

Briana Pegado 22.11.25

Interviewer: This is Kirsty Arnaud interviewing Brianna Pegado for the Young Women's Movement Young Women Remember project on... what's the date? [Laughing] The 22nd of November and it's a Saturday. To begin with, for the recording, can you please confirm the following, your name, where you're from and your former role with Young Women's Movement?

Interviewee: So my name is Brianna Pegado. I'm from Washington DC, but I've been in Scotland my entire adult life since I was 18. I'm 33 now, so 15 years and roles with the Young Women's Movement, there's a bit of a list, so hold on [laughing]. So 2015, I was the engagement officer for YWCA Scotland in the headquarters, I know that things have shifted and changed. Then that year in 2015, I think I became the Enterprise Engagement Officer, left the Young Women's Movement and then re-joined later on, but in the role as a steering group member and I think that was probably 2016 to 2017. Then I joined the board in 2018 and that December, I became vice chair of the board and then I believe it was December 2020 at our AGM, I became the chair of the boards and then [laughing] I was there as chair of the board until like June 2022. I stepped down as chair and became interim CEO. So I was the interim CEO from like June 2022 to something like August 2022 and then I left the Young Women's Movement [laughing].

Interviewer: Wow, that's amazing. I feel like I've been involved in a couple of projects, like just trying to keep track of those, let alone all your roles. Was I in that one or if I just made that up? That's fantastic. So we've just got a couple warm-up questions. You're saying you're born in Washington, D.C. Did you grow up there?

Interviewee: I did, yeah.

Interviewer: And what was that like, if you want to talk about that?

Interviewee: Of course. I mean, so I grew up, first just outside of Washington, D.C. in Silver Spring, kind of in the suburbs and outskirts. I grew up with my parents. My grandparents are pretty close by, um, and I grew up in a family with just really, really strong kind of matriarchal energy. My grandma was an English teacher. Her sisters were teachers as well. My mom kind of went into civil service and then worked under the Clinton administration for the president as director of commerce. It was a very long title, I won't bore you with, Assistant Secretary and Director General of the Foreign Commercial Service, but yeah, I grew up in a family that really kind of valued volunteering and kind of supporting each other. And I think also really being involved in the community, um, but I think as well, kind of this like legacy of being part of, you know, whether or not you want to call it a movement or kind of supporting other women and kind of really having strong, strong figures in our family, I was really lucky, but then I left D.C. when I was 18 to go to uni and for many reasons at the time, it was and it still is, it was cheaper to study in the U.K. and in Scotland but my link to the U.K., not necessarily to Scotland specifically, but was my parents met in London in the 80s and got married in London in 1988. So, my dad and my mom met there and then they moved back to the States. My dad never lived there, but moved to D.C. where they raised, raised me. So, that was kind of some of my connection to the U.K but when I

came when I was 18, I'd never been. I'd been to Scotland once before to visit and I found out years later that my uncle had gone to the University of Dundee in the 70s. But I kind of came to Scotland and the rest is history. I'm still, still here [laughing].

Interviewer: I love that [laughing]. Where in Scotland was it you moved to for uni?

Interviewee: Edinburgh.

Interviewer: Edinburgh. Amazing.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So I know you've discussed some of the roles you've had at the Young Women's Movement. I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about any other jobs that you've had?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, so it's tied to kind of uni as well but basically when I came to Edinburgh and particularly coming from a kind of black family and coming from a family where my grandparents were the first in our family to go to uni and there is a kind of big legacy there because my grandparents were first, as I said, in their families to go to uni but my grandpa, for example, wanted to go to medical school and couldn't because of racism in the U.S. So he had to apply to medical school in Europe and study in Germany and then after a few years, gave up because trying to learn medical terms in Latin and then also learn a second language was really difficult and he kind of went back to the States after three years in Germany, but I mention this because I think a lot of my family couldn't understand why I'd come to Scotland, and, you know, the universities obviously had a great reputation. It's an English speaking country. I didn't really have ties to the U.S. in the way that I felt like it was home and my dad is from Angola and he grew up kind of in a very post-colonial, post-war situation. Portugal was still, Angola was still a Portuguese colony. He'd kind of fight in the in the Revolutionary War, but on the Portuguese side and then finally kind of left Angola and travelled to Portugal and then London and then the States, but I mention all of this because I think when I came to Edinburgh and especially because of my family history, but who I am, I've always been really aware of inequality, of, you know, oppression, of all sorts of things. So, like when I came to uni here, I ended up joining the at the time, the BME society, the Black Minority Ethnic Society and my mom really pushed me to go because she wanted me to kind of meet people that had maybe a similar identity to me, which wasn't necessarily a huge priority for me but it was something that I did and I mention this because it leads to my first job, but I was the vice convener of kind of the BME. Well, I was the vice BME convener for the Students Association and in 2010, we set up the first Black History Month at the University of Edinburgh. and so like leading on from that, I got really involved in student politics. So, my third, that was my first year. My second year I took a break [laughing] and my third year I was elected international students convener, which at the time, given the fee regime change in 2010 for kind of our UK students to pay fees to go to uni, a lot of kind of policies that the home office, universities were losing their sponsored status, fees, tuition fees were going up for international students. So, I got really involved in that in the campaign to kind of bring back the post-study work visa for students and kind of fight against a lot of the home office changes, they brought in census points. So, we had to physically go to the registry each term and actually present ourselves to say we were

physically there, um, and a lot of these policies were really unfair. So, by my third year, I was doing that, and then I ran for president of my Students Association and I didn't get elected my third year, but I did in my fourth year. So 2014, that was my first job. It was trial by fire. I, you know, was responsible for 150 staff, 250 during the Fringe Festival, our sabbatical year as president. So, I had three other sabbatical officers alongside me. We had very different politics. I was the first black woman in that role, definitely the first American, second black person in the history of the union and it's the oldest in the UK at that point, I think it was 150 years old, um, and obviously, I was really still passionate about all of the things that I was interested in and I think my kind of feminist kind of awakening...I was always, um I always identified as a feminist, but I think kind of really understanding the structural and systemic kind of impact of things really kind of ramped up in those years, and so basically, I mean, it was a very wild time but you know, I was 21 and president of the Students Association, chair of a board, that was my first experience of chair, as chair of a board of a charity, and we had a 10 million pound turnover, and we had a quarter of a million pound deficit and it was a wild time to be there and it was very, very tense amongst the sabbatical officers, I think a lot of past sabs fell out with each other, had to move to different offices but I say all of this, because that was my first paid role for a year, um, and then actually, after I finished up my role as a sabbatical officer, two things happened. I needed a visa to stay and I was on a special sabbatical officer visa, which luckily for me, that was the first year 2014, they'd ever kind of created it. So, I kind of was able to be in Edinburgh and stay because of that visa change but I also in that year set up something called the Edinburgh Student Arts Festival. So it was a social enterprise. I ran it from 2014 to 2017, um, it won a Social Enterprise Scotland award for kind of inspiring youth enterprise. We worked across all of the unions in Edinburgh, including Edinburgh College Students Union, and set up a festival that would run in February and over the three years we worked with, you know, over 500 artists, 7000 people came to the festival, it was across 15 venues in the city, but the whole purpose of that was to address the barriers that a lot of people experienced to enter the creative sector and the creative industries as artists. It was everything from craft, film, contemporary art, visual art, theatre, dance, everything that you can think of but it was a social enterprise, it was about giving people a platform, skills, opportunities, and work experience they could put on their CV to run the festival and be part of it, um, but that was when I also applied to join the Young Women's Movement. So my first job with the Young Women's Movement was 2015 while I was running the festival and then a few other jobs I had after that were, I worked for the National Theatre of Scotland from 2015 to 2018. I worked across their Department of Artistic Development supporting new artists, getting people, people that had residencies at the National Theatre of Scotland would be kind of supported by our department, seeing new work and new artists work across the country, um, in that time I also worked for the production team. So getting people and productions up and running, helping people with their travel, their visas, logistics and then I worked for the Learn Team, which is now the Creative Learning Team and that was 2018, the year of young people. So, that was a big project. I project managed with kind of 10 projects across Scotland, working with kind of young people with different companies coming from different parts of the world around a theme and different parts of the country. Um, so, yeah, the National Theatre of Scotland and then just I'll rattle off a few more. I did some work for the Scottish Drama Training Network for a few for big research project, again, on barriers to entry to drama for young people. I worked for Custom Lanes, Scotland's Centre for Design and Making in 2018 as their business development manager in Leith, worked for

what was Voluntary Arts Scotland, but is now Creative Lives as their engagement officer, working with voluntary arts organisations across Scotland and in my time both there and at the National Theatre of Scotland, I travelled all over the country, um, and then I also did a bit of work with an organisation called One Stone Advisors, which is a sustainability advisory company, which was the first B Corporation in Scotland. So, my degree was sustainable development and I went into the arts, but always with the view to thinking about not just the climate crisis, but power dynamics, ethics, how to make kind of third sector organisations and arts organisations more equitable and kind of led by the people that they were serving, um, and after working for Voluntary Arts Scotland, I became director of Creative Edinburgh and I was director of Creative Edinburgh for two years and in between that time of kind of working for Voluntary Arts Scotland and becoming director of Creative Edinburgh, I did a project for the University of Edinburgh School of Design Informatics and that was like an executive education programme for Tesco Bank staff to think about the future and AI and the impact of ethics on that, um, and the role in Creative Edinburgh also included quite a big project that looking at data driven innovation in the creative industries. So, massive investment from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and we were investing in artists and arts organisations in the Lothians to get funding to kind of look at new tech and data, um, and that brings me to now. So, I finished up at Creative Edinburgh. I was the creative director at Fringe of Colour Film Festival in 2021, which was a festival for black and minority ethnic artists in the Fringe and we supported them by giving them funding, building a database of all the work on at the Fringe and also funding films that artists were making for the first time and also co-director of an organisation called We Are Here Scotland in Aberdeen that, again, was supporting black and minority ethnic or POC, don't really call them minority ethnic artists, across the country. But yeah, after We Are Here Scotland and Fringe of Colour Film Festival, I went into really my own business consulting freelance practise. So, I now do governance board work, board recruitment, work on intersectionality, anti-racism training and I also have my own arts practise and I'm an author. So I published a book in 2024. I know this is like ridiculously long, but that's what I've been up to. It kind of works across... Even though kind of young women's movement has been there. So, it's always been a kind of feminist kind of anti-oppressive approach to things in the arts and cultural sector and so, yeah, I do that consulting work now for loads different arts organisations and charities. Thanks for listening to my TED talk [laughing].

