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**Date:** 8 September 2014  
**Interviewer:** Clara Aguilar Falguera  
**Respondent:** Mohammed Razaq

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**So today's the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014; this is Clara Aguilar interviewing Mohammed Razaq in West of Scotland Region Equality Council for the Project Stepping into Diversity. Could you please spell your name and surname?**

*Err my name is Mohammed Razaq – you want me to spell it?*

**Yes please.**

*M-O-H-A-M-M-E-D. Second name is R-A-Z-A-Q.*

**Okay, thank you. Where were you born?**

*I was born in a city called Mirpur, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan.*

**And when were you born?**

*04.03.55.*

**Okay, so you were born during the '50's?**

*Uhm hmm.*

**How would you describe your decade in your country?**

*Err what I remember of that erm – very little. Erm, err I come from a village erm economically awful you know erm very poor err little land to – to erm you know work on. And it was quite a poor time. Erm personally you know as I grew up slightly I was a goat herder for the family, we had two goats or something back then and being the youngest in the family I was the nominated person to take them out during the day and along with many others in the village that you know you'd collect and the young children went together and you know, erm that's it basically, that's what I done. That's what I remember the most and another thing I slightly remember is my – one of my uncles was erm a soldier in the Pakistani Army so when he came back I remember fondly that he was coming with you know, and that's when you actually got gifts or some money or some food on the table [laughter], basically so that's some of the things I remember.*

**And do you think that if you grew up in a small village, it was different if you grew up in a big area or a city?**

*Well certainly it would be quite different err because you – in villages you are really dependant on the economy of the village, whether that's land or whether it's other people that may own the land but you work on it so it's very restricted in terms of you know, how – how you would you*



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*know economically err benefit from that so unless you have lots of land, which is fine, or you have a very good you know erm kind of working relation with the rest of the people in the village then – otherwise it's gonna be a bit dodgy. In the cities I suppose erm there are issues. It's good if you can get a job err but then again you need education for that, you need you know some experience of working err you know – err so therefore at my age you know, I had no experience of working or anything like that so – I wasn't really the age as it goes but certainly erm doing what I did in the village at least you know bringing up you know animals was something that you could sell later on and that would bring you in – food on the table I suppose in the long term.*

**Uhm hmm. And how would you describe your family? Did they come from Pakistan too?**

*Yes, erm my family was what they call you know people from that village for centuries. We weren't erm migrants or immigrants as such although my mother erm came from a part that's now Indian side of Kashmir so their family had to migrate but our family – you know my dad's family was there and they were there for centuries. Erm, is that what – was that the question?*

**Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you said that you were the youngest one in the family?**

*Yeah, yeah.*

**How many?**

*Oh, siblings? Yeah, err I have three brothers older than me and I have err one sister older than me.*

**And in that moment was it considered a big family or was it normal to have that number?**

*No I don't think so. I mean in fact, it grew afterwards err you know I have another two siblings which are younger than me so erm – so there was another two after that so erm I don't think it was a large family. Not – not by going what was around us. Err no.*

**Uhm hmm. And what did you – when did you leave your home?**

*Erm my – actually it was in stages – my father had left erm when I was born – he didn't like me I think [Laughter] when I was born another face to feed so he came to the UK in 1955 err and then err my two elder brothers came in 63 to join my dad here in Huddersfield and then I along with my other err rest of the family, my sister and brother and my mum, we came in December 64 to join the family here.*

**Uhm hmm. And how was the experience coming to England?**

*Oh it was a wonderful experience originally erm because you know being at that age you like to go out and about you know which you've never done – you know it's exciting. New things are always exciting aren't they? So erm it was a first time – I travelled with the whole family to the City Centre because we'd never been to the City being in the village, you know you hardly go unless there's – erm and also the fact that we were altogether. We had never been together on any trip really erm and also the first time going on to a train – I hadn't been on a train before and we travelled to – to Karachi which was the capital of Pakistan at that time and it was a long*



