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Interviewer: Clara Aguilar Falguera

Respondent: Bushra Iqbal

Okay, there we go again. So today's the 10th September 2014. This is Clara Aguilar interviewing Bushra Iqbal in the West of Scotland Regional Equality Council for the Project *Stepping into Diversity*. So please could you err spell your name please?

B u s h r a. Bushra

Thank you. And your surname?

Surname is Iqbal – it's spelt I q b a l.

Thank you. Where were you born?

I was born in Pakistan.

And when were you born?

I was born in – long time ago – 1949.

Okay, thank you. So you were born in the last 40's so 40's turning to 50 – how would you describe your early childhood?

Okay, very interesting. I was born in a village – a very small village in Pakistan Punjab area and I went to a primary school err in our village which was quite far from my own village so I had to walk to my school. Erm it's was very different what I've – what we see even today in Pakistan – things have changed but in my time we didn't have as many schools for girls and as I say my school was quite far from my own village and I had to walk there and we sat on the floor having the mats on the floor. In our school we only had erm a couple of chairs which were erm only for our teachers so as they respect they wouldn't have sat with us they would sit on the chair whereas we would sit on the mats. At that time it was very enjoyable. We never missed anything because it wasn't there so erm they were comfortable mats made with the erm very special material and we felt comfortable at the time. We did not have the facilities that we have now like papers and pencils for writing erm we – we used wooden slates and those wooden slates were erm like so we had to re-use them for writing erm we would clean every day a wooden slate so we could use it the following day. Erm the wooden slate was once it's ready to write and after writing we would go to the nearest pond erm because in the village usually err there would be a water pond there and we will go to drink water and erm and that water is being used for various other needs so we – all the children during our break time we would run to the pond and wash our wooden slate and then we put very special type of clay on it and leave in the sunshine and so it will be ready for the next day to use it. We would make lines – straight lines on the wooden slate and then we would write it with the ink and pen which is again the pen err was made with the erm bamboo stick and err adult would help us to erm with the knife to make



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into err the pen shape and also the ink would be in a sort of packet [0:04:23.0] and we would mic in a very very small bottle erm and use water and turn into ink and that was a pen and ink and slate but I can assure you the handwriting – I don't see as good handwriting nowadays. My handwriting wasn't – I wouldn't say that great but my class erm they were genius. So that was my experience education experience in erm in my village and I was like very very early age, I think only five. The first three years I went to this village school and then after that I moved on to totally different environment which was erm the military environment because my brother was in army, he was brigade here so he erm he felt and because my father died when I was very young so he took the overall responsibility to look after us the brothers and sisters and I was the youngest one so and being a girl going to another school on my own was an issue as well and that's the reason it was decided that I would stay with my brother who had just married at that time. And so I joined his family and went to another place which was in Pakistan erm frontier area near Afghanistan and Iran – the place called [ph. Fort Sundiman 0:06:08.0].

And there the life was very different obviously with the – army – army environment is different because there is still a lot of British influence within the army environment even today obviously so I was having lovely big houses and the likes of all sorts of people to work for you but the place itself was a frontier place where erm all the [ph. Pashtoon 0:06:46.1] people lived in the areas and their lifestyle was totally different again. We were there for a good three years and through that time I never saw even a single woman during the day on the road or anywhere in the street obviously they were in the street there was totally likes of men, yes, during the day you would see men there but we did have some friends and I remember my brother – erm brothers friend that we used to visit and they lived in apparently in the mountain but there were huge caves and within those caves there were beautiful houses obviously traditionally erm decorated and all the facilities there and erm they were very happy and warm in there within even each you know the family – huge big family living in this compound. It was a sort of compound that's what I can remember. There would be maybe 40, 50 people living within that – from outside you wouldn't even know that this place existed. I wonder if that's still the case. I would like to go there and see it but erm that's the way their life was and women apparently would have their own women's quarter and they lived happily. They did look after each other. Apparently it seemed that they were happy being protected – being provided and looking after their family erm they didn't need to go outside, they – that's the way at that time I – looking back as well I – I thought would have been the case but I never had the opportunity to ask them because I was too young myself and so ... but looking back I still remember what was it like or what they [0:08:51.9].

But do you think if you – it would have been different for a boy? Your childhood? Was it different being a boy or being a girl when you were a child? Education?

