

Kirsty Kelly 03.05.25

Interviewer 1: So, I'm just going to start with what we start with on the script. So, my name is Beth and I'm interviewing Kirsty for the Young Women's Movement's Young Women Remember project. So, to begin with, can you tell me your full name, where you're from and your previous role with the YWCA?

Interviewee: Okay, so my name is Kirsty Kelly. What was the other question? [laughing]

Interviewer 1: I know, it's quite a lot here. Where are you from?

Interviewee: I'm originally from Edinburgh, but I grew up in Fife. And my previous roles in the YWCA, well, at the moment, I'm still a trustee of the YWCA of Great Britain. And so, previous to that, I was Vice President of the World YWCA. And then before that, I was President of what was YWCA Scotland.

Interviewer 1: Amazing. You've done it all [laughing]. Excellent. Okay, so just a few warm up questions to set the scene. So, if you don't mind me asking, when were you born?

Interviewee: In 1984.

Interviewer 1: Where did you grow up? We already answered that one. And where have you lived apart from Edinburgh and Fife?

Interviewee: I've lived in Edinburgh, I've lived in Fife, I've lived in Glasgow and Switzerland.

Interviewer 1: Oh, Nice. And what jobs have you had?

Interviewee: So, my jobs have been, I've been a youth worker, I have been a business analyst, and now I've also been a music teacher, a performing arts teacher, a singer, and now I am an arts director.

Interviewer 1: Great, great selection.

Interviewer 2: Yeah, it's a real variety of jobs. That's really cool.

Interviewer 1: And the last one was, what do you do for a living now? Which you've already answered. So great, thank you. Okay, so the contextual questions is other Kirsty. We'll try not to get mixed up with the Kirsty's in the room.

Interviewer 2: Don't worry, you're not asking any questions at the moment [laughing].

Interviewer 2: Yeah, so just a few questions about the kind of context around your involvement in the YWCA. So, what year did you join the organisation?

Interviewee: I knew you were going to ask me that question. I can't even do the maths. So, I joined the YWCA when I was seven.

Interviewer 2: Wow, that's really young.

Interviewee: So, we're talking 34 years ago. I'll leave you to do the maths. [Laughing] You're looking at me and you're thinking there's no way that's possible. I understand that. [Laughing]

Interviewer 2: [Laughing]. We weren't thinking that at all, for the record.

Interviewee: And you're both going to tell me that neither of you are even 34. You're going to tell me that. I know you are. [Laughing].

Interviewer 2: Well, I'm 21, but I'll be there eventually, you know.

Interviewee: Oh, great.

Interviewer 1: I'm 25. I think, yeah, I'm 25.

Interviewer 2: You think? [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: I keep getting mixed up. I don't know why I keep thinking I'm 24. I'm stuck, there. [Laughing].

Interviewee: So, I'm old enough to be both of your mothers. That's great. [Laughing]

Interviewer 2: No, that's not true [laughing].

Interviewee: I'm only kidding.

Interviewer 2: Okay. So, yeah, how old were you when you joined? That was my next question. So, how did you find out about the organisation, if you remember?

Interviewee: So, as a young child, I was living in Fife, and the local YWCA centre at that point was Kirkcaldy YWCA. And I was really heavily into drama, and my mum sent me along to the YWCA because they ran drama classes.

Interviewer 2: Cool. I didn't know that. So, my next question was, what projects slash initiatives did you take part in? So, drama, was there any other projects?

Interviewee: So drama was originally the first one that I connected with the Y, and then I just kept cycling through all of their youth work projects as well and then like at 16, I ended up on the local committee, and then they also employed me as a youth worker. And so then I like took part in what was known then as the local play schemes for social work kids as well. So, yeah.

Interviewer 2: And during that kind of role, were you always in Kirkcaldy and like kind of Fife area?

Interviewee: Yeah, I was but then when I was 16 and became involved in like the management committee of that centre, I then kind of connected more with YWCA of Scotland and I had done previously to that because whenever there was something going on in Y of Scotland and they needed a young woman, then, I seemed to like, there wasn't, let's just say there wasn't many of us at that point that were involved and then it got then it got a lot more young women involved. So, yeah, I kind of connected with the Y of Scotland at that point, too but mostly like growing up, it was Kirkcaldy Y until I think I got into that management committee and then the committee of YWCA Scotland asked if I would want to put myself forward to go to the World YWCA Conference in Australia. So as a 16 year old, I was like, hello. Yes, yes, yes.

(5:23 - 5:38)

Interviewer 2: Absolutely.

Interviewee: I got selected by the delegation to go to that. And that was kind of my first step into like being part of like more of YWCA Scotland and being on their management committee and then getting involved in the European YWCA's, etc. So, yeah.

Interviewer 2: Wow. Do you have like a favourite place you went to with the Y?

Interviewee: Oh, man, I've been to like I've had like I would say I've had an incredible journey with the Y and like the reason, like it sounds really corny, but the reason I am who I am today is because of the Y and my journey through it and like I'm sure there's probably other people who have said that as well and I'm just trying to think of all the places that I've been. So, Belarus, Kenya, Australia, Switzerland before I actually lived there. Yeah, Vienna. Yeah, I've had some like some amazing experiences like as a singer, I got the opportunity to sing with Annie Lennox when I went to Vienna and it was in front of like Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, like and then when I went to Thailand, I got the opportunity to sing in front of like the princess. [Laughing]

Interviewer 2: Wow.

Interviewee: So, so, you know, like the opportunities that I've had from the Y like have been amazing. So I don't think necessarily it's about the places, if there was one place, probably Palestine. Maybe that's got like a really big place in my heart just because of everything that happens there and the projects that we that we do through the Y there. They're so strong and the women are so courageous and it's just an amazing place but I think it's just the people I've met along the way. Like I think the Y is very much like this sort of, you know, big massive family and so it's really nice to be able to say that wherever I go in the world, like I have friends because I've got these Y connections and yeah, and my mum, like, when my mum left home, My mum went and stayed in a YWCA flat in Lothian Road in Edinburgh and that's where she met like her lifelong friend and like, yeah, so it just seems like the Y is like that safe space, like where, you know, there's always somebody from the Y somewhere.

Interviewer 2: Lovely. One of my questions is what was. Oh sorry.

Interviewer 1: That's such, such lovely anecdotes. Thank you so much for sharing.

Interviewee: Sorry, tell me to be quiet because I do go off on tangents.

Interviewer 2: Not at all. I feel like I'm interviewing a celebrity now.

Interviewee: No not at all, believe me, I'm actually going to tell you that actually one of my favourite places is actually, you're going to laugh, but it's Elgin YWCA.

Interviewer 2: No way! Interviewee: That was one of my favourite places that I used to go to, actually. So yeah.

Interviewer 1: The Elgin one?

Interviewee: Yeah, the Elgin, I really enjoyed and Coupar Angus as well. They were two of my favourite centres. I just loved the people there. They were amazing places to go to, to visit.

Interviewer 2: Both Beth and I are from up north. So when you're saying like you're getting to go around all these places, I'm like, and I get excited when they ask me to come to Edinburgh, let alone Australia.

Interviewer 2: And now you're saying that Elgin's your favourite. I love it. [Laughing].

Interviewee: I loved going to Elgin. I absolutely adored it. I think the Y women there, they took me out nightclubbing.

Interviewer 1: In Elgin? [Laughing]

Interviewee: I was going to say Moray? No, near the Baxter's Soup Place, wherever that is.

Interviewer 2: Oh, Falkaboos?

Interviewee: Yeah, some nightclub there. I had the best time.

