her husband, with her new husband, when she was twenty, when, sorry, when you were twenty-four?

MM: Yeah, well, yeah, maybe twenty-three, twenty-four, yeah, they came back about fourteen [pauses], God, it's hard to say when they came back, but no, no, about fifteen years ago, cos she came back just before I moved to London, so, cos when I moved to London my sister was living with her boyfriend and now husband, and then she was having her first baby, cos I was going to go to Australia, I had done a placement for nine weeks in Melbourne to make networking and connections there, so that if I wanted to apply for a job there I'd have the connections already made, and then when my sister was having her first baby I was like, oh that's too far away, so I kind of was like, well, mum's sorted, she's all settled and my sister is sorted, I can look after me, I can do what I want, so then I came to London.

FR: Okay, so when had you started thinking about, about leaving, either to–?

MM: I suppose probably about the third year of university, cos it was kind of thinking what do I want to, I've got this degree that's transferable, you know, you can bring to other countries, and it was a four-year degree at that point.

FR: Was it Jordanstown?

MM: Yeah, yeah, and at that point it was a four-year degree, so I kind of, I was just kind of going right, I've got opportunities, what am I going to do with it, and because my sister was

with her fella for four years and just, it just kind of felt that my responsibilities for them, because even like, when mum lived in America I always had to make sure I was there for my sister, it just kind of felt that I, you know, I was going to be free for the first time, so yeah, so then a friend of mine had lived in Australia for a year, so I, we chatted about the different cities and I kind of figured that I'd like Melbourne the best, so thought I might do a placement in, the hospital in Melbourne, arranged through the university, and loved it, yeah, and they really liked me, so they were like, yeah, yeah, we'll give you a job, so I was all like, right, I'm going to be moving to Melbourne, and then it was just whenever my sister was pregnant, and I was flying back from Melbourne it was just like, it's just too far, yeah, to be, to be auntie Tina, so, whereas London, you can be home in a jiffy, so.

FR: And so then you decided London.

MM: Yeah, and one of the reasons was, it was, there was a guy working in the hospital in Melbourne who was moving back to London and he'd said to me if you decide to, if, you know, to come to London, come to Guys and St Thomas's, which is where I work, so then I applied to Guys and St Thomas's and got it and then yeah, I've been there, been there since.

FR: Had you been to London before?

MM: For like, a weekend about [pauses], yeah, the summer before I'd been over visiting friends.

FR: The summer?

MM: Yeah, so I, yeah, so when I moved over I had a couple of connections which made it a little easier.

FR: And you had friends here already, some friends.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so that, it did definitely make it easier, and then also I lived in hospital accommodation for the first year and there was other people from my department in the hospital accommodation, so we would go to pub quiz every Tuesday together, things like that, so it was quite a friendly environment to come into and like, and one of the women, we'd go to the gym together and stuff like that and like, me and her are still friends, and also like, back when I left Northern Ireland in 2004 it wasn't multicultural at all, so all of a sudden like, London obviously is and the department I work in really, really is, and just like, being really honest about that and like, so, say, like, the girl who I would go to the gym with, just being like, I've never met a Muslim before, what does Ramadan mean and, you know, she, I did it in a way that I, I'm asking from a place of I don't know, I'm not, and I want to not offend people by saying the wrong things and, and I'd started reading up on stuff so I could not be an ignorant, you know, dick about things, and not I suppose what you would come, do microaggressions, which I didn't know that, that's what, wouldn't have known it was that then, but I just wanted to be culturally aware so that I wasn't caught, you know, making big blunders because it's, it is a really, you know, multinational department, but what I found was that with a lot of my Indian colleagues there's a lot of similarities between Irish culture and Indian culture.

FR: That’s interesting.

MM: Yeah, with families and, so we like, a lot of the Indian people in the department would be like, I’ve got way more in common with Irish people than I do with English people, you know, and stuff like that, so I kind of, yeah, you fitted in quite quickly and there were other Irish people in the department as well, so yeah, I just saw it as an opportunity to open up, yeah, knowledge and horizons and, yeah, so I, I was quite happy quite quickly actually, yeah.

FR: So you moved initially into hosp-, into hospital accommodation, so like, kind of a halls of residence is what I’m picturing.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: Where in London is it?

MM: London Bridge.

FR: London Bridge.

MM: So like–

FR: Right beside work I guess.

MM: Yeah, yeah, although I was based mainly, my work was mainly at St Thomas’s, but I’d walk along the Southbank to work, so it was like, it was a really nice introduction to living in London and even like, a year on I’d be walking home along the Southbank going oh my God, I can’t believe I’m living here and here’s like, everything [laughs], you know, and then just like, I’d never known, been into art and stuff or anything, so just going to the Tate all the time and just things being on your doorstep and I suppose just, open up things to yourself culturally, whereas I’d led, I suppose because, you know, we did, I didn’t have internet before I moved to London and stuff that like, I didn’t, I’d never watched foreign films or anything like that, so when I got here and started doing things like reading the *Guardian* and I think I just had time to actually open up your mind to just normal stuff, whereas before **[00:50:00]** I, I don’t know, it just didn’t feel that normal things were open to you, and certainly not with the people I knew like, I know they would have had arty, you know, more arty middle-class people would have, all those things they would have known about, but I didn’t even, just didn’t, just wasn’t anything in my sphere of reference to even remotely know that it existed to even do it, so I think, yeah, just, you know, you start reading the film section in the *Guardian* and reading about a lot of art and different stuff and, yeah, just yeah, it totally opened up and it like, a whole literal, whole new world to me, living, moving to London.

FR: It’s really, it’s really interesting, really interesting, so there’s the kind of multicultural thing and then there’s also this kind of cultural possibility.

MM: Yeah.

FR: That's really interesting, so you, do you still, you still work at the same hospital?

MM: Yeah, I've changed roles within it, it's quite a big department, but yeah, because I suppose it was so big you got lots of opportunities to move around and move up and like, now I work in clinic with head and neck cancer patients and I'm a non-medical prescriber, so, and I've got my own clinic list and things, so as much as I've been in the same place for fifteen years–

FR: It's different.

MM: Yeah, it's kind of evolved and developed while I've been there, and it's kind of like, God, if you're at Guys and St Thomas's where else do you go from there [laughs], yeah, so yeah, I was just really lucky, yeah, so I've been, yeah, London, I've, I've been really happy in London, you know, and it's nice I can still pop home really easily.

FR: Were you homesick at all when you first moved?

MM: No [laughs], it was, it was like a break for freedom.

FR: [laughs] Easy answer.

MM: Yeah, also I never like, I always was seen as a bit strange in Northern Ireland cos I was always a feminist and I would have like, you know, not dressed in the way that girls were seen to, should dress and I, I just, you know, and like, I, I'd been seeing a guy for three years and he was getting ready to propose and I realised I didn't want to marry him, so I finished with him at the old age of twenty-eight and everyone was horrified and thought at my age I should be taking whatever offers I should get and, and people would say that to me like, outwardly say, and then I'd go but I, I don't love him, and they were like, what's that got to do with anything, it's better to be miserable and married than single, and I'd be like, but I can be happy single and they were like, what, you know, so it kind of felt that, you know, I kind of always joke with people that I was going to get burnt at the stake as a witch in Northern Ireland and, yeah, and I just found, yeah, I just, I get like, the likes of the DUP and their attitudes and equal marriage and, you know, abortion, all those type of things like, you know, I, I just found it like, that constantly having to bite your tongue all the time with people, that, so [pauses], yeah, so I basically was, I left very, very happy to be out of there. I, over the years I've had moments of, whenever you go back home and you go into a shop and everyone is really nice and friendly and chatty, or you're at the gym and you're in the sauna and people actually talk to you and things, that you're like, oh maybe it would be nice to move home, and then someone says something racist and you're like, no, I don't want to move back home [laughs], you know, so although it is getting much better there, absolutely, but I, I forget about the marches like, I went home, I booked flights one time and went home on the eleventh of July totally forgetting, just like, cos it's just another date, and my mum, when I said to my mum oh, cos I'd just looked at the work diary and when I could book time off, and I went oh there's, I can take this week off work, just booked it, booked the flights, said to my mum oh I'm flying home on this date and she kind of went that's a bit strange, but didn't say anything, and then I was on the flight and there was a bunch of

Glaswegians drunk at ten in the morning singing 'The Sash', now, what's this about, and then I kind of went oh yeah, it's frigging eleventh of July, what am I doing, oh my God, and I texted mum on the plane and she was like, before it took off, and she was like, well, I did wonder pet, but, you know, you already had your flights booked [laughs], you know, but it just was so, I was just literally, you know, out of that mindset that half the country gets brought to a standstill and half the people have to stay indoors for a few days, you know, I just was like, yeah [laughs]. But it is, it is a lot better now in, around that time of year like, in Belfast, from like, where my mum lives the flags are only up in the summer, they're not up the whole year round, things like that, there's definite improvements, and then my sister lives up Ballysillan and again, the flags are only up in the summertime rather than all year round and things, so there's def-, there are improvements, for sure.

FR: Slowly.

MM: Yeah, yeah, but then when I hear things that my nephew's friends, he says that his friends say, that kind of, your stomach just drops cos you're like, well, they're still being indoctrinated.

FR: Sectarian things, yeah.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so, you know, or just topics of conversation, you know, you can sort of see that he's, I'll, I'll mention this and see what she says, I'll try to keep it fairly neutral I, I will try and just say things like, to him, well, there's two sides to every story, and I think that's a bit one-sided, or stuff like that, because I know my sister would get angry if I, you know, talked about, you know, about things a bit too much with him so, and also she doesn't want him to go back to them saying things and then maybe getting beat up or something, so [laughs].

FR: It's so hard, cos thinking that earlier your sister wanting to kind of not have any politics, which is fair enough, I can see why, but then because there's politics everywhere outside of the house, it's very hard to balance that, I don't know how.

MM: Yeah, you know, and like, all, all he sees, cos like, well, he'd never be in areas where there'd be like, tricolours flown, but also like, I, when I grew up I never saw tricolours being flown anywhere like, maybe at Easter and that was about it, you know, so he's never exposed to that, that there are even people who would identify with that, you know.

