

S – Ok. This is comrade seven, could you tell me a little bit more about yourself: your age now, your age at the encampment and a general political descriptor.

C7 – Yeah, I would describe myself... well, at the time of the encampment, I was 19... yeah. General political descriptor. Vaguely abolitionist, anarchist-pilled. Yeah. Scratch that strongly anarchist-pilled, slight, questioning abolitionist, somewhere in between. My age now: I am 21.

S – And when did you first go to the encampment? This question is not applicable for some people but tell me about that first time you were there.

C7 – 7am on the day of set up, I guess. I think, I was still half-asleep to be honest but I was just glad to be there doing something. I think general mood... I think everyone was quite apprehensive at first. I remember being on the perimeter walking up and down, making sure security didn't come. But on that first time, we actually had an estates worker come up to us and I remember being delegated to speak to the people that came up to us, mainly for like security or police purposes, but then he mentioned solidarity. At first, I thought he was going to heckle us, then I saw he was being quite nice so I was like 'Oh we have got faith in the staff' and everything. Then from there, I don't think I really ever... still now I don't think I've really sat down to visualise what it was like the first few days. I think seeing the amount of people who were there on the first day or the second day for the rallies and things, it was quite overwhelming but I remember being so overwhelmed that I didn't know how we could translate these numbers into doing stuff and I think that issue is an issue that I don't think many of us thought to address in a way that we could, otherwise it would have happened. Yeah, I think that the first day really sets the tone for a lot of questions that will be underlying or overlying, I guess, which, having read your thoughts and speaking to other comrades, I think that we really failed to capitalise, I guess, for lack of a better word, of other scenarios

that were given I guess. Like the first day, we had five hundred students and staff there I think. I remember the stress that I got because I was battling with Yunus to not heckle on the mic at women like that was part of the... literally everything from the first day, from the underlying things to the really overt things, really clear what we would be dealing with. So yeah, and then dealing with Mark FRFI on the mic, almost getting into a scrap with him, thank you to your comrades for stopping that.

S - Oh Mark, I am happy to know he has always been like this and it is not a recent thing.

C7 – Genuinely, genuinely. I remember in the middle of being really shook by the amount of people there and the smaller meetings we had had before with LOC and stuff from thirty to forty people to like ten times that. Yeah. I just think perpetual stress and navigating different rifts, trying to basically having a meaningful end for the movement or the struggle rather than interpersonal purposes which goes on to some stuff I have written previously. Pretty much the solution to going forward with this kind of university thing from the first day is how people foster a culture of intra-community resolution and, similar to security culture which I think is in terms of the movement at the moment or the struggle in this area, I think everyone is on a similar page, or a lot of people are and it is easier to get a lot of people on a similar page and now that struggle is trying to get on the same level of proactive resolution for the longevity, which also comes from the first day of realising, and overall the encampment, how British leftism fails basically. I think that was a really good snapshot of how it fails compared to now, I think.

S - Ok, could you tell me a little bit what you were doing during the set up then? I have heard from a lot of other people about waiting in bloc at a bus stop with tons of bags. How did that look for you?

C7 – Yeah so, some of us... I think there were two different locations due to parking I think, again I can't remember so much of it and that's genuinely what my reflection is, I was so stressed, fight or flight. Recently traumatic events that had happened to me as well that's what a lot of my personal thing is I was just like boom, boom, boom. But I think... I can't even remember whose car I arrived in, I was in someone's car and we arrived to a different location which I remember was a necessary choice but a poor choice and poorly communicated because it was a last minute thing. I can't remember the exact... but I remember other people getting stressed so I remember, kinda a tale as old as time, I will be happy to say it and do it so like, which is kinda unfortunately a lingering effect from myself on the rest of the encampment is kinda myself, hearing what people think and doing it for them I guess at their request rather than stand... yeah, which links into discipline which I have a lot of thoughts on after.

S - Right, so what first drew you to the encampment as a tactic and what was your first impression of the encampment after it had been set up?

C7 – Yeah, for me I was quite mindful that there's a degree of things I can't do to jeopardise my registration and stuff, already at the moment I am registered on various things that would jeopardise that, I mean this isn't something that necessarily needs to be kept in the transcript I guess. Just being more mindful of kinda overt things that I cannot do so then I was like what is the best way that we can get a mass amount of people and kinda protest and show. And to be honest, I never thought it was going to happen. I remember in chats before, like right before the encampment was meant to happen, antisemitism being had within this original organising circle and trying to resolve that but also having my own interpersonal experience of everything else that was going on and also somehow reverting to Islam. Trying to navigate all of this stuff, all this together and I think all this stuff and me reverting to Islam kinda is a really integral part of the encampment and my activism now but I think reverting, growing up

in this Muslim and also Christian household, I tried the Christian side, didn't get the community that I wanted, then I found more faith in scriptures of Islam and I was expecting more of a community especially when imperialism is targeting our community and I think that was really what drew me to Islam at first and then seeing the lack of organising, the impact of the war on terror and stuff like that. So I think on the build-up, I was really mindful in the first few days of other people's vulnerabilities without kinda yeah... so I think the encampment was kinda the most feasible way we could do that, I think. At the time its what I thought, I don't think this anymore.

S – Yeah, so what was your first impression of the encampment after it was established? So after the first day, going into the first week.

