

ALS18 RT 29.6.89

Q: If you just want to start by telling me about what you are doing in college?

A: ..(003)..

Q: Do you think it is?

A: Yes, especially recently. We've got at least two more weeks of college and the teachers have stopped ... The English teacher has cancelled We had a mock exam and .. (006).... and the college is empty.

Q: Well, when I was at college it wasn't like that, .. it was...

A: I think it has...(010).

Q: Are you disappointed with it?

A: Yes. I didn't mind at first because I thought...(11).. anyway because the(13)..

Q: It makes it a hell of a lot easier if you have got ..(13)... Whereas a lot of....

A: If you see people around you as well not working, it's just wondering what we are doing at college.

Q: So do you think that you are ..(016).. than most people?

A: I don't know, in our English class there is only one boy that wants to go to University.

Q: Why did you decide to go to [NAME OF COLLEGE] ...(020)..

A: Because I(021)...

Q: Right so you knew about..

A: Yes.

Q: So do you regret it then?

A: Yes ...(023)... It's up to me though, if I want to work(024)....

Q: Yes, I can imagine. I think quite a lot of the schools....(027)...

A: .. (027)..

Q: Did you go to school in Manchester?

A: No.

Q: I was going to say,(028).. you haven't got a Manchester accent. So how long have you lived in Manchester?

A: In Manchester - two years now.

Q: Right. What was the change ..?

A: Well it was a big change ...(031)...

Q: But the first time you'd been....

A: Yes, down to Sale which is just a ... bus ride.(034)

Q: Right, so were you living in London?

A: In Camden Town.

Q: ..(035)...

A: Things are a lot quieter(036)..

Q: So why is it; have your family moved up here?

A: No. I left home. I wanted to get as far away as possible.

Q: So you're here on your own, oh I see. So it was tempting for you to move away from home?

A: Yes.

Q: Start off by telling me about your family?

A: Well they've gone now, they emigrated...(041)... but we always used to live in That was when my mum..... and they both had children before so it was like a really big family but it didn't work out. I was looking forward to this really big family and it just...(044).. And they all split up.

Q: Did you feel quite agitated?

A: I think I feel more sane now I'm away from my mum. She sends me rather insane. It's just the families...(048)... as far away as possible.

Q: Was it before quite a close family?

A: Before it was just me and my mum. And that was when my dad died. She's not weak, she's Greek and there is sort of a woman has always got to have a man, especially if you're Greek...(053), so she got married straight away. She had a bit of trouble about that because the relatives stopped talking to her because they thought it was so ..(064).. but I think she did it mourn for months.

Q: They thought she should have been mourning for longer?

A: Yes. It's not that she didn't care anymore (057). My stepdad was going to marry someone else but he decided to marry her because she had children so it... (058).. compromise.

Q: Sounds like a real love match!

A: It didn't work.

Q: Did you not get on with your stepdad, was it difficult?

A: No it was OK, he was just sort of wanting ..(60).. and sometimes I thought he was being....(061)... He was good for her though. ..(063)... I've got a little half-sister from my stepdad and mum.

Q: Is the family important to you, are your relationships important?

A: Oh yes. ..(066)..

Q: So where do your brothers and sisters live now?

A: My stepbrother and stepsister in law live in London and my half-sister lives in [MEDITERRANEAN ISLAND] with my stepdad.

Q: So they are spread around. Do you still have quite a lot of contact with the family?

A: I won't see my mum until I get ...(070)... I feel a bit strange with my stepbrother and my stepsister. But my mum's house.....(073)... Because she threw them out of the house once, she didn't want them around anymore.

Q: ..(074)..

A: They just didn't get on. It wasn't as hard for me because we were young .. and they were old and they ..(075).....

Q: It's never easy to stick families together, bits of other families..

A: I was looking forward to having one big family(079)...

Q: ..(80).. So it was quite a big move then moving up here on your own?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: You said you wanted to get away from the family and stuff, were they happy about you moving away on your own?

A: It was really after they had gone...(084)... It was more because of my mum that I left home... I was starting to get rather depressed and I just felt I had to get away. ... (087)..

Q: Yes, could you tell me a bit about that because I really don't know very much about..?

A: It's not...(087)... The Greek boys but that's not because they're not allowed, they They have got say yes, go out get as many girls as possible, and they have got their mum to cook and wash the dishes, so they don't want to leave home. But the daughters are just meant to stay home, get old enough to look after the kids, do the housework but not

Q: Is that how, I mean the way they would like you to grow up and be looking after the house and children ...

A: Well I don't know. My mum's very poor education, My mum's for education because she's seen what it's like now ... having to rely on someone financially. ...

Q: So she didn't have any education?

A: No she left school at thirteen. I think she would prefer....

Q: So were you always a bit of a rebel against the role..

A: It was what everyone said but you don't have to do a lot to be a rebel really when you're Greek. Not as far as England...

Q: Exactly. Do you feel you grew up by English standards rather than Greek standards?

A: No.....(103).....

