

S – So this comrade five, interview five. Just elaborate a bit more about yourself, your age now, your age at the encampment and a general political descriptor.

C5 – Ok, now I am 25 so I would have been 24 at the encampment. I was not a student at any university during that time and I then went on to be a student following that. When I first attended the encampment, I was not particularly politically educated, I got a fair amount of education from the encampment to the point where when I first joined the encampment, I was asking people to explain to me what socialism and communism are. Now like a year and a bit later, I am all out, staunch Marxist, communist and a lot of that came from learnings at the encampment, which I guess we will discuss. I first started very much like anti-capitalist but didn't know where to be on the left.

S - Ok great. So when did you first go to the encampment then?

C5 – On the very first day. I was working when the camp was set up and I went straight after work, probably like two or three o'clock-ish on the first day.

S – So what first drew you to the encampment and what was your first impression of being there for the first time?

C5 – So I was drawn there, I mean... AOC, I already knew about and had been involved with the group and been involved with other members of the group in other settings. I was an activist for Palestine before the encampment so it was kinda like a solidarity like I support the students I wanna do everything I can to help them set this camp up. I remember seeing the pictures and the videos on Instagram when the camp was first being set up and also when I first got there and just this amazing feeling of power and solidarity and like resistance in a way we hadn't really had in Newcastle because up until then there was so many groups and factions and it was just getting everybody across the north east in one place together to fight Zionism, it just felt so, so powerful that first whole week, really, felt amazing.

S - Ok great, so what *did* first draw you to the encampment? Is it just your previous experience as a Palestine activist?

C5 – Yeah, I think that anything Palestine that happens in the north east I'll attend. It wasn't really like the encampment itself, this university is complicit in supporting genocide, they have a campaign targeting it, I am going to go help in any way that I can.

S – Ok great, so how did you spend the majority of your time at the encampment, for me that was a lot of chain-smoking, how was that for you?

C5 – Yeah, vaping. It was quite difficult actually because I had just got stuck in from the very second that I stepped foot there, and I have learned now that it is probably not the best skill to have, but I am very much just like 'let me help you wherever I can'. So I did a lot of the setting up, the organising meals, cleaning, introducing people to the camp. For quite a while I helped cross the line of external-internal people from the camp. So like students and non-students because I knew a lot of the students and I knew a lot of the people who weren't who were coming to support and things like that, I think it was quite a good little between person to cross over the groups. I largely spent it as if I was a member of the camp staying there but not staying because obviously I wasn't a student. Yeah.

S - Ok so, it sounds like you had a lot of experience with the various working groups, do you wanna say whatever you remember about that one?

C5 – it is quite hard to remember yeah. I was part of the cleaning working group but that was kinda just largely nobody else is doing. One of the struggles that we had at the encampment was actually camping itself, like actually the act of cooking, cleaning, keeping everything organised, making everything weather-proof, making sure people are safe. I am quite like an organisational, leadership kind of person so I was happy to kinda happy to just help people organise, I spent a lot of time just moving things between tents, setting up tents, so it wasn't

really necessarily cleaning I guess. I spent a lot of time in the food group, helping, not necessarily organising the food, but distributing and clean up and things like that. What else was I in? I don't really remember what other groups there were.

S - Yeah it seemed like we had made a cleaning working group for a task that should have just been done by anybody.

C5 – Yeah. It was more just to take on the responsibility to delegate but it didn't end up being that way, it just ended up being that we were seen as the cleaners for a bit and I would say me less so than the other people who were there because I would come straight from work and things and these people wouldn't so they would just kinda get shifted with all the awful jobs. But that is a large part of what the encampment struggled with, the actual day-to-day, which I imagine... most people have not camped for two months at a time before on the university grounds so it is unsurprising.

S - Ok this next one is a juicier one, how did you interact with the factionalism that there on the encampment?

C5 – Yeah so badly.