C7 – I knew it going to actually... I was preparing to brace myself for... I think at first I was really like 'wow, this is amazing, this is beautiful' but then I think, after day one, I had heard bouts of racism, bouts of transphobia, bouts of misogyny, and from day one I was just preparing myself to be on the firefighting game and I think that only recently, this last year I guess, has ended but I just think as optimistic as I was, I knew that we would never get divestment deep down, I just really thought that we would get something else. I knew that we probably wouldn't get divestment but I think part of that was speaking to my friends that, I never know how to word it, aren't socialised in Britain if that makes sense. Whether they live in Britain now or are from global majority countries especially Arab countries, especially Palestinian people. I think what I did was kinda, obviously I have not been raised Palestinian and I am not Palestinian, and I think being around so much resilience, I think it was a matter of understanding, and I don't think non-Palestinians can get close to it, understanding, balancing revolutionary optimism, which is what all Palestinians somehow have, to kinda also knowing how to channel that in a way that is realistic and speaking positively but also knowing the worst case scenario and things, and I think from day one or day two is when I

knew that was going to be a struggle for me to have and I think that just also shadows over my time on the encampment until my ban I think.

S – Ok, so how did you spend the majority of your time at the encampment? What were you doing day-to-day?

C7 – This is the thing, I can't remember. Like I remember vividly running from the comms tin up until the camp, I vividly remember my routes that I would walk regularly but what I was doing I could not tell you. Obviously things that I was doing after my ban off the encampment, from the uni to clarify obviously, I tried doing a lot more back office things so kinda trying to do graphic design but that didn't go well, a lot of things for the comms team but then also for the negotiations and I think that negotiations are where I spent most of my effort trying to kinda read. It's a knowledge game and trying to gain as much knowledge as I could while trying to partake in these intense regular meetings, there was no reason... I couldn't think of a particular reason for any of us to be on this panel if that makes sense and that was said from the get go if that makes sense. And I kinda wanted to give people a chance and they were all so passionate and at the time I was so undisciplined that I couldn't be like these people can be passionate, they can be Palestinian, they can be from Gaza, they can be my best friend, they can be my friends but that doesn't mean they are best suited for this. It is quite a utilitarian thing and it also shadows a lot of my experience on the camp. I just think that I spent most of my time reading a lot of things for negotiations and I had no faith in myself and I was doing it, it wasn't in a way of tokenising but it was in a way of actually I want to support these people, especially [names of two Palestinian comrades], and I wanted to alleviate a lot of the pressure from them in terms of... I don't know. What it was that these two people had a lot of visions and it was basically people would be saying to do things and I think from my point of view I wanted to make sure we were doing it the right way which entailed a lot of reading. I think I just spent too much of my time doing things that weren't

the best and I think that was my main regret. But for the first half, for the first 29 days, it was me throwing myself at the wall basically to the point I developed chronic pain. It is going away now but I have been hospitalised for it, I was on regular opioids for it, like famously I fell down a mountain. But yeah, just I think that a lot of mistakes from my side were obviously made and I think that's undoubted. I think if you rate my personal extracts, I think that goes into a lot more. I have so much room and time to make for that though I am not sure that room and time... as in conversations can be had for interpersonal reasons for a result but I don't think in terms of me changing tangibly as a result, because the amount of self-reflection since then, and self-criticism as well, which is when besties started saying it recently I was like 'yes, we can bring this in the mainstream'. So, it was not like yeah there's a resilience or a reluctance to speak about it... yeah. I think informally a lot of us know of a lot of the fuck ups and all the opinions to go around, so I think that this kinda informal albeit probably not the best way to resolve things in the future that everyone is aware of different grifts and gripes people have had, whether it is between the factions or interpersonally and I think that... yeah I just think that so much time actually has passed and been dedicated to that, I can't speak for everyone but I can speak for me and some of my closest comrades for example and I think that kinda where that wasn't seen to be happening as much, distance has been made between those people and I think the encampment is part, not in a bad way or anything, of a conducive way of being productive a bit like you wouldn't work with FRFI or the SWP for various reasons whether they are value judgements or like tangible things, I wanna lean into the tangible things which I think was so many lessons of anti-imperialism both internally and externally and I think that I kept my mouth open when it needs to be open and I kept my mouth shut when it needed to be open more, especially to do with islamophobia and racism generally, and I think for me if I opened my mouth and took that burden off other people who have been dealing with that, rather than following their lead not

wanting to step on anyone's toes, I think we could have had a more sustainable movement, that's not to say I could have done that all on my own but that is to say one person can make a lot of a difference with certain groups and things, especially Islamic societies and stuff.

Yeah. I think a lot of it kinda... even know I forget to articulate my intention with things and I think that kinda got misconstrued and the reflection on that I have had with a few comrades, you can kinda see that lack of articulation of my intention, ie this isn't for a political purpose, ie I don't know me volunteering to co-ordinating a working group and if this isn't done ASAP I will do it and that was a really common theme and it also kinda entails boundaries and things which I didn't stick to for myself which really, really endangered other people, not lives endangered but I think it endangered the movement and the pockets I was in by not taking care of myself to that degree I guess.

S – Ok. This next one is a bit broad and definitely, not quite controversial, but I imagine you'll have a lot to say about it. So, how did you interact with the factionalism on the encampment? Obviously, I was on the other side of that.

