

KK: So, just to start, if you could say your name and where you're currently located?

EEW: My name is Ella Every-Wortman. I live in the Bay Area.

KK: And I'd also like if you could maybe share a bit about what you're looking at or what your space is like or describe an object in front of you or something?

EEW: I am in my home space, my sort of makeshift virtual office that I don't use anymore that still exists though. And it's spring time here in the Bay so all our plants are starting to bloom which is really lovely.

KK: Awesome. And starting to think about your time as a student organizer at Columbia: do you remember your first initial impressions of Columbia as a student?

EEW: I grew up in the suburbs, so the idea of going to a school in New York City was really exciting. So at first it was kind of like awe and kind of that feel of 'ah, I made it.' And then it was pretty quickly disillusionment.

KK: What was that disillusionment coming from?

EEW: I think just a sense that---I truly did love my peers, like I felt like I was meeting interesting people and connecting with interesting people, and that was exciting. But I also felt like there's this institution that doesn't actually care about educating students and cares more about its name and reputation, and it was clear from the beginning that there was so much harm that Columbia was enacting not only on its student body but in the community around the campus. And I think just like---I did go to a small high school so some of the transition to just being in a large university and realizing kind of like you are here as a paycheck for the University, and you are not seen as an individual but rather like a resource became evident pretty quickly.

KK: Did you feel politically activated by the time you go to Columbia? Did you have a sense of what the political environment of Columbia was when you started?

EEW: I think I was excited about Columbia because of the history of activism there, like that was something that had drawn me to the school. I wouldn't say I was particularly politically educated. And it was very much a learning that happened at Columbia through my peers, and also through some of my professors as well. But definitely yeah, the history of activism was something that drew me there. It's interesting that that activism very quickly turns against the University [laughs].

KK: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember those early learning experiences? What they were like and what they were about?

EEW: Yeah...I came into Columbia thinking I was going to---I had grown up in the DC area so I knew a lot of people who work in the foreign service and that was sort of like---

KK: Me too.

EEW: ---the job that I knew.

[Laughter]

EEW: And that was like doing good---

KK: Yeah, exactly.

EEW: ---was like going and working at a Save the Children NGO or like working for the foreign service. And so I think that was my idea of my path when I arrived and then I took courses in CSER [the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race] and I took courses in women and gender studies and I met student who were way further in their political education that I was. And I became more interested---or had more of an understanding of intersectionality and of challenging systems of oppression and learning---I think a big concern for me in college, and continues to be, is just understanding my identity and what---how I can leverage it in terms of organizing systems of oppression.

KK: Can you talk a little bit more about that specific piece if you don't mind?

EEW: Yeah, I mean I don't think it was as if I didn't have an awareness of racism before, but I think I---college is a time where you are really---your world is expanding so rapidly and you are trying to understand who you are and how you fit into it. And I think about that a lot now, too, because I teach middle schoolers, and so they're going through the same thing at just a different developmental stage. And so, understanding my whiteness and how, just through white supremacy I am enacting harm onto the world and trying to unlearn that, but also understanding that that means that I need to be active in working against white supremacy and I need to do that in a mindful way. And I think it---I know we haven't quite gotten there yet, but that's one thing that drew me to organizing in prison divestment, because it felt like a direct, like 'okay this is a concrete way that I myself am invested in the system of mass incarceration and a way in which I can enact my privilege to work against it.'

KK: Yeah, I'd love to hear you talk more about how you initially got involved in Students Against Mass Incarceration---or were you directly involved in Columbia Prison Divest [CPD]? What did that path look like for you?

EEW: Yeah, so by the time I actually joined Columbia Prison Divest, they were already a year into the campaign, so I was not a part of the initial launch of the campaign. I had been

going to Students Against Mass Incarceration [SAMI] events and had gotten connected to [Columbia] Prison Divest people in that way. But it was really kind of a mix of this is where my interests are leading me, and this is also 'I met some people and they invited me to come, and now I'm enjoying these meetings and this space, and now this is just what I do.' So I don't remember it so much as a super conscious decision of this is what I need to do, but that it felt very aligned.

KK: What were some of those early events like as a participant rather than an organizer before you really got involved?

