

THE GUANTÁNAMO BAY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Cerie Bullivant

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Cerie Bullivant conducted by Kanishk Tharoor on June 1, 2011. This interview is part of the Guantánamo Bay 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.

3PM

Session One

Interviewee: Cerie Bullivant

Location: London, United Kingdom

Interviewer: Kanishk Tharoor

Date: June 1, 2011

Q: This is an interview with the Columbia Oral History Research Office, held at the offices of Cageprisoners. The date today is June 1, 2011. The interviewer is Kanishk Tharoor. I am talking to Cerie Bullivant.

Cerie, would you begin by talking a little bit about where you were born and your early childhood.

Bullivant: I was born in Yorkshire in a small spa town called Harrogate. My family moved around a lot as my mother was growing up. They lived in Nigeria for five years. They were originally from Ireland. My mum even lived in Switzerland and Palestine for a while as well. In my early years we were moving around a lot as a family, up until I was about eight. We came down to London for my mum's university. She was doing a psychology degree. Then up until the point where she became ill and I went into foster care, we were living in and around the East London area.

Q: Where in East London?

Bullivant: We lived in Forest Gate, which is a ghetto. But it was nice times. I have fond memories. It was hard, those times. I think I went to maybe ten different primary schools

because we were moving around a lot. My mum was a single mum finding it very hard to keep everything above water. Then she became very ill and had a nervous breakdown and I ended up in care for a few years.

Q: What were your earliest memories of life in East London?

Bullivant: My continuous memory actually starts from the time my mum told me I was going to be going into care. That is where it continuously begins. Before that, I remember things like going to my babysitter's and just little bits of the Stratford area. I got lost once in the shopping mall. I remember the security guards finding me and they saw my mum, they took me up to her and they said, "He must be yours, he looks so much like you." Odd little things like that, but, as I was saying, my continuous memory does not really begin until the day my mum took me aside and told me I would be going into care.

Q: Did you have any siblings?

Bullivant: No. Only child. My mum jokes, "Tried it once, didn't like it." She is only playing, though.

Q: How old were you when you had to go into care?

Bullivant: I suppose I was eight years old.

Q: Did you stay in London or did you go far away?

Bullivant: I was always in and around London, but in quite different areas. I lived with a Jewish family for about a year and a half out in the suburbs, in a really nice area of London called Woodford, which is right on the outskirts. It was a really, really nice area. There was a little wood at the end of the road. It was semi-rural. Then I lived closer to the area that I live now for a while with a family in Chadwell Heath, and another family just outside London in Chingford, a police officer's family. Quite ironic.

Q: What was your mood during those years? Were you missing your mother?

Bullivant: It was hard. I would go sometimes two or three months without seeing my mum, and with the exception of the Jewish family, I was moving around quite a lot. I spent quite a long time with them. They really took me in and treated me as one of their own. I went on family holidays with them. I went to their sons' bar mitzvahs. I still have really, really fond memories of my time with them and with them as people.

Q: Where were you going to school at this time?

Bullivant: Again, I was moving around a lot. I went to Wells Primary School in Woodford. Then social services thought it would be a good idea that I start going to school in the area where my mum was going to be living when she was released from hospital. I would have to take an hour

and a half car ride every morning from Chingford down to a school in Dagenham, which is where I was. I was really moving around quite a lot until secondary school.

Q: What kind of student were you?

Bullivant: I think most of my reports, if you read them, say things along the lines of, “Lots of potential, needs to do more work.” As a kid in school, I was lost in my own world. I loved writing and building story worlds for myself. Some psychologist would probably give you some nonsense reason for that, escaping childhood or whatever. I was just a quiet kid.

Q: Do you remember any examples of those story worlds?

Bullivant: I have got a book of them at home. There are hundreds. They were usually tales of knights and maidens and swords and sorcery. Lord of the Ring-style stories. Sci-fi, everything. That is why I really grew to love film. I met my best friend, Arthur, who I still work with in film today. Since we were about thirteen we have been trying to break into the film industry.

Q: Did you at some point go back to live with your mother?

Bullivant: When I started secondary school I went to live with my mum.

Q: So how old are you at this point?

Bullivant: Eleven. She was still quite ill and things were quite hard for a while, but we muddled through. We are very, very close. When I was in care, social services wanted to put me up for adoption. There is a specialist hospital in London, it deals specifically with child-related issues and child psychology. The name escapes me. But I remember we went along there and they did loads of personality tests and this and that and the other because they were asked to come in and say how feasible a relationship would be. My mum showed me the report a few years ago. It said that we were the most closely-bonded mother and son that they had seen and to split up the family could cause permanent psychological problems and they would do everything in their power to support Christine, my mum, in her aims to keep us together. After that, social services dropped the issue.

Q: Give us some sense of what happened in the years after you moved back with your mother.

Bullivant: My mum suffers from schizoaffective disorder. At times she can become quite ill and she will hear voices at times and do things out of the ordinary. It would not be often. It is one of those things, every six months or so, once a year, something might happen. One time, I had not cooked for myself in the morning. I had not made myself any food and she came home, and I said, "Oh, mum, make me some food." It was the wrong time to say that. She said, "Alright, if you don't make anything, I'll throw it all out." She literally went through the whole house, found every item of food in the house, and chucked it all out.

Those sorts of times were the exception rather than the rule, and we had a great time. She really took time to teach me a lot, and take me to museums, and show me that there is much more of

the world than just being stuck in Dagenham. She sparked in me a love of history, and learning about different cultures, and all of these sorts of things.

We would always go on odd holidays. Where everyone else was going to Spain to spend two weeks on the beach, if we went on holiday — we did not go too often — it would be to some sort of old ancient Greek ruin somewhere. Odd places. As I said, when my mum was growing up, she spent a couple of years living in Palestine on a kibbutz and those sort of spaces, so she has always been an interesting character.

[SIPS TEA]

All the stereotypes about English people and tea are true.

Q: What was Dagenham like?

Bullivant: Dagenham is a mixed bag. It is one of those places where there is still a lot of community and everyone can be very close. When I was growing up around there, everybody knew who everybody else's kids were. There was a drinking club opposite our house with a field at the back and all the kids from the whole area would come, we would all play football over there. There are a lot of really nice aspects of community there. But also there are some quite hard-line, entrenched right-wing views. It is one of the areas where the BNP [British National Party] get votes. They are an extreme right-wing national party over here. In the last election the

leader of that party [Nick Griffin] chose Dagenham as the place to try and get elected as an MP [Member of Parliament].

Q: He lost.

Bullivant: He lost. Yes. Thank God. In that respect, there was a lot of underlying racism. People from there, their parents tend to be from there, their grandparents tend to be from there. It can be quite an insular place. There were not many other cultures about. It was different to how I was brought up at home to learn about and to be interested in these things. But I think it is more the environment that they are brought up in rather than the people. I met some really, really good people there. But also, you have to look after yourself. I picked up a few war wounds along the way. But it is cool, it makes you into the man you are. Which might not be saying much, but —

Q: What were your friends like from the area?

Bullivant: In the area, there was Arthur, who, as I said, is still one of my best friends. I do not know if you have the same thing in the States, but we call them “chavs.” He is kind of a pretty boy — loves all his clothes and hair and this and that and the other. But he is probably one of the most honest, decent people I have ever known in my life. The only Asian in the area was a friend of ours. He was called Russell. To be honest, we just got up to normal things. Playing football, soccer. Just mucking about as kids do. You could get into the drinking club. There was a wall, and it had an extension part, and then you could climb up through another gap into the roof, loft area of the drinking club and get in. We would go up there and hang out in the loft and watch all

the old man sitting around watching the football, getting drunk, and playing pool and whatnot. It was quite an adventure for us at the time. Just normal kid stuff.

Q: When you were being raised, what role did religion play in your life at that point?

Bullivant: I generally had an agnostic upbringing. My mum taught me the morals and ethics of religion, but there was never a structured form of religion when I was living with her. When I was living with a Jewish family, I went to synagogue and took part in all of the ceremonies of Passover, Yom Kippur, and all the other things, I went to bar mitzvahs. One of the families I lived with was quite a strict Catholic family. I went to Sunday school as well for a while, and did all of that. In that respect, I had quite a wide view of all the different religions. It was something I was always interested in, learning about how other people lived and why they choose to live their lives in those ways. My mum did not believe in structured religion. She went through a phase for a while being quite into spiritualism, crystals, and tarot. I suppose it was always there. I always saw it going on around. I look at and try to understand things from the outside, thinking about them, rather than being involved in them, per se.

Q: At what point did you begin think about Islam?

Bullivant: It was not until I was twenty-one.

Q: Perhaps we can maybe sketch out the root towards your finding Islam.

Bullivant: OK. Basically after I finished my A levels, and I was at university I was working nightclubs at the time, and generally just partying a lot and having a good time. I bumped into an old friend from school. The school I went to was very, very white.

Q: This is you secondary school?

Bullivant: Yes, secondary school. I had not seen him since I was sixteen. I think in our year, he may have been the only non-Christian. Even Russell was a Christian. But Aftab was the only Muslim in the year.

Q: In Dagenham.

Bullivant: Yes, in Dagenham. He was probably one of about three Asians in the year. But he had this reputation even in school that he would never lie. He was known as the most honest guy in school. He was a good guy, studious, but everybody thought he was boring. I bumped into him when I was twenty-one. I said, "Come, we'll have a game of pool, go down to the pub." He used to go down to the pub before, but he would not drink. He would just have an orange juice and play pool. He said, "No, I do not go down to the pub anymore."

I said, "Why not?"

He said, "Because I am practicing my religion now. I should not be in a place where alcohol's served."

My natural curiosity about all these sorts of things was sparked up. “Come then, we'll get coffee, then. Go to a cafe, and have a chat.” From there, we started meeting on a regular basis, and just talked about all sorts of things.

There were a lot of discussions about religion, and why he chose to live his life the way he did. He eventually introduced me to some of his other friends. A very deep spiritual connection and contentment came from their religion, and I saw that as a system, Islam helped them in all aspects of their lives, be it from the way they handled themselves professionally, to how they handled their families — every aspect.

In my life I have been blessed to meet quite a few exceptional people later on in life, people like Gareth Peirce or people that have done quite amazing things. But I started realizing there is such a concentration of these sorts of people within this group of people. What is it about this that is making them excel in this way? I spent quite a long time, about six months, reading books and looking into, studying it, and I just realized that this is something that is going to enrich me and enrich my life in such a deep way. Even then, I had no idea how amazing it would be for me. Even though becoming Muslim is probably one of the major reasons I went to prison and for everything I went through, I still think it is the best decision I ever made in my life. It is still just the greatest thing I could have done in my life.