FR: Not in the Ardoyne?

MM: I never was aware of it, not overly.

FR: That's interesting.

MM: Yeah, I mean, and even like, I've had a friend come over from here, he wanted to come to Northern Ireland, he would, he's English, but reads a lot of history, so he asked if he could come to Northern Ireland with me one weekend and we, we went to the Giant's Causeway, so of course you're going through lots of little towns, so after a while he was like, so the Catholic towns are the towns with no flags, and I was like, yeah, you know, because, you

know, he was like, so the Protestant towns all have the Union Jack and the kerbstones, and he's like, but this town has nothing, and I go mm hmm, ah so this is a Catholic town, you're like, yeah, you know, and that, I know there are towns that do have it, but by and large my experience has been that they just don't fly anything or the kerbstones aren't painted, and when I grew up in like, you know, Park and Dungiven you maybe would have had the odd tricolour about, but not anywhere like, festooned along the street, flag, you know, the streets or anything, not anything like that, what I would have seen, you know, living in the Protestant areas, so yeah, I don't know why that, why that was, you know, and I'm fine with that, I think it's silly to have to fly your flag all the time [laughs], you know, so, but yeah, and it was something he point, my mate pointed out to me as well, he was like, oh so all the motorways, they go to the Protestant areas and then stop, and I was like, I didn't, I never even picked up on that and I was like, I've lived there, and he was just, cos he kind of looked at where they went and then went ah and then, so after that point it's Catholic areas and then, so the motorway stops, and I was like, how have I not, how did I not ever pick that up.

FR: That's really interesting, the kind of sectarian infrastructure of the country.

MM: Yeah.

FR: So what about being Northern Irish in London? It's interesting that you've got an English friend who is curious and who knows about Northern Ireland and its history. Was that, was it something that you talked about with colleagues with?

MM: Little bits, I suppose [pauses], I mean, I think it, a lot of people in London who I work with wouldn't necessarily be of, English, so wouldn't have had that much of a knowledge about it or maybe would have a little bit, but you would have conversations like, whenever they started wanting to stop Muslims more in the street or talking, trying to bring in, when Gordon Brown tried to bring in that forty-two day thing where you couldn't, basically internment–

FR: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM: Yeah, and I would, I would, I basically talked about it then, when we've got examples of how that doesn't work in living memory and how actually all it does is radicalise people, and people are like, what, so then you'd be like, oh they did it in Northern Ireland and also whenever Irish people would have been over here they, people would have assumed, they would have heard the accent and thought they were terrorists, so you kind of, it was a way of, you kind of had that common ground with, you know, say, Muslim people in work, where they're kind of like, oh because I've got the hijab on people are thinking I'm a terrorist, that I can, not that I can understand because it's a lot more visible for them, but I can at least, I can empathise a bit more than maybe some other people, cos you're like, yeah, I understand what that's like to have people assume you're a terrorist because you're, you know, cos of my accent, but obviously it's hidden until I open my mouth kind of thing [laughs], you know, so it's not the same level, cos if they're wearing the hijab then they're a target constantly, you know, potentially anyway, and people, you know, like, yeah, but it does, it gives, I think it gave me an insight to, to that, that how that, that how it's wrong to do it and how, you know, how they feel and also I suppose because I grew up knowing, I felt

that we were second-class citizens until the nineties, things like those adverts, also growing up knowing that soldiers could just shoot you in the back and nothing would be done about it, you did feel like a second-class citizen, you were very much aware that you were an enemy of the state kind of thing, that when it came to learning about racism and stuff I kind of had a certain empathy, nowhere, nowhere near think it's as bad like, I don't think, but you could sort of go well, I actually, I can empathise with what you mean, so, and that like, just being constantly aware of it kind of thing, cos you were constantly aware of like, say, me being a Catholic in a Protestant school, as much as I really enjoyed it and stuff you still knew **[01:00:00]** you were, you know, so like, it, it gives you, me a tiny little glimmer of what it must be like to be like, a black person in a white environment and having to deal with people's intolerances.

FR: Yeah, no, I can understand that, it's interesting that your Indian colleagues would have said that they had more in common with Irish people than English people.

MM: Yeah, and these are even Indian people who, born in England, you know, that they, that just the way like, you hang out with all your cousins and your, your uncles interfere in your life and tell you what to do, you know, and cos I, I did grow up in an environment where your best friends were your cousins and, you know, you hung out, you know, you went out on a Saturday night with three cousins and, you know, and that was the norm and, you know, I'd go up and visit cousins and stay over and stuff, up in, you know, in County Derry and things and like, yeah, my sister like, her, one of her best friends is still her cousin, well, he's my cousin too, but they're best friends and they would go out, they would hang out together, and to be fair like, I, my, I've got another cousin, my cousin Damien, the two of us would have hung out all the time, even until like, he left Northern Ireland just before I did and he's now back there, but we'd still go out, you know, we'd still go to the pub and we'd go out, you know, rambling and stuff together and things, so yeah, so it, it's, I think that, you don't get, get that as much here with English people like, I find I see my mum more than a lot of English people I know do, even though their mums only live maybe an hour away and I'll, I'll see my mum far more than they do, so I kind of find that weird, that they're, and people don't hang out with their cousins, and their kids don't even know their own cousins, you know, whereas–

FR: It's a different kind of family network.

MM: Yeah, yeah, whereas it, what, yeah, Indian colleagues, they were kind of like, yeah, we, we do that too, so you kind of, were like, oh, you know, you understand, whereas they find English colleagues would be like, why, why are you hanging out with your cousins or what, that's really weird that you hang out with your cousins, and whereas like, with me I was like, oh yeah, I hang out with my cousins, you know [laughs], so yeah.

FR: That's interesting, and what about kind of the Irish community in London? You had worked with some Irish people, I think you mentioned that you're learning Irish.

MM: I'm learning Irish, yeah, yeah, I watched the film *Black '47* and it just kind of really brought it home to me that it's ridiculous that I don't know my own language [laughs], and because, well, my mum was anti me learning Irish. I would have known a little bit when I

lived in the Republic, but weirdly, although Dungiven was kind of a republican town like, in the primary school you didn't learn Irish or anything, which I'm quite surprised about [pauses], so I never had any access to Irish until we moved down to the Republic and then I, so I had to learn, I had to catch up and learn, and then when I moved up to Belfast I sort of made noises that it would be nice to carry on with the Irish, and my mum was like, no, no, no, dead language, it's totally useless, nah, nah, nah. She still does, she still, you know, grumbles about me learning, and then also someone spoke to me and it, just the dialect difference and I kind of went oh what's that, you know, whereas now I realise it's not as big as I thought it was, but again, it wasn't available in the school I was at, so it just kind of just went away, and then when I came to London I, you know, always thought about it, you know, considered it, but then anytime I'd try and contact the Camden Irish Centre for classes they were always full up or whatever and it just seemed to be this constant, and I'd always miss it, cos they don't put the thing out and I just, after watching *Black '47* I made a bit more of a concerted effort and then actually found classes in City Lit that you could sign up to, it was a bit more, you know, they're on a regular basis, that you know when it's going to happen, whereas the Camden Irish ones they'll announce the week before, oh we're starting classes, and you're like, uh and then they're full like, half an hour later and you're like, are people sitting there waiting for you to announce this and like, agghh, you know, so yeah, so and now it started January last year, and then yeah, so I suppose I'm hanging out with more Irish people through that, whereas before I did have some Irish friends here, but I, friends from all over like, friends from, you know, English friends, a Finnish friend, people, you know, just from all over, Iranians.

FR: It's London.

MM: Yeah, yeah, exactly, so friends from where, you know, from everywhere really, but now through doing the Irish class I have a bit more of an Irish, you know, bit of an Irish network, cos we try and meet up and do the pop-up Gaeltacht-type things and stuff, so.

FR: How have you found it, learning Irish?

MM: Loving it, absolutely loving it, it's, how we use English is a translation from Irish, which you're like, that's why we say that, you know, because I didn't realise that we used English differently until like, over here, and people will be like, what, what, what have you, why have you, why do you say that that way.

FR: There's even some tenses, right, that exist in Irish, yeah.

MM: Yeah, the habitual tense, yeah, the do be do be, I do be doing that, yeah [laughs], I do be doing that, and people like, do be do be, you're like, that's a completely normal thing to say, why are you looking at me strange, and now I've realised that's cos it is actually grammatically correct in Irish, but also just the sentence structure, I'm going to the shop, so I am, it's because Irish has verb-subject-object, so it's a bit Yodaish, so yeah, so it, just, so much of it just makes sense for how we speak or, you know, like, yeah, just even how you would say, you know, like, if you're cold or you're hungry, just some way, sometimes like, a bit more out in the country, just certain phrases, you know, like, that's still the, that's the translation from Irish and even like, in Derry you would say purdies for potatoes.

FR: For potatoes, aye.

MM: And then that's praties in Irish, you know, so a lot of it, there's just little things that are still, it's been passed down, that it's people who were, you know, spoke Irish, learnt English, but used it in that way and then just passed it on down, so I just think it's brilliant how much it's still hung in there really.

FR: That's, that's really interesting. I haven't thought about that praties thing for years, my dad says that. Have you followed the kind of Irish Language Bill stuff?

MM: Little bits of it, yeah, so yeah, no, I think it's really important because, yeah, and obviously because of, and I'm learning now, you know I, I do think I would be great if people, you know, if you want to learn it that you've got more access to it and just acknowledging that, you know, it is, it is our language, you know, but even like, people like Linda Ervine, she is a unionist who's, who's learnt Irish and is doing a lot to try and promote it within the Protestant community and I think that's great cos, you know, like, the Ulster, the United Irishmen were Protestants, you know, and, and they learnt, they knew Irish, and they considered themselves Irish, you know, as well, it wasn't until like, the Act of the Union in the 1800s that it was like, oh you're British, cos it was, Ireland was not part of Britain until, was it 1802, and that was just to stop the rebellions that they did that, so, and to formulate, you know, sort of go here, no, you're not Irish, here become, be British, you know, so yeah, and that was stuff I never, that's stuff I've been learning over the last few years, we were never taught any Irish history.