EEW: I think it was just a lot of really excellent education. I think the folks who were involved in SAMI and the folks who were involved in CPD from the very beginning had really strong political messaging and an investment in educating their peers about mass incarceration and about how universities were invested in upholding the systems---and in a really broad way too, not just like this is the impact of private prisons but how prisons are intertwined with anti-Blackness and that they just did an excellent job, I would say, of really leading with that education piece.

KK: And did it feel new to you at the time, or was it things you were already familiar with?

EEW: Slightly. Like, I think it was very much in tandem with my studies at that point. I was doing a lot of learning in my classes about the carceral system and about anti-Blackness, and so it wasn't totally new, but it was localizing it and making it hit home in a particular way.

KK: So by the time that you really got involved as an organizer what was going on in the campaign? What were you working on?

EEW: So it was the fall of 2014 that I became really involved in the campaign. And the campaign was at a little bit of a standstill because they had gone through the whole process of presenting to the ACSRI [Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing] in the spring, then the ACSRI fell apart, and so that process had dead-ended essentially. And always the approach to the organizing was a dual pathway, like we will engage with the institution in the way that they are telling us that we need to engage and show [quotes] "good-faith" and then we will also be doing escalating actions and educating our peers alongside of that to put pressure on both together. So there had been a lot of teach-ins and---they hadn't escalated so much yet, in the way that we would in the fall and spring of 2014 and '15, but those two things were going at the same time. I joined in the fall: people have graduated---which is a major problem of student organizing, is that core people graduate---and so they were looking to bring people in. And in particular, they wanted people who were

willing to devote themselves to the ACSRI process and who would be a good fit for that, and so that's where I ended up slotting in.

KK: Why did you feel like a good fit for that?

EEW: I think they felt that people who would be able to get the message across but also come across as respectable and willing to engage, which you know comes with whiteness for sure, and would be able to also handle the bullshit that the institution would throw at you. And yeah, who honestly were like, yeah I can deal with that, were the folks that ended up working on the ACSRI. And not to say that it was only white people doing that, but that was part of the reason they thought I was a good fit there.

KK: That makes sense. Yeah, I am interested in that recruitment process. In these interviews, I haven't gotten the chance to talk about that [graduation] turnover that you mentioned, and what the strategy behind that was. If you could talk more about the problems that created and what the fixes were, and what your own recruitment was like?

EEW: Yeah, I think there's both turnover that happens from folks graduating and there's also turnover that happens from folks burning out. And I think the way CPD was organized is that we had a core group of organizers, and then we would have general members or folks who came to the open meetings. So the recruitment usually worked like somebody who had been regularly coming to the open meetings and volunteering to help with some stuff and was showing that they wanted to be more engaged, when there was kind of an opening in the core group we would then just essentially invite people in, and so that's what happened to me. I had been going to some of the membership meetings, I knew some of the people who were core organizers, and so they invited me in. And the core organizers, we aimed for no more than eight core organizers. Sometimes it was less than that, because people, you know they were technically a core organizer, were unavailable or burnt out.

KK: When someone burned out and they were maybe less responsive, what did that look like? And how did you deal with that?

EEW: Um...that's a good question.

KK: Take your time.

EEW: I don't remember exactly. I will say that I was looking back on some old emails and stuff like that, preparing for this, and I was like, 'oh my god, we were like working a lot' [laughs] this was a lot of work. And I think there was an understanding that some people wouldn't always be up for that, but also there was---we felt a lot of urgency in what we were doing. So I think we were pretty good at having people assigned to their different lanes and

their different projects, and that did mean that somebody who lane, if they weren't able to fill it, then you would kind of have to find someone else who could step into that.

KK: And what made people good---in terms of going from general membership to a core organizer, what kinds of things were you looking out for amongst those people when you were selecting?

EEW: I think we wanted people who would have a really clear sense of the vision and a really clear sense of the mission and able to articulate the messaging in a strong way, cause always that was so core to what we were doing, we never wanted it to be a campaign about private prisons, we wanted it to be a campaign about the harm of prisons in general. And so that was usually the first piece, like okay does this person really come from a place of prison abolition, and are they able to explain that because anybody who's a core member, would potentially be talking to press or talking to other students or talking to the University and needing to be able to walk that line of being like 'yes we're talking about private prison divestment but we're not saying just private prisons are bad, we're saying all prisons are bad.' So I feel like that was kind of like the initial screening, and then after that, it's like what skills are you able to bring and what are you able to offer and those kinds of things.