S – Be as open and as critical as you would like, even about the stuff you would have done differently because I know we should have done stuff differently.

C5 – I think, to preface it all, we are a bunch of young people to fight their university and their awful stance on Zionism, who had some massive wins and more than anything created a beautiful solidarity space and I do think that largely we came out of it stronger now than had we not done it at all and I think it wouldn't have existed without factionalism. It is kinda hard to remember specifics I guess because there were a lot of disagreements and a lot of stuff happening externally to the camp that I was involved in like with Newcastle PSC and things so it is hard to keep track of everything that was going on at once. I think there was a case of

some people being very logical and being like 'If we want the camp to function, we have to put some basic principles of cooking, cleaning and caring for each other in place', and some people were like 'we have to have a revolution right this very second'. Both ideas are so right but there was no intersection, you can't build the revolution if you can't do the dishes. But there were also some of us like myself who spent too much time focused on the logistics of the camp, rather than like the actual the politics and working together to build something stronger. I guess because we thought it might go on for longer we thought we would set some good structure in place first and it just ended up kinda being neither of the two which kinda sucked. I think that when you put a bunch of young people, any people actually, in a small space together who have differing political views and do things differently, it is inevitable that factionalism would happen and I also think that... I would like to say that the people post-camp now that I have spoken to have changed so wonderfully and the growth is absolutely amazing to see. I think you do have to make these kinds of mistakes and have these issues to grow. But I think there was a lot high school type bitchiness or like cat-fighting, where it was like 'you said this! I said this!' and very much, because you're all stuck in a space together for 24 hours a day, not looking at the bigger picture of what was trying to succeed as the encampment. When I first heard of the original... when the two groups really split from each other, which I can't even really remember specifically how it happened, over messages in group chats? There was a massive split from that. I tried to stay external and then I was like actually maybe I might be a good person to mediate or talk between the two because I am not really even part of the two of them and now looking back that was really silly because I was. I knew people better than others and really it was very white saviour of me to be like 'I can save the day' but at the time I thought it was best. I also naively thought we can all talk this out and we can be nice. When I started the encampment I was quite just going from liberal to left so I was like 'let's talk, let's chat', rather than 'we have different

politics we need to figure out how to align'. I think people were so incredibly critical of each other like you breathe and its wrong, purity politics was really, really strong at the encampment. I mean one of the first big meetings we had, we got a lecture by... don't know the codename. The person isn't really relevant anyway. We got a lecture in terms of who we could support in terms of resistance groups in Palestine and it was very much like if you step out of line, but that's not stepping out of line, that's having a different view. As someone who didn't know as much as I should have, especially with my involvement in the Palestine movement, I blindly listened and was like 'yeah that makes sense I will just do whatever they say' but now obviously understanding what I understand, I can see why people would sit there and be like 'shut up, that's really stupid, why would we sit here and now support the resistance?' or 'why would we not say that?'. I think half, when I say half I don't really mean half, but some of the group wanted to lead it as a 'we have to appease the public, we have to look good for the public, we have to look good for the media, we have to appease the media. We have to perform it in a certain way that is still appealing'. And then the other half of the group were like 'we have to take direct action right now and actually impact the university' and there was no discussion of a middle ground, it was one or the other, which I thought caused a lot of tension and clashes.

S - So I have two further questions, based off that. So it seems like there was some kind... there were some issues with division of labour in that many people seem to have been stuck with 'grunt'-type work or perhaps more with the cleaning up of the encampment and maintenance of it. Could you speak a little bit to that?

C5 – Were they maintenance group? Is that what they were called? That's rung a bell.

S – Potentially, I don't really remember either.

