

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

PROFESSOR EDNA L. VAN HARTE

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Dan Whitman. It is February 12, 2010. One day after the 20th anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. I am interviewing Professor Edna van Harte. I am very excited to be meeting you once again. It turns out that we knew each other 30 years ago. This dates us both.

VAN HARTE: Yes it does.

Q: And it gives a certain special personal touch to the history we are going to look into today. Professor van Harte, the objective of this study is to show the benefits if any in the relations between the United States and the exchange programs funded by its government and South Africans and the development of South Africa. Before we get to that subject I would like to ask some general questions about your own upbringing, your education and what brought you to your profession prior to your exposure to the United States.

VAN HARTE: Well I must first say it is a pleasure to meet you also after 30 years and that we could reminisce about the past.

Q: 32 years actually.

VAN HARTE: I was born in Elsies River about 12 miles outside of Cape Town. It was a disadvantaged and segregated area for Blacks. During the Apartheid period the area became restricted to Coloured people. I had working class parents. My father was totally illiterate. He came here from District Six community.

Q: Which is a whole history in itself.

VAN HARTE: It is a whole history in itself. I have wonderful memories of visiting my grandma in District Six.

Q: Before its destruction.

VAN HARTE: Yeah. My father was a Moslem who turned Christian for my mother because her mother and her grandmother, demanded that before they agreed to the marriage. I say my mother must have been a powerful woman, for my father as a Moslem to have done that, to have changed his religion in favour of Christianity.

Q: Sometimes it is the other way around. That is noteworthy.

VAN HARTE: So, my father was totally illiterate. My mother had a grade five education. She came from a rural town, Oudtshoorn, in the Karoo.

Q: In the desert, yes, east I think.

VAN HARTE: Not quite desert. She had a Catholic school upbringing. The interesting thing was that both of my parents highly valued education. My father in particular. He was very proud of me because I was a good performer at school. I remember the joy with which my report card was received by both parents, and within the extended family, because I was one of the first grandchildren to reach such a high grade levels in school

Q: Was this special to your nuclear family, or was it part of the culture of the community, the value on education?

VAN HARTE: Both to family and sectors of the community, education was seen as a way out of Apartheid. I come out of the group that was classified Coloured people. That is not a categorization that some of us easily accepted.

Q: That was a term imposed upon you.

VAN HARTE: Imposed on us by the apartheid regime, yes. Many of us still have difficulty in using an ethnic label. I refer to myself as a black person. That I must say is also largely due to the influence of Steven Biko, and that period of political conscientization that happened on our university campuses. I became comfortable with the label of black, rather than Coloured. I am still more comfortable with that label of being Black.

We were from a working class background. I was the first one for instance in my street to go to a university. Community members witnessed wonderful things happening to me, such as being sent overseas, getting a brand new car from my employers etc. I think I became a role model. Thereafter many other young people started to go to university from my street. I was happy that I was no longer unique in that context.

Q: Which university did you attend?

VAN HARTE: I attended the University of the Western Cape.

Q: UWC.

VAN HARTE: At that time it was named the University College of the Western Cape therefore my degree do not reflect that I was at the University of the Western Cape If you were enrolled for a degree UNISA (University of South Africa) awarded the degree.

Q: And in fact is that what your degree is, prior to when it was the University of the Western Cape the degree was granted by UNISA.

VAN HARTE: By UNISA, and that was true for all the black institutions at the time. Sometimes I feel a little bit upset about that because I don't have any evidence to show that I was a student at UWC. That is true for all of those graduates who studied at UWC when it was named the University College of the Western Cape.

Q: Do you know when UWC began granting degrees?

VAN HARTE: You know I studied at UWC from 1967 and I completed my studies in 1969. Now at that point it was still the University College of the Western Cape. I think it became UWC somewhere in the 1970's.

Q: UWC, to explain to the reader is the University of the Western Cape attended by those designated as colored as legally dictated by the Apartheid system.

VAN HARTE: We had to attend universities according to our ethnicity at that time except for white people who could attend any of the white universities, although they were not allowed to attend any of the Black universities.

Q: It might have seemed to you as an inferior institution at that time, but I must say that graduates I have met from UWC are supremely intelligent, skilled, and professionally advanced. So there must have been something of value.

VAN HARTE: I think this is one of the interesting things of the apartheid years. All the black institutions were meant to keep us in our place, in an oppressed state. Bringing us all together from different parts of the country onto one campus according to one's ethnicity resulted in an incredible network. Our campuses were not big at that time, enabling us to form strong bonds with one another. In later years when it became necessary to mobilize nationwide for the struggle, it was not difficult because you had people dispersed throughout South Africa and you could just pick up a phone whenever necessary. So these black institutions boomeranged in a way for the government. If you look at who currently governs the country you will find UWC graduates, throughout government. You will find them in prominent positions, and that is true of alumni of other historically disadvantaged institutions.

Q: Institutions for disadvantaged populations. But there must have been some wonderful professors there.

VAN HARTE: The professors may have been good. I don't know. Many of them were Broederbonders who came to teach there and who verbalized that their mission as lecturers there was to make sure we didn't turn into communists. Against whose standards were they measured as lecturers. If their ideological views were not in line with the government I do not think that they would have been easily appointed. They had this attitude of telling you that you may be forty or fifty students now in this class, but you will only be ten or so in your second year. So, that was the arrogance and the attitudes, that we had to contend with. Their negative attitudes motivated us to succeed against the odds. If you look at the later programs of how people went either on Fulbright or on the SAEP scholarship programmes you will find the South Africans did very well in America. I did a little study, not a published study, but it was meant for my dissertation where we found most of the students would say to you that it is that affirming relationship between the American professors and themselves that empowered them and helped them to succeed so well in the U.S. In South Africa it was our determination to rise above apartheid that motivated us more than the fact that these lecturers were necessarily good. Also remember that we studied from textbooks from America or from Britain. A lot of the successful outcomes were actually due to our own efforts rather than the South African professors'. The professors did not want us to be critical thinkers. We were expected to give back content to them, exactly in terms of what they gave us in class. So there was little room for creativity. If you became too critical you were often marked down. If you were too outspoken in class that was also dangerous., You know we would caution one another as to how to behave in the various classrooms. So I don't know how much of our success is due to the professors instead of as a result of our own determination, and our support for one another and the community's desire and pride in us. For many of us we were first generation college students. So the communities were really proud. I remember when I graduated my picture appeared in the Argus newspaper when they announced the graduates of UCWC. That was for my community quite a source of pride and for my family members.

Q: The Argus being the mainstream the English language mainstream newspaper.

VAN HARTE: The English language newspaper, yes.

Q: The Afrikaans one being Die Burger.

VAN HARTE: Die Burger, yes. We had the Cape Times, the Argus and Die Burger as some of the mainstream newspapers in the Western Cape.

Q: And the readers of the Argus were people of both ethnicities I think at the time.

VAN HARTE: Yeah, for all ethnicities in Cape Town, it was not so politically correct for some of us to read Die Burger.

Q: You had to speak Afrikaans I suppose.

VAN HARTE: Well for us it was unpopular because the content was so biased. In the rural areas many of our people were Afrikaans speaking, so they had a preference for Die Burger because of the language.