KK: And then for you when you became a core organizer, I know you said the ACSRI process was stalled so what was the initial strategy to get it un-stalled?

EEW: So the ACSRI was basically asking us to start over again. Cause they had already done an initial report in the spring to the ACSRI, and essentially they were asking for a new presentation. And so that was what I was working on, along with a couple of other folks, was like creating that new presentation, giving that new presentation, and then working with our outreach and action organizers to have that dual-prong approach that I was talking about to make sure everything was aligned with that. Later n the ACSRI, so we presented to them, but they also had---[laughs] they have these ridiculous things where they want to have a balanced information so we present to them but then they need to hear from the private prison companies about why private prisons are such a good investment as well. And so there were calls with G4S and their like investor specialist. They had us organize a panel where we were supposed to have folks to represent the pro-prison divestment point of view, and then they were going to invite people who were anti-divestment. They couldn't really find anyone---

[Laughter]

EEW: ---who was anti-divestment. So that was a large event that we organized as well was this panel. And yeah, I think those were---there was just like different hoops to go through with the process.

KK: And so re-presented---the initial presentation was like April of 2014?

EEW: I think it was, yeah, that was before I joined, but I'm pretty sure it was in the spring.

KK: And so was the re-presentation that you were a part of in the fall?

EEW: Yeah, it was either the fall or the winter. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

KK: And were you changing things about the presentation from the spring? Did you feel like you had to?

EEW: Yeah, I think we felt like we had to do a whole new presentation. So yeah the presentation was really like the case for divestment, and you know, walking that line that I was talking about of like presenting---there's so much research that shows why private prisons in particular are harmful, how they drive incarceration, how they are even more racist than non-private prisons, and then the harm that companies like G4S and GEO Group enact around the world through border security and immigrant detention centers. And so it was really showing the breadth of what they do, also while trying to not throw under the bus a general anti-carceral messaging.

KK: Yeah, how did you end up navigating that line? Or what were the conversations that you were having around strategic messaging like?

EEW: I think it was---I mean, in the ACSRI they want to see the facts and the numbers, and so I think like we could frame that however we wanted to a degree, but also we needed to provide them with the, 'this is research.' And so yeah, I think it was the framing, but it was also decisions about what we were going to include. We included information about the apartheid state that G4S is helping uphold in Palestine and that was, you know, a discussion because we knew that that would be more controversial for a lot of people on the ACSRI and more controversial for people on the board of trustees, but it also wasn't something that we were willing to throw under the bus.

KK: And how was that received from the [ACSRI] themselves?

EEW: It was, I think, kind of brushed over. But I am glad that it's in there, and they have precedent for divesting from Israeli apartheid. Whether they realize it or not, they have precedent in doing that.

KK: What was the experience of being in that room itself like when you were presenting?

EEW: I don't remember too much of it. It kind of feels like it was like a dark basement [laughs]. But I'm sure it was not. I remember having to get dressed up and presentable for it. I don't remember them asking too many questions, although I'm sure they probably did. Yeah, I think it feels kind of like a blur.

KK: And what were the steps after that presentation happened?

EEW: Well so the sole purpose of the ACSRI is to slow down any potential divestment. So as soon as that presentation is done, we were trying to enact pressure in other ways to speed up the process, put pressure on Bollinger to bring the issue of divestment directly to the trustees. So once the presentation was done, I was organizing the panel, which came shortly after, but also we were doing a lot of those more visible and disruptive actions like the action at President Bollinger's class.

KK: Did the---I want to talk about that action, but also I'm interested in the panel since you were organizing it. Did it feel like a kind of like 'we just have to do this, check off the box' or was there a strategic purpose to it?

EEW: It did feel like we just have to check off the box, but it also felt like a great opportunity to show there's no reason not to divest, like you can't even find somebody to speak in favor of keeping investment in private prisons. And we used it as an opportunity to stage an action as well, so during the panel we filled it with students who had divestment signs. And so another thing that you need to show in the ACSRI process is that there is student support for divestment, and so filling the panel with students who show their support for divestment was another way of meeting that criteria.