C5 – Yeah that rung a bell. You've probably picked the right person to talk to about this because I was very much... Also with myself the difficulty is, if it doesn't get done I will just do it, so it wasn't always necessarily that myself or others were being asked to clean, being asked to sort the tents out, it was more like it's not getting done and there's mouldy food in this tent. Or it's not getting done and the dishes haven't been done for three days. It was less about... Nobody really organised the cleaning part of the camp. It was kinda of just like a given that... well, it was just something that I presume some of us would go unsaid, that you would just clean up after yourselves. I think that... I don't mean to be derogatory towards university students because I've been a student for a very long time but a lot of students are new to cleaning up after themselves and when you put them all in the same space together that is literally outside, people just don't. I do think it is a gender thing as well, I think that men can largely... the invisible labour that is naturally done by women since birth of picking up after things or just doing things without being asked to. It's very... it gets learned by men, especially leftist men, it takes a lot to learn it and to make that domestic skill that women do since birth natural. I think that there was a fair few of us, maybe four or five of us, who since day one of the camp would just do that labour just because we wanted to help, like I was serving food on the first week, I was cleaning up tents, all of that kind of thing. But then the trouble is when I didn't do it, not necessarily just me, but when we didn't do it, other people also didn't. It didn't just get picked up so then it just kinda became an expectation or it wouldn't get done. I think every day it was like 'please can we clean, please can we do the dishes, please can we care for each other a bit more'. I think maybe a few people were more short-sighted about the encampment, about it not lasting as long so not being too fussed about that bit but I also think it didn't get spoken about, it very much felt as though there were a few women or a few people who were nagging the camp the whole time about cleaning and then that was it. It was never really like 'the camp will fail if we don't do the dishes guys'.

Yeah, I think... we had... when the camp first started, the public was asked if they could donate anything such as sleeping bags, tents, anything that you would need to camp, anything that people had and the community really showed up, they gave us loads of tents, sleeping bags, warm clothing, excess food, things you could store, to really help out and that all got shoved in a tent and that tent got so, so messy and it genuinely felt like I would come from work to the encampment and spend two hours per day cleaning the tent. Just to do that every day because people didn't really see it as that much of an issue. Then it got to the end of the encampment and we couldn't find anybody's stuff or anybody's belongings because there was no system or structure, the things you don't think about when you are setting up an encampment and that's really what burnt me out at the encampment, doing so much of the cleaning and the invisible labour and I think I could have spent a lot more time actually building revolutionary stuff at the encampment or even just talking to people in the public about it, if we didn't have to do the dishes all the time.

S - Perfect, that's a completely excellent and absolutely fair point.

C5 – It is interesting because I can see why it happened and now I can see that I would take a completely different stance. I think I would very much more sit there and be like 'if we don't do this the camp will shut, full stop, so pick up the labour', but at the time I was like 'I'll do anything I can to help you even if at my own detriment' and that then festered a kind of resentment or harsh feeling in me to the people who weren't doing which, when the factionalism came about, I subconsciously sided with the people who were cleaning with me because they were my friends and they were doing the cleaning with me which had nothing to do with the factionalism or any of the politics or anything, which looking back now is silly. But also completely understandable.

S - Yeah, definitely, I think there was an implicit misogyny that unfortunately runs through a lot of far-left spaces.

C5 – I think everyone can see it now talking back which is interesting.

S – Yeah, as well that’s something worthy of critique that we couldn’t, or some of us didn’t rather, notice it then.

C5 – I even didn’t notice it until like a month in and I was like ‘hang on, I think it’s the same three of us who are doing the same cleaning every day.

S – So last thing on the factionalism. What, in your mind, then is the role of a political faction or a faction politically?

C5 – I guess that there are positives to factions. A large problem that we had at the camp was that nobody discussed difference and could see where we would agree or where we could lean towards each side’s different politics to build something. We just kinda gossiped about each other. We just kinda said ‘I don’t like this person because they’re a communist and I don’t like the way they are doing this and I don’t like the books that they read and I don’t like that they chain smoke all the times’, instead of being like ‘ok, you’re an anarchist, you don’t wanna do the dishes, you have to do the dishes so we can enact whatever you want to do’.