I think of course because being a girl I was much more protected. I must say. My own personal experience is that I was – I was loved – I was protected and I was spoilt, yeah. And yes, my brothers they were more free. They could go – they could go out and you know they can come home late even in the evenings whereas for me it was that I shouldn't be out there late err if I go out to play I would have to come home and that was the case in the village. But when I was in Fort [ph. Sinaman 0:09:42.6] it was totally different we erm obviously didn't see erm the boys playing outside because it was army environment so it was only if we got together in erm likes of army club then I would be – it was more like Europeans and all there would be girls and boys there so there was much difference in Fort [ph. Sinaman 0:10:41.1]. In Pakistan obviously even today you go to a different part of the country and everybody different. In cities it will be different. In villages in our frontier area will be different and there are different traditions there as well but within those tradition I don't think people feel you know the women. Because I didn't



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feel at that time. Looking back now I would be saying "Oh, well if my brother was going out in the evening to play why couldn't I go?" but at that time there was no question. We – it didn't occur to me it was just – that's – that's the way the life is and you just continue.

Uhm hmm. So it wasn't your family that was trying to protect you it was a general protection with girls in general?

I think it was erm in general with everyone that was every girl in the err looked after by their family and that was – that's the tradition that the girls can be erm – I think it goes back to again trying to even err centuries ago, you know how the girls were being used as a something which is there to entertain you and misused for to entertain you do you see my point so err just to protect I think hmm, that was the idea that you know my daughter and my sister is not going to become just to entertain someone but she would have a decent life err but maybe that – that would have been the initial intention and then the culture develops in a way that sometime you – you're denied for the other opportunity to develop and I think personally I thought that some girls – I was lucky that I got opportunity then you know I – luckily I was born in a family which was quite progressive family and those sort of restrictions weren't on me but they can be on for instance those girl I was talking about in Fort [ph. Sinaman 0:12:38.0] who I've never ever seen them outside or may not have seen the outside world so all of their protection would have been err lost it – you know they wouldn't have had the opportunity to develop themselves whereas yes, I go from the village school and I still feel that this village school has given me erm the – the erm the asset – I call it asset because today all the technology go and I will be still able to survive.

Yeah, because I've gone through that sort of system where you've got nothing and yet from a piece of food and from a clay I manage to develop myself and I learned my language, the same I find so to me that is a way good because nowadays you give children so much and they can't even write or count nowadays many children because they are using all these electronic stuff so it that goes – if there is no electricity they can't use anything – they can't do anything and personally I know that erm I'll be still able to do something so I don't – as I say I was lucky that then I got the opportunity to develop myself and went to another city erm I had the opportunity to go to a good high school, college, I came to this country and I continued my progression like self – although I got married, came here erm I had no family err I became pregnant immediately. I had err my daughter when I was quite young and erm there was no one to look after her so I could go to College or University so I had to wait until she was a bit older and she went to school then my second one – second daughter was born and she went to school and only when they started their primary school I went to College here and then from College to University and then to my employment as well obviously I've totally like progressed. I got opportunity here a lot more [than] if I was in Pakistan in my time I may not have got this much opportunity to develop all the things are different at the moment over there.

Before we talk about you moving here and in Scotland, I would like to ask you what would you like to highlight about your parent education. Which values would you like to say these are the most values I learn from them.

Over here? Is that ...? Sorry – I didn't get you're your question, could you repeat it again?

Oh, sorry. Erm, which values from your parents from the education they gave you would you like to highlight or emphasise?

Vales over here or back home values that I brought with me?



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Yeah, exactly from when you were a child your parents.

Yes, okay. Yeah. I think again going back to erm the values I value hard work. Which I saw in the village other people doing hard work and my parents doing hard work and caring for others because I remember erm I was very very young at that time and I remember how caring my father was and then I saw even my mother how caring she was and other people around err for instance my aunt she was used to do her own housework and then she would come to my mother because my mother didn't feel well most of the time my mother was erm not well so he would come and then helped my mother with housework and it's something unconditional sort of love and care for others and I think that's something which is very much part of me even till this day err I – I bring that with me here and something which I value the most – care about other people and I think when you care about other people then as they say "What goes around, comes around" then you get care as well, you know. Erm I also care about that we should never forget about erm the – your creator and that is something which links me to the highest power that if you are caring for other people and you're not thinking about yourself then erm quite often you get hurt because other people don't care about you and err you feel okay if other don't care about you you're not going to care as well and so you become quite self-centred so you need also to have a strength so continuously you do what you value the most and as I say talking about their [0:18:20.7] to start with my family and I needed to have some sort of guideline there because quite often you could see I value this but whatever you value sometime it turns out to erm not as productive for – because other people – you – you can't do it during this world you have to be – you have to be erm associating with the rest of the world as well so the others are going to respond to according to their values so in that case you have to have a benchmark how you are going to adhere to that and I was quitter lucky coming from a family who adhere to these you know the guidelines which are part of our belief so I only took that with me to give me the strength if I am doing something I am doing to please my creator and that's it so there is no expectations so to me I value my faith a lot.

Uhm, hmm.

So that's my most important thing as well.

You said you have a daughter?

Yeah, I've got two daughters.

Two daughters and ...

And a son.

And a son, so three – three – do you think they had a very different childhood in comparing with yours?