Q: What sort of school did you go to?

A: All girls' school.

Q: Was that a comprehensive or?

A: Yes. All girls' school, it was mixed in the fifth form.....(107)...

Q: Right, that's another part of it?

A: It is with my mum.

Q: Did she not trust you...

A:

Q: In general?

A: That's it yes.

Q: Well it's probably the most common to think mothers give daughters anyway in general. Most people I've talked to seems to all come down in the end all the mothers are really cynical. Did you ever feel there was a time; I was talking to a girl the other day whose father was Asian and her mother was English and she had a real pull about which one she was going to - because she could have chosen the kind of life style, she has chosen English.

A: Because her mother was Asian?

Q: No, her father was. And she also had the prospect of an arranged marriage, going back to India so she had - it was a pull on her. Did you ever feel there was a pull; that you were supposed to be sort of kept in the Greek community and that type of thing?

A: Oh yes, I suppose so. The Greek community..... anyway. It's worse in Manchester. I thought it was bad in London, but they are pretty open minded in London But in Manchester there's not that many Greek people and there's gossip going on about me at the moment that I smoke draw and things and I can't think where they've got that from. All I can think of was friends smoke and they could see through the window or something. It's really bad in because there's only a few of us.

Q: Do you know other Greeks up here?

A: I've got an uncle.....

Q: And do you still feel an eye is being kept on you then?

A: Yes.

Q: And what would their reaction be if you

A: Oh yes. My mum see what I'm doing.

Q: You moved away from London, so you must have moved away from most of your friends...

A: one had left anyway. Yes it was but I could have left home I suppose and stayed in London but I don't think I could..... Not as a student anyway.

Q: Do you find that you've got more freedom now, that you didn't have at home?

A: Yes. I find now thought that I don't mind staying home. When I was living at home I would be climbing out of the window. Sleeping over at friends and doing all sorts of but now I don't mind staying at home..... go out that I wanted to show that I could

Q: Are your brothers and sisters sort of being quite independent or?

A: Well I don't know about my younger sister, she

Q: So it's OK?

A: Yes.

Q: So for you the idea that they are waiting for you to get married?

A: No..... I don't even want to get married....

Q: For her that's recognition ... her daughter a good marriage?

A: Yes, as well.....

Q: Right so you always wanted to have a career?

A: Yes, although I remember speaking about my cousin once she wanted to get married and she was.....had to leave her job so I think she was a bit confused herself as well. Because she's got good Greek around her get married as well as much as

Q: So tell me about, it said on your questionnaire you had got about what you wanted to do

A: ...

Q: Tell me about that.

A: and then there was this other.....

Q:

A:

Q: I know exactly what you mean. So I think for most women that if you are ambitious.... it's not for a man to be ambitious it's just looking for a job and may be a job with money or whatever, for women there's the issues about your femininity and wanting to be - to do something that is glamorous.

A: A lot of it isn't that glamorous, I'm sure isn't, it's a lot of hard work.

Q: Did you use to read a lot of women's magazines and stuff?

A: Yes, I still do. Certain women's..... girly ones but I wouldn't like to work..... I wouldn't mind working for something like Cosmo.

Q: Do you think that those sort of magazines influence people?

A: I think they do young teenagers. There's Jackie not

Q: Did they influence you when you were younger do you think?

A: I don't know..... Yes they probably did because..... I wasn't allowed out so I just used to read magazines all the time.....

Q: Do you mean when you were at home you had quite a lot of restrictions about going out?

A: Yes, definitely.

Q: So I suppose that's a good way of find out what's

A: Yes....

Q: So when you were in London what sort of things did you do, what sort of social activities did you have then?

A: Usually house parties..... I went to a student one and there was about two people there.

Q: That's a shame. Do you think your social life has slumped when you came to Manchester?

A: Yes it's slumped, definitely. But I could feel necessarily..... you have to go out to nightclubs....

Q: So what do you do in terms of social life in Manchester, what sort of things do you do?

A: I usually go to my cousins..... Recently we do DAVID has got a car, so we go to the airport at six o'clock in the morning..... or go to the water park and watch the sunrise at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Q:

A:DAVID.

Q: Is this your boyfriend, DAVID?

A: No, we're just good friends.

Q: Can we go back a bit to when you were at school, it was an all girls' school, did you get sex education at school or was it the type of school where that sort of thing didn't go on.

A: We got sex education, but I remember it was in when we were doing human biology. And the didn't want to do it she was a bit nervous. She left actually after the first year because someone used to say she was really bad make plasticine models..... strange and amazons.....

Q: So that was the end of your sex education at school?

A: Yes. I'm sure we had more but I really can't remember. What seems to be

Q: Did you get any from your mum?

A: No.

Q: Right so that's not on?

A: No. I doubt she knows herself even

Q: Is that part of the way women are brought up, they're kept ignorant about those things?

A: Yes. Well so are men except the men go out and get firsthand experience.

Q: Right so they are expected to be sexually active?

A: Yes.

