ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Phase 2

The Reminiscences of

Kieran Rose

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Kieran Rose conducted by George Gavrilis on September 1, and September 3, 2015. This interview is part of the phase two of the Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Audio Transcription Center | Session: 1

Interviewee: Kieran Rose | Location: Dublin, Ireland

Interviewer: George Gavrilis | Date: September 1, 2015

Q: Today is September first, 2015, and this is George Gavrilis with Kieran Rose in Dublin at the GLEN [Gay and Lesbian Equality Network] offices, in fact. We're doing this for the Atlantic Philanthropies Oral History Project, which is being implemented by Columbia University. Kieran, thank you for doing this.

Rose: You're very welcome.

Q: So, Kieran, as is the case in oral history, we always start by wanting to know a little bit about the person we're sitting across from. In your case, I'd like to ask you where you grew up and memories from your youth that you think are important to what you did in subsequent life or even things like what dinner conversations were around the table growing up.

Rose: All right. I was born and brought up in Cork, which is Ireland's second city, and initially into a very middle-class affluent background. My father was an entrepreneur, a very successful grocer. But, actually, I was thinking about this first question and it was—because you gave—you know, anyway, he died when I was quite young, and then we fell from the affluent middle-class to middle-class in status but with very little income. My mother had to go out and work. I remember that, at that very young age, seven, eight, nine, ten, being very outraged, I suppose, at what happened to her and that she had to go out to work for not a lot of money, because women

in those days wouldn't have been trained in careers so she was a bookkeeper. Because we had lost her car, I always remember her coming home carrying very big loads of groceries, and the bus system in Cork was hopeless. But, anyway, it's kind of—I think it was a very influential part of my life that I could almost trace a commitment to social justice and wanting almost to redress that injustice.

Q: Wonderful, and tell me your parents' names, for the record.

Rose: Maureen was my mother and Alex was my father. It was kind of interesting because he left school when he was—what we would call primary school. So, he would have left school at about age eleven or twelve, so he had very little education, whereas my mother came from a very middle-class background. Cork was incredibly stratified then—it still is, probably—incredibly stratified in terms of class and status. So, it was a very unusual marriage. It would have broken a lot of taboos, I think, really.

Q: Now, you became an urban planner, I believe—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —among other things that you've done with your life. But, tell me a little bit about your education and how that came to be.

Rose: To be a planner?

Q: Yes, to be a planner. You also studied history, I believe.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Take it wherever you want. It's your story.

Rose: Yes, well, I went to University College, Cork [UCC]. It's kind of interesting, I suppose, the changes that have taken place in our society that have been terribly positive. I'm the youngest of five children, and I was the first in my family to go to college because I—that was the first year of the—just second year, maybe, where we had grants to go to college, and so we paid no fees. So, that made it possible for us to afford going to college, which is really strange when you think about it now because Ireland's higher education participation rate is huge. It's the highest in Europe, I think. Yes, so I went to UCC and I studied history and geography, and got involved in student politics there, and had some brilliant history teachers. There was [J.] Joe [Joseph] Lee, who actually is—I think he's in New York now. He's one of Ireland's—he's a brilliant historian. He wrote one of the critical history books of modern Ireland. I forgot the name now. Then, Johnny [John A.] Murphy, who was a senator, and was incredibly witty and a great lecturer. Then, I did the history of economic thought and had a brilliant lecturer there as well.

I think that that—one of the critical things, I think, for me is that I've a fascination with strategy and learning from the past and what has worked in the past and what has not worked in the past and brought that into GLEN because GLEN is—one of its critical things, I think, really of its

success is that it's a highly strategy-driven organization and is highly intellectual. That sounds—whatever—but you know that we believe that thinking work is hugely important, is as important as doing work and that you can do your own thinking. You read and you listen but you don't take your strategies or your ideas off the shelf, that you have a—that we have an intellectual confidence to look, to examine, to reflect, and to go in our own direction, which we can talk about later on in terms of the civil part when you consider marriage. Actually, it's kind of funny because a lot of people accuse GLEN of being arrogant. I suppose maybe there's a thin dividing line between intellectual confidence and arrogance [laughs]. Sorry—

Q: No, it's interesting. You said that you've always had an interest in strategy, so is this something that you discovered in college or was it before then when you were in secondary school?

Rose: Well, going back to the family thing, I suppose, you mentioned dinner. I remember at home—because it was in the '60s, so there was political ferment everywhere and in Ireland, so a lot of our dinners—what would you call them? There were kind of robust discussions [laughs] and debates about politics, and about the Church, and all that kind of stuff. My sister, my eldest sister—she was working in a publishing company in Cork and there is a socialist tradition in Ireland and that was being discovered in the '60s. So a lot of the people, like James Connolly, who had written a lot on socialism, they, her company, Mercier Press, republished it. It was called *The Best of Connolly*, and she gave me a copy of it. I remember devouring it, and it was a Marxist analysis of Ireland and a Marxist analysis of the world.

So yes, I was always kind of interested in ideas, and politics, and social change, and social justice, and the importance of intellectual work.

Q: Did your siblings also have a leftist interest?

Rose: There was a gender [laughs] divide. My two brothers didn't and my two sisters did. The eldest sister was a feminist and wrote one of the first books of the second wave of feminism in Ireland, and the younger sister, who's just two years older than me, was more of a free spirit and she just—she was a feminist but she just did the feminism. Do you know what I mean? Just did her life and a young, brazen woman or girl [laughs]. They were very influential on me.

Q: The one thing that I learned about talking to Eoin [Collins] about Ireland in the '70s and '80s especially is—well, he characterized it as a very dark period in terms of where Ireland was financially, economically, and politically. How do you feel about that period?

Rose: Yes, I mean, there's a truth. The '80s, especially, were a very bleak period. There was war in the north. There was economic crisis in the south, emigration. There was the right in terms of the religious right were in the ascendant. Divorce was lost in the referendum. An amendment was introduced to the constitution to make abortion not possible, and that was a very bitter debate. The '70s were slightly different in the sense that I think there was—as in throughout the world—there was this very strong sense that rapid, radical change was possible, and that happened in Ireland. That's when the Irish Gay Rights Movement was founded, women were campaigning.

It was a very active period. But, I think what happened almost in the 1980s was that sense that if you suffer enough defeats, you kind of give up, and that's a very important thing that defeats are not good for a movement. People aren't mobilized by defeat. They're demobilized by defeat. They go home and they—it's all too much, and that happened. That happened in the 1980s and it particularly happened for the Lesbian and Gay Movement, for the Women's Movement. That was one of the reasons why we set up GLEN, in fact. We learned a lot from that.

Q: Did you get involved in the movement before that?

Rose: I got involved in the Lesbian and Gay Movement in Cork in 1980.

Q: What was it that made your decision to get involved?

Rose: I suppose it was just blindingly obvious because I was politically committed. I remember as a teenager trying to join [laughs] the Labour Party in Cork and that didn't work. They weren't looking for members. So, like when you come out as gay, obviously, the most obvious thing to do is to use your political commitment to change in your own—and to take on the issues that are closest to you. I think that's that brilliant book, *Dig Where You Stand*, the Swedish book, which is, you should and could do [unclear] and solidarity or whatever, but equally you should take on the issues that are right in front of you, that you know most about, and where you can make the greatest impact.

Q: Had you come out at this point?

Rose: Yes, I came out. I remember, when you do a B.A. in Ireland, like the options for you in those days were teaching, the Civil Service, or doing another degree. I remember thinking very clearly that I couldn't be a teacher and be out, and one of the ones—if you have an honors degree, Bachelor's Degree, you can join the Foreign Affairs Service. I remember thinking that you couldn't be out there, either. So, that's the reason why I went and did a post-graduate degree in planning, because the minute I got to Dublin, I came out. Well, I phoned the Gay Switchboard and then came out there.

Q: What is the Gay Switchboard?

Rose: The Gay Switchboard is—in those days, it was a telephone service. So, it was run by gay people for gay people, and so you'd phone up and you could find out what events you could go to or how to meet people and so on. It's still there.

Q: Great. All right, wonderful. So, you talked about the '80s before I interrupted you for a wonderful detour and your decision to set up GLEN. Tell me a little bit about that.

Rose: Well, the immediate impetus to set up GLEN was because the European Court of Human Rights [ECHR] had said, on David Norris' case, that Ireland had to change its anti-gay laws. But, it's a thing that's often forgotten. All the European Court of Human Rights said at that stage was that any law that completely prohibits homosexuality is counter to the European Convention. So,

it would have been possible to bring in the British-style gay law reform, which was an age of consent of twenty-one, retained the basic criminalization of homosexuality, and there was a very strong privacy restriction. When they brought that law in in Britain, it resulted in a quadrupling of convictions of gay men because they could use it.

So, we knew that and, it was funny, our initial campaign was to stop the British-style gay law from being introduced into Ireland, because that would be a very standard thing to do, that we would just copy Britain and it was so repressive. You could imagine them actually nearly going for it. So, that was one of our—it was to campaign to stop that. And to bring in the legislation that was to be brought in. It would be brought in on the basis of equality with heterosexuals. Then, we had kind of a two-winged strategy, and the other one then was equality legislation and especially employment equality because a lot of us who were involved—all of the GLEN people came from a left-wing background, and a lot of us were involved as trade unionists. So we had a very strong commitment to employment issues and workplace issues.

Q: So, you were involved in the trade unions, then, at this point?

Rose: Yes.

Q: So, Cork wouldn't take you but Dublin did?

Rose: Well, no, actually, no, sorry. When I was in school, I tried to join the Labour Party, but they weren't [laughs]—they were, maybe, in turmoil or whatever. No, but when I was working

in Cork and Cork County Council, I got involved in my trade union there, and when I went to Dublin, I got involved in it as well. We were called a shop steward, on the Branch Committee and stuff like that.

Q: In the 1980s, late ‘80s, when you set up GLEN and you continued to work through the ‘90s, it’s a voluntary organization, right?

Rose: Yes.

Q: So, everybody’s working for GLEN on their voluntary time and they have their jobs during the day.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Was that typically the case or any sort of gay or lesbian rights organization in the period?

Rose: Yes, definitely, it was, yes. It was true for a lot of lobby organizations, and advocacy organizations. So Atlantic funding transformed the situation, not just for GLEN, but for a lot of advocacy organizations.

As people—it was fascinating. We, GLEN, were very successful in that period, but we had no office. [Laughs] We had no money and no full-time workers. I suppose, one of the critical things is both Chris Robson and myself and Eoin had jobs that allowed us to kind of—had flexibility in

terms of we could go and meet a government minister during the day, for example. Then Eoin was working in Nexus at the time, which was kind of a research organization, so a left-wing research organization so that we used their office facilities, like their fax machine and all that kind of stuff.

Q: Where was Chris working?

Rose: Chris was working in the Department of Agriculture.

Q: You were at the City Council at this point?

Rose: County Council.

Q: County Council. So, one of the things that I've been wondering about is what the effect was of 1993, decriminalization. I don't mean so much in the law but in terms of creating some sort of mood change. Would it be fair to say that?

Rose: Yes, definitely. I suppose it's an important thing to say that the law wasn't implemented, since about 1970. That was stopped by the first Irish Gay Rights Movement by supporting the people who were going to court. So, in the end, the police, the guards decided it's not worth it. It was more a matter of—what would you call it? A matter of principle that was there. People were not going to court for a decade or so, but the battle over it, and the winning of it, and the winning of it on the basis of equality, and the debates that happened in the Dáil and the Senate, and the

debates that happened in the wider society, they were hugely important in terms of transforming public opinion. I suppose one of the critical things about GLEN was, first of all, we believed we could win. We believed we could win a majority of the Irish people, and we appealed to traditional Irish values, and we believed we could win over people who were conservative. We were saying things like, "This is not against our traditional values in Ireland. This is an amplification of traditional values of fairness and social justice." So, there was a whole sense of celebration in the country, and in the Dáil, and in the Senate. You can read the debates and people are saying, "This is a great day for Ireland." People used to joke with me. Chris Robson described me as a Pollyanna.

Q: Why was that?