C7 – Genuinely, I think that is where most of my thinking has gone to, which is why when you asked me about the first day... like you asked me about these other things and I think because actually... I think it's partly from a psychological interest in kinda why that happened and how that happened especially some people who were initially part of the other faction and then were back on the other faction or people who were double-agenting and even when I wasn't personally like as bothered by it, at the time when it was all happening the first and foremost thing was like 'oh ok', its interesting that we've got more or less two or three factions going on, if you want to go into it, I guess you could find a few more. Two large factions that concerned like me and yeah my first interest was 'its happened, why don't we just move on?', like if the two factions do what they want to do but kinda more like interplay, I don't know if that's the right word, from people on both sides kinda muddying the waters

rather than working towards a resolution, I think negatively contributed to that and overall in the factionalism, I think for me, I think it took me by surprise because I had only been, again this is where my reverting to Islam thing comes back and its like 'oh my original community, community A were meant to show up, didn't show up.' So then... community – use that word very loosely. So then, of the entire student group on the encampment, group B oh like its fine, I will keep chiding myself and burning myself out and maintaining that skeleton because that's where I felt like I was best, maintain that kinda aspect. But yeah, so when that broke down it was like 'there's clearly been miscommunications' blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But then after it struck me, a comrade said to me afterwards, no-one bothered to sit down or call a group meeting, I think a few of us did try to do that and I don't think that went well, again I can't remember the specifics of it and I think part of it was a blind obedience or a respect for elders, kinda just ignoring it and trotting on, and yeah I don't think that was the right solution. And obviously, as much as I can speak on kinda the other side like guillotine-gate, as much as I can speak on it, I don't think it is that productive and I think that... I think it is productive for me to say like I don't necessarily have hard feelings over it, in the sense that of the material things that were said, I have hard feelings over the way it was handled. Also 'hard feelings' used really loosely. I think it is more just an annoying thing that I wish myself, you, anyone else, literally anyone could've just facilitated a simple conversation and I think, after having a reflection on it, I think it was really just down to an easy solution, yeah. I think my perception of factionalism there, I think actually had very easy solutions. Whether or not that is mirrored by other people but I think that kinda the knowledge, I didn't know that, I didn't think that. Like 'People are very angry, what do we do?' and then I was actually like 'I've got to do what I am always doing' which is when I realised who the principle people were, in terms of the people who were still going to the encampment and stuff and where I realised people weren't and, I think, the way that I summarise the faction is [now reading from some

notes]: ‘Overall it was a mish-mash’ and this is about the encampment generally, ‘of unprincipled or undisciplined, semantics I know, people, half following trends from social media or anecdotal stories, not to say they were intentionally malicious, a lot of them driven by moral cause. I believe those of the latter group are the one still organising today and I think that speaks for itself in many ways and I say that as someone with not an overall sense of joy thinking about the encampment. I look back at this period and feel a wave of illness at how undisciplined we were. But mainly feel fatigue of it because I pushed myself way too far and it also leaves a really bitter-sweet feeling knowing other comrades were so committed to the struggle as well. This leads to the point I realised I had overworked myself, albeit fairly frequently in misguided ways, largely due to a feeling of life falling at the hands of imperialism combined with a then traumatic event, I still don’t feel if I can describe my time on the encampment until my ban, I largely just think it was perpetual adrenaline filled fight-or-flight.’ But the last thing of importance I think I write here is basically just saying, I do stand resolute in the fact that, for me as an individual and I think all of us, everyone came from a place of wanting to do as much as they could that was healthy for them and other people had different boundaries which was good as well. But for me I was foolish and decided to preserve with deteriorating physical and mental health and I think that way that I look at it is, I could name for you at least five or ten comrades who were in a similar boat who persevered when we shouldn’t have and actually as a community of students or a wider community of people that are just organised and organising or mobilising, there should have been structures of care that allows some of us to take steps back, whether that’s because some of us had burnt out on always making poor decisions or due to paranoia for example, because that was also a massive issue on both factions. Yeah, I think I look at it with a lot more tangible, what could we have done rather than necessarily historical recounts.

S – So, what do you think the substance of our critique was? And what is your opinion on the substance of the critique?

C7 – I think for me most of it was, or most of my memory if this was probably overshadowed by a handful of people I wouldn't say are as involved in organising or shared organising spaces that were just shocking that anything else. I think for me, it was, you know, there is disagreements and factionalism and then there's being on a camp for martyrs and there's, you know, just taking the word martyr out of context and reframing to for other people and other things, combined with violence and I think for me it was like hrm, I am not sure about these intentions anymore, and I will always assume the best intentions in people. I don't know, we are told in Islam to believe 70 things about someone before you think a bad thing without evidence. So like really, me and a few other comrades to try and think of different assumptions of how people would get from A to B, but, as I said earlier, I think the perception of it was at the time we've not got our way so we are going to depart and doing our own thing, which we, at the time, a lot of us were like this is very fine, this is good. Rather than kinda how can we bring them back. It was assumed that there would be no dialogue between the two groups and I think that was because there were efforts made for dialogue made, and I think that was on both factions there, but just the level or burn out from, at least the faction left on the encampment, wasn't there to give meaningful... to facilitate something meaningful like that and I don't know about the other faction and that was my perception, yeah. I think after the 29th of May I was also like... it just took me by surprise that I would be banned off campus, so I think after that, after the first 29 days, when I was like... I don't know. I would still be sitting on the edge of the campus perimeter and things like that because it was like I will still show up but I think like overall, I understand the specific things that are raised, at the time I didn't quite see this because there obviously wasn't that dialogue like I said, which would have perpetually, actually changed the scope of everything overall but