Q: So for a woman you are supposed to be a virgin until...

A: Oh yes. It's pretty..... it's not ours.....

Q: Is that one of the reasons..... good ways to find out about..... generally not actually about sex, they are just usually about falling in love and boys and then the problem page and things like that so you could get some information from that. Did you feel that you were less well informed than your friends were or do you think you had got as much..?

A: Yes, no I did feel because I had like my friend..... half Turkish so it was the same for her really.

Q: Right.

A: So no-one felt left out because we were

Q: Were you not really allowed to have boyfriends when you were at school?

A: No, I wasn't really allowed but I still did.

Q: Were they generally in secret.....

A: Yes.

Q: Would you not have been able to bring someone home?

A: No.....

Q: Did that frustrate you, were you angry about that?

A: It used to upset me that girls could talk to their mums about their boyfriends.... and I always wanted an English mum.

Q: I don't think they were all like that, that's.....

A: No.....

Q: Do you still feel that you haven't been able to talk about it as much as you wanted to?

A: Not with my mum. I think she assumes we will meet a boy and then we'll get married and I think she knows at the back of her mind that boys..... she must know and I think she knows but she's ignoring it.

Q: Right. Is there a distinction made between having a boyfriend and having sex? Is it that you are just not supposed to have boyfriends or you can have boyfriends but you shouldn't have sex?

A: No I think she thinks that if you've got a boyfriend they will want it anyway.

Q: Right.....

A: In fact, it goes even further. She thinks if you've got a boy as a friend it's automatically a boyfriend. Like I will mention DAVID and she will say - well I don't mind as long as he's a nice boy - and I have to explain that we are just friends..... I've given up phoning now...

Q: Typical. You don't feel that you have never been in a situation where your background has worked against you?

A: Oh definitely. I think so.... especially my first boyfriend. I was sure.... first boyfriend..... You are not just told you can't trust

Q: There's no sort of... it's just.....

A: Yes, that's it, they're bad. Naughty.

Q: It probably must have had some effect on you the way you thought about boys?

A: What you mean....

Q: Yes the

A: I have always been quite untrusting....

Q: Has that changed, or do you think - why do you think you feel that?

A: I think at the back of my mind.....

Q: Right I was going to say.

A: That could be through.....

Q: You have never since.....

A: No, I haven't. That's probably got something to do with my mother.....

Q:that you couldn't take it seriously.

A: Yes.

Q: You said your dad died, how old were you?

A: Six.

Q: Right he wouldn't have had much influence.

A: Oh no. I haven't really had a male..... I don't know how that's affected me.....

Q: Presumably it would have been a lot stricter for you if.....

A: people told me that my dad convent school so he would have been stricter.

Q: Right, you are in quite a different situation now....

A: I don't know what

Q: That must have been quite a strange feeling the fact that you are living on your own now and you are aware from your family, lots of different.... that you.....

A: I don't know maybe I would have done anyway..... it's not as if my mum....

Q: Have you ever sort of thought of the way you act and..... as being anything to do with feminism or just something to do with your individual

A: Umm, I have been told by Greek people, Greek people don't really quite headstrong..... but it just seems that I don't feel it is what I want to do. I've been told I'm quite strong in terms of.... I don't know whether it's true. But it was

Q: You say you don't get on is that on a personal level as well?

A: Oh we are just so different, you know, we can't get through to each other. She will say something and there's no asking why. You know you can only get to a certain point and she won't tell you anything

Q: She doesn't like talking about it?

A: No. It's also Greek parents, they don't, it's not that they are not close to their children but they don't go talking about personal things - you are my children, you will do what I say.....

Q: Would you bring your own children up

A: No. Mum's spoken about me, ... AMBER we both wish we had other mothers, and been going on about how different we will raise our children and let's have a daughter now just to show that we can raise them right..... but it's worrying that I might be exactly the same. Because the most dominant that..... my mum's had with me is a so I don't want it to.....

Q: So you don't really know how deep

A: No I don't. But that's sort of the only At least I will know what I shouldn't do now.

Q: So tell me a few things about what you're planning to do - you say you want to go to journalist...?

A: I hope I get enough 'A' levels ... college. I am thinking of changing but I don't know if that will be for the best or.....

Q: A different college?

A: Yes.

Q: Could you do that?

A: Well I don't know if

Q: Where would you go.....

A: Anything's better than.....

Q: So do you find you don't have much in common with the people on the course?

A: Oh, I had a bit of a.....

Q: You want to be a student?

A: No, I don't.....

Q: Was that students in general or.. what do you mean?

A: I don't know the students that..... drama students, they are so funny. I walked into their mock exam and it was just really..... they are all.... and prima donnas and there was really only one of them that I saw that I thought could act. My sociology class, I enjoy sociology because they are the only people I actually like in that college that I can spend time with. I don't know whether that's got anything to do with I don't know.

Q: Well it might be. Are they mostly women who are doing sociology?

A: Yes.