Interviewer 2: That's so cool. I love that. Amazing. Yeah, so just kind of tailing on to what you're saying is what the community around the Y was like. So you're saying it's kind of global and you just feel like it's a safe kind of space for you?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think like for me, you know, I came very much in at grassroots level right through a local project and came through my like love of music and drama and then all of a sudden I grew up in this organisation which they kind of looked at me and identified me as this young woman who had a big mouth and like lots of people will tell you that [Laughing] and a lot to say for herself and so they kind of like harboured that and nurtured that and mentored me. And then all of a sudden opened like the world up to me. Like, you know, even just being part of YWCA Scotland and going to like Moray and Cooper Angus and

Livingston and getting to be at the opening of Scottish Parliament representing the YWCA or getting to go to Buckingham Palace to represent the YWCA and sitting with Prince Philip round the table with all the other youth organisations in the world like the Scouts and the Girl Guides, etc. And representing this charity that I did feel really strongly about, and then getting to go to like, you know, across, you know, on a plane, like by myself like at nearly 18 and being the youngest voting person at our YWCA World Movement Conferences. Like, it's amazing. You then like, you know, you make all these friends, but then you also learn so much about what's going on in the world because, you know, when you're in Fife or, you know, you're in your own little bubble, you know, it's exciting when something happens in Fife but then you realise that there's so much more that goes on in the world. Like, I remember in Kenya, we were running this campaign to raise one dollar for every woman that we represented in the world. So, I think at that point they had like 125 million or something, don't quote me on that, but like young women and girls involved in the Y, so they wanted to like raise a dollar for each one. And we had like women from like African countries running on stage with like a chicken or running on stage with like things that to them were worth a lot of money and for them to like, you know, donate them was like massive, like huge. So, then you realise like just what the movement actually means to women across the whole world, but then you can also put it back into your own context, because in Scotland, we had this amazing exhibition and it was to do with domestic violence and it was to walk in the shoes of women who had been victims or been affected by domestic violence and this went around the whole of Scotland and then it ended up going to different countries in the world but like J.K. Rowling like donated her shoes from the world premiere of the very first Harry Potter film and then it was like alongside those shoes, there was like a woman from like Edinburgh who was sharing her story of and, you know, then there was like shoes that were huge, shoes that were tiny, shoes that were stilettos, shoes that were trainers and these went into like churches and places and you just like see the impact, like, you know, getting that, that number out there, because obviously that number changes every day. So we took the number at that time and like listen to all of these stories of women who had been affected or women who couldn't, couldn't relate because it hadn't happened to them, but wanted to help be a voice for women who have been affected. So, I think the campaigning element as well, it taught me so much in terms of how to have a voice and how to also give other women a voice who don't necessarily have it themselves. So I got the chance like at one point to stand up in the United Nations, the United Nations in Geneva to talk about Young women marriage, child marriage, and to do that on behalf of an organisation and to be able to give a voice to women around the world, it's amazing and so it's great to go to all these different countries and be with women all over the world and hear their stories from their grassroots but then it's great to be able to put it back contextually back to like, you know, being in Scotland and like what's happening in our part of the world as well.

Interviewer 2: That's amazing, honestly, and you're obviously referencing a lot of campaigns that you're involved in. Do you remember what the kind of what the YWCA kind of agenda was at the time you were most involved, if that makes sense, a kind of broader agenda or is it lots of different ones?

Interviewee: So I think there was lots of things that happened throughout my time there because I was around for quite a long time. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

So the domestic violence campaign was, was a massive one. Um, one of the chief executives of YWCA Scotland at that point, Elaine Samson, she had actually founded back in the 80s, the Zero Tolerance campaign, which I'm sure you've maybe heard of and so domestic violence was really high on the agenda and so that was probably maybe some of the bigger work I was involved in but then we also had that real big push on it being young women and girls. You know, the YWCA and, you know, and I put myself in that shoes now as well as being an older woman. You know, a lot of our committees, a lot of the people who were having the voice were older women who, yes, had that experience and who probably, you know, had stories to tell but we're an organisation that is meant to be primarily about young women and children or young women and girls and so it was really this big campaign about giving the voice back to the young women and doing that kind of intergenerational leadership. So, still using our older women, because for women, when you reach a certain age, and for me, like I remember when I reached 30, I was like, oh, the Y doesn't want me anymore, because it's like women that are 30 and under. So I understand and appreciate now what the older women felt at that point in time when I'm running about being this big voice but then there's these older women who are like, what about me? I've still got a place. So that intergenerational leadership where you're learning from, from women who have that experience and those stories to tell but they are nurturing and mentoring you so that you can have that voice and be that voice, because I think that's really, really important and I think at that point as well, like some of the great work that I was involved in was around in Scottish Parliament, because it was fairly new, like the opening of Scottish Parliament and MSPs, et cetera, all of those things. I got to be involved in the youth parliament on behalf of the charity. So it was but that was very, very new and I don't think I don't think a lot of people knew what to do with all of us young women and other people. [Laughing]. So, yeah, so I think it's that and also, I think probably the biggest thing that I was involved in was the C. So the YWCA and, you know, that word Christianity, because, you know, when you say it, it's not necessarily inclusive, but it is what the foundations of the YWCA is built upon. It's where we come from. We don't forget that. We don't forget why it was, you know, first founded and the impact it had at that point. But in the same token, you know, the world does change and as we know, we're living in a very, very different world from 10, 20, 30 years ago and so, yeah, being, being part of those conversations around the 'C' was, was controversial, was massive and, you know, we've changed the name in Scotland to the Y Movement and yeah, so that was like a big story because you don't want to lose that story. The minute you take away that 'C' then you're kind of forgetting where we've come from but it's also about moving forward because the organisation wants to be that organisation that can move with the times and be whatever young women and young people need at that moment in time.

Interviewer 2: I think that's what really drew me to this particular project of the oral history and kind of bringing all those, all the elements of the movement's history kind of into light and into this accessible archive where people can remember and reflect. I think it's really important.

Interviewee: And I think it is. I think it's really important to be able to like to still remember those stories and reflect on them and then see how far the movements actually come, because like we've done amazing stuff in the Y Movement in Scotland, like amazing things and it's so nice to see, like how fresh it is just now in that campaigning part and how you're

really giving a voice to young people all over the world and in Scotland primarily, which I think is great and I think that thread is something that's happened throughout the whole time that the organisation has been going. It's just that it's been done in different ways. I mean, the best story that I ever heard was, and I actually met her. I went to London to one of the YWs that was there. It was called the Y Club. I still don't understand why it was called the Y Club, but in a very nice part of London and it was for the 150th anniversary of the YWCA and there was this lady there, very elderly lady and she started speaking to me and she had checked herself out of her nursing home to be able to be at this gathering and so this woman ended up being Jeanette Palmer and she had, back in the day, during the war, basically all of the Ys, like worldly goods, including all the archives, gonna get bombed, you know, because of the war, so they weren't safe. So, she put on an army outfit, put all of the archives into the back of a van and drove the van over the border, like into Switzerland to save them. Now, it was highly, like, even just driving the van, like in, like, England would be, like, highly illegal but being a woman, like, totally, totally not okay. So this woman, like, you know, completely and utterly just to me was just like the essence of the Y, of somebody who just loved the Y so much and believed in them and totally wanted the story of the Y to go through generations, that she risked, like, her life. I mean, I'm still in awe of this woman, like, I still, yeah.

Interviewer 2: That's wonderful. Wow. That's a fantastic story. Thank you for sharing that. So we're wondering kind of what volunteering for the organisation looked like on a regular basis, kind of like day in, day out.

Interviewee: So for me, like, when I was younger, it was like going along to, like, the different youth clubs and the different drama clubs and being a part of that, like being a volunteer within those clubs and, like, running games or, like, being a part of the staffing group that was there. So, that was very much how my volunteering first started and then when I started getting involved in, like, the management committees, etc, it's more, like, it was just different and it depended on what had to happen. You know, sometimes it was just attending meetings, sometimes it was attending events. At one point when I was at university, I was also helping to run a redundancy process in the Y of Scotland because we went through a massive restructuring. So, yeah, so sometimes it's been just management level and then sometimes, like, actually being involved in things like talking to lawyers and things, things I never thought I would actually like be doing. So, yeah, sometimes writing strategic plans, being involved in finance. Yeah, I learned a lot being involved in, yeah, in Y of Scotland and then when we went to, like, go to, like, a world conference or a European conference, it was looking at all the papers and then thinking about how does it relate to us and what do we want our voice to be? And looking at constitutional changes in the Y or looking at things that were being put forward. Did we agree with them? Did we not agree with them? What would our voice be? Would we vote yes? Would we vote against it? So very much working collaboratively and making sure the delegation of women that were going, that everybody was on the same page and that we were all representing, like, the charity that we were coming from and so, yeah, yeah, I don't know if I can say that it always looked the same because I don't think it ever did.

Interviewer 2: That's a perfect answer, though, you know, there was no regular basis for the sense of it. That sounds really, really interesting. Yeah, so kind of looking at your

involvement a bit more broadly, how did your involvement with the organisation interact with, it says your regular life, but your life outside the Y?

Interviewee: So I think probably some of my life choices have been because of the Y or as a result of being a part of the Y. When I left school, I always wanted to go and do music and drama but as a singer, my voice wasn't necessarily mature enough and so I went and worked for Standard Life Assurance Company as a business analyst and they were amazing because they had this at that point in time, we don't do it now but at that point in time, if you volunteered, they gave you back that time. So if I went and volunteered with the Y for like a week, say like on my like going on a European trip, they would give me a week back. So then I would just give two weeks to the Y. So, yeah, I think I just married it up. Like even when I moved to Switzerland and took up my role here in an international school, I still got given like time away from, you know, out of school so that I could attend meetings because, you know, sometimes like the worldwide YWCA, their meetings were like a week long. So, yeah, I think it's almost been, I would say it's almost been a part of my normal life. Does that make sense?

Interviewer 1: Absolutely.