Also, you might disagree with running a media campaign and having someone out there to be pro-media but we never sat down to talk why that was a good thing or why that was a bad thing, we just sorta said, I don’t really wanna do that because I don’t care how the camp looks, that’s not what it’s for. We just went behind people’s backs and were like why’re they doing that, that’s really stupid. There was really a lack of communication between everyone. I think, I don’t know... because there’s factions everywhere in the north east. Incredibly stressful. I would view factions as a strength in terms of you find your people and you can build something with people who really align with your views and take action in the same

way as you but it doesn't work if then as a faction you can't give anything or are not willing to work with other people. I just think there was just, in relation to the encampment, such a line between people who were kinda trying to make sure the camp looked good for the media and still got along with people in the student union and things like that and people who were like 'fuck this university, let's spray-paint it all red in blood' and there was no middle ground and that's where factions don't work when there's no communication or agreement at all. I also think a lot of people in that encampment like myself were not politically educated and then some people were so, so phenomenally well-read and it was a case of some people being like 'you need to read more' and some people being like 'you need to act more', when really there is a nice balance that we could have spoken about.

S – Yeah. The next three are personal experiences on one event essentially. So, what was your experience of Kings Gate-gate? Which was May the 8<sup>th</sup> I believe. Were you there?

C5 – I don't remember what that one was.

S – The blockade of the administrative building.

C5 – Oh Yeah. So I was at work that day and I was in the group chat so I had known that people were there. I had kept up to date. I was actually incredibly stressed, I hate being at work when these things are going on, and I went straight from work afterwards. I got there about half way through maybe. So by the time I got there, everyone was sat at the entrances making a bit of noise. Nothing was really... it was quite... the original energy that I imagine there was had kinda dissipated, it was a waiting game by the time I had got there. I do remember walking round all the entrances just to see if everyone was ok and stuff and most people were just kinda sat there. There was a little bit of noise but the momentum of chanting and stuff had gone by that time. I don't really remember what else happened that day.

S - I don't think a huge amount did happen that day.

C5 – I think because I was so late to it, I missed... because that was the first group target big thing but I got there when the initial momentum was gone. So it was just checking if everyone were safe and just hanging around. Very much in support of it, it was a brilliant action but I wasn't there for a large part of it so I don't know how much I can speak on behalf of that one.

S – Ok, great. Describe your experience of May 29<sup>th</sup>.

C5 – al-Shifa Hall, I knew you would ask about that one.

S – It is *the* experience of the encampment I feel.

C5 – I didn't know whether or not I could go into the hall or not because I am not a student. I kinda spoke to the members of the encampment to see how others would feel. The consensus was that if we just kept it to students then we don't have enough who are willing to go in to make it safe and it I, or me and a couple of others, were willing to potentially risk it, then it was our own call. So I was like, I don't fucking care, so I was like I'll go in and see. I did a fair bit of the planning with groups. I think, off the bat, we made a massive mistake when we sent people in to recce the hall because the information that we had wasn't really correct. So we decided to go in pairs into the hall, as like a buddy system to keep someone safe, then the person I was paired with was also external and the second we went into the courtyard went on the roof. Just scaled the roof and that was my partner, so good strong start. So we had been told about two exits that we needed to block and the second we got in we found out there were about a hundred exits we needed to block, there were a lot more exits. I had never been in this building so I myself had no clue about where anything is, about how you would block anything. We had some bike chains to lock doors but only four or five, it was just pure chaos the second we went into that building. The planning was not sufficient which understandable, it was the first thing we ever did, like the first occupation kinda thing. The planning was not