Q: It seems to be the case, I don't quite know why. Ok, well, if we can go back a little bit to - I'm not sure when you were at school if AIDS had been heard about then?

A: That's what I was thinking, I don't think it was. I don't remember

Q: Can you remember the first time you actually heard about it?

A: Umm, it must have been.....

Q: In terms of as soon as you got home....

A: It's on all the time. Got an electricity bill for £80.

Q: Oh god, so that would have been in the week when they had a big blitz on it. Can you remember what your first reaction was to it, did it sink in?

A: I don't think I took it as seriously..... I thought..... but then it started to upset me.....

Q: What were you thinking, were you thinking of it as something more than disease in that case?

A: I just thought it was just another.....

Q: At the time that the initial campaign was going on, from the stuff that you heard about then, has any change, from what you know now and what you think about it

now, has that changed from when you first heard about it? Can you remember whether you thought who was most at risk..?

A: I think I knew more when it first came out because there was a big fuss about it and swept under the carpet now, you get documentaries now and again.

Q: Do you think that makes it important....

A: Oh yes. Well I don't know..... I don't know really.... I think people should be aware though. I don't know what they are doing in schools now.....

Q: When it first came out it was seen as something pretty much to do with gay men - has that changed..

A:

Q: Would you see it now as heterosexuals being at risk?

A: Oh definitely.....

Q: She is?

A: This happened last year. Everyone's contact.....

Q: At [NAME OF COLLEGE]?

A: Yes. And she came in one day and told us so they..... transferred as much as possible. And she came back this year.... and then she disappeared, and no-one could get hold of her on the phone and we were all pretty worried about her but I've heard she's on holiday. She did intend to go on with college I think.....

Q: Has she any idea how she got it?

A: Yes. She knows who.....

Q: Was it.....

A: It was a bisexual man. And he told her that he had it and she

Q: Right so she found she was positive.

A:.....

Q: Did you find that quite shocking that somebody, not just somebody who was heterosexual, and it wasn't just that it was a woman, but also a woman that you knew?

A: Oh yes. That.....

Q: Why do you feel....

A: Well for a start she didn't know he was bisexual. I think he should have told her that. Because there is more risk.

Q: Because....

A: It just seems so unfair.

Q: A lot of the.... AIDS hasn't been treated in an objective fashion at all particularly by the media. There's been a lot of moralism surrounding it.

A:

Q: On that level there have been quite extreme levels, there..... but also the lower levels and less obvious

A: Sexual behaviour.

Q: About sexual behaviour and also in fact people often believe that certain people are to blame - for instance bisexual men are seen as being actually to blame, in spreading it from one community to another. Do you think that complicated the way you felt about it, or were you pissed off with him because it was a friend of yours?

A: Yes.....

Q: You don't feel in terms of moral..?

A: No not at all.

Q: Before that happened, before you found out your friend was HIV positive, did you have very much of a feeling that you were; well not necessarily that you were as an individual, but people like you, someone like you, would be at risk, or had you thought about it?

A: I..... more closer to home than that. Yes, it was more of a shock.....

Q: Has that made any change in terms of your behaviour? We haven't talked about this yet but in terms of your sexual experience, but before you found out about your friend being positive, were you taking any precautions?

A: I would anyway. I don't think that's really changed. I would have to know someone really well, well that was after my first boyfriend, that was just I thought I was in love and I just decided... No, the next time get to know someone and see how you feel because I really didn't know what I was doing.

Q: Was this the first boy you'd slept with?

A: Yes you could say who I had sex with. You know, what was it, I really didn't know.

Q: Do you think that was a product of you not having talked really about sex before and things like that?

A: Yes. Boys full stop.....

Q: Tell me about that relationship, the way it happened?

A: My first boyfriend. I met him at this friend's house..... in Camden Town. There's quite a few in Camden Town..... We used to go round to each, well no-one came round to mine but, we used to go round to their houses..... I was sort of..... Looking back now I know I wasn't in love but I thought I was then.....

Q: I'm interested in what young women think love is at that age, what was it that you thought....?

A: I couldn't get him out of my mind the first time.

Q: Was it partly the type of person he was?

A: No, I think it was just because he was my first boyfriend.

Q: Was he a glamorous figure?

A: I think it was that I felt

Q: Right....

A: It was always a game as well, it was so stupid, I still do it now.....

Q: And also that other people.....

A: He was also..... I tend to be put off by men with big..... not that he was passive...

Q: Is that anything to do with being actually scared about the physical side of sex?

A: Yes probably.....

Q: And so, when it became a sexual relationship was that quite soon into the relationship?

A:

Q: What would you have seen as being appropriate for when you slept with somebody, you would probably have thought about it beforehand, thought about the prospect of sleeping with someone, how had you worked it out in your mind?

A: No, I hadn't thought about sleeping with but I had after I had a boyfriend..... I don't think about sex, the person first.....

Q: That's interesting to start with because generally the way it's presented men..... it's nothing to do with the individual women, it's sex, and there's got to be a woman to fulfil the role. Have you any ideas why you may have been thinking about the person rather than thinking about sex, do you think you actually didn't feel any sexual urges?