Interviewer 2: Yeah. Sounds like it had to be. There's so much going on. So you talked a little bit about restructuring within the Y. I was just wondering, was there anything else going on within the organisation that you can remember, like anything that comes to mind?

Interviewee: So, I think restructuring was a big thing. You know, Y at one point in Scotland was very much... We had accommodation, so accommodation was a large part of the life of Y across Great Britain, in fact and I think legislation changed [Coughing] excuse me and also just kind of the work and I suppose the way that life was, was working as well. We kind of steered away from there, like when my mum left home, she was only allowed to leave home because she was going to go and live in a YWCA flat at 18. Um, like when I left home that like I went left home and went to university and went into university accommodation. So life was a bit different then as well. So and then we had a lot of centres too and obviously we've moved away from that as well. Like we had centres like everywhere. There was like always a Y centre for you to go down to in like Restalrig or, you know, Livingston or, you know, up in Elgin, Coupar Angus and I know that we still have some of our YMs, YWs still kind of have some of those centres, etc but we don't necessarily. So, I think that kind of local grassroots in terms of local projects, etc. Kind of merged more into where you guys are just now in terms of like the campaigning and still working grassroots levels, but not necessarily having to do that within four walls.

Interviewer 2: What other initiatives were taking place that you maybe didn't become aware of until after the fact, if that makes sense?

Interviewee: In the Y?

Interviewer 2: Yeah, but also kind of just generally like within your community.

Interviewee: Interesting question.

Interviewer 2: Yeah. It's OK if nothing comes to mind. I think it's just more about like if there are other kind of youth spaces that were maybe also around at the time or if there wasn't.

Interviewee: Yeah, there was, like the Girl Guides, the Scouts, all of those kind of like, you know, movements were around and at that point in time, the Y of Scotland did an awful lot of work with the Girl Guides as well, like, we had a lot of communication with them and sometimes we actually did work with them as well and youth work in general, like especially within local authorities, you know, Fife Council had like a massive relationship with Y of Scotland in terms of they ran play schemes for social work kids and even things like the Big Issue. The Big Issue was being sold out of, or not being sold, but was being run out of YWCA of Kirkcaldy. So again, the Big Issue had a relationship with us as well. So I think the partnerships as well were really like, even the YMCA, we had a really strong relationship with them as well but these were all projects that were happening and local things that were happening but youth work was massive, like with the local authorities, like huge. I mean, yeah, working with schools, running projects in local centres and sometimes Fife Council would actually give us youth workers to work within the Y, within our own projects as well. So, yeah, I think like in terms of youth projects, there was tonnes going about, like when I was growing up within the Y and even when I was then as an adult in the management committees as well.

Interviewer 2: And what were your relationships like with the other members of the Y?

Interviewee: Aw, I had a brilliant time. I had an absolute blast. I've still got loads of relationships going on. Didn't always agree with them [laughing] and yeah, I think at some points, probably the older generation sometimes maybe thought I like spoke out of turn but then we would come to an agreement later on. So, yeah, and I think that intergenerational part for me was so important. There was, I'm sure you've maybe seen her name because I think one of the rooms in the office in Edinburgh is named after her. There was a wonderful woman called Sheila Moir who was, again, chief executive of Y of Scotland and she was just an absolute, she was a gem of a lady. When I came into the Y, she was older and she retired, but she still kept her finger on the pulse and kept, yeah, just like knew everything that was going on in the Y. I mean, she was a champion for young women. Like she taught me so, so, so much and when I was standing for election as vice president of the World YMCA at the World Conference in Zurich, she was there. She was in her 80s and she had got herself by herself from Edinburgh onto a plane, booked into the same hotel and then I was like, Sheila, why are you here? And she was like, to make sure that you've got everything you need and for me, I was just like, oh, my word, like this woman has like basically travelled to just come and support me and she took me for a beer and a burger one night because she thought that's what all young people did. Like, she thought she was being really cool. I didn't even like beer, but I felt the need to have the beer that night because I was like, OK and this woman knew so many people in the YWCA so she was going around like properly, like being my proper little cheerleader, like my little fan club but like for the right reasons and for like she just truly believed that I was what the Y needed but like I just love I love stories like that and I love like just the fact that like she believed in me so much that she believed that she should come and even when, she's now passed, she passed a few years ago but I used to go and visit her in her nursing home in Edinburgh and she had her YWCA and her girl guide badges next to her bed and she had dementia in the end and, you know, bless her little soul, she couldn't, lots of things she couldn't remember but if you picked up that badge, all of the

stories came back and I just for me, I just think that's what the Y is. Right? When you once you step through that door and you never really leave. Yeah. You can say I'm no longer a trustee or I don't no longer go to that youth club or I'm no longer like helping them with that but you never leave like once you've been stamped with the Y, you're like you're like a Y sister. Like that's it. Like for life, and I just... yeah.

Interviewer 2: Have you always had a role within the Y? So obviously you're saying when you got to 30, you're no longer like a part of it but then after that, did you go straight into another role?

Interviewee: I was still a part of it at 30. I just thought that life ended when you were 30 because everything that was constitutional in the Y and I'm sure that some of it still is. Well, no, I know some of it is that, you know, young women are 30 and under so I just thought life ended when you were 30. So, no, I was completely still involved when I was 30 [Laughing].

Interviewer 2: Amazing. That's good to know.

Interviewee: It's OK. You've got time. You're OK.

Interviewer 2: [Laughing] They'll never get rid of me.

Interviewer 1: This project was advertised to young women up to 30 as well.

Interviewee: And I genuinely did. I got to 30 and then reached out to them and then was like, do I have to step down now? And they're like, what are you talking about? It's just the constitution. It says we have to have representation from young women and I'm like, oh, so, so, so I don't have to leave.

Interviewer 2: Aw. That's amazing. And then I just have a couple more questions before passing on to Beth. I think I've just got the one. Were there any men involved in the organisation when you were involved?

Interviewee : Yes, Douglas. Douglas was the treasurer of Y of Scotland's board and oh, my word, I absolutely adored that guy. He was the biggest champion for women you could ever find. Like he just was like he was like our little tokenistic guy on the board but he was the champion for women and actually, he was a delight to have, older gentlemen and amazing, like amazing at figures and everything else. Didn't know it all when it came to women, but listened to us, like really listened to us and through that, I think he helped champion us because unfortunately, and I'm sure you still know this like today, there are there are times when you go to meetings or you go to, to things and it's more likely the man will be listened to than the women and so he used that for the goodness of our charity. And yeah, and I think as well, we had like we did a lot of things with the YMCA as well and so, you know, there's men involved there as well as well as women. Um, so, yeah, there were men involved, but I think I think that's OK as well. One of the, the play schemes that we used to run in Kirkcaldy was headed up by a guy who was the chief executive of YWCA of Kirkcaldy and he was also he just used to like his, his saying used to just be. If it's coming from a woman, then it must be right. So I'm just going to let you go and do your thing.

Interviewer 2: I like that.

Interviewee: Yeah, I do as well, I mean, you know. [Laughing].

Interviewer 2: Amazing. So that's my first round of questions done. Thank you. I hope this doesn't feel like an interrogation, but I hope and if you need to take a break at any point, we should have said that, please. Just feel free to take one. Yeah, and I'm going to hand over to Beth now.

Interviewee: Perfect. Great. Thank you.

Interviewer 2: Thank you.

Interviewer 1: Honestly, all of these anecdotes are brilliant. I've written that actually after I asked these questions, I've written a few down. I want to hear more about Sheila [laughing] for starters [laughing] but my questions are explore questions. So the first one is, I mean, I'm going to try to shape them around the information that we've got now. So what the question is, what motivated you to join the organisation? But we know you were seven. It was the drama. So, I'm gonna ask what kind of ideologically drew you to stay in the organisation? Because obviously you went for the drama when you were young but what was it that made you think, OK, I'm going to keep on with this?

Interviewee: I think the fact that the Y believed in me and then was giving me a space, was giving me a space to develop and grow, but also to have a voice and to learn. I think all of those things, like I felt like I had my place that, you know, I think being in the Y. Yeah, it just it just felt like it was my place and that I believed in what it stood for as well and so, yeah, I think that's why I kind of stayed, and the opportunities. The opportunities were like, are amazing.

Interviewer 1: Perfect. Thank you. So what does and did the working with the organisation mean to you? Emotionally, I suppose.