Rose: Because I had a very deep belief from—I think from living in Cork and from being involved in my trade union, and knowing very conservative parts of Ireland—it was a public servant trade union, including for local authority people, so it would have members from Donigal, Kerry, Sligo, Leitrim, all sorts of, what then were really, really conservative places. But, I knew when I was speaking on lesbian and gay motions and stuff like that, or I'd be chatting to people afterwards, they wouldn't have you're your standard, pro-gay people but when you put it to them that it's a matter of workers' rights, that nobody should get fired, and everybody should be treated equally in the workplace as trade unionists, that got to them. Do you know what I mean? They heard that, and so I was very clear that, once you appeal to people's values, their positive values, their good values, you can win them over no matter how conservative or religious they are. So, you could say it was propaganda or it was marketing, but

by telling—and I believed it from my knowledge of history—telling Irish people that there are these very conservative and reactionary traditions in Ireland, but there are these huge positive progressive traditions in Irish history, and the positive ones can win.

It's the same, I guess, in the United States. The Irish-American traditions are terribly negative in some ways but they're also very, very positive in other ways. In some places, like Australia, our emigrants would be almost entirely positive in terms of building up the trade union movement. So, it was kind of like writing. What would you call that? It's like [laughs] almost psychotherapy for people. It's saying to people, "You know, you're actually very good. You're very open. You're very welcoming." You could almost say that people began to believe it."

Q: Positive reinforcement.

Rose: Yes, it's that, right, yes.

Q: So, one of the other things that I noticed in the 1990s as you're doing this work—that there are some very big milestones or at least what appear to me from the outside as milestones.

Rose: Yes.

Q: There was the equality employment law that was in 1998 or so. Is that right?

Rose: Yes, the first, yes, employment in 1998, and then—

Q: Before that, in either—in ‘95 or ‘96, you did the really big poverty study—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —that was funded by Combat Poverty Agency, which got me thinking about two things. One is about what you consider milestones of the 1990s and what affected change, and the other thing that I was thinking about is where the money came from to even do studies like this. The Combat Poverty Agency is sort of an obvious story about where the money came from. But I’m wondering what kept gay rights organizations going financially in this period?

Rose: Well, we did—the other study we did was—HIV and AIDS was a huge issue, and there were a lot of individual groups around the country and stuff like that. But, there was a lot of in-fighting. So we were asked to get involved in that area because we hadn’t been involved. What we did was—and one of the things about the gay law reform—and one of the things about successful legislation is that it opens the door for a certain period of time to further progress. So, we went to the minister for health and we said that what’s needed is a strategy for HIV prevention for gay men, within which all of the organizations or all the actions could take place, and so we did that. That was done actually by Nexus and we got funding from the state to do that. One of the recommendations out of that was there should be a strategy worker engaged, paid for by the state.

So, that happened and I was the first, actually. I took a two-year career break and did that. That job still exists, so Tiernan up there is the current project director, and Brian was previously. So, that was our first funding from the state, and it was based on a very broad approach to help so that a person's ability to do safer sex, to look after their health, is dependent on how they're feeling about themselves. So, if they're being bullied at work or whatever, all of those kinds of things—if they've been assaulted in the street, if they are isolated, that all affects their ability to look after themselves. So, it's that very broad sense of health so that project was able to work on the gamut of issues that affected gay men, whether it was the workplace, or providing safe places for people to meet, or to liaison with the police and the guards to try and get a better police service delivered. It began there, that we have a good relationship with the police. But, that began from that period.

Q: What was your engagement like with government officials and civil servants in this period?

Rose: It was very, very good. I think we were at our initial phase, I suppose, but we were—the Labour Party were in government in 1992. I think they went into government with Fianna Fáil. So, the Táinaste, the Deputy Prime Minister—the leader of the Labour Party was Dick Spring, and his key advisor was Fergus Finlay, who was my full-time trade union official when I was in Cork. I remember coming out to him, because when I was going to come out on the radio in Cork, and I was a temporary planner, which meant that it was a six-month contract followed by a six-month contract, so I wanted to make sure that I had the support of the union. So, we knew one another very well, and so we were able to negotiate on the gay law reform.

We would have been not as engaged with the government at the time as we were doing the civil partnership and civil marriage thing but quite engaged. So, we would have met the Minister for Justice, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn. That's one of those pivotal moments, Chris, myself, Suzy Byrne, and a mother of a gay man. I always remember Chris and myself were very good political operators, salespersons almost. The Minister, Máire Geoghegan, listened to us for a while and then kind of felt, Yes, of course you're glic. That's an Irish word for clever or whatever. So, she's used to people trying to persuade her but she wants to find out who this older woman was, Phil Moore [phonetic]. Phil said that she had a son who was gay and da-da-da-da-da. That's why she wanted the law changed, and that's why she wanted it changed on the basis of equality. Chris, I think, joked that two Irish mothers got together and sorted the problem out.

Q: [Laughs] That's a wonderful anecdote. This is also during, I guess, Mary Robinson's presidency.

Rose: Yes.

Q: What was her role in the broader movement?

Rose: Well, she obviously represented David Norris at the time, when he was taking his case to our courts and then to the European Court of Human Rights. But, one of her critical things was she was hugely popular, even though she would have been on the left and Ireland at that time was—the social right, religious right or whatever you call it, were in the ascendant. But she captured the mood. The presidency has very little power. It's the powers of symbolism, really.

She invited a group of gay men up to Áras an Uachtarain, which is the house of the president, which is a huge status in Ireland. That was hugely symbolic. I wrote about that; that she was symbolically welcoming lesbians and gay men into what is the symbolic house of Ireland, the president's house. Yes, that was very critical. There were loads of other aspects, the TV debates and all that kind of stuff that were very important.

Q: The other thing that I wondered about when I'm thinking about this period is Northern Ireland. It was a roller coaster ride because the early '90s were incredibly violent, and there was the ceasefire and then the Good Friday Agreement by '98. So, what kinds of connections did you have with the north in this period?

Rose: Well, it's quite interesting because at that time, Sinn Féin and the IRA were trying to get involved more in politics and trying to broaden out their—to come out of the isolation that they had existed in and to engage with the wider social movements. So, I remember we—I don't think we wrote in as GLEN, because I think we wrote as individuals. We wrote a letter to the Sinn Féin magazine, *An Phoblacht*, *Republican News*, saying that the speech that Gerry Adams gave [laughs]—that we'd be very happy to engage with Sinn Féin [laughs] on issues of mutual concern. We were never shy in the ideas of what we could achieve or influence. We were quite stroppy or whatever you'd call it. We had a very strong sense of our own self-worth.

Q: What was the response to the letter?

Rose: Nothing [laughter]. But, we got on very well with them on an individual basis and stuff like that. I've spoken up in Belfast, up near the West Belfast Festival in the company of Gerry Adams and all of their chief people. I've spoken in Derry at events to commemorate the Bloody Sunday and stuff like that. Yes, we would have—

Q: This was in the '90s when you spoke?

Rose: Yes.

Q: What was it like in the north, to be an advocate for gay rights issues. Let me, I guess, give my questions in context. Some people say that the north was a very difficult place for gay rights, and other people say that it was ahead of Ireland, and I'm not sure which is closer to the truth.

Rose: Well, they were ahead of Ireland in the sense that they had a British-style gay law reform up there. I forget when that came in—in the early '80s, I think, because Jeff Dudgeon took a case to the European Courts as well. So, in a legal sense, they were ahead but not in a social—in a lived reality sense they weren't, because what you have in the north is you have a very strong, fundamental, Protestant force—like the Democratic Unionist Party. I've kind of forgotten the name of the church—Paisley's church. And then because it's a sectarian society, the Catholic Church, even then, was much stronger up there than down here. So, the gay groups were caught between two very antagonistic forces and then, of course, the war didn't allow for much space for social movements. It was a grim place to visit.

Q: I read somewhere, if I'm not mistaken, that you spent time in the prisons as well.

Rose: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

Rose: It was kind of weird. That was the other thing.

Q: Not as a prisoner, I should say, for the record.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Sorry, I—

Rose: A visitor.

Q: Yes, it was ambiguous the way I asked the question.

Rose: No, no, well, you'd be—in Ireland, being an ex-political prisoner is a very laudable background. What did we do? I think, arising from that letter that we wrote to *Republican News*, a Republican prisoner in Long Kesh, who was gay, who was in the process of coming out in the prison, wrote to us. And then we used to go up to visit him. There was a prisoner's magazine, *An Glór Gafa*. I've forgotten what's the translation in English, but he wrote an article for that on the

connection between the rights of lesbians and gay men, and socialism and social justice, and how it tied in with the Republican ideology or whatever. I think we must have done that for about twelve months or so, and then we met him, obviously, when he came out, when he was released on parole. Yes, a strange time.

Q: I'm switching gears a little bit but I think Eoin was telling me that around 2000 or so, he thinks it was, when Tara approached GLEN. Is that right? Was that the first point of encounter?

Rose: I couldn't remember the date. It probably was around then, yes.

Q: What are your memories from that? Because I have to say that I thought that it all started in 2005 with that first big battery of grants, but apparently there was an earlier more private history.

Rose: Yes, [laughs] well, it was very—yes, it would have been 2000, yes, because I was the project director from—I joined the City Council in 1999, so, yes, it was 1997 to 1999. That was the two years and—

Q: Project director for Gay and HIV strategy?

Rose: Yes.

Q: Those are the years.

Rose: Yes.

Q: I'll look them up. Ninety-seven, and '99.

Rose: I think it could have been even '99 or 2000 or whatever, but certainly around there, yes. They came to us out of the blue and I think it was based on probably our prominence around the gay law reform times and around the equality legislation and stuff like that. I remember they wouldn't tell us who they were [laughs]. Did I say it at the meeting, or did I say it to them afterwards, that I was wondering, were they the Moonies or something? The reluctance to say who they were was strange.

Q: When you say their reluctance to say who they were, do you mean the organization that they representing or even their own names?

Rose: Well, I think they said—I certainly knew the name, Tara, but they wouldn't give any more information than that. Tara, as I said, was the Loyalist paramilitary organization. But, they were secretive.

Q: Yes, so who was at this meeting from Tara?

Rose: Eoin remembers now much better than I because there's—I forgot. I keep on forgetting his name because I met him. One of his sons is gay or at least one of the sons, so I met him in the

RDS [Royal Dublin Society] during the count and referendum, and he was ecstatic about the whole thing.

Q: Sorry, what is RDS?

Rose: The Royal Dublin Society.

Q: All right [laughs]. Would Harvey Dale or John Healy have been at this meeting?

Rose: Yes. It was John Healy.

Q: Okay, and what did you talk about? What was their interest?

Rose: Well, basically, they were offering us money. That's from my memory of it. I think there was a sense that we—I know we didn't seem to quite cop on to how much money there were offering us or something. It seemed too good to be true or whatever. I think, in the end, they told us to be more ambitious. It was strange given that we were quite ambitious and determined that we didn't quite pick up on—because it didn't exist in Ireland. Maybe, that's true. We were used to going to the Combat Poverty Agency to get the money to do a piece of research, going to the Department of Health to get the money to be political, to get one job and stuff like that. That's where we started, actually, was looking for money to do a piece on education, an action research project on education. It's a wonder they didn't get fed up with us and walk away [laughs].

Q: Is that what they ended up funding in this period?

Rose: Yes, just a very small piece of work like that. But, then, I must admit, later on, when we began to engage with them more definitely, like in 2003 and ’04, we had to prepare a strategic plan, and it was going backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards. In the end, I think it’s one of the things that I can bring to this kind of work, like from my trade union background and stuff like that, and from maybe my work background, is to know about negotiation. I remember making a very clear decision that Atlantic, who were saying they were going to fund us, were actually using up the little resources we had, because the project director for Gay and HIV strategies was continually re-writing the strategic plan. It seemed to be just going around in circles, and we were getting nowhere, and it was going on, and on, and on. So, I asked to meet them and I said that to them. Instead of giving us resources, you’re using our resources because Will Peters couldn’t work on the other things. I said, “But, here’s a way out of it. You fund the CEO and an administrator, and then they can do the strategic plan.”