A: No I don't think I did. I was only fifteen.....

Q: I doubt that it's just the Greek upbringing, I think most women have actually no idea how to identify sexual desire. When the relationship sex was it something that you did, that you felt you were doing for him, to make sure the relationship carried on, or was it a decision...

A: No I think I thought it was something that happened anyway, it's just a part of the....

Q: So you were quite willing?

A: Well I was willing but not really knowing what I was doing.

Q: Did you enjoy it, did you get any pleasure from it?

A: No, I don't think so, I did hurt.

Q: How did the relationship change after you'd had sex with him?

A: I don't know, I think I felt uneasy. I don't really remember. I don't think it was closer, he might have thought it was, but I don't think I did.

Q: Why do you think oh God, I don't want anything to do with this?

A: Yes. And thinking he more than me.

Q: Was that something you found confusing then?

A: Oh yes, definitely. I decided I would never sleep with anyone again after him. I don't think.....

Q: I think there is definitely a feeling that you can't have anything in common with a person if they sexual.... and you really don't feel so - you feel so very distant from them because you just don't understand what's motivating them.

A: Yes.

Q: I..... you had to sleep with them, it's something you did to keep them, but you felt very boys and girls were very different types of people. They had different motivations.

A:

Q: So were you using contraception and things like that?

A: I was on the pill at the time but that was just because we all used to carry them around in my bag.

Q: What, the pills?

A: Yes.

Q: So why was this?

A: It's something that just happened at school, 'oh yes, things to do'.

Q:.....

A: Was it like a fashionable thing?

A: At the girls' school.....

Q: So were you taking them regularly, actually on the pill or were you just carrying them around?

A: No I used to take them now and again.

Q: But you weren't taking them every day?

A: No.

Q: So were you, so when you were sleeping with your boyfriend you got protected?

A: Oh yes. No, not now, thinking a bit not really....

Q: But you thought you were?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh that's great. I can imagine that, everyone carrying them around.

A: I just used to do everything everyone else used to do just to be one of the..... Smoking in the toilets, I hate smoke and I used to pop out but I smoked... because everyone else.....

Q: At that age, how old were you, about fifteen, sixteen?

A: Fifteen.

Q: It sounds like that you weren't having relationships for your sake..... it was part of the whole scene.

A: It was really difficult at an all girls' school, there were a lot of pressure to be the same, you can't be an individual.

Q: Why do you think that is, is it because it is an all girls' school?

A: Well I don't know.....

Q: But things like....

A: No, it is in all schools if you're someone different.....

Q: So you desperately want to be normal?

A: Yes.

Q: So what was normal when you were at school, what was seen as normal?

A: Oh everyone used to be casual..... I was different in that, I just couldn't dress, what was it..... skirt and those grey matching sweaters and cardigans from Marks & Spencer.....

Q: And did you want to wear them?

A: No that was more the English girls anyway. I think whoever wasn't English stood out.....

Q: Did that have an effect on you when you were younger, that you weren't English..?

A: When I was younger I used to pretend I was English anyway and my Mum was Greek..... But now

Q:.....

A: I used to lie about it.

Q: Was that wanting to be part of the.... group and not wanting to stand out?

A: Yes.

Q: In terms of what was seen as normal and what everyone I remember when I was at school it was the worst thing in the world to be a virgin, I know it has changed quite a lot now - talking to girls at school now, but it was like total stigma, if you were a virgin you just lied about it. And all....

A: Oh yes, we used to lie about it.

Q: Was there a pressure there to be sexually active?

A: Oh yes. Then again though, there was MEGAN who had a lot of boyfriends and she was a slag. You had to strike a balance.

Q: Right between the two. Was that difficult, was it confusing?

A: Oh it was always confusing..... I didn't really enjoy school. I stopped going in when I was in sixth form.

Q: What did you dislike about it, was it the big group mentality?

A: Yes it was the girls together. Girls are horrible.....

Q: Was it really bitchy?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you get into trouble at school.....

A: Everyone had. There was always a fight around the back of the bike shed. I had two fights at school and both times it was the biggest girls in school..... JENNIFER just had her hand out and I was up against her arm kicking and bumping at the air. The next day I was.....

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Q: You had absolutely no power or control over them, in fact you have also got to make really serious decisions like about things and you've got to do things. I mean I was interested in the sort of risks you take as well, you don't really understand because everything seems to be dangerous, just about everyone, so you've no idea what's very dangerous or what's a little bit dangerous because the whole world seems to be like that. When you were that age you were saying you were smoking and things like that which is obviously something you don't actually enjoy doing,

were there other things that you were doing that you actually didn't want to do but it was part of being that age and what everybody else was doing. Did you ever take drugs and things like that?

A: No, I don't think there was drugs at the school, well there might have been but not in my class..... I can't think of anything. I think the dress though, that was the only thing I didn't do, I don't know why I chose not to dress like anyone else.

Q: Maybe you just had good taste.