Q: Had you felt the need for religion before? What precipitated this?

Bullivant: I never felt the need to be religious. I never prayed in any orthodox way. They say there is no such thing as an atheist in a fox hole. So, in that sense, maybe I prayed.

I had been involved on the outskirts and around orthodox religion before. But everything always seem to be through someone else. In Catholicism, it was connection to God through the priests. In Judaism, you were you going through the rabbis. The role of an imam is a very different role in Islam. They are not a better person or a person with special rights or powers. The imam is just whoever is amongst you that happens to know the most Koran or the most Arabic. One day I can be out with my friend, we are praying, and he leads the prayers. The next day it is someone else. Because your relationship with God is a relationship direct between Him and you. This is the concept of *tawhid*, oneness in God. There is nothing that comes between you and Him. You do not seek your forgiveness from another person.

All human beings make mistakes. We are all flawed and we all have sins. So why is one sinning person better than another to give out forgiveness? To me, so much of it was so powerful. Arthur would probably say that there was a lack of fulfillment for me in my clubbing days. He thinks that was why I converted. I just was not getting enough out of that, and so I turned the other way. Probably he would say "too far!" if you asked him. It was just the right choice for me.

Q: What did your mother think?

Bullivant: I think she nearly had a heart attack at first. She asked me to wait a while and think about it, and take my time, which I did. When I made the decision, she supported me whole-

heartedly, as she always has done. She has been very, very supportive of me in the choices I have made, and she has become quite close to some of my Muslim friends. One of my friends in particular, Daniyal, she goes over to his house without me. I will get a call, saying, "Your mum was over today." "All right, great." She supported it a lot.

Q: You mentioned Arthur. What did your other friends think?

Bullivant: Dagenham can be quite an insular area. A few days after I converted, it was one of our other close friend's birthdays. Everyone was going to the dog track.

Q: Dog races. Are they in Dagenham?

Bullivant: They are in Romford, which is the main town center place near us. Obviously, the whole point of the night is going to be drinking, gambling, girls. I could not go along. I said, "We'll go to the cinema after, we'll get coffee, we'll hang out, we'll do something after. We will all do something separate." With the close friends, anyway. There was a close circle of us.

They just lost it with me, basically, at that moment. They started effing and blinding at me, saying why have I become a Paki, I have taken on a Paki religion, and so forth. None of them were happy with the fact that I had become Muslim, but they tolerated it, they said that it would be alright. They really just went off on me that I would not go to the dog track. After that, we quickly drifted apart. All except Arthur and me. Arthur has always just accepted me for who I am. He has been there for me no matter what choice I make.

Q: I meant to ask this before, but could you tell me a bit about the process of conversion? What was involved in the process?

Bullivant: This is another one of the things that I love about the religion. To convert to Islam, you do not need a special ceremony. As soon as you believe that God is one, and He has no partners, there is nothing else that deserved to be worshipped apart from him, and Mohammed is a continuation of the messengers, such as Moses, and Jesus, and Abraham, that he is another in the line of all of those prophets and messengers, at that point you are actually a Muslim. As soon as you believe those things truly in your heart, you are a Muslim. So beyond that, the only thing that there is, is that you say what is called the *Shahada*, which in English means “the testimony,” which is basically those two things. In Arabic it is, “*ā ’ilāha ’illallāh, Muḥammad rasūlu-llāh*” which means “there is nothing worthy of worship except for Allah and Mohammed is his messenger.” As soon as you say that with true belief in your heart, you are a Muslim. You do not even need to say it in Arabic.

This is the inclusive nature of the religion for me. Anybody can become a Muslim. Within Islam, everybody is equal. I went to some Pentecostal churches a couple of times. It struck me that when I went to the Catholic churches, it was all white, middle class people. When I went to the Pentecostal churches, it was all African or Afro-Caribbean people there at those churches. The congregations did not really mix that much. They were very, very segregated and separate. Within Islam, although a community might build a mosque, everybody in that area will just go there. At the mosque in my local area, there are probably all different colors, shapes, and sizes.

You get Indians going there, Pakistanis, Arabs. Everyone just prays exactly the same, and everyone is equal before God. That is one of things about *Hajj*. When you go to *Hajj*, there are two million people from all over the world. They are all dressed the same, and there is no difference between the rich man and the poor man. Everybody is equal, and everybody is just there to do the same thing. It is a very powerful symbol for me.

Q: Did you make new friends through conversion?

Bullivant: Yes. When I first became Muslim, for a while I was with a group, probably because I did not know too much about the detailed aspects of the religion. Islam is one of those things. You can understand it at a basic level, but as deep as you want to go, there is always more and more to learn. Scholars have spent their whole lives studying, and there are always other books and other things to learn about, the *fiqh* and the jurisprudence. When I first became Muslim, I fell in with a group for a while — I am not really into groups in that sense, in a religious sense anymore — called Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT). You might have heard of them or not. They believe in non-violent political revolution in the Muslim countries, to get rid of dictators, and to go back to ruling by an Islamic caliphate. So the countries unite.

So for a while I fell in with them and I made a lot of friends there, but when I read a bit more about the religion and I studied more deeply, I realized that their view on the world was quite stunted towards dealing with the consequences of colonialism and loaded far too much with just the political aspect of their understanding of the religion. The religion is not just politics. The religion has something to say about politics and that is part of why I am here with Cageprisoners,

but that was not really the full cup of tea. I suppose you can say I did my tenure with them. I went on and started reading more widely, and I feel got a better understanding of the religion then when I was there.

Q: Maybe it is time to move on towards the control order. Could you give us some of the prehistory to what happened? Maybe some of how you begin to experience the scrutiny of the government?

Bullivant: I met some friends playing football. I just realized there is this ongoing theme of playing football.

Q: Do you play football a lot?

Bullivant: Yes. I am terrible, though. I am absolutely awful. But I do love running around a field chasing a round leather ball. I met some friends playing football, and we got quite close and started spending a lot of time together. They said to me, "We're going to Syria to learn Arabic. You can learn really good Arabic out there."

Q: Had you studied Arabic in London?

Bullivant: Yes, I had studied some of the basics. I could identify all of the letters of the Arabic alphabet and pronounce them. But my Arabic was at a very, very basic level. Immersion within a language is always going to help you learn it more fully and in a more practical way. Syria is one

of the best places you can go to learn Arabic —“So we’re heading out there, why don't you come?” I had been looking to go traveling to see a bit of the world anyway myself. Ironically enough, it was about the time that Prince William was going traveling as well. He is exactly my age. I thought, “Yes, now is a good time for me to get out there.” I wanted to do some charity work, as well. They were more interested in just doing the studying thing, the Arabic thing, and learning the religion. But I wanted to get in and do some work in orphanages or other community projects I could find. Just go out there and see what needed doing. Just do something. As I said, my mum spent a couple years on a kibbutz when she was younger. That was something I was very keen on.

Q: How old were you at this point?

Bullivant: Twenty-three.

Q: You have been a Muslim for two years?

Bullivant: Yes, around two years or maybe a little bit less, maybe about a year-and-a-half-ish, or so. That was the plan. I went and got a teaching qualification so that I could teach English and provide for myself because apart from that my only other international skill was serving drinks, which was not going to work too well in Syria. I went and got an English teaching qualification, and we booked our tickets, and went to the airport.

Unfortunately, the government had other ideas. They stopped us at the airport and held me for about ten hours. They held Ibrahim, who is the guy I was traveling with, for about eleven hours. This oral history has been going through my past. It is nothing compared to what they did in eleven hours. They asked me every single question about everything you could imagine, right down to who my favorite music groups were. They must have a file somewhere on me, to exactly identify what sort of — it is ridiculous, they asked me everything, school teachers' names. If they could have taken a download of my brain, it would have saved time to do that. They also asked me for some of my political views on Islam.

Right up until the point when the plane was about to go, fifteen minutes before hand, they were saying, “You'll get your flight, you'll get your flight, don't worry. It's a normal stop and search.” Then, as soon as the flight went, they went and took my DNA and took my fingerprints. It was weird when they take your fingerprints. Nowadays they have got electronic machines that you just put your fingers through and it just takes the prints. They did that, but they also took hard copies with your ink ones. They did not just take one set of the hard copies — they took five sets of the hard copies of every part of your hand. Even the ball of your thumb, you have to do. You have to do all of those five times. That took about two hours to do as well. Because every time there was a smudge on one, they have to redo it. They have done that to me three times, so they have actually got fifteen copies of my fingerprints in hard copy somewhere, knocking around. That is just British bureaucracy for you.

Q: Before you went to the airport this time, had you had any sense of surveillance or scrutiny, or any contact with the government or security officials before?

Bullivant: None at all. To this day, apart from being asked my views on Afghanistan and Iraq a couple of times, I have never been interviewed or questioned by the police on terrorism-related matters. They have never asked me, “Would I want to go and fight?” They have never asked me, “Do I know such and such about this or that?” I have never had a terrorism-related interview with them. The furthest this ever got is basic questions on, “Do I think 7/7 was acceptable in Islam?” Of course not. Who is going to say that killing fifty-two people on a tube — well, maybe Mohammad Sidique Khan would say so, but other than that, it is nonsense. What use is that going to be to them? Even if someone did believe it, they are not going to say it to the police.

This is one of the baffling things about it. It is one of the things that, as I have become a case worker, I have realized goes through case after case after case. I was reading an interview of two people yesterday. They said they have never been questioned by the police on anything. They were just given control orders and financial sanctions. They had never actually been arrested or questioned. I had never been arrested until I was actually put on the control order.

Q: Did the police at the airport talk about Hizb ut-Tahrir?

Bullivant: Yes, they did. I brought it up. They said, “Have you ever been a member of any groups?” I said, “For a while I was with Hizb ut-Tahrir, but they were just too political. I didn't like their world their world view, so I left them.” Having read things outside afterwards, there was a report done in the United States that said Hizb ut-Tahrir is a conveyor belt for extremist Islam. I realized that by my saying that, they may have thought, “He's been on the conveyor belt,

come out of the other side as an extremist.” But I do not know. Who knows what goes through their heads?

Q: Do you think that is true?

Bullivant: That HT is a conveyor belt for extremist Islam? In my experience of spending time with the group, most people do a year or so with them, or a little bit of time here and there. The majority of them end up leaving, getting married, having kids, getting a job, and just settling down into their own style of life. That would form about 60 percent. Thirty-five percent of the others go off and become even less religious than they were because they become disenfranchised. Of the other 5 percent that actually do become a little bit more extreme, the furthest I have ever seen anyone go is join Al Muhajiroun.

Q: Which is another group.