Q: Sure, and there has been much said about the language of the Cape which is own Afrikaans I am told. It is not a standard Afrikaans and yet those for whom the language is the language of oppression nevertheless it was their primary language.

VAN HARTE: And the irony today is that I sit here in front of you as the chairperson of the National Council for the Afrikaans Language Museum and the Afrikaans Language Monument which is a symbol of the Afrikaner's pride in their culture and language. My role there is to help transform those institutions for government.

Q: Please explain transform in the sense of giving more information and more image to the Cape colored as native speakers of Afrikaans.

VAN HARTE: No I would say transformation in the sense that yes there are many black people in general who speak Afrikaans in the coloured community as well as some Africans and other people speaking it in the country. There was a Malay influence on the Afrikaans language as well. Historically this Museum and the Monument were mostly built to celebrate the Afrikaner culture and language, and for tourists from countries such as The Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Now we bring in school kids of all races there and what I am also trying to promote is the role Afrikaans can play to help with the academic development of the other indigenous languages. The Afrikaners have learned through the years how to nurture Afrikaans and grow it as an academic language. That hasn't happened to the same extent for the other indigenous languages of South Africa. Part of the transformation agenda that I am trying to push is for our Afrikaans Language Museum to become a vehicle through which these other languages can be developed academically, nurtured and preserved.

Q: Be the same, do likewise.

VAN HARTE: Yes, we can all benefit from some of the lessons learnt.

Q: Eleven languages here officially, nine of them African.

VAN HARTE: Yes. Well many Afrikaners argue that Afrikaans is one as well. It is a debatable point for many South Africans.

Q: With some European parts.

VAN HARTE: Are we nine or ten indigenous languages? That is always an interesting debate as far as Afrikaans is concerned.

Q: So one person said to me today the Afrikaans language will never die. Is that how you see it?

VAN HARTE: I think the Afrikaners who preserved this language through the years feel very passionate about it and they are protecting the language and their culture in all possible ways.

Q: You have mentioned transformation. Can you tell us from what to what?

VAN HARTE: Transformation from the society as we knew it prior to 1994 into the new democratic society that we want to see post 1994. We see our roles as deepening the democracy that we gained in 1994. The Operation Crossroads Program, and the SAEP shaped and developed my knowledge, skills and awareness for this role to transform from an undemocratic society to a more open and free society. So my transformation work cuts across different sectors, academia, language, rugby, culture and much more.

Q: We are embarking on a huge topic. You just mentioned on a different level, Rugby and that brings to mind the recent film, Invictus.

VAN HARTE: Invictus, which I saw.

Q: When I saw it six weeks ago I realized I must make haste and come here very soon and get the other side of that story. It is a tremendous story and a true one. Meanwhile and in a less visible way there was this bridging developing of which you were a part. But your opinion of the film; did they get it?

VAN HARTE: You know, they got it I think. It succeeded in showing the political astuteness of Madiba (clan name for Mandela). I think in that way the film did succeed. I felt that there were scenes like the reaction of the security guards that felt real. It was very authentic in many ways. The only thing that made it perhaps less authentic was the fact that Madiba is still alive and to have a foreign Madiba in the movie was a bit disturbing.

Q: True.

VAN HARTE: I think if Madiba wasn't alive anymore it wouldn't be so bothersome, but you keep on wanting to see him as himself.

Q: Which you do in a very final scene I think. That is a good point. Although Morgan Freeman does an amazing job.

VAN HARTE: I mean there is nothing wrong with the acting that took place there, but for some of us who felt that we still have the real Madiba among us, it was problematic.

Q: And we all saw him on television yesterday observing the State of the Union message of the President. Transformation. This is an enormous story we are embarking on. Where do we start? In your own personal role here.

VAN HARTE: Ok, in terms of my background, I was the eldest of six children. Eventually there were seven, but my one sibling, my brother died when he was very young. So we actually grew up as a family of six siblings. My father who has passed away at age 56, saw me graduate with my first degree at UCWC. That was a wonderful moment for them as parents. My mom is 82 and still alive. My brothers passed away since so it is only the four daughters and the mother who are still alive.

Q: The degree was in '69 did you say?

VAN HARTE: Yes. And it was granted at a ceremony in May of 1970 but we finished the studies in '69. That is how it works here. My mom is still alive. She is '82 and she has seen many more of my personal achievements. I can tell you my life has been amazing. Bart Rousseve, who was on my selection panel for OCA and later worked for IIE on the SAEP program, became a substitute father for me and once remarked in reaction to a comment I made to him: "You know God is aware of the work you did in South Africa. You are being blessed in America for that." That notion of being blessed has stayed with me up until this very day.

Q: The blessing was mutual. Bart pointed out that having you in the U.S. was a blessing for the U.S. Was that the meaning of what he said?

VAN HARTE: Yes and no. I was referring to the blessings we received constantly in America as a family whenever we faced some challenges. So that is what I referred to. But I must tell you in terms of your question that I was in the US when the Diversity Movement started. I found myself eventually in the role of going to university communities with my American consulting partner, a fellow student from Columbia University, and teaching college level students how to live in a community across diverse backgrounds. I sometimes had to do public speaking. I marveled at the fact that I come from Africa, and in particular from South Africa and facilitating processes to help younger generations of Americans live together across the racial divide. So it has been an amazing journey.

Q: ON the other side of that I will say that when I worked in Pretoria in the late 90's we brought Americans to inform South Africans about diversity and every single time the South Africans taught the Americans more than the reverse. It was despite the extreme adversity there was something about it that people understood even in the worst of times here, better than those of other countries that face similar issues.

VAN HARTE: Yes we may find it easier in social settings to talk about racial and discrimination issues than modern day Americans. However, American academic programs were good programs. We were taught many theoretical models that we could bring back here and adapt to our situation. For instance, I got hired at Stellenbosch University which viewed as the crème de la crème Afrikaner university institution. That is the institution to where a most of your Afrikaner elite send their children to for undergraduate and graduate studies,. The influences of the Broederbond was still very much alive there. While some of the mostly Afrikaner faculty and administrators

underwent a personal transformation they were not critical mass. I realized that transformation of this institution will only happen through the students. We submitted a grant proposal to the Mellon Foundation under the program for new Vice-Chancellors and we included a student leaders transformation tour to the US as one component of the program. The goal was to grow change agents among our student leaders through exposing them to historically Black campuses mostly, but not exclusively. This tour started with a week-long exposure to A&T State University in North Carolina.

Q: I have been there.

VAN HARTE: Good to hear that! But we also exposed our students to other institutions like University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Duke, Howard University, and Sarah Lawrence to name a few. They experienced diversity in many different ways, but the most profound experience for them was always at North Carolina A&T State University.

It was a two week trip. The impact of our students on these campuses were meaningful. So much so that in later years a group of students came from Sarah Lawrence. They spent some time to make a documentary on diversity issues at Stellenbosch University. Our students were excellent ambassadors for South Africa and our university. Even your Council on Foreign Relations marveled at the quality of our students.

Q: Yeah, the people who organize the hospitality for visitors.