Interviewer: No, honestly, it was so impressive. I was like, especially to go from doing a degree in sustainable development where that could take you down so many avenues but I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but taking that in a creative direction isn't always like the easiest way to do it?

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: And it sounds like you've just, you've owned it. You've done so many incredible things and it's really funny you say you're talking about your student politics background because I don't know about Julia, but I've definitely [laughing] had my experience of student politics and I think it's probably more intense than real life politics.

Interviewee: I agree. I would always say there's no amount of money you could pay me to do that again and it's a bunch of people that, you know, national politics is bad enough, but

you mix in, yeah, it's not even about age, but you mix in students. It's savage. It is savage [laughing].

Interviewer: Especially if you're...Because I went to Glasgow Union and you kind of expect people to be like open-minded and progressive and you hear the most crazy things and they're like, anyway...I mean, I bond with you over that [laughing].

Interviewee: I think my time in student politics radicalised me in a good way because I think coming from the I was probably more left of centre and probably had some really liberal views when I first arrived. So I think it was a really good education for me, but it was insane and sorry, one last thing I'll just add a piece, just it's, you know, being freelance, it's like jobs. It's always tricky to name them, but a piece of work I've just finished for Scottish government. I've been... Another ridiculous title, but I've been chair of the Scottish government's kind of independent culture fair work task force for the last 18 months. So, we've just kind of come up with a fair work charter for the entire cultural sector and recommendations to Scottish ministers on how to implement fair work across the cultural sector and I mentioned this because that's what you're saying about student politics and just my experience of work. It's like seeing so much exploitation, seeing people bullied out of their jobs, seeing so many women and young people experience really horrific kind of working conditions, especially if they're freelance or part time and working in the cultural sector, has been a big part of my lived experience, but a big part of my career the last few years and the recommendations will be coming out soon, but I think also my time at the Young Women's Movement, which I know we'll get to, has really supported me through some of those things and we had our own interesting experiences with partners at the Young Women's Movement in my time [laughing] but I think like, yeah, that's a big part of it and for the work at the Edinburgh Student Arts Festival, I was on the 30 under 30 list in 2017. So that kind of also brought me back to the Young Women's Movement and why I joined the board after that but yes, enough, I'll stop there [laughing].

Interviewer: It's so fascinating. Thank you again for sharing that. So yeah, I'm going to ask how did you find out about the Young Women's Movement? Yeah, what was your gateway in?

Interviewee: I really think that I saw the job advertised for the Young Women's Movement when I was finishing up my sabbatical role, I obviously knew what the YMCA was and at the time, it was still YWCA and I think because even though I wasn't involved with the YMCA, I think because I kind of understood how that works, and then looked into the history of obviously having shelters and refuges kind of across the country before I kind of was employed by the Young Women's Movement, I really just saw it advertised probably on socials and applied and I really didn't know loads about the Young Women's Movement before that.

Interviewer: Amazing, and, um, I know you talked about some of the roles you were involved in once you joined, but is there any like, specific projects and initiatives that you took part in that you want to kind of share with us just now?

Interviewee: Sure, um, so the year I joined the Young Women's Movement in 2015, Kara Brown was there and she later became the director and we were really close. I was the first person that she'd ever line managed, I remember that and that was the first year of the Status of Young Women in Scotland Report, so Kara wrote the first status. I didn't contribute to it but what I remember when she was writing it, I remember when it came out, but what I did contribute to was some of the research on the gender lightbulb moments, which I thought was a really gorgeous project that contributed to the first status. Um, we also what I did work with Kara on that I was very involved with...that was also the first year of Feminist Fest and you might know about Feminist Fest...Just really briefly, it was an initiative with Engender to fund, I think it was 20 women to go to the Fringe and the Edinburgh festivals who wouldn't normally be able to access it. So they reviewed shows through Feminist Fest, got passes and went to the Fringe and that was an incredible partnership within gender. It was Alice Mumford, who I think now is a councillor or even an MSP, maybe she's a city councillor, and it was brilliant. So, Feminist Fest was a big project I was part of. Also, there that year was, oh my goodness, it was called, it was an international YWCA event, but it was this, oh my gosh, I'm trying to remember, I was thinking about this beforehand. We had an event at City Arts Centre, and I think it was called... Something 2030 and this was all about the ambition for the Young Women's Movement by 2030 and I wish I remember the name of it but that was a big project I was responsible for organising the event at City Arts Centre to kind of... Envision 2030. That's what it was called, and it was all about the future of young women and feminism by 2030. So that was a big part of my role to those three projects but obviously, when I was at the Young Women's Movement, I was only there for three months as an employed person. So, it was a really short period of time that Feminist Fest happened, that the Status Report came out and Envision 2030 happened but I'm really grateful that I was a big part of that and then the two other things was as a board member, we obviously were part of some of the planning for the centenary celebrations. We weren't, I wasn't there, obviously, when all of the kind of final plans happened but that was a big part of our agenda when I was on the board. I think in terms of projects, and this is more internal, this is the very last thing. This is something that's kind of like hard to quantify sometimes and measure because it was so behind the scenes but it was in my kind of time as director that we demerged from Y People because the Young Women's Movement had merged with Y People in 2018 or 19, because... You both may or may not know this. Young Women's Movement was about to shut its doors in 2018, 2019. We had a board and that was a board that I inherited that had essentially allowed the organisation to get into a massive deficit, we're talking like a quarter of a million pounds and Kara Brown, who was director at the time, really saved the organisation by going to Y People, which used to be YMCA Glasgow and asking them to bail out the Young Women's Movement and part of that was a merger that lasted for a few years. It was a precarious time for the organisation. When I joined the board, the merger had happened and we had to pull ourselves out of this really huge hole financially. Kara Brown did an incredible job with that and then Patricia Kupiec, who was the director after that, really restored the kind of financial stability of the Young Women's Movement but in my kind of time as chair in 2020, we really realised that our values and our approach to doing things were really not aligned with Y People, which is a homelessness charity. Their director at the time was not really that comfortable that, for example, we had young women on our boards, and that we really kind of not just talk the talk, but walk the walk about progression through the organisation, really supporting young women to be empowered. Young Women Lead obviously started in that time as well over that period. So

we were really supportive of Young Women Lead, so, that whole kind of de-merger process was really intense and quite fraught, but we were able to kind of de-merge ourselves from Y People and be able to continue to grow and thrive and it's not that kind of exciting to talk about, but in terms of my time with the Young Women's Movement, that is one of the biggest pieces of work I contributed to kind of helping us become more financially sustainable and kind of separating from that parent charity that bailed us out at one point, but that we had kind of outgrown.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think that's a really interesting like context as well, because I joined Young Women's Movement over a year and a half ago now and like, I've been involved in the kind of women's support work sector since I was about 15 and I really felt like there wasn't that kind of progressive, accepting, inclusive space anymore. Like, you know, the times were changing, but nobody was keeping up with it and then I remember finding the Young Women's Movement and I was like, oh my goodness, like, it's really basic things like, you know, sharing pronouns or, you know, talking, using language that is reflective of like how we speak to each other as young women and within our wider community and that, it sounds like that wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for this kind of, like, claiming of Young Women's Movement autonomy, almost, because I feel so much like, strength from being a part of such an autonomous and like, yeah, just so like a standalone organisation. So, thank you for sharing that. I think that's, I just want to feed that back to you that, yeah, I was so over the moon and so like, I felt so burnt out and then when I found this space, I was like, yeah, good things do still exist.

Interviewee: I'm so happy to hear that and yeah, hard fought, and I think, you know, I know the Glasgow Centre doesn't exist in the same way that it did, you know, did it then but I really think, yeah, that period of like, you know, through the pandemic, you know, the organisation really did rally to go, no, we want to be independent and autonomous and continue this legacy of doing our own thing and I think when I started in 2015, you know, we had just sold all of our centres across the country. So we had this massive surplus of money. So it's like that whole journey of being really secure and confident and kind of going through really tricky times and into that space but I'm so happy that that is what attracted you to it and it kind of created that safe space and I feel like safe space, so I know that's a bit out of date. Safe spaces is what drew me to the Young Women's Movement in 2015 and the way it kind of protected safe spaces for young people and young women but yeah, that intersectional, intergenerational, inclusive kind of part of it is what was so important but yeah, thank you for sharing that with me.