A: Because.....

Q:..... Did you ever have any other relationships when you were in London or was the next one..?

A: Oh I had a boyfriend after that.

Q: Did you sleep with your boyfriend?

A: No, not after the first one.

Q: Had that been a decision you'd made after the first?

A: Yes.

Q: What reactions did you get from boys, the boys that you were going out with that you didn't want to sleep with them?

A:..... Moaners..... That just pushes me even further away when I'm pressured.

Q: Did they try and make you?

A: The older I've got the easier it was to say no.

Q: Right. Did you feel it was very difficult to start with, actually saying no to them?

A: It depends how much confidence you've got in yourself. I'm more confident..... it's what I'm going to do.

Q: Did you have boys trying to make you feel that you were abnormal, that there was something wrong with you because you didn't want to sleep with them?

A: Yes, what's wrong.

Q: Did it ever work, did you start thinking oh God there's something wrong with me, I don't want to, why don't I want to?

A: No I didn't actually. I think that was to do with my mum as well.

Q: That you could resort to that sort of framework - oh that I don't have to, it's good to say no. It's positive to say no.

A: Yes because my mum always said stand up for myself. Especially with men. I know she took it to an extreme.....

Q: Your decision then not to be sexually active was nothing to do with AIDS or anything like that?

A: It's also me because I was still living at home, I didn't even know who I was, I I decided not necessarily that I wouldn't sleep with anyone, but that I would know that person first and maybe if I'd had a long relationship it was only because they weren't that long that I didn't.

Q: So it was something about you finding out about yourself more than anything else?

A: Yes.

Q: It sounds very, I mean a lot of people go through that stage who sleep with people all the time, and don't do that.

A:

Q: I don't know which is the best, but it sounds like you probably get a bit more self-respect doing what you did, or find out about yourself. So when you did start sleeping with your boyfriend again, when was the next time you slept with someone?

A: eighteen.... left home.....

Q: And was that done on the basis of a completely different type of relationship?

A: Yes, that was real love that. That's something to look back on and not regret.

Q: Good. What type of relationship do you expect to have now in comparison to what you had when you were younger?

A:

Q: What do you want, what is it you want?

A: I wouldn't mind I found..... be quiet when they start talking about women..... Which is a shame because there's self-consciously..... I should go out. But I didn't even realise that I was looking back and I just realised that all my boyfriends had been Greek except for two..... and I am sure it wasn't planned it just happened. I think I can trust Greek men. Even though I know they are sexist and...

Q: Is that because they share the same values?

A: I don't know that they do even though they annoy me because they are so narrow minded and that's.....

Q: Well maybe it's something about not trusting English men, maybe it's the other way round?

A: Yes instead of...

Q: It's trusting those you actually know even if they are bastards or whatever, you know exactly what they are going to be acting like?

A: Yes.

Q: What is your image of Greek men in comparison to English men, is there one image you have?

A: sexier. Recently I've been thinking that it's been..... and I want to make sure I don't do the same because it's not the same, I was going to say the being attractive..... and the Brylcreem boys...

Q: I think blonde men are for young girls, you know like Bros, when there's no sexual element involved, and dark men are more sex objects. Cute and unthreatening.

A: Jason Donovan.

Q: Yes I think it's quite interesting that men are increasingly being portrayed as sex objects as well in the media, the way that women always have been.

A: Not in the same way.

Q: Not the same....

A:

Q: But adverts are beginning to happen where they are transferring from women by having a man with hardly any clothes on.

A: All the things for men like shower gels, and everything.

Q: Yes..... So you were saying that your relationships have changed, the type of relationships you've had have changed and that's...

A: Because I've changed.

Q: Yes, you've changed. Now just to go back to bring AIDS into it, if someone was talking about safe sex to you, or the type of safe sex that you would practice, that you were saying you don't take risks in terms of AIDS, what would you use for safe sex?

A: Condoms.

Q: Are you happy having sex with condoms, is that something that.....

A: I would rather that than I don't see why I should.....

Q: So tell me why you don't want to take the pill?

A: For a start I'm sure..... cancer risk..... I don't know, I've been making a stand lately, I don't see why I should have to use anything. But the condom isn't going to harm anyone but the pilland I don't think.....

Q: I think it makes everyone... but it also made me very depressed and I didn't realise why I was depressed until I came off it. What reaction have you had from men when using a condom..... and not being on the pill or agreeing to go on it?

A: The last boyfriend I had was condom anyway and.. It's the type of person I would go out with anyway.....

Q:

A: Yes.

Q: When you were younger you were on the pill, would you have been able to use condoms...

A: I wouldn't have asked, no.

Q: It's something that you would have to have some confidence to

A: Yes, definitely and feel that you've got the right to.

Q: Which you didn't feel then?

A: No.

Q: I don't think you feel you have anything to do with it, OK, if it's going to happen.

A: You don't make any demands or say anything, it's really...

Q: Yes. So you have changed very much so in terms of your sexual identity?