FR: It's interesting that as well as doing the Irish language you seem to have been reading kind of Irish history as well.

MM: Yeah, yeah, I suppose, I think [pauses] because it all was so fraught, when you were living in amongst the Troubles you were like, oh I kind of nearly was like, I don't want to be part of all of that because it's, it's causing too much strife and it, it shouldn't be so important, I think, yeah, you were just like, you just wanted it all to end, that was kind of like, putting a mental block about it all, and then also like, I never, like, you know, at BRA and stuff you were learning about the Tudors, you never learnt any Irish history, and my mum didn't talk about those type of things, so I just [pauses], yeah, I suppose when you're, when you're in London, I think, yeah, Brexit has made me [pauses] identify even more as being Irish than I already did, so I always was like, oh yeah, I'd say to people oh I'm Irish, but I think the whole Brexit thing and the whole just seeing how much nobody gives a shit about Northern Ireland at all, not north, and the South either, nobody, literally nobody gives a shit, that I suppose it's made me care more, you know, and you don't want it to go back, and you were like, there was a working solution, why are yous messing that working solution up, you know, as much as Sinn Féin have always got united Ireland as an end goal they still weren't being too active about it until Brexit, whereas like, I've never heard of united Ireland being talked so much except now that Brexit's happening. I do think a united Ireland is the only solution, it's the only sensible option.

FR: And certainly it seems much more likely now.

MM: Yeah, well, especially because Boris John-, Boris Johnson won't have the patience to deal with Northern Ireland and the nonsense, the craziness of it. I, I could see him just ripping up the Good Friday Agreement and handing Northern Ireland back and just doing like, the partition in India like, that Britain did then, and just overnight and then just going deal with it yourselves, and on you go, and I think it'll be awful, but I just think it needs to happen, cos all that's, all that's happening for now is is just the ball's been kicked down the road like, it should never have been created in the first place. Have you read that book *The Border* by Dermot Ferriter, Diarmaid Ferriter?

FR: I haven't, I have read, I, I recently read a book by a guy called Peter Leary about the border, which is very good, but I haven't read the Diarmaid Ferriter one.

MM: Right, oh I'll look that one up. It's really, really good and no side comes out of it good, you know, whereas I don't like books that make one side out to be all perfect, you know, no side of that comes out of, of that looking good at all, but it's really, really interesting and very readable, yeah, I did that on, I did that on Audible actually, I think I'd nearly buy the book just cos it would be a bit, su-, kind of think it would be, it's just so insane that it'd be good to go back, you know [laughs], over, yeah, so yeah, I've got a few books at the minute, but I'm going to work on about the, the murder of, of Jean McConville, but then kind of explores other topics, *Don't Speak Out* or something.

FR: Don't, Radden O'Keefe, is that what the guy's called?

MM: I've got it upstairs, I could have a look.

FR: *Say*, is it called *Say Nothing*?

MM: Yeah, *Say Nothing*, yeah, yeah.

FR: Yeah, yeah.

MM: Yeah, so I've got that waiting to be read and then I've got that one *Burnt Out* as well **[01:10:00]**, where yeah, so yeah, so I definitely, I think Brexit has [pauses] made it matter more I suppose, whereas before it just didn't matter because it was on, it was an easy, there was a peace that you didn't want to mess with, so it was like, no, there's no point delving into things, leave it be if it's working, whereas it's not.

FR: It's not working.

MM: Yeah, so I kind of felt, yeah, and I suppose just it's when you get older you're more into history aren't you, so [laughs].

FR: [laughs] Simple as that.

MM: Yeah, yeah, I don't, yeah.

FR: That's really interesting. Where have you lived in London then, so–?

MM: Brixton, Herne Hill.

FR: Oh yeah, I like Herne Hill.

MM: Yeah, it's lovely, Stratford, and I've been here in Mile End for about four years, yeah, so yeah, Brixton was, was great, loved, that was 2005 I lived in Brixton for a few years and then yeah, lived in Herne Hill and then Herne Hill just got too expensive, just I think people started realising that it was nice and you're like, fuck off, you didn't, I lived here before people knew it was nice [laughs], and then all the, you know, yeah, it just started getting gentrified and rent all of a sudden jumped, doubled and stuff, you know, whereas we'd been in a cushy situation, we were living in the same house for six years and they could only put up the rent a little bit every year, so it was really affordable and it was a beautiful, beautiful house, beautiful street, absolutely so happy there, and then people like, housemates moved out to move in with boyfriends and things like that, and then this woman moved in who turned out to be a psychopath, so then we all ended up having to leave because she was a psychopath and it kind of ruined everything and it was like, oh I can't afford to live somewhere else now, everywhere is twice the rent, so had to leave and come out east, hated Stratford. Here, I like.

FR: Why did you hate Stratford? I don't really know it that well.

MM: It's just pretty grim, yeah, just, it just felt like you were really far away from everywhere and also I was a fair bit away from the tube and I just kind of felt once you were out there it was like, I don't want to go back out, and you just went ergh, but also, just no nice pubs, no, the street we lived in, nobody gave a shit about what it looked like or there was no like, Herne Hill, everyone's gardens were all nice and there's some trees, Stratford is just grimness, it just grey and grim, and [pauses] yeah, I just never felt, I was there, we were there for two years, never really felt like I was connected to it and I suppose there was nothing that was nice, there was nothing nice in the area to make you feel, you were always just wanting to be elsewhere kind of thing. But then the landlord there gave the house to his son, so gave us notice, but this, ended up they had this house, so that we ended up with the same landlord and the same agency, so everyone that I lived with we all moved together to here, but then people have moved on, I've, I've stayed on, but my boyfriend lives in Whitechapel, so just a hop, skip and a jump, so to be fair I'm hardly ever here, it's somewhere to kind of [pauses] come back, do some laundry, do a bit of cooking, throw stuff in the freezer and, you know, pretty much back to his a lot of the time, so.

FR: Yeah, my, my partner used to live in Hoxton, so I knew like, round there quite well.

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so yeah, a lot of friends in Hackney and Hoxton and stuff, yeah.

FR: Okay, so I think probably just a few sort of finishing questions now, are you, do you think you're settled in London or would you go back ever to Northern Ireland?

MM: I don't, I think I'm settled here cos my, my boyfriend's English, from London and as much as like, he's been a couple of times and we're both going over in February for my sister's birthday, he [pauses] like, there's no way he'd move there.

FR: What does he make of Northern Ireland?

MM: [pauses] Like, he would know more than a lot of people would cos his mum had an Irish friend, and his mum, she'd been given some flyer in the sixties about 'one man, one vote', so that made her kind of go what, Catholics in Northern Ireland don't have a vote, so it kind of made her more aware of things, so he's been brought up in a house where she would have said what we've done in Ireland is terrible.

FR: That's really interesting, yeah.

MM: Yeah, so I, I probably couldn't have gone out with him if he didn't have that awareness, if you know what I mean like, I, he's the first English person I've ever gone out with, and he's half Welsh, which I, I'm always like, he's half Welsh, he's half, he's half Welsh, so I think, you know, I couldn't have gone out with someone English who'd deny or has no clue about what, about all of it, so he, he does, he, he knows and he doesn't get defensive if you're slagging off the British government cos he knows it's not, individual British people that you're blaming, it's like, you know, you're slagging off the fact that Paras went over and shot people in the streets and nothing was done about it, you know, and like, the way the media talk about Soldier F that he, you know, a hero and all that like, he, he's totally like, no, of course, you know, should be brought to trial and things, so, I mean, we don't talk about it a lot, but if it, but if it does come up, yeah, he's, he's on board and he doesn't take offence if I'm like, you know, whatever, you know, so whereas I've got an English friend and she'll like, there was some comment on Facebook about Cardi B slagging, or saying to an Irish person do you, don't you have a famine to go off and die in.

FR: Ah yes, I remember that actually.

MM: And, and, and I was sort of saying look, she's so, being so ridiculous I don't even find her offensive, I find her funny and so an Irish friend was like, but, you know, they're saying about the Famine, I was like, oh, but like, at the end of the day she's, she's American, she's black, she's probably faced a lot of racism from Irish Americans, so I think I'll give her the Bible. Now if it had been an English person making a joke about the Famine that would be a different thing, and one of my English friends tried to be offended and I was like, no, no, no, no, you do not get to be offended by that, and it is a totally different thing, an English person making a joke about the Famine and you can fuck off, and she was like [pauses], and I was like, mm hmm, if you've got a bother we can talk about it a bit more if you want or you can shut up, and she was like, okay, yeah, fine [laughs], you know, so yeah, no, I couldn't, if it was someone completely ignorant or felt that the, you know, that Soldier F shouldn't be brought to, you know, that there shouldn't be trials and things I wouldn't be able to, I wouldn't, I wouldn't be able to go out with, with them, yeah.

FR: Yeah, no, I can, I can understand that [laughs]. Have you been involved in politics at all in England?

MM: Yeah, I–

FR: In like, a general sense of it?

MM: Yeah, yeah, I was, I did a lot of campaigning for the abortion referendum.

FR: Oh really?

MM: For, yeah, for five years, I did a lot of stuff with that, but based from London, and did some stuff in Ireland as well, but mainly based here, just kind of showing support. I was part of a group called Speaking of Imelda, so what we did was, back before it would have been in the media a lot in Ireland we started doing stuff here, so say when, we, we did a thing, we knicker-bombed Enda Kelly, Enda Kenny at a fundraising dinner.

FR: That's great.

MM: So we, basically what we did is we, we did stuff here when there was Irish events and it gave people like Una Mullally something to, a topic to talk about, and then things started roll-balling and there was loads of stuff happening in Ireland, but we just kept chipping away at doing things like that to, kind of from a different perspective, to talk, to talk about the topic in a quite ridiculous way sometimes, so we, yeah, so we got YouTube channel and there's a website if you want to look them up, so, so yeah, so I would have been hanging about with obviously a lot of Irish women through that.

FR: Is that Irish people in London?

MM: Yeah, yeah, and there's a group, there was a group called the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group, that, two of the members of that were in Speaking of Imelda with us, so you kind of felt like you were with the, you know, political giants kind of thing, so that was, that was an amazing five years being involved with that. I also was involved with setting up the Women's Equality Party, but then I kind of lost faith in that, so stepped away from that.