Bullivant: Which is another group, and again, another nonviolent group. I have never heard of anyone from HT going off to get involved in terrorism or anything like that. If you look at the people that have gone off and done those things, they tend to go down a very different route in coming to understanding of religion, much more of a hard core Salafi background rather than the more political HT route. That is just my observation on that.

Q: What happened after the incident at the airport?

Bullivant: I was allowed to go, eventually and so was Ibrahim. We got picked up and taken back to East London by a friend of ours. Ibrahim Adam and Lamine Adam, who were my two friends, were put on control orders quite soon after that. But I was given back my passport and told that everything was fine. Syria, they said, was a place that was close to Iraq, and therefore a hotspot for people who were trying to go and join the insurgency out there. They did not think I had done anything wrong. I was free, “just be more careful where you choose to go next time. Don't go anywhere that could be misconstrued.”

I still had plans of traveling, doing community work. One of my closest friends is Bengali, and his family in Bangladesh is very well off. They actually own their own orphanage. They run it charitably from their own money. They have got 200 kids there. I spoke to him and his family, and they said, “If you want to go and work there, that's fine, there's no problem with that.” I went and got a visa for Bangladesh, started making plans to travel to Bangladesh. I thought that Bangladesh is not a hotspot for anything, apart from maybe fish curry. The closest war zone is Afghanistan. You have got the small matter of India and Pakistan in the way.

I was one white guy on my own, I do not know any of the languages, of which there are about probably ten to get across that distance. There is no way that my travelling to Bangladesh can be misconstrued. This time, I have got an actual project I am going to. I have got a family that I am staying with. Everything is much more arranged than last time. Last time, it was a bit of a backpacking trip, a little bit of money in my pocket, some clothes in the bag, just go out there and see what is going on, jumping on something, find something worth doing. This time, it was obviously a lot clearer and more sorted out, and you could see exactly what I was going to be

doing. I thought, "I've dealt with all of their issues, they shouldn't have a problem." The day before I went to go and book the tickets, my friend's mum gets a call on her mobile from MI5 saying, "This guy is a terrorist. He is going to use your family to get to Bangladesh and he's going to go to Afghanistan and fight."

Q: How could MI5 have known that you were going? Had you applied for a visa or something?

Bullivant: I had got a visa from the Bangladeshi embassy. But they must have known. Clearly I was under surveillance and I did not know it. But I never made a secret of any of my travel plans. My mum always knew. My family always knew. We had a big send-off dinner for my trip to Syria. I have never been secretive about any of these things. The imam at my local mosque knew. Anyway, I only got a phone call. Old Bengali aunties in their 50s do not like getting phone calls from MI5.

Q: I am Bengali, too. I understand.

Bullivant: She completely freaked out, and said, "Right, that's it. You're not going anywhere, we're not doing anything." A couple of days later I got served with a control order.

Q: Before Lamine and Ibrahim got their control orders, had you heard of control orders before?

Bullivant: No. When they got put on it, I did not think it was possible to have legislation like that in this country. They explained to me what the things were and how it worked, and that secret

evidence. I said, “No, you cannot have secret evidence. If they are making a case against you, they have to give you the evidence. They cannot keep it secret, how are you going to defend yourself?” It completely baffled me.

Q: What were they telling you after they got their control orders?

Bullivant: They were friends of mine, so I went and saw them. They explained what their conditions were and they explained what they had been accused of.

Q: What were their conditions?

Bullivant: Their conditions were the same as mine when I was first put under the control order. There was only a month between them being put under and me, so our orders were the same, such as residence at one fixed address, surrendering all travel documents and travel documentation, not being allowed to travel to any port, airport, or international train station. I could not go on the underground through King's Cross station. That would have been a crime. I had to sign on at the police station at a specific time each day and allow the police to search my property whenever they wanted, with no warrant. I had to allow them in to search it.

Those were their orders. The only thing that we were told about why we were being put on them — and we all had the same thing written down — was that “there are reasonable grounds for suspicion that you may be a threat to our troops abroad.”

That was it. That was all you knew about why you were on the order. It is completely baffling. How can you try and defend yourself and prove your innocence? I suppose that is jumping ahead of it, but I honestly did not believe at first that this was even possible under British law. You grow up with this naive view that you are the bringers of civilization into the world. The good guys. We went in and rescued Kuwait in 1991. We are sending peacekeepers all over the world. You have this view that we are the good guys. When we do things, we do them for a good reason. Then suddenly it happens, and you think, "Oh my gosh, I haven't done anything, why are you doing this to me?"

Q: How do you receive a control order? What physically happens?

Bullivant: There is a film I saw once. It was one of these American teen movies. I cannot even remember the name of it. But I always remember this line. They get all made up for their driver's license photos. Someone says, "Why are you putting so much effort into your driver's license photo?"

"If anything ever happens to you, this will be the picture that will put all over the media to find you. You have to look your best."

As it happened, the day that I got given my control order, I had been building a patio at my Bengali friend's house. I have been mixing up cement and carrying big chunks of things. I was a complete mess, in a state. I was actually outside the front of the house, making cement at the

time. The police came up to me, and it was like something out of a film. They said, "Are you Cerie Bullivant?"

I said, "Yes," and obviously, I am all covered in dirt, my hair is a mess, everything is a wreck.

They said, "We are serving you with a control order, will you come to the police station with us? We need to explain what the conditions are and take your photos."

"Can I go upstairs and get changed, please? At least tidy myself up?"

They said, "You can, but you are going to have to have an officer with you at all times."

I said, "No, I do not want an officer looking at my junk. I will just come to the station as I am."

That is why in all the wanted pictures of me, I look an absolute state because I have been doing heavy labor all day. I look absolutely horrible. If you are going to have one picture put out all over the press and everywhere, could it at least be one where you look good? In the end, they took me to the station, they explained what the conditions were, and they explained what the rules were. That was it, basically.

Q: Were you expecting it?

Bullivant: No. I had no idea. I knew by then that they obviously thought something about me, because they called up auntie and auntie went into hysteria after their phone call. But I was not expecting to be put on a control order.

Q: Did you talk to her?

Bullivant: Well, I did not do much talking. She did a lot of talking. I sat there with a very scared look on my face, and said, "Yes, auntie, no auntie." But we had a chat.

Q: What was going through your head in those early days, right after you got the control order?

Bullivant: I very, very quickly became very isolated and insular. As soon as people find out that you are on a control order, you become like a societal pariah. I had no idea how this would affect everyone around me. The whole community just withdrew. Nobody wanted to have anything to do with you. You do not know why you are on an order, so maybe they can be put on an order for spending time with you. As it happens, as we found out more and more about the case over the years, it is pretty much guilt by association, and in my case, twice removed. I knew people who knew people who at that time were on remand for a crime. I had never even met these people. These people had been put into prison before I had even become Muslim. I did not know that the people I knew knew these people either. So in a way, I can understand why the community pulls back so much from you. This was the early days of these things. I did not know about things like Cageprisoners, I did not know about groups like HHUGS [Helping Households

Under Great Stress]. I was literally just on my own, in my place, feeling very, very isolated and not understanding why any of this was happening.

Q: Could you remind us what year this is at this point?

Bullivant: I really should know this in my interviews. 2006. But you might want to fact-check that, because I am terrible with dates. When I am writing stuff for reports for Cageprisoners, I have to fact check everything up four times to make sure I have got the right dates.

Q: You are in Dagenham at this point?

Bullivant: Yes.

Q: You are living at your mother's house?

Bullivant: No. I had been living at my mother's house but because of her condition and because of the fact that they could search the house at any time they wanted it, I did not want her to have the stress of knowing about this and to have that worry on her. I thought it could make her ill, possibly push her over the edge again. The only way I could not have her know or find out was to move out. I moved out and I got a place of my own.

Q: You did not tell her about the order.

Bullivant: No. She did not know about the order. Not for a long time.

Q: How long?

Bullivant: It was about nine months. I will tell you how that came about. I got a place close to her so I could still be near her to go and help her out but on my own, so that the police could not search her house and disrupt her, and make her condition worse. I had asked the police if there is any way that they could do it that would reduce the impact on my mum, and my solicitor and I tried to negotiate with them. They were firm, and they said, “Absolutely no way. We have to be able to come over at any time we want, whenever we want, and we will do that, regardless. That's not our problem.” My only option then was to move out, which I did. That obviously only further led to my isolation.

Q: Were you still in Dagenham?

Bullivant: Yes. I only went around the corner. I wanted to stay close to my mum, in case she needed my help. When I eventually came to trial for the breaches, which was a criminal matter — and obviously I had to disclose the evidence of the breaches — one of the breaches that they were trying me for was the fact that I spent a night at my mum's while she was very, very ill, looking after her, and I broke my residence permit. That was one of the breaches, one of about fifty odd.

I was living away at another house at that time. It was a hard time, to be sure, of trying to maintain some sort of semblance of a life, which I really did not do up until the Christmas of 2006.

Q: Were you working?

Bullivant: No, I could not work. The signing was right in the middle of the day, and I could not find work that would be flexible enough to let me make it to the signing place. The other thing is that they did not make the police office that I had to sign in at the closest police station to me. It was the closest twenty four hour police station to me, even though I was only at that sign on for within an hour period during the day. I had to sign on between 11:00 and 12:00. There is a police station just around the corner from where I was. It was open between 11:00 and 12:00. But I could not sign there because it was not a twenty-four-hour station. My solicitors kept on trying to make the point, "What's it matter if it's a twenty-four-hour station? He's only got an hour to sign on, anyway."

I had to get a couple of buses and travel a long way to go and sign on, right out to the edges of Dagenham. Dagenham is the biggest borough in London. It was a forty-minute trip to sign on every day, and a forty minute trip back. Then when you get there and you have to sign on, if there is a queue of people waiting to make police reports or whatever, you have to wait in your queue behind them, obviously wait your turn, even though you are only going to be scribbling your name and walking out. Sometimes you will be able to go in, there would be no one in, you go in, sign, go out again. It would take two minutes. Other times, the longest I waited was two

hours because there was a massive queue. I had to wait two hours to sign in. I got arrested for it the next day for signing in late. It was quite funny in that interview, the police said, "This is a state of the art station. We have CCTV [Closed Circuit Television]." Then they start going on about all these things. At the end I say, "Look, you just said it is a state of the art station. Just check the CCTV. You will see I was there on time. Don't pull me up because I can't sign my name when I get there. I did my bit to try and get there." It was just a nightmare.

In my whole life, the only arrests I have ever had have been directly related to the breaches of the control order. I have never been arrested for anything else. With the exception of one, when they arrested me for attempting to gain a fake passport — which there was never any evidence of — and when judge finally made his decision that I was innocent he said it was ridiculous. I should never have been arrested for that because there was no evidence I had any involvement with that at all. They were just pulling anybody in. But everything else has always been just directly related to breaches of the control order.