Q: So, you put the idea in their head that they had to fund the labor.

Rose: No, the strategic plan would always have been—we were agreed on that the critical thing was education, health, what turned out to be workplace but then was community, and then a director for the organization and administrator, and then the work that Eoin did, which was director of policy change. So, all of those things were agreed but the tweaking of it just seemed to go on forever. Ithink that’s a trade union skill, I think, where you [laughs] say, “Thus far and no further,” bang the table but also you offer a solution, and the solution was the full-time

director, and the administrator. That opened the door then to getting the funding and employing everybody.

Q: In 2003 and 2004, who were the people you were negotiating with at Atlantic?

Rose: Brian.

Q: Brian Kearney-Grieve ?

Rose: Probably. My memory, God, it's hopeless. I can't remember then who we met because we went to meet them, Atlantic, and to put that case. You say you're going to fund us, so why don't you, instead of getting us in a big trench, why don't you give us two? Yeah, I think it was Brian. I can't remember now.

Q: Do you remember at this point learning what their interest was in the Gay Movement? Because, Kieran, one of the things that I haven't been able to learn in this project is why Atlantic, in Ireland, decided to fund gay rights?

Rose: Well, because, I suppose, it's because it's obvious now, because they were getting involved in the human rights area and lesbian and gay issues and human rights are very connected. I don't know how much they thought of this. Maybe, they thought—it would be interesting to know. Did they fund GLEN, or fund lesbian and gay rights issues, because they

thought that GLEN was a good vehicle? Would they not have funded if GLEN wasn't around and willing to work with them, you know?

Q: So, the money came in around 2005, I believe.

Rose: Yes.

Q: It was a multi-year grant, right?

Rose: Yes.

Q: How much money are we talking about? It's not necessarily the amount. I guess I'm trying to understand what this meant for the organization. What did it allow you to do that you weren't able to do before?

Rose: Well, it allowed us to hire—and that was one of the decisions we made or I made that we—there was a kind of a tradition in Ireland that people—it's gone the other way now, perhaps too much. There was a tradition that people in advocacy groups were paid not that much, and it was often based on, what we call, social employment schemes. But, at the time it was unusual. We made a decision that we wanted to employ the best people, the most professional people, and that you had to pay them an equivalent rate if you wanted them to move from their current jobs. So, we weren't interested in employing, like, twenty people at kind of the rate of pay of somebody just coming out of college. We wanted to have really, really skilled kinds of people,

because we thought that that was the most important thing. So, we did that and we got really brilliant people, like you've met Eoin.

Interestingly, they're all still with us. All of the people are still with us, Tiernan and Sandra [Irwin-Gowran], Davin [Roche], Eoin, and I interviewed them all. We didn't make a mistake with anyone of them. [Laughs] I'm not used to saying this, but actually I'm a very good interviewer. So you kind of know—because I have experience of interviewing in my workplace and stuff like that. For an organization, I suppose this is what you say, like, this is standard modern human resources or management, that the key resource of any private sector company is its staff. That's triply, a hundred times true for an advocacy organization that it stands or falls not by the amount of money that it gets from Atlantic but, one, its strategy, and two, its personnel, its board and it's full-time workers.

Q: So, what did you look for in the people you were going to hire?

Rose: One is they didn't have to be lesbian or gay. We made a very definite decision about that. Two, they had to have a strategic focus. So, it turned out that Sandra has an education background, but we didn't think that was essential because—I used to joke that like if we employed a social worker they'd start doing social work. People have tram lines or something. I think a strategic approach is a particular skill and a particular understanding and a particular expertise, and that's what you need, you know. You can pick up the things about education or whatever or mental health or whatever. It's a huge asset if you've got the two of them because you know the field, but sometimes if you're too close to it, you can—just because you're a

mental health professional doesn't mean that you know anything about strategy. Again, interestingly, Eoin is a mental health professional but he has also a strategic awareness.

Q: Where do you get started in terms of the work in 2004 when everybody is in place?

Rose: It was a hugely demanding time, I suppose, because it's like a start-up company and you have to employ everybody. You have to do all of the proper governance stuff about interviewing people and advertising. God, it's all flooding back now.

Q: Yeah, what are some of the stories that come to mind as you talk?

Rose: It's just huge amount of work to do it, and in some ways, you'd prefer—I think Atlantic told us we have to do it, but in some cases you prefer just to hire people without interviewing because interviewing takes forever and the record-keeping of it and all that kind of stuff.

But, actually, now that I think about it, I'm just going to jump sideways. One of the things that I said, I set out and I said to people that our benchmark was going to be the best possible NGO, so that if there was an award or an assessment we would come out as the best possible NGO. But, equally, I said that if you could have a metric or something like that that would assess any—like a private sector organization that had an income of whatever our income was and employed x number of people, that we would equally come out ahead. That effectiveness aspect was huge. I remember [laughs] we were having dinner one time and I was sitting next to Eoin. I think maybe he had just joined us, and I said that that was my aim or that was my principle and that was how

the organization was. Then he just said, kind of sarcastically, "No worries, so [laughs] no pressure." That was the other one that I put in place at that time was saying that—and I said it to Atlantic, which I began to rue when we were looking for a second lot of funding. I was saying that our job is to make GLEN redundant as soon as possible. That idea that you're not—and that you come back in in the story about civil partnership and civil marriage, that there is this—in Ireland, we're fascinated by the struggle and it's a standard thing of the left, I suppose. They're more in love with the struggle than they are with the achievement and handing on the struggle to the next generation. I thought that was a load of bollocks, and that your role should be to deliver as soon as possible. That was the whole point of getting the multi-annual funding and getting the very skilled people.

Equally, I think an awful lot of people in advocacy organizations, and on the left, don't really believe they can win. If you win over a majority, win over people in the public service, win over whoever you have to win over. It's a matter of morality or ethics of something that you keep on chipping away at this project because if you thought you could really win, you would do what is necessary to really win. There's the classic one they say about the British Labour Party and even the Irish Labour Party, that they prefer to be in opposition because they can retain their purity and they can complain and give out, but when they're in government, they have to take difficult decisions. They have power, and then what do they do with it?

Q: How much time are you spending at GLEN in 2005, given what you're trying to do?

Rose: A lot of time, yeah.

Q: Because you have a full-time job. Right?

Rose: Yes.

Q: It's your other life.

Rose: Yes.

Q: How many hours a week are we talking about?

Rose: With GLEN?

Q: Yes. I ask because, as you talk about these things, you almost sound more like a director than a chairperson.

Rose: I think Brian would say that's right [laughter]. Well, I'm a planner, so at that stage, you've a lot of flexibility because your job—you're not sitting at a desk all day, so your job is to meet people in the council, outside the council, to go out on site visits and stuff like that. So, it gives a huge flexibility because your job—say, when I was doing development management, which was dealing with planning applications, is that all they're interested in is are you doing the planning application work. So whether you do it in the morning quickly and go away in the afternoon, they don't particularly care, and I didn't ask them [laughs]. We just call it liberating time.

Q: I think it was 2005 when Brian invited Minister McDowell—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —Michael McDowell, to speak at the film festival. How important was that?

Rose: It turned out to be very important and I remember Brian asking me for my opinion about it, and I said, "Yes, definitely, go for it," because GLEN always dealt with every single politician. It's kind of backtracking now, but even in our dealings with Sinn Féin, I remember Chris Robson, who was the co-chairperson, was hugely opposed to Sinn Féin because of the IRA and all that kind of stuff. But, at times, we would be asked to sign up to things like the removal of Section 31, which prevented the Sinn Féin's spokesperson being on the state television, RTÉ [Raidió Teilifís Éireann]. His one always was that it was a matter that we were not supporting Sinn Féin. We were supporting civil rights. That's the way we looked at it. That's a separate part. We were always tough on those kinds of issues. We weren't frightened of supporting other areas of civil rights and human rights because they were currently unpopular. I suppose that connected to that is that we dealt with every single political party. We were never frightened of—and again, we just because the Labour Party—we were all Labour Party supporters, I would imagine—we never just restricted ourselves into that easy comfort zone. So, we went out and met the right, center-right parties.

So, just because Michael McDowell had a particular reputation on issues of immigration, that didn't frighten us off because you have to deal with— It's a basic thing that will come up again when we draw up civil partnership. If you're an advocacy organization, you have to deal with the government. You might not like the government but the government was elected by the people. They're the democratic, elected people, and if you want to achieve legislative change or policy change, who are you going to deal with? It would be just irresponsible to say, we're not dealing with that minister because we don't like him.

Q: The one question I have in my mind is that, ultimately, the Atlantic grants are funding a whole category of things. Right?

Rose: Yes.

Q: The education issues that you mentioned, health, and so on. But, GLEN is really recognized for the legal changes that it affected in Irish society with big political milestones. So, can you tell me a little bit about how the work is turning out among these sectors in the first couple years?

Rose: Well, I suppose, when Eoin became director of policy change, and that's a very interesting title, director of policy change, because there's a huge difference between a director of policy in an organization—you know, when you name something, sometimes that's how the role happens. So, if you're a director of policy, you can think, well, my job is to write policy or to respond to policy, but if you say you're a director of policy change, it's a very clear statement of direction.

Anyway, so as it turned out, it followed on from Brian's inviting of Michael McDowell, the whole issue of civil partnership and civil marriage was being debated then. He said that from talking to gay men, I think, that he knew. They said to him, "We don't want or need civil marriage. A form of domestic partnership would suffice." So, anyway, he got a very good reception at that film festival thing. He was also a classic liberal. He was liberal in economic terms and socially liberal, and he had a particular thing about immigration, which meant perhaps you'd say he wasn't liberal. So, we asked to meet him, and he had a fierce reputation. In terms of just his argumentation and he was very fierce-looking, even, and fierce in the side of argument. He would not take any prisoners. So, I remember we went to meet him in the department, twice, in fact. I think it was the good feeling that we got to meet him because of the good feelings he had over the film festival, and perhaps because of our reputation. I had, as GLEN spokesperson, had very strongly supported Brian when he had been attacked in the media.

Anyway, he was saying that he wasn't going to do marriage, and we were saying, "You have to do marriage," that it's the equality option. I remember almost being fearful thinking, Geez, he's going to ball me out as I kept on saying, "No, we're not putting up with domestic partnerships. We want marriage and that's the equality option." I remember generally he said, [unclear], "I accept your position," But, out of that came—and I think, again, it's a very important thing. It's like the one with Atlantic, when you're in a hole or you have an impasse and it's a negotiation one. You go for something that really works for you and is the maximum that you can get but it still is possible.

So, what we got was the working group on domestic partnership, and we got Eoin to be employed, to be paid by the Department of Justice, a hundred grand a year to be a policy liaison person with the equality side of the department to go off and talk to all the other government departments to see what they are doing about lesbian and gay issues, equality issues, within their arenas. There were two critical things about that. We didn't need the money because we had the Atlantic. Eoin was funded by Atlantic. But, first of all, it's getting to find out, is he really serious about supporting us, and if he is, to put his money where his mouth is. Second of all, the people in the department take it more seriously. So, then, instead of you asking them, "Please do this," they're nearly coming to you and saying, "We're paying you a hundred grand a year. What are you doing? What have you delivered for it?" It's almost reversing the roles.

Q: You're like mutual prisoners, so to speak.

Rose: Yes. They have to—and then you have a status because it's—when Eoin would go to the various government departments and so on, he would be introduced as the policy liaison person for the department rather than being introduced as an employee of GLEN.

Q: Was this concurrent with the work of the Colley Working Group?

Rose: Yes.

Q: It was.

Rose: That was very deliberate, too, to have GLEN on that group. I made a very deliberate decision that it wouldn't be me because it was going to be hugely demanding time-wise and stuff like that. so that was Eoin's role to do that.

Q; He mentioned a very long period of insomnia [laughter] ensued.

Rose: He did?

Q: He did. Yes, he said it was extremely demanding.

Rose: That's true, yes. But, he—that was—he played a blinder in that. That was just phenomenal. I don't know if he told you the story.