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. There are most erm spoilt and children I would say because if you get everything you don't appreciate so if I look at my first daughter she didn't get everything and I see her personality developed different from the second one.

Uhm hmm.



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By the time I had my second daughter when we came here we had nothing at all. When I came here I – and my husband he came initially for studying but he didn't have anything either. We did not have a house. We didn't have nothing. We practically lived with the family who has no even place – enough place for their own family but initially we had to erm live in terrible conditions. Yeah, there was no toilet inside the house – can you believe it – in Scotland and I'm talking about early '70's. - it's not centuries ago. I lived in a house which had a toilet outside and there was no bathroom and we used to go to the public bath to take our bath. So on a bus actually where I lived and from there - it's in Glasgow - we lived in I think it's called like [ph. Lintontoll 0:21:18.8] or something] a place called – that's where we initially stayed there and the bath was somewhere near. I used to take a bus anyway to go to a public bath for taking a bath however so then [s.l. my dad 0:21:35.3] was born and we got a place which had inside washing facility – no hot water – we used to boil water and erm erm gas cooker. I mean I'm not saying that would have been the situation here with every family, but I am talking about mine – my own. Coming here it was a culture shock for me as well because then I – we're from a family which we use – we lived in our big house erm having facilities like so each bedroom with the bathroom, having all those facilities. Food being prepared and served and then I arrived here. So, I go back to the – obviously bad situation but again, that goes true though because I had learned hard way as well.

Uhm hmm.

And I didn't give up. Erm continued my – myself – my – my attitude toward positive thinking and okay the next step is we had to buy a better place perhaps and which we managed somehow through a family friend who knew my father back home and he was this old gentleman very nice when he came to know that I was you know back home so and so's daughter and living in such conditions so he was very kind and he erm agreed erm – in fact practically he said he was going to make all the arrangements which he did and we got a place of our own and that time I was expecting my first one and we moved into this place which was again, erm nothing in the house – totally nothing. I mean there was one broken chair in the house and there was one at which they had left you know which we used at the beginning and erm you know gradually worked very hard my husband and myself started working. Erm my daughter's expecting all this I started then working erm because another friend they had their small business erm manufacturing. They used to make overall – so she said and we became quite friendly and she said I could come with her and help in there erm and their factory and that's where I – obviously. That's the way – we worked very hard we got gradually erm all that was necessities and my daughter – when she was born of course from an early aged she saw us struggling so because that was the sort of bringing up erm she was erm – she was different. Very hardworking she is still and she went to Glasgow University. She did her engineering. She worked abroad and she's one of the most successful, I would say, girl in our family now. Again, I will say the second one different. She likes good life and just think about for the time being erm to – to get the best what world had for her but then she gets married and she becomes totally different so different personality I can't tell you. So caring. In fact she's now the most caring in our family if you ask me. She talks all the rights things.

And your son?

My son, if he was – he was born in my later age – I was I think 37 when he was born and then he had three mothers in a way because my two daughters were also there looking after him and he – it's erm – typical boy, relaxed [Laughter] because he's got his mother there you know, sisters and all as well erm but he's a nice boy, he's done very well. He did his engineering from



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Strathclyde University. He is working in London right now, married happily and that lovely beautiful daughter-in-law. I've got four grandchildren and I ...

Big family.

Big family.

Erm and ben told me that in the 70's you work with a psychologist on research on all children – could you please tell me about this Project?

Okay, this was my very first employment with – at that time it was Strathclyde Regional Council and within the Strathclyde Regional Council there were divisional councils so my first employment was with err Lanarkshire Divisional Council. I was appointed as a – I – I can't remember exactly the title but I think it was advisor err with a team of err – erm people. There was one Clinical Psychologist and there was one School Teacher and myself erm we had to conduct a survey with children who had just arrived from Pakistan who had been assessed as a children with – with err learning difficulties and I think it was shared the number of children when they were being assessed that raised a question for the Education Authority that they needed to do some sort of further research to find out whether these children are being assessed correctly or not so that's the reason they brought me in. Before that I was working as a volunteer with English as a second language classes so I was helping there and I think I was being paid for a couple of days as well so that's how obviously the education – community education knew me and when this opportunity came up I was being – to there – I was paid for that erm so this piece of work involved assessing these children and when we assessed we worked – my – my input was to ask children question in their language and – and also provide advice on cultural aspects which I did for instance when err – 9 years old is being assessed and the child has been given or shown some kitchen utensils or vegetable you know and ask them to tell us what is this so err although in my language they would tell some of the thongs but they were not able to name some of the utensils and I advise them that these are kitchen utensils so if it was a nine years old girl she might know it but the boy will not know it because they are coming from culturally where the boy will be always outside you know with father or other boys not in the kitchen you know they would not even see and apart from that obviously these utensils may not have been used because if I go back to the point that in a village school where – if you – if you show them err [0:30:18.4] and pen they may not be some of them not familiar with so they may be familiar with wooden slate and seen that write. So obviously they need to then come up with some erm more appropriate sort of assessment erm for the male and for the female and then – so we carried out different and they prepared you know, the team prepared different sort of exercises and err you won't believe that the result was totally different so it was more to do with the language than – and so we made the recommendations on this and err that is where than the Education Authority Approved Language Unit which was then established in a Hamilton – the Language Unit came into existence and then these children were treated in the Language Unit and given them the initial English language erm proficiency so they are able to improve their language before joining the mainstream school which erm was the case at that time, that policy was quite erm being considered positive way forward but later on it was the Commission for Racial Equality which err obviously made recommendations that err that a segregation and they shouldn't be separate language units but they should be attached to the school and then within the school these children should be given additional help and it became a discriminatory sort of practice having separate err language unit.