Q: So you said you had solicitors, at this point. How did you find the solicitors? How soon did you get solicitors?

Bullivant: This all leads into why I was on the control order, as well. Lamine and Ibrahim were the two guys who I was going to go traveling with, the two guys that I was playing football with. Unbeknownst to me, before I was put on the control order, they had a brother who had already been put in prison. He was on remand, awaiting trial for the fertilizer bomb plot.

Q: This is Richard Garcia, right?

Bullivant: Anthony Garcia.

Q: Anthony Garcia, sorry.

Bullivant: Anthony Garcia. His name is Garcia. Their name is Adam. I had no way of connecting the dots and knowing that he was theirs. They did not tell me they had a brother in prison. They just seemed like a couple of nice guys. But Garcia's solicitors were Birnberg, Gareth Peirce and her firm. When Lamine and Ibrahim got put on their control orders, obviously they went to their brother's solicitor, and so she took of their case as well. Then when I got put on a control order, they then told me that they had a brother who is in prison, and went through the story. That is how I ended up with Gareth Peirce as my solicitor as well. The solicitor who actually handled most of my case on a day-to-day basis was Henry Miller. Birnberg had a really good way of working with it. Although they have obviously got all the other solicitors who handle cases, everyone sort of mucks in on everybody else's cases. Everything goes up and through Gareth, and back down again. At times it can be a bit slow to get things done, but you are always getting the best possible ideas going through because everyone is always working together in a really good melting pot there. In that sense, it is part of the reason why the cases end up so strong there, and why they are such a good firm. I was really lucky to get them.

Q: You are now living on your own. You are isolated from the community. What is going through your head? What happened next?

Bullivant: I end up becoming very depressed. The only time I was going out during the day was to go and sign my name in the police station. Then I came home and just did nothing. There was nothing I felt I could do. I was just in a real limbo. That carried on until about Christmas. Then my mum, obviously with a background in psychology and her whole mental health history, saw that there was something wrong. She did not know why, because I had not told her that I was on a control order. But she knew something was up, and bless her, she gave me a kick up the arse to try and do something with my life, try and make something of it. I decided to go back to university and do a mental health nursing degree. I sought permission. I did not need permission at that time from the Home Office, but I checked it out with my solicitors. They said "Yes, good idea. You should do something, it's better than just doing nothing."

They tried to organize the signing on time to be moved to the end of the day, at five o'clock, after I would have had my day in university. I picked out a university that was purposely close enough that I could try and make signings. I started my degree. I was there for about six months. The police would not change my signing in time. They kept on bringing in new conditions. During that time, they brought in a condition that I could not take up any employment or education without prior Home Office approval. They brought in lists of who I could and could not talk to. Every few months they would add on more and more conditions. When I started going to university, they really started ramping it up, and they refused to change my signing in time. I would always miss my first lesson. When your first lesson is CPR, it is quite a big deal that you make it. I was getting a lot of trouble from university for not being able to make it. Although I did not have a criminal record, I could not pass the CRB check, which is the Criminal Records

Bureau check. There was just nothing coming back. Everybody else had been passed and cleared, and you are fine to work in a hospital. Mine was just in limbo.

That is still the case now. I still cannot get anything back from the CRB one way or the other, yes or no. That is basically no, because if you cannot get beyond it, you cannot get a job in certain areas. Everything was crumbling around me at that time. My relationship with my mum was becoming very strained. It was my fault. I was not communicating. She knew something was wrong, and I was not able to talk about that with her, or with anybody, really. I realized after a few months that this just was never going to work.

One morning the police came and raided my house and arrested me on the charge of trying to get a false passport. They took me down to the Belgravia police station. They had closed the whole police station for the day, just for this case. It was a central London police station and they had nobody else in there. The whole station was dedicated to cracking this fraudulent passport thing, where everyone was going to abscond.

As they brought me in to the station, I looked up on the board, and I saw Lamine and Ibrahim's names, and a bunch of other people, I had no idea who they were. Because there is a map of the cells, I could see that they had us all in the corners of the cell wing, so that we were all away from one another. Birnberg sent down one of their solicitors, a brilliant lady called Barbara. You know this term, the pit bull solicitor, the pit bull lawyer? She was the scariest lady I have ever met. She terrified the police. She just would not give them even an inch, and she was constantly barking orders at them. She was so tenacious. We were all released by the end of the day, and I

realized that it was just the two guys I knew and a bunch of guys from the mosque. There was nothing going on. All of the charges were dropped.

When I got home, I found out that not only had they searched my place, they had gone and searched my mum's house. When the police turned up at the door, they let themselves in and started searching. They did not have a warrant to search my mum's house. They felt that I might be hiding passports there. She said, "What's going on?" obviously, as she would.

They said, "We are searching for false documentation for your son."

She said, "What are you talking about?"

"Your son is on a control order, he is a suspected terrorist."

That was actually illegal as well, because I had anonymity. They could not tell anyone that I was on a control order. But obviously, as is the case with all of these things, the police tend to just go around doing what they want.

Around that time, my life just completely broke down. I could not handle anything that was going on. I was trying to start a relationship with a girl I liked at that time as well. That collapsed, the university collapsed, and my mum found out about the control order.

Q: Do you remember talking to your mother once she found out?

Bullivant: I sat down and I explained that everything was all right. She spoke with the solicitors, and she handled it amazingly when she found out. She was solid, and she tried to help me out signing on, and doing what she could to support me in that. But I could see that it was really, really stressing her out as well, as it obviously would. It was a huge pressure on her. She had trust in me from the beginning. She knew that there was no basis to any of these claims. It was never even a question.

Q: It is okay, take your time.

Bullivant: It is quite a hard time to go back to.

Q: No, I am sorry. If you do not want talk about it, that is okay.

Bullivant: No, it is okay. I could see that everything was collapsing around me. My mum was becoming more and more ill because of the pressure that I was putting on her, and my university courses had all gone to pot, and the relationship I was trying to get going was not going to work.

Then Lamine and Ibrahim came to me on their own. I had not seen them very much in a while. They said, "Look, mate, we have had enough of this. We are out of here. We can't take the stress of this. It is just destroying our lives and we have got no way of winning. How can you win something when you don't even know what the case is against you? We are off. We don't really have a good plan, but do you want to come?" At that moment, that was the only door that

seemed open to me. That was the only possible way that I could try and regain any part of myself and have freedom. I said, "Yes, sod it, let's go."

That was it. We absconded from the order. We went and hid out somewhere. We were in a tiny little place, just hiding out. A couple of days later the story broke in the news. They dropped our anonymity without giving our solicitors a chance to give representation. They just went full force all on their own thing, and suddenly we were the biggest news story in the country for the best part of a week.

Q: Were you aware of that at the time?

Bullivant: Yes. I saw on the BBC [British Broadcasting Company]. When a big story breaks, you get the whole treatment, all the press outside the house and the flashing lights and stuff. I saw them doing that outside my mum's house. I was reading. I managed to get some newspapers, and read in the newspapers that the Home Secretary at a time was talking about pulling out of the European Convention of Human Rights because it was too limiting to their fight on terror. They might need to pull out so that they could introduce stronger measures that would protect us more from these dangerous criminals on control orders.

Lord [Alexander C.] Carlile came out saying, "There is solid evidence that these guys will go fight our boys abroad, the troops." I was just in shock. How do you even begin to start coping with that? It was massive. There were huge stories. The *Sun* did a couple of stories on Ibrahim from his yearbook from when he left school. They got a picture of him and his girlfriend at prom.

They put that up, and they had interviews from people he went to school with. Thankfully they did not do that with me, but it was absolutely insane the amount of coverage that there was on it. We just stayed in this little flat. Well, I stayed there for about a month.

Q: What would you do during the days?

Bullivant: We tried to do exercises. We could not go out, so we would have just rotted away in a tiny little flat if we had not done exercises. We would do exercises every day, press ups and sit ups, and stuff like that. Cook a bit of food, listen to BBC World Service on the radio a lot, and see what was going on. Listen to Islamic talks. Lamine was very good at Arabic and he was translating some classical Arabic books. I would help him with the English side of that. I could not help with the Arabic, but as he translated, I would edit the English text for him. We tried to keep busy as much as possible. You end up just sleeping for huge amounts of the day. After about a month or so, I realized that I had just swapped one cell for another, and I was probably doing even more harm to my mum by not being about than I was being about. I came to the decision that I had to go back and make sure my mum was all right.

It had died down in the press by then, so I thought I could probably get home and make sure she was all right. Then I wanted to try and fight this out through the courts because that was the only way I was ever going to get any actual closure on this and freedom. They decided that they did not think that was going to work. They did not think there was going to be any benefit to doing that, and they were not going to go that way. They stayed and I left.

Q: Was it difficult to part with them?

Bullivant: It was. They were the only people that up until that point knew what it was like to be on a control order. They were the only people who had been through the same thing and had those same feelings. They were the only people that stood by me through those times. Still to this day I know there are a lot of things said about them in the press. But Lamine and Ibrahim were two of the most honest, genuine, decent people I have ever met in my life. I am still proud to call them my friends and my brothers. Lamine came to my house one time before the control orders and everything. He was dropping me off at home. He ended up staying until four o'clock in the morning, chatting with my mum about all sorts of things. Everything — life, travel, this, that. Mum loved him. That was the kind of guy he was. He was the kind of person that everybody got along with. He never had a bad word about anyone. He was honestly one of the most decent people I have ever met.

One time, someone came into the mosque and they said, “We do not know where to stay. We need some help.” He had them stay with him. A friend of his cousin called Nello, an Italian Christian, needed somewhere to stay in London for six weeks while he did an exchange student program and came and studied English in Britain while someone else went and studied in Italy. But there was no accommodation organized for this. Lamine had him come stay with him. He came and stayed and lived with him in his house as a member of their family for a whole summer. That was just the kind of guy he was. It did not matter. If he was such an extremist, he is not going to have some random Christian guy that he does not know come live in his house,

live with his sisters and his mother. He would just welcome anybody. Anything he could do for anyone, that was the kind guy he was.

His brother was the same. Obviously I never met the older brother. I do not know anything about him, in that sense. But all I know is that, from those two, they were some of the best people I have met. It was hard leaving them. But at that time, I needed to do what was right for me.

I came home, and I saw my mum. Obviously she was very relieved to see me. Then we called up my solicitor, and Henry came over straight away and he said, "I'm going to call the police. We'll tell them that you're here, and you are willing to hand yourself in. There doesn't need to be a big hooah about it. I'll get them to make sure they don't send around a hundred police wagons or make a spectacle out of it."