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*journey I think it was a 24 hour journey err sitting vividly – I remember that very vividly sitting on the floor – there were no seats, it was just floor at that time. Whether you know there were seats on other parts but I don't know so erm that was quite exciting then going to Karachi which is a city was quite exciting we – we stayed there for about two weeks while our paperwork was – you know paperwork was sorted and then we flew out from Karachi to London in about two or three weeks after that I think. So quite exciting.*

**So you remember as a good memory like in a positive way?**

*Yeah, yeah it was very positive – definitely positive – but there was a moment when I got here you know – the same day when we got here in Huddersfield my dad had already you know put a deposit down on a house so we did have – we did have a house to come to -. The first day erm because my two elder brother were already here one of them said let's go to the shop that same day as we walked in within an hour or so – I think it was about an hour or so he said "Come to the local shop" which was at the bottom corner so I went with him along with I think my other brother and coming back the way – because I was younger they ran and got into the house and I didn't know which house it they went in [Laughter] erm oh it was frightening. I didn't know any English, I didn't know anybody, I didn't know which house they went to erm – that was a very scary moment for me erm so just like any other kid or child I leaned against this particular door and started crying of course err and hey and behold the door opened at it was our house but you know- but it was quite a scary moment.*

**Yeah I imagine that having to face to – to use another language and you didn't know erm was – I imagine it was hard to communicate. Apart from language as a kid, what do you think you had to face at that moment?**

*Well apart from the language you know I went to primary school there so I was at that age that I could get into the primary school and I loved – I loved school. It was great, because I'd never been to school before that by the way just to let you know, that was my first school erm and I loved it and I learned the language very, very quickly – it wasn't really hard, honestly, I never had a problem with language - apart from that first day [laughter]. Erm as soon as I went into the school I don't know whether that was a week later or two days later I can't remember to be honest. I can't remember when I started the school but err language wasn't an issue, the area was okay, there was a number of ethnic minorities in the area which wasn't too bad, you get support and the language then you know but I did find you know I suppose not so much in the primary school but the secondary school a few years later was quite a tough time.*

**Yeah. Why?**

*A very tough time. A lot of racism, a lot of bullying, bullying goes on naturally it doesn't matter which race you come on but add that the race and you – you know, it was very intimidating. They were frightening times within the secondary school. Not the primary school, I don't remember any incident in the primary school to be honest err but the secondary school because you have to travel away, you know you go on a bus and go to the school which was a bit – two or three miles away and being in the playground and the corridors it was a bit frightening. There was a lot of racism at that time.*

**And apart from you – you come from Pakistan, were there other people from – not from England?**



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*Hmm, yeah there was but I – as a child you don't form that kind of you know erm collective with others who may be come from the same place although later on you manage to do that, you have friends, other people that can support you, you know if there was any fighting or things like that you know you do manage to get that but in the initial time or when you're on your own you still - yeah a problem.*

**So you – you arrived in England in 1964 and then told me that you moved to Scotland four years later?**

*Yeah, I did. That was because initially my father had moved to – initially came to Kirkcaldy in Scotland in 1955 err and he worked there and he had an accident – an industrial accident and a person from Glasgow helped him with his language and you know dealing with the employer at the time err he was hospitalised for a year I think err so when he came out of hospital he joined other family members down south in England err and however he kept in touch with the person that helped him here you know with the language and other things, he was a Pakistani chap and during that time that Pakistani chap had done well and got businesses here and because he came back and forwards he said your family and my two eldest brothers were working and my dad – they were working in textile industry so the pay wasn't great and health wise wasn't great either you know because your scoffing a lot of you know textile stuff down your throat while working there so he said "Why don't you come to Scotland? Or I'll give your son a job here. I'll; give him a lot more than what he earns there. He can work in the shops for me and once you – he you know gets to know the business then we can help you buy a business here" so that was summer of 68 so I – I was with them when they came to Scotland, my elder brother and my dad and me came to Scotland to visit this dad's friends err and they agreed that my elder – one of my elder brothers would come here and work for them in the you know the business so when we went back I said I wanted to go as well. I was still of school age, I was only about 13 still. He said "What would you do?" I says "I'll go to school there and I'll help in the evenings" and things like so I – I did – they did allow me – I don't know how – they did allow me to come. So that's how we came to Scotland, so my brother worked for this family and I helped at the weekends and after school and went to school there as well.*