Interviewee: Yeah, well, I think it's just I think it's that thing of, how to put it into words. Like that connection, like growing up in the Y. So it just felt like it was a part of me But then also getting to be part of like, you know, I'm the little girl from Fife and then getting to go to like stand on a stage with women from all over the world and getting to sit down and have like lunch or dinner or like a meeting with, with all these other young women who have stories and then realising that one, I think in some senses, realising how lucky I am. You know, at that point in time, I remember going to a conference and like I arrived, went through security at the airport and went to my hotel but there was a lot of young women who were kept and questioned at the airport because of the passport they had or the passport they didn't have. Maybe they were only travelling with travel documents because they don't actually they're not entitled to a passport. I'm talking about like women from Palestine or, you know, coming from an African country as a young woman. Well, you're only coming into this country because you want access to it and then you're never going to leave. You know, so I think I realised one, how lucky I am and how much, how maybe I can make a little bit of a difference like through the organisation. So I think, yeah, that access to this bigger world

and learning so much about things that. I didn't necessarily know anything about or because the one they don't affect me or maybe they're not as prevalent in the community that I grew up in. The Vienna conference I went to on HIV and AIDS, I learned so much, you know, like I was talking to women who were sex workers and, you know, like being, I suppose, naive. I felt sorry for, I was like, oh, I'm so sorry that you've had to become a sex worker and they were like, no, don't be sorry, feel sorry for me, we love it and so I was educated as well and I think then you go back to your own community with these stories, you go back and they are stories, right? I think that the best way of learning is from a story from, from somebody who's living that life and so going back and being able to, to have those stories and being able to pass them on, then you educate another person. It's that domino effect as well and then you can be the bigger voice. So when you're party to other debates or conversations that are going on, you can actually give a voice to the women that you've been speaking to from other countries as well and pass on that story. So, yeah, I don't know if that's answered it. Sorry.

Interviewer 1: Yeah, no, that's amazing. It's given such a great perspective on, you know, we say Young Women Scotland, but it's, it's so much more than that. How global it is and how far reaching and being able to bring those stories from so far afield home is just so important. So the next one is, what do you remember feeling about the organisation at the time? But I suppose because you've had such a long stretch for that, I'm going to ask what was the most pivotal point personally for you with the Y and how did you feel at that time?

Interviewee: [Pause]. I suppose maybe one of the most pivotal parts for me was when I when I was elected as vice president of the worldwide YWCA but for me, it wasn't about me. This was like such a big thing for Y of Scotland, right? Not even just like Y of GB, but, you know, I am that little girl from the Y of Kirkcaldy, you know, like that's, that's who I am. And so then for, for to have somebody get into that leadership position and now to be representing not only Y of Scotland, not only Y of Great Britain, but then, you know, European YWCA and then the world, like it was an amazing opportunity and I think at that point, I realised that actually the Y does believe in young women, because, again, the board wasn't, we did have representation of young women and at that point, we had reached 50 percent young women on the world board but that was like a significant achievement and such a not a fight to get there, but just, I suppose, an investment and for people to believe that young women could be in those leadership positions. I mean, I'm talking about like the conversations that you're part of. I remember going to the bank on behalf of the Y of World Y in Thailand to meet with Bill Gates and to talk about the millions of dollars that Bill Gates Foundation, not actually Bill Gates, but the Bill Gates Foundation to talk about the donation they were going to give to us and being party to that and thinking, if I like cock this up [laughing] the organisation won't get that money. Like I have to be really strategic here and I have to like, you know, have the best head on to fight for what we need. So, yeah, I think. Yeah, I don't know if I've articulated it in the... Yeah, it was great for me to have that opportunity and I worked hard, but it wasn't about me. It was about the other young women and about Y of Scotland and that was an achievement for the organisation.

Interviewer 1: Yeah, it sounds amazing. Do you mind me asking how old you were and when was this?

Interviewee: Yeah, OK. Great. I knew you were going to ask me that as well. [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: [Laughing]. Sorry.

Interviewee: No, it's OK. So I was 18 when I went to Australia, which would mean then four years later...9,21, 22 was when I was in Kenya and I got elected onto the World board at that point. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26. I need to go back and just double check. I was either 22 or I was 26. I don't know. I bet you'll be able to find that out because it will be in your annual reports in the Y of Scotland.

Interviewee: So if you look back something, yeah, then you'll be able to find that. You'll be able to find that out.

Interviewer 1: Perfect. That's a good job for Samar to do. [Laughing].

Interviewee: The annual reports, the very colourful paper annual reports from back then, but they were like glossy. Yeah, ask him, he'll or they'll be able to find that.

Interviewer 1: OK, excellent. Great. We'll look it up but that sounds amazing. Yeah, like you were saying, the scope just going from Scotland to Britain, to Europe, to the entire world. It's just such an incredible achievement. 22 or 26 is incredible. So young. So the next one was, what were your hopes for the organisation at the time? I suppose we can just take from the time we were just speaking about.

Interviewee: I think for me, it was just like I didn't want to. So I'm going to be really honest about this because it's nothing I've never said before. At some points in my journey in the Y, I did feel like the tokenistic young woman. Oh, we need a young woman. Just go and get Kirsty. Just go and get Kirsty. Just go and get Kirsty. So in some respects, it was nice because I've got lots of extra opportunities but in other respects, it was like, no, no, no. By getting one young woman that's passionate doesn't mean to say that you've done it. So I was really passionate about when we had these world conferences that happened every four years, that our delegation that went was representative of Y of Scotland. So, you know, we did have people, women coming from Elgin, from Livingston. You know, I really wanted it to be about grassroots, about, you know, women that were on the ground, that were working, were volunteering, were a part of our community and so my hopes and aspirations were that we would continue to grow and we would continue to, not have, that almost the young women wouldn't be tokenistic anymore. It would be the older women and that's a very like young person's thing to say, because that's what I would like at that point. I was like, I don't want to be, you know, it's great for you to be able to champion me and say, oh, there's Kirsty doing her thing again. We've got young women, but it's not about one person. One person can make a small difference but it's about that ripple effect and about having more young women involved and looking at why we didn't necessarily have that. So I think then when we got to like 50 percent of the world board being young women, that was like a massive achievement and then it almost gave like y of Scotland and Y of Great Britain and Y of England and Wales a bit of a kick up the backside. That if we can do a world level, there's no reason why you can't be doing it at your grassroots level as well and now we have, you know, Y of Scotland, you know, I follow, or the Y movement, sorry, I follow like, you know,

all the social media and everything and I just love the fact that the chief executive, you know, has been a young woman or a young person and that, you know, the people that are involved now, the people that are doing interviews, the people that are, you know, the majority seem to be young. You know, and for me, that's, that just makes me really happy because that's what the organisation is about. That's what's at the heart of this.

Interviewer 1: Totally. Do you mind me asking, like you're saying it was 50 percent young women. So what was it like on the grassroots level in these groups? Was it mostly women 40 above? Or like what did it kind of look like, the average group?

Interviewee: Yeah, sometimes even over 60. So when I joined the World YWCA board, I really was like, like some women were looking at me as though to say, like, she's young, like really young because I was and I also didn't bring with me like the high power job in the big pay packet. Like and I'll be honest, you know, we do have women all over the world who are power driven. Yeah. Like that, you know, that's getting onto the board. Oh, yes, I've made it but it's more about them. It's more about, you know, and then it's about what can they bring in terms of wealth in terms and I think at some points I, I alongside, there's another woman that if you get the chance to, I have kind of slowly poked her to try and get her to come forward. She's called Julie Dixon. She's also from, from Kirkcaldy. She's in charge of youth work in Fife Council, but she was heavily involved in like world level as well and I think both of us [pause] being, you know, I don't want to say like the average, the average Scottish person, but we were, right. I didn't, like, I had Saturday jobs at that point and was like thinking about what to do, like when I go to university, if I was even going to go there. So I wasn't this person who could like donate thousands of dollars every month to this board and when I rocked up, I wasn't like there with my really beautiful handbag and having like, you know, flown first class and I'm not saying everybody was like that because they weren't, but there were... So there was me that I was like, oh, what are you donating this month? Well, I'm donating my time and actually, I've got like an awful lot to say for myself. Isn't that like enough? So I kind of like, I suppose, questioned the stereotype of necessarily the women that were standing on these boards. So, yeah, when I then became vice president of the world, I had, you know, people then had, I suppose, listened as well and it was OK for the average woman to be on the board rather than the one that could bring the wealth or the, you know, the big mass of time because they didn't have to work or. Yeah, and I'm not saying it was a bad place because it really wasn't and these women did amazing work, like amazing work, but it's just because they but they brought something different from maybe like little grassroots me. You know, my foot had been on the ground working with, with kids and like social work kids and listening to, you know, women from different centres who were living on the bread line or who, who were trying to do their best and we were supporting them as well and women all over the world, there's loads of like great grassroots stories but when you get to women being in leadership positions, you don't always see those grassroots women being a part of those conversations. And I'm sure you know what I mean, because it happens in Scotland right now, right? You know, in lots of places.

Interviewer 1: Oh, totally. I love I love your phrasing of someone saying, so what did you give and you... my time. So important. So important to recognise volunteers.