VAN HARTE: We would meet all these important figures. You know they would be emotionally touched by what our students would say to them about the impact of the tour on them. For instance, a black female student on the trip said she discovered now that she is a black person on the outside but a white person on the inside. The trip moved her to a position where she is now committed to affirming her black identity internally as well.

A young Afrikaner male student said the following to his fellow students during our debriefing session one night. "You know my grandfather whom I love dearly was a police Brigadier. I never knew this is how you all felt about people such as my grandfather. It is hard for me to hear." So they would talk frankly about these experiences to Americans and among themselves.

Q: Very transparent.

VAN HARTE: I am a psychologist so at night my co-leader and I would process their experiences on this tour in a South African context. We witnessed powerful personal growth among the members, and ourselves. The students became powerful change agents at Stellenbosch University. I view our collective growth as one of the big accomplishments of this program.

Q: I should have asked at the very start just for the record your title then or now.

VAN HARTE: My title is Dean of the Faculty of Military. The Faculty of Military Science is located at the South African National Defence Force's Military Academy. It is the first time that a woman was appointed as the Dean (Academic Head) of the Military Academy

Q: Of course. You are a paratrooper.

VAN HARTE: Delegations from abroad were always intrigued by my position and some tried to figure out if I am really doing the same work as my male counterparts globally who are academic heads of their military academies. I am proud that South Africa and Stellenbosch University did not hesitate to appoint a woman. My role is challenging, but I am enjoying what I am doing.

Q: And your position at Stellenbosch exactly was...

VAN HARTE: Initially I served as the Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor and Rector and two years later I was appointed as the first woman to serve as Dean of Students at the institution.

Q: So you are on the Stellenbosch...

VAN HARTE: I am still attached to Stellenbosch University. The Faculty of Military Science is one of ten faculties of Stellenbosch University, in fact, the only university in South Africa that has such a faculty of Military Science. One can understand this uniqueness in a historical context. The University was closely aligned with the Apartheid government.

Q: Dean of faculty.

VAN HARTE: Dean of the faculty. Our faculty is more diverse in comparison to the other faculties at the university. We have five different divisions and a research institute so it is almost like a college in itself.

Q: Well in the exhilaration of the tale we have leaped forward I think. We never actually talked too much about your OCA. When was that?

VAN HARTE: My selection to the Operation Crossroads Africa Leaders Exchange Program was in 1979. It was a six weeks exchange program.

Q: OCA Operation Crossroads Africa.

VAN HARTE: I think that is one of the best programs that I came across because in those years we were denied knowledge of the broader African continent. The program exposed us to African leaders from across the continent. We were about sixty participants on the program.

Q: Africa?

VAN HARTE: Yes. And culturally it made us excited to see the positive way in which Black culture was presented and valued. In our country we were educated to view Black culture as primitive. Many South Africans internalized this faulty education on Black culture. Fortunately now this position is being reversed in South Africa. OCA educated us about the US and about the African continent. It exposed us to the hostility and rejection other African leaders on the program showed towards us because they viewed our ability to get passports from the South African government in a negative light. The reality was that in contrast to the selection program in the other African countries, we were chosen directly by the Americans without involvement of the South African government. The Americans facilitated the process for us to get our passports.

Q: So in fact the perception was the exact opposite of the truth.

VAN HARTE: Yes. The Americans who came here, viewed us as future leaders. I must compliment them on their farsightedness. You could interview any one of us and you will find us still or having served in significant positions. We have proven that we are occupying leadership positions in the new democratic South Africa.

Q: Was there any difficulty in getting a passport?

VAN HARTE: The staff of the American Consulate played a role in facilitating the process for us.

Q: Yes, otherwise it would have been difficult.

VAN HARTE: Some participants may perhaps not have been able to go on the program.

Q: Did you notice or did you see any cases where the consulate had to cut corners or well to outsmart people in the regime or was this basically just handled for you and perhaps you didn't have to observe what they went through for you.

VAN HARTE: Well, we knew how difficult it was for black people to get passports, so it was very helpful. They did their interventions quietly. You know we had to do some preliminary paper work if I remember correctly, but when we hit snags we would report it to the Consulate and they will take over. So our most difficult hurdle was to come through the selection process. Then of course you also knew that once you do that, you are going to be a marked person with the South African government.

Q: OK, because you have accepted a grant from a country whose policies were questioned by some, and also because you were able to get a passport.

VAN HARTE: Yes, but not so much due to the passport. I think the formal acknowledgement of you as a leader made you suspect....

Q: I see, so you got it both ways. You were suspected by everybody.

VAN HARTE: By this government and by those people who viewed us as suspect because we were South African passport carriers. Although South Africans in exile would be cautious, they loved meeting people from back home who could give them first hand accounts of what's happening South Africa

VAN HARTE: Our orientation took place at Washington State University for the first week. I remember that I was thereafter placed at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to research public housing. My supervisor, Morris Cohen eventually came over here to teach at the University of Cape Town because he fell in love with all the South Africans that he met over the years on the CIP program.

Q: Cleveland International Program.

VAN HARTE: Yes. I wasn't on that program, but because I am also a social worker by profession, I met the other fellow South Africans and that is how I met Morris Cohen.

Q: Now, I am delighted and I have seen that Africans from different African countries, often a great value in those trips was meeting other Africans. Of course the argument to congress in funding was those programs were for Africans to learn about America. I don't think it is contradictory.

VAN HARTE: Well no, there was the American piece. I researched public housing, and even today some of what I learnt come to mind because we have huge housing challenges in this country. We made friends and learnt much about the American culture. I will give you an example of why I am bringing up North Carolina University, Chapel Hill. Shortly after I came back from the U.S. I was detained in early 1980. When people at North Carolina whom I met heard about it, I think the Amnesty International chapter there, responded, I was told. I don't have the evidence, but I was told that they embarked on a letter writing campaign to get me released.

Q: Detained for what?

VAN HARTE: I was working at UWC dealing predominantly with the student leadership structures among other things. I think the South African security sector assessed regularly whether you have the ability to influence people and in their opinion threaten the state. On that particular day there was a very tense atmosphere on our campus. I remember the student leader chose me to be a negotiator with them, with the police. They at some point rejected our Vice -Chancellor during the negotiations. The police demanded that the students go into the buildings. The students didn't want to do that because the police did the same to the high school kids shortly before and then beat them up once they were in the buildings. Myself and a few other colleagues offered to enter the buildings with them and eventually succeeded in getting the cooperation of students, The police made a decision on that day that they would start to use live bullets in dealing with UWC students. Prior to that they used the live bullets on the African students, not on the

Coloured or Indian. But because they got a sense that the protests were getting out of hand they made this decision, and they actually came to warn the Vice-Chancellor of our university that they are going to start Monday with these live bullets. He had a meeting with myself and other colleagues of the campus to share his concern about this new decision when the students came running into the meeting to say the police have arrived and were standing ready with their rifles. We ran to the students determined to avoid loss of life. I remember they really had rifles aimed at various students they intended to shoot. I don't know where I got the courage from but I also remember going in between the police and the rifles and standing there and influencing the students to get into the building after our negotiations deadlocked. We succeeded in getting the students into the buildings by 12 noon.