sufficient, the plan was: go in in pairs, block the entrances, occupy the hall. We hadn't really considered, where we going to occupy the building or the hall? Were we going to shut certain entrances off? What were we going to do about the fact that it is multiple floors, so we went in, tried to shut every door behind us and security were there so we went up the stairs to block the entrances off and I got confronted really intensely by a member of staff from the university, I don't know just someone who was taller and more muscular than me, pushed the door shut and locked it and it was literally just a bunch of people running around trying to lock a bunch of doors. I couldn't tell you even where the hall was from where I was, I had no clue. So then I ended up getting kicked out of the building because I was with two people and the security were trying to block the entrances so I put a bench on the door but one of the people I was with took the bench down to let themselves in the door so then it was wide open for security who quite literally swept me off the floor, picked me up and over the shoulder picked up me and I got kicked out of the side entrance of the hall, so then I ran around the front of al-Shifa hall again and that's when I got stuck in the courtyard, so I was in the courtyard the whole time. There was then the group in the hall, the group in the courtyard and the public outside and I was part of the courtyard group. We didn't really know what to do there because that's an awful place to be stuck because we couldn't get inside the building and we couldn't get out. So when we realised we were stuck in the courtyard and couldn't get back into the university building... Did we shut the doors of the courtyard or did they? I think they did.

S - I was inside so I don't know.

C5 – Because I remember three of us slipping through the door in the courtyard, me, Saul and someone else. I remember us slipping through the door last minute and then the door was shut, so I imagine that was then trying to stop anybody else coming in. So then for a bit... I think all of us thought we were going to get kicked out in about twenty minutes, half an hour,

so we just did a lot of noise-making, we hung a keffiyeh on the statue, we did some chalk on the floor and then it was a lot of communicating – trying to get posts out with no signal, communicating with the people in the building. And, obviously, we had, at this time, no perception of what was going on outside the hall and little did we know that there was like a hundred people there and also like a hundred police so we did a lot of chanting but the main trouble we had was that we had no real means of communication with people. People were also really unprepared for this. So I had taken my bag in with extra clothes, food, water, medication, because if you are doing an occupation, you never know. There were probably about two of us who had actual sufficient things for a long stay occupation. Then it poured down, absolutely poured down and we were outside in the cold and rain for four and a half hours. It was brutal. I remember we did a lot of chanting, a lot of noise-making, a lot of scheming, trying to get into other entrances and things which we could never really figure out. We were trying to phone people outside, trying to figure out what was going on. We had the idea in the courtyard of let's try and get this gate open and get the public to flood in. When the police started coming in the hall and stuff, all we could think about was the people in the hall, there were only about... what? 12 people in there?

S - There were about 15, yeah

C5 – We were just thinking, that is easy for the police to sweep up, every single one. So what can we do to either cause a distraction or get them out really. Because an occupation is fine but 15 people can easily be arrested. What we imagined, what we had discussed was more of an open occupation, where the building was occupied and it was fine. We didn't expect, a hundred and fifty police and a whole big thing. So then it was really think on the spot. I would say there was maybe 15 or 20 of us in the courtyard and probably 8-10 of us were not students, were external people. So we also were like we need to get out of here too. So there was a lot of... I remember the police came from inside the building and filed a line to block

us, to kettle us into the courtyard but we were like what are we doing because there is nothing going on here, and we were on the phone to people outside and they were like shall we push through the police line and open the door and we were like we will push through this side and open the door and then they opened the gate so we could see outside which was the most phenomenal feeling ever.

S - Yeah I remember seeing that from inside the hall.