A: Yes especially since I've left home.

Q: So there is a lot of not just myth around condoms but I think probably some of them were based on a lot of men refused to use them to start with, you know point blank refusal, or talk about how it makes sex ... there's so many..... there are a lot of horrible terms or sayings about it, have you come into contact with that or has it influenced how you feel about it?

A: How do you mean?

Q: On one side it's seen that condoms are very positive, they protect you against pregnancy, they protect you against any sexually transmitted disease if they don't break, you don't have to be on the pill, it's not something you use all the time, and those are the positive images of it. But there are a whole set of negative images about the condom and legends around them.

A: I don't think women have those negative images about them.

Q: Do you feel that you would never

A: No.

Q: Have the men you've slept with used them, had any problems with them?

A: No.

Q: I think quite a lot of time people are really scared that their partner is not going to want, is going to refuse, that they already feel there is something wrong with condoms, that they are dirty in some way or they are too obvious, they don't make sex spontaneous.

A:

Q: I think when people don't feel happy or don't want to be aware of actually what sex is, the idea of spontaneity and losing the moment, that's quite often what people talk about when they talk about using condoms, oh you can't, it's all messy and you lose the moment. Has that ever been.....

A:

Q: Do you think there is this moment that people talk about exists. Do you think there is a real moment when sex starts?

A: No I don't

Q: So you feel quite happy about asking your partner to use.....

A: Yes because for me to sleep with someone I would have to be now, extremely close to them anyway and..... I don't think I would be able to say that to anyone but I'm.....

Q: Is that something that you would have done anyway, a way of behaving that you would have done anyway?

A: How do you mean?

Q: Well not sleeping with someone until you've known them quite a long time, it being quite an informed decision that you sleep with somebody or not rather than going out with somebody and it being a matter of course within the beginning of the relationship, you start sleeping together. Do you think AIDS has had any influence on your sexual behaviour?

A: No, I don't think that's AIDS though.

Q: What do you think it is?

A: I don't know I think it's a standard I've set myself. I don't think it's to do with AIDS.

Q: So it's something you would have been doing anyway?

A: Yes.

Q: You say, obviously you are quite well informed about it, presumably you know the difference between HIV and AIDS?

A: Yes.

Q: If you know someone who is positive I should think.... Did you find out a lot about AIDS when you found out your friend was positive, did that make you want to know more?

A: I don't think I was very good before and I think I was the wrong person to I should have been strong and I just cried..... But I tried to be as positive as possible, you know it's just the virus, there will be a cure. But even so.....

Q: Do you find it's something that upsets you a lot?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think you will be more careful now in the future because of knowing her?

A: Yes, definitely. Having said that, me and AMBER agreed that..... and it was about a couple of weeks after HEATHER told us and AMBER slept with someone without using anything.

Q: What did she feel about that?

A: She just didn't understand, she felt stupid, she said. She is really worried. She won't go to the doctors..... We tell her not to worry about it but.....

Q: What, have a test?

A: Yes but then again there's not a lot you can do.

Q: So you would as a matter of course always practice safe sex no matter who you were with?

A: Yes..... sitting here saying it.

Q: You say you can't tell what happens, it's different, why do you think that is, that a decision that you've made quite rationally about the way you want to conduct yourself, why do you think that doesn't sometimes happen in practice?

A: I don't think sex is a very rational thing anyway.

Q: Right. Do you think that's inherent in sex or do you think that is to do with the way we are brought up to think about it?

A: I don't think it's inherent, it's probably....

Q: Do you feel happy about talking to your boyfriends or your partners about sex, do you discuss it?

A: Umm, I do. I didn't used to, but I do now. And friends and boyfriends, friends that aren't just boys.

Q: Do you think you are finding out a lot more about it by doing that?

A: Yes. I am inclined to talk more with English boys than Greek. The Greek boys are quite shocked if you talk about.....

Q: Talking about sex?

A: Or that you've actually had it. I remember I thought I had a lump in my breast, I got really scared I thought I had a lump and he said but you can't have one, you can't have a lump in your breast, because he thought I hadn't had sex so I couldn't have breast cancer.

Q: What? Why should that make a difference?

A: I don't know, I said _ it's got nothing to do with it - and he went - oh hasn't it, I thought it would develop... - but I was thinking that he assumed that I hadn't had sex anyway.....

Q: Did you tell him that you had?

A: Yes.

Q: What was his reaction?

A: I think he was shocked. I don't see why he should be though because it's really... a group of girls especially when you go on holidays to Greece and Cyprus. In fact they sleep around quite a lot because when you've got no freedom that little bit and you just go wild. I don't even think it's something they want, it's just when they have got that small piece of freedom.

Q: And they take it and they don't know what they are doing..... In the end also it makes it much more dangerous because you are completely uninformed as well, so you don't know what risks you are taking..... But presumably he's had sex and that's OK for him? Do you talk about those kinds of things, double standards?

A: I do all the time, I get angry and I take it out on him because he's the only Greek man there..... I was hitting him once sorry for him.