Q: Which is what the police wanted.

VAN HARTE: Which is what the police wanted, but it also confirmed to them who all had influence over the students.

Q: You can't win.

VAN HARTE: You can't win. So at 04h00 the next morning myself and six other colleagues were detained among with many student and community activists during a major security swoop across the country.

Q: So there was a paradox in that you were able to get the students out of the line of fire, and yet, suspected.

VAN HARTE: Yes. We were concerned about saving the lives of our future leaders.

Q: And you were suspected because of your ability to do that. Crazy paradox.

VAN HARTE: Yeah, but that was the apartheid system. Apartheid was crazy. Apartheid was a schizophrenic system for us. That is the kind of life we lead. Funny, I knew that night that I was going to be detained. I told my husband and friends I think I am going to be detained.

Q: How long were you in detention?

VAN HARTE: I was in there for six weeks. As I said, there was this campaign. And the campaign wasn't just from North Carolina; the campaign was internally as well I learnt. You know apartheid was funny. There was this white journalist from Die Burger, an influential Afrikaner newspaper in the Western Cape who had met me and the students and had seen the community development work that we did in the Modderdam Squatter Camp as it was then known. He was impressed with our work. I was detained under section six of the Terrorism Act, and basically they were saying that you are a threat to the state and could be kept for a whole year without trial. This white journalist could not

accept that this person (me) that he met doing these wonderful development work in his eyes, could be a terrorist like the government was saying.

Q: Was he regularly covering the campus?

VAN HARTE: At that time most journalists were covering our university because there was such a hive of political activity at UWC all the time.

Q: So he was observing you.

VAN HARTE: He used his influence as a Nationalist Party oriented journalist covering parliament for Die Burger, to go to the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice. He told me this afterwards because he took me out for lunch when I was released. His name was Dave Bishop. When I think back I really have such respect for him. I have heard that he is in a deep depression in later years and unable to work at present. I think it is because he had soul and he witnessed many wrong things done by his leaders. I think that it may be a part of what happened to him. It is not unusual to find that some White people paid a price like that.

Q: Now if he was from Die Burger, this was a newspaper of a very conservative leaning, and was the spokesperson for the traditional Afrikaner point of view.

VAN HARTE: Yeah, so you know he went to see the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice I think. One of them told him he can't understand why everybody is making a fuss about me because the file that they have on me is bulky. So, what was in that file only they knew, I don't. There were also representations from a group of social workers, because I was also a prominent social worker at the time. One of the social work leaders in the association's father was a minister in government so she and a group of social workers went to make a plea for me and another social work colleague Lila Patel to be released. In fact we could have been released within the first week provided we signed an undertaking from government to stop our political activities, the two of us refused. Our male colleagues were held at Victor Verster Prison while we were held at Pollsmoor Prison. Our Vice-Chancellor was like a father to us and had much pressure on him by colleagues to get us released. So, we all as UWC faculty members had the opportunity to be released after three days, but we had to sign an undertaking barring us from future political involvement.

Lila and I declined to sign the document. The male faculty members held at Victor Verster Prison all signed the document and were released after a few days. The other male member, Basil Kivedo, was held at a police station under a different section (Section 22) of the Terrorism Act and I don't think he was granted the opportunity to sign. So only Lila, Basil and myself had to stay in detention. I was the first of the remaining UWC faculty members to be released after six weeks. Our refusal to sign was guided by a political principal not to negotiate with an unjust system.

Q: So 100% of the women and a small percentage of the men took the courageous step.

VAN HARTE: We were warned by the security police that we are going to face the consequences of our decision. We said, "We are ready for that." You know we were trying to be brave. It doesn't mean we weren't scared because we knew people who got killed in detention. In fact, if you look at that Cry Freedom movie they scroll the list of people who have died in detention at the end. One of my peers at UWC, a fellow student, George Botha's name was on the list. I saw that movie in New York and I remember crying when I saw those names. There was a very real possibility that you could be interrogated, tortured, that you could be raped, or that you could die in detention. They also used other psychological ways to disturb you. I always remember how the security police drove with me here from my home early in the morning and took the highway next to the mountain. Once they brought me to Caledon Square they first took me up the steps, and then they said, "Oh no, let's go take the elevator because people die here on our steps." The space in the elevator was small. I was collected by four security police, three men and one woman. I felt like I must be viewed as a really dangerous person. When I was in the U.S. in later years I developed a phobia about driving a car. I never understood why because I used to drive there. One day I was sitting in a lecture in a clinical psychology class. We had an expert from Harvard lecturing on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was saying how it sometimes happened when you have been removed from the primary fear, a secondary associated fear can develop and then the light bulb went on for me. I remembered every time I talked about my detention, and I come to the part about the driving, I would feel anxiety inside of me. When I returned back to South Africa driving my car again was one of the accomplishments I had to achieve. Having the understanding now of the cause of the fear helped me, so today I can drive with ease. But if I go around sharp curves in the road I do tense up so, but then I speak to myself and then I can manage the anxiety.

Q: What was the bad association with driving during the detention period?

VAN HARTE: It was how they drove to instill fear in one and the road around the mountain has sharp curves.

Q: This was the police driving you.

VAN HARTE: The security police. That happened shortly after four o' clock in the morning.

Q: Plus the uncertainty of what they were driving you to.

VAN HARTE: Well I knew I was coming to Caledon Square now. So there was that fear. You don't know what was going to happen to you during interrogation. You were fully aware of what could happen.

Q: At four in the morning, why?

VAN HARTE: That is when they normally come, because when you are in deep sleep you are at your most vulnerable.

Q: So these are psychological operations.

VAN HARTE: Yeah, and so it was really traumatic. Many of my friends were detained or banned you know especially during the Black Consciousness era from the, early 1970's. I saw how bitterness about their experiences destroyed many of their lives. I made a conscious decision to fight bitterness should I ever be detained. I remember when I left my home accompanied by these four security officers, I held my head high and said to myself "be brave, be a strong black woman. Maintain your dignity." I kept on saying this over and over in your head.

Q: So you made this decision seven or eight years before.

VAN HARTE: Yes, I just implemented the decision that morning. When I was in high school one of my favorite teachers, James Ravell was taken out of our classroom by the security police. I think I was in my grade 11 or 12.

It was so traumatic because it was one of my best teachers. We loved him. He was taken out because he had written an article on 10 reasons why he doesn't believe in God. On the basis of that article he was denied a scholarship to Holland. He was refused a passport and could only use the opportunity by going into exile. It was traumatic for me to lose that teacher.

Q: What happened to him?

VAN HARTE: He went into exile in Holland and obtained a Doctorandus degree. Shortly after I qualified as a social worker I was sent to Europe in 1973 and had the opportunity to visit my teacher. I was very happy to see him after so many years. After 1994 he came back to our country, but he died alone in his office here in South Africa from a heart attack. I was still in the U.S. and could not attend his funeral.

Q: What do you suppose happened to him? He was taken form the classroom and then something happened. The result is he emigrated.

VAN HARTE: My teacher was a brilliant man. The scholarship was a great opportunity to get further education. The government forced him to choose. Decline the opportunity or go and never return. He chose to become better educated. I am so happy that he lived long enough to come back to a free South Africa.