FR: What was the Women's Equality Party?

MM: Exactly what it says on the tin really, yeah, so Sandi Toksvig and Catherine Mayer, basically I was at the very first, happened to be at the very first meeting, so, oh yeah, I also, so I also used to be part of a campaign called the 50:50 Parliament campaign, so trying to promote gender equality in politics and having a, the idea kind of being to have a quota essentially, so I would have been going to a lot of political talks and events and things run by Compass and things at Royal Festival Hall, so would have met like, a load of MPs, so always been there to raise the topic of and wearing the t-shirt, the 50:50 Parliament campaign. So then was, I happened to be at the meeting, the very first meeting that Catherine Mayer spoke out for, out the first time about the idea of a Women's Equality Party and then just said if anyone's interested come and speak to me at the bar after, so did, and then was at the first meeting of starting to set, set it up and I was, I set up a branch when I was up in Stratford and stuff, so, so would have canvassed a lot around that, but also was [laughs],

was also a member of Labour and would have canvassed a lot in elections for Labour, door to door, knocking and stuff and I, I was a fan of Corbyn personally [pauses], yeah.

FR: Yeah, it's a, it's–

MM: Like, I went to a load of hustings, I met him, went to a load of hustings, heard him speaking, and I was like, I just don't understand what people have got a problem with, being kind to each other, you know, it was like, I really just don't get, but, you know, what, why people hated him really.

FR: He just seems like such a nice man.

MM: Genuinely, genuinely decent, most, one of the most decent people and you were like, finally a politician that you could, you know, actually wants decent things, but I think we were just, we're all a, we're a country of morons and don't deserve him [laughs], so, as we've proven, so yeah, so I kind of, I got disillusioned and also I was doing a master's module from September there, so I didn't get involved with this election because I had exams and assignments and stuff to hand in in January and things, so yeah, I just was like, I need to concentrate on this because I had paid for it myself and stuff as well and my work, I work long hours. **[01:20:00]** I probably work, work eleven-hour days most days and then trying to study and, I was using annual leave to go to Kings every other, one day every other week and things, so that.

FR: For the MA?

MM: Yeah, so, so yeah, so I just couldn't be, I just didn't have the, the wherewithal to be campaigning, but also canvassing like, anytime I've, when I used to canvass with the Women's Equality Party because people, you were, people were open to have a chat about it, whereas if you knock on someone's door and they're a Liberal, Lib Dem voter or a Tory voter they're not going to, they don't want to talk on the doorstep about it generally.

FR: They'd sort of made their minds up.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so you didn't, when I was out canvassing for Labour, very rarely had actual conversations on the door and really couldn't see the point of it a lot of the time, whereas when I was, because, so say, for example, when we were canvassing for the MLA, not the M, what do you call it when it's for the London Assembly?

FR: Aye, I know what you mean, but yeah.

MM: Yeah, and it's kind of proportional representation, so what you're basically essentially doing is going, you can still, you can still give us a vote and your usual person a vote, do you know what I mean, it was, you were, there was more openness because people had two choices to put down, so it wasn't as closed a conversation, so I actually found that, you know, really good and enjoyed that, you know, and, yeah, there was just a lot of camaraderie around it like, I'm, the woman, I'm going to a woman's birthday tonight who I

met at the branch that I set up in Stratford for the Women's Equality Party, so yeah, so still like, good friends from it and I would still see people from Speaking of Imelda.

FR: Speaking of Imelda, I've seen something, I've seen it somewhere on Facebook recently.

MM: Yeah, yeah, you probably, yeah, if you're following any of that campaign at all, would have been mentioned, we always wore red and Imelda is an acronym for Ireland Making England the Legal Destination for Abortion, but, and Imelda used to be the code word that, when people would ring up for the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group they would say can I speak to Imelda, if they were somewhere that they couldn't speak and then, yeah.

FR: I've read, there's a book by a woman called Anne Rossiter.

MM: Yeah, yeah, she was in our, she was in Speaking of Imelda.

FR: Oh really, it's a, it's a wonderful book, it's a wonderful book.

MM: Yes, the London dia-, the under, the underground, yeah, yeah.

FR: Hidden diaspora, yeah.

MM: And I've got this [extended pause; doorbell rings], first chapter in that is about Speaking of Imelda [pauses]. Just going to answer the door.

FR: Yeah, absolutely. [extended pause; voices in background] Have you got a–?

MM: No, no, that was for my housemate, I just happened to get to the door before her.

FR: How interesting.

MM: Yeah.

FR: So that's written as a collective.

MM: Yeah, so we all wrote different sections. I wrote the Northern Irish section.

FR: Yeah, it's, oh so interesting, and so what was that like, being in the group, was it difficult or was it–?

MM: No, it was amazing, and I suppose that's probably, so when I moved to London I didn't move here as an Irish person so to speak, so I didn't seek out Irish communities or Irish pubs, I was just being a person in London, and I think [pauses] hanging out with them and just how relaxed you felt around, having that, I don't know, it just felt like being at home, that it kind, I think that was maybe the process even before Brexit of making me want to be more aware of Northern Ireland and of course like, they would be very aware of like, Marian, very aware of politics, she's been involved in loads of different things over the years, Marian [pauses], what's her surname, but she's someone, she's always working in the

background of loads of things and was very, very shy, so has never put herself forward, so as much as she would have been helping out with loads of different stuff, her name probably wouldn't be, be known, but, so she would have known a lot of stuff about Northern Irish politics that, but then I started becoming ashamed that I didn't know about, I knew about things that I knew about because family had been through it or like, Bloody Sunday because you, if you grew up in County Derry you couldn't, wouldn't have not known about it, and about Bernadette Devlin and stuff, but about more other things, just the little bits in between, so that's, that actually started me going actually I need to know more about what happened rather than just what was my own experience, and also to make sure that opinions I've formed aren't just bullshit, you know [laughs], so, and that there's, you know, weight behind it or whatever, so yeah, so that definitely, that would have started the process for me to want to be more involved with being Irish and, you know, and that that was okay to be, you know, I suppose, not that I didn't, I just, just didn't give it much thought before really I suppose [pauses]. I mean, I would have had like, I had a Portuguese boyfriend and he used to be quite astonished that some people, the things they would say to me about me being Irish like, they, the thick Paddies type thing, you don't get it often, but you would get it the odd time, and he'd be like–

FR: In London now?

MM: Yeah, not, not now, but this, I suppose this was fif-, fourteen years ago, so would have got it, and just things like, people would say things like throwing a Paddy and I'd be like, what do you mean by throwing a Paddy–

FR: Yes, actually.

MM: And they were like, oh someone ready to fight or throwing a tantrum, and like, and what's that got to do with being a Paddy, and they're oh, and like, it's not okay, you're like, what, what are you talking like, I'd never even heard it before until I moved here and I remember I was in a room with, it was an English person and my colleague Abdul, who is Syrian, and he kind of went [pauses], and I was like, and then whenever I kind of questioned her a bit more and she thought about what she said she was like, gosh I didn't even know, and she was like, oh it doesn't mean that, and he was just like, well, you couldn't say oh I'm throwing a Syrian or, you know, you couldn't and he, she was like, oh, you know, so, and I would've, yeah, you would've had that thing, oh you're, oh you're quite smart for a Paddy or, you know, just different, different things that you'd be like, if you just listen to yourself that you've just said that or, and I've had like, you'd maybe be on a bus and you're talking to a friend and someone going go back home like, I've, I've had that a couple of times and, you know, just, and that, and weirdly the, one of the guys who told me to go back home was a, he was a black guy and I said to him I went so are you a member of the BNP then, and he was like, what, what do you mean, and I went well, you sound like someone who's from the BNP, would you catch yourself on, and his friend was like, oh I'm really, really sorry, and I went yeah, like, catch, catch a grip would you like, you know [laughs], so I didn't get angry or anything with him I was just like, like, have you thought about how like, how, how ironic you are here right here now, you now, not that like, in, not saying that he, but it's just, you've probably faced this, but yet now you're doing it to someone else, you know, what, what the fuck, you know, so, but by and large I've, I've had, it's been positive experiences, just maybe

the odd drunken idiot who'll make some comment about you being Irish or whatever, and you're just like, yeah, whatever mate, and like, you know, yeah, so, and I think yeah, like, I'm quite adaptable obviously because I've moved so much in my life, that you kind of make wherever you lay your hat your home kind of thing, so, so yeah.

FR: And it must have been a kind of euphoric thing when the abortion legislation passed.

MM: Oh yeah, that was amazing like, just couldn't believe it, cos we kind of hoped it would go through, but thought it might be close, so then when it was like, a landslide, and because I'd already booked, I was at a thing in Belfast, the BBC were doing a, a big two days, big concert thing down at the docks with loads of different bands like the Manic Street Preachers and Underworld and it was amazing for like, eighteen quid, so a group of friends came over and that was all booked long before the referendum was announced, so I was kind of like, I would have loved to have been in London with all the crew, but then being out, cos I was wearing my Repeal jumper, everyone was coming running up to you and you would have seen other people with a Repeal jumper and everyone is just running up to each other in the, in the concert and just being like, aaaagggghhhh, you know, and especially cos on the Saturday the exit polls looked really good, so it was just, literally everyone was just running up to each other, who didn't know each other and just being like, aaaagggghhhh, and then I ended up meeting a couple of other pro-choice activists, one that was over from Berlin and the Belfast crew, the All Alliance for Choice people, who I had met a couple of times briefly before, so we kind of hung out, so I ended up getting that kind of little thing with them because again, they, the tickets bought before it was all announced, so it was like, before the dates were announced, that it was like, oh we feel like we should be at some big thing celebrating, but at least then we were able to do a little bit of it together in the stadium and just the walk home into the city centre, it really was everyone just going up and hugging each other and like, just complete randomers in the street, because you were wearing Repeal jumpers and stuff, and so, and it still is like, if I see someone in a Repeal jumper you just run and, in London, and you'll run up and go repealed, repealed, and in the middle of the, give each other a hug and then run on and people'll just be like, what just happened there [laughs], you know, so like, and, yeah, so, I still wear my Repeal jumper, you know, and you will, you'll get people going like, [whispers] repealed, yeah, you know.