Interviewer: Oh, absolutely. When you were working with the Young Women's Movement, were you based in Edinburgh?

Interviewee: I was based in Edinburgh at the West End office that is next to the Ghillie Dhu, so we were there when I was working there in 2015 and then kind of consequently over the years, and I was a board member and kind of joining at other points, we were at St Margaret's House in Abbey Hill in Edinburgh and then moved to the offices at the foot of Leith Walk, which was when we were kind of, it was a Y people, I think, office space. So it was there that we'd have our meetings but yeah, based in Edinburgh but obviously, like as a board member in particular, and I lived in Glasgow for a few years, I spent a lot of time at the Glasgow Centre as well.

Interviewer: What would you describe the kind of community, like that physical community where your offices were? What were they like at the time?

Interviewee: I remember, especially the West End office, I can't remember the name of that street, literally West End of Princes Street. I remember walking into that office. So the idea at that point was that there was a resource centre, so there were computers, people could go in and use. You did have to buzz in, it wasn't like it was on the ground floor, you could just walk in. But I think the atmosphere then was a kind of space that people could come to, could visit. I remember all of the decor, the pillows, the posters. I mean, at that stage, and it still is, the Young Women's Movement worked with a lot of women artists that had commissioned. We also, I forgot to say, were trying to set up a feminist shop, which didn't take off, but that was also part of my job in 2015. So we had a lot of kit that was supporting other people. So yeah, the atmosphere was really collaborative. I worked with lots of different staff. Cara Brown, I mentioned, Jackie Scott was the director at the time. Jenna, not Jenna, Jenna was there. Karis, there were loads of people that I think, Tamiwa used to come in and was one of our volunteers Floronzo, Romana Syed. So, there was just a real atmosphere of this being an inclusive space. You could come as you were, the same as St. Margaret's House. It felt a bit different, obviously, in the foot of Leith Walk, because that wasn't fully kind of our space, but I also know for the Glasgow Centre, just having that huge space for meetings, for events, coffee and tea room, the biscuit room and the coffee room had all of these historical photos on the walls, which was really incredible and through the pandemic, because we'd shut down the Edinburgh office for a bit, I remember going in and working with some of the team to honestly look through all of these boxes of young women's movement history and obviously that was Libby at that team. There's so many people in the Glasgow office that I just really cherish. Ang, I know is still there, dropped food off at my flat when I had COVID. So it just really felt community based and I think the Glasgow office, because of all of the workshops it would do with refugees and migrants and people that were kind of upskilling to learn computer skills. It just really felt safe and warm and open and it was just an incredible team and I always really loved the Glasgow team in particular. Don't tell anyone that but I think that was a really, really special, always a special space and atmosphere.

Interviewer: That's lovely to hear the kind of, how community can then expand into things like mutual aid and almost living what you're teaching in a way. It's what you're spreading into the wider community. You also hold those values amongst each other and obviously that's how that works. If you don't embody it, you can't produce it, I guess. So that's really lovely to hear.

Interviewee: Also, I think of The Melting Pot, because I was obviously there in the interim role and I know that I think the team is probably still at the melting pot. I think kind of moving to that model of maybe moving across different offices or being able to be a bit more flexible is really important and if the Young Women's Movement is still at The Melting Pot, I mean, that's a great kind of community social enterprise space and I've been involved in that space and kind of other iterations of my life But I think I think, you know, it's beautiful that it's flexible. I also think that office space is really missed, that's kind of uniquely the Young Women's Movement Like I think there's something really important of having its own space but I also know there are a lot of reasons for that as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, I think it's something obviously, like, it's quite individualistic. Some people love working from home, and, I don't know, when we're doing our projects, a lot of our meetings are obviously done online. Like I used to live in the Highlands, so I feel like so far away from everyone but the best thing about the young women's movement is that they have a lot of like residentials and stuff, like Julia and I were in the hostel in Stirling [laughing] and it was such a, it felt like quite a random thing at the time, but it really just brought us all together and yeah, that was, that was a lot of fun. I liked that [laughing].

Interviewee: You just reminded me of one more thing. I promise. I know we have all these questions. The other project I loved, and I completely forgot to mention, when in 2022, when I was still chair of the board, and Patricia was the director, we had some leftover funding from Esme Fairbairn or Paul Hamlin, I can't remember which, um, and they let us use that funding to create a retreat for young women working in the frontline kind of services of the kind of gender-based violence sector and we took, I think it was 10 young women to Arran, to Lamlash, for a retreat weekend, just to rest and recover and be looked after, and there were people from Scottish Women's Aid, from Engender, all sorts and we made sure that there was representation, really, that, you know, wasn't too focused on the central belt, that it was people that had come from all over the country and honestly, that was one of my favourite, it was a feminist retreat, I think is what we called it, um, and it was really beautiful just to kind of meet people that were doing frontline service work who were knackered, and who are young women that were in positions of power, they might not have been senior managers, but that really felt like they weren't being, or they weren't supported, maybe, or didn't have a network. So yeah, I think that was like, April or May 2022 and that was one of my favourite projects to be involved in.

Interviewer: That's such a fantastic idea, because I know quite a few people in those support roles, and how, like, overwhelmed they feel just to properly celebrate them, and, oh, it's fantastic. I really like that. That's, that's incredible, um, so you've obviously touched a bit about this already but the question is, what was the YWM agenda at the time you were involved?

Interviewee: So YWM had really switched from, though, it's still really supported kind of some of the frontline service work the Glasgow Centre did and continues to do. YWM's agenda in my time really switched into this focus on, like, young women's leadership. So, Young Women Lead was part of that, that launched in the time that I was involved. There was obviously a status report, as I mentioned, in 2015. So it was really trying to capture the data around the experience and impact of young women's lives kind of across different aspects of, you know, Scottish culture and I say it as a weird phrasing, but obviously, young women, the status report would go from, yeah, women in sports, YWM women's experiences. So that shift, that agenda was really about, that we're connected to the international movement and I feel like in 2015, when I was there, and Kara and Jackie was there, there was a lot of kind of connection to that international movement, though, of course, you know, that's very Christian led and Young Women's Movement has always been non-denominational, but that connection, because Kara went on to work for European YWCA. So I feel like there was a lot of real connection to the international movement but yeah, the agenda was young women's empowerment, research and evidence-based ways of sharing that, building connections in terms of policy change, all of the kind of young

women's leadership kind of work and research and that was incredible, because it was Young Women Lead and there was another one, another research-based project. We were also looking at, do we develop like an action research-based arm of the young women's movement? And is that a way for us to expand our impact and reach? Obviously, youth work was still a part of that, because when I was there in 2015, we still had, I think, our centre in Irvine, and somewhere else in West Lothian but yeah, it was all about how to support young women into leadership roles and collect the data to kind of really be able to communicate what the kind of impact of experiences of oppression are on kind of young women and girls but also that open question on the agenda was, are we an intergenerational movement? What do we do for all of the kind of members of YWCA over the last 100 years that still donate or still send us money or still want to engage? And I feel like the Glasgow Centre was really a centre, like a beacon for that but obviously, in the time that I left, by 2022, it was our rebrand, and I was part of commissioning that process. It was the decision to change to the Young Women's Movement. So I think I've been there in like three different iterations of the Young Women's Movement, of that real connection to the international movement, Envision 2030, the Status report, moving into what happens with all of our spaces and kind of intergenerational questions, focussing on young women's leadership, among other things. We obviously still have the incredible work of the Glasgow Centre, and really championed that work, and then into this current, current time.

Interviewer: Amazing. I think you're the perfect interviewee for this. Obviously, not that we have a perfect model, but you've seen it in so many different phases, and as you say, like, you've watched that kind of journey. I was just wondering, what did you kind of, what did working for the movement look like? What activities were you doing to kind of be a part of this change? And, you know, you're talking a bit about like research there, were you, I don't know, surveying, or, you know, you say you're commissioning things like, yeah, what did that kind of look like, practically, if that makes sense?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think a lot of the work that I did when I was working for the young women's movement, practically, was, yeah, for me, it was really those three projects of kind of organising Feminist Fest, making sure that was happening, organising Envision 2030, helping us kind of capture the views of young women across the country to kind of talk about what kind of world we wanted to live in by 2030. So it was event management, it was organising people, it was going to the different centres and running some youth workshops. It was interviewing people for different kind of roles, specifically when we were talking about getting people on for Feminist Fest, was helping with young women lead, of course, for 30 under 30, because I think 2015 or 16 was the first year, if I remember correctly, it was always putting people forward for it and then in my role as a kind of board member, as a trustee and chair, I mean, that was massive heavy lifting around our financial future and funding and making sure things were ticking over and making sure we had the resources we needed, supporting the directors at the time, Patrycja and others, and yeah, handing over the organisation, and I don't feel, I mean, there's so many people involved with this. There's so many people on the board I worked with, from Pauline Lunn, who joined the board later, but was from Y People, that helped us with all of the funding side of things, to Rachel, who was the chair before me, and I'm forgetting Rachel's name just now but yeah, it went from kind of the practical side to really strategic direction, funding, all of the boring stuff on risk and compliance and making sure that we were financially solvent and that we were okay for

the future but it was a lot of like, supporting the team and people management and making sure we were okay, but I'd say it was kind of those two different sides of it. The kind of steering group as well was feeding into campaigns, events, new projects, like giving that perspective from the position of being a young woman. I still technically am. I'm not 35 yet [laughing] but so all of those things and yeah, and I think what I'm really, I think also just really quickly part of what it looked like day to day is really ensuring and protecting the kind of organisation to make sure young women's voices were at the centre of all of our decisions and you know, when I became the chair of the board, I was the youngest chair we'd ever had. I was 27 at the time, and that's what I was told, I don't know if that checks out historically, um, but the fact that, you know, we really made sure that our treasurer, our vice chair, everyone involved, we were young women making these decisions and having a lot of power and responsibility and we really made sure that, you know, our trustees and people involved in the organisation were young women and I think doing that work of fighting for that power and fighting for that influence and not letting anyone tell us that we were doing things in a way that was not traditional, which did happen, working closely with Scottish Government in terms of sharing all of that policy and just being models and leadership, I think, from top to bottom, not just the kind of programmes and work we were doing, but the way that we ran.