Q: Not a sustained sort of detention.

VAN HARTE: No.

Q: It was a conversation.

VAN HARTE: He was taken out of his position as a teacher, also because he was active in the Unity Movement I think.

Q: Now some people might have considered it a lucky break to be taken to Europe.

VAN HARTE: You see this is where I think the South Africans are so different. You look at our statistics on the SAEP program. According to a study done by IIE the South Africans had the highest returning rate (95%) among international students. Our commitment to come back and work for the country and get rid of apartheid was extremely strong. Yes it was wonderful and exciting to go to Europe and all of that, but you knew you wanted to come back and fight for justice.

Q: So OCA, you got the opportunity to go to the States, Washington State and study in '79.

VAN HARTE: We were exposed to Washington State, Washington DC, and New York as a group. Individually we were sent to different institutions to go and do research. I went to University North Carolina, Chapel Hill for three weeks before we all reconnected in Washington DC.

Q: And then you returned later.

VAN HARTE: It was a six week program so we come back after six weeks, and a few months after my return I was detained.

I was also chosen as one of the eight top young women rising stars in South Africa shortly after I returned. It was so ironic, the week that I was detained, that was the same week I got the award as one of the top women, for the very same work that I did in the country. So government viewed me as a terrorist or a danger to the state, and this private corporate company saw the work as community development. I would like to salute Mr. Renier van Rooyen who started the successful PEP Stores business in South Africa for initiating the Pappillon Young Rising Star Awards for women. The monetary award we received enabled me to create some wealth that I am still benefiting from today. It was quite prestigious for me to be in the company of seven other very talented women. The point I wanted to make is in one week I won an award and I went to jail that week for the same work.

Q: Well this is a comment on the insanity of the system.

VAN HARTE: I call Apartheid a schizophrenic system.

Q: Schizophrenia, yes, because two realities for the same circumstances. Isn't that amazing? Well OCA six weeks. Detention, awards, then what?

VAN HARTE: Let me tell you about OCA. The thing about OCA was we witnessed the ignorance of the Americans about Africa. We got the most ludicrous questions like how did you come to America? Do the lions walk on the street? We were encouraged to bring photo albums to share with the host families. I remember my host family's children asked me after I showed all the pictures to them "where are the other pictures where you walk naked?" These were they types of questions and we thought "You are Americans and you have so little knowledge of Africa?" For us that was an eye opener.

Q: It was a positive in that it showed you that your own sophistication was greater.

VAN HARTE: I think so, and we often made that comment. So it showed us the ignorance, but it also helped us to make friends, real friends. You and I talk about Bart Rousseve, and that friendship lasted until Bart passed away tragically in 1994. I was there in the U.S. when it happened. I was in the hospital and could not attend his funeral.

Q: I did attend the funeral.

VAN HARTE: Did you?

Q: Yes. Bart used to tell the story of the Americans asking their African visitors, "Is it true you live in trees?" Some of them would say, "Absolutely," and the Americans would say, "So you do you go up there at night?" "We take the lift."

VAN HARTE: In response to one such question about how we travel in Africa one student commented, "We swing from tree to tree. If you see us at peak hour time it is just arms going." Sometimes we found the questions offensive or absurd and responded through humour. These comments were even there when we came on the EOC program.

Q: Excuse me, EOC is the Educational Opportunity Council.

VAN HARTE: That was the South African administrative arm of the South African Education Program.

Q: Funded by who?

VAN HARTE: IIE.

Q: I see, funded I guess by the State Department or USIAD.

VAN HARTE: Yes. Our scholarships were also contributed to by various universities and corporations through IIE. USAID was the largest contributor though. This program resulted from various commissions visiting South Africa after the Soweto uprisings. As they met various people around the country the request was the same, namely to provide scholarships for Black South Africans to study abroad. I was always a member of the group at UWC who would meet with these delegations from various parts of the world.

That was a universal message throughout the country, and various countries responded, but I think the U.S. program was the largest program that came about.

You will have the good fortune to see how well your taxpayer money was spent because most of us occupy significant positions. Last week we had a military parade, and there I stood at the podium with a general, and I am reading the code of conduct to our learners who are male and female soldiers in uniform. They pass by and they salute the general, while I am on the podium. Many feelings were going through me because I used to reject the military like many of us in South Africa did. That is the interesting thing about one's life now. You are constantly confronted with the past, and you have to deal with the past. You constantly have to go on your own transformational journey because if you don't transform from within, you cannot help to rebuild this rainbow nation. We will never become a nation unless all of us take that personal transformational journey. Therefore if you work in organizations, transformation is not just about race, ethnicity and gender, it is also about changing the processes, structures and institutional culture. At the interpersonal level I think it is also about forgiveness and reconciliation. We need to take ownership of spaces we now occupy, I think one of the problems in South Africa for our leadership now is that they have to take ownership of institutions they formerly rejected, resented or even hated.

Q: You said that the taxpayer spent the money very well. Cause and effect, were we lucky enough to choose the ones who were bound to succeed or did we assist the ones we knew in succeeding?

VAN HARTE: I think it could be a little bit of a mixture. But if I look at the Operation Crossroads Africa Program, I really do think that you chose very well, because I am not aware of many who went on that program who didn't become a leader or who didn't serve in a leadership position.

Q: It was the program that was officially called the Young African Leaders Program. The requirement was to be under 35 years old.

VAN HARTE: That's right. I was under 35.

Q: Now when you say you chose, in many cases it was Bart, with the compliance and concurrence of the consulate.

VAN HARTE: We were chosen by a panel consisting of the American representative who came to South Africa specifically for this purpose, representatives from the American Consulate working in Cape Town (local and American) and perhaps an alumnus from the program or other local community leaders.

Q: And I believe it went both ways. I believe Frank and some of the others brought the right candidates to decide, there was a consensus I think.

VAN HARTE: It was a rigorous selection process. You had to demonstrate you were active in the community and you were making a difference to the lives of people on the ground. This process was similar for the SAEP as well, but the EOC representatives played a significant role on the selection panel

Q: Now does that imply that one had a great prestige in the struggle, people or in general in South Africa? When you said it was rigorous and competitive.

VAN HARTE: I would say at that time we were so hungry for opportunities. I don't know that it was about prestige. In later years you could talk about the prestige of a Fulbright Scholarship. In the final analysis it did not matter what program you were on...to us these programs all represented opportunities that we embraced. One had to demonstrate involvement in the community, yes, but also good academic potential and get good scores on the ETS tests to be acceptable to American Institutions.

Q: So regardless of the type of exchange many people wanted to avail themselves of it, whatever it was.

VAN HARTE: Yes, whatever it was. We remained critical and did not see ourselves as people bought by the Americans. We were mainly South Africans committed to fight for justice and freedom.

Q: So we knew you weren't bought by the American government.

VAN HARTE: As a group on the SAEP/EOC program we were very challenging for the Americans as we really didn't just accept things in the same way other international students would do. We challenged some of the policies of the program. I think in the end it was all good.

Q: There was much discussion at that time about the policy which was constructive engagement. Did South African visitors have a uniform reaction to that policy or was it varied?