C5 – We only thought there were like ten people outside and there were a hundred and something. So we were pushing really hard against our police line to try and open it so we could get out and also so people could come in. We had a lot of... so we were kettled from both sides. It started to get really intense where some people were getting hurt, some people were fainting. The police got their batons out and I got hit in the face with a police baton, they just went really, really violent. So the people were pushing from outside and we were pushing from in the courtyard to try and break the line so we could get in and out. Yeah, I remember the gates opening and everyone pushing forward on the police line and then they stopped but there were also like a hundred police there, so it is not surprising. It was literally, for maybe an hour or two, pushing and shoving and people were getting hurt, and nobody really knew what to do or how to communicate with each other. So I spoke to a couple of people who had a lot of experience with police brutality or intense protests, direct action, things like that, and we were like ‘there are so many police here that all of those people in the occupation are going to get arrested so we need to cause some form of distraction, just staying in this courtyard in the pouring rain is absolutely unproductive’. This is where we came up with the idea to block the tyne bridge to deter the police from the university and get them all away. That’s when we agreed with the police to let us out of the courtyard, we were like ‘no, no we will leave, it’s fine’. So they made us walk out in pairs, with our hands up.

S – Because they thought you were armed?

C5 – Yeah. Yeah, yeah, like they made us walk out... so they made us walk out... so between the lines and the gate, there were two police lines and they literally had us going two by two and as we were walking out, the entire crowd was cheering for us, as if we had done something revolutionary, not just been locked in a courtyard for four hours in the rain. It was crazy and they were cheering for us and I was like ‘my friends are in this occupation and they are going to get arrested’. We literally walked out two by two, hands above our heads and it was like we’d done something revolutionary; we’d just got trapped, we had not. Some of the people in the courtyard had not even been in the original occupation, they had just snuck in, so it was kinda interesting. So from there we literally got outside and took straight off from the camp, like no break. I remember how badly I needed a wee the whole time – so bad. The whole time, it was all I could think about. I thought I was just gonna have to wee myself. We ran straight from there to the tyne bridge, on the way down we were collecting cones, road work stuff, to block the tyne bridge. We ran from there to the tyne bridge, just to get as many police as we possible could away from the encampment and when we got to the tyne bridge, nobody was blocking the tyne bridge. They were all just stood there like frightened. So two of us just went and sat in the road, me being one of them. We maybe blocked it for two or three minutes before we got told there was an ambulance coming through, which turned out to be untrue but then it turned into this whole big thing of do we stay do we go? We had managed to drag a lot of the police presence away, a lot of the people away. We basically just caused a whole bit of chaos and it wasn’t as productive as I would have liked it to be, I would have liked there to be an actual successful block of the tyne bridge and it really just turned out to be a load of people running around town. But it did do the right thing of causing chaos and disrupting all the police. Then we had a phone call to say that people were being arrested in the occupation, which was untrue so we all ran from the tyne bridge back up there. Apart

from someone who was arrested at the tyne bridge, who did that to say me because the police were coming to arrest me. They were looking at me, pointing at me, talking about me, because I was the first one to occupy the road and I was very, very loud. It was obvious I was the first to be arrested and they came behind the police officer and put the siren on the megaphone so got themselves arrested and I didn't. So, I owe them a massive gratitude. Massive, massive. So we came back up to the university, I freaked out the whole way back up, because I was like these people I know really, really well... I had these images of everyone just being marched out straight into police cells. Then we got there and everyone was just out.

S - Do you remember the potential threats of tear gas?

C5 – No. We had the police batons. There was somebody who had really, really badly injured their leg, which we now know was a torn... Torn ACL?

S – Torn ACL yeah.

C5 – who wasn't allowed out of the occupation, medics weren't allowed in and there was... I mean I got hit in the face and bruised by face with the police baton, they were very, very violent. But I didn't hear anything about tear gas but I was really struggling to comprehend anything that was going on.

S – Yeah. So, the general characterisation of al-Shifa hall so far has been that the brutality that we did stand our ground and we did meaningfully resist and defy the police. What are your thoughts on that characterisation?

C5 – I think that... so we had seen, was it Leeds? Or Manchester? Who had done an occupation not very long before, an open occupation that was really successful.

S – I think it might have been Manchester.