yeah I think that looking back at it, I can see, looking back I can see and obviously I hear it and understand it but again, I don't think that... I think that my education and political understanding has just gone on so much further and yeah I think that, yeah, I don't think that the specifics... I wouldn't say not of merit in that sense but I mean in the sense of, I have heard the, either through the grapevine or explicitly through various worded things, and I think that I can confidently say from what I have seen that discussions around these things have been had in the year, year and a half actually, since this... Yeah since the faction arrived and I don't think there would be such a level of co-organising going on, or I would hope that people in that faction would be true to their values and they wouldn't work until they feel these things have been resolved, have people from this faction been implementing these things that you guys action from, if that makes sense?

S - Kinda. As in do we still have the same critiques that we had then?

C7 – I think so yeah, and it fits in to the same people or to the culture, I think that probably, I would have enough faith in people to be more active in changing it I guess, I think that is my theme in changing it I guess, is more explicit dialogue, so I guess that is the question.

S – Yeah, I suppose some critique still stands but that is sort of the Maoist heritage of my group to constantly be engaged in ideological struggle. In some respects, all of them, except for me, have gone off the concept, rather the word, Democracy. We think there is more to be done in the realm of a culture of self-criticism, which I don't disagree with. I think some of that work needs to be done by us. Yeah.

C7 – That's fair, that's really understandable.

S – Do you have anything more to add on that?

C7 – Yeah, I think my general understanding still, I don't know if I managed to say it or not in one of my previous questions or answers, I do think that the... yeah. I do think it was a

very British handling of factionalism and I think I stand by that and I think that things that tend to be inherently British are things that tend to not be for the best of the people. I think that, you know, a big thing of the factionalism highlighted to me that there needs to be cultural change holistically and to me, to be more anti-British doesn't necessarily mean to be copying the global majority or anything like that but it does mean that there needs to be some kind of cherry-picking of different elements of cultures and of indigenous people over all because I think that you can't be anti-imperialist whilst maintaining an imperialist culture and that is not to say that the other faction was imperialist, I just think that the way that it was handled was a very tone deaf, Eurocentric way of handling it because on the other hand we had people left at camp who were still mourning their family members in Gaza, that, I don't know, have gun to gun with the IDF for example. So I think in that context, when the big faction happened for a lot of people that were burnt out or whatever because they weren't there because it was summer as well there were loads of people gone, things like that and obviously I was banned but I think after it was people kinda consoling people and trying to relight optimism or they were just keeping the sticks and bones of that encampment alive still. That's the main point on factionalism that's more tangible, I think that it was a very Eurocentric way of, or a white way of, handling it, I think. Yeah, I don't know. I think my need or my belief in open dialogue and people who are able to facilitate and take lead on that, yeah would have been imperative and it would always have been imperative and I think this goes to self-critique again. People who are as politically educated and stuff are open to this stuff and it is not even about pandering to them, it is just about without that open dialogue, without that high level of commitment to being, I guess politically correct, or theoretically correct, ideologically correct, it is about at least creating that atmosphere to do that and I don't think that atmosphere was ever created and I think that goes on, not just on the two

factions, but that actually goes wider and the burden, when a faction happens, is not on the two main sides of that and for some reason that didn't happen and that's my main thought.

S - So could you describe your experience of King's Gate-gate? Which was May the eighth, what happened to you there? What is your critique of that situation?

C7 - I think that was when we were first set to go meet Christ Day in the student union building and I remember I went along with Ellie, ex-lecturer, to be Jewish representation which I... there's many issues I had with the encampment and I think kinda the platforming of Jewish voices, I think was increasingly damaging to Jewish people and to Palestinians and I think that's where my first self-critique goes and I think to turn up to a negotiation meeting to get a university to divest from a squatter state and trying to get Jewish people to be that bargaining chip, it just felt very wrong and that's kinda come from Jewish comrades and, more importantly, Palestinian comrades. Yeah. I think that if we are going to go on identity politics, and that's how we are going to have our demographics laid out of our negotiations team then it should have been almost wholly Palestinian or just not that at all. But that's my first critique, I think secondly, King's Gate-gate was a failed opportunity. I remember myself and some of your comrades were the first ones there, I remember being half way in the door when it got shut by security and getting trapped with shared comrades, I guess. Being quite badly injured, we waited, how many hours I can't even remember, it felt like ages. But I remember speaking to the bronze commander because I was police liaison, I think, or I remember having to speak to a police commander and essentially, I think I left that feeling like this was a win, kinda like how I said about day one, we have actually kinda managed to manoeuvre the student movement into doing more tangible things but yeah, I think after King's Gate-gate, I had some meetings with negotiations team and what's a common trend that I will capitulate to anything that is said in the negotiation team, I wouldn't say it was a kind of thing of being a white saviour, it wasn't that, it was that I felt so helpless that anyone,