VAN HARTE: Perhaps there was some variation, but most participants rejected the policy of constructive engagement. It wasn't so much about wanting to engage constructively; it was just wanting to take in the full experience and empower yourself to make a difference in South Africa.

Q: And that is a proper answer to the question. I was also curious the U.S. policies. You said many people from South Africa had a political awareness. They must have had an opinion towards American policy in South Africa critical.

VAN HARTE: Of course. We were critical of your foreign policy especially towards developing and underdeveloped countries across the globe. That political consciousness was there. We had knowledge about your two dominant political parties being the Democrats and the Republicans. Many of us black South Africans supported the

Democrats. There was the wonderful thing about us that we could make a distinction between the American policies versus the American people. We rejected your policies, but not your people.

Q: Surveys bear you out. We learned that this ceased being the case six or seven years ago when people's disapproval of the policy suddenly for the first time ever became disapproval of the people who had elected the same administration twice. Now you said we were critical of American Policy. American policy toward South Africa in particular or were there other issues?

VAN HARTE: I think in terms of American politics towards the world.

Q: Do any examples come to mind of things that you as a group, I guess, not just you as an individual. Were there particular I am sure that South Africa must have been a major...

VAN HARTE: You saw American foreign policy in those years towards the Soviet Union and communism and you witnessed the South African regime's paranoia about communism. So in a way we didn't like that. So that could be one example. There was the feeling that America dominates the world politically, economically, culturally and with the help of the West even on the military level. That America as a superpower tried to dominate everybody and we did not like that. We were happy when the Democrats won the elections in America as we expected them to be more tough on the South African government.

Q: Was there discussion among South Africans, there were things terribly wrong in South Africa, there were many currents of belief in the U.S. that this should be fixed and there were many ways to do it. There was disinvestment, constructive engagement. There were outright protests of people honking their horns in front of the South African embassy. I think maybe I was one of those. Or I think you said earlier your main goal was to take something back to the country.

VAN HARTE: We prepared for a post apartheid society.

Q: So you weren't taken up primarily as many of the other African visitors were, with American behavior, you were more focused on your own.

VAN HARTE: You are right and you are wrong.

Q: As I often am.

VAN HARTE: Politically, we were more concerned about preparing for a free and democratic society and our contributions towards obtaining those goals. We were determined to bring about the collapse of Apartheid as well. Culturally we loved American music, movies, theatre, clothing, cars, your universities, and many other aspects. Your cars often had a wow effect on us. We did not like the ignorance

Americans had about Africa or the impact of American foreign policies on the world. We appreciated the philanthropic nature of many Americans. We admired the value placed on democracy and freedom and the efforts by many to fight Apartheid through divestment and the cultural boycott.

Q: Some of which no longer exist I am afraid to say because of the failure of the American automobile industry to compete internationally. Now we have been assisted by problems with Toyota but it doesn't seem fair.

VAN HARTE: We didn't like your foreign policy towards Cuba. We also felt that you were robbing Africa of its resources.

Q: because of our support of people like Mobutu?

VAN HARTE: Yes.

Q: Now it is very much in style to criticize the Chinese for doing that. We sometimes forget that we did it ourselves.

VAN HARTE: And are continuing to it in different ways.

Q: When possible. Less successfully because of the greater competition.

VAN HARTE: Yes, now you have competition.

Q: Guilty as charged.

VAN HARTE: Nevertheless I had the good fortune to go to America through the Operation Crossroads Africa Program at a time when being black became popular in your country. That had a profound effect on me psychologically. Given that I am from this Coloured ethnic group, a label some of us rejected, especially the intellectuals. So it was wonderful to go to a society and see people celebrate their blackness, and their pride in their blackness. You could bring that sense back with you also. I think it opened me up to be influenced by the ideas of Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement. We brought many things back both tangible and intangible. One of the great things about the SAEP was that we could reject our ethnic labels in the US and embrace the label of being a Black South African

Q: Of course it is said in America we have never made the distinction between different colored. You are either white or you are black. So you have said in this interview that you are more comfortable identifying with black. Was that easier to do in the U.S. where those distinctions were not made?

VAN HARTE: Yes. In South Africa most of us remained trapped in our minds by embracing the Apartheid labels imposed on us. However, in the US it was also the interaction with white people that helped us to switch gears. Through these programs we

met wonderful white people. South African White people were predominantly horrible towards us. Through the job reservation Act Whites were confined to managerial positions or forced to have oversight over Blacks. Part of the amazement for some of our participants were the fact that during the orientation program at Denison there were white women cleaning their rooms and white men working in the gardens or walking around in painter's overalls. We can never forget the interactions with Black Americans who embraced their blackness with much pride. Let us however never forget that in all previously colonized countries you will find people whose minds are still colonized.

I believe those images prepared us for the challenges of having to integrate the South African society now. If I come back to transformation work we have to build bridges and we have to help people. You have to compete now on an equal footing for jobs in government. Let us not forget that the economy is still in White control in South Africa. So I reject the accusation that white young people cannot find jobs. The white managers in corporate South Africa can still hire the White youth and my question is why don't they? Why does White South Africa perpetuate the myth that there is no future for young white people in this country? You can argue that government is trying to correct the past by allocating jobs to Blacks in an effort to reflect the true demographics of this country, but you cannot say that about corporate South Africa. You know money talks eh? We have political power as Blacks in SA but we don't have the control over the economy, and you know without economic power you can only go so far and no further is my belief.

Q: Now changing gears a bit here is a soft ball question. In justifying the expenditures of these programs in Washington we used to talk about the multiplier effect. Only a very small number of people can actually be participants in these programs. Do you feel the lessons learned and the pride you brought back with you, this is very intangible and difficult to measure but do you feel this went beyond the actual visitors themselves?

VAN HARTE: I think so without a doubt. Most of us returned to leadership positions. So you could influence, people's thinking or broaden their visions. Until today I feel if I can have the money to expose as many South Africans as possible to the outside world I would do so, because I don't think South Africans fully appreciate what we have now. I think we need to go into broader African continent and other parts of the world. We need to learn from other developing countries how they deal with challenges. We came back and there was a multiplier effect.

Q: IN the sense that as leaders your directions to subordinates and colleagues had an internal consciousness, maybe not explicit, maybe implicit, that filtered through the actions and the relations that you had with your colleagues.

VAN HARTE: Absolutely and remember we developed powerful networks in the US. When we ran short of resources for our projects we could turn to our networks and appeal for support and often succeeded in our effort to get their support. Our new appreciation of the African continent influenced our thinking. For instance when I was a trustee of Freedom Park Trust I was proud of the fact that as a board tasked with the

conceptualization of this museum we wanted the architecture to reflect that the museum was in Africa and not in Holland, New York or London. We wanted to have something that could also resemble the Africanness in us. I remember many Americans who met us would say, "You know we went to South Africa but were disappointed. You are so developed there and look like an American city". Almost like people were disappointed in South Africa when I came back after 15 years in the US and I didn't have an American accent. Another important aspect was that we originally went to study for one degree program but some of us found opportunities to complete second and third degrees. with a lot of sacrifice. I want to make that clear. The Americans paid for our first degree like for me, they paid for a masters degree. But I came back from American after 15 years with two masters and a doctoral degree.