He phoned up the officer, he was on speaker phone. He phoned up the officer, and he said, "Hello, is this so and so?"

The officer said, "Yes."

He said, "I'm with Cerie Bullivant at the moment. He's come back and he wants to hand himself in."

The police officer said, "Oh, does he?" You could hear that there were kids playing in the background. It was a Saturday.

“Can he come in on Monday morning to Belgravia police station, please?”

My solicitor said, “Pardon me?”

He said, “Yes, he can just come into the station on Monday morning. That's fine.”

Q: So you were not dangerous enough for them to lose their weekend.

Bullivant: Yes. Henry said, “OK then, that's fine.” He hung up the phone. You had them threatening to pull out of the European Commission of Human Rights, you had this massive coverage that we were armed. They actually said that phrase on the news, “they could be armed and dangerous, do not approach them.” These are the sorts of the things they were saying.

Wanted posters were everywhere. When they found out where I was, they said, “You can come into Belgravia police station.” Belgravia police station is the one closest to Buckingham Palace. It is in the center of London. “Just come into the center of London, hand yourself in. It's cool.”

I did that, and Monday morning my solicitor was waiting for me at the police station. I actually did not know the way to the station, though I had been held there before. We had obviously been taken there in police vehicles and taken cabs home. I did not actually know the way from the train station to the police station. I went and asked a policeman for directions. He did not recognize me. He says, “Yes, this way.” This is just surreal. I handed myself in, and they questioned me for a whole day, basically, on everything. I just declined to comment on anything.

My solicitor and I prepared a short written statement about the reasons why I had absconded and the situation I was in. After that I just said, "No comment" to everything. By the end of the day, I was in Wandsworth prison.

Q: What happened thereafter?

Bullivant: Wandsworth is not normally where they send terrorism suspects.

Q: Belmarsh.

Bullivant: Yes, it is normally Belmarsh. I went to Wandsworth because it was the closest prison to Belgravia. I had never been a career criminal. As I said, as a kid I was quite introverted, into stories and stuff, and films. I was a movie geek. That was me, fundamentally. Being in prison was such a shock to the system. I suppose if you are a career criminal, it goes with the territory. You are prepared for it. You are that sort of person. I was not that sort of person. I think I would have been a lot worse of if I had not come from Dagenham. I knew a bit about how to handle myself, and to be with these sorts of guys, but I was not by any means like that.

I remember the first day, the first association time, when you are walking out of the cell for the first time among people. I did not know what to do. I was completely out of my element. The only thing that was running through my head, the only reference point I had, was prison movies. Seriously, that is not a good reference point.

There was this guy sitting at a table. He was sitting at a table, and everybody around him was standing, even though there were chairs at the table. He called me over, and in a Russian accent he said, "You, come over here."

I was absolutely terrified. I thought, "I have to seem big and tough, and not back down or anything. At least if they think I'm dangerous, maybe they won't do something to me." I went over there and he looked me up and down.

He went, "You. You're the one that wants to blow up London, aren't you?"

I thought, "Now is not the time to tell them that you are a wuss." So I looked at him sternly, and said, "That's what they're saying."

He said, "This isn't my country. I don't care. You're all right."

After that, I did not know what to do. He did not say anything, so I wandered off. I felt a little bit safer after that first encounter. It was just surreal being in prison.

Q: How long were you there?

Bullivant: I was in that prison for about three weeks until my first court date. After my first court day, when I went to the magistrate's court to try and get bail, which we all knew I would get refused, I got put in Belmarsh. Belmarsh was a completely different kettle of fish. There are a lot

more practicing Muslims, and a lot more people in there for similar related issues. In prison there is very much a gang mentality. You might have five guys who used to be in a gang together from South London who went in together, these guys from Essex, these big white gangsters, and some Russian guys or this and that and the other. They have all got their little gangs. Maybe fifteen, twenty is the biggest you will get, though, before people bickering and whatnot. There were 230 Muslims. We were all there for pretty much the same reason. We all knew that we were the scapegoats at the time for society, for everything.

There are a lot of things going around in the news about these Muslim gangs. It is not really the case. They were one unit, and they would look after one another. But they were not going around aggressively forcing people to convert, or trying to take over anything. During my time, all I saw was that they would be nice to people. People would come to them if they wanted sugar or this or that. The Muslims would be generous with the other prisoners, non-Muslim and Muslim. But that said, if you crossed the line, if you were violent to one of the Muslim prisoners, all of them would back that person up and support them. There was an Afghan guy who was due to be extradited to Pakistan, and he was beaten up by a couple of white guys who were racist. They thought he was Taliban, fighting "our boys." They beat him up quite badly. But thereafter every wing that they got moved to in the prison, they got beaten up twice as badly. They eventually moved into another prison, and they got beaten up in that prison as well, because it is a small world and everybody knew everyone, and as soon as it got out, they had to put them in isolation.

I can see where this thing of Muslim gangs comes across, but it is not the way that it is portrayed in the media. They will protect themselves. A lot of them are in there for things that they are

probably going to go to prison for life, so they do not really care about a couple years for beating up a bigot. It is like what Moazzam [Begg] said in his interview — when you feel like you are being attacked from all sides, they formed the Lynx gangs in Birmingham. In prison, the Muslims, we all got to do *jumu'ah* [Friday prayer] together on a Friday. Unlike the other prisoners, where you have all different faiths and religions, we are all there in one place together. There was always nothing but hugs and love for everyone. It was the only time when everyone got to see everyone else. There was a lot of camaraderie in prison. Belmarsh was a lot easier to handle because of that. But at the end of the day, you are still locked up in a cell on your own for the best part of twenty hours a day. That is a lot of time to be left alone with your thoughts and with fears and worries about how you are going to get through this, how you are ever going to put your life back together again.

Q: What were your solicitors telling you at this point?

Bullivant: Basically, there is not a lot your solicitors can do to help you when you do not have the evidence. Solicitors work within the framework of the law. If they are not given any of the tools that they are used to working with, there is very little they can tell you. Although you know you have got the best on the case, all they can tell you is that what is happening to you is unfair, it is unjust. At some point the truth will come out but we do not actually know how we are going to do that. Henry described it to me one time as playing darts in the dark, having been spun around. You have got a blindfold on a guy, and you give him the darts, you point him in the direction of the dart board, and then you spin him, and spin him, and spin him, and spin him. He has got to get a bull's eye. He said, "The only hope that we have got is to throw everything into

the case, the kitchen sink. We will interview everybody who has ever known you, and try to show that there is no way that you could be connected to terrorism.”

That meant a lot of very, very long interviews with the solicitors, going through things, and trying to build up everything. One day he brought in my special advocate, who had not seen any of the evidence against me at that time. They went through a “who's who” of alleged terrorists in the UK. Abu Qatada, Abu Hamza, Sheikh Feiz or these people. “Do you know this person, do you know this person, do you know this person, do you know this person?” Just everyone. With the speakers, they asked, “Have you ever listened to their talks?” I said, “No, no, no.”

One of the things that tends to be common throughout these sorts of cases is the computers will get taken. Whether or not they are actually extremists, you will find lectures and stuff there, because people look into them out of curiosity. Maybe some of them do have quite radical views, but whether they are committing a crime or not is another matter. Most people have all these things on their computers. I had nothing. My computer was full of computer games and film trivia. The latest script I had been trying to work on, or whatever. That is what my computer was full of. Abu Qatada does all his talks in Arabic. I cannot understand Abu Qatada. Abu Hamza was that guy with the hook off the TV. You do not want to listen to him. That was my world. I had no idea why they would be saying these things about me.

But anyway, as we said, we had to go through the kitchen sink approach. But the fact that there is nothing you can do to win your case. There is virtually nothing.

The thing is even when they want to out and interview everyone who has known you, people do not want their names coming out in court in a terrorism case. They went to interview someone whom I had worked for a while about what sort of person I was and to determine that the money that I had to go traveling was legally earned. He would not come forward and engage with us because he did not want to be involved in a terrorism case. That happened again and again and again.

In fact, the only people who really, really completely stood by me were the Bengali family that was going to let me go travelling. I got a very funny story one day from the solicitor. He said he went around to my friend's house, and spoke to him and his brother and their mum and dad. He said their mum told him off for about two hours, "Why aren't you doing enough to get Cerie out. He's a good boy, so you should have him out by now. What's wrong with you people?" He said it is the first time he has ever gone to interview someone and been told off. They were some of the only people that stood by me. In fact, their sons were the only Muslim guys that came to visit me in prison.

Q: This is when you were at Belmarsh?

Bullivant: In Belmarsh and in Wandsworth. They were the only people that came to visit me. Arthur came, and my mum came and that family, but the rest of the community were paralytic with fear to come near anyone going through this sort of case.

I was getting quite depressed during my time in prison. Because of the nature of the case, you just feel that there is no way you can ever win this. It is the not knowing, constantly having no idea what their case is against you, why you are being accused of this. How can you defend yourself when you do not even know what the case against you is?

I was facing two cases. Control orders are a civil legislation, so they can only be dealt with in the High Court, which is just with a judge and secret evidence and all that. Then I had a criminal case as well in the Bailey, which was going to be a normal criminal trial but that was only looking at whether I breached the terms of my control order or not. Clearly I had breached. I could not say that I had not. I had been late. I had stayed elsewhere. I had absconded for five weeks. I had a case where I was going to be pleading not guilty to something that I had actually done, but there was a legal argument as to why I was pleading not guilty.

Then I had a case with a secret trial, where I would be excluded for most of it. Even in the civil trial we could not challenge the control order. It was to be stated at the beginning of the trial that the control order was lawful and that, from their perspective, they have to look at it as if it *should* have been on me. I am going into a trial where the jury is going to be told that I am a terrorist and that I have absconded from this order. I have not got a say. I have to agree with that in principle, that, "I'm on this control order and, at the moment, it is a valid, legal restriction."

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Let' pick up again where you were talking about the cases.

Bullivant: Yes, so you have got the civil case, which is in the High Court, where it is going to be a secret trial. Then there is the criminal case where you are accused of being a terrorist, and you cannot actually defend that part of the case. If you can imagine how hopeless you feel at that time, with how little opportunity you feel that there is for you to ever prove yourself innocent. Even before I went to prison, I was pretty depressed. I just started sinking to lower and lower depths.

Q: I am sorry.

Bullivant: Sorry.

Q: No, that is okay.

Bullivant: Basically, one night, in my cell alone, I just felt completely hopeless, that there was never going to be a way out of this, and that they had destroyed my life. I had been moving from one cell to another. I was in the cell at my house under a control order, and then I was in a cell when I absconded. I just felt like I was never ever going to be free again, and probably the thing I am most ashamed of in my life —

Q: If you do not want to talk about it you do not have to.