anyone that I trusted said something to me, I would be like fuck it let's go do it, which is so different to how I normally operate, pre and post, especially post but yeah, I think kinda caving in or capitulating to kinda... yeah. I think it very much felt like I was a tool, that I just should have been used, so I took any guidance that was given to me, especially from people that I look or looked up to and that I love a lot so... I think that's my thoughts on King's Gate-gate. I think we ended up missing a huge aspect and I remember, behind closed doors trying to advocate for more and then, I remember when there was a few of us, when there were enough people to organise something, our desired location would be King's Gate after this, I think that once we lost that, we lost it. Yeah I think it showed, really showed, how scared the university were, yeah. I think despite all the decorating that was done, despite everything else, that was the most scared they have been. for a university to have its essentially admin HQ locked off for an entire day, staff unable to get in or leave, have a flock of police on campus as well, seeing staff and unionised staff as well being present, I think that there's no wonder that the board capitulated and called a emergency meeting. And I think that a positive of that was that we reacted quite quickly and that was one of our demands, we randomly found out, whilst we were on the blockade, that we could try and get them to do an emergency meeting because a UCU comrade came up and told us so we went off and did that, and we got it and then we lost it and... I think that's it. Again, I think its not that I have a lack of self-criticism, arguably everyone has a lack of self-criticism, but I mean specifically on these matters, it is not that I have a lack of it, its just that I think I have zoomed so far out, it is kinda hard to individually speak on it which is why, I suppose, I am trying to speak on it holistically, I guess. Yeah, yeah, I think that's it.

S - Ok great, this next one is going to be a bit of a long one as well: describe your experience of al-Shifa Hall Day, May the 29th [Laughter from C7]. I always like to give it all the names we gave it, May the 29th, Black Wednesday, Our 9/11.

C7 – Black Wednesday still haunts me.

S – Well, the clouds were very black that day.

C7 – Yeah, I don't remember much of it, I remember wearing black all day though. Yeah, so I remember the build-up to this. Comrade, I can't remember his code name, Spanish comrade was meant to be doing recces of sorts and I think I turned up quite early in the morning for some reason, I don't know if it was specifically for this or what but I found out that this said comrade was meant to be delivering a briefing and said briefing never ever happened for this team so then we were all really fucking stressed and we were like 'well, how hard can it be?' let's just go off what other people he had spoken to, because I think he relayed it to Rollie maybe or someone and then it got kinda half-asked. Then I remember it was one of the few times that I really remember actually very pissed off, shouting very angry, I think I called him or sent him a voice not being like 'where the hell are you? What the hell is going on?' and yeah, I think we just ended up deciding after discussion that we would do it anyway, we split up into teams, I remember being on the initial team and going in and really scaring a lot of staff by accident which I think I didn't really take into account.

S - How did you do that?

C7 – So when we went in, we demanded that everyone leave, we didn't really ask, we were like 'everyone out now, please. We are occupying.' Yeah, they had big trolleys in there that we used to block doors as well as many other kinda locks and things which some of the folks carried and I kinda remember, I think my job, after I got rid of my equipment, it was to just go upstairs and ensure that all the offices were escorted and all the offices were out, upon doing so I found staff fitting through the locked doors, which I hadn't done admittedly, I know the comrade that did this... I don't think political parties have it as a requirement to lock doors so I'm sure they'll be fine. Yeah so I have to escort this American lecturer who had

just had a knee replacement surgery or had something wrong with their knee and due to the nature of how everything was locked off, I put her in the lift and put her down and left her, and she was screaming at me and I was like 'sorry I have things to do'. And, again, I think that was another realisation that as much as we can speak about resistance and watch resistance, actually the kinda being so principled that you have to be a bit ruthless, like it really, really kinda opened my eyes, especially because it felt so out of nature for me, especially to someone random on the street, an old lady, maybe not old but an older lady, I would never want someone to do that to my mum or some shit. Yeah anyway. So then I am on my own, I am locked into the bit I assume security are about to get into so then I hear security's footsteps coming so then I have to open a cleaners' cupboard and I hide in the cupboard until the footsteps are gone and I think at this point I had lost my sunglasses so I was like shit, I found them eventually. I was speed typing trying to see where people are, like 'where's my buddy?', I was left alone and I bump into someone because I am typing so fast and I am in full black bloc, head to toe, put my sunglasses on and I had just scared the shit out of some international student and I had no idea what to say to him so I just ran, I just pegged it. I found another classroom, I hear footsteps, so I am like 'oh shit, how do I avoid this one?' so I hide under a desk to avoid security and then I am like shit, it's the home stretch, I have made it to the courtyard, I can get out. Then lo and behold, a security guard grabs my collar, calls me a fucking cunt, raises his fist at me, so then I escaped, then I tried and go into the hall but I couldn't because it was blocked from both sides.

S - Was this when you dragged the grand piano in front of one of the doors and then couldn't...