KK: As far as---like organizing students, did it feel easy to get people in on your actions? They seemed very large from the protest photos that I've seen.

EEW: Yeah, I think there was pretty substantial support among students. We did a lot of tabling, we did a lot of outreach, we did a lot of teach-ins, really, there was a lot of work to engage the student body. And sometimes it felt like 'oh a lot of people don't care,' but also there were a substantial number who did. And we were able to get the University Senate to pass a divestment---I don't remember what you call it, a...

KK: Like statement? Or petition?

EEW: Yeah, statement. There [were] different moments throughout where we could gauge that there was pretty strong student support. And yeah, the actions, like people who show up to actions.

KK: Yeah, I was just listening to Asha's interview, and she talked a lot about the die-in during the tree lighting. And that seemed very emotional and powerful. What was your experience

of that? Because this would have been just about the same time as your presentation, right?

EEW: Yes, yeah. Yeah, that was a super powerful and impactful event. That event was really led by Black student organizers, so that was, you know, an expression of the harm the University was perpetuating in---through investment in prisons, but also through just like anti-Black carceral politics in general. And yeah, the vision of it was so powerful, happening with the tree-lighting and so many students participating. And in a show of solidarity, folks were weren't participating in the die-in, mostly white students, were trying to stand around as sort of the first layer of defense or security. Casuse we weren't sure how risky that action would be, and then the University did call the cops, so [laughs].

KK: Yeah, how were you talking about risk before that action? And then we can get into the cops.

EEW: With every action, there was a lot of discussion of risk. You know we very much took an approach of who is able to put themselves on the line to accept more risk and who need to behind the line to accept less risk or have their risk potentially reduced. And you know, it's about comfort, like people's comfortability, but also knowing their---being informed of like this is the risk of the action that you're taking, and this is what could potentially happen. We didn't experience the level of repression that students are facing right now, but there was an awareness that we could. The same time Prison Divest was active, there were huge movements against sexual violence happening on campus as well, and a lot of those folks were being silenced and were facing those shadowy disciplinary practices being used against them. And you know there was overlap in the organizing through all these movements, so we were very aware that there were some risks and some people were more at risk than others.

KK: Were you working with those folks? What was the overlap? Was there coalition-building happening?

EEW: Yeah, there were definitely attempts at coalition-building happening. There was like--- I mean, my personal academic interest was about restorative justice processes for sexual violence and how sexual violence is handled at the University. And so in a very kind of like--- I wouldn't say it's totally removed---but in the academic work that I was doing, [inaudible], I was doing research into those connections, which also meant building connections with people who were organizing on these separate issues but related issues. And there were definitely folks---you know, people had different priorities, but there were folks who were interested in tying the two together.

KK: Why do you think that that movement or subsection of student organizers was more heavily disciplined than you guys?

EEW: Yeah [sighs]. I think it was more of a direct attack, or the University saw it as a more direct attack on their reputation than they did with prison divestment. I think they were more afraid of those organizers.

KK: Mm. Got it. And to, I guess to bring it back to the risk of that action, what happened when the cops are called? What was that?

EEW: I remember a lot of anger. I remember a lot of fear. I don't remember a lot of specifics other than that we dispersed. And it was just like feeling of like, 'of course, they did, of course that was the choice that they made was to call the police on their own students.'

KK: Had they done this for any of your actions before, or was that the first time?

EEW: To my knowledge, that was the first time.

KK: As far as the die-in action, were there conversations about disrupting---did that feel like an escalation of action---

EEW: Totally, Yeah, yeah.

KK: ---and did it feel risky in terms of like alienating the general student body? And what was that like?

EEW: Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean I think we saw it as a major escalation because you are, as you said the word disrupting, you are disrupting this beloved campus tradition, there is the risk of alienation but that's also the point of these actions, not to alienate people but that this is something worth disrupting a tree lighting over. The point is to bring attention over and to kind of force people to bear witness, like you have to see this pain and you have to see this harm and you have to sit with it and understand your complicity in it, not just the University but other students who might not, you know, go about their day thinking about complicity in that way.