C5 – And we kinda had this notion in our head that we would just, not walk in and occupy, but we would go in and occupy and create this open occupation and it would not be horribly... we were quite naïve in how easy we expected it to be and I think that the people in the hall were brilliant and stood their ground with the fire alarm on. I think it was just thinking on the spot the whole time a little bit, it was a little bit of a scramble and we couldn't really communicate between all three, the outside, the courtyard and the people inside very well. The people on the outside thought that we wanted out from the get go, whereas the people in the courtyard and inside wanted to stay and occupy. So they were trying to break the police barrier in a way we didn't really want, so there was a lack of communication. I think that... because we didn't have much organisation, much planning, or really even people who had done any of that before. It was the absolute best we could have done with the resources we had and the time that we had and I think it is right that the ground was right. We occupied for hours and hours, even us in the courtyard in the rain occupied it for hours and hours and stood our ground. The amount of attention, police resources it brought to the university, I mean it went incredibly viral. Sometimes, the intention wasn't necessarily to create something that would mess up the police and go viral, but that is also a good thing in the face of a genocide to bring more attention to the fact that the university is supporting it and the fact that people are resisting, so where it might have been a bit lack lustre in that we didn't create an on-going occupation for days, it created something really good for social media. But also for the students at Newcastle uni. You can't really ignore when 150 police have been on your campus. It benefited in ways we never really expected to but also in things that were like oh, we could have done that a bit better. I think... I think it was successful in way that we didn't expect it to be, but I do think it was like... there were so many external things that we couldn't control such as the police and the people outside, so it was kinda like we did the absolute best we could with what we had. So I would say it was a success, yeah.

S – Ok, great. So could you describe your last ever experience with the encampment? That could be the last day you were ever there or the last day of the entire thing.

C5 – I had a really tough last day of the encampment honestly because I was one of the only people with a car. I actually really, really [indecipherable] on the last day because I just felt like nobody was packing the camp up. So the day before the last day of the camp was pride and we all went out and we came back to hang out at the camp together afterwards, we went to the march and it was a very nice social thing. Then we agreed to come to the camp at nine or ten the next day and pack up and there was three of us there and people didn't start coming until after lunchtime-ish but it was a whole camp to pack up and then on the last day, there was also a rally with speeches which was quite emotional. I really desperately wanted to be involved in the last day with people and we had done something really brilliant over the last two months and I really wanted to spend it, and the whole time I was just stressed about cleaning the camp up because we had to be out by that night and I was like if people don't pack up now we aren't going to get out of here and people continuously told me to stop putting pressure on them, stop being stressy and I was like 'We have a camp to pack up'.

Literally until the last day... it was horrible, I remember from like five o'clock onwards I was just doing runs in my car to places with all this stuff and every time I got back I was like 'can people please pack stuff up so I can take it in the car. They'd be like 'Oh we are trying to put a shroud out to memorialise the camp' and I was like 'that's fine, the camp needs packed up though' and I was quite upset because I didn't get space or time to have a goodbye with the encampment or the people who were there and people wouldn't even bring stuff to my car to give me that five minute. I was packing up that thing til 11 o'clock and I had work at 6am the next day. Not optionally, just because it had to be done. People were getting annoyed at me being stressed and I was just like 'AAAA', that kinda did sum up why the camp needed to go because it was very much like... yeah. Not being cared about and the logistics thing was not

being considered, like we had to be out that day. The camp had to be packed up, if it wasn't going to be packed up the stuff would just be left there and nobody really felt any pressure or we kinda need move this stuff. So I was very much like done with it by that day. It was kinda sad because I would have liked to spend it a bit long chatting to people but I literally just didn't have a chance packing the whole thing up.

S - Great, well not great but...

C5 – Yeah not great.

S – Great answer. So, what was your defining experience of the encampment? If you have an image, a feeling in your head that sums up the experience, what would that be?