C7 - No that was the second time. We've got a lot to get through. So then essentially what happened was I managed to get the comrades in the courtyard to let me in the courtyard, I did that the police still hadn't kettled us into the courtyard, the protest outside hadn't started. The

doors were still shut, there were people on the roof via ladders and things and then I determined to get back in there because there's just no way that I am not being in there, I have told these guys that I am gonna be in there, like over hell or high water will I not be in there. SO then I find a window on the lower ground floor, or basement maybe, and I manage to open it, I had some tools, just kinda wedged it open and then I found a magnet locked door and I couldn't get it open for the life of me and I realised I was being stupid and could have just shoulder barged it open so I should barge it open, small alarm goes off, I didn't think of that, I then see loads of police so I get the grand piano and I ram it in the corner to stop the double doors from opening, at the same time, I realised the doors were locked and it wasn't you guys that locked them and you had been locked in so then I heard of someone who had lockpicking stuff and I was nervous to ask them because I was adamant they shouldn't be in these spaces, and they weren't the most fond of me as a result and they still offered to try and I said you know what 'I've got it'. Yeah we didn't really end up doing much, we got escorted out by police after they got over the piano and then we ended up going out again and this time I was going in on my own and then I realised this is most likely a listed property so the damages for this would be a lot more severe, yeah. So then we fast forward to that, I am now kicked out, I am no longer in the courtyard, I am nowhere near the hall. So then I see the rally starting, I really don't wanna say any words because I fucking hate speaking, this is another common pattern, I found myself speaking too much. Anyway, I see a comrade after I leave the rally after I go to the side, after I go to the door I see comrades being dragged. That original footage is actually from me because I didn't know what to do.

S - That little side door?

C7 - So I was about to go full blast because I had just been kicked out of that side door and was now seeing how they had been treating some of my friends, I was like um ok and I run back to the rally and I just scream 'Help, the police are attacking us' and next thing I know,

its just a sea of people running towards it. It was fucking petrifying, I was like 'this is a stampede'. Yeah, I don't know, I can deal with stampedes but that was something else. Just the level of sheer anger from everyone, genuinely until I feel that again I don't think I will rest, because the sheer amount of willingness from students that I had seen and walk past and snigger at the encampment to acutally seeing this violence directly being put on us, it allowed them to get in. There was people from the student union there, staff and their children were there I later found out, battling with the police. So yeah, they try and corner us off then the executive board come through which agitates people further, then they block that archway by the Armstrong, obviously pointless because after trying to push through for a while, we got everybody to run around and then hadn't blocked the other side. So we did that and on this home run, I realised there was one security guard outside the double barricaded doors, so what...I don't know what's the best way to word this... What I think could have happened, someone could have pushed this guy out of the way to open the smaller door of those two doors and rather than going in I decided to hold the door open which kinda resulted in a massive stampede. I don't know if that's what caused it but there was a stampede. Lo and behold, one of your comrades might have fallen over a bestie who then fucked their ACL, etc, etc. But I still remember trying to get in the door and security grabbing onto my foot.

Anyway, we are now inside the courtyard so we have reinforced the numbers and after a few minutes a few police come in and we tell them all to fuck off, and they come and form a line and the new break the line. Then they come back with more. This time myself and another comrade were like fuck it, let's open the doors lets fuck you off because we have the rally. The rally had been moved from the sides and come back to the front, I think, after a lot of pushing and we were just greeted by police on the other side with batons out and there were four of us like bring it on, because we were like 'what the fuck else can we do?'. Then we turn around and realise we are about to be kettled and it all happened really quickly.

Considering the lack of discipline that was on the encampment and the student movement as a whole, even the wider movement in the north east, the lack of kinda discipline and principles, and collective principles, it was really surprising to see how strategic we did what we could because on the other side, when I first got in, after the stampede, the walls were just full of people and it felt like something out of the trenches, the walls were just full of people laying down with fucked legs and knees and stuff, yeah. Then I remember Yunus Bakhsh trying to push some of us into the police lines, pushing us in the way of getting batoned. After he had done that to me the first time, I was like ‘ugh whatever its fine I guess’ [indecipherable]... there was repeated attempts to break the police line and then I found myself on the front and after we had broken the line they just got their batons out and were going galore, specifically targeting hijabis so that’s what I remember and I didn’t know what to do because, obviously, I didn’t wanna touch someone without their permission or anything but I just kinda had to swaddle them and run out with them and it did result in me getting batoned but, again, perpetual state of fight-or-flight, I didn’t feel it until a few days after, or I actually until my cell. And then we decided to give in strategically, if you can call it that, after enduring many hours in the rain and bruises and blood and ambulances refused to come in to the courtyard for multiple people, yeah. So then we decided, myself and multiple... So I can see that a comrade is scheming so I decide let’s see if I can get in on the scheme and then I think we got some of your comrades in on the scheme as well. So then we decided to scheme and we were like ok let’s go to the bridge, so to the bridge we go, we kinda surrender, it was such a weird time, we were coming out to lines of police, some dogs here and there, tactical uniform police as well and I remember thinking ‘what the fuck’. I remember one of the last things I used my phone for was sending a voice note to some of the encampments to let them know and see if they could pick up some of the comms because we had taken up some of SOAS’ comms when they had arrests and stuff and when it was quite volatile... yeah, we get

out peacefully, peacefully as we can. Some of us are still pushing the line as we get out, chanting and things, then I think me and a few other comrades were like 'we need to go to the bridge', so then I think I or another comrade makes an announcement on the megaphone after our shared comrades were mobilising people informally as a back passage, and I just remember running there thinking 'what the fuck is going on', people were picking up cones in the middle of the road, people were picking up barriers and I... yeah. I diva'ed out. It was such a weird experience, yeah that was weird. We get to the bridge, people are sat on the bottom, im still in black bloc, head-to-toe, bally and all so I was like 'I need to be mindful'... so anyways, I go to speak and I turn around and I see the police are warning everyone that are sat on the floor and I thought even if they get arrested now, their charge won't count if they can argue that they didn't hear it, so what is the best distraction I can do? The best distraction I can do is go on the megaphone and sound the alarm button and I went up to every individual officer and put it in their ears whilst people were sat on the tyne bridge.