Q: The EOC. IIE administered program, you mentioned the South African...

VAN HARTE: EOC.

Q: EOC, yeah. Just we haven't actually talked about how that worked and where you were and how long you were there. If you could just mention that.

VAN HARTE: Like I said that program came about after the Soweto uprisings. We influenced various international commissions visiting our country to provide scholarships for Black South Africans.

In America through Derek Bock, former president of Harvard University, Hilda Mortimer and David Smock from IIE they established the SAEP and the EOC. David Smock is now working in Washington. David and my paths crossed again when I went to visit to look at the Security Institute in Washington. They were instrumental in getting various universities to provide tuition waivers for us to study. Many corporations also joined the initiative. That was the time of divestment, and we played quite a role in educating and promoting the message of divestment in your country.

Q: So you were involved in U.S. policy.

VAN HARTE: Oh yes, well very much so. I can remember us going to the UN. We challenged their policy towards our exiled students. Even IIE had a tough time. I think we were the only students who formed our Student Representative Council (SRC) and we pressurized IIE to negotiate with us formally. I was elected by the South African students to be co-chairperson of our SRC. Saki Macozoma was elected as secretary. Have you come across him?

Q: No I don't think so.

VAN HARTE: He is one of the top businessmen here now.

Q: So you were, did you say you were at Columbia?

VAN HARTE: My husband and I received scholarships from City University of New York, Queens College. When I graduated in 1986 I was accepted at Teachers College, Columbia University to do my doctorate in Counseling Psychology. So I have a masters degree from CUNY, Queens College, and a masters and EdD degree from Columbia University.

Q: This is for the record one of the most eminent degrees in the world if not the most.

VAN HARTE: The program is very difficult to get into at the doctoral level. They take only twelve students per year in the Counseling Psychology doctoral program so that is one of the reasons why I say I got many blessings.

Q: My gosh. I could go on for days. I don't know, people seem to burn out after a couple of hours.

VAN HARTE: No it is all right.

Q: How did we the American government and how did you outsmart apartheid?

VAN HARTE: My resistance started in high school when the security police took my teacher from our school and he ultimately went into exile in Holland. He was very fond of me as a student and wrote interesting letters about his experiences. The Security Police came to the school to warn my principal that I was communicating with communists. I was called into the office, but I am proud of myself because I said to my principal, "I will not be dictated to about who I can write to." And I kept on writing to my teacher and a penfriend from East Germany.

Q: So the South African security was reading your mail I guess.

VAN HARTE: Yes. That was part of life. We were under surveillance as students and as employees of the university. Some of the white staff at the university told us openly "we are here to prevent you from becoming communists". They did not hesitate to take photographs of us during protests or to give information to the security police about our activities. But you know the schizophrenia of this country I must tell you a little story if we have time.

Q: Yes of course.

VAN HARTE: My mother is a woman with great dignity. And she prided herself on the ability to cook and to clean. So wherever she worked the directors or managers would notice something different about my mom and sooner or later she would become the preferred one who makes their tea and their lunch. So when my mother worked at Plate Glass Company her employer asked her about me. , "My child is speaking about wanting to go to a university but we don't have the money, and she cannot get a loan because her father and I earn too little for the bank." So I think because this employer liked my mother he said, "Why don't you bring your daughter in for an interview with me." So I

dressed up and I went and she was very proud of the fact that her daughter is going to have tea with her director of the company you know. So I had the interview and he wanted to know what I wanted to do and what are my visions for the future. I can't really remember what I told him, but he must have liked what he heard because "afterwards he told my mother, "Your daughter is going to go far in life." I am willing to stand surety for her to get the loan. Let her bring me the forms to complete. That is how come I could go to university. This man's name is John Horwood. Now at the time the Minister of Finance of South Africa's Apartheid government was also Mr. Horwood. He was the brother of this man who now stood surety for me.

Q: Oh my.

VAN HARTE: But now we went to university and of course everything was under surveillance, but my political consciousness was not that well developed to know that. Through exposure at the university many of us became politically active and our consciousness grew. I became a leader at the university when I was elected Chairperson of the Social Science Association. During my student days a robust debate developed on whether to have contact with the neighbouring Stellenbosch University. We rejected the contact, so the university administrators suspended our Student Representative Council. Jakes Gerwel a prominent student leader approached our association to pursue political activities further. We agreed to their request and so they could continue with their debates. (Jakes eventually became Vice-Chancellor of UWC and later on Director General for President Mandela's government), As expected the university authorities were not pleased with our ongoing activities and took disciplinary action against us. I had an uneasy sense that penalties that I got, were somehow less than the others. It was just a feeling that when I hear others say they were punished in this way or that way I always felt mine wasn't as bad. Then when I graduated, one of the administrators of the university called me into his office and asked "I would like to know how come the minister of finance's brother signed your forms?" So in some way that gave me a protection without me knowing it. My story is not unique. Many of us can tell a story like that. In the heart of apartheid you have these little incidents that crossed the racial divide. I am really indebted also to Renier van Rooyen an Afrikaner businessman who organized an award to honour eight top South African young women. I was one of the recipients of the award and I invested the prize money in real estate. That was a decision that resulted in wealth creation for me that I still benefit from today. So I had a white Afrikaner and a white English South African influencing my life and career in significant ways. But I am telling these stories to show to you that despite the harshness of apartheid the imprisonment, the death, the torture etc. there are also these examples of human interactions that defied societal systems.

Now if you want to measure your programs in America you need to look at the , many black South African students who found American families who reached out to them during their American stay and significantly influenced their lives. Most stories still need to be told.

Q: Now you mentioned that some individuals decided to invest in you. The other side of that is they were partly smart to do so, but partly lucky because they did invest in the right person. You saw to it the investment became good.

VAN HARTE: Yes, and there were other institutions. There was the Cape of Good Hope Foundation who also sponsored some of my education. Ned Munger, was the president of the Foundation and he was attached to California Tech?

Q: Cal Tech.

VAN HARTE: There were many such people who started initiatives to help black South Africans after these formal programs of yours. So one has to really look at the whole sphere of added value when you assess the impact of the program.

Q: A system whether good, bad or indifferent is made up of a multitude of individuals, each one doing a separate thing.

VAN HARTE: Yeah. Mzamo Mangaliso is one of those black South Africans who remained in the US. He and his wife are professors now at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. But Misamo came back a few years ago; and became president of the National Research Foundation. He invited sixty or so SAEP Alumni so that we can speak about the benefit of the SAEP and how we can help other students to benefit from such a program. We are still working on a plan to make his vision real.

You know we have the most incredible stories on the grounds. So yes we made contact with government officials, with your leadership, but we also met other very interesting people from all over the world. The thing that I also feel was very important was the fact that many , South Africans tend to believe that their oppression is special. Through these programs we learned about the oppression of other people in the world, and we could develop the capacity to relate to them and could support each other's struggles. So I don't know if you can ever measure the full impact of these programs.

Q: You cannot, and we have government agencies obliging us to do so, and we are at a loss.