KK: And what were the after effects of the action? Did you feel movement from the University?

EEW: Um, that's a good question. I think we---ultimately prison divestment happened very quickly, when you compare it to other divestment movements, like it was fast. It didn't feel like it at the time, it felt like oh we're facing one road block after another, but things moved pretty quickly. And I do think the dual approach of having these big disruptive actions did put pressure on the more administrative process to keep going.

KK: And then around the same time, I guess, was the action in Bollinger's class.

EEW: Mhm.

KK: Can you talk more about the conceptualization of that and how it played out?

EEW: Yeah. So I think we wanted Bollinger to feel the pressure directly of like---he could make the decision at any time to bring divestment to the Board of Trustees, he didn't have to use the ACSRI to slow things down if he didn't want to, he could make the decision to put it on the agenda and it could be something that they voted on in any point in time. So we always saw Bollinger as a direct target and, throughout the campaign, did many actions that were directly [targeted at] him to leverage that power that he has. And so the action outside of his class was great because we were able to make it a very visually impactful action, we tied it to police brutality because, if I'm remembering correctly, I believe we did it on the Day of Mourning for Police Brutality. And we were able to interrupt him, I don't remember if it was in or out of class, and be like 'when are you going to put divestment on the agenda?'. It was Dunni who did that. [Laughs] There's a really great---

KK: Yeah, I saw the video.

[Laughter]

EEW: Yeah, it's great.

KK: Yes, he's quite meek compared---

EEW: Yeah, he is. He's like mmmm [makes face].

KK: And curmudgeonly. So he agreed to meet, and were you a part of meeting with him eventually?

EEW: Yeah, so he agreed to meet with us. I was a part...all CPD core members, who at the time, I there were the full eight of us there, met with him. And yeah, he was way more condescending than I remember the ACSRI folks being [laughs].

KK: Really?

EEW: Yeah.

KK: In what way?

EEW: I think he was just like, 'well, you've got my attention now, and like so what, what do you have to say for yourselves? Like why is this so important that you take my time up with this?' Is sort of my memory of his attitude. Yeah, I don't remember much about that meeting itself other than that feeling.

KK: Yeah, did you remember what kind of talking points you gave him? Was it the same as the [ACSRI] or?

EEW: Yeah, I believe it was, like I remember we prepped for it a lot: who was going to share what, what were the questions that we would ask. A lot of the same stuff as the ACSRI, but also like I said, bringing the pressure directly to him, of this---you're the one who has the power to move this forward, so use that power.

KK: And then, what was the result of that meeting? Do you remember?

EEW: I don't.

KK: Because at some point, he does bring it to the Board?

EEW: He does. But, I believe that was actually after the ACSRI gave their endorsement of divestment.

[Pauses]

Yeah, I don't---I wish I could remember the result of that meeting. 'Cause I remember we had more actions after that that were still asking him to bring it to the Board. So I don't think after that meeting he had necessarily agreed to do that.

KK: Yeah. I am wondering, this is sort of a larger question, but it's been touched on a little bit, of how you guys were thinking about your position as students in relation to the University? As you were demanding things of the University, what power did you think you held as students to make those demands?

EEW: I think one of the powers of a divestment campaign is that the stakes and the ties are incredibly clear: the University has money invested in the private prison industry, that is money that students have paid through their tuition but that is---we also invest in the University just by choosing to be students here, whether it's our tuition money or not, we have a stake in this university and therefore the decision that you make are decisions that you make in our name. So I think with a divestment campaign, it's a great way---even though it doesn't always cause the most radical change, there is a very clear message around 'we as students don't want to be invested in harm and we call on you, our university, to disinvest in harm.' And we also framed it a lot around, 'you are harming your own students when you are doing this, like the same systems of incarceration and anti-Blackness don't just stop at the University walls, like you have a history of harassing Black students on campus whether it's with NYPD or with the Columbia security, and those same systems reinforce each other,'

KK: Yeah, yeah. And did the University respond to that point? Or what was the conversation around inner-campus policing?

EEW: Yeah, I think that's a [laughs] not so much, the University didn't respond to that. Yeah, not so much.