**And after this you stayed here until ...?**

*Yeah after that err what happened was – my elder brother along with another older brother went back to Pakistan to – to marry - that was I think 1971 I think and I was the only person in my family here in Scotland and my dad's friends offered us a business here which is – it's not far from this building actually he said "You can have this building – err this business which is very good" and it's only – I think at that time it was about £6,000 for a business so I phoned my dad up in England and I said you know "There's an opportunity" and he says "No, no we've not got the money I've just got – spent all the money on your two brothers weddings and things like that so I've no money so we can't take on that, we haven't got the money" I says "Don't worry they are going to give us a loan and we can pay it back" "Oh, no, no we don't want to take any loans" So I said "Don't worry about we'll pay it back. I'm here and I promise you I'll pay it back" so he did agree. So erm one of my eldest brothers he was just about to start College in Huddersfield so he came along with my dad to Glasgow and we opened up our business and we just stayed here and we were very successful – at one time we had about 12 or 13 shops that we were doing and a business in Pakistan, Kashmir and everything, you know. So that – that was the ...*

**Uhm hmm. Can I just ask – what was your fist impressions of Glasgow and how did it kind it differ from Huddersfield?**



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*Well first impression of Glasgow as soon as you get to Carlisle you don't understand what people are saying. [Laughter]. Honestly, that was practically – as soon as the train stopped at Carlisle and people started talking it was – I'm sure it was Carlisle you know because the accent was – I just couldn't understand it and we wasn't in Glasgow at that point so – I don't know if there's other stops at that time you know maybe past Carlisle but I just felt it was Carlisle you know, knowing now that where the border is but certainly the language was quite – the thing that really came across as something that was exciting. Err nothing else basically. The other thing was that although I had already kind of erm been exposed to that is where in England the houses are single houses with back and front gardens and so forth, here climbing up stairs that was quite different and ...*

**And how would you describe Glasgow apart from memories and that moment comparing to now the city?**

*Well the City's changed quite hugely I mean there was – there was a very small number of ethnic minorities then and most that were here were either on the buses conductors or drivers or they had a shop. That was your main err work for ethnic minorities at that time – it's changed hugely since then and we've got a lot more ethnic minorities not just of Pakistani origin but a lot more others and since erm talking about more recent you know erm because of the asylum seekers err programme – dispersal programme that was about ten years ago before that there were a lot of no go areas for ethnic minorities generally not as if there were – they couldn't even walk in certain places without being racially abused or you know because of the dispersal scheme a lot of people that came, they were actually houses in these schemes because that's where the houses were available nobody else would take them so erm so what happened by them being there yes, they were victims of racism and violence and antisocial behaviour but other organisations stepped up to support them in – as victims like the Police, the Housing Associations, Scottish Government ploughed a lot more money into local organisations so now I – I mean majority of Glasgow there is no such thing as a no go areas for ethnic minorities because they live in every part of Glasgow and it's only because of that dispersal scheme I think willingly nobody would have gone to these areas to live, if you know what I mean?*

**Hmm.**

*So therefore Glasgow is a much better. Not just south side of Glasgow where there's quite a large ethnic minority or this north side but generally I think all over Glasgow which used to be a bit you know, dodgy living but you know people live everywhere now.*

**And I always ask in the interviews if you think that Glasgow now, because we was talking about this, and its people are respectful in terms of immigration?**