FR: Ah it's so great.

MM: Yeah, just and that like, Home to Vote was literally, I donated some money for people to go home to vote and stuff, it was just the most amazing thing like, I know it happened for the equal marriage thing as well, which was amazing, and that was quite euphoric to watch, yeah, even thinking about it, I, you know, having that kind of yeah, so I think yeah, no, I'm very, I'm very proud of, of having been part of it and also I think cos I'd always been seen by my family as a bit of a black sheep and a bit of a weirdo, hanging out with these other women who were the same, kind of felt it's actually okay to be that, you know, and, yeah, it kind of centred me a lot more, kind of, that you felt you know you didn't have to prove yourself or something, yeah, so I think it's been one of the, the best things **[01:30:00]** I've, I've done and I'm really proud of having been part of it, and my family, a lot of my family are anti-choice, my sister does not talk about it, but she's still kind of proud of me for having done it, if you know what I mean, so, but it's just a topic we don't talk about.

FR: You just don't.

MM: Yeah.

FR: Is that a Catholic thing I suppose?

MM: Well, Protestants in Northern Ireland are just as anti-choice.

FR: No, that's, that's true, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM: Yeah, yeah, I think you, you–

FR: A religious thing really is what I meant to say rather than Catholic thing, yeah.

MM: Yeah, it's, it's, you're indoctrinated with it from primary school, so like, you would have been shown those horrific photographs and stuff of, you know, baby parts in buckets and stuff, so and like, I'm, I'm not pro-abortion, I'm just like, I'm just not going to tell a woman she has to stay pregnant [laughs] if she doesn't want to be–

FR: Pro-choice, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM: Yeah, so, you know, whereas like, people like my sister will jump do you want babies to be, and you're like, oh for fuck's sake, no, I don't want anything of the sort, I just don't want, I just want individual people to make their own choice, I don't think I could make that choice, but that's not, you know, I'm able to separate what I believe in from what I'm forcing it on others, so, whereas my mum she's kind of, it depends if she's been talking to my sister she'll be anti-choice and if she's been talking to me she'll be pro-choice, after a while you can persuade her around to both sides, but ultimately she has empathy and would always like, when I was ten, a friend of hers was separated and it was before you could get divorced and this was in the Republic, and her husband like, wasn't giving her much money and things like that, so, but she was kind of scraping by, but she started seeing this guy and then got pregnant, cos also it was difficult to get contraception and stuff as well, and then he disappeared and she was like, right, so (a) I'm a social pariah because I'm separated, and then I'm going to have an illegitimate child, and then my ex is going to be coming and picking up the two kids and this kid is going to be left with nobody, and I can't afford it and there was no maternity pay and I'm just about getting by in life, I can't do this. So my mum and all her friends sold jewellery and got money together and sent her to England, and my mum had told me about it when I was ten and I was like, even as a ten-year-old, I was like, I can see how her life would be absolutely awful if she had this baby, so I just had that empathy for [pauses], I'm going to separate what I think about abortion to, and just put it about what she needs to do for her life, so I've always then been able to see it from that point of view because I literally looked at her life and was like, there is no way she could have this baby, end of [laughs], that's just how it is, you know, and not judging about not going to go into, well, why were you sleeping with him if you didn't, weren't using contraception, just, you know, that's not the point and I just think people are too busy moralising about it and judging, and also like, my sister would be like, oh and these girls just

using it as a contraception, and you're like, well, even, how many people are doing that, but even if they are it's still ugghh, you know, just get your fucking judgement out of it, you know, and mind your own fucking business essentially [laughs], you know, yeah, so.

FR: Well, that maybe takes us onto sort of the last question or last questions, so you go back to Northern Ireland quite, reasonably often cos you've got family there. Do you think it's changed, particularly around this kind of, I don't know, restrictive kind of gender roles, still kind of more conservative, small c conservative than, than English society?

MM: Yeah, definitely. I think it, it's slowly changing, but I, what I see in terms of like, childcare, like the, it's still the woman who's picking the kids up and dropping them off, you know, they're still the ones having to make sure they leave work in time or if the kids are sick it's still the wife that, you know, has to not go into work rather than it being shared, whereas here it would, you'd take it in turns and there'd be set days that he picks them up and she does it, set days, so it, it's equal parenting here, whereas I think Northern Ireland, it's getting better, but there's still like, my mum will still talk about my sister's husband babysitting and that he's very good because he, you know, he takes the kids out for the day, and you're like, he's just being a parent, well, how is that him being very good, you know, and what else, you know, whereas, but then she's from like, like, my, you know, I never saw, when I moved here and I started seeing male friends being really involved parents I was just like, wooow, like, I'd never seen that before, and it was just like a revelation to me that, you know, it was like, wow, and you want to do this, this is amazing [laughs], you know, and often male friends being the ones saying to their partners I want to have children, and the women being a bit more, hmm, not really sure, and them being no, let's have children, so them making a conscious choice as opposed to being tricked into it, you know, or it being forced onto them, so that was like, an amazing revelation to me and I, I loved it and it was just like, wow, so then also like, at home you're having conversations with people and like, say you're talking about sharing paternity leave, sharing parental leave, and they're like, no, that's my maternity leave, and you're going, but you're basically saying that you're more important to the child than the father is, and it, the father should be as important, and they look at you like you're a weirdo, you know, so yeah, I think living here has definitely opened up, you know, different options and you would talk about things like that more like, friends who were having children and how they negotiated with their, right, if we're gonna do this why, why is my career being the one that has to suffer, so they like, so they, different ways of working around it like, one couple, she takes four days, they both work four days a week, so they'd both have the kid one day each and then the kids are only at daycare three days a week, but they both have the sole responsibility for an entire day, so the kids will go to each parent equally like, it's not like, you know, if they fall and hurt themselves, it's not like, I only want mummy I don't want you, they're used to the dad being the one to console them as well, and that's, so yeah, when you're trying to have those conversations with people at home you can sort of see people going ah that's a revel-, that's weird, but okay, you know, and so my mum, my sister and her husband are a bit more like that now, that he, he used to be the, he'd come home and sit down and Emma would do everything as well as working and doing absolutely everything, that he is more, being a participatory like, equal parent than like, would have for the first five or maybe even ten years, it's been more than the last five years that, yeah, so, so that's good to see, to see that shift with them and he'll, he

makes the Sunday lunch and stuff like that, whereas that wouldn't have happened before and, and things, so, so yeah, you know, but–

FR: [pauses] That's really interesting. Is there, is there anything we haven't talked about that you thought–?

MM: [pauses] I don't think so really [pauses], yeah, I think, I mean, I think I've probably got a, quite a different, because of the fact of (a) having a unionist mum, but also having moved so much, you don't have that thing that Irish people have that they've got there, they're still friends with people that they went to first, P1 with, you know, at the age of, you know, fifty, so I've always, I suppose I kind of feel like [pauses] my experience has been a little bit different from a lot of people.

FR: Do you think that made it easier to leave?

MM: Yeah, probably, yeah, I'd say so, but also something I've noticed whenever, not so much now, but over, until the last couple of years when you've met Irish people not in Ireland, it tended to be people from the Republic. I was all, it was very rare that you'd meet people from Northern Ireland outside of Northern Ireland, that it was kind of like, people from Northern Ireland are real home birds, but I'm more, cos you, you instantly, if you hear a Northern Irish accent you're like, ooh, and you will go over and you go like, oh you're from Northern Ireland, you know, and they're like, yeah, yeah, yeah, whereas that used to very rarely happen, and whereas now hearing it more and, you know, it's happening more and more, so I don't know what's happened there that people aren't feeling as stuck to stay, I don't know, I don't know.

FR: I was going ask you actually who does the Irish classes? What, what's the sort of composition of people?

MM: So some people are second like, yeah, second generation, some people are just people like myself who either never learned, and there's some people who did learn it at, you know, secondary school, but now they're like, in their fifties and want to refresh and, yeah, just want to re-, refresh it, and then there's a couple, there's one guy, he's German and his girlfriend is from, Northern Irish and they were starting to learn together, cos he just likes languages and he likes the fact of being a part of saving a dying language, so yeah, so he's German and learning, so that's, that's really cool, but his girlfriend then couldn't come to classes, so he now knows more Irish than she does [laughs] and she's Irish, and the teacher is from Tyrone, so we're getting, he does, he'll do, give you the both, all, you know, the different versions, but there's a couple more people in the class last term from the North, so he was loving it that he was able to give a bit more of the Ulster bit, whereas before I was the only other Ulster person, so he was always having to give the like, the, you know, the Munster dialect thing, whereas now he's just like, yeah, just go full on Ulster, so he's, he's, he's loving, he's loving that [laughs], but yeah, and weirdly, is it Jack O'Connell, a movie st-, like, an actor like, whose been in movies and stuff was in our, in the first class, I'd no idea who he was. I've seen, he was in that film *'72*.

FR: I, do you know, I read an interview with him in the *Guardian* this morning.

MM: Oh really?

FR: On my phone, Jack O'Connell, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MM: Right, so he was in our class and I literally, even though I'd seen stuff he was in, seen movies he's in, just, just he's just a young fella that I was just chatting to in class, hadn't, clearly just hadn't actually looked at him properly, and wasn't until he had long left the class, cos he had, was going over to Canada to film, that someone said something about him being a movie like, being in like, were in movies, and I was like, what, and then when they said he was in that movie *'72* and I was like, I really like that film and that was him [laughs]. So have you seen that movie?

FR: No, I haven't actually, no.

MM: It's actually really good. **[01:40:00]**

FR: Oh no, hold on*, '72*?

MM: Yeah.

FR: I have, I was thinking yeah, yeah, yeah [pauses], the soldier in Belfast.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so I thought, I thought that was, I thought it was very good, yeah.

FR: It's a, it's an interesting kind of portrayal of the city, it makes it, it's quite like, scary I guess, yeah.

MM: Yeah, yeah, and I think it kind of captured, it kind of did feel like that back then, so it did [pauses], yeah, like.

FR: And you said Anna Burns's book as well.