Bullivant: Yes, sorry, it is hard.

Q: No, no, we do not have to go into it.

Bullivant: Yes, I know. I tried to hurt myself quite badly and kill myself. I ended up getting moved off onto the medical wing of the prison. I don't know why they call it medical wing, because it is just another bit of the same prison and there is no medical help given to you. You do not speak to anyone. You are just in exactly the same situation in a different part of the prison.

My solicitors arranged for a doctor to come in and assess me in there, and he diagnosed that I was suffering from severe reactive depression. But he was just there to do a report for the case and ascertain certain things. I never actually spoke to anyone about it or tried to go through why these things had happened.

In the health care wing things were worse in a lot of ways. There was a guy there who was also on a control order, too. Funny enough, everyone in the prison on control orders all ended up in health care, separately though. There were two other guys in there. Mahmoud was desperate to try and kill himself. He had a family and everything. It was bad enough for me when it was just my mum in the family that was being directly affected, but he had a wife and kids and it was destroying their lives as well. He was pretty determined to kill himself. He cut his wrists and cut his arms and everything one time during a football match, big England match against Croatia to see if they would make into the European championships that year, the 2007 European finals. The officers let him bleed in his cell until the end of the game, when they were ready to deal with

it. There was a guy there who would just defecate on himself all the time. You would hear screams like you had never heard at night sometimes.

There was another guy in there on a control order, Jerome [Hibell]. He had been tortured in Syria with British complicity. Upon getting back, he had been the first person they used forced relocation on. He came back to his country and they put him on a control order virtually straightaway. They moved him away from his family and his wife and kids in London and his mum in London, and forced him to live in this tiny little box of a bed-sit in Leicester, about 200 miles away. He was suffering, obviously, from post-traumatic stress. He had been tortured for the best part of eight months really badly, and came back and he was just locked away in this box. He was in there. He tried to hang himself.

Everyone was going through a pretty bad time in there. A couple of the prisoners were not really safe to be even mixing. There was a guy who threw boiling hot water over another guy while we were there, and it was just a surreal, horrible place. You are locked up by yourself twenty hours a day. There is nothing done to try and help you or support you. Clearly people were there because they had issues and they needed some help, but it was just the same as ordinary prison routine.

I was there until my trial started. Then when my trial started, I was going from health care to the trial every morning. That was sort of six in the morning.

Q: How long did the trial last?

Bullivant: Not too long. Two weeks.

Q: This is the criminal or the civil trial?

Bullivant: This is the criminal trial in the Bailey. They had all these instances where I had breached my order from being an hour or two hours late signing in to being just a couple of minutes late signing in. There was the incident where I stayed at my mum's while she was ill, all manner of other things. They said that I was talking to Lamine and Ibrahim after we were banned from talking to one another.

Q: That was also part of the control order?

Bullivant: Yes. That was part of the conditions that came later on. As I said, every couple of months, they would keep on adding more and more conditions. There were about fifty breaches in all, and they read out the list of them all, all the breaches. Then they said, "Well how do you plead?" I said, "Not guilty, not guilty, not guilty, not guilty."

Then when I went up in the witness stand, the prosecution read out the list again and said, "Were you late on this day?"

I said, "Yes."

"Were you late on this day?"

“Yes.”

“Did you not stay at your house on this day?”

“Yes.”

“Did you talk to Lamine and Ibrahim?”

“Yes.”

Ironically enough, we got in a bit of an argument about that one. The prosecutor was saying that it was criminal for me to talk to Lamine and Ibrahim. I said that, “No, the wording on the control order was that ‘you cannot communicate directly or indirectly with anybody on a control order and on a list from the Home Office.’”

He and the Home Office obviously took that to mean on a control order and anybody else whom the Home Office would want to put on that list. I said, “No, grammatically, it's on the control order AND on the list from the Home Office, so they have to be on the control order and on the list from the Home Office, not either/or.”

He was an Oxford-graduate and one of the top barristers in the country that tried all the big terrorism cases. He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, one of the proper old boys' club,

and he got schooled on grammar by someone from Dagenham, some cockney lad. I was right, so they dropped those ones.

We said that the control order was having such a massive effect on me and such a destructive effect on my life that it was unreasonable that I could have complied with all of the conditions. It was just impossible. That was the argument we made and the case that we made about the effect and how bad it had been on my life.

They said, basically, that I was faking it. I had a mum who had mental health issues. I had done a mental health nursing degree for six months. I pointed out that during that time we were just getting up to how to make a bed. We had not really got into the psychology of mental illnesses yet. They were saying that it was all a big blag and that the jury should not believe me.

The jury, thank God, did believe me, and I was acquitted on all charges.

Q: Do you remember what you felt when you got the news of that?

Bullivant: Elation does not even come close to summing up how you feel. There was this one particular officer, Bob Eager, he was a real nasty piece of work. Some of the police officers, you get the feeling that they are just doing their job. They do not really care one way or another. You are on a control order, "it is our job, we have to go and do this." Bob Eager clearly relished it. He took it on wholeheartedly and loved it, loved showing that he was more powerful than you and

that you were something less than what he finds on the bottom of his shoe. He would show that at every opportunity he got.

He was there. He and I, clearly, we never got along. There was one time, actually, he had been interviewing me for some of the breaches — this was a while ago — and he was working on another guy who was on a control order, another case, Zeeshan Siddiqui, who I had only met after being on a control order. I met him a couple of times. We would end up talking about Bob Eager. Zeeshan had absconded before I had absconded and no one knew where he was. He went out of a bathroom toilet while they were stopped or something. Just disappeared into the never-never.

Anyway, Bob was interviewing me, and all through this interview, I would say, “No comment, no comment, no comment.” Then at the end of it, when he turned off the tape, I looked at him. The only thing that even helps you keep your mind even a little bit is these small acts of defiance, whatever you can do to sort of assert that you are still you and I have still got my character. I am still me. You cannot take me away from me.

I looked at him and I smiled. I said, “Have you had any luck finding Zeeshan yet?” Clearly I knew they had not. He just disappeared. His face went red. He dived over the table at me and just screaming and shouting: “I know you know where he is. Tell me where he is.”

He was there in the trial when all the “not guilty” started getting read out. I just smiled at him. He got out and he stormed out of there in a right strop. I got a lot of satisfaction from that, and I

know I should not get satisfaction from another person's pain or whatever, but sometimes the lower parts in yourself win out. This guy had taken pleasure in ruining my life, and I had got a little one-up on him now.

I just felt so elated that twelve ordinary members of the public, twelve decent human beings, had seen that what was happening to me was an injustice. If they were not going to convict me for fifty breaches, that was a damning indictment of the control order regime.

Afterwards, obviously, we all watch the films and everything, I was expecting to go out the front door and hug my mum, but they took me back down to the cells. They said that, "Unfortunately, you are not allowed to leave." I got taken straight down from that massive high of being found not guilty. I was locked straight back up in a cell for five hours, and then the police came back to me and put me on the strictest control order that I had ever been on.

Q: They delivered a new control order?

Bullivant: They gave me another control order, and said I was not allowed to go home on my own but that they would drive me home and install all of the equipment there and then that night.

Q: What kind of equipment?

Bullivant: There is a black phone that has one direct line that goes straight to the monitoring company. You have to phone every time you leave the house and every time you return to the

house. There was a tag, curfews, and restrictions on what areas I could go in. Because I have never had anything compromising on my computer I was allowed to use the Internet, but I cannot even remember all of the conditions.

I had just won my case because the last control order, which was less strict. Then they go and they put an even stricter one on me, a point that was not lost on the High Court judge, because when he saw it —

Q: This is the civil case now?

Bullivant: In the civil case, later on, and he said that I would have had more reason to breach this one, and the Home Office would have had an even weaker case to prosecute him on it based on this. But I remember I won my case in the Bailey in December the 13 or 14, 2007, so almost two years from when I was put on it in early 2006.

I finally got my day in court for the civil hearing within February 2008. Literally, almost two years. Again, it took about a week, and I went in for every moment that they allowed us in the court, I was there. Because it was a civil thing, I did not have to be there this time. I chose to give evidence and stand up there and take questions. Again, I did not have to in this one, but I wanted to. My solicitors would say it was the best thing to do to prove that “You are wrong here.”

They asked me why I did not have very good plans and why I did not have a lot of money on me and this and that when I was going to Syria. My barrister told me a story that he, as a young lad

backpacking, had gone to Marseilles with fifty quid in his pocket and nowhere to stay, and ended up sleeping on the streets that night, because he could not find a hostel or anywhere to stay. I just told them that story. I did not realize that is not really good in the High Court to tell stories about your barrister sleeping on the streets of Marseilles. But everybody laughed and my barrister hung his head down. It made the point. Do you know what? You only really get to see barristers for a couple of days while this case is going on and then they are gone again. They come in and do all the fancy stuff and you never see them again. It is the solicitors that you get close with.

I gave all my evidence there and we were excluded for 90 percent of the hearing. Most of the time, we were just sitting outside the court, waiting for them to stop talking about secret evidence. Then at the end of it, it is not the same as a criminal thing, where they say guilty or not guilty and the gavel comes down, that is it. The judge said, "I'm going to be giving my ruling in writing in a month and a half's time. Although it's not usual, in this case, I am going to forewarn you all. I'm going to forewarn you all of what my decision will be. I will be questioning the order and questioning the basis for it."

Yes, the judge said that he was going to give his ruling now, and it would come into effect when he gave out the decision in writing. As an advance notice for everybody, he said he was going to quash the order and quash the first one as well, because by now it had been two control orders, one after prison, and one before. He said he was going to quash both of them, and that he would find in my favor that there were no reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Again, obviously, I was ecstatic. I knew now that all we had to do was wait a month and a half for the order to come down in writing and then I would be free.

Q: With the existing control order?

Bullivant: The control order would remain for that month and a half. But my solicitors told me, "Don't worry, he said it in open court. There is no way they can keep the order on you even for this month and a half. We'll phone them up. We'll cut a deal. They know they've lost now. The judge is not going to open up any grounds for appeal. His decision will be final. We will phone them up, and they will probably reduce your condition to some sort of minor point of reference. Just a residence or something, and that is it, so you will be okay."

We called up the Home Office, and they refused to budge even an inch. They sank every second they could out of that order on its strictest level, even to the point where there were backroom games to try and delay the delivery of the ruling because they had to submit things that they did not submit. It ended up being two and a half months extra that I was on the control order.

Q: Beyond the one month and a half?