*I think in terms of perception I think it's got worse. I think it's got a lot worse with ethnic minorities perception wise erm and that's a lot to do with the media and you know events in the world at the moment err whether it's faith orientated or even Eastern European communities you know new communities joining the EU and that and you can tell by - I suppose it's not even just perception it's all the new regulations that have come in supports that unliking of ethnic minorities or migrants in general. If you look at all the new laws that have been put in place whether for you you know as a migrant to have your family here or your elderly parents here and the restrictions that are there is unbelievable erm sometimes not even human, you know err human rights would be you know erm or should I say kind of erm – human rights would be you know not adhered to to some extent. Erm and the whole kind of onslaught of the media is unbearable actually, it's unbearable. I don't know if you – every day you get something and*



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*more recent one is – I mean a criminal is a criminal. The colour of faith of that person does not matter. I don't know if you agree with that or not – a criminal is a criminal and when you get you know whenever somebody does something a criminal if somebody you know does something it's erm – if he's a Muslim he'll be – say he's a Muslim criminal or he's a migrant – he was a migrant ten years ago or he came to the UK so many years and now he's this but you don't get that with people from other parts of the world. Irish come here, they are not told ten years later, the Irish immigrant came here ten years ago and now he's being a criminal – no you don't get that or their faith and background is never an issue. So it's an onslaught actually and that's not helpful erm and I don't know – is that the question answered? [Laughter].*

**Yeah, it's a very good point absolutely. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.**

*And I – if I can say a bit more I think before 911 my children if I spoke to children, I have a large family erm some were adults at the time and I asked them you know before that if you ask them what do you prefer Pakistan or Scotland or are you more British or Scottish of Pakistani – Scotland they were obviously the Scottish "What's Pakistan got to do with us?" but since 911 that's totally changed because they've not been accepted as Scottish or British because what you get on the media every day is just totally demoralised that sense of belonging to some extent. So I don't know if that kind of – because they can't escape that – it's in their face every day you know whether you're watching the news or watching picking up a piece of paper of a new legislation that coming up – it's – I mean if you look at the legislation that they are talking about just now where these young people are going out to – to fight, you know the – awful – awful thing that's going on in the name of Islam, there's no doubt about it but the legislation that's being talked about is these single people going out of the UK but there's other people that are going out to fight. What about these mercenaries that go out to fight for money – what about them? Are you going to arrest them when they come back? Are you gonna arrest people who are part of erm you know err armies of other dual nationalities – are you going to you know if they are going to go and fight are you going to arrest them as well? It – it's discrimination right from the beginning in the law. It's like the UN for instance. There's only five members that can veto – why? New European Union organisation err countries that are joining – why is there different rules for them when they join? It should be on the same level playing field and if you can't do them a little bit why are you asking them to join? It's simple. If you can't take them on on a level playing field why ask them to join? That – that's my simple kind of err question so we are starting from a discriminatory process that then carries on with that and before you know it "Oh that was then and we need to deal with the issue now" that's what orders you get or "Oh that was then we need to deal with the issue now" so we are not learning from our historical actions. So I don't know.*

**You said your kids erm would say they're Scottish – if I would ask them – what do you feel – do you think – how would you describe yourself in terms of nationality? They would say Scottish would they?**

*Children – in the past as I said they would – I don't think they would have had any hesitation of saying Scottish and anything else afterwards but I doubt if you'll get that now. They may say Pakistani, they may Kashmiri I don't know but I can assure you it's not going to be Scottish.*

**Uhm hmm. And what you? How would you describe yourself?**

*Well I – I am certainly Scottish but very strongly you know erm I used to say Pakistani but I now say Kashmiri for other reasons. But I am not allowed to be Scottish though and that's a very clear thing. No matter how I wish to be but ...*



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**And would you like to change that? Would you like to say "Yes, I am Scottish"?**

*I think so – I think, you know if you're in a country and you adopted it you've got its best you know interest at heart then you should be able to.*

**What do you mean you're not allowed to?**

*Well you are reminded every day, as I said earlier on in the news from a faith perspective "Oh, why doesn't the Muslim community come out and say this is bad?" Why would we need to do that? Have you asked any other community to say that? You know because your faith comes in, your background comes into that. For instance if you look at what's been happening down south about these paedophiles that've been said – they're called Pakistani paedophiles because they are Asian and Pakistani of origin but paedophiles are – other paedophiles won't be called you know Irish or why do you particularly call them Pakistani? A Paedophile is a Paedophile [Laughter] it doesn't matter. You know the grooming thing I know – I don't know if you've read about it?*