VAN HARTE: Yes. If we want to talk about the impact of the American programs on us and on others you must avoid seeing impact in a simplistic way. The impact is complex and at many different levels.

Q: And with many different nations. It transcends nations does it not?

VAN HARTE: It really does, but it resonated with me because of the many nations in me. I will always love America because my kids grew up there and had their own experiences. I just overstayed a little bit, so we became trapped because we would have disadvantaged the kids if we took them out of school then. So we made the commitment to stay and work our way through studies to remain so that our kids could finish school.

My daughter Meagan was awarded a scholarship and went to Smith College and did very well there. Upon her return to Columbia University for graduate studies she met a former U.S. Marine and married him. He is working for your Department of Justice. She is involved in social projects in New York City and doing another Master's degree in public Administration at John Jay Criminal Justice College. I remember some of the frustrations we had with America when they sometimes perceived us as angry when we passionately fought for justice well. The way we understood that reaction from some Americans was due to the fact that America itself hasn't dealt completely with the issues of racism and oppression and so this mirror we were holding up was also at times perhaps too painful for the Americans to deal with. My late husband Stanley went on the SAEP to do a Bachelor's degree in Education. He returned to South Africa thirteen years later with a Master's and an EdD degree in International Education and Development. He was appointed Associate Director for Continuing Education At Teacher's College Columbia and also assisted in teaching a course run jointly by TC, Columbia University and the United Nations for selected graduates from developing countries. Upon his return to SA he worked for a few months at Venda University and then worked for the United Negro College Fund on the TELP project until his death. The TELP project was funded by USAID and was aimed at building capacity on all Black universities and technicians. Now there is a real example of a SAEP funded alumnus having a multiplier effect. My son Etienne studied information Technology perhaps because of his early exposure to technology in the US.

Q: I dare say you taught as much as you learned. I mean I am a witness to this because I said earlier some of the speakers that came to South Africa purporting to teach something but learning that very same subject like diversity for example.

VAN HARTE: Yes, so it was a rich experience, really rich. I think the way we understood your program. We understood your programs not as a philanthropic action towards us. We understood your program as America making an investment in their own foreign policies, you know, their own future and in job creation for their people. We were actually very clear about that. But we were also determined not to compromise our own principles in the process. So you see even having to make that decision to take the scholarship was not always easy, and I must tell you one other very important issue about coming back to our country. Many of us were punished for having gone to study in America. My husband for instance was unemployed for a year because he was viewed as over-qualified whenever he interviewed for positions. A professor who was in exile and who became a Vice-Chancellor, professor M. Nkondo at Venda University eventually hired him. It was perceived here as you guys left when the going here was rough and tough and now you come back and you take over top jobs. You know there was resentment. I think mostly to those of us who came back from America, I have often wondered about this because people went to New Zealand, to Australia, to England, among others. Somehow our people didn't bother so much with those, but they bothered with us who came from America.

Q: And Lusaka.

VAN HARTE: Yes, I think they resented the level of confidence we developed in America, the assertiveness. But also the skills we developed, I guess. We had our own education going at the same time. For instance in psychology. There was my formal graduate program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Excellent, as you know, but I was very aware of the fact that I also need to understand the psychology of the oppressed. I didn't get that in my programs, so part of what I needed to do was to look for informal opportunities where I could find that education. So we had dual systems running there all the time. We had our formal education, but also our informal programs. We had this organization called OSAALE. It was an organization formed by SA professors who were in exile and were now teaching in institutions in the U.S. They would mentor us and sometimes recommend areas for us to research so that we can prepare for the post apartheid society. But we also formed a nonsectarian, student body by request of the ANC at the time. Our SRC and students on the SAEP played quite a role in this but we were joined by the exiled community. So we succeeded after two years to form this nonsectarian student body called SAASM (South African Azanian Student Movement). So it was OSAALE, SAASM, the SRC, all these structures played a role, a particular role. Some of our students went on hunger strikes as you know over divestment. We challenged the multinationals, It was a big thing, for we were very committed to the struggles waged back in South Africa. So now some of the Alumni are considering how to help our country increase the output of graduates with masters and doctorates. This we intend to do by documenting our experiences and our successes to influence potential donors. There is seed money for the project and I will be one of the people trying to accomplish this goal.

Q: That belongs to you. That is also created by you.

VAN HARTE: That belongs to us as SAEP alumni.

Q: Let's look together because there is some overlap here. Not entirely. I have noticed whatever you have done and where ever you have been you have always been the leader of something. Whether it was the SRC. I don't think you have ever been in a student or professional organization in which you did not lead others.

VAN HARTE: Yeah, but I have been in the role of the follower as well. Leadership is interchangeable depending on the situation. I turned 60 two years ago. I must now start to mentor the youth who are becoming the new leaders.

Q: I remember that; it was a long time ago.

VAN HARTE: Yeah you might. So one of the guests at my party paid tribute to me by describing me as a person who takes care of leaders. As he spoke, I suddenly realized there is truth to what he is saying. I have the tendency to take care of leaders I don't see my work now as only being about leaders. It is also about transforming institutions, institutional cultures, structures, processes. So I am or was involved with rugby, the military, language and cultural institutions and throughout all of this ran the theme of transformation, reconciliation, forgiveness, rebuilding and uniting the nation.

Q: So improving the past rather than demolishing it.

VAN HARTE: Yes. And feeling good about doing that. That is a good thing that South Africa is doing. We are not just throwing out the baby with the bath water. In some instances we did, and we are paying a price for that. But we are learning our lessons too. But at the same time I remember me often sitting with the students when we were having our little house parties in New York or where ever, and saying how are we going to honor our heroes? You know I used to have that debate with our people and they weren't really into that. But now I am happy to say I am here in this country and involved at the national level with cultural initiatives to rebuild our nation; such as Freedom Park, National Heritage Council, and the National Archives. So yes, I am busy helping to transform the old, but I am also helping with creating the new, and that is putting me in a very comfortable psychological space.

Q: That is wonderful. Professor Van Harte, I don't know whether to shake your hand or salute you.

VAN HARTE: You can do both if you so wish! You know military people have their own way of interacting with civilians. I must say I have become proud at what I am observing at the Military Academy. I don't talk about it there, but sometimes some of the uniformed staff and students do pay me military compliments. That to me says that I am accepted as one of them. With the rugby tour to Scotland we brought the former Stellenbosch University SRC president to join the team. We had an injury, so we brought him from Oxford, where he was studying, to come and join our team. When he came I said to him, "Anton," "You asked me the question as a member on the interviewing panel when I interviewed for a job at Stellenbosch University whether I can work in a male dominated culture. What do you say now finding me here as your manager of the male rugby team?"

Q: What could he say?

VAN HARTE: He just smiled. So that is a little glimpse into Edna Van Harte and our life in the U.S. I love the U.S. When I and the airplane approaches New York, my heart just starts to thump. When I hear the American accent I know I have arrived at my second home.

Q: I had the exact opposite experience two days ago when I arrived here.

VAN HARTE: That's nice. That is really nice.

Q: I salute you.

VAN HARTE: I accept the compliment with humbleness. Thank you America!

End of interview