S - bet they loved that.

C7 - Yeah so this one police officer who had already been batoning me on the line, she turned around so quickly and turned around as she did it, she actually accidentally hit the megaphone into my face, so the only reason I believe I got arrested subsequently was because she didn't wanna face an assault charge because the only way... most of it was recorded I believe, quite easily it could have been construed into that but yeah. I was tied to the tyne bridge, I shouted at some ISoc bro that he had his phone in my pocket so he could actually get my phone. Yeah, so I am waiting, I am chained to tyne bridge, I still have scars from how hard they had the fuckign cuffs. They let me sit in the back of the van with my bally on, still head-to-toe black bloc on still. My black jeans dripping, denim soaked and yeah, lo and behold I go to forth banks and was custom to some weird form of racial profiling, it was weird he just asked questions about my last name just really intensely.

S – Ok, any final thoughts on al-Shifa Hall? Some analyses that have come out about it are that we have had a moment of quite powerful resistance, this is mainly from a few of my comrades, that even in our silly, disorganised student tactics we did on multiple occasions break police lines, whereas other conclusions seem to say that it was all doom and gloom and everything bad started and sprouted from that.

C7 – No I think, from my perspective, we had two student arrests, myself and [another comrade] who was studying architecture at northumbria. The way I look at it was he was threatening to throw himself off of a bridge to try and save the others from police contact and things like that and actually as a result he kinda managed to keep his student place, I did as well, it was a big uphill don't get me wrong, I never thought I was gonna get kicked out, I did technically... procedurally I did, and then I think yeah, we broke police lines and I think my analysis of it is yeah, just for months, even to this day, hearing people talk about it like it was some huge traumatic event. The culture generally, regardless of faction, I think everyone can say there were characters and people that were kinda milking as much as they could out of it and I think that actually it was really detrimental and I made this clear immediately, as one of the people that kinda was arrested and I don't think that an arrest equals, I endured the most on that day, I think out comrade who were on visas stuck in the hall probably did, if we were going to quantify it, not that I think it is necessarily productive. I do think that it was a good day, and if it happened again I do think that I would jump straight in and there's not many things about the encampment I would say that about. Again there's a level... there was a level of community that day that kinda no matter what did kinda restore good faith in a lot of people, whether tensions arising from people walking past not doing anything or tensions arising due to factionalism and I think that we really could have profited off that, in the sense of... I just think it was so momentous, which is why when I started to see like things being brought up about black Wednesday and as much as I understand wanting to scare off the

students, I don't think that's productive, I think that actually allowing us to be some kind of powerhouse of strength or fear conceptually to the uni is more important and we really could have done that if we hammered home that we pushed the lines, that we occupied one of the busiest roads in Newcastle for like a good... even when people were gone the road was still shut down because I was waiting to be transported there and people were lingering and people that I am now really good friends with that were on the camp for just kinda night shift and stuff, helping out where they could, they were recording my arrest, telling the police to shut the fuck up and what to do basically, making sure I was ok obviously someone helped me in the process of my arrest as well and things like that. There were just so many momentous things and I feel like the only time I have had to explain or I have been able to speak about the good things of the 29th of may have really could have been set in stone for us are to kinda other people if it comes up in conversations rather than an kinda self-critiques or reflection of that day because I do think unfortunately certain people have or did decide to make it more emotional rather than looking at it from a more political lens, I guess, meaningful lens.

S - Could you then describe your last experience of the encampment?

C7 – Yeah it was just after... because obviously I had been banned for so long I think that one of the first times I came back was to start packing everything away, which became a really long process and yeah. I think my general feeling was kinda... I... I think it was kinda bitter-sweet, I think it was kinda... I had been saying it needs to end for quite a while in trying to, trying to basically visualise what an equally strong movement could look like for people to get behind, I didn't really care about how it looked but I think after kinda speaking with comrades up and down the country and people internally as well, really early on like within a few weeks after, or like a week or two, after may 29th it became really clear that it wasn't really as hard-hitting as it once was, and because we had cemented in so much I think

kinda the act of taking their graduation space or their rental space, I don't think really was seen as a priority anymore, yeah I don't know. One of my last times there was kinda, there were different ways to do this and it could have either happened sooner but either way there were different ways that could have been more productive and more kinda efficient in capacity, I guess. Whether that looked like going to a skeleton option, just for the sake of restricting their financial asset there or having it as our kinda main hub of doing things was just from really early on seen to be failing, if that makes sense, and I think I kinda would refer to others who did call it a peace camp or a commune, as much as, I would be much more willing to go with commune rather than peace camp, I think people were willing to bash a zio or a fash regardless of who they were on that camp, but I think... actually I take that back. I think that overall people put too much energy in misguidedly and if we worked early on on formations and friendships or interpersonal connections and how our networks would work or how our spaces would work, I really think that things could have looked very different and I think we could have radicalised a lot more people through kinda, when I say soft approach, I don't kinda mean soft in what we say, I think I mean soft in kinda surrounding and atmosphere and ensuring people's guards are down because I think a lot of people in the wider community of students' guards are up when they hear communist or anarchist so I think since I had these thoughts on the last day of the encampment I think and a lot of what I have been doing recently are to kinda facilitate different people meeting and I think that is one of the key aspects of the encampment and the lack of, due to austerity, community spaces that we can meet and organise in, there's a lot less intermingling among the left so yeah. I think that was my final thoughts.