Bullivant: From the time that we knew that he was going to quash it, it was two and a half months until we actually got a court date when they would read out the ruling and it would become law. My solicitors and everybody told me that you just have to come in as normal, sign

on in the morning, come in, and then afterwards the police will come with you, they will take off all the equipment, and you will be free.

I had a different idea of it. I thought, "This is the day, they can't do anything else to me now." I got a knife and I cut the tag off and I took out all their equipment. It is beeping and everything. I chucked it all in a bag and ran to the train station and got in the underground where they could not track any of it. I had all their equipment and everything in this carrier bag. Strictly speaking, I had just breached my order again ten minutes before it was due to be taken off, or a couple of hours, maybe.

I walked into court and ultimately we had two solicitors in there to manage the case and a special advocate, and our barrister. On their side, they had at least ten solicitors, three barristers, a whole army of people there. All the police were in there as well.

I walked over to their side of the court, and I walked up, again, to the policeman, Bob Eager, and I tipped open the bag in front of him, and everything tumbled out and crashed all over the place. I said, "I think this belongs to you." I walked over and sat down in my seat and waited for the ruling to come down.

For the criminal case, they had not got a Home Office-approved psych report, but for the civil case they did. This report was even more in our favor than the report made by our defense psychiatrist.

The judge made reference to all of these things, made reference to the fact that it was out of order of them to have said that I was faking it when they had not even bothered getting their own review, and that when the second review actually came out, it had supported me even more. He said three times there were no reasonable grounds for suspicion that I had ever had any reason to be put on a control order.

During the course of the High Court case we had found out quite a few pieces of evidence to do with the case and why I was put on the control order. We went through all of those and explained why they were nonsense. He said, "To be going traveling when you are young without many plans and without loads of money is normal. You are only picking up on that because he is a Muslim. That is not a good enough basis for reasonable suspicion."

There was an anonymous phone call that was made to MI5 and they had been questioned by our barrister from behind a screen, and they could choose not to answer any question they wanted. But we had managed to get them to admit that they had never checked up on this anonymous phone call. They had never checked on who it was. They had never gone and asked me further questions. They had never done any sort of background investigation into why this accusation would be made against me.

We did all that background stuff, and we found out that it was a friend of my mum's who was drunk at the time, and thought to herself, "Why would this ordinary white guy from Dagenham become a Muslim? He must be becoming a terrorist!" In a drunken state she phoned up and left this anonymous call. She actually admitted that to my mum and apologized for it.

But that was part of the evidence, and we showed that I had never had any knowledge of Garcia or the fertilizer people, or anyone involved in that case. Mohammed Junaid Babar was brought up in the case, supergrass from America.

Q: Mohammed Junaid Babar.

Bullivant: Yes, they brought up Mohammed Junaid Babar in the case, and a few years before I had even become Muslim. He had given his big statement, and he said that the people were interested in blowing up a nightclub. Part of their evidence that they had used was that I had worked in nightclubs, and therefore knew the security of nightclubs and would be a perfect person to help them smuggle in a bomb into a nightclub.

The judge rubbished that and said that you cannot hold the fact that he worked in a nightclub against him in this way. It is just ridiculous. He pretty much completely came out on my side. The only thing he did say on their side and on their behalf was that when the Home Office and the police put the control order on me, they did it thinking that I was a threat, and they were not criminally negligent in doing that.

Q: How did that caveat by the judge make you feel?

Bullivant: It upset me, because he had said, and he did say, that if he had seen it the day after it was put on me he would have quashed it. But I understand the law, especially when you get to

that level, is not just the law anymore. It is politics and games and he has to cover the back of his bosses as well, otherwise he will never get cases like that again. If he leaves the government open for a prosecution or says that they were completely negligent, he will not remain in that position.

This is the thing I learned about the system. The higher you get up, the more freedom they have, but they can still only rock the boat a certain amount, because every other judge we had been in front of just refused to even see the case. They would just pass it on up, pass it on up, pass it on up. That is part of the reason why it takes two years to get you a hearing, because every judge just does not want to rock the boat on a big case like that. After that, that was when I was finally free and I suppose I had my last moment of defiance.

Q: You began to feel free?

Bullivant: Yes. There was no media coverage of the fact that I won all of my cases. Especially in those early days, when it was all still quite fresh in people's minds, I had a guy on the bus tell me I should be hung as a traitor. There was still quite a lot of negativity towards me, but at least now I was vindicated. I knew and the people around me knew that there had never been a basis for this, and I was an innocent man.

Ironically, then and even still now, some people think that the only reason I could have won that is by doing a deal with the government and that I might be a spy or a mole now, and I have heard that a few times from different people.

Q: From within the Muslim community?

Bullivant: From within the Muslim community, because the case was so stacked against me it was literally so implausible, almost impossible for me to win, that they think the only way he could have won is if he did a deal. I remember Alastair came to see me just before my trial started, and maybe it is my love of films, but we had one of those moments, I said to him, “Alastair, tell it to me straight, what are our chances of winning this case? Is it just a completely lost hope?” At the end of the day, I did abscond. I did everything that they were saying I did, in terms of the breaches, not in terms of anything else, but in terms of the breaches.

He looked at me and said, “Cerie, your case is impossible, but we might just win it.”

Q: Now that you think back on it, how did the acquittal and the dropping of all the charges and the squashing of the control orders — how did it all make you feel about the justice system?

Bullivant: That is a very good question. Unfortunately, I would love to say it restored my hope in the British legal system and opened my eyes and all was rosy and well again, but the truth is really that I had an impossible case. I was playing a game of football where I was only allowed two people and had a massive goal behind me, and they had a team of twenty-two.

Q: More football.

Bullivant: With a tiny, tiny goal. The fact that we won the game does not change the fact that the rules of the game were completely unfair. The whole way that they had gone about it, and the vindictive nature in which the Home Office had treated me by refusing to allow me to do a course, by purposefully being obstructive at every single step and every single stage of the process, it still left me with a very bitter taste in my mouth about the way that they behaved.

Still, to this day, I hold that the most important thing was twelve ordinary, decent people of the society — because it is not the society, it is the people that are running it who are in the wrong — who saw truth and justice, and that is the biggest reason why we should stick with the tried-and-tested legal system of trial by jury, and show everyone the evidence and have it out in court.

I got lucky and found one judge in the system who was brave enough and ballsy enough to tell the government, “No.” He was not angling for a peership in the House of Lords. But, really, the fact that I won my case is almost a miracle, and I thank God that I did win my case. But I cannot put it down to the system, because the system created an unfair playing field where all the odds were stacked against me.

Q: How did your Islam, your faith, help you or feature when you were undergoing this entire experience?

Bullivant: I do not think I would be here if it was not for my faith. As I told you, I had some very, very dark moments. I had some very, very hard times while I was on a control order and while I was going through this whole experience, this whole ordeal. Some of those times were

exceptionally dark moments, but I think if it had not been for my faith, all of those times would have been dark like that.

Especially at times in Belmarsh, I needed the support that other prisoners gave you. There is a verse in the Koran about Yusef. Yusef is the Arabic of Joseph and obviously it is in the Bible as well that he spent time in prison, in Egypt. The Koran goes into that in a lot of detail and a lot of depth to the story of how his brothers got rid of him and how he ended up becoming in a position where he gave the advice to the king about the wheat.

Reading the Koran and reading verses about people who had been put through trials much worse than what I had been put through and how that, if we can remain patient with the tests that we go through in this life, then there is something better for you afterwards. In Islam, nothing is necessarily good or evil in the sense. Obviously, some things are good and evil, but in the sense of things like experiences. For example, you can have money and do good things with it and it becomes something that will be a credit to you, and maybe even the thing that will take you to heaven. You build orphanages, you do good things with it, and you do good works with it. Or you can go out and use money to make more money and oppress people. The money is only what you make of it, and it is the same with the time in prison and time on the control order. That is why I am here at Cageprisoners now, because those experiences and those times are only going to be what I make of them. Therefore, I have to try and seek some goodness from them.

Some of the people that I met in prison — for instance, there was a brain surgeon in the cell next to me at one time, and he was eventually acquitted of all charges as well. He was an innocent

man that was in there, and he was one of the country's most promising brain surgeons and he had been locked in up in prison. We supported one another and formed close ties, and even just did stupid things together. We would watch *House* on TV, because you had a little TV when you were in the main cells. I would bang on the wall and shout through the pipe, because there was this big pipe and you could call through to the next cell. "What is it? What's wrong?" He would shout back his predictions on what this strange illness could be and probably 80 percent of the time he got it right. I was just amazed. The guards used to call him Dr. Death. Clearly, they had never played the *House* game with him. Seriously, he is not Dr. Death. But we used to play Battleship stuff through the pipes as well, shouting through, "E4, hit!" Moments like that are what pull you through.

Sometimes, when you are being tested and when you are going through your hardest moments is when you feel closest to God and closest to your religion. I had talked to Moazzam Begg before I went into prison, and he had said that his time in Guantánamo was the best of times and the worst of times.

I had never really understood what that meant. Obviously, I understood the literary references, but when I was in prison, it really struck at home to me. From the religion, there were times when I just felt so at ease with myself and with my situation, and there were other times — because of what you are going through, I guess you overthink your predicament — when you let your brain sort of run away with you, that you become despondent and sink into despair.

From a logical perspective, there was no way I could ever win the case. There was no way. From a rational experience viewpoint, you are in the most lost position you can be. Obviously, it is worse for the people in Guantánamo and worse for the people in Syria. You take some comfort from the fact that at least you are being oppressed in Britain where you are not going to be hooked up to a car battery or sodomized or something.

But you are still constantly taking strength from the faith and from the religion, and from the fact that a lot of the heroes and people that you look up to in the religion are people who themselves have spent time in prison and have written about it. There is a famous saying of a scholar. The ruler at the time was, as happened quite a few times, quite oppressive and bad to his people, and the scholar was speaking out against him. He was put in prison three times during his life. He actually died in prison because of speaking out against the oppression that the ruler was doing to them. After he came out the first time, it seemed like he was going to be imprisoned again, and someone asked him, “Aren't you worried?” He said, “What can they do to me? I carry heaven in my heart. If they expel me from the lands, then I'll travel to new lands and tell people about Islam. If they kill me, then I'll be a martyr. And if they lock me up in prison, then I'll just have private time with Allah.”

Things like that give you a lot of strength when you are going through these tests, to know that these are tests that people have been through before, and there were people in much worse scenarios than you. You just need to remain patient with it.

Q: How did you get to Cageprisoners?