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer 1: So important. Um, I just want to ask a follow up to that. So you use the word stereotype and you seem to kind of suggest a few class politics. Was that was that quite prominent, would you say, within the organisation then?

Interviewee: Yeah, to an extent. Yeah, and I think that's, that's normal, right? In everything. So I don't think it was just our organisation as well. I think that's just that, um, that's just how it is as well. You know, as you get older, you stereotypically did have more time or, maybe then than younger people because, you know, they're out partying, out studying.

Interviewer 1: Having burgers and beers.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly. So, yeah, like these women and they are still doing phenomenal work and they have sometimes the connections that sometimes the average person doesn't have and so it's great, but it's about finding the balance and I think that's always been the case. It's about finding the balance of everything. You know, we should be inclusive. Everybody should be welcome but it's really finding that balance of, of what we need and what we want and also the voice, the voice has to be genuine, right? The voice has to be the voice has to be real and it also has to be understanding and sometimes, some people can be too far from reality as well but, but coming with the best intention and coming with, you know, the same the same thing that we are all looking for or the same thing that we're all there for, like young women's leadership and empowerment, but just doing it through a different way and I think, you know, it is good to have to always recognise that you need that balance.

Interviewer 1: Definitely. Perfect. So back to the actual questions that are written down. So you're probably not going to like me asking you to whittle it down, but what was your favourite memory from the organisation?

Interviewee: I've had so many [pause].

Interviewer 1: You can say more than one. That would be great.

Interviewee: I think I've told you some of them already. My favourite memory, but it's not my memory, but my favourite memory is the story of how the Y of Kirkcaldy was, like, was built. Um, you know, people bought bricks and, yeah, they actually got to lay the brick of the building. So this building was given to the people of and has always been that it was to be used for work with young women in Kirkcaldy but people actually bought bricks to build this building and the building is still there and actually what happened when it went up for sale, the person that bought it bought it because him and his wife used to country dance in the Y and couldn't bear to... They just wanted to keep it for their memories. So bought it and now it's being used back in the community again, which is fantastic. Like, It's such a community hub now, kind of an arts place. But, yeah, the bricks were actually laid by, like, you could go and buy a brick and lay it. Like, yeah, I mean, I wasn't around when it was actually built, so I don't know the full story, but I'm always like, wow, like, okay, hello. Um, yeah, like that for me is just like an amazing story. I think my one about Sheila is also one and then also I was in a board meeting at world level and, you know, you're sitting around the table from

women that represent countries all over the world. So English is not the first language of many of these women. It's not almost the second or third language. It could be the fourth and I can't even remember what we're talking about, but it was something I clearly was passionate about and I was getting really quite angry about it. So I was very vocal and then this woman from an African country banged her fists on the table and stood up and she was like, I have not a clue what Kirsty is talking about. I have no idea what she said for the past 15 minutes but if she, she is so passionate about what she's talking about, I'm going with whatever she's saying and there was a massive roar of, like, applause and everybody said we're exactly the same and I was like, I don't understand why you couldn't understand me and they were like, because you got faster and faster and faster and faster and even some people who were like English speaking, but not from Scotland, were like, we had no clue either. [Laughing]. I think that one, but the fact that these women were just like, we're behind you, like, yeah, whatever you're saying, we are like 100 percent behind you and I think for me, that was like, just showed the power that sometimes you don't actually need to, to know what's being said, to just realise how like to feel the passion coming from each other and to be supportive. Um so, yeah, that one is probably one of my favourite stories. Have I got any others? They'll probably come to me. I feel like I'm getting older now. Yeah, I think just trying to think of any other ones. I told you some of them at the beginning, some of my favourite ones. [Pause]. I suppose like getting to speak, like just as Scottish Parliament was being opened in this like beautiful, wonderful building and at the time, the president of the World YWCA was called Musimbi Kaniyoro, a beautiful African lady and if you ever get the chance to Google her, you should. She now actually works for, Bill and Melinda Gates have a foundation that is just for voluntary organisations and they invest a lot of money into projects. They funded a lot with the YW and she works for them now and she's just such a believer in young women and she stood beside me and gave a speech and I gave one as well and then afterwards, at that point, like you're never finished volunteering. So I had just given the speech and then came down, but then was asked to go and hand out like glasses of red wine. So, which was fine, so I'm standing with my tray, but I must have been really nervous and I had like two bottles of wine on the tray and all these glasses and somebody moved back and the tray went up in the air and I then wore red wine all down this like new outfit that like I felt really posh because it was from monsoon and I had like, I thought that I needed to look really nice that night. So I had on this posh outfit that was now covered in red wine, but it was also down my face and on my hands and red wine doesn't really come out because it stains but it was also on the carpets of the new Scottish Parliament building.

Interviewer 1: Oh, that's a great legacy to have, though, when you visit again.

Interviewee: You know when you just want the ground to eat you whole? And I was in this room full of like people from like MSPs, lots of organisations, and I am wearing it and I've just remembered I've told you the story the wrong way around because it happened to me before I went up to give my speech.

Interviewer 1: Was the dress black at least or red?

Interviewee: The dress was pink, but it wasn't pink when the when the wine happened. I've just I've just come back to me and I think my face was bright red as well but Muzimbe stood beside me and cracked this joke, like cracked this really amazing joke. I have no idea what it

was, but she basically like wiped the floor in terms of like making me feel OK and making me feel like it didn't actually matter what I was wearing, what I looked like, it was about what came out of my mouth. I'm sure she told everybody to close their eyes or something to me but, like, it just made me feel like I had got everything back again because I had literally thought that I had lost everything that night [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: Mhmm, I know that kind of support from someone that you obviously look up to and just that reassurance like, OK, if you're laughing about it, I can I can do this. [Laughing].

Interviewee: Absolutely, I think, yeah, yeah and they're just there's so many more memories of things like being on a delegation, like funny stories that have happened. Like, oh, yeah, I, I went to work to volunteer with the Council of Europe. So it was a young women's study session in Budapest and so I was leading on it. So I was there with some YWC, World YWC staff. There was women there from Scotland and lots of Eastern European countries and the ash cloud hit. You'll may not remember this because you were a little bit maybe too young, cause, I think I was only in my 20s. So the ash cloud hit from Iceland and basically the world stopped. Couldn't go anywhere. Couldn't do anything. I was absolutely freaking because I had university exams and we didn't do resits at the university I went to because it was a conservatory for singing. So it was like you only and there's only 15 of you in your group, you're um, year grade. So you do not get resits. So it wasn't a case of like, oh, I'm sorry, I got hit by the ash cloud. I can't be there. That was non-negotiable but I also had these 45 young women who majority of them didn't have a credit card, debit card. They'd come with the exact amount of cash. Some of them only had visas for a certain date and I remember being in my hotel room with a map. I'd went into the shop and bought a map and I had little pins of the buses I'd put people on and like all the different places I'd put them on and I worked as a Saturday girl at that point for the Royal Bank of Scotland and I phoned them up and being like, is there anything you can do? Is there any way I can get money so I can get all these young women home? And they helped and the Y, like, reimbursed them and we got insurance and whatever else back but everybody rallied round to help and so all these young women were like leaving by like boat, then by like bus and then by like this. I literally was having...an'... I'm going to say I don't really think mobile, like computers and stuff, yeah, but like mobile phones weren't. It sounds like I'm so old. Like, you know, there were mobile phones, but you didn't necessarily have one. Right? You didn't like go around the world like with your mobile phone. It wasn't a thing. So I had to like, yeah, the Icelandic girls, they got out first. It was their ash cloud, but they got like home first but then like everybody else I'm like trying to work out where they're going, going to embassies, trying to help them get like passports, everything else and then at that point, I realised that this is the Y and in the Y we can make anything happen, like we just, you know, we can do it, but we need to like rally like round and help each other and I think like it was a whole week before I managed to get everybody like out and back to where they had come from. Yeah, and I think that's probably one of my best stories because I was like now I like now I'm always like I can troubleshoot. I was like I can troubleshoot because, because I've been there [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: I was gonna say that that is incredible. Like how proactive to go out and get a map and pins and everything.

Interviewee: Someone emailed me and they'd be like, where is so-and-so from this country? And I'd be like, um, they're on a bus. Yeah. Like I literally had I felt like some sort of travel agent but these some of these young women were quite vulnerable. Some of them had that was the first time they'd ever like been away from home. So then, you know, be panicking about getting back home. Like, yeah. Do you know?

Interviewer 1: No, totally. Yeah. As someone from the rural highlands, I remember the first time even getting on a public bus. It was absolutely terrifying. So I can't imagine. Yeah, Yeah. Just how nervous some of these young women were and probably how nervous yourself was but it sounds like it all worked out.

Interviewee: It did work out and I got a flight back with, um, a whole SAGA trip. Yeah. You know, SAGA? The old people's organisation.