MM: Really cap-, yeah, that book really captured the tension of living in Ardoyne, but just when you, you do come out, you came out of your front door and there'd be a nineteen-year-old with a machine gun and you'd be like, hmm, hmm, hiya, hope you've got your safety on there, you know [laughs], and you don't trip over and accidentally shoot me, you know, and just, you just walk up to the, just the, you ignored them and they were just there like, you'd be just walking up to the bus stop and you'd have passed like, all these soldiers just hiding in people's gardens or just sitting there and you'd just be walking past and it just became part of the furniture and how weird that was, and then how if you were driving across town, that you were like, we had photo drive-, ID-photo driving licence before the UK did, the rest of the UK did, and that you'd have to say where you were coming from, where you were going to, what you were going there for, and of course they'd be doing an assessment based on your address and your name, how much else they needed to ask, and as a girl, that was probably the one time being a girl was actually a privilege in Northern Ireland, that you were, you know, you were less likely to be seen as a threat, so you got a lot

less hassle, but, and where, the street I lived in because it was a bit ambiguous, although my surname gives me away as a Catholic because it's McCloskey with an o, or else I look, I look like a Catholic, but [pauses] I suppose when they're doing that risk assessment the street I lived on would have confused them a little bit.

FR: That's int-, that's interesting, aye.

MM: Yeah, so, but you would have, just what should have been a ten-minute journey would take a lot longer cos you'd have four stops with the army and police and stuff, so, and again, just army jeeps and like, army Land Rovers being around all the time, that it was, looking back it wasn't normal, you know, but you just [pauses] normalised it, and just even things like, we always had where the army would put you between, say there was two of them, they would try and have like, a civilian car in between them, the idea was that it would be, the IRA were less likely to do a rocket launcher at them if they had a civilian car in between them, so they were kind of use, using you as cover and things like that, that you were always aware of and I got, the time I got beat up, I got brought home by a, in a peeler van, which of course the neighbours were all like, oh look, she's, she's just been brought home in the peeler van, yeah, it's yeah, it was weird, it was weird and films like *'72*, you were like, yeah, it was a bit like that, you know, and just, you know, like, in Ardoyne in particular like, the areas, the streets burnt out and having to pick your way over rubble to go anywhere, and how you did it just so nonchalantly, you know, oh and another thing, my first dog was killed by soldiers.

FR: Really?

MM: Yeah, they went around poisoning, they didn't do what they said in Anna Burns, putting in a big–

FR: Cos Anna Burn talks about it, doesn't she?

MM: Yeah, but this was in County Derry, it happened though, but it, and it wasn't, they didn't pile them out, up in the street the way Anna Burns describes it, they just went around people's gardens and poisoned, poisoned people's dogs, so–

FR: That's terrible.

MM: Well, it was just like, a general level of, we'll show you that, you know, you're just scum and we can do what we want.

FR: Was there any justification for it or any kind of–?

MM: Well, the Dungiven was a republican town, it was just, they just wanted to [pauses] show, show you who's boss [laughs], we can do, we can do this, you know, but what they didn't realise was that all it would, all it does was formulate communities against them.

FR: Well, of course, yeah.

MM: Like, you know, Bloody Sunday was the biggest recruitment thing, you know, ever, you know, so, and the more they acted like dicks then the more people were like, well, yeah, and like, in a, one of the teachers at my primary school had been interned and stuff, he was [pauses], was it Brawley, I can't remember his first name, he'd be quite, you know, relatively famous, but yeah, so you just always had this thing around of just knowing that yeah, the attitude was that they could what they wanted to you and there was no recourse to justice and there was no point in even asking, because even like, the Ballymurphy massacres like, nothing about, that wasn't even known about until recently because people just, people were just so oh that's just what happens, they didn't even, it was kind of accidental that they kind of figured out that it actually was a lot, quite a few people over a few days and it was like a, and actually it was the same people who then went to Derry, so they only started putting a jigsaw together more recently to go, and it was kind of by accident, and people just didn't even really speak about it cos they just kind of, I don't know, just this kind of weird acceptance that that's, what's done to us is okay, so you just, there's no point in even fighting against it kind of thing, you're just resigned to it I suppose, a weird resignation, yeah, so, and I think that's hard to explain to, to people who didn't live there or never, you know, cos even an old housemate of mine, he came around this week, he had been out working with the MSF and he was in Africa and they were in this compound with like, wall and barbed wire and then if you did pop out to a restaurant you'd have like, these soldiers and stuff and I was like, oh it sounds a bit like Belfast and he kind of went oh yeah, right, ha, ha, ha, and I went Callum, seriously like [laughs], it was, and he was just like, and I was like, alright, okay, I'll show you some pictures love, you know, so yeah [pauses], and I think you've, the suicide rate in Northern Ireland is really, really high and people, I read this really interesting article that it was sort of saying right, you've got that whole thing of people's DNA being changed by trauma and then that being passed onto their children, but also you've got dysfunctional people bringing up children, so they're saying why are you committing suicide, why are you depressed, you didn't have to live through the Troubles, no, but I'm being brought up by you who's an emotional fuckwit, of course I'm going to be fucked up cos, you know, like, I, in, my feeling, well, people I know and family and stuff, you don't talk about things, you, the only valid emotion is anger kind of thing, you know, and you don't show anything else and you don't talk about issues, nothing's talked about like, my like, I'm, I can only presume my family is quite typical, nobody talks about anything, everything is just brushed under the carpet and also you don't show emotion, you don't talk about emotional things, you know, you could have big life events and you'd just be like, yeah, yeah, fine, and everything is, nothing is talked about, it's only through friends here in London that I've learnt to, how to talk about anything, you know, cos you certainly never did before, you just bottled everything up.

FR: It's just kind of bottling up, exactly.

MM: Yeah, so that's why you kind of think well, that's why people are committing suicide on an epidemic level, you know.

FR: It was the Lyra McKee article, Lyra McKee wrote an article on cease-, ceasefire babies and suicides.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so I think that was the article actually that I, yeah, so, and like, and my sister is wild for it like, she, she'll say it's really terrible all these suicides, but yet she doesn't talk about anything and she'll say to her sons oh man up, you know, or come on, suck it up, kind of thing and you're like, aaaah, you know, that's not exactly teaching him how to talk about anything and maybe, maybe then, do you know what I mean, it's, she's not seeing the link that, you know, actually trying to teach them how to be a bit more emotionally intelligent and to name their emotions and stuff would maybe help them, whereas she sees if you show any emotion about anything that you're attention-seeking, so, you know, so yeah. I think there's a lot of, I think you need, I think Northern Ireland needs stuff like South Africa did, truth and reconciliation things, things like Rwanda did, where you sit down and actually talk to people from the other side and actually get a bit of their perspective, and like, say around the Twelfth like, I was brought up that Twelfth of July marches were the equivalent of the KKK walking down your street, but when I've said that to a Protestant friend from Northern Ireland she was, and I said well, you know like, we see it as the KKK, don't be silly, no you don't. I've just told you that's what we see it as, you can't tell me that that's not what I see it as, so therefore shut down any conversation about that it's seen as intimidation, no it's not, it's just some bands, but that's not how, yeah–

FR: Telling you this is how I perceive it.

MM: It's, it's yeah, and why do you think people have been fighting against it for so long if they don't see it as intimidation, they're not doing it for no reason, so, but yet if you talk to some people who are doing the marches they probably don't even know why they're doing it, they probably know nothing much about it all, and it's just something that they've been brought up to do and it's probably the, one of the few things they, you know, and they're getting their camaraderie from being in the band with each other and they feel a sense of collectiveness together and they're getting something else out of it, and for a lot of them the primary reason probably isn't, won't be to intimidate Catholics, they're doing it for other reasons, but, so therefore then can't see why Catholics react to it in the way that they do. So I just think there needs to be less of this brushing under the carpet because everyone is just hoping it will magically go away, but it's not, so there does need to be some kind of truth and reconciliation thing, that people can see, actually what you're getting from that isn't what I thought you were getting from it, you know, and I think they need to pay off some top loyalists and get them the fuck away, so that they can stop, because my brother-in-law works in a school in east Belfast and anytime there's any trouble over the summer, the kids, the loyalist paramilitaries come around the doors, knocking on the doors at like, and the kids are dragged out of bed and aren't allowed, they have to be out rioting and they don't have a choice, they're actually dragged out to it, so the kids will be telling him, and he'll be like, why are yous all so tired, oh well, the, the UV-, you know, the UVF **[01:50:00]** were round, we had to be out rioting, you know, throwing stones and flag protests and stuff, and they don't have a choice and the parents don't have a choice to say no, so, you know, I think you need to, I don't know, pay some of these lads off and send them to Australia or something, I don't know, although Australia won't want them, but do you know what I mean, just somehow get them out of it or something that, that they're not, you know, but then there's a hole has been filled, apparently there's loads of Russian criminal gangs now, you know, running things in Northern Ireland, whereas I think we were

protected, I think something that's quite significant as well, we were protected from normal crime.

FR: That's interesting.

MM: Yeah, so things like burglary wasn't as common, you, pickpocketing didn't happen, muggings, you know, just normal level, you were pretty much safe walking around the streets, you know, other than like, if, you know, certain areas you maybe wouldn't have wanted to if you were a fella, you know, but, you know, as a girl you felt safe walking around and also, you were like, well, there's all these soldiers, so I know I'm not going to get randomly attacked in the street because soldiers everywhere.

FR: Well, there's such a level of surveillance towards yous, but also paramilitaries from both sides are kind of policing their areas as well, yeah.