Q: He started to talk about it. We're supposed to follow up the next time we meet. But, I'm going to come back to the story in just a second. The one thing I realized I didn't do, is that in the previous years, before 2006, Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan are also pursuing, I think, their case before the Irish Courts. I remember reading somewhere that, while you supported them in spirit, you thought the judicial option was not the right path to pursue.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Could you talk about that? Maybe, I said too much about it.

Rose: No, no. Yes, well, I mean, it's a matter of principle. In a democracy, you should go through the democratic procedures first. You should go through the Parliament because that's just the democratic process. Why would you go to the courts and say, "They won't grant me my rights," and I always thought, well, if the judge said, "Well, did you ask the Parliament?" if you had to say, "No, I didn't," well, if I was the judge, I'd say, "Well, come back to me when you've asked them and they've said no, and then we can talk about things." But, equally more importantly, I suppose, is that social change, like introducing civil marriage, as has happened in South Africa or certain other countries, doesn't necessarily change anything except the people can get married. So, you could get married and your boss finds out and you're fired or you could be living in an area and they find out you're a gay couple and you get harassed. Your marriage is, in other words, not recognized socially. Sustainable, permanent change happens better when it goes through the democratic process rather than being imposed by courts, who people reasonably think are out of touch. I never understood why they—you know, nobody had—why would—[laughs]

Q: But, I imagine that in this period you must have had conversations with Katherine and Ann Louise, right?

Rose: Yes.

Q: So, what were those conversations like?

Rose: Well, Chris Robson would have more had the conversations. I was invited to meetings and I just—they were up in the mountains somewhere for dinner and I just thought, I'm not doing this. I'm not going up there to a dinner party because they seemed kind of ridiculous. I'm a political activist. And there were a lot of people who were in the closet invited up to these things, so they didn't seem serious. Equally, and we'll come back to this again around the civil partnership thing, I didn't believe it at the time but ninety-nine percent of constitutional lawyers, everybody, politicians, blah, blah, blah, said that marriage would require a referendum, that the constitution doesn't say marriage is between a man and a woman but all of the interpretation of the high court and the Supreme Court is that it's opposite sex marriage. Even civil rights lawyers and really liberal and left lawyers all said that. So, why would you go and put a case to the courts where you know the result? Why would you set things back? Why would you have it written into stone that a referendum was necessary? While there was some room for maneuver, why not leave it there? They didn't, so they ignored all that advice and went off to do it.

But, again, that idea that you're—and what would you be doing, like bringing in—getting your case so confused that you're in a republic? You're bringing in theologians and stuff like that. Anyway, they lost.

Q: I know that in the immediate surroundings of the civil partnership bill, there was a rupture in the Gay Movement.

Rose: Yes.

Q: We'll talk about that. I think we'll talk about that more when we meet on Thursday. But, was a rupture already forming because of GLEN's approach versus Katherine and Ann Louise's approach, or an altogether rejectionist approach?

Rose: Well, there were two, yes, very divergent roots. There's just a fascinating one, I think, that on the board of GLEN, there were feminists who were opposed to GLEN taking on [laughs] civil marriage as our goal on that old basis of being a patriarchal institution and stuff like that. So we had a big, long debate about that, and I remember saying, "I've invented the thing called the Morning Ireland test." Morning Ireland is a radio program, news radio program in Ireland on RTÉ, which is the prime one. It's almost like a cross-examination in court. It's a test. Does your reasoning stand up? So, I was saying, "What happens if we go on Morning Ireland and say, 'Okay, you're with the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, so you're not looking for civil marriage because you don't think you're entitled to full equality?' How do you answer that?" Then, if you start saying, "Well, we start saying we think that civil marriage is a patriarchal institution, you're attacking the deeply-rooted value system of ninety percent of the people." So, logically it just didn't stand up. It's almost like we might not think much of gays in the military, but unless you're going to say that we should disband our army, like if you're a pacifist or something like that, or you may not think it's a great idea to join the army. But as an equality organization, you have to argue for equality within the military.

Q: One of the things that is interesting is that GLEN eventually pursued civil partnership rather than marriage. Partly it's what you said earlier. It's about what is viable. We have to pursue what's viable.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Can you link that back to the work of the Colley Working Group, because I think it did lay out the options and possibilities very well? What are your thoughts on the working group for the historical record?

Rose: Well, one of the things that GLEN has always done, like from the get-go, is we always believed that our role was to convince other people to make our case for us because that was much more effective. So, instead of us saying that lesbians and gay men should have employment equality, etc., etc.—we said that but we also got the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and all of the individual unions to support that. So, it meant that it had a much greater chance of success. It also meant that you don't have to make the case from principles. You just say, implement what the—this very respected organization—and equally the Law Reform Commission in terms of the gay law reform of 1993—they had a discussion paper about reforming the sexual offences laws. We put a lot of work into convincing them. So, in the end, again, all we were saying on public television debates, to the Parliament, or whatever, "Just implement the Law Reform Commission Report."

That was why one of our key demands was to set up a working group so that, again, it wouldn't be GLEN, saying, You should do this. It would be a working group who—and it would be then on auto pilot now who have examined all the issues upside down, inside out, carried out a public consultation, and there is your record. That's the recommendation. Sorry, was that the question?

Q: Yes. Yes, I think it is. It is. How important was the Labour Party in this period?

Rose: The Labour Party was critical because, I describe it as our inflection point, where they asked to meet us and Brendan Howlin. They said to us that it was their strong advice that a civil marriage bill would be unconstitutional, but they were prepared to introduce a civil unions bill, which would provide all of the legal rights and protections of civil marriage except the constitutional status. I got the very strong impression at that meeting that they were looking for public support, and if we didn't give it, they wouldn't proceed with the bill. So, up to that point, we were on our policy of civil marriage and nothing less. So, there and then, I said yes, that we would go for that and totally support it, and we did.

That was a game-changer because they introduced that bill twice into the Parliament. It generated all that kind of debate. The Parliament was crowded with lesbians and gay men. It was just a game-changer. The government defeated it, and the very peculiar thing was that Michael McDowell opposed it, and said all sorts of silly things, that it wasn't going far enough or that the government was going to do something some time later, and then that's why the Labour Party brought it in again. But, anyway, he lost the next general election by four votes, and I often thought that that's a very narrow way to lose in a very liberal constituency, and that his opposition to this Labour civil unions bill didn't do him any favors. But, we weren't bitter. We wrote him a lovely letter saying, "Thanks very much for all the work you've done." It was very interesting that we were told subsequently that he really liked that. That meant a huge amount to him. It was very interesting that some political advocates don't understand humanity almost.

Q: What happened after this initial bill failed?

Rose: Well, it was quite funny because I think it was the day before that Katherine and Ann Louise lost their case, which was a big setback because that copper-fastened that a referendum was necessary.

Q: December of 2006 or so? Would that have been it?

Rose: I can't exactly recall now.

Q: This is before Judge Elizabeth Dunne?

Rose: Dunne, yes, yes. So it was almost like our route through the Parliament was copper-totally-fastened because the court route had run into the sands, and now there was the possibility of progress with the Labour Party civil unions bill. Everybody in the Parliament said, "Oh, yeah, it's great, yes," even the government who voted it down. But, do you know what I mean? That's the way things happen. Then, the new government—we lobbied during the general election campaign, the standard thing. You get the parties to put something into their manifesto and then you lobby to get it into the program for government. So, it got into the program for government and—

Q: That's a big thing of lobbying all the parties to make sure that it's in their program.

Rose: Totally, yes.

Q: Don't skip over that. Tell me some stories about how you did it.

Rose: [Laughs] Okay. Well, I suppose it's just blindingly obvious. Do you know what I mean? It's a very interesting thing that an awful lot of things that I think about lobbying are blindingly obvious. Other people think, wow, that's amazing. I'm getting into anecdotes. I remember one of the things I said around the time of the gay law reform was what we needed to do was—how you win a majority is to consolidate your supporters. Win over the doubtful, pacify those opposed, and isolate the bigots. The bigots part I would never say in public, or never said in public, but I would say, "Isolate the remainder." But that's what you do. You just build up the support of people. So, anyway, if you want political change, either policy change or legislative change, you must engage with the political parties, and the key—I mean, you have to engage them throughout the year—but the key times are when their manifestos that they're putting to the people—so if you get what you want in there, but you put it in language that they're interested in, which is another totally separate, important point, then they have a mandate to implement that in government. Or if it's a coalition government, they have a mandate to negotiate that.

Q: All parties then included this in their manifesto?

Rose: Yes, of some form. So, some would have said, "Civil marriage," and others would have said—Michael McDowell's PD [Progressive Democrats] said, "Domestic partnership," and there

were other forms of it. But, again you're driving a political agenda, which meant it was included in the program for government by the Green Party. I think it just got in, just snuck in because it didn't even make sense in terms of the sequencing of the program for government. It just seemed to be added on at the end. Eoin says that happened through Arthur Lee. He was on the board of GLEN in Cork, who knew Senator Dan Boyle, who was a key negotiator in the program for government for the Green Party and made that contact to make sure that he got it in.

Q: Who's the Minister of Justice at this point? Is it Lenihan?

Rose: Lenihan, yes.

Q: Then, here at GLEN, at some point, I think you ended up having cohabitation with marriage equality. Was that already the case in 2007?

Rose: Yes, I think so, yes. KAL [Katherine, Ann Louise], I think, was one manifestation of it, right here, I think.

Q: How did that come to be?

Rose: Well, I suppose, we had offices and they didn't, and even though we didn't particularly agree with their direction, it was just a—it's a democracy [laughs] so you can't stop people going ahead and in their own direction. It's solidarity, I suppose. We just gave them a desk, yes.

Q: How much back and forth is there with Atlantic in this particular period, 2006, 2007? I guess my question is whether they're hands-off at this point, now that they've given you the money or whether they're actually trying to shape the work as well and give you advice.

Rose: No, no, well there are all the evaluations and all that kind of stuff, so they're very rigorous on that. But, no, they didn't engage at all in the strategic side of it. But, I suppose, what they did do, and I think it's a really, really high risk strategy—if you fund one particular group with one particular strategy to achieve change and then to fund another group with exactly the opposite strategy.

Q: Did you ask them why they did that?

Rose: I don't think so because they had done it, I suppose, so, like, what was the point? But, they knew. The worst thing about the whole—as it went on, like, I have no problem with people saying, "We want marriage." We wanted marriage, but what happened in the end was it became a campaign against civil partnership, to stop civil partnership, and I thought that that was pretty bad. Do you know what I mean? I thought Atlantic—that's where it became really, really high risk, because it's very easy to wind people up, if you've a very simple slogan. So, there was a very high level of emotion going around the place, and there's the bubble, politics kind of thing. It caused huge dissension on the board.

I used to always say that there's the dinner party set in Dublin. We must look out beyond that. Our constituency, our lesbian and gay men who haven't a clue who GLEN is and who really

don't know who they are, and they're living up in Donegal or out in working class estates in Dublin City, or they're fourteen. and you can't be driven. You can't make your decisions on the basis of whomever shouts the loudest, and because you want to be liked, and because you want to be the flavor of the month and stuff like that. You have a responsibility to do that, and you shouldn't be taking money if you're not prepared to stand and take the heat. You have to do it rigorously by analysis and reflection and stuff like that. I thought Atlantic were—why they did it, I haven't a clue. I think they were embarrassed by it, because they've come up with this kind of, I thought, self-excusing rationale that it was a two-pronged strategy or something, that having a group that's arguing for marriage is—the worst thing, they said, because—

They tried to bring us together. They brought us for dinner and it was a very weird situation with us and Marriage Equality, and Katherine and Ann Louise all around the table. At one stage, they started to talk about—they brought in a consultant, I think, somebody from the United States, and he or she—I can't remember now—started talking about, that GLEN is the pragmatic wing and they're the principled wing. I nearly lost my cool because I said, "What's principled about losing? What's principled about stopping progress in the here and now? We are principled because we are saying, 'This is the reality and this is what's possible.' It will be unprincipled," and I said this in public, and at that dinner. I said, "It will be unprincipled, unconscionable to know that you can deliver real progress to people in their everyday lives, to somebody who's going to be deported," one of the couple, two of the couple, "somebody whose partner is dying," think of any number of circumstances, pensions people who are going to live in poverty or whatever because you— "but you're going to oppose it because you just want to be popular, or you're going to call for the defeat of civil partnership because you couldn't be bothered

analyzing it and seeing. Am I right in saying that civil marriage can be brought in by a simple bill into Parliament?"