Interviewer: So any particular aspect of all those different activities you were doing that you enjoyed the most? Like you're saying it's quite different. You've got the kind of financial planning and then the people planning side of things.

Interviewee: Yeah, I am just a little governance nerd. It's ridiculous to say it is what I do now. I've always found power dynamics and abuses of power and like working out how that works fascinating. I loved being on the board. It's like and that kind of sisterhood, if I'll call it that, that camaraderie, like working with all of the people I worked with over those years. That was what I loved, and I absolutely, you know, being the chair of the organisation, you have kind of oversight over so many things and it was it, was it, was I wasn't managing, they're not line managed by me, but like supporting, advising, working with the director, with and with the whole team, doing all the HR. That was a lot of HR work because we don't have an HR department that kind of sits with the board and the director. We do navigate some really sticky things with staff, with that demerger but that's what I love the most and I think that, not that it's about kind of trying to measure this, but I feel like that was my most significant contribution to YWCA and the Young Women's Movement.

Interviewer: That's such an important contribution as is it the kind of like future proofing of an organisation as well. So it's really impressive. What was going on more broadly with the organisation when you're involved? So you're kind of talking about the merger and kind of that financial context but I was wondering if there's other initiatives you were taking place, sorry, other initiatives that were taking place that you were not involved in, if that makes sense?

Interviewee: Yeah, you know, so at that time, so I think there are a few things happening. So 2017 or 2018, forgive me, because I might get the years slightly wrong. That is when the legislation around coercive control came into play, and I remember Kara being interviewed for it with the First Minister at the time, Nicola Sturgeon, about course of control and policy and legislation. So, I know that this isn't necessarily a kind of project, but the Young

Women's Movement, alongside rape crisis, alongside Engender, alongside the Scottish, um, SWA, Scottish Women's Aid, loads of organisations were doing all of this important work around policy and legislation change. So, that was happening. There was also so much work happening at the Young Women's Movement more widely, kind of around provision of services for women that were kind of migrating or kind of arriving in Scotland and there's a lot of anti-poverty work that was happening as well that I think, you know, I won't kind of point to specific kind of campaigns or initiatives. There were campaigns constantly happening that we were part of that I think, you know, tied into Young Women Lead and 30 Under 30 and funding we got from Glasgow City Council to do Young Women Lead locally with kind of Glasgow City, City of Glasgow. So, all of that was kind of happening in terms of the wider work and agenda of the Young Women's Movement and I think with kind of that legislation coming into place, with consultations that were happening, obviously, on the gender reform bill, uh, horrific, and kind of the lead up to that, like we were always kind of part of that work. I'm not saying we led on it. We didn't, but we were always part of that work. So, I think all of that context and then, of course, with Brexit and with the Indyref kind of the years before that, just really trying to kind of capture the impact of austerity, the impact of Brexit, the impact of the rise of the far right on young women's kind of quality of life and in Scotland. So, I think that was always the undercurrent to the work that was happening more widely that was impacting all of our activities and campaigns and services.

Interviewer: Yeah, you can't really like separate, I guess, as you say, it's always present in your mind when you're doing other activities within the group. Um, the next question is about relationships with other members. So kind of covered, like, who you worked with and what the team was like. Did you meet anybody who you maybe like didn't expect to meet when working at the Young Women's Movement? I don't know if that makes sense, but [laughing].

Interviewee: It does, I mean, I'm thinking specifically about I think I didn't. So I know I already mentioned and I'm just I'm making sure I'm covering all the names I wanted to cover but yeah, I think like in terms of not expecting to meet, I feel like the answer to that is I didn't expect to meet so many people through the Young Women's Movement. I mean, Kara Brown had a massive influence on me. Gemma had a massive influence on me but I think kind of also working with the board was really massive but it's hard to kind of put that down, for example, to kind of one person. But I think for me, the biggest thing and the biggest gift really was working with everyone that I worked with on the board at that time. So, Molly Brown, Pauline Lunn that I mentioned, Gabrielle Blackburn, or now Blackbell, also the team like Rihanna, Rihanna Mallia, or Mallia, like there's so many people around that time and that continue that, you know, Heidi from the Glasgow Centre, Angela Melvin, um, but I really think we were in, and I experienced a kind of like a golden era of just incredible sisterhood and support and love kind of being on that board at the time that I was and that kind of core team really was Molly Brown and myself and Rachel and I think like that, and working with Pauline, it's Rachel Thompson, I was just getting names together, but I wasn't expecting to kind of be part of a community and a sisterhood that was working towards a common goal that I genuinely love to be around and respected and I think obviously just coming into contact with so many incredible young women and so many service users through the work that we were doing on all of our campaigns, through the Glasgow Centre as well and I remember, it was we, had an event at Scottish Parliament, and I'm just going to

see if I can pull it up. I think it was a celebration of Young Women Lead, I think that's what it was, and it was in 2022 and seeing all of these young women who'd been involved with different aspects of the Young Women's Movement over the years in one room and being able to celebrate our work and I got really emotional at the centenary event at the Edinburgh City Council, Edinburgh Chambers. I started crying, so I was standing next to Ange in the back and we had a moment, we just looked at each other. I mean, I hadn't been involved with YWCA or the Young Women's Movement at that point in the year when I went to the event. Ange and I just kind of looked at each other, and Ange and I have been through a lot together [laughing] So the two of us just looked at each other. And we both just started tearing up because it was this real moment of like, oh, we made it. Like, there was a moment where we didn't know if we'd still be here for the 100 year celebration and I just remember feeling so emotional. So, it's not one person, because everyone, I think, was really surprised to me but it was it was a family as much as it can be, as much as work can be but I mean, like it was, it was a real family and it's something I'm so grateful for, because I've had other experiences on other boards and other organisations that won't touch it, just in terms of like, the environment.

Interviewer: I think that's so beautiful and like, yeah, thank you for sharing that, that tender moment, because I think you do just meet people that you align with so personally through the Young Women's Movement. Like, I don't know how they do it [laughing] but they just seem to attract these incredible people who you do just have that connection with and I think it's, it's stunning. Yeah and would you, this is just in my own kind of interest, like, would you say that that sense of community that you found in that, in that workplace was, was unique to the Young Women's Movement or to the sector or?

Interviewee: It is not unique to the sector, YouTube [laughing]. I have to say, and I'll tread carefully. I mean, so Patrycja and I, the current director, are still very dear friends. I mean, I've been friends with Patricia for years since then, and handing over to Jenny when she started her role was a really special experience. I do work for Rape Crisis, I used to do work for Zero Tolerance, like I do some anti-racism training and workshops. I have been involved within Engender, especially the Equal Media and Culture Centre, I kind of give talks for them and I'm involved with them. So, I'm still in and about the kind of women's sector, for lack of a better word. I know it's not just the women's sector, obviously, the feminist sector. This is not common and I think that there are great organisations doing great work across the sector but I really think what exists at the Young Women's Movement, and hopefully continues to, is incredibly unique and positive and supportive and collaborative and that is not often the case [laughing] across the sector more widely. I will go as far as to say that this is the exception, not the rule. So, yeah [laughing].

Interviewer: I think I knew that answer when asking it, but yeah [laughing] and that is a kind of sad reality but I think for me, the Young Women's Movement shows that it is possible and that it doesn't have to be this kind of downtrodden culture of survival, I think is a lot of the cases, especially in those support institutions that have been going so long and, people just have that burnout but your testimony today has shown that Young Women's Movement and other organisations, it can almost rejuvenate and progress and that kind of positive trend and yeah, I think that's fab. Unrelated, but still relevant. Were men part of the organisation at the time?

Interviewee: So, no. Well, no men were employed or ever on the board or ever kind of voluntary but the caveat is, we were merged with Y People, the director was a man. So, the way that this worked, without getting too technical, when we merged with Y People, which I think was the end of 2017 or 2018, we had a partnership agreement, part of that meant that two of their board members sat on our board. So, there was a man called Joe, and he retired in the time that I was on the board in there, who was the only man on our board who had power. I mean, he could be talked down or overruled and he was, I won't go as far as to say he was an ally, but he was supportive. So, that was a strange wee blip in our kind of leadership and history. We had men apply for roles on the board and like, I would be involved with staff recruitment too, including Jenny's role, um, and we never explicitly turned them away but quite frankly, they would not make it through the shortlisting round and when Y People was involved, we had a bit of a tense exploration of why there were no men because Y people's approach was, if you're a feminist organisation and you're all about gender equality, why are men not allowed? And of course, our response was, we're not saying men are not allowed but we are talking about a marginalised group of people. We're talking about marginalised gender. We are intersectional. We are anti-oppressive. We are trans-inclusive. We are queer-inclusive. We do not need to be giving men a platform here. They can go elsewhere and we're not going to tell them to leave. But hopefully, when they turn up, they're going to realise that maybe this is not the space for them [laughing]. That was our kind of line and approach. So, no but yes, Joe, whatever Joe's surname was, Joe was involved in quite a critical time and I'll see if I can find his name, if that's even relevant. Hold on.