MM: Yeah, their own areas, yeah, yeah, so you were kind of, it kind of had its kind of good points, a bit, you know, and also, oh God, oh that's, you're prob-, this is going to sound absolutely crazy, so my sister had a stalker, an ex-boyfriend was stalking her and the police were doing nothing about it, it was before like, better laws came in, and they basically said to my mum well, we can't do anything unless he pretty much kills her, we can't do anything, and like, he would attack her and stuff, and he would say to them I'm going to go up and rape her and stab her, and they just wouldn't do anything, and this went on for a year and he terrorised all of us for like [pauses], full on for a year like, there wasn't a week that went by that there hadn't been some incident and him pitching up somewhere and we were just terrified. So in the end our local taxi company, basically all taxi men were generally involved, not all of them, but a lot of them would have been involved in paramilitary in some way, and they, we'd used the same taxi company for like, years upon years upon years, and my mum just said to them like, we just want you to scare him, we don't want you do anything, we don't believe in violence, but the police are doing nothing, and they just won't do anything, we just want him to stop, we literally just want him to stop. So what they did was they made, Emma had to be available, so they kind of held a court kind of thing and they took my sister away to one location, interviewed her, took, lifted him, he didn't know it was going to happen, my sister knew it was going to happen, so we had to sit there and know that she was going to be taken away, interviewed and then interviewed him and then thankfully believed my sister and basically said to him, basically put a restraining order on him, didn't do anything, at our request, but basically scared him off and told him if he went near her again then he'd get done. But his dad was in the IRA, but they just overruled it and just went, and he was from a different part of where we were, but they just went, we don't give a shit who, who your da is, and your da will be told that he is to stay out of it and, yeah, he left her alone after that, and you were like, it's really, really awful that we had to resort to that, but the police–

FR: If the police aren't doing anything.

MM: Yeah, and, and they'd literally said he's pretty much going to have to kill her before we'll do anything.

FR: That's awful.

MM: So yeah, so we felt really hypocritical going essentially to the RA for help, but yeah.

FR: What can, what can you do, what can you do.

MM: Yeah, so.

FR: It's something that Anna Burns talks about in that book as well, cos it's kind of about her being stalked, right, and as she says it's very hard to, the character says it's very hard to explain this kind of violence to people in Northern Ireland because they're so used to direct physical violence that I can't describe this as violence, even though it definitely is violent.

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FR: Which I thought was interesting.

MM: Yeah, well, I think, yeah, and then that, it also was, yeah, it, very interesting, not just from the political point of view, but from a like, a gendered point of view it was, it was very good, that book from that, you know, because yeah, harassment and sexism would have been totally underplayed and just you would have like, I worked in a bar when I was sixteen, Frames, did you ever know the Frames snooker hall, but it used to have a nightclub, so I worked in there when I was sixteen, and when I was sixteen I looked eleven and I got sexually harassed, ridiculous level in that place and I used to just kick them in the shins, and then one of the guys complained to the manager and was like, oh Tina, Tina kicked me, and the manager came and was like, Tina, what are you doing, you know, kicking, kicking a customer, did he tell you why I kicked him, well, yeah, and I went well, then you tell him if he doesn't touch me I won't kick him, it's easy and then I'll not kick him, but you can't, and I went seriously, I'm not serving me on a plate, I'm serving him drinks, if he doesn't touch me I won't kick him, it is that easy, tell him that, and I think cos I was sixteen he kind of felt he couldn't do anything, whereas if I had been eighteen I would have been either fired or told to put up with it, but when you say to people, I ended up, the only way I got left alone, I had to pretend the twenty-seven-year-old barman was my boyfriend, and then they were all like, oh sorry Sean, sorry Sean, and he was like, Tina, I'm too old to be your boyfriend, I was like, well, it's better than all these frigging thirty-five-year-old men, frigging older than my dad, harassing me every week, and then they were, they were all mortified that they would offend Sean, so left me be then, but when I would speak about it outside like, and I'd be like, this is ridiculous that my no wasn't enough, and people would be like, sure that's just life, that's just normal, that's just what you have to put up with here.

FR: It's just kind of accepted.

MM: Yeah, so if you were railing against it you were the troublesome one, not their behaviour was the trouble, so yeah, and even like, my mum leaving my dad, who was violent, she was the one in the wrong, and so the reason we ended up going to Ardoyne and not back to Derry was cos the family in Derry ostracised her for a while for leaving him.

FR: Really?

MM: Yeah, cos she was seen as an embarrassment, you know, it was shameful, so it was my aunt in Belfast was the only person who sort of was like, okay, come to us, to be able to leave, so you kind of were going from this horrible situation into Ardoyne, which was a horrible situation, and then went to school for a while at Holy Cross.

FR: Oh yeah.

MM: So you had that whole thing of walking up, you know, through that flashpoint to go to school. It wasn't, you weren't, the way, cos my cousin's kids were there at the time and you had all the, the protests going on at the school kids, but it still was, you still had that thing of you knew you were walking through a loyalist area, and also, another thing we used to do the odd time, the swimming pool in the Shankill had a wave machine, so we'd, we'd go swimming, but we were meant to go to one, it was still in a Protestant area because there was no, there was no swimming pools in a Catholic area, so you would have to run the gauntlet to go to a Protestant area, so you were having to feel a bit brave and then if you were feeling extra brave you'd go to the Shankill, and then we'd all have names prepared to, so to, Protestant-sounding names, so if anyone asked you your name you could say I'm Ruby or something, we made up these ridiculous names that we thought Protestants were called [laughs], but, so that we could go to the wave machine, but we'd not tell our family because they'd be like, no, you know, you'll get you, you, that's too dangerous to be going to the Shankill, and we, we'd literally just be like, right, are we, are, are we feeling wave machines brave today, you know, and like, the four of us would, would walk down and absolutely keek ourselves the whole way, but they would be like, the wave machine is just so amazing [laughs], yeah, so yeah, so I suppose just wee things like that, there's just loads you could, it's, you know, everyone has got those, those stories, oh another, sorry.

FR: No, go, go, go.

MM: I'll have to stop at some point. Another one, I was meeting a friend in town, we, we got the town bus, we walked into town from BRA and, you know, went for a milkshake and went into American Madness, you know, buy, you know, looking at the vintage clothes and stuff and then I was getting a bus to go home, said cheerio, said cheerio to her, a sixty-four bus was there, said cheerio to her, gave her like, a hug and a kiss and then ran on the bus and didn't realise it was a totally different bus and I ended up in Ballygomartin. So then, and that, areas like that, you know, everyone knows if they don't know you, so then everyone's like, oh who are you and what are you doing here, and I was just like, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God [gasping], I'm going to get killed, I'm going to get killed, I'm going to get killed. So I got into a payphone and phoned my cousin, it was like, who's got a car, and back in the day (a) no mobiles and (b) when you knew people's phone numbers, I rang my cousin Deirdre and it's like, her boyfriend had a car, and I was like, you have to come get me, I'm up the Ballygomartin, what are you doing up the Ballygomartin, I got on the wrong bus, and she was like, what are you doing, I was like, I know, I know, I know, come get me quick, come get me quick. So then she like, got in the car and they raced over and then there was some kids going past and going, who are you, what, what's your name, and like, just, and thank God, because I was wearing the BRA uniform, they would've assumed, but like, you still just

had that absolute mortal fear of I'm where I shouldn't be and I'm not known, and I could just end up in a wheelie bin, and absolutely so frightened, you know, and that was, you just had moments like that, that were extra scary I suppose, you dealt with a certain level of scary, but you knew where you were okay to go to. Like, I would still feel scared down the Shankill now, to be honest, I still wouldn't blithely wander down it [pauses], but yeah, how much of that is in my head too, do you know what I mean, yeah.

FR: No, it's, it's hard to lose that habit almost of anxiety, you know, awareness of or like, hyper-awareness of people looking at you and things like that.

MM: Yeah, yeah, and being like, oh we don't know you. I think now with tourists and stuff that people are more used to people they don't know, which I think is helping change things because there's people there that don't give a shit about it all, and don't have a clue about it, so, and aren't interested, so I think that's a good thing. I love going to Belfast now and seeing that there be, that there's tourists or people like, your taxi man could be Italian or whatever and you're just like, oh this is so amazing, like, it's just like, I went to, me and a friend, old school friend went to an Indian restaurant and the waiter was English and we were like, so we were like, oh, you know, you've come to Belfast to work, and he was like, yeah, yeah, my girlfriend's Spanish and she's doing a PhD at Queens, so I came over with her, and we were like, wow, Belfast is somewhere that people come to to live now, and we were like, my God, so I love it, **[02:00:00]** and the Waterworks now, there's a big fishing community like, they've set up a hut and they've stocked the Waterworks with fish, so you see all these fishermen and they do parkruns there and my sister, there's a kids' parkrun, so my sister's kids will be there every week for the parkrun and I would go and cheer them on when I'm home, and it, you're just like, wow, the Waterworks was definitely not somewhere when I was a kid or when I was a teenager that you would have gone to, and you certainly wouldn't have gone there after dark, it was a really dodgy place to be, so seeing things, places like that become just normal spaces and cross-community spaces and, yeah, I think, I do, it's absolutely, it's absolutely finding it just so amazing that it, that there's, it's becoming more of a normal place and a place that people, tourists will come to and you just have chats with people at the bar and, you know, and [indecipherable].

FR: It feels different now, Belfast, definitely.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

FR: There's a different atmosphere.

MM: Yeah, so yeah, and I'm loving that, absolutely loving, and I think things that may, would do, I wouldn't be against moving home, only for the fact that I know my boyfriend wouldn't be up for moving, he's–

FR: You mean he just wouldn't want to leave England?

MM: He wouldn't want to leave London.

FR: London.

MM: Yeah, I don't think he would live anywhere else in England, you know, he, he's a London boy, so has literally no urge to leave it, so, and that's fair enough, you know, I met him here, I can't say like, if, you know, right, you have to–

FR: Move back to–

MM: Yeah, so, but like, I know a woman, she met her husband here and he's from London, but he just fell in love with Northern Ireland and they moved over about nineteen years ago, cos I know her sister, so they would be over here the odd time and I'd meet up with them in Belfast the odd time and he just absolutely adores it, but it was him that wanted to move.

FR: That's interesting.

MM: Yeah, and then you get more bang for your buck for a house and stuff and–

FR: That's true, that's true.

MM: Things like that, so, you know, they were able to get a really nice house in south Belfast, so, you know, two kids and, yeah, so I think things, yeah, things are slow, not, more could be done, I think they could do a propaganda thing on unionists to be, that a, you know, like, say, a united Ireland wouldn't necessarily, you know, there needs to be like, a propaganda campaign to show them that their culture will be respected and they can still have their bonfires and the marches, just maybe not those big massive ones up, you know, that are going burn down the wh-, your whole estate, you know, within, in a more respectful way, but that you know, you can, your culture will still be respected, you know.