**Hmm. Yeah, yeah.**

*Yeah, so really – I mean – is this the first you know grooming gang they've come across? I bet you know, but why in particular do you have that and – and they've really focused on just white girls, I can assure you if they've been grooming white girls – they've been grooming Asian Pakistani girls too so – and it's that kind of thing that doesn't allow you to you know kind of fit in to the – the bigger picture.*

**And how would you describe yourself in terms of religion?**

*Err Muslim. Not practising maybe but a Muslim, yeah.*

**And do you have a place of worship?**

*Plenty. There's 22 mosques in Glasgow. And err I have two or three round – where I – just the area so I can chose anyone I want to go to. Yeah.*

**Erm, yeah, how much close do you feel with your origins and how often do you go to Pakistan or Kashmir?**

*I feel very close to my origins because erm even when I was young I had been returning and going back because we had family like there err even now my mum and dad have retired and they live there. One of my elder brothers with his wife lives there so we've got very strong connections with Kashmir and Pakistan. And also in my lifetime as an adult I went back to live in Pakistan – two years at one point from 1978 to 1980 and I worked on my dad and brought a farm in Pakistan not Kashmir in Pakistan so I worked on it for two years as a farmer and then I spent another four – or about four years in about Kashmir working the family business err and I had six months in Islamabad, not working but just living there. Err so I have very strong connections with Pakistan and my children have also been going and they love going there as well so, yes strong connections.*

**Which are the differences between the way your children grow up and the way you grew up?**



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*Well that's a huge difference erm because I grew up in a very poor environment. I grew up in a very constrained village life. I had ten – if that's the - if you take that part of my life up to ten. I had no education at all. My children went to nursery when they were four, so there's huge differences in terms of education and having the resources, you know day to day resources, nice house, nice everything else erm from time to time holidays so you know totally different err – and if you look at from ten onwards when I was here, my children err were much more supported myself where my parents weren't able to support me because their own knowledge and understanding and language was an issue for me that wasn't the case so my children actually benefitted from that.*

**Uhm hmm.**

*Err and also knowledge of the education system and the employment system so they benefitted from that and also I think a lot of things moved on in schools – the bullying and the racism although it's still there but it wasn't as bad as it used to be because now there's you know rules and regulations are in place and teachers are being trained to support you know, victims and deal with perpetrators and things like that so although it's still – they were of faced a number of things that I faced but not in the same kind of – I think erm not as challenging if I can say it.*

**Do you think they are aware of the differences?**

*Well some things when we talk about these things, you know I have kind of let them know. Whether they grasped that I don't know but also they know that they've had a better deal than I had erm err you know and I left school without qualifications initially so therefore they v- they've got qualifications as they left the education system err so therefore there's a difference already and that was because you know when they started their schooling at an early age, plus they had the support of family to get there, which I didn't.*

**I would like to ask you my last question about your family but regarding to your parents education, what would you like to highlight them and which values?**

*Ooh, tons of values. Erm honesty, my dad is even saying now you know he's was up my daughter's wedding recently – honesty in the first thing erm and he always felt that one should work hard err and work honestly erm one of being honest generally but in work and anything else people need to be very honest and the other thing that is kind of instilled is that you need to support others that are maybe not as well off as yourself or you know, whatever your circumstances if they're worse, you need to support them whatever you're circumstances. I remember when I was even younger, the situation where our village was was erm not far from the city centre, you know the town as they call it err it was only about walking wise I think it was about 20 minutes – it was still a village, you know but at that time you know it was quite a distance and we had a lot of relatives that lived further away err and if they had a hearing at Court of something like that they would come to day before and stay with us for the next day to go to Court because it was nearer. You know they were walking all day to get to our place and the next day is was the jury or whatever they needed to do paperwork or you know formal err so they would stay at ours and I know for a fact that many days when guests came our family went without food and gave them food. Because there wasn't much going around anyway so that's the kind of things that have been instilled err from our parents.*