Interviewer 1: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. I was the only person on this plane. Apart from all of these all of these old people who had been on a trip, they were all like in their 70s, 80s.

Interviewer 1: Did you make your exam?

Interviewee: I did not make my exam, but they did make an exception because it was deemed as a world crisis.

Interviewer 1: Oh, OK. That's good. You're one of the only people in the conservatoire that have ever had the exception and I'm sure it's written just ash cloud. [Laughing].

Interviewee: Yeah [Laughing].

Interviewer 1: That's crazy. Well, that kind of answered a little bit my next question. So do you think you've gained any transferable skills from your work at the Y and troubleshooting and travel agency Sounds like two but if you have any more, that'd be great.

Interviewee: Um, yeah, like, you know, I've only been Arts Director for the last year and in my interview, like, I talked more about my skills from the Y than I did actually about my skills from any other job I have. I think like most of the skills you gain within the Y are always transferable. I think they teach you those skills, life skills and people skills. Yeah, and even just like having to deal with finances or having to deal with like strategic plans or public speaking. All of these things that are so transferable to absolutely everything.

Interviewer 1: Yeah. You've listed off so many already. It sounds amazing. So what do you think the organisation's greatest achievement has been?

Interviewee: Surviving. I think the world has changed. The world has changed a lot. Women haven't been given the easiest of rides and they still continue not to be in some respects as well. You know, it is a we're always fighting the fight, etc and I think, yeah, and, and the gender part as well, you know, the world is ever changing in terms of identity and gender, too and being able to be inclusive and being able to change with what is needed at that time

in the world but being able to survive. You know, there's been so many cuts in terms of funding. There's been so many things that have happened in the world that could have closed the charity. Um, you know, yeah, I think that is that is the real reality and I think, you know, being... So surviving, still having a voice, still the name, still being that trademark is still there, like if you go around where you go in the world, if you say, oh, I, you know, I'm part of the YWCA, somebody's got a story. There's somebody who's got a connection, whether it's just that they've stayed in a Y hotel, a Y hostel, whether it's, oh, my mum, like, you know, was a part of that or. Oh, yeah, I used to be I used to go to the local drama club. Somebody's got a story. Um, so, yeah, for me, I think that is the biggest achievement, because I do think that the world has changed so much and it would have been easy just to throw the towel in.

Interviewer 1: Totally, you know, adaptability is an incredible achievement for an organisation, especially one geared towards young women. It's incredible. Um, so, the next one. How do you feel the organisation impacted your local communities specifically? So Kirkcaldy, I suppose, is the context.

Interviewee: Um, so I think at that point in time, having this kind of like centre, like this little hub where you go in and you could do everything from drama clubs, youth clubs, um, country dancing. Um, the nearly new shop, um, all of these things. I think, you know, it was the place to be. It was in a really prominent part of the town as well, like on the prom. So you had to kind of drive past it to go anywhere and you know, the Y was the place to go. So I think it didn't matter what age you were. It was where women and young people went at that point. So I think it did have a big impact.

Interviewer 1: That's lovely. Um, so you don't have to do this just now, but this question is, are there any photographs or objects from your time at the Y that you'd like to share with us? If you have any at hand, that would be great but if not, you're welcome to send them to us as well.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't think I have anything [pause] to hand. Well, I do have something. Wait a minute. I will look up my other stuff. I've realised though. So you will have gathered that I live between Switzerland and Scotland. So, a lot of my stuff is at home and I realise that like there is like boxes of stuff at home and I also have like the badge that I was talking about from Sheila that she had beside her bed. Um, I have one of those also but I gifted mine to my grandmother when she was alive because it was a beautiful little, it's just a pin and with the YWCA written on it but yeah, it's just beautiful and so she always wore it with pride and I know it's back at home. So like I have lots of photos and other stuff that I can share but I just I'll be home, um, in seven weeks so I can have a look for that stuff and I'm happy to like photocopy stuff and send stuff in so that you can have stuff because I've got, I probably have tonnes of stuff, but I would just need to go through some boxes but like loads of stuff because we didn't. I really think that we threw anything. I would like newspaper cuttings or annual reports and things like that but I don't know if you can see it.

Interviewer 1: Oh, wow. Yeah. That's so beautiful.

Interviewee: I was gifted this but like, you know, it just kind of like I think for me, it's kind of like that world part like, you know, you can see people from all walks of life. It kind of represents like where we've come from and I think that was the way at that point in time was like prayer groups and stuff, because that's what women needed and I would say we still have those prayer groups, but they're just in a different way, like, you know, because we have like support groups, we have conversations, discussions. It's still the same kind of concept. It's just in a different way. So, yeah, I think it was my mum who bought me this and I just always I love that, like help them to carry on. I'm like, yes and my badge is like this.

Interviewer 1: Triangle

Interviewee: Yeah, with that initial blue triangle.

Interviewer 1: Oh, that's beautiful. Thank you so much and it looks quite an old print as well. So it just shows how much the global aspect was at the forefront even then.

Interviewee: Absolutely, for sure.

Interviewer 1: Thank you. Yeah, that would be great if you're comfortable sharing anything that you've got photos, photocopies, anything like that. If you could send them, that would be great.

Interviewee: Yeah, I will do that, so I'll just, um, I will connect back with you and when I'm in June, I'll see if I can drop them off and stuff. So...Because I know that I do have lots, I just need to find those boxes and stuff.

Interviewer 1: Amazing. Well, thank you. So the next question, do you remember any like major social or political events that happened in society at large during the time that impacted the workings or your experience of the Y?

Interviewee: Um, yeah, the thing about religion was quite prominent at one point. So, um, the Y started to lose funding because it had the C in it and so then lots of debates started happening, kind of, and discussions around that as well. So, that would be one kind of big thing, in the world and then also like identity and gender. I know it's so much more prominent now than it was necessarily back there then. I talk like I'm like, I'm 95, I'm not 95 let's just be clear about this but when I was similar age to you [Laughing]. Um, yeah, like identity and gender started to become much more topical as well and so these conversations and I think like I've kind of, this being kind of a common thread about being able to change with the times and being inclusive, that inclusivity in general was, was always kind of a big thing that happened and there was like a pivotal point where that kind of came to a head when it came to funding, etc. When people were actually removing funding because of the C or because you only deal with young women and girls. Like, well, actually, I don't know if that's OK. So it was like that fight for actually showing the reasons why, like and actually having to, um, shout about why we did have to have a safe space for young women and girls and like why it was still society still needed this and I think that's something that's always gonna be the case, right? I don't think that's something that's, that's ever going to kind of leave but yeah, I would say those were kind of probably maybe the two

biggest things that kind of happened when I was I mean, there was lots of other things that happened in the world, etc and things that weren't like those are kind of things like Y of Scotland, obviously, like in the world level, the Palestinian women, you know, it's very prominent in the news just now but this isn't necessarily new, right? It isn't new. These things were happening when I was growing up in the Y and it's just that the stories are being heard a little bit more, whether they're the right stories or not but yeah, so a lot of the time, Sheila, that I spoke about the chief executive or the past chief executive. She had a lot of connections with Palestine as well and did some amazing work and so, you know, we always try to support, but it's really hard to understand as well, like even having been to Palestine now, I still don't understand, like I just I I'm just at a loss of like why? Um, so, yeah, so those are the maybe the I can't think of anything else off the top of my head. Like there was lots of lots of things. I think in general, Scottish... Scotland changed, like I think that actually is probably the biggest thing it did, you know, getting a Scottish parliament and just like Scotland becoming that kind of bigger voice about kind of being different from England. It did come up, you know, before we talked about whether or not we were going to split from England, et cetera. But like, you know, those conversations were starting and they were like, like lots of things were changing in Scotland and Scotland was becoming a bit more of a voice as well, you know, like we'd all like in general, the world or like the UK being the UK in Great Britain, but then all of a sudden Scotland getting the Scottish parliament and all of these things like we were getting our own voice and we were getting to like actually say, you know, we're different. We're not necessarily the same. We don't have to be the same as England and Wales or, you know, so I think those things as well and those, those impacted, like even YWC of Great Britain, because all of a sudden, like not everybody wanted the same things and so I think maybe just that voice part as well. Yeah, I'm not sure. Sorry, I'm not sure if that's really answered your question.

Interviewer 1: No, that's, that's answered it perfectly. I've got a follow up one. So I was just wondering how these kind of big words like religion, gender, Scottish identity. How did you see that play out on the kind of like, I don't know, interaction level with people? Do you remember any sort of things that happened specifically within your group or the people that you knew, conversations that were had that made these things much more apparent?