FR: You, you would think they have to, you would think they have to.

MM: But they, you just, not much evidence of it happening, but it's just really stupid cos propaganda works, you know, and like, you could make a concerted campaign, and also like, the British government has not ever wanted Northern Ireland, they, they should have been doing that all along, because they didn't even want to create it really, so what they should have been doing was going well, we, we're going to want to get rid of this piece of shit for, at some point, cos that's how they see it, let's lay the groundwork and make sure that, you know, people aren't entrenched in these views, but they've just also, they've, what they've done is, we just don't give a shit, so we're going to ignore it, rather than going well, we'll have to deal with it at some point, so yeah, so I do, I do think, I'll get the odd English person maybe saying things like, oh Northern Ireland is messing things up for us, and I'm like, excuse me, you can't create a problem and then ignore it and then expect that it just, you know, miraculously disappears, sorry, but it's, you know, you created it, so deal with it, you know.

FR: And then become annoyed by the problem that you created in the first place.

MM: Yeah, yeah, so if someone does, you know, you do get the odd person who will say something along that lines and I'll be like, you've spoken to the wrong person here, I do not,

you know, if you want, you know, it's like, okay, yeah, we'll, we'll have this chat, and then you'd get some, you know, there was one guy who was like, oh yeah, I didn't really think of it like that, and you're like, oh okay, good, you know.

FR: You've convinced someone.

MM: Yeah, so, you know, you try and just be a bit, well, well, you know, if you hadn't created it in the first place, and you've created, you've allowed this dynamic where the DUP's had a, you know, put, balance of power, which of course–

FR: Confidence and supply, yeah.

MM: Yeah, then obviously it, you know, your, your, the, the problem is being perpetuated and it's, it's perpetuated in terms of politics in Northern Ireland is still based on, you know, orange versus green, whereas more could have been done to prevent that, so people are like, oh, oh, oh right, right, grrrrnnnn, so, so yeah, so, I think–

FR: But some hope, or some hopeful signs, in Belfast anyway.

MM: Yeah, absolutely, yeah, no, I, I do, I think a united Ireland should happen, I just think that the South, unless people in the South feel that they're going to be economically affected negatively by there being a border in Northern Ireland, that's the only way that they'll accept it, because yeah, they're not going to take on the burden of Northern Ireland despite the fact that it would just be the right thing to do, and Leo Varadkar certainly has no interest in a united Ireland at all like, literally he's like, absolutely no interest whatsoever, but that's Fine Gael really, so yeah, I don't know. But I think it would be a good opportunity for the South to have Northern Ireland because Sinn Féin, I like their policies, I was always against Sinn Féin when I lived in Northern Ireland, but their actual like, policies themselves, I, I agree with a lot of them because I'm a socialist, so, and they are like, a little, they are lefty, so I kind of think it would be, it would be good to have a bit more left politics in Ireland in general because–

FR: What do you make of People Before Profit?

MM: I don't know a lot about them, but yeah, like, I think that's, they sound good too, but I think, yeah, you need to break the Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael stranglehold because they're literally just the same party, so I think it would be of benefit to Ireland in general and also have like, be less Dublin-centric, so, you know, actually kind of going act-, the, Dublin isn't the be all and end all, so I think it would be, I think it would be good in the long run for Ireland to have some, some people who are of a bit left leaning, having an influence in the politics, you know.

FR: I haven't really thought about it from that angle, but I, that makes sense actually.

MM: Yeah, because you would have more, Sinn Féin would have more seats then, so–

FR: Why would you have been against Sinn Féin?

MM: I suppose because my mum.

FR: Okay.

MM: Yeah, and also being, going to a Protestant school, so I kind of was, had a skewed view that the Troubles were all their fault, I wasn't looking at it from the bigger picture of Sinn Féin, IRA existed, it was more in hindsight that I would have been able to go well, if the British government had, whenever the civil rights movement started happening, if they had said actually this is wrong that Catholics are second-class citizens, let's deal with that, then the IRA wouldn't have got any traction, they wouldn't have got anywhere with their communities and wouldn't have, no one would have been joining them, or very few would have, so if you bring it back to that it's actually the British government's fault that the IRA even had to exist in the first place, so, but all I would have seen at the time was that people are murdering people and that's wrong, so would have been against that, and obviously Sinn Féin, IRA were synonymous and also there would have been stories in Belfast about them stealing people's votes, things like that, yeah, and I suppose I, you know, I didn't see, yeah, the bigger picture of why they did what they did, just saw them as extreme murderers I suppose, it was more, yeah, I mean, I probably still wouldn't have voted for then back in the eighties or nineties, but if I was living there now I'd vote for them, and I did chat to my mum about voting for Pat, because my mum lives in north Belfast, to vote for Pat Finucane to get Nigel Dodds out and it worked, and that was the only good thing out of the last election [laughs], and I was like, sort of like, yes [laughs], I was, even mates were texting me and going Nigel Dodds is out, and I was going yes [laughs].

FR: One, one happy moment from the election.

MM: Yeah, exactly, you know, and just even, just so that they don't have that veto again in the, if that then transformed into Stormont, that they didn't have the majority of seats, to take away their veto so that they can't stop normal things going through like, say, equal marriage and that, that they'd been holding that back for years, that, so not even from a Catholic-Protestant point of view, just for the fact that they're crazy evangelicals that, and also they're corrupt as hell, you know, they, they're so corrupt, that just to take away, you know, their, that, that balance of power that they had and my, you know when you're just like, oh Ulster unionists come back [laughs], you know, you know, so yeah, I would just like people to be able to vote for people based on policies, whereas when I was voting before I moved, I voted for both Catholics and Protestant parties, I just voted for the ones I saw as less crazy, you know.

FR: [laughs] Sure, sure.

MM: You know so, and just did it in order of, you know, I just sort of voted for the more moderates on both sides and put the more extremists down at the bottom, so obviously DUP, and I would have seen Sinn Féin at the time as extreme, but wasn't really thinking about their other policies, so I did one of those, not for this election, but the one before, I did one of, and actually it was even after the one before that where, so it was before Jeremy Corbyn came in, where you look at your political, they answer loads of questions.

FR: Like the spectrum thing.

MM: Yeah, and they asked loads and loads of questions and it took about an hour and a half, it was quite a lengthy one, and all about policies and immigration and housing and loads of different stuff, and it was a really big, at the time, because it was before Jeremy Corbyn, Labour were actually considered quite right and authoritarian, and then after Jeremy Corbyn came in it was more left and libertarian, but at the, when I did all that and it was like, saying that I agreed with seven or something like seventy-four per cent in agreement with Sinn Féin's policies, and I was like, what, and then that kind of made me go right, Tina, so you need to leave your preconceptions about Sinn Féin behind and actually do look at what, and then that's what made me see actually they are left leaning and, yeah, if I was **[02:10:00]** in Northern Ireland, I would vote for them, so I kind of persuaded my mum, who is a Catholic unionist, to vote for Sinn Féin cos even she, so again, there's that weird dichotomy that she feels that she's British and wants to stay in Britain, she also doesn't like the DUP and knows that they're a bunch of bastards, so whenever I just said to her, I was look, if you break it down to just the policies mum, and also just get frigging, get Ian, you know, Nigel Dodds out, vote for, you know, Pat Finucane, and she did, you know. I'm not sure if my sister did, so yeah.

FR: Well, there's that Northern Ireland thing where you don't talk about it [laughs].

MM: Yeah, yeah, so whereas, yeah, my, I can talk about things a little bit with my mum, but not, not massively, but enough like, with things like that where I did, we had been talking about Martin McGuinness, how our opinion of him had changed over the years, when he was in Stormont and he was really fair to bo-, all sides when it came to policies and things like that, and my mum was kind of a bit ummaggh, he's actually quite good and stuff, so really, yeah, so in the end, by the end, by the time he died I was really sad like, actually felt it was real loss to Northern Ireland, whereas if you'd asked me twenty years before it would have been like, murdering scum, you know, so yeah, just how that changed, and I went to a talk here by a guy called David Latimer, he's a Presbyterian minister at the Derry First Presbyterian church, and he formed a close friendship with Martin McGuinness, so he's written a book.

FR: Ah do you know I've seen the book.

MM: Yeah, and it's really, really good, so I went to a talk with him, so I've said to mum some time I'm home that I'm not leaving early on the Sunday, we'll, I'll drive her up and we'll go to his church for a service, for Sunday service and then have a dander around the Derry walls and stuff, cos I haven't been to Derry since I was like, in the city, I've been to the County Derry loads, but into city I haven't been there for years and years like, since I was a child, and he's such an amazing man, David Latimer, like, and he's even learning a bit of Irish and stuff, and that book, I bought a copy for my mum as well and she loved it, you know, and it gave you a different, a bit more of an insight into Martin McGuinness as well. I think it would be a, a good book for everyone in Northern Ireland to read, just to soften, you know, people's views a bit maybe on things.

FR: It shows the kind of, the possibility of a different way of being, yeah.

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, and just having empathy, you know, cos he, in his talk, David Latimer just said how did Protestants think that they could carry on with this situation where you're treating people like that and that they're not going to retaliate at some point, and you're like, well, yeah, but if you try to say that to people they'll go you're justifying violence. Like, if I tried to say to English people here, cos you'd have lots of conversations about Jeremy Corbyn and him being a terrorist sympathiser, and you were trying to talk about it and you're going, and then like, I had a friend who fell out with me because I said well, I'm sorry, but the British government is the biggest terrorist in the world, other than America, and he was just like, you know, he literally fell out with me for about four months. I was like, get over yourself like, you can fall out with me all you want and then, you know, when you work your head around that then fine, speak to me again, but I was just like, I don't see how that's that controversial [laughs], you know, and I was like, and if you're, you know, you and your, in your nice little Sussex upbringing, what the fuck would you know, you know, so yeah. Okay, I'm done now [laughs], finally.

FR: Thank you so much, that was, that was brilliant.

MM: Okay.

FR: That was really, really interesting, thank you so much.

MM: No worries.

FR: I'm always worried that I'm going to delete everything when I do this.

INTERVIEW ENDS