KK: Totally.

EEW: The same time that this was happening, one of the largest quote-on-quote gang raids in New York City history happened in Harlem, literally right next to campus, and Columbia was collaborating with the NYPD on that raid. So we saw it as, 'Look, you are actively participating in this harm, whether it's right on campus, whether it's right outside campus; as a university, not only do you have this money invested, but you are perpetuating this harm in many of the actions you take.'

I don't know that that message was really taken to heart by the University, or I should probably say I know it wasn't because clearly we see what's happening now [laughs]. But I think it was important in terms of the messaging for other students to understand and to build community and solidarity with the community as well, like that we weren't just acting within our own bubble and within our own interests but really trying to tie it with the larger community.

KK: Yeah, what was the sort of like outside Columbia community response to those raids, or what did those collaborations-solidarity look like through the campaign?

EEW: Yeah, I think that other people could probably speak to that better than I can, like I don't know if Asha touched on that at all---

KK: Yeah, she did.

EEW: Yeah, Asha was definitely very pivotal in building those bonds and connections with community. There's obviously a lot of distrust and anger towards Columbia from the community outside that has been so harmed by the University, and there was definitely a desire to build solidarity and have student support in those actions against the University and against the criminalization that was happening in folks.

KK: I also wanted to ask as a white organizer in this, how were you thinking, or were you thinking about making appeals to white students? Did it feel like an education effort? What was their, or your, position within that?

EEW: Yeah, no absolutely. I think I was thinking a lot about talking directly to white students, also directly to white faculty. And I think I spoke in the beginning about why this campaign as a white person felt like a particularly strategic place for me to be involved and

leverage my privilege, and I therefore, was very committed to having other white students see that as well. I think the idea of 'oh as a white person you benefit from carceral systems,' can feel very abstract, and that a campaign like CPD, we worked to make it seem less abstract and to show people directly like 'these are the ways that you are benefiting from carceral systems as a white person as a student at the university, and that this is a way that you can work against those benefits that you are reaping.'

KK: And when you were having those conversations, what were the responses like?

EEW: I would say that we had a lot of pretty positive conversations. You know, there was a lot of tabling and so of course there's a lot of people and a lot of conversations that get brushed off, but I do think that political education was one of the strengths of the campaign and that we were able, through spending a lot of one-on-one energy, devoting that time to really talking: 'Hey, did you know that your university has ten million dollars invested in the private prison industry and this is the harms of that and this is how you benefit from it.' Like those conversations did mean something and did help bring some awareness.

KK: And then after divestment happened, what was the sort of shift in the campaign like, because obviously it's about much more than divestment, but you had a win, did the campaign dissolve? What was that repositioning like?

EEW: It was really wild when it happened. We were really shocked, we were very shocked. And it happened in June, so it was also in the summer, and a lot of our core organizers had just graduated; there was only a handful of us still around---and around for that summer. So there was kind of a feeling of like, oh my god we need to capitalize on this moment, divestment has happened and now we want to make sure that people know this and it happens at other universities, and it happens with other institutions and that this isn't just a blip that gets overlooked but that 'we can share this win with other folks to allow them to build their own divestment campaigns and also that it gets coverage in the media and that education happens.' So I remember a lot of frenzied meetings and emails through the summer, there was a lot of press we were doing, there were a lot of folks reaching out from other universities about the campaign, so we tried our best to share resources and to gather---like we had this great vision of having a complete kind of playbook that we would be able to hand to people, which I think ended up falling apart, but we did do our best to create resources and to share our story and just be able to pass that on to folks. And interestingly, people still reach out, we'll still get requests from folks to share resources from current students at different universities, especially there was a definite boost in folks reaching out again last fall when folks were being more active in their BDS [Boycott, Divest, Sanctions] campaigns.

KK: 'Cause there was other divestment campaigns happening at Columbia at the time. I think fossil fuels...and I don't know how active BDS was at the time. Can you talk a little bit more---did it feel like, 'oh, we're going to expand divestment at Columbia to other things'?