You can see I'm quite emotional about this, because I think that that is—you know, people who get involved in advocacy organizations, who take money from charitable organizations, who put themselves forward to be on a board or put themselves forward to be chairpersons, they have a huge, phenomenal responsibility for that. I thought it was—I remember [laughs] saying that we were getting assaulted by the marriage or nothing crowd. You just couldn't rationally explain. No matter what you said, it didn't sink in; like, they would just shout back at you. I remember saying it to a councilor over in the city offices. I said, "It's just all really unreasonable." [Laughs] I said, "I've never come across this thing before." People just won't accept that that's a cup. It's not a fucking tin, which they were trying to say, just denying that reality existed. He looked at me. He sang at me. He crooned at me, "Welcome to my world," [laughs] which I've always loved about politicians. That's what they have to put up with.

So, oh, yeah, the final thing out of that, the worst aspect of that was Katherine Zappone becomes a senator, which is you're a legislator. Her position was that it could be legislated for, but she never introduced a civil marriage bill into the Senate as she could have. It proves that she couldn't be bothered. It proves that she thought it was unconstitutional. I don't know what it proved. But did she think that by going back to the Supreme Court and having another go it would work? But, I thought that was fascinating.

Q: There seems to be a real wall between the public face that you had, and the very diplomatic response to what is possible or necessary versus these real emotional fights you had behind the scenes with the community. Were you hated in this period by parts of the community?

Rose: I think it's very important to say by parts because, again, like I think it's—and I kept on saying it, and I think it's really, really important for advocacy groups. It's from my study of history. The most dangerous people often in any trade union, or in any political party, are the activists because they're unrepresentative. They're quite prepared to lead the party or the trade union over a cliff, just damaging, seriously damaging the interests of the people that they claim to represent. It's not just the left. It's the Tory Party in Britain, for example, kept on electing unelectable leaders of the party. So, they rode to power for all the Blair period because the base are the activists. That was what this debate about civil partnership was about as well. It's terribly small bubble of that activist crowd, and not all of the activists people were opposed to us but there was a—and you have to face that down if you're serious.

I often thought that these people were playing with politics. They didn't almost particularly believe it or whatever, that this was like a game. I mean, I've said it to Una Mullally. It was a fascinating thing about zealotry, and there can be zealotry on the right and there's zealotry on the left, and it's where ideology trumps reality. It's just, Stop. Don't tell me. Don't tell me. I don't care what the reality. This is what I want. That's a form of religion, and religion is anti-rational. It's like the people who believe the world is going to end next Tuesday, and next Wednesday when it's still there, all the classic things about all of those millenarian groups, they just go back

and they repost that they're calculation was wrong; it's Tuesday twelve month. But, anyway, it's an interesting thing, I think, that both Katherine and Ann Louis are theologians.

There's that place where I don't want to be rude and you go on to be immediately rude, but, I mean, theology has as much relationship to science as astrology has to astronomy. Again, if you believe in absolutes, because—stop me now if I'm going on too much.

Q: No, no, not all .That's what oral history is about, going on too much, so please do.

[INTERRUPTION]

Rose: The worst thing about religion or about the extreme left—and it's a circle, they often end up being extreme right—is that people are sacrificed to ideals. So, in all of the debates in Ireland about contraception and divorce and abortion, what the left, the true left were saying, was that these are necessary to respond to people's real needs. There are real people who will benefit from this. The couple who need contraception, the mother needs contraception because she's going to die if she has another child. The Church said "Hard cases make bad law." Divorce, the right to remarry, "Hard cases make bad law." The ideal is more important than the individual. Abortion, rape, whatever, again, the ideal is more important than if that women is going to die or is going to be traumatized or whatever.

The same thing was told to us when we would put the case—and this is to the two theologians—when we would put the case, "Okay, what do you say to the person who's going to be deported?

What do you say to the person whose partner is dying?" Again, it came back, "Hard cases make bad law." So, you're setting up the ideal. You're not dealing with the reality of what that person needs. In fact, that's downgraded. That is not a priority. The priority is the purity of the ideal of civil marriage.

Q: I should add for the historical record, Una Mullally's book, *In the Name of Love*, which was published last—

Rose: December—

Q: —year, 2014, I think.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Yes, just a few months before the vote. Putting it on the record, [it was] a very nice oral history of the movement.

Rose: Yes, brilliant, yes.

Q: You participated—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —and so did Brian and Eoin as well. So, it was great. Just one last question for this session and then we'll reconvene on Thursday. You mentioned earlier community-building and that you were thinking actually about your constituency, not community-building, your constituency out in Ireland's various counties. It did all of a sudden get you to think about gays and lesbians, who may be out, in rural Ireland, in Donegal, and all of these places. So, in the run-up to the vote on the civil partnership bill, what had changed for them since the '70s and '80s, and what hadn't changed as you see it?

Rose: In their ordinary lives and stuff like that?

Q: Yes, in or out.

Rose: Well, I think Irish society had changed positively. We live in a global world, and so I think popular culture is hugely important. So, I think that the gay—whether it's an Irish boy or in London, the gay guy who came out from that band, and gay characters or lesbian characters in soap operas and all the kind of stuff. That had a huge transformative effect, I think, on the society in general and on lesbian and gay men's sense of themselves. One of the worst things is where you're ignored in a society, where if you're growing up, if you're fourteen or a teenager, there's nothing out there that you get hold of, and say, Oh, look I'm like him or her. So, that was very important.

Then, I mean, I think social media—I think just computers are the information—when I was involved in the early days of the lesbian and gay movement, access to information was one of the

critical things. It was very, very difficult because when I was in Cork, we weren't allowed to advertise the Gay Switchboard telephone number in the newspaper [laughs] and magazines. So you had to produce your own magazines. There were no commercial magazines. Then, how did you get people to get access to them? A lot of things, very basic things have changed, so that there are commercially gay magazines, lesbian and gay magazines, and they're very easily available. Interestingly, which I suppose happens a lot, is that capitalism can be progressive. There's a market [laughs] out there so they supply that market.

I think there's a trajectory that is true in the United States. I think there was kind of a hiatus in Ireland, '93, '98, 2000, and that was the law reform equality legislation. Then, things just went around on an even keel and then took off. That happened in the United States. The fascinating thing is the numbers of states that rejected gay marriage and the huge opposition to it, and then suddenly, it took off in a very progressive way. The graph went way up. It could be generational. I think it's certainly popular culture. It's very hard to fully analyze all of those things. Of course, we are—the United States is probably not influenced so much. It influences itself. Ireland is a small country. It's terribly open to external influences, from Britain and stuff like that, obviously, the English language, television programs. American popular culture would and certainly British popular culture had a huge impact on this country.

Q: Is this a good place to stop then for today?

Rose: Yes.

Q: Wonderful. Well, thank you.

Rose: You're welcome.

[END OF SESSION]

Audio Transcription Center	Session: 2
Interviewee: Kieran Rose	Location: Dublin, Ireland
Interviewer: George Gavrilis	Date: September 3, 2015

Q: Today is September third, 2015, and I'm here with Kieran Rose in Dublin at City Hall, in fact. What do you call it here?

Rose: Civic Offices.

Q: Civic Offices, a lovely and very modern building right on the bank of the river. We're here for the second session. We met two days ago, talked a lot about GLEN's early history, infusion of the Atlantic money. And so we're going to keep going through the timeline and talk about the civil partnership bill, the passing of the bill, which we didn't get to, and then marriage equality. But, before that, a couple things I wanted to put on the agenda. The first is that you just told me you're headed down to Cork to receive an award. And you're from Cork you mentioned last time. So, what award are you receiving?

Rose: It's called "Person of the Month," which is very—myself and Arthur Lee are getting it. So, Arthur is on the board of GLEN, and Arthur and myself set up the Cork Gay Collective along with others, and we set up this thing called the Quay Co-Op, in Cork, which was a workers cooperative and resource center for gay groups and feminist groups and green groups and general left progressive groups at a café and all that kind of stuff, and it's still going.

Q: Well, congratulations.

Rose: Thanks very much [laughs].

Q: The other thing that I'd like to ask you about before we get back to the timeline is something substantive. I've done research into GLEN, and I talked to Eoin before. One of the things I was struck by was how much the history of GLEN seems to be kind of specific to Ireland, and perhaps the broader gay and lesbian movement here. So, my question to you is this. Did the gay movement in Ireland or GLEN—did it look to what other countries were doing or did it plow its own furrows, so to speak?

Rose: Well, I've written about that in Eoin's book in that article. I think it is one of the reasons why we have been so successful is—well, I did it, anyway—you very consciously read about what other countries have done, but then you have to translate that into your own particular circumstances. So, for example, I said that I wrote that San Francisco or London or New York or Sydney, where there would be very dynamic lesbian and gay movements, that if you just copied what they did, in Ireland you would have been almost bound to have failed because those are completely different circumstances. In the '70s and '80s in Ireland, we were much poorer. We had a very high emigration and a lot of lesbians and gay men going to London, or going to those cities. We had a very powerful Catholic Church. If you compare it with, say, like Amsterdam, we didn't have a social democratic tradition, or Sweden or whatever. It is a truth, I think, for Eastern European countries, any country, you have to learn from abroad, but then you have to develop your own particular strategies that are attuned to the particular circumstances of your own

situation. For example, GLEN, we did—Eoin did it—a research project on poverty in lesbians and gay men. It was very interesting when we did that, we couldn't find any international research done on that particular theme, and that was quite peculiar.

Q: Well, if we look at the broader arc of GLEN's work and your work, I'm curious if other countries, or people from movements in other countries came to you, and said, "What would you advise us to do?"

Rose: No. I mean, I think, it may sound like jargon, but there's a thing called cultural imperialism [laughs] and a lot of places like the Netherlands really think that they know it all. Far from asking you about how did you do that. They're more likely to tell you how you should do it or how you got it wrong or whatever. That would apply to the U.S. It would apply to the United Kingdom, Canada, to a certain extent.

That kind of cultural imperialism, if you look at history, applied to the left as well, and that goes back to my learning about history. The Irish Labor Movement, the British—because Britain and Ireland were together—so some of the British unions set up branches in Ireland but then they were following the policies that were appropriate to Britain and not necessarily to Ireland. So, we had to set up our own trade unions. So, now, we have a mix of Irish-based trade unions and British-based. So, in other words, that issue of cultural imperialism and having to develop your own particular strategies in your own particular situation applies to the socialist movement, labor movement, and to the feminist movement and to the lesbian and gay movement. Cultural imperialism isn't unique to—

Q: That's interesting because I remember reading the 2010 Report by Atlantic, and I remember there were, as is usual of such reports, they were praising your accomplishments and talking about your strategy and how you do it. But they were also criticizing GLEN for not being internationalized enough. So, it sounds like you're saying it was by design that you're self-referential here in Ireland and contained to Ireland.

Rose: Well, I think that was Joan Hart, was it, who did that—that evaluation? What she was saying, I think, is that we should use those skills to reach out more to give support to lesbian and gay groups in other countries that are more under pressure. She's right, yes. But, we were kind of—yes, in that sense, we were very focused on what was going on in Ireland in terms of the civil partnership and stuff like that. Although we do work with the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Affairs have very strong, pro-lesbian and gay policies which they work through the United Nations, etc.

Q: We'll come back to some of these big issues towards then because they ultimately come up in 2015. But, let's go back to our timeline. So, I think it must be 2008 we've reached at this point in your narration, and I think the Labour Bill had just failed, and so you were looking for other ways. I think, if I'm not setting up the context wrong, I think there was a new minister of justice at this point, right, Lenihan.

Rose: Yes, yes, Brian Lenihan.