**Uhm hmm. And you came here to be a volunteer in 1997?**



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*Yeah, well when we had this business you know honestly we were successful and the family business was great, money in every pocket as I usually call it and I didn't know what to do with it. There was tons of money and I didn't know what to do with it, no clubbing, no womanising, work seven days a week morning to night – there was no time anyway err so erm it was easy to make money and I just thought in the later part I was in Pakistan for four years and I seen people being mistreated – the elderly and the poor were very badly treated – they still are I suppose so I just thought you know money making is easy, how do you help others – that value that I was talking about a minute ago, people who are less fortunate than yourself – how do you support them so I thought – so I started doing a wee bit of work while I was still in Pakistan, Kashmir where I lived to support other people that were not as err well off so when I came back in 1992 when I came back to Glasgow, I just felt you know I didn't want to go into the family business I wanted to come out of it erm so that's when I started going back to College and University so I graduated in 97 and I didn't want to work in the business again so that's why and I not worked for anybody before that – I was nearly 40 by then I think, if not more. Erm and I hadn't worked for anybody so I thought I'd come to – and that time it was called West of Scotland Community Relations Council in the City Centre so I went there, somebody knew there was an opportunity for volunteering so I came to volunteer in WSREC and erm I am still here and that was in 1997. Err so I – after about I think four of five months volunteering I got a one day a week's paid job then two days a week then applied for the Office Manager's job that became vacant so I got that and then two years later I applied for a Racial Equality Officers job and I got that and then I think it was 2001 I was made Deputy Director and in 2003 when my you know boss retired err I was made Director, so I've been a Director since 2003. So I've not left the organisation, I'm still here.*

**And you were elected as a Counsellor? Why ...?**

*Yeah, that's another story in itself. We could be here all week. Erm ...*

**Why did you decide to start in politics?**

*I – I didn't want to be in politics actually. It wasn't err a conscience decision err it – it actually came from helping others – when I came back in 1992 erm with that viewpoint of helping others I joined the local Housing Association as a Board member err I joined the local erm Community Centre which is – I don't know where we are – it's across Maryhill Road – I also joined the local Community Council so I started and I think there was one or two ethnic minority organisations to see if I could be helpful as a volunteer you know being on Boards so that's where I started off and then somebody said you know "Why don't you join ...?" after that which you know I'd done for a couple of years somebody said "Why don't you join a political party as well if you can do more?" err because you'll be putting into you know if you're a member you can put into new you know ways of working or you know possibly you know erm supporting certain types of erm you know issues that would be very valid from our community that we live in so I joined the Labour Party at that time and that was the one that kind of met kind of the aspirations that I kind of felt at that time not that they – that it met all the aspirations I had but it was the closest one at that time. So I joined that party and then – so I became as with other organisations I became Secretary then Treasurer and things like that. So eventually I was asked if I wanted to put my name forward for – for selection as a candidate and I said "No" and I wasn't interested because I working at [Weslake 0:36:11.2] you know I hadn't managed to kind of err by the time they asked me to – to put my name forward that was after – after I think it was 96 or something like that. Erm so I said "No, I'm not interested err then again in 1999 I'm not interested then 2003 I was asked and by that time I was asked by a – a very close person who kind of nurtured my kind of political kind of views. He had died and his wife actually came and said "Why don't you go and*



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*be selected?" so I couldn't really say no to be honest erm so I - I did put my name forward so I was selected and elected in 2003 err and then again in 2007 and then 2012 so I am doing both jobs so that's why I don't have any hair left. [Laughter].*

**Uhm hmm. So thank you so much for your time. I don't know if you would like to say anything else from your point or if you would like to ask anything else?**

*No I'm fine.*

**It's been a pleasure.**

*Yes, it's been a pleasure too.*

**And thank you for your time.**

*Thank you very much.*

**Transcript ends 0:37:28.5**