Interviewer: No worries.

Interviewee: Joe Connolly. Joe Connolly was his name. He retired, he was the director of Y People.

Interviewer: I think what you're saying just there, it reminds me of when we were in high school, we campaigned to not have head boy, head girl, and just have head captains and they were like, what if two girls get elected? And we were like, well, the guy's not good enough to do it. Who cares? If he's not cutting the mustard, he doesn't get the badge [laughing].

Interviewee: Exactly, but this comes back to that whole politics of representation and it's like, yeah, we've been living with toxic patriarchy and misogyny for centuries, obviously, not all of our human history, obviously, not all countries and societies but yeah, we promote platform... It's not about balancing. We're rewriting that in some ways and this is not the space to be... I mean, I'm not saying what I will clarify and say is obviously feminism and kind of feminist philosophy and politics helps everyone. Dispensing the patriarchy supports everyone. The toxicity around masculinity and toxic masculinity and gender binaries and everything else obviously is harmful for everyone but we are not going to pretend that women and marginalised identities haven't been oppressed and it is that kind of liberation and that kind of, um, yeah, dismantling of oppressive systems that we are moving and working towards. So not everyone's on that bandwagon and not everyone will get on board with that justification but talking about the student movement radicalising me, the Young Women's Movement radicalised me [laughing]. So, that was part of my you know, real part of my politics, but understanding of the world and I remember when I first got my job in

2015, even like I was responsible at the time for some content as well, which I forgot to say, but it was a small thing but, you know, I was even kind of learning, you know, the way I was framing and talking about things that maybe were image based or I mean, never, never body shaming or fat shaming, but were image based about content I was creating and I sort of told, yeah, like step away from talking about beauty or, you know, focus on inner beauty and I think I really, really learned a lot from my time... But yes, I'm rambling now, but yes, one man, Joe Connolly, he was interesting and he retired, thankfully, and a woman took his place but she was she was very problematic, which was a large part of why we demerge from Y People.

Interviewer: Right. Interesting. Yeah, because it's obviously like the solution isn't always just put a woman in that position but yeah, I think that's a topic for another conversation. Although one I'd love to have, quite frankly. Um, I was just wondering, are you still involved at the Young Women's Movement today? Or is it just kind of through like your friendships and your connections?

Interviewee: Through friendships and connections. When... I think when I left, it was so hard because I had only been the chair for a year. I'd been like vice chair for a year or two before that and Patrycja decided to leave the Young Women's Movement and we made a bit of a booboo because our contracts only had a one month notice period and for a director, that was a bit ridiculous, we should have had a three month notice period. So, I was in a position that summer, 2022, where everyone was like, Brianna, please, can you do the interim CEO role? And I was like, no, thanks [laughing]. They were like, yeah, but you're the right person to do it. So, I stepped down from the board really reluctantly because I didn't finish my term, I had two more years, and I very, you know, happily took on that interim CEO role for a few months but I feel like I kind of left at the right time. It was all things happen for a reason but I didn't want to leave the board and so I think after that, I have not been on a board since. I took a break from boards after that because I sort of thought to myself, if I'm going to do any board work, I'll be paid for it but volunteering my time for something after that experience of the Young Women's Movement, it's going to have to be something really special. So, I still get the newsletter. I went to the centenary event. I think I had an opportunity to tender for some work when they were doing some strategic planning work that I did with, I applied for with two other people and they kind of changed the direction of our proposal and we got feedback saying, the portion that Brianna proposed is what we wanted but the rest of this is not not what we were looking for, and so no, I haven't been that directly involved. Occasionally, I'll check in with Jenny but it is really through the friendships that came out of that.

Interviewer: Yeah, um, our next set of questions is called explore questions. So, interpret that as you will [laughing]. I'm just going to skip a couple because we have gone over it and there's some exciting ones at the end that I'm keen to get to but there's a question here, it says, what do you remember feeling about the organisation at the time? So like what you were doing, and I guess, the kind of wider feeling of other people as well, the reactions.

Interviewee: Yeah. Let me just turn the light on. I'll be right... Interviewer: No, that's so fine.

Interviewee: I can just see myself, kind of fading into the background.

Interviewer: I love that painting on the wall, by the way. It's so gorgeous. Interviewee: It's a little unfinished, but yeah, that's mine. It's so... I've been I've been getting distracted by it. I've been just staring at it. It's lovely, so. that's incredible. You're so talented.

Interviewee: Well, that's encouraging because I like rarely pick up a paintbrush these days, but that's lovely to hear, so thank you. I think the feeling was always of excitement and also urgency, like an urgency around the work we were doing and importance around the work we were doing. Also, this feeling of feeling really supported and I know this word empowered, I don't know how I feel about empowerment because, you know, this idea of empowerment almost suggests like someone is giving us power or empowering us and I don't really think that's true. I really think that, you know...Also this sense of like, yes, we were sharing power and building it but, you know, in a context that is when I was there, didn't feel as bad as it does now, but was becoming really difficult and more grim and always has been. So, I think this real sense of safety, of joy, of celebration and of really genuinely respecting the autonomy of the people around us and I think this real belief in a movement, in a vision and also a long history, like I've always gotten that sense and that feeling that we were standing on the shoulders of giants and, you know, especially at board meetings, we have little updates that would go, by the way, so-and-so, whatever, you know, it would be Sarah MacArthur sent us a cheque from, I don't know, it would be, I mean, I'll go with WIC. You know what I mean? Like, we'd get cheques from people that like hadn't been in touch for 50 years, but they'd send us, you know, or which is a bit kind of not sad, but a bit morbid a little bit, we'd get kind of donations and endowments from people's estates after they died and I'm not talking about loads of money, it might be a couple of hundred pounds or a thousand pounds, but so this like constant reminder that we were connected to a long history of women that had been building and growing this movement and this organisation.

Interviewer: I think that's, it's so impressive as well, because doing this project, we are talking about when the Young Women's Movement was, you know, in its former relationship with the Young Christian Movement as well and obviously it's non-denominal now, but it still has that legacy and you've just put it in such fantastic words and there isn't that kind of, I don't know, I think I would expect there to be almost like a fear to celebrate that history or a kind of, I'm not really, I don't know how to word it in particular, but seeing how we embrace it and we have projects like this and it's more about what the movement kind of empowered people to do as opposed to what the latter stood for, you know and I think that's just lovely and for you to put it in such succinct words, unlike I did, is really nice. Yeah, so, what were your hopes for the organisation at that time?

Interviewee: Sorry, my chair just creeps, say that again [laughing].

Interviewer: Sorry, um, what were your hopes for the organisation? Kind of maybe like, if they evolved over time, start with when you first joined, like, yeah, what were you hoping would happen with the organisation?

Interviewee: I think my hopes were really to go on a journey with my feminism. I think when I first joined, especially because it was just a year out of uni, I think I really was drawn to the organisation to learn and to be part of a community and movement and to kind of understand maybe, and this sounds quite lofty, but my place in the world with my feminism

and then I think as I joined the organisation and, you know, left and came back, my hopes were really for this to be a really strong force for young women's voices and I think it was doing that demonstrably with 30 Under 30, with Young Women Lead, with all of the kind of work that was happening also on social media. I think one of the things I also loved about the Young Women's Movement were the social media takeovers and just like the day in the life of different young women. Also, I think something that I loved and I maybe haven't mentioned yet is the Young Women's Movement has always had a really close connection to the arts and it's something that maybe I wasn't that conscious of. I mentioned, obviously, all of these different illustrators and artists and all of this artwork we had in the office in the west end of Princess Street's office space but I think throughout, whether or not it was commissioning the title of the drawings or the work for the status report, or events like at our events, we would have spoken word poets, we'd have performers, we'd have writing projects, you know, feminist fests and that's kind of been like a through line throughout. I think some of my hopes for that was, without realising was how much it would kind of lift up and raise awareness about Scottish women's artwork and artists and creatives but I think my real hope was just to make a difference and for this movement to have an impact on the lives of young women and to push a feminist agenda that would mean more equity um, and that was always the kind of hope and that was the reality. I really feel like it, not that it's at an end ever, but it accomplished that and contributed to that. And I went to the Women of the World Festival with the Young Women's Movement in 2016, or something was my first WOW fest and it was before Wow Scotland had started in Perth and I remember going to that and the feeling I had was of like, oh, this is a movement, this is a community, this is a feminist movement and I think because my time at uni, there's a lot of really like horrific Greek life being introduced from the US and anti-feminist sentiment and I think I hadn't ever been in an environment where feminism wasn't under attack and so I think it's not even a hope or an aspiration. It kind of maybe goes back to that question you asked before this. It was really feeling like I was being let into, not a secret club, but let into this whole community in space and I know a community isn't a single thing, it's disparate and complicated but I remember being like, oh, this is a movement and I was really surprised by, because you asked me this earlier, the last thing I'll say about this. I think I was surprised to meet some real feminist icons through the Young Women's Movement, Laura Bates, Caroline Criado Perez, though we're not standing her for her turfy views at all but there were lots of people that I met, Gemma Kearney, who would do some WOW Festival events, who's now my neighbour. So I think that was a surprise that I've kind of forgotten about. I just had access to and the opportunity to meet all of these kind of feminist icons in Scotland, but across the UK and that was just the hope that we'd make a difference.