Q: So, go ahead. Pick up anywhere you'd like.

Rose: Well we did the standard thing of getting our commitments on the implementation of the Colley Group into the party manifestos, and then we were successful, just barely successful, in getting it into the program for government. So, then, that means that the minister can start working on the bill and the civil servants can start working. But, it was interesting that, again, the KAL Case was used. The minister very cleverly said that they would await the decision, the appeal to the Supreme Court before they would publish a bill. That was a huge barrier, and, again, just to belabor a point, it shows you that it wasn't the wisest thing to take a case because that was being used as a very clever ruse, excuse, to delay publishing our work on the civil partnership bill. So, that was one of our key tasks.

Q: A ruse by who, Kieran?

Rose: By the government, and by the minister, because there would have been very strong—people forget, and there was a very rapid change over a period of time, but there would have been huge opposition to a civil partnership bill within Fianna Fáil, by Fianna Fáil, TDs [Teachta Dála] and senators. So, they were shying away from it. So, the first thing we had to do was to get the minister off that particular hook and Eoin, who actually knows him—Eoin's mother was a Fianna Fáil activist in the constituency of Brian Lenihan, so he would just know him personally. So, he convinced him to put aside that delay, which could have gone on forever. Like the KAL Case, they never appealed it to the Supreme Court or it stalled or whatever. So, again, the

urgency—we have to get him off that, and he did agree to produce the bill and not to await the decision of the Supreme Court. So, that was a huge, basic decision, or success that got us to here.

Q: Kieran, was it strictly procedural, the decision to proceed, or did the minister actually have something to lose politically by not waiting for the Supreme Court to rule?

Rose: Sorry. Say that again.

Q: Well, I'm trying to figure out if Lenihan's decision, after being convinced by Eoin to proceed with the preparation put him in some sort of political risk or spotlight.

Rose: No, I wouldn't think so, because there's a very good article written by Noel Whelan in saying that the really strong opponents in Fianna Fáil had no problem with the bill. I mean, they would have preferred if it had been delayed or I'm sure if it had a way to the Supreme Court. But as long as the bill wasn't published and as long as the bill wasn't being passed, they had no problem. They were quite happy as long as there was a delay. So it was the decision to go ahead with the bill. That wasn't the critical moment for them, for the right wing, and because the bill is so complicated, because it was the—there are two ways of bringing in a marriage—like civil partnership bill. The Labour one was just very brief and said, "All of the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage without the constitutional status," whereas the government went the other way where they built it up by saying that domestic violence, as it applies to married couples, will also apply to civil partnerships. So, it goes through all of the legislation, where marriage is included and then repeated it.

It was an incredibly lengthy process which, again, shows you the success because the Department of Justice and Equality it an incredibly busy department. There are prisons and police and all. It's always in semi-crisis mode. So, to get that length of commitment to writing up the legislation was quite a huge political achievement.

Q: What happened next?

Rose: Well, we kept on lobbying, obviously, to have the maximum amount of rights and responsibilities in the civil partnership bill. Then we, again, kept the maximum pressure on to get it published as soon as possible. I suppose one of the critical things is that the right were very, very strongly opposed to it. There was a story published in the newspaper that up to thirty of Fianna Fáil TDs and senators had signed a letter saying that they were opposed to it. That was a huge group. That's a lot of votes. The worry was that the government would slow down or back off a bit or whatever.

I remember I went on radio twice [laughs] on the Morning Ireland program and started saying things like, "Fianna Fáil is the great Republican Party in this country. It has fought for social justice, and Republican values are the values of equality and fraternity, and Fianna Fáil have always stood for these things. I think that the civil partnership bill is part of that fantastic heritage," just showered them [laughs] with praise. It was very funny because one of our leading political commentators—he was down in West Cork, and this local Fianna Fáil, a strong man one of the leaders of the local Fianna Fáil band or something like that, who he said would not be very

progressive but who came up to him, and he said he was purring with delight [laughs] because of all of this showering of praise on them and saying how wonderful they are and how progressive they are. Then, he said, he whispered to him he must be one of ours, is he, meaning I must be a member of Fianna Fáil [laughter].

Q: So, what happened to this potential opposition then?

Rose: Melted away then. It's an interesting thing that it would be just a very standard procedure that you don't attack. If you don't attack those thirty TDs and say they're outrageous and they're homophobic or whatever. You say how wonderful the traditions of that particular political party are and say to them how what you're proposing is part of the tradition, and how not only will it not undermine your traditions but it will amplify them and strengthen them, and it is a development of them.

Q: Did you have internal discussions at GLEN about how to approach this, because you mentioned last time that you had a board that was rather diverse?

Rose: Yes, we were—in a stage of legislation, there's an announcement, what's called the heads of the bill. The outline of the legislation is produced first and then they go away and they do all the detail of the legislation. So, anytime the minister produced the heads of the bill or made a statement of whatever, we would—me and Eoin and the others—would draft and go on radio and say, "Oh, that's wonderful, fantastic, brilliant, and this is really great progress." Then, we would add in the criticism that children must be included in the legislation or whatever.

There was some dissension on the board that we were praising them too much, but it was a tactic. What people just don't understand is that, even if you had a left-wing minister for justice or for any area like they have a zillion priorities on their desk that they want to do, that they would love to do, but they can't do all of them. So, if there's a particular piece of legislation that you want them to introduce and they start to do it, and they produce the head of the bill, and then you go out and send a rocket at it, what they will do is drop it. If you're a minister, why would you use up some of your very scarce political capital and let drafting—drafting legislation is very complex and time-consuming, resource-consuming. So it would be just sort of human, not to mention political, that you would just walk away. If you're going to get all the brick bats and none of the praise and you're using up your time, you'd want to be a very unusual minister to plow ahead.

So, the praise was—there's a phrase in Irish, *Moladh an óige agus beidh siad ag teacht*, which is, "Praise the youth and they will come." So, it's a very human thing. You say, "That's great," so they're getting the praise. They're getting the positive political feedback, and you have a little suggestion. You have the criticism or whatever it is because even, say, like for Fianna Fáil, if we were really criticizing them, they had their very strong opposition internally, and the party as a whole might say, "Look, we're getting attacked from both sides, so what's the point?"

Q: What about your approach to the Catholic Church in this period, because I think there were rising voices from the Church in opposition to the—

Rose: Well, we always tried to stay away from getting involved with the Church. We never attacked it head-on. What we would prefer to do was to say, "Look, the Church is entitled to its views. Any church is entitled to their views. It's a democracy. But, this is a civil matter. This is a matter for the state. This is a matter for the Parliament. The Church can marry whoever they wish or not marry whoever. We're not interested. We're intersted in civil marriage." That's why we keep on stressing civil marriage.

Q: Were there private channels of communication between you or other people at GLEN and the Church?

Rose: No.

Q: So, there was no direct dialog, then, at all.

Rose: No, no, because I think it's a—we did around the gay law reform, in fact. We wrote to all the bishops and, again, praised them for their commitment to social justice, which is true.

Q: So, the gay law reform is the '93 one?

Rose: Yes, and we said that we shared—again, it's the praising thing—that we share a lot with you about social justice. The Church in Ireland, in fairness, does—and in other countries—has a commitment to social justice and also international social justice and human rights, even. So, we praised them for that and said, We're not trying to run the Catholic Church out of Ireland. Again,

it's a matter for the state. Some of them actually wrote back, kind of very polite letters to us, saying, "Thanks very much for your kind words."

Q: Well, why not praise them in 2010 as well, like you did the Fianna Fáil?

Rose: That's interesting. I don't know, maybe, because they are far less powerful [laughs]. Took a cynical—we thought we had nothing to gain. If somebody's gone over a cliff, and if your opponent has gone over a cliff, you don't have to do anything. I suppose we felt that the more the Catholic Church criticized something because of the feeling—and especially the bishops. The more the bishops came out, I think the more they got the backs up of a lot of ordinary Irish people.

Q: Are you saying by this point you had realized that the Church was not powerful enough to stop the bill or the scuttle it?

Rose: No, I mean you asked an interesting question because they were very powerful. They are. Like the IRA, they haven't gone away, you know [laughter]. So, but, I think we just felt that, us attacking them wasn't going to do us any good, yes.

Q: So, take me through 2009 and 2010. So you've got the bill that is starting to—in 2010, I guess. But, then, before that, you have all of these events in Dublin and some, I guess, unforeseen protests from within the gay and lesbian movement. Tell me that story.

Rose: Well, there was a group called Marriage Equality and there was group called Noise, who were very vehemently opposed to civil partnership. It was a very emotional time. It was obviously—it was the classic thing. Divisions on a particular side are often the most bitter. It's like a civil war. As things moved on, it became Noise and Marriage Equality—their strategies seemed were less for marriage and more opposed to civil partnership. So, they were more calling for the defeat of the civil partnership bill. Then, GLEN, because we were praising the civil partnership bill, because we knew that a civil marriage bill was not possible and we saw the civil partnership bill as a stepping stone to civil marriage, then they turned their guns on GLEN. So, we came in from a very—from a small, I would say, representative grouping of lesbians and gay men in Dublin, not outside of Dublin because people outside of Dublin are not in that bubble. In a place like Cork or Dundalk, you can't live in a lesbian or gay bubble, and so you know what's possible and what's necessary. So, it was very Dublin-based, and it became incredibly bitter.

At one of the lesbian and gay pride parades—I remember I went on the first lesbian and gay pride events, public events in Cork in the early '80s. In Dublin, I went on the Fairview March, which is a march about the marriage of the gay man, and I never felt as intimidated as I did at the Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade around the time of the civil partnership bill. It was in 2009 or 2008. People had t-shirts saying, "Fuck GLEN," on them. And the civil partnership bill was torn up on the stage of the lesbian and gay pride, which was a phenomenally aggressive, irresponsible, divisive thing to do. The crowd was whipped up into an anti-civil partnership thing. So, there we were standing with this awful feeling. One of the speakers would say, "And it's him over there." It was like a mob. The feeling was as of a mob.

One of the worst things about it, I think, was, beside the fact that you're—the symbolism of ripping up a piece of legislation is phenomenally, I think, irresponsible. In a sense, what that person was doing was ripping up people's dreams, and aspirations, and hopes because so many people could see this coming through. They could see that, Okay, I can have a civil partnership with my partner from Cuba or from the Philippines and now he or she will be able to stay here and get a proper job. All of the ruses that people use to stay in a country so that they keep on going to college or whatever, or that they're in maybe not wholly legal employment. So people are able to get— that happened once the civil partnership.

The other one was that the Pride Parade is a time of unity. It should be and it always has been the time of unity in Ireland, and I presume in other countries. It's the time when you put away all your divisiveness. It's a time for conservative gay people, left-wing gay people, all backgrounds and stuff like that, and it's about being lesbian or gay, and this was—and the "Fuck GLEN" t-shirt. I think it's always important to say that man didn't dream that thing up on his own. Do you know what I mean? It came from the press releases and the speeches made by Marriage Equality and Noise and other people saying that GLEN was betraying the—using that kind of aggressive language.

Q: Who was it that tore up the bill?

Rose: It was a woman from Noise who went on to be the—when Katherine Zappone was appointed—she's a lawyer. It shows you the respect for the democratic procedures and legislation and all that.

Q: So, I'm thinking if I'm a TD—

Rose: Could I just say one other thing about that?

Q: Yes.

Rose: When we spoke about—in GLEN at that time and we were getting verbally assaulted and it caused resignations from the board, what we had to do was hold our nerve because it would have been very easy to go with the flow, and hike up our criticism of the bill or completely go over to the side that, "Oh, we only want civil marriage." I think probably I would have had a critical role in that as the chairperson to have the steeliness to ignore the attacks, and to plow on, and to know that you're right, and to stick with that, and to take on that responsibility. I think it's ones that a lot of NGOs don't do because they play to the gallery, or they're not serious.

Atlantic, for example, funded many immigration NGOs in Ireland, spent huge amounts of money, but we still don't have an immigration bill act. We had a couple of immigration bills but after ten years of Atlantic funding, there is still not an act. They didn't get it through. And why? Some of them walked out of meetings with ministers and stuff like that, which is great fun and it makes you feel good, but it doesn't do anything for your constituency.