S - Ok great, so what would you say was your defining moment of the encampment? If you would just pick one thing that has stuck with you and defines the entire experience, describe that moment to me.

C7 – Honestly, the most defining experience for me was when [friend of interviewee] came to the encampment, they came on their own, bless them, though they came from Sunderland in the middle of the night, they saw it on Instagram and they just came. We had a comrade stuck in New York without an ACL that was unable to navigate, so I was trying to navigate that but I was also trying to show this person where they could sleep and stuff, and they'd never camped or anything and just speaking to them and just speaking to another Arab, I think as well because there were very few Arabs in that organising space, which was a larger frustration for me at the time than say factionalism for example but I think yeah, the most touching moment was when this person came, just speaking to them about them, being able to speak to people and just show them normal things but meeting someone within five minutes and feeling like you've known them for a while and this isn't some romantic story, this is a Romantic story about how we can... I don't know just really extrapolate things from, I don't know these personal interactions, for me it invigorated me in a way that was actually like, this poor person has seen the thing at the most dilapidated time but we are having this lovely talk, they're meeting other people, things are going really well and this random person has travelled this far, this late at night, not knowing anyone and just pulled up, has brought pyjamas and is like 'let me sleep'. I think that's the most defining moment or moments like those at least. The food team, as much as people liked to be stressed about that, whatever, the food in the evening when it was done right really provided a sense of community and I think is a really easy way for us all to get around and put things aside. Yeah, I would go back to food again, it is out of the stressful moment, it is where you can get to know you comrades better and it was fundamental, I think a more leisurely time like that was some of the most precious time, I think.

S – So now our last question, what have you been engaged with since the encampment and how/if have you taken the lessons of the encampment forward with you?

C7 – this might be a really long one.

S – That's fine.

C7 – I think, more importantly... actually, I've got a simple way to word it. I think what I have been spending... I can actually go into specifics of projects that I have got or I am doing that I can touch over, the most important thing for me however is ensuring anything I have my hands on is never like that again and even that's without the... even if I didn't have the knowledge or if I wasn't too sure on specific criticism of the encampment overall, I think even then that was a general feeling I had but even then, I think it was around this time last year, even just trying to understand XYZ, not even anything specific, just trying to understand the circumstances of the time both ideologically, mentally for people, physically, intersocially and intrasocially as well and like the wider community and stuff as well and I think... generally I think, the overarching thing for me is to never let people that are undisciplined or unprincipled near something that is part of a community, I think that is first and foremost. I think for me personally, on an individual level, it goes more than that and I don't want anyone near me that isn't disciplined and isn't principled on a personal level as well, because I think... yeah... there's definitely range in how that looks, but I think the encampment has moved me up a few notches if that makes sense and there's less margins of error with people in their politics I think, maybe [indecipherable]. I think actually the best way of wording it is: 'I think the encampment showed me how important it is to be disciplined not just principled and they both go hand in hand as much as there is a bit of semantic debate on them and without them the movement is nothing, the struggle is nothing and I don't think anybody else, I don't think I would have been able to power on without these guiding principles, guiding ethics or discipline and I think that the encampment taught me, to a degree, because I had never seen that in my organising before, I had been quite principled and quite diligent in how I had done my things but such an intense atmosphere like

the encampment and recent traumas that had happened to me, both in that period and slightly pre, I think for me just kinda led to a breakdown I think, not a mental breakdown but a breakdown in how I facilitate and how I actualise my principles I guess, so over the last year kinda focusing on the damage of borders and I think that's one thing the encampment highlighted as well. I guess that's a defining moment as well: seeing other people like migrants, people on visas, whether they are workers or students, I think that was probably one of the most heart touching because it was unprecedented like, one week we would find out that seven people had been arrested for occupation and then we would find out others are fine to occupy buildings, so it was really like... I don't know. Yeah. Is that it? Yeah.

S - Yeah?

C7 – Yes. I just feel like I can expand on things I've said. It is just more about the migrant aspect, I think it was really, really, really underplayed. I don't know how it is underplayed, it is one of the, I wouldn't say niche things, but it is definitely one of the things I have not found people saying but I do think there should have been a more general culture of understanding rather than assumed. [indecipherable] which I feel is still the case in a lot of our circles, shared organising circles and things.

S - Is there anything you would like to leave this on? A comrade quoted Amadeo Bordiga which made me really sigh, someone else quoted Jean-Paul Satre.

C7 – Less of a quote, I think it is more of a... I think it's a simple statement and I think that it's the radical left has got to do better than the left and I think we can do that with open dialogue and realising things are a very british thing specifically has really helped me and helped other comrades moving away from less productive means of working together, as cheesy as it is and as much as I fucking hate a lot of people on the left, I also love them deeply as well. There is that weird bond that a lot of us got from the encampment and other

action similar, I would still... even if I don't agree with people on a political level I would still find myself jumping in front of things for them if that makes sense and I think that sentiment is shared and I think that is the sentiment that should be echoed the most I think.