Interviewer: That's fantastic, um, this question leads on quite nicely from that. I was going to say, what is your favourite memory from your involvement with the Young Women's Movement?

Interviewee: Goodness, I don't know.

Interviewer: You can say this if you want [laughing].

Interviewee: Of course. Oh my gosh, it's endless. I will...Can I pick two?

Interviewer: Absolutely, give as many as you want.

Interviewee: Amazing. I'd definitely say that feminist retreat was a really favourite memory of just being outside of the Young Women's Movement, but connecting to the wider feminist movement and meeting people doing frontline work. The first status report launch was a really exciting moment. I'm not saying that it was like we didn't celebrate it collectively, but that was incredible to kind of see what that would grow into and how it would continue but yeah, I'd say the centenary event and that moment with Ang was one of my favourite moments too and I think brought everything to a culmination of like, hmm, how incredible and also this feeling of like, I'm not part of this in an active way anymore, I've had my time contributing to this and it's nice to come back into this space and see the incredible work Jenny's done and the team has done and how much this organisation and movement is thriving and is in a different phase of its life, um, yeah.

Interviewer: Fantastic. I think those moments as well speak to so much you've talked about is those like big events as well as like those small moments of friendship and community. It's just lovely. I'm wondering what opportunities did you gain from being a part of the organisation? And did you gain any sort of like transferable skills or maybe like a different quality to yourself you found?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't be who I am today without the Young Women's Movement, like that's fundamental and the transferable skills...So organising, you know, I always had like experience with events and experience with campaigns and campaign building but I really think the Young Women's Movement had a real knack, and particularly Kara Brown, for building effective movements and campaigns and seeing that really grow, being really good at like press and PR, but like having really good messaging policy, like understanding feminist kind of policy issues, being able to speak on them, all of the research that came with the role and then later it was really, kind of, governance and like those transferable skills of good governance and what does a like really well-functioning organisation on that board level actually look like? Like what does an organisation with board members that are engaged and ready to roll their sleeves up? I mean, there are many times that we had to do all sorts of things to keep things going. So I would say those transferable skills of like financial management, people management. I learned so much about HR, things that I would never learn in any other situation. In terms of like sick leave, I wrote a maternity leave policy, it should be parental leave, but I had to write a maternity leave policy with the chair and the vice chair when Patrycja went on mat leave. So, like, there are all of these things that I learned through this time and this work that I absolutely wouldn't have learned and that have served me in all of the work that I'm doing now but it was definitely from those moments of like, oh we don't have something or we've done something or things are not going right or we're recovering from past bad decisions but also the kind of, yeah, campaigning, organising, facilitating, working with people from all different types of backgrounds, supporting them, advocating for them and yeah, that comes into my wider work anyway, but this is a lot of this I learned here.

Interviewer: Fantastic. We've already kind of talked about like the community of the Young Women's Movement, but do you feel like the Young Women's Movement had an impact on your personal community, like outside of work?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, look, we all know Scotland's tiny, so I feel like. I feel like, yeah, there are a lot of people that I then either worked with or met and I met through the Young Women's Movement and like they'd seen me at a Young Women's Movement event or we'd worked together on a project and then I ended up kind of running into them later on. I would also say, I'm not going to sit here and say that like my entire friend group is dependent on the Young Women's Movement, no, but there's some really like key foundational, fundamental friendships I had that came out of the Young Women's Movement. Kara was definitely one of them as a mentor, as a pal. I lived in Kara's flat for a year or two at one stage. I mean, she rented her flat to me, you know, so I think that definitely like it had an impact on my social life. I would go to protests with people from the Young Women's Movement. Yeah, and obviously like this was my free time because on the board and as part of the steering group, I was volunteering my time. So this was sometimes evenings and weekends. So yeah, like it was a big time commitment and I spent a lot of time like in Young Women's Movement spaces and doing that kind of voluntary work. So I would say yes, it did have a big impact on my social life and also it kind of helped raise my standards around who I'd associate with. Like I wasn't putting up with people with really crap politics [laughing], like really crappy views on things and yeah, again, I'm being a bit silly here, but no, genuinely, so, I think like it had an impact on the standards of who I would surround myself with as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. We kind of talked a bit about like, Brexit and the Indyref, um, as well as some other kind of policies that came into act during your time at Young Women's Movement, um, the question is, were there any major political slash social events when you were with the organisation? So if we covered that, feel free. But I was thinking if you talked a bit about like protests there, like, yeah, if there's anything along those lines you want to get into. Interviewee: Sure. So, there, as we all know, there are so many events that have happened politically in recent years that it's hard to keep up. But I've always really had a lot of memories of the Young Women's Movement being really present in Scottish politics and at Parliament with events, with launches, with campaigns. I think I've covered most of it but one other event that I remember, which honestly I can't remember the name of, but it was the centenary of the, oh my goodness, the Suffragette Movement and this was like across the UK by Edinburgh, maybe this was 2018. There was a big march and it was called something. And if it comes to my mind, I will think of it but I didn't go to that event with people from the Young Women's Movement necessarily but what I want to say about this and capture is like my time at the Young Women's Movement was also a time of massive, I don't know, the third and fourth wave of feminism, you know, when we're talking about the rise in intersectional feminism, that was demonstrated through all of the books that were coming out, all of the research that was happening, how popular Laura Bates became. I'm not saying Laura Bates is the only person, but all of this kind of work and awareness raising around, obviously as well, like, oh, my brain, what happens with, all across the world and in France with, oh my gosh, everyone talking about sexual harassment and why can I not remember the name of this? Do you remember the movement that happened on socials, probably just at the end of like the 2010s that everyone was coming? It feels, it's so out of date now that I honestly can't remember pre-pandemic.

Interviewer: Like the Me Too movement?

Interviewee: Thank you, why am I honestly ridiculous? But no, the Me Too movement. The Me Too movement was obviously significant, right? But like, I think when we think about this in the context of the Young Women's Movement, I was there at a time when because of all of these political events, Indyref, Brexit, rise of the far right, Me Too movement happening, this like centenary of the suffragette movement, I think that there have been some, and the rise of intersectional feminism and anti-racism. So, I think that there have been some really key moments where feminism has been front and centre and kind of the collective consciousness and in public debate, and I don't like the word debate, where actually, we have been riding a wave and it is also an incredibly difficult time in terms of polarisation and the rise of the far right but I think it was a really incredible time to be at the Young Women's Movement through all of these major transitions and major political moments and having a woman as First Minister in Scotland who was really supportive of the Young Women's Movement and its work. So yeah, nothing in, you know, specific in terms of events or protests, but I think like the political time that I was involved was really beneficial for the Young Women's Movement and safe spaces and intersectional feminism and lived experience and disaggregated data and making sure young women voices were at the centre of things. While also, you know, there's that kind of tension and pull of far right extremism and terrorism, really.

Interviewer: Yeah, and how do you feel like the movement evolved during that time?

Interviewee: I think the movement became bolder, became louder, centred young women's voices in terms of investment in all of these kind of programmes and schemes and, you know, decided that it was going to be really the preeminent organisation and charity doing work on collecting and gathering data on the impact of misogyny on young women's experiences. Also, the Empower project and Elena's work really kind of came into some of the other programmes that, you know, Young Women's Movement was part of and another kind of programme I was forgetting about that was kind of launching when I was on the board was the Coding Project and Young Women Code, but also a lot of kind of work around raising awareness around abuse and the kind of experiences young women were having online and deep fakes and AI and the impact of tech. One of the team members who's not there anymore was doing her PhD on the impact of kind of, misogyny on Twitter and her name will come to me in a moment. So, I think we were front and centre, we were raising the issues that were most important to young women because young women were kind of leading the charge for this in their lived experiences and we were intersectional in a deeply demonstrable way that I'm quite frankly, I just don't think other charities and organisations were able to be, um, because of our kind of focus and demographics. So, I really think without tooting our own horn too much, and there's always more work to do and there's always kind of learning, but I really think we were front and centre in terms of fighting for change and doing it in a way that was genuine and led by young women.

Interviewer: Yeah. Are there any other achievements you feel that you were part of within the movement during this time?

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: I think you should toot your horn here [laughing].

Interviewee: But genuinely, I don't know, like I... Achievements in the movement, I mean... Status, 30 Under 30 is something that was raising the platform of young women across Scotland doing great work, all of the work around coercive control. I really think our leadership, what I was part of in terms of our leadership was behind the scenes of like doing the work of building a genuinely feminist organisation from top to bottom and doing that in a way that we don't, I don't think we really shouted about, I don't really think we talked about our board and who was on it and why it was so important that it was completely young women led and led by women and but I think really like what I was involved with was like preserving the young women's movement's legacy, making sure it was future proof, as you said, and existed well into the future but doing that kind of really quiet behind the scenes work of building a genuinely, it always was, but I'm saying like maintaining that kind of ethos and ethics of being a genuinely feminist, intersectional feminist organisation and also, yeah, I think just maybe leadership of the young women's movement. That was my contribution as chair, as the youngest chair, as a black chair, as a young woman. So, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, when you first joined the movement, did you feel it was feminist? Do you know, I think when we say that, we kind of apply that as degrees of feminism and obviously, yeah, but you feel like that was kind of already in place?