Q: Kieran, if I'm a TD of Fianna Fáil and I'm watching these events and I see the bill being torn up, I would call you up and say, "Why should I stick my neck out?"

Rose: Exactly, yes.

Q: Did you have this kind of political fallout and have to do damage control?

Rose: Well, we were in intense lobbying for reform, so we were—people like Tiernan, and Eoin, and Brian, and myself, to some extent, were in the Parliament, in the Dáil nearly every single day, talking to TDs and senators. So, we probably even ratcheted up our press statements in support of the legislation. We didn't tone anything down. But, you're right. Besides being a dreadful thing to do, it was endangering the passage of the bill.

Q: I read somewhere that you met with something like 130, 140 TDs and so—

Rose: Yes. Breda—Breda or Brian quoted that.

Q: Yes, so don't go down the list, but are there any sort of memorable exchanges or conversations that you can share about those meetings? A couple of them?

Rose: Not immediately, no, no, no. Maybe, if I come up with—

Q: Yes. But, what does one do in a meeting with a TD?

Rose: [Laughs] Well, there are all sorts of meetings, I suppose. There's a meeting that you're in informal meetings. Say, you're in the Parliament and you're walking around and stuff like that, and you bump into somebody and you can have a quick meeting. What we did, I suppose, which was particularly important was meeting representative groups of the political parties. So, we would have met all of the Sinn Féin TDs and senators, for example. I suppose those are the times where you say the civil partnership bill has to be passed as a first step to civil marriage and stuff like that. So, you're really solidifying the support from the political parties. I think it was really significant that Sinn Féin or the other political parties could have played politics with the civil partnership bill, because they could have said, "No, no, no, we don't want this. We want marriage," but they didn't do that. That was hugely important to get the bill through, because the government, again, they were being praised by the opposition parties. I think GLEN was critical to that, to giving them the sense of security, both to the Sinn Féin, Labour, Fine Gael, Independence, and Left Independence and all that. GLEN, I suppose, has a reputation of being a very strong gay and lesbian advocate. Wery respected is what it is. A highly respected organization with a long track record in support of this. It gave people the security and the confidence to move with the—

I suppose the story, the kind of anecdote is that when we met with the Fine Gael TDs and senators, and we were making our case and stuff like that. It was in a kind of lecture theater in the Parliament, and the leader at the time, the leader of Fine Gael, Enda Kenny, who is now our prime minister, our Taoiseach, came in and sat down midway through the meeting, on stage. I remember thinking that was a very symbolic statement of support that he was behind the civil partnership bill, because Fine Gael, like Fianna Fáil, would be center-right and they would have

had their people within the party who would have been opposed to the civil partnership bill. So, that was a very interesting, symbolic—he is from the west of Ireland. He wouldn't be known as a liberal or progressive.

Q: Before we talk about the actual vote in Parliament that comes, I guess, in July, 2010, there's something I want to ask you about Marriage Equality. In the midst of all this turmoil, aren't you sharing offices with them?

Rose: No, they had moved out. They would have been with us '85, '86, '87 or whatever. They had moved out by then.

Q: So, it was in the very early period?

Rose: Yes.

Q: Okay. All right, got it. So, tell me about the vote and the bill going through Parliament. I mean, the Parliamentary vote, not the 2015 vote.

Rose: Right, yes. Well, it was fantastic to read the speeches. The speeches were very, very powerful speeches and from all sides of the house, and it's always great. One of the things of an advocacy group is that you almost write their speeches for them or you write the language. Do you know what I mean? So, you could hear them coming back, talking about Republican values and stuff, all of the things that we had promoted or tried to put into the public consciousness.

Also we had—because the brilliant thing of Atlantic funding again is that we were able to produce very good briefing materials for all the TDs and senators on quotes that they could use from *x*, *y*, and *z*. We would tailor them to each political party. So for Fine Gael, say, how much they had done for lesbian and gay rights and blah, blah, blah, that's in there. For Labour, obviously, it's quite easy to do. For other political parties, you'd have to [laughs]—

But, anyway, the fascinating thing that they—on the actual vote, there was a demonstration outside the Parliament against the bill, and it was quite angry. Senator David Norris went out to speak to them and kind of wind them up. But, then, inside the Parliament, it was packed with lesbians and gay men who wanted the bill passed. In fact, it was so packed that they had to have an overflow for the surplus people, in another room, and they watched it by television. I mean, it was very moving to finally get it over the line. The incredible thing was that it was in the midst of the Recession. GLEN began campaigning for civil marriage during the boom time, and what we talked of then was Ireland's success, and that social success was equally important and all that kind of stuff. We used to use imagery of cranes and construction projects, that this was the new Ireland and all that kind of stuff. Then, when the Recession came, we had to change tack and start saying that just because we're in a Recession and economic crisis does not mean that we can't have social progress. Again, it was a huge political achievement to—that when the troika at the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the E.U.—what's the other part of the troika? IMF, EU and—

Q: European Central Bank.

Rose: That's right, yes.

Q: Being Greek, I know that troika well [laughter].

Rose: That's true, that's true. They arrived on your doorstep as well.

Q: [Laughs] They sure did. They haven't left.

Rose: They haven't left. Well, they left here.

Q: Yeah, they've moved in.

Rose: Taken up residence. But it was incredible because you would think the government would say, Look, we're in existential crisis here. We can't be bothered, or we must focus on this but we can't divert our attention over there. Also, we felt that the right didn't use it, but I remember thinking why they didn't use it, why they didn't really strongly criticize the government for this distraction. Why are you—?

Q: Yes, why? I'm baffled, as a political scientist, as to why your greatest opposition seems to have been people within the gay and lesbian movement rather than across Ireland's otherwise chaotic political spectrum.

Rose: Yes, it's a very interesting question. In fact, it's a fascinating thing that the groups who were opposed to civil partnership in Ireland were Marriage Equality, Noise, Katherine and Ann Louise, David Norris, a gay senator, the Catholic Church, and the secular right in Ireland.

Q: Well, have you figured out why that was?

Rose: Well, the Church and the secular right, that's obvious. But, why a gay senator and two—Katherine and Ann Louise—and I'd almost make an exception. Noise, a lot of them were quite young and coming out and stuff like that and student radical type. But, David Norris is a legislator and a lot of the people in Marriage Equality, and Katherine and Ann Louise, are mature, have been in very senior positions across a range of areas. So there's no excuse for them not knowing what was possible and what was not possible and incredibly disingenuous. Do you know what I mean? Either they were deluding themselves, and it's hard to figure out how you could delude yourself to that extent. I said it to Una—

Q: Una Mullally.

Rose: Una Mullally—yes. Yes, like either David Norris as a legislator should know the constitution, and if he doesn't know the constitution, he shouldn't be a senator. It's bizarre. I mean, it's almost a level of psychotherapy or something. Katherine and Ann Louise were, I think, in the glass closet. They were relatively prominent people in Irish society. Katherine Zappone was at one time CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland, which is the representative body, but they were never out as lesbians. Do you know what I mean? There was

that idea of the glass closet. You're out to your circle but you're not out publicly. Then, I think, you're middle-aged and then you kind of come out, and you come out with a blast of purity or something like that and anger. I mean, psychotherapy—angry at yourself that you left that late, your first time being involved in lesbian and gay politics and you've become puritanical or whatever the correct phrase is, extremist or something. I used to often think that, say, for example, Katherine Zappone. When you were a CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland, did you take up positions like that? I mean, you had to deal with government. You got funding from government. You were proposing legislation. Did you say on issues of legislation for women that you would oppose anything other than something that delivered a hundred percent of what you wanted? Bizarre. It was incredible. It was just a very particularly weird time.

Q: The bill passed—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —resoundingly, I think. Did anyone vote against it?

Rose: In the Dáil, which is the lower house, the critical house, the directly elected house, it was unanimous. In the Senate, three Fianna Fáil senators, or was it one independent—? It was three or four senators, anyway, one or two independents and some Fianna Fáil ones.

Q: I think Gara LaMarche was—

Rose: That's right.

Q: —visiting the Senate. Did you have any conversations with him about this?

Rose: Not really, no, I can't remember, anyway. No.

Q: What about Brian Kearney-Grieve or other people from Atlantic?

Rose: Well, I think they were thrilled because I think it was the only piece of legislation that was passed by one of their fundees, I think. Do you know what I mean? I don't think there was any—across the human rights and equality area, there wasn't any other—well, there obviously wasn't the immigration bill. So, for them, it was unique.

Q: I'm curious about the mechanics of the grant and the money. Was there a written or an oral understanding between GLEN and Atlantic on what GLEN could and couldn't say, could and couldn't do with respect to the money being from Atlantic or—I'm struck by the fact that you're ultimately using Atlantic money to produce talking points and material for TDs that are going to vote on a crucial issue. Did Atlantic say anything about that?

Rose: No.

Q: They didn't.

Rose: No.

Q: So, it was, Here's the money.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Go at it.

Rose: Yes, yes. Well, it took a long time to get the money and to agree to the strategic plan. So, like, they did agree to the work we were doing. I mean, we never asked them, "Can we campaign on civil partnership?" but we had a legislative element, or policy element to the strategic plan.

Q: Before we talk about what happened after 2010, I want to ask you about GLEN's other programs. We haven't talked much about those, because you're also working in health, you're working in education, and so on. So, which moments in those programs outside of the legal and bill arena stand out in your mind?

Rose: Well, I suppose one of the most critical ones was the progress made in the education area at second level, when kids are teenagers. The Catholic Church has a huge control of Irish education because they control about ninety percent of the schools. So, that's a big barrier to getting equal opportunities for lesbians and gay men or children in schools, to get progress on that kind of front. So, one of the things we started off that particular program was by concentrating on the issue of bullying. So instead of kind of talking about that we want lesbian and gay content in the curriculum, which was just too great a task, we'd concentrate on the

bullying one, which we felt, and proved to be correct, that this is something that everyone can agree on. I mean, the Catholic Church [laughs]—you could see why they would want to fight tooth and nail against lesbian and gay role models in schools or in the textbooks or whatever or any of that kind of stuff. But when you're saying to them, "No child should be bullied, every school should be a safe school for every child," it's an easier way to—Sandra Irwin-Gowran, who's our education person, who has a teaching background, she built up that alliance so that in the end, the anti-bullying policies were signed up to by the Catholic Church and its various educational bodies, which was a phenomenal achievement.

You talked about international work and stuff. It's one that I think, if we had the money, to use that for countries that are Catholic-dominated or religious-dominated, Look, you can—it's almost like some form of Japanese martial arts or something, where you use their energy to get what you want to do. So, you don't really go head to head with them because in Ireland, in the educational system, they're far more powerful than us. We had one worker. So, you go with—

Q: What is the situation like today in Irish schools for gay and lesbian youth? It's an impossible question to answer, but I ask it nonetheless [laughter].

Rose: Well, we have a lot of anti-bullying policies. The trade unions are fully behind us, so the policy framework is there, but it's the classic case of how do you deliver. Is the policy actually being delivered on the ground? I suppose that's another question, but it's almost like jumping to the marriage referendum. I said that at various celebrations after the marriage referendum, that one of the most fantastic things about the victory, the extent of the victory, that it was throughout

the country, and it was very, very high in disadvantaged parts of Ireland, in working class parts. I was saying that it was a fantastic thing that the next Monday a child would be going into school, that they would know that they had the people of Ireland behind them, supporting them. And equally, that the other kids, who would be straight in the school, would know that the Irish people—sixty-plus percent of them—had said that lesbians and gay men are entitled to full equality and full citizenship. So, I think it's one of the effects of the referendum would be in schools, in fact.

Q: Well, that's a good segue to talk about the referendum. I first have a question I'd like you to clarify. I believe that Atlantic did not directly fund GLEN to work on the referendum. Is that correct?