Interviewee: So I think like the gender thing was about educating people as well, right? Because I don't think people understood. I don't think people really like kind of got it and that's OK, because it's not that everybody should understand or know and it's like it's kind of a new territory as well, especially if you've never experienced or had a connection. So it was very much about the education. Um, another chief executive that used to be of the Y movement was Elaine Sampson and actually, she lives in Edinburgh still and she would be she's the one I talked about with the zero tolerance campaign but she would be a good person to connect with because she has so many more stories like and she's an amazing woman. Um, but her big thing was about educating people. So you could sit around a board meeting or sit around and have discussions but if you didn't educate people, first of all, then the discussions didn't really mean anything because they weren't built on anything. They were just of people's opinions or people's naivety or people's perception of people's assumptions. So I think like that education of our own internal people, but then then going out and educating people on the other side as well. So I think the religion thing will always come up. I think it's something that is always going to be a sensitive subject. My personal

view on it is the Y is inclusive, whether it's had the C there or not. It's always been inclusive. That C was or is where we came from and obviously, we want to be able to acknowledge that but we've moved from that and if the C is stopping us being inclusive because people see it as a barrier, then it needs to go. You know, like just take it out, but have it somewhere to still acknowledge that that's where we've come from and to show people that's how much we've grown but, you know, it's such a, you know, religion opens up so many cans of worms that it's not just in our organisation.

Interviewer 1: Yeah, well, my next question was, how do you feel about how the movement has evolved? And it sounds with the name change that you feel it was.

Interviewee: I'm totally for it. I mean, I like I used to go back to just telling everybody I was from the Y. I never heard of YWCA, like very, very seldom. I used to always say I'm from the Y and if people were like, I don't know what that is and I was like, well, you know, the YM. So I'm like the women's version of that, but like much bigger scale. So, yeah, I think like, you know, yeah, I like I think for me, I love seeing what the Y of Scotland are up to and I just love seeing that women and young women are at the forefront, like, I love that and I love seeing the campaigns that are happening, the conversations that are happening, all of these things, the questions that come out. I'm loving these little podcasts that I see, the little videos, like all of these things. Yeah, I think. Yeah, I'm so very like I feel very proud to still be associated with the organisation and to still, you know, feel a part of it as well.

Interviewer 1: Great. So I know that you mentioned that you were partnered with some different organisations like the Big Issue and the Guides and stuff like that. Were there any other sort of partnerships or collaborations that happened during your time that you have memories of?

Interviewee: Yeah. So I think like, yeah, a lot of those like teenage movements, right? So the Scouts, the Girl Guides, those were definitely good partnerships but then obviously it's different because there's a Scottish part of me for the Y and then there's also the world part as well and obviously the world is different, it's different partnerships. [Pause]. So, yeah, I think just, yeah, there's, there's there are there are so many partnerships that probably happened over the years that I probably can't even remember, like all of them but locally, like being just being a part of all of these other young people's organisations was really important because actually none of us are out for, like the majority of us were not against each other. We were actually out for similar things. So when you partner up and become a bigger voice, then you get places.

Interviewer 1: Yeah. Was it, did it ever kind of collaborate with, because you were saying there's quite a lot of older women involved, did it collaborate with, I don't know, like the Women's Institutes or?

Interviewee: Yeah, what are they called? And they're up in Elgin because I remember going up to their meetings. The Soroptimists? Soroptimists, yeah, yeah. The WRI, the Guild. I used to get invited to go and speak at all of these places, which was fabulous because these women wanted to learn from us and, and yeah, like, yeah, there was like those organisations as well and women would come and like sit on our board or come and sit in,

like, or be part of things that were from these different organisations as well, or even hire out rooms from, like, the local centres as well. So I think that intergenerational thing for me is really important as well, like, I love how far we've come but I think it is always the intergenerational part is so important, because, you know, as I've said a few times today when I thought I was 30, I thought I had, you know, I thought I was over [laughing]. So it's, you know, it's great that we give young, young women their place but then it's also great to still have the supporters from the side and still have those people who can champion, those people who can mentor, those people who can, who are still a part of it as well.

Interviewer 1: Totally. Yeah. Oh, that's so interesting. I need to Google this. Soroptimists.

Interviewee: I'm just going to just, I'm sure that's the right. Soroptimists. Yeah, it is. A global volunteer organisation dedicated to empowering women and girls worldwide. They work to improve the lives and status of women and girls through education, economic empowerment and opportunities that support their growth.

Interviewer 1: That sounds excellent. I can't believe I've not heard of them and that there's one so close to home in Elgin [laughing].

Interviewee: Oh yeah, well maybe, maybe they don't run anymore. I don't know but like they definitely, yeah, they used to give us quite a lot of money as well.

Interviewer 2: My auntie lives in Elgin and she's, she's about 65. So she'd probably know. I'll ask her, then I can report back [laughing].

Interviewee: I know that like Edinburgh has quite a big one. Yeah. I mean, there are lots of, there are other organisations out there that are actually championing the same things that we're championing. Just do it in a different way, right, or under a different brand.

Interviewer 1: So I've got two more questions. They're quite big ones. So what impact do you feel that you have achieved through your work with the movement?

Interviewee: Impact for me or impact for?

Interviewer 1: Impact that you have made.

Interviewee: Well, I suppose it's that story thing again, right? It's like I am the little girl from Kirkcaldy. That's like, like, that's where I'm from. I'm from grassroots. I'm not one of these women who have, who, who was born into like this really wealthy family and could go and do whatever they wanted. Right. I'm just the average, I'm just the average Scottish girl who, you know, has achieved a lot etc but part of that is because of the Y, like a part of that is because of the experiences that the Y has given me and the, the opportunities and the skills that they have given me and so my, you know, the whole way through my journey, Sheila, the Chief Executive used to always say to me, remember, it's about what, whatever we help you to become or help you to find in yourself, you need to use it for the right purposes and I feel like I have given a lot of me to the Y, because I wanted to, because I feel passionate about what we stand for and so by going to like all these different places with the Y, or just

in like my local community, just being able to be that voice and being able to get people to just listen sometimes, and to be able to tell a little bit of that story and a little bit of that legacy, like I think for me, that's probably the biggest impact. It's just, you know, you know, we stand for empowering young women and girls and providing leadership opportunities. I am an advert for that and I'm an advocate for that, because I think it's so, so important for women to be able to have their voice and to have a safe space to be able to find that voice, to then be able to go elsewhere and have that voice and I think for me, that if I've left that little bit with the Y, then yeah, that's all I ever wanted.

Interviewer 1: That's such a great answer. Thank you and so my last question is, what would you like the future of the movement to look like?

Interviewee: Well, I'd love for us not to be having to champion for women all the time. I'd love for like it all to be easy and for us to be like we're not needed anymore. But I'll go back to reality and I just think like my probably my common thread has been that we just need to make sure that we're always evolving and changing for whatever young women and girls need at that point in time. Right? It's never always going to be the same and I suppose just providing that space for you to, for women to be able to ask those questions in a safe space to actually look at who they actually are and not be ashamed or afraid of who they are or they don't know who they are and be able to like explore whatever they need to explore as well and then being able to equip women with whatever they need to go out into the world, like whatever that is, whether that, you know, just for daily life or for something bigger. I think I think that's just what we need to be.

Interviewer 1: Perfect. Well, thank you so much. That's the end of my lot of questions. So I will pass over to other Kirsty again.

Interviewer 2: That was amazing. I've just been sitting like soaking it all in. Thank you so much for sharing. We only have a few more questions and then we shall let you be. It's just kind of about the, I guess, the vibes of the organisation. Did you feel like the organisation was slash is a feminist movement?

Interviewee: [Pause]. Yeah, totally. Yeah, absolutely. I think, I think more so maybe now we're less afraid of like really saying what we think. I think maybe in the past people [pause] sometimes went round the houses to say what they were actually meaning and I think now we maybe have, I don't know if it's empowerment or just the way of the world. I'm not sure but I think now, like, I see the Y really standing up and really having statements on things. And in the past, we have had that as well. But I see it much more prominent now and it makes me, it makes me smile. Um, especially when I see controversial things or questions, just questions that are just left somewhere on social media or when I see a video and somebody's asked a question, I'm like, great. Okay.

Interviewer 2: Fantastic. Do you mind me asking in what ways would the Y previously kind of, as you say, go round the houses of kind of difficult issues?