C5 – I think it might be a bit clique but solidarity it will always be for me. There were so many ups and downs. I mean... there were so many good times at the encampment where we could just come together and just... It was so nice to have a space that when anything happened, whether in Palestine, whether in the UK, whether in individual people's lives, there was a place where you could go and be with your people, who would understand and it was like the amount of horror and grief all of us were feeling because of the genocide, there was a space where we could just be with people who understood, which had never really existed with a permanent thing before and some of the emergency rallies and vigils we held really kept us going. There were obviously some really horrible and hard times where there was lots of factionalism and lots of people disagreeing, but the root of all of it was that there was this Palestine base in the north east and like a lot of Palestinians described it as a cultural home or somewhere they could go to be with people who understood at that time, and to create something like that felt really amazing. Mainly just the sense of solidarity that was there throughout and we might have had these internal factions and we might have not gotten along with some people and we might have gotten along better with others but at the root of

all of it was it was us against everyone else, we are a camp together. Multiple times, when it did come down to it, we were all together no matter what. it was a sense of home for two months. After spending a year and a bit in the north east, desperately trying to fight Zionism, just to have a place where people understood that is what I think about the most... or what I miss most from the encampment is the sense of solidarity and home that we had there.

S - Ok great. So, what have you been engaged with since the encampment politically? And what lessons have you taken from the encampment that you have brought forth into work, if any?

C5 – The encampment really radicalised me. I think... I really lacked political education, which is largely my fault for not going out and seeking it but I had never really had any... Nobody in my life was political, I didn't know much of anything about politics. It changed for me when the genocide started, I became a lot more educated and verging between liberal and leftist and getting more and more leftist. When I went to the encampment, I learnt so much because it was just like this space where you could talk to all of these brilliant minds who had all these different life experiences and I literally felt like every day was a school day. I kinda went in as an eco-socialist, just kinda learning the terminology of it, and came out as a direct actionist, willing to take up arms for Palestine, within those two months. Since then I have taken up arms for Palestine, I have done direct action. I joined, before it was a proscribed terrorist organisation, Palestine Action and there is an Israeli state-owned weapons factory in Newcastle which I did an action with in February [2025] and shut it down for nine and a half hours by climbing on the roof of the security booth and I think, had I not been at the encampment, I would never have had... not necessarily the courage but like I would never have been exposed to the necessity of it because before, it just kinda didn't really exist to me or kinda just saw as something that other people do and then when I was at the encampment I was like 'I am so incredibly privileged and there's also no reason why I can't

do this' and just to be around so many people who had this belief in direct action and resistance. I left the encampment thinking there is no reason it can't be me. The very next thing I did after the encampment was join Palestine Action, which obviously was before the proscription. I joined them after the encampment because of it. Since then, I have been involved in varying degrees of direct action, organising lots of demonstrations and rallies with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. I have gotten a lot more involved in politics with the Green Party, only since they have agreed to proscribe the IDF as a terrorist organisation. Yeah, it was kinda a lot of the basis for my political foundations, I guess. So I have taken a lot of lessons from there and also lessons in factionalism and things like that which have sprouted from there.

S - Ok great. Is there anything else you would like to add? Not quite final words because you aren't dying after this hopefully.

C5 – Yeah, hopefully not.

S – Anything more you would like to add, though?

C5 – I think it is mainly covered in what I said. Looking back now it is so easy to be like 'this is what we did wrong' but at the time we were a bunch of young people and we were putting our heart and souls into this thing, in the best way all of us knew how, to try and fight Zionism at the weapons factory but also at the university. I think we did an absolutely phenomenal job and whilst we didn't achieve many of the demands that's because there's like a £100 million funding this university to support a genocide and we are a hundred students trying to fight against that, some of us not even students and some of the work we did, especially to push direct action in the north east, was really phenomenal. Like those little things like the nuisance group spraying the university with red paint were a lot of our first introductions to direct action. I think it is what has pushed a lot of, especially Newcastle

Palestine Solidarity Campaign, people to become more radical and less protesty. So I think there are a lot of good things to have come from the encampment and I kinda wish we would do it all over again.