Bullivant: Asim [Qureshi] hunted me down. Obviously, Asim knows my solicitors quite well, and somehow came to hear of my case. I am not really sure how, actually. Anyway, my solicitors gave me a call and they said to me, "Asim Qureshi has given us a call. He's from this group called Cageprisoners, who Moazzam Begg works with, and they'd like to interview about your time on a control order."

Q: You were familiar with Moazzam Begg's case?

Bullivant: I was familiar with Moazzam Begg, and I had heard a bit about Cage here and there, not a great deal. I did not know very much about them at all, really. I had not had any contact with any of these groups while I was actually going through my situation. At this time they were a lot smaller than they are now, and in a more difficult situation as well, because there were more cases and the group was smaller. They said to me, "Look, they're good people, you should do what you can to try and help them."

On the first day back at home, off the control order and off everything, I sat there with my mum, a couple of my Muslim friends who I trusted a lot, and Arthur. We had all discussed it and decided that there was a moral obligation on me to try and get it out there and make people aware of what is going on because these things are only going to put our country more at risk. The more oppressive and draconian the legislation is that we use, the more chances are that you are going to have more homegrown terrorism, and these sorts of problems. So there is a moral obligation because of what I have been through, because of the fact that it was a first-hand

experience and because of the fact that as a Brit and as a British national — it is wrong, I disagree with it in principle and everything — but that, because English is my first language, because I am white, that I will be taken more seriously and be a better interviewee for the media. If it is just another Arab or just another brown guy saying how bad it is, it would not be as effective.

I had already decided that I wanted to do whatever I could to try and help the issue of human rights and make sure that this does not happen to other people. Asim came over and we did an interview in the park, and over the next year or so, I spoke at a couple of events for Cage and we kept loose ties and connections. I was doing a lot of stuff with HHUGS as well, and floating around doing different things with different groups, but not really being in with anyone in particular. Obviously, I was also trying to get the film thing off the ground and trying to rebuild some sort of semblance of a life after two years of void.

Then, probably a few weeks ago, there was a lull in the film stuff and there were a few projects going through that needed some —

Q: Could you talk a little bit about the film?

Bullivant: Yes. I will talk about that. There was a bit of a lull in that, and I phoned Asim, I said, “I’ve got some time on my hands, can I come and work in the office with you guys, do some internship?” He bit my hand off. He said, “Yes, great, come in.”

Q: That was just a few weeks ago?

Bullivant: Yes. I have just come in and started helping out with the detention and morality report. Ironically, I spoke at the launch of the first report, and now I am helping write the second report.

Q: Had you, while you were under the control order, learned about other cases?

Bullivant: Yes, I was in prison with most of the other cases. I had seen first-hand a lot of the effects of these things, and I got involved with HHUGS and I saw the families. When people started to come out of prison, that I was in with, we met up and I spent time with them. Because of what I had been through, I obviously have a lot of contacts and I know these people. As much as I am saying this to you and I hope all this works, anybody listening to this is never really going to understand what it is like to go through that, unless they have been through something similar themselves. These were the only people that I could talk to that understood what I have been through, without even saying a word. I suppose studying and learning about human rights and about the way everything works clearly became a passion for me. I made sure that I was aware of virtually every case and I have been doing a lot of media stuff. After I came off the control order, no one covered it at all. Nobody was interested.

Q: Did that upset you?

Bullivant: It annoyed me that there was such a bias within the media that when I had absconded I was literally on the front page of every paper for almost a week. There was this massive, massive

blanket coverage of this. Then, when I was found innocent and they admitted there had been a mistake, nobody cared. There was a tiny article in the *Guardian*, and a letter in the *Independent* that Gareth wrote herself. That was it. There was nothing.

As the control order issue came up again and again, for different reasons, reviews came out and reports on it. The media were looking for someone to interview about what it is like to live under a control order, and that is when they got interested in talking to this guy who is English and white. Suddenly, in the beginning of this year, when the big review came out of terrorism, they decided they are going to get rid of control orders and replace them with TPIMs, which is just a complete rebranding. That is another subject altogether.

Q: What does the acronym stand for?

Bullivant: TPIMs, Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures. They are being marketed as control orders lite, but the fact of the matter is that they are stricter than the initial control order that I was on. I could go on for hours about how they are counterproductive, and they are going to create more terrorism rather than protect it.

Q: Could you go on for a few minutes about that?

Bullivant: The whole issue with control orders and TPIMs, because they are basically the same thing, is that you have a system of legislation that is isolating a section of our society, and it is only being used on them. When a BNP member was found with the largest stockpile of bomb-

making material in the UK, he was charged under the 1896 Explosives Act, not the Terrorism Act. He spent less time in prison than I did on remand for my control order thing.

These sorts of things do not go unnoticed by the Muslim community. I know that certain people out there in society have tried to use my case to radicalize people. “Look, he is white. They are only oppressing him because he is Muslim. They are out to get us, we need to fight back.” When you have legislation like this —

Q: How did you find out about that?

Bullivant: It was not violent people that were doing it. It was Al Muhajiroun, who you hear about and come into contact with here and there. When I heard about that, I felt completely annoyed because they had never done anything about it when it was going on, so what cheek do they have now to use it as rallying call when they had nothing to say? Even if they did, I would not want them to say anything about it anyway, if they are going to say it in the way they do.

The fact of the matter is that they are part of the problem. You would not have the EDL, English Defense League, going around threatening to burn down mosques if you did not have Al Muhajiroun burning poppies. They are all reactions to one another. Islam is the middle path. If you handle yourself with wisdom and according to what Islam actually says, then you end up with characters a lot more like Moazzam and a lot more like Asim than people like Anjem Choudary. They understand that, yes, we have to stand up for our rights, yes, we cannot allow ourselves to be oppressed, but we have to do it in a correct way without compromising what we

believe in, and without compromising what makes us who we are, but while being respectful and dealing with these points in a way that will actually make everyone's lives better.

On one side of the coin, you have got control orders which are radicalizing people and being used as a recruiting tool for further isolation and extremism. On the other side of the coin, you have got a measure where over 25 percent of the people on them have absconded. If these people really were dangerous, deadly terrorists, then this is not protecting you from them because they can just get up and go whenever they want. I got up and went, and they could not find me. I had to come back myself. You've got a measure that does not protect us and does not offer a suitable amount of restriction and protection, and cannot under any law because of the Human Rights Convention, because of the fact that you cannot just put people in prison without a trial. They tried that after 2001 with the Belmarsh Eleven. It did not work. They cannot do it legally.

Control orders are the best they have got, and they do not work. They cannot protect you if these people are actually dangerous. So for the sake of a measure that does not protect us, we are radicalizing huge swathes of the community, and any one of the people on these orders that wants to go can go. You have got exactly the same problems with TPIMs.

If we want to be safe, we have to go through tried-and-tested legal methods. This is what I want. People say that Cageprisoners is some front group for Al-Qaeda and we are just trying to protect all the terrorists and make sure they are free on the streets. That is nonsense. If they are terrorists, if they are a danger to the public, then trust me, they need to be in prison. I could not have

absconded from prison. There are bloody walls everywhere and cages and doors and, trust me, you are not getting out.

Mouloud Sihali, in a documentary interview, said that within his boundary there were three tube stations. If he was a terrorist, he had more than enough time to go and commit an act of terror at these tube stations. His control order allowed him to go on the underground. If people are dangerous, then they are committing a crime, by its very definition. You cannot be dangerous to other people without committing a crime. If they are not, then you should not be locking them up, because you are just going to make the situation worse. All of those points are still true for TPIMs, because it is all still based on secret evidence.

Q: Let's close by talking about your film work.

Bullivant: My other passion.

Q: I know that you have been interested in film for a long time. Just talk about what you have been doing.

Bullivant: Arthur and I have been making short films and filming things ever since we were kids. Ironically, because of all the terrorism stuff, and through Cageprisoners as well, we finally got a break into the industry. The sad thing about the film industry is that it is a lot less of what you know and a lot more of who you know. It can be very, very hard to break into it.

There was a Canadian director who got in touch with Cage looking to possibly make a documentary on control orders. He came and met me and we had coffee and a bite to eat, and he was asking me about control orders. It was a shorter version of the same conversation I have had with you. He left me his number. I called him up again after a few months. I said, "Did you ever decide to do anything with that control order thing?"

"You know, to be honest, I really couldn't find a good angle and a good story that hadn't already been told, and I didn't just want to repeat the work other people had done. So I'm not going to be working on that."

I said to him, "Have you ever thought about doing a dramatic film?" I knew he had made dramatic films in the past. He said, "Go on, I'm interested." He was still in the UK. He had come back, and he was visiting his girlfriend over here.

We met up again for a coffee, and Arthur and I pitched him a story for a film, which was basically an amalgamation of four or five people that I was in prison with. It was a bit of my story, and a bit of a few other people's. He really liked it. He said, "Cool, write it for me then."

Suddenly Arthur and I look at each other and think, "Crap, we have not actually written a full-feature script for a professional milieu before, but, cool, we will write it. We can do this." We went off and wrote him a synopsis first and a beat sheet, and we eventually did a script. He came in as a scriptwriter as well, and worked on it with us. We have been working on it now for almost a year. It just went to Cannes, and we have got a producer signed on now and a couple of stars as

well. Emma Thompson has agreed to be in it. She is going to reprise her role as Gareth Peirce from *In The Name of the Father*.

Q: This is like a sequel of *In the Name of the Father*.

Bullivant: It is a completely separate story, different people behind it, but yes, I suppose Emma is reprising her role, so there is that continuity between the two films. Although Gareth said, "I will help you with this project, because I know you do a lot for other people, and I'll do what I can. But I have one rule."

We say, "What's that?"

"You can't use my name. It has to be somebody else. I'm not going to be in another film."

So Emma Thompson is playing Gareth Peirce, but not quite Gareth Peirce. It is the least I could do for Gareth after everything, because she hates the fact that she is even in the other film. She is a very self-deprecating person, and much more of a giver. She does not like the limelight on her, as you guys have found out.

The film is getting funding now and entering into pre-production, and we have got some producers that have made things like the *Constant Gardner* and *The Last King of Scotland* involved. One of the producers from *The Kids Are Alright*, Todd Harris, has got involved. We are really excited now, and maybe, as I said, the experiences I went through might be a break

into the film industry, which would be awesome if that is the case. But you never know. Even for every hundred films that get this far, ninety-nine do not make it out and do not turn into anything, so there is still a long way to go, but it is really exciting. It is the closest we have come to actually getting something out there and made. I have made a few short films that have won awards. Arthur and I won an award in Los Angeles a couple of years back, but there is just so little access to the real film industry that it is almost painful at times. But maybe this might be it now.

Q: Good luck, and thanks so much for talking to us.

Bullivant: Thank you very much. Thank you.

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