EEW: Yeah, so we had been working closely with SJP throughout the campaign and doing solidarity events, but they hadn't officially launched a BDS campaign yet. And so, actually, one of the direct responses that came out of the CPD win was the launching of Columbia University Apartheid Divest [CUAD]. And so at their meeting, which happened in the fall of 2015, I was there along with folks from the fossil fuel divestment as well and SJP members, and they were sort of getting ready to vision and launch this official apartheid divest campaign, building off the win of CPD. So yeah, there was a lot of sharing with those folks, a little less---I mean, there was definitely solidarity with the fossil fuel divestment, but there was a little bit less of that direct connection.

KK: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember that early CUAD launch, or do you remember what that transfer was like a little bit more?

EEW: Yeah, I remember...I do remember just the energy and excitement and hope. There was also, SJP was already and has always experienced a lot of repression and a lot of pressure from Zionists students and from the University, so I think there was excitement and there was a knowledge that this was not necessarily much harder, but this was going to be a hard road ahead. We tried sharing what we could that would be useful and were hoping that we could leverage the support that CPD had had in even just getting students to turn up at events to bring to bring it directly to Apartheid Divest. But it did feel like a passing of the torch moment, even though there had been connections, it was like okay, this is the next fight, and these are the folks who have already been committed to this fight and now are going to be taking it forward.

KK: Yeah, yeah. How did that play out over---because this would have been your senior year?

EEW: This would have been my senior year, yeah.

KK: What was that final year like for you politically?

EEW: Yeah, I think there was a lot of---there was sort of the balance of like 'okay, we won this campaign and so all the work that we've been doing where we've been going like a thousand miles an hour, we can breathe it doesn't have to be a thousand miles an hour anymore, and there's this huge weight and responsibility of making sure we share the knowledge and the resources and there's only like four of us left on campus, a lot of people had graduated, we were a very small crew whose attentions were being pulled in lots of different directions because we were all seniors. So I think like---I feel like we did our best,

and I think there's times I wish we had been able to do more, to really feed into CUAD or to help more campaigns in other universities that were getting launched.

KK: Did you, I guess at the time and now, how much do you see divestment had a symbolic victory of a material victory? What do you personally see the purpose of divestment as?

EEW: Yeah [sighs]. I see it a little bit as both. Ultimately, Columbia had a small amount of money invested in private prisons when you compare it to their investment in Israel, when you compare it to their investment in fossil fuels, it was a very small amount. And I think that's part of the reasons that we won, because the ask wasn't as big. And so in that sense it's symbolic, the divestment wasn't actually going to hurt the private prison industry, [laughs] it wasn't going to tear it down. Yet, it also did shine a spotlight. Divestment, you know we're seeing a resurgence of private prisons right now, but, you know, these companies had to change their names, [laughs] there was a certain amount of awareness and material impact that was brought to---and I'm not saying just from CPD---I'm saying as part of the divestment from private prison movement in general---that did have impact on the companies. But, unfortunately, they are finding a lot of success in migrant detention at the moment. So it wasn't a long-term success.

KK: Yeah. Were there other successes or failures that you reflect back on about the campaign in general? I know you said there are some things that you wish you did better but, now ten years later, what's your overall perspective on it?

EEW: Um, I think I have a much more positive view on it in this moment than I did for some years. Because I think it did feel like oh this is more symbolic than it is material. And I was still proud of it, I was proud that we were able to achieve that. But seeing a resurgence or like seeing divestment movements being so brought to the surface in the last year and hearing from current student organizers that they are still looking back on what CPD did and taking lessons from it, that means a lot to me and makes me feel proud of what we were able to accomplish. And we---yeah, I mean I have so much admiration for the student organizers today, and the fight they are facing is so terrifying, and to think that there is some small bit of wisdom or experience that has been passed down, I guess in these ten years, like is a source of pride.

KK: Yeah, great. Well, I don't have any more questions. If there's anything that we touched on that you want to talk more about, now's the time for that if you'd like to.

EEW: [Pauses] I feel like we covered a lot [laughs].

KK: Cool.

EEW: I'm sorry, I feel like I didn't [have] so many details to offer, but...

KK: No, this is a great addition. I really appreciate you taking the time. Yeah and it's so nice to be able to talk to you.

EEW: Yeah, likewise. Thank you for doing this project, I think it's exciting.