Q: So it's something you feel strongly about then?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Do you think that you can overcome that in your life..... how do you feel you can do that?

A: Overcome what?

Q: Having to live by double standards?

A: I don't think I do live by double standards. I would hate thinking that I'd have to, but I don't. It's the same for English women though. Just a lot worse.... It worries me that I want to be proud of being Greek and my culture and yet there are some things about it that make me so angry. I will make sure that I don't talk about sex and Greek men and Greek culture in front of someone that I know is racist.....

Q: But that has come up a lot in terms of racist..... Africa, actually the black man as the traditional view as the racist and all those types of thing. It's complicated. A lot of racism can be rooted in ideas about sexuality as well.

A: Well AMBER, my friend, feels really strongly about racist.... and something that makes us both angry and it's really difficult for her because she has had bad time and it's been black men that have given her trouble yet she has got to stick up for black people all the time, it's so difficult.

Q: Is she black herself?

A: Yes.

Q: Right. Obviously..

A: And she will tell me about

Q: Right. It's a cultural thing as well, particularly .. is she Jamaican?

A: No, her dad is from Africa. Her mum's white though.

Q: Yes there's no getting away from it, you can't pretend that there isn't a lot of sexist..... Yes, it's all very complicated. OK well just give me some things about what you're ambitions or what you are going to be doing. Like you're in Manchester now doing your 'A' levels?

A: I want to work in London.

Q: Right so you want to move back down there?

A: Yes. I would like to work in a hot country.

Q: Right..... I'll second that.

A:

Q: So you will probably move down to London, do you want to do a course or something?

A: Well there's London..... I'm a bit worried about that because it's a bit special..... I really want to work I'm getting tired of education.

Q: Getting itchy feet. The idea of doing post graduate and not been working. How old are you now?

A: Twenty.

Q: Right so you feel you won't be working until twenty-five or something. It's frustrating. Maybe you can do something at the same time and What is the most important to you in terms of things about.. is it your career, is that the most important thing in terms of your future?

A: Yes.....

Q: Right to your family?

A: Yes. To Greek people and not be married. All my cousins around me are getting married and it's a shame.

Q: Are they being married to people who

A: got married it just so happened..... when she decided she wanted to leave home so I got the blame. I used to go round to their house and anything that went on I got the blame for so I stopped going round. But I really thought she should have left home, because she wanted to leave and no matter what you say..... so I said all you can do is leave home. And she told her mum and I got blamed.

Q: So you are seen as the black sheep of the family a bit?

A: Yes.

Q: When they see you as the black sheep is it.. often women are seen as deviant in any way

A: I am because I left home.

Q: Right, so is it all seen in terms that you...

A: I.....

Q: But it's seen as a sexual type of thing?

A: Oh yes. Some people think it's because I've got no dad to control me. I don't know, maybe it would have been different if my dad.....

Q: Just a few little things about AIDS in terms of what you know about it, what do you think are the ways that it can be spread?

A: How it's contracted - sexually.

Q: In what way sexually?

A: Penetration, not necessarily

Q: Right, for instance, would you know if oral sex was risky?

A: I think I heard recently that one case was found of oral sex.

Q: Would you be happy to have oral sex and take the risks?

A: No. I am a paranoid person anyway.

Q: Would oral sex be something that you would want to have or is it something you are happy not to have anyway?

A: I don't mind to have.., I wouldn't give it.

Q: Right. I don't mind having it at all. Yes, that's definitely a good attitude to have. In terms of the way you think about sex now, actually what sex is, has the actual act of sex what you see as being sexual, changed from when you were younger. Is it, for

instance, penetration as what you see as the core of sex, is that what you imagine sex as being?

A: Yes that is sex but that's not I think I used to think it was you know.....

Q: Do you now?

A: It is something different, but it is something that I wouldn't do That would make it the closeness.

Q: Have you ever thought of non-penetrative sex as a form of safe sex?

A: I don't think so. I wouldn't term that sex though.

Q: Right, that's the quite interesting thing for heterosexuals that everything else is foreplay, that is sex, this one act in a way is sex. Is that how you feel about it?

A: Umm.

Q: It's quite interesting, have you any idea of safe sex for heterosexuals as being seen as just using a condom, whereas in the gay community safe sex would be a whole wide range of things, all different things, very positive images of sexual practices that you can do which are safe in themselves and that really hasn't been presented to heterosexuals as safe sex. I think that's a lot to do with the fact that heterosexuals don't think anything other than penetration is sex.

A: Yes

Q: If you had a relationship where you didn't actually have penetration would you not think that as being a sexual relationship?

A:

Q: Do you think you would be satisfied by that relationship which didn't have penetration?

A: Umm yes.

Q: Do you think your partner would?

A: No I don't think so.

Q: Do you think penetration is more important for a man than it is for a woman in terms of actually being sexually ... coming to orgasm?

A: Umm, I think so.

Q: I think it's difficult to work out what it is and what we think it is as well, the difference between them.

End of interview