Interviewee: [Pause]. So I think in terms of I think nowadays, like now, the movement very much just says it how it is like and what we believe in everything else but I think maybe sometimes in the past, not all the time, but sometimes sometimes in the past, whether it

was politically sometimes, or, you know, sometimes worrying about funding and worrying about if you said the wrong thing that it would have a negative effect on the charity as well. I'm not talking necessarily personally about me. Um, I think as a teenager growing up, I didn't have a filter. So, um, yeah, but I think, you know, and I think we like as people, we still do that nowadays, right? We still like sometimes think about what we're going to say before we say it so that it comes out in a way that is meant with the best intent, but also is saying what we want to say, but maybe not saying it so bluntly but I, like in some respects, I think we sometimes still have to do that but in other respects, I think, say it how it is, like, you know, don't, don't dress it up or don't, you know, put it under a cover or something like just say it how it is and I think the movement is so good at doing that just now. I would say that's one of the strengths that I see through the different campaigns and through the different things that I see on social media, etc, that we're just saying it how it is and I think that's what we always should have done and I think in some respects, we did, but there was always just sometimes like I would, as a teenager, I would say, but just say it and then people would be like, yeah, but we need to be strategic about it. You know, it's like that, what do they say, playing the game? Yeah, yeah. I don't know. Does that help?

Interviewer 2: Yeah, absolutely. It's really helpful. Yeah. What made it a feminist organisation for you when you were younger and involved kind of at that grassroots level that you're saying?

Interviewee: Um, so I think it was because we were tackling things and asking questions about things that were standing up for the rights of women right? And that we, we were like this collective, like, I do think that sometimes when you come together, it's much, it's much bigger, like, I don't know what the right word is, like a much bigger thing, like everybody was coming with the same, like, understanding and want and need for women to have their, their place. Like, I couldn't believe like, even we're only talking like back in the 2000s, like earlier 2000s but like, I couldn't believe I was getting paid less as a youth worker than the male youth worker that was getting paid. Like, that's not okay. Why is he getting paid more than me when I'm actually doing like a better job? Like, do you know these, like these small things, but actually then, but then knowing that like, actually, I could like, deal with that and I had all these other women who would like rally behind me and would like support me and it was like, it would change and it did and then I got paid more. I mean, all I wanted was to be paid the same, but you know what I mean? Yeah but yeah, I think it's just that, that as women, regardless of the age we all were, we were all there with different stories. But with, like, I don't know how to say it, because it sounds like it sounds wrong, like different stories, but with the same gender. So we had the same kind of understanding. So because of that, we, and when I say the same gender, I don't, I'm not meaning like necessarily because we were all women, but just like how we identified as, as well but yeah, we just all wanted to have, like, to, I want to say fight the fight. We're some sort of army, but we're not, right? We're not having to fight a fight, but to like just have our voices heard and for it to be okay for things to be women and for us, yeah, I don't, I don't know how to, I need to like think in my head how to articulate that better. It wasn't a very good answer, sorry.

Interviewer 2: No, it was, it was perfect, honestly. I think the kind of like raw, unfiltered answers are the best because you kind of, you feel it more, you know and was the feminist aspect of the Y important to you? And is it still?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it is. Absolutely. I think, as long as it's used for the right reasons, right, I'm going to use the word power and leadership and empowerment. They're great words, and they have so much meaning to them and I wholeheartedly believe in them but they can also be used incorrectly, you know, and they can also be used like, even like as women, like, there are some, there are some women who are very, very power driven, who are very like, you know, and that is what gives us motivation in life, etc but you have to always remember what you're actually like, what your purpose is. It's not necessarily just about you. Okay, when we're talking about feminism, it's about talking about the collective, right? It's talking about making the world a better and better, kinder place for all of us to be a part of and I mean that in terms of them, like, regardless of the gender. I think for women, there are things that affect us, that other genders are not being affected by, or other people are not being affected by. So we need to have a place and a fight but if you're using it for the wrong reasons, and lots of people do, then it's not okay, because that word feminism is also a powerful word and there's lots of people out there that say I'm a feminist and actually, they're using it because they think it's a word that is going to get them the power that is going to help them be able to help them to get to the top of their game and everything else, and they're using it incorrectly and then you can see the fallout of that you can see when we see bills that go forward in Parliament, and you think seriously, like, actually, or, you know, when one person makes a statement or does something, and then it has a knock on effect. I think we always have to remember that it's not just about us. I mean, we're the only advocate we have for ourselves but if you're a true feminist, it's not just about you, it's about this bigger collective, and it's about actually the whole world and you have to have an understanding, or at least be looking for those stories of what's affecting the whole world to be able to truly be a feminist as well.

Interviewer 2: I think that's what I feel that the feminist movement as well as that kind of collective energy, it's quite rare as well and I think in modern society, so to find a group, it's been very important to me. So to hear you articulate that as well, it's really nice. So thank you. Final, final question we got there. What challenges did you, slash do you face within the organisation?

Interviewee: Um, so I think like I've covered some of that. So I think some of the challenges I did face was that, you know, at times I felt tokenistic. I was a young woman who, you know, like, everybody loved and I was, you know, doing the right things and, but at times I did feel a bit tokenistic or, you know, young women and I was labelled and, you know, we all know what labels necessarily can do to people as well and so, but I use the term challenge kind of loosely and also say it was a positive, because then it gave me more kind of motivation to challenge others, and to be able to ask those questions, and that needed to be asked as well. So I would say that that's definitely a challenge, was a challenge, but like a positive one and, and a challenge it's still facing. So, like, I'll be completely, like, honest with you at the moment in YWCA of Great Britain, we're looking at changing YWCA, or not changing it, but just looking at how it operates and going forward, and this is something I've already shared with Y of Scotland, so they're fully aware, because the world has changed, and because it doesn't necessarily need to be the same as what it was before. In the past, Y of Great Britain was very much an umbrella organisation with England, Wales and Scotland underneath and, you know, the world in each of these countries has evolved, and kind of each of these

individual organisations are now, have now diversified into what's important within their part of the UK and they don't necessarily tap into Great Britain in the same way as previously was. For me, I'm all about, if there's money there, that should be used for the goodness of women and young girls, and for making a difference within their lives and to the greater world. So, at the moment, we are actually, there's a fantastic Y down in Sheffield, Y of Sheffield or Yorkshire, and they are looking at going to be the sole trustee, or the sole corporate trustee of Y of Great Britain, so that their funds can be used around the UK for the purpose they were there for, rather than it being kind of this virtual kind of board that oversees things because I think actually, for me, what's really important is going back into those grassroots again, and actually making an impact at grassroots and that's been me from day one. It's about, if you can make a difference at grassroots, then it will filter up into the bigger world. It's not about starting at the world and filtering back down, because that's not how it works and I think we've seen that in politics, etc, and everything that's going on just now. People at the top don't always know, or have an understanding of the best things, like, even in education, like, I'm a strong believer that anybody who is an admin in education should still have a foot in a classroom, because if they don't have a foot in a classroom, then they've really, they've lost what's actually real and I think that's the same in our movements. So I think, like, having, you know, women involved that are from the different geographical areas, and it not being about just one person at the top who's kind of in charge of it all, really being a team effort. That's the way, that's the way forward and I think that's also a challenge as well. But I think it's a good challenge to have.

Interviewer 2: That's incredible. Thank you so much for sharing that and yeah, I just want to say that I find this really inspiring and hearing all the incredible stuff you've done and how much you've taken away from the Y. It's been, yeah, and all the, there's so much positive stuff in there as well. It's really lovely. Yeah, I think sometimes, like, I don't know, like, I was involved in the Status Of Young Women's report recently and it was human rights and half of it was like, oh, yay, like, we're feeling good and positive and then the other half felt like, oh, it's a bit scary, though, isn't it? So to kind of hear all this positive stuff, it's been really rejuvenating. So thank you.

Interviewee: Hang on to the positives, right? Because that's what, when you see, it's not just about that tiny little difference. If you can see that tiny difference you've made, then you just have to keep going with it, right? You have to, like, if you just look at all the things that didn't necessarily work out, or we haven't quite got there yet, you'll lose, you'll lose that momentum but seeing those little tiny differences, and it only makes a tiny difference to have that domino effect.

Interviewer 2: Thank you so much, again. Is there anything else you'd like to add? Or, yeah, anything that you want us to go over again?

Interviewee: No, I just hope that I give you, like, the answers you were kind of looking for, etc.

Interviewer 1: You've been amazing. You've given us everything and more that we could want. So thank you so much, anecdotes and stories and everything. Thank you.

Interviewer 2: I know Samar's gonna watch this and be like, goldmine [laughing].

Interviewee: If there's anything else you need, you just, you have my contact details, I'm happy. I do still have contacts with quite a few Scottish women that have been involved as well. So if there's anything else, and I did speak to, I can't remember who it was from the office, somebody, um, because the archives are kept down, like from Y of GB that will include Y of Scotland are kept down in one of the universities down in England as well. So there's a chance that you could get access to them as well in such like so. Yeah, so if there's anything else you need, you know, or going along in the future, like, even though I'm not in Scotland all the time, I'm always happy to like, dip in and out to like support things that are going on in such like because, you know, it is like I am very passionate about the movement.

Interviewer 2: Thank you. We really appreciate that. Thank you. I'm just going to end the recording just now.