Interviewee: I think it was a gender equality organisation. I think there were people in it who were incredible feminists. I think it was a feminist organisation, but I think it was at a different stage in its feminist journey, that like intersectional feminism that was embedded in its work and I know that even now, like talking about intersectional feminism is a bit out of date too, like that kind of intersectional approach to things, I think in large part was due to Kara Brown and the team around her and that work and when I joined, Jackie Scott as director was, you know, a good director, but I don't think that the organisation due to her leadership and the board and people involved was the most progressive and radically inclusive feminist organisation known. So, I think like it became more of a feminist organisation from 2017 onwards and like it still did important work to combat sexism and misogyny but yeah, I think its feminist journey evolved, but it was already, but I won't say it was like the most progressive feminist organisation because of that history and kind of working through its history of ties to the Young Women's Christian Association, the international movement. Yeah, it was, but not as feminist as it is now and I know what you mean, because I don't even like talking about degrees of feminism. It was at a different place in its feminist journey [laughing].

Interviewer: Yeah, that's perfectly put, I love that. And was it important for you to work for a feminist organisation? And is it, you know, in your continued career, is it something that you think about before you work for somebody or, you know, with someone?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I, as I said, like my time as a sabbatical officer was, you know, I was radicalised in that time as a sabbatical officer and being president of a union and understanding what that meant. Then I was radicalised by joining the Young Women's movement in a good way, um, I think feminism was always important to me, but I think like I was still having my feminist light bulb moments and so I think joining the Young Women's movement crystallised a lot of that for me. So yes, it is very important that I work with, let me think about how I'm going to say this. I work freelance as a consultant, and a lot of my job is going into organisations that are not feminist or that are not anti-racist, that maybe

don't have or need support with their values. I still don't work with just anyone, like I work with organisations that have good ethos. I work in a sector that is very dominated by women in leadership roles at the top level, but then there are real issues with women and other genders representation across the organisation or across the sector. I work with a lot of freelancers and artists and creative people. Yeah, so it is very important to me. I have been very lucky, and some of this has been intentional and by choice, that I've worked in very feminist spaces throughout my career. It has not always been the case, but the Young Women's movement set the standard really high for me, and then I had a point of comparison when I worked for other companies or organisations across the third sector in the arts that were deeply problematic, like deeply problematic. So it's important to me, it continues to be, but I think my work requires me to go into spaces that need to be held accountable and need support for change. It's not easy, but I know what, it's not about standard, I know what I'm working towards because of that time at the Young Women's Movement, but also because of wider support that I have and wider communities that I'm part of, but being on the board at the time that I was gave me a model for good governance and good practise of what a feminist organisation actually looks like.

Interviewer: That's lovely. I think it's something as well, coming from that background of student politics too, I'm like, oh my goodness, this could be, like, it doesn't have to be so negative and it doesn't have to be so oppressive in lots of different ways, even in the smallest ways that you don't think matter and yeah, the Young Women's Movement is, for me, that kind of, that something to reach for, something to aspire to. So it's to hear somebody else, especially somebody who's a consultant and goes in and kind of shares that idea with other people, because not everybody's had the opportunity to get involved, and I think that that's really lovely. What would you like the future of the movement to look like?

Interviewee: Great question. I would like the future of the movement to continue to be as intersectional as possible, to be radical as it is, to give young women even more power and control and autonomy. I don't know if I like the word control, but you know what I mean. I think, like, we talk about this aspiration, right, of the Young Women's movement, and I think I'm going to actually liken this to the student movement for a moment. I think what's beautiful about the student movement, though it is deeply flawed, is that I had, at a really crucial time, my first job out of uni, this opportunity to understand what it would feel like to be in a position of power and influence as a young person, and for that to be honoured and respected, and to be part of a wider student movement of sabbatical officers doing that work with NUS Scotland and the National Union of Students UK, and really not fully understand until I was finished what that meant for my own kind of self-worth and my values moving into the world of work. So, when we think about, like, that question of the future of the Young Women's movement, I would want every young woman, if they wanted to, to have that experience, and I'm not talking about being a sabbatical officer in the student movement or in a leadership role, but to really have that autonomy and to live in a world which will maybe never happen, but free from misogyny and harm and abuse, and a movement that is trauma-centred, a movement that is care-led, a movement that is about mutual aid and collective care, a movement that is anti-capitalist, if I can say that here, and a movement that really, it shouldn't have to do the work of protecting, it's not about protection, but it's like providing the resources and the tools and the support and the power for people to thrive in a world that is on fire, and is on fire because of my generation too

now, but many generations before it, and is a movement that holds power accountable and people that are abusing power accountable, but also that knows that it isn't alone and needs to work, it's not about working in partnership, but can find other spaces of support, and I think, like, we need these spaces even more now, we're seeing an attack on our trans siblings' rights, we're seeing an attack on so many different marginalised communities, so many people that experience oppression, particularly when we think about the impact on working-class communities and austerity and the cost-of-living crisis, and the world of work, like, you know, I work with a lot of people moving into the world of work, either post-college or uni, or just kind of moving into the arts or work at different life stages and ages, and, yeah, we're in a crisis when it comes to, I don't think AI is bad, I don't think it's that basic, like, we're in a crisis of what will happen to security, that's a bit of a strange way of putting it, but, yeah, like, people's security around, like, living and work, and I'm a big supporter of universal basic income, but, like, we don't have it here, Ireland might be moving to UBI sooner than we will, but, like, this whole question of, like, what is, not just with the climate crisis and emergency, but, like, what is our future, and obviously rights of young women are under attack all over the world, especially here, so, yeah, the future of the movement is a movement that holds its grounds, that is trauma-informed, that's care-led, that's radical, that kind of shares resources, and that continues to hold power and redistribute it and support people to thrive, and whatever that looks like for them, I know that's not leadership for everyone, it's not for everyone, but, yeah, all those things.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think there's something you said there about providing young women the tools and the resources, and that resonates so much, because I think, like, for me growing up, it's all about have your toolkit ready for when you go into the world, and you're like, what does that look like, I don't know what that means, and then slowly, like, over time, you start to go, oh, okay, this is a part of my toolkit, this is how I kind of, yeah, as you say, not protect myself, but almost, like, yeah, I don't know, I get through the world, and I think seeing organisations like the Young Women's Movement as people who are able to help you build that toolkit is such a nice thing, and how do they keep doing that, as you say, with, like, AI and tech, and keeping that trauma informed, keeping that, like, kind of knowledge sharing space for women, yeah, I agree, I think that's so important.

Interviewee: And also, what that might look like, too, sorry, just quickly, as you were saying that, is, like, maybe it is a return to providing frontline service support, so, like, that's another thing, and I know that that still happens in some ways, but, you know, we're moving, continuing to move into a certain direction that will require some practical support, and I think, and I'm not, you know, in any way saying that moves away from that, kind of stepping away from the Glasgow Centre or negative or anything, I just think that that might increasingly be needed as well, like, really practical, on the ground, frontline support, too.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm going to rephrase this question a little bit, we're almost done, by the way, thank you so much for your time, it's been fantastic. So, the original question is, what do you think makes an organisation feminist? But I'd love to know your thoughts on that, as well as, like, going forward, how do you keep that at the core? And obviously, this is, like, your job, so if you want to be, like, this is for paying clients only, I completely understand [laughing] I'd love to pick your brains on that.

Interviewee: Sorry, say it again, because I was just looking at the questions, and I completely zoned out for a second, go for it.

Interviewer: No, it's fine. So, I've been jumping around the questions as well, so I'm sorry about that.

Interviewee: No not at all, I haven't been reading them.

Interviewer: What do you think makes an organisation feminist? And my addition to that is, within the context we were just talking about going forward, how do you keep feminism at the core of your organisation?

Interviewee: Yeah, great question, and no, it's not only for paid clients.

Interviewer: [laughing].

Interviewee: I think, like, what keeps an organisation feminist is, like, radical feminist values at its core that it acts on and that is everything from how it manages its money, is it managing its money in a feminist way? You know, is it participatory decisions? Is it money that's being redistributed into networks and to people that need it? It's about its leadership, it's about the way that it makes decisions, who it works with, who's at the core of it, and in this case, it would be young women. It's about decisions about, like, who it partners with and, like, who it associates with and what sort of, like, policy change it's making, who runs everything from the team to socials, how kind of projects and programmes are designed, are they designed with young women at the core? But a feminist organisation needs to be radically driven by dismantling patriarchy, dismantling oppression, dismantling misogyny and being bold about it, but also knowing that, like, sometimes that's a quiet, gentle thing. I'm not saying it's always about activism in public and visible ways, it's about the quiet things too, which is, like, who is making decisions behind the scenes and how they're supported and listened to and respected and honoured, and it's about having that integrity but I think really the core of it is, like, feminist values at the core of everything and tying every decision that every person makes, which sounds a little Big Brother, but what I mean, like, every decision being tied to those core feminist values and everyone, even though everyone's feminism looks and feels different, which is, like, welcome, but that everyone's kind of on the same page of what that core purpose is and is working towards it, because I think, and without naming an organisation I work for now, I do some anti-racism work for another feminist organisation, and when I've asked the team what feminism is or what their feminism is, they're like, well, this is mine, but I don't actually know what this organisation means by feminism. So I think, like, that, like, transparency, clarity, um, I'm neurodivergent and neuro-spicy, like, having it be obvious and, like, really out in the open and not being afraid to decide and have that, like, collective decision around that, because I think where things do go wrong and where people will claim to be feminists and not be in practise is not willing to, like, it's not about being held accountable, but not willing to have, like, that honesty of bringing things to... Unearthing things and, like, being really honest about things that are difficult or uncomfortable or in tension, and I think, like, in tension with each other, different views, different ways, different ideas. So, yeah, I think it's about not being afraid to, like, surface and stay with the trouble and discomfort of things, that's what I think a feminist organisation is about.