Rose: Yes, legally, there is very—I'm sure it's in all countries—very strict legislation on where you get your money from if you want to campaign on a referendum. It's €2500 maximum per person. You can't take foreign money or money from outside the country, all that kind of stuff. So, we complied completely with that legislation. So, full-time workers in GLEN had to take leave, for example, to work on the referendum campaign.

Q: On a voluntary basis?

Rose: Yes.

Q: Well, tell me about that. One of the other questions I have in my mind is whether you woke up the day after the civil partnership bill, and whether it felt a little bit anticlimactic, and how you got back on the horse. Well, there are several questions. What happened between 2010 and 2015? Because somebody might have predicted—they would have been wrong—that 2010 would have been the end of it.

Rose: Yes.

Q: It was a relatively good bill when you look at all the other work around it, right, on taxes, on children, and so on.

Rose: Well, once we got the civil partnership act through, then we had to work on the taxation bill, because anything that's to do with finance has to have its own legislation because it comes from the Department of Finance and all that. So, again, in the midst of a Recession, a phenomenal economic crisis, I think it was a phenomenal success for GLEN. Just to say one thing, I suppose, that I always say, that how you win is as important as what you win. You must make people feel really, really good about what they have enacted, and they must have an appetite for more. That's what happened. If we had, for example, had rubbished the civil partnership act and it had got through, or if we had burned bridges or boats or whatever it is with the government, they wouldn't have brought in the taxation bill. But, the celebration of the civil partnership act, and the way it made people in Ireland and the politicians feel good about themselves, so there was good will to then go to the next steps and, again, the Recession, and to produce a taxation bill, which was basically giving all the rights and responsibilities and money

[laughs] that civil married couples, giving them to the civil partnership couples. Remember we were concerned that people would scream and say "We're in a Recession. Why are you giving money? Why are you giving tax benefits to these people and you're shutting down facilities for people with disabilities?" But, again, they didn't do that, and it was an incredible political commitment because, again, the amount of legislation that it involved amending was quite huge.

And then we had to go for the children's bill, because our strategy was that when the referendum came, the only decision before the people would not be about taxation. It wouldn't be about children. It wouldn't be about immigration or anything like that. It would only be—the net point would be civil marriage and constitutional status, and that was based on the second successful divorce campaign so that the net question in that was not about divorce, because that was all sorted out through separation legislation. The next question put to the people in the second divorce, successful referendum was the right to remarry.

That was a difference between us and Marriage Equality as well. They wanted the referendum to go ahead as soon as possible, and we said, "Our priority is a successful referendum and as soon as possible does not deliver that." In fact, we said, and we said it to the government, because I was at a meeting with Mark Garrett, who was the chief of staff, whatever you call him, to Eamon Gilmore, who was the deputy prime minister, Tánaiste, the leader to the Labour Party at the time. He sent out to us a referendum in 2014, 2015, or the next government. Because of the need to get the children's legislation through and because it was very complicated, we said, 2015. We said we were quite happy with 2015, and I think they were quite relieved and delighted by that.

Q: I remember at some point, Enda Kenny said that he would make sure the party campaigned for a yes vote.

Rose: Yes.

Q: Is that something that he decided on his own, or did GLEN's work have anything to do with that?

Rose: What I think the work that GLEN does, you could describe it as mood music. Do you know what I mean? So that you spread kind of goodwill in all your press statements, and radio interviews, and television, and all that kind of stuff. There's a famous phrase. Willie Whitelaw was the chief of staff, or whatever you call it, of the Tory Party in Britain under Margaret Thatcher, and he said his role was to go around the country, stirring up apathy. [Laughs] I said that was GLEN's role, especially during the gay law reform debate was to say it's not a big deal calm down, settle your nerves, and stuff like that. I think that that is the role for an advocacy group. I think it's almost—I have no interest in sport so I don't know if the analogy is correct. It's almost like you arrange everything. You calm down the opposition. You praise everybody. You listen to the government and the political parties, and if they want you to do something you think seriously about doing it, sort of like the 2015 thing. If we started banging the table and saying, "No, it has to be 2014," then the children's bill wouldn't be passed by then. So, I think of the analogy. What you do is arrange everything so that it's an open goal and then the prime minister or the political parties just have to kick the ball into the back of the net.

The other thing, too, I suppose, about the civil partnership thing—it had a phenomenal effect because throughout the country, every single week, there were wedding celebrations, in rural areas and all that kind of stuff. I've often said that, there were massive consciousness-raising sessions because I was at them, and I suddenly realized it is just a wedding. There are the grannies and the granddads, and there are the little kids running around the place, and there's the food and the dancing and the speeches and people crying and all that kind of stuff, and it just was a wedding. Breda O'Brien has said it in her article, that it was the greatest normalization strategy that she had ever seen. So, lesbian and gay relationships—I use the phrase, "In the court of public opinion, the Irish people had decided that marriage was the option."

Q: This is the article that you were thinking—*The Irish Times* or *Irish Independent*—which?

Rose: *The Irish Times*, yeah. That's the one where she said—

Q: It's right before the referendum, right?

Rose: After the referendum, I think. Or was it just before? I forget.

Q: It might have been just before. She referred to your movement as the greatest acculturation she's ever seen in Irish society. I thought that was really interesting. I think we'll try to link that up to the transcript because it's an interesting thought piece on the opposition.

So, could you repeat something? You said earlier that you really tried to simplify what the referendum would be about.

Rose: Yes.

Q: It sounds, as you were talking about all the things you did before, you got the financial bill in place, the children's bill in place, was the bill simply about amending the constitution—

Rose: Yes.

Q: —just to simply take out the gender references to marriage.

Rose: There weren't actually any gender references in the constitution. The constitutional problem was that the Supreme Court had made many judgements saying that marriage was between a man and a woman. I've forgotten the wording that the government came up with. It was beautifully elegant and simple, basically saying that a couple can get married—just from memory now—a couple can get married according to the law, which means two ten-year olds can't get married, irrespective of their sex. Sex was used instead of gender because sex is used elsewhere in the constitution.

Q: Okay, wonderful, great clarification. I think the only county that voted no was Roscommon.

Rose: Yes.

Q: I think by just a very slim margin. Were you surprised at the results? They were resoundingly for.

Rose: Yes. I mean, I was, yes, quite surprised because—I think it's a phenomenal thing that, say, if lesbians and gay men are ten percent of the population, and that we're probably not that much, so ninety percent of the population or ninety percent of the voting population had to go to the trouble of thinking about the issue and had to go to the trouble of actually going out and vote on something that didn't concern them directly, anyway. So, it was a huge sense of seeing their role as citizens, and a huge sense of generosity. In the debates I used the phrase, on the television and stuff like that, David Quinn, I said, "It's not affecting your marriage. What you're doing is sharing this—we're asking you to share out this status to other people." That's what Irish people did.

You know, I work as a planner, so I know developers and tough developers and stuff like that, and they were voting yes, and they were voting yes on the basis, they told me, because of their children. In one case, the children were seven or eight, and partly, possibly on the basis that the children may turn out to be lesbian or gay, but I think equally that they wanted their children to be brought up and to live as adults in a country that has a respect for human rights and equality. That's why people voted yes.

Q: When did Atlantic funding end of GLEN?

Rose: At the end of this year. That's when it runs out.

Q: I remember that back in 2005 when they gave you the first multi-year grant, it was something like €2.1Million, €2.2 Million-something, in the neighborhood, but I think GLEN got more than that, right, over time.

Rose: Yes, we got two lots of funding.

Q: So, I guess my question is it was generous funding.

Rose: Yes.

Q: So, what is fundraising like in the aftermath of Atlantic, and what does it mean for, not just GLEN but, I guess, the broader movement?

Rose: It's extremely difficult. Currently the other morning, we had a working group on our financial situation because we'd have to raise the core fund—we get some funding from the state for the education work, and the two health projects are fully funded by the state. The education project is half-funded, and then we've a workplace diversity program, which is subsidized. It raises money from companies, but the costs of employing our staff are much higher than that. So we're going to have to raise the core funding. Either we have to get the full funding from the government for the education project but we're going to have to raise the money for the rest of the rent and legal fees, accounting fees, and all that kind of stuff. That's a big issue.

Q: Well, is there anyone in Ireland's philanthropic sector that can pick up the slack?

Rose: No. We don't have any great tradition of—Atlantic wasn't indigenous, but there's another similar one called the One Foundation that operated in Ireland and it is closing down as well, or spending down, whatever the term is. The usual model in Ireland for community groups and advocacy groups is to get funding from the state. So there isn't a tradition of that kind of philanthropy in Ireland. So, Atlantic and One Foundation withdrawing is a huge issue for the complete sector.

Q: Is the country openly discussing the problem—

Rose: No.

Q: —of the disappearance of big value philanthropy?

Rose: No. I mean, I've seen one or two articles in the newspaper, but no, no. If you talk about civil society or civic society, whatever the phrase is, I mean, it's a—if you think that that is a significant part of our democracy, the withdrawal of the funding is a big challenge, to say the least.

Q: Well, in terms of impact, I had a couple questions if we look back on the Atlantic money. It's a tough question, but if we subtract the money that Atlantic put down in GLEN, where would we be today?

Rose: Well, we would have far less progress. We may not have had civil partnership, and if we didn't have civil partnership, we wouldn't have civil marriage. It's not to say that progress wouldn't have been made, but what I think it did was it hugely speeded up the progress that was achieved and the rapidity of the progress is quite phenomenal. Just on the kind of marriage thing, if you think that the civil partnership began moving in 2005 with funding for GLEN and then the Colley Group recommending that in 2006, I think, that you'd have massive pieces of legislation, such as the Civil Partnership Act in place by 2010, and then in 2015, you'd have civil marriage, that is phenomenally rapid progress.

Q: Do you think that any of these gains are reversible?

Rose: All gains are potentially reversible. As a member of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and I belong to the working group, and I'm on the board, I keep on saying that, and the best defense for human rights and equality in anywhere is the support of the people, that it's part of the DNA of the country, it's part of what people feel it means to be Irish. Again that goes back to the thing about how you win is as important as what you win. So, I think that the one about the referendum is that everybody is delighted. It wasn't, from our side, anway, it was a very kind of happy, generous or whatever, those were the kinds of values and those were the kind of tone of our campaign. I think there was genuine celebration throughout the country for it,

and I would think even people who voted against probably feel relieved. They thought, oh, it's a bit too fast or too quick or too something or other, but then they're thinking that they're—most people, I think, are delighted when they're generous.

Q: You've been very generous with your time for this project, and so I wanted to conclude by letting you conclude any which way you like, any thoughts.

Rose: Well, I suppose the biggest thing is the referendum's success. I think that that was due to GLEN's strategy completely. The strategy that won it was the strategy that GLEN set out and never wavered from, and right up to the last minute, people were arguing against us. So, I gave you a copy of that memo from our advisory group. Sorry, an executive group was set up, composed of GLEN, Marriage Equality, and the ICCL [Irish Council for Civil Liberties]. ICCL and Marriage Equality got it into their heads—

Q: The ICCL is the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

Rose: Irish Council for Civil Liberties, yes—that they were going to be the only decision-makers for the referendum campaign and that they didn't need any expert advisory group, didn't need a director of elections for the campaign, and basically that they knew it all and could run the thing themselves. I thought that was just ludicrous and bizarre because we were tiny, little advocacy groups. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties is bigger than GLEN in money terms and stuff like that but we're marginal—I just mean marginal as not being at the heart of Irish society. To win the majority and all that, you have to bring the whole [laughs] group in. The rest of mainstream

Irish society has to be involved, and they were rejecting that. I remember thinking at the time, I think they think the referendum has won. What they're basically in their heads they're thinking is that we're now just deciding who's going to take the plaudits and we don't want to share the plaudits with other people. We have to really dig our heels in to ensure that that viewpoint was overturned, and the advisory group was put in place and the recommendations it made were implemented. So, yes, right up to the last minute, GLEN had to argue very, very strongly, and I just had to say, "No, that won't work." They argued with us, but in the end, they gave in [laughs[.

Q: Is that a good place to conclude?

Rose: Yes.

Q: All right.

Rose: Great.

Q: Thank you, Kieran.

Rose: Thanks very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]