Interviewer: Yeah, that really resonates and kind of, like, what they talk about the Young Women's Movement is creating that safe and brave space, and I love the addition of brave, because it does take bravery to be a feminist, you know, and it shouldn't, but it does, and yeah, I think that that's being bold and sticking to those values is really, it's, yeah, it's resonated a lot. The next question I have is second last, the penultimate, is did slash do you experience any challenges with the Young Women's Organisation, organisation, Young Women's Movement, sorry.

Interviewee: Yeah, of course, like, I think, I think, yeah, the challenges were with some really philosophical questions, how do we stay part of an international movement that looks really different to the way we are, even like YWCA Ireland, you know, like, there are other kind of, not chapters, but other, other associations as part of YWCA that have a particular way of doing things, are still doing deeply feminist important work, but that kind of identity question, so, like, it wasn't a personal challenge, but this question of, like, who are we, and how do we hold all of this, our association with the international movement, which I won't say I felt part of personally, but, like, it was there, and it felt present, and through people that were connected to the international movement, like Cara and others, we were, we had a direct, like, line of communication, and with them, and all sorts, also, like, how do we kind of come to, how do we bring our past and our history into our present, with all of the people that are associated with the Young Women's Movement, but, yeah, the personal challenges for me were that leadership in the early days, then during the pandemic was financial challenges, management challenges, keeping the doors open, making sure everything was running well, and then also, like, you know, we had people come in and through the Young Women's Movement that maybe didn't have positive experiences of working at the Young Women's Movement, either because of values misalignment or overwork, like, I cannot, you know, skate over the fact that we're still in a sector that is underfunded, that is over capacity, I'm all against urgency culture and productivity for productivity's sake, but, you know, the Young Women's Movement operates in the context of a third sector that is struggling, and will continue to, because there's a lack of money, so I know, and I've, when I was interim CEO, dear God [laughing] like, that was two and a half months of just, like, what, you know, it was, like, there was so much, and I knew it going into it, but when I stepped into that role, I was like, oh, and Jenny's done a brilliant job, we need to put systems in place, the team's all working remotely, we don't have regular team meetings, people feel isolated, how do we support this team working remotely, so I think there are the challenges of being a charity in this time, in this funding landscape, in a sector that is burnt out and oversubscribed by design, because we're replacing public services that should exist, you know, we're doing work, that's civic society, right, this whole question of should it even exist, of course it should, but, like, it's replacing public services, you know, that are being cut, and replacing, kind of, public services that should be doing that work, or if it was well resourced, so I think it is the challenge of, like, being a charity in 2025, and I lived through those challenges as a board member, and in my time as interim CEO, and it wasn't for everyone, and not everyone was well treated, I will say that, because of the conditions we were in, and maybe leadership we've had at different points, so I completely honour that, acknowledge that, put my hands up to that as well, because I was involved at different points, but that challenge at times, there were times that it felt insurmountable, but we did it [laughing] we did it, but yeah, there were times it was, like, what, I mean, I

loved it so much, and I loved the people I was on the board with, and working with, and involved with, it was always worth it, but yeah, there were times it was, like, this feels, it never felt impossible, because we were supported, it was never just me, or one person, but of course, like, it was challenging, and it continues to be challenging work, because of those conditions.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think, um, you might have covered this already, but last question is, is there anything you would like to see improved within the organisation, like, as it is today?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, I have to say, I can't fully speak to the organisation today, because I don't fully know anymore, but I think that I would like to see a better resourced organisation always, so that the team and everyone involved can breathe, and of course, ah, I forgot to say a big accomplishment that comes up now, because I forgot, well, bringing in the four-day work week, that was huge, and I was part of that decision as the chair and vice chair, so yeah, that is a big thing that I'm really proud of, and back to this question, so there is a four-day work week still, I hope, is it still, okay, good, and there are challenges with that too, because like, the rest of the world's not on a four-day work week, so there are some massive challenges with that, but I'm really proud of that, but yeah, I would like to see better resourced, more rested, better supported team, because the amount of work that this team does is, it punches well above its weight, and probably shouldn't be happening, like the Young Women's Movement shouldn't be able to accomplish as much as it does with the capacity it has [laughing], and I know that's growing, but that has always been an issue and challenge, and so I would just like to see it have more money, and more, it's not about people, but just like well resourced, and that's a pipe dream for any charity, but that's what I would want for the organisation to really be able to do its great work, but for the people in it to not feel burnt out, and overburdened, and oversubscribed, for the people that make all this happen to thrive, and I know that word is so overused, but genuinely to thrive, I mean, can we thrive under capitalism in the world of work? No, but as best as we can [laughing] as best as we can.

Interviewer: That's amazing, my favourite saying at the moment is, rest is resistance, and that's fine, don't get out of bed until 11, I'm resisting.

Interviewee: as you should, so yeah, all of that.

Interviewer: Amazing, thank you so much, just before we finish up, is there anything else you would like to share, or tell us about?

Interviewee: Briefly, yeah, because one of the questions about like an object, or something...

Interviewer: Oh yeah, sorry, I was going to come back to that one, because I didn't know how to fit it in, but yes, do you have an object?

Interviewee: I don't have an object, but there's one thing I do want to talk about, because when we, we had like a storage locker with things from our history over the hundred years, and when Jenny came into her role, on the week of her handover, the two of us went to the storage locker in Edinburgh, and found zines, newspaper articles, but the big thing was, there was a like, a campaign at one point, to collect shoes for a project we had called In Her

Shoes, and I think we'd gotten shoes of like really well-known, and well-established Scottish women, who were politicians, I think we had Nicola Sturgeon's shoes, who were actresses, or whatever, but they were literally just in this storage container in Balerno, or something, and I don't know, I don't know what happened with them, and I don't know if they ended up being like displayed for the centenary events, but that's an object I'll remember, I'll never forget, it's Nicola Sturgeon's shoes, and I just think there's something really unique, tangible, funny, about the fact that we had all of these women's shoes they donated, and of course it's about being in her shoes as a woman, you know, in this world, and what that means, and what that looks like, but as an object that just feels incredibly tangible for like the work of the Young Women's Movement, and so I don't, yeah, I'd like to see something happen with it, if it isn't already, it might be, there are a lot of shoes to store, some of them were a little mouldy, but yeah, I think like that, that was, that was something that was really quite special, and quite funny, about the Young Women's Movement.

Interviewer: We'll ask Lauren, Lauren, if you're watching this, where are the shoes?

[Laughing] Like I want to know, that's fantastic, we'll probably sell a few of them as well, make a profit, we talked about fundraising, and like doing a big auction, and yeah, yeah, but then who would want to like, maybe you tracked the wrong type of crowd, if you're selling like women's shoes, like a closed, invited thing, so yeah, yeah, anyway [laughing], amazing, well I think, Julia, do you have anything else to add?

Interviewer 2: No, it's been really, really interesting to listen to everything you had to, you had to share with us, I really, really enjoyed it, so, but I don't have any, any further questions off the top of my head, unless you have anything, anything more, or anything you would like to, to, to elaborate on, or share more about.

Interviewee: I think, nothing I can think of, it's been really nice, because it's, I mean, it's been a joy, so thank you for interviewing me, and I think your questions have prompted me to remember things, there are bits of things that I, yeah, Joe Connolly, I mean, not that we need to talk about him that much, but there are things I would have completely forgotten, so I think, I think we covered it.

Interviewer: Your honesty has been so refreshing as well, because I think it's lovely to hear the kind of challenges, and the, it's not all just like sunshine and rainbows, and stuff, and to have that kind of background perspective, and you saying like, you working quietly in the background to build the young women's movement to what it is today, it's like, I don't know, the people I've interviewed so far have been so lovely, and, and interesting in their own right, but I've not heard that perspective yet, so it's been, yeah, as somebody who wants to work in the sector, and is involved in their own kind of start-ups, it's like, it's inspired me so much to be like, okay, don't do that, and like, avoid this, and do that, and yeah, I feel like, thank you so much for your time today, it's been, it's been so inspiring, and really entertaining, and I hope you don't dwell too much on the, on the Joes of the world, and stuff after that, I hope you leave feeling, yeah.

Interviewee: Thank you, it's been so lovely, and I've been looking forward to this, and it's been so nice to reflect on, you've been a brilliant interviewer, and it's been really lovely, so yeah, thank you for having me, and thanks for everything you've said, and shared, it's been my pleasure.