And this was your first employment in Scotland?



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That was my first employment in Scotland.

And why did you came in Scotland – why Scotland?

Why did I come here? I – yes, my marriage was being arranged with my husband of course and so I got married and I just joined him. There wasn't choice. If it was choice I would have left err as soon as I came here because at that time I thought – where I ended up actually there wasn't place for me but only in the later life I realise that this was a good place for me to progress and improve erm and you know I could – I could improve building my own personality here better.

Yeah.

Yeah.

How many years have you been here in Scotland?

Right, I arrived here in err – I – 19 – end of 1969. Yeah.

So 4 ...

No. 69, yeah.

So almost you know 44 years.

Yeah, 44 years.

Would you consider yourself err Glaswegian?

My god, it's been 44 years. You know I didn't really think about it. It's been a long time.

Would you consider yourself erm Scottish?

Erm definitely, yes. Definitely I would. I think when I go back home now – that's the one thing which is quite strange – a lot of people feel very Pakistani, but I don't. I – I feel quite a bit erm internationalist sort of approach but my home is Scotland. That's the way I feel. Personally now – I go back obviously I have been going lately because when my mother passed away erm she left a piece of land which obviously was donated erm to the mosque and I went there and I built a centre over there for women and young girls so erm now obviously I even – when I was working here with erm you know the public sector organisations I realised that they've got a lot of computers which you know – which can be used so I took some of these computers back at my village and started classes over there so girls are learning now – you know the IT skill over there as well as other skills so I go there quite often but I find that country's change so much. I see so much materialism there that the same village doesn't seem the same village that I loved and I got so much values in my early age and I – I feel those value needs to be again err inculcated in young children's minds err because they are living in a very very erm self-centred sort of approach at the moment. I think it's – it's been – became globalised this sort of approach which is sad, you know. There are still a lot of – I mean young people out there but it's not what it used to be you know you could see in certain place you can't see now.

Positive ways.



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All sorts. Is this positive or negative? Again, as I said it depends on – it's – the world changes so quick isn't it? When something which we think is negative but once they are put into positive perspective they do become positive so personally I – from my village obviously what I see there – I think there are some things which are positive and some are not positive. It's just like everywhere else. It would be ideal world and if you ask me is there one ideal place – it's very hard to find nowadays.

Uhm hmm. And how would you describe for yourself in terms of religion?

Erm religion, yes, I think I have a bit more erm application to my religion – I apply in a more than what it was when I was young. Maybe I had some knowledge but I wasn't applying it and I'll do the basic erm values were there and I applied all through my life but now I have become erm with the knowledge and with the experience and realisation erm with the understanding I think I've got better – a lot better understanding of my own belief now – my own religion. I actually understand – our understanding now a lot more, that's the difference and I try to implement as well.

Uhm hmm.

But that's most important thing in my life now but has because most important thing in my life.

And do you have a place of worship here in Glasgow?

Erm I live outside Glasgow and yes, we have and there are a number of erm places of worship here in Glasgow. Too many. Sometimes you think you know and sometimes you have a place of worship but you don't have a real impact on you so erm there's no shortages of places of worship here and I must say in that way obviously this country allows you and erm and sometimes that can be misused as well erm but erm I think having worship place is a great thing as long you run it according to what your religion erm guideline gives you and if you do that that would be the most wonderful thing to have so even in Lanarkshire area we've got places of – we've got women's – actually it's – it's not – in Islam you don't to have a specific place for worship, you can worship anywhere because we do five prayers in a day and that can be anyway you are – at work obviously I'm here at my work sometime and erm I find any corner, any place you know that I don't distract anyone else and I can do my prayer. Things will be – all the business going round me will not stop me from doing my prayer. So – and at the same time we have got women's groups as well where we meet over the weekend and we learn more erm what – what are the commandments of god almighty and what are the likes of guidelines from the – all – from all prophets for erm – it's you know you open your mind and expand your knowledge understanding that when you are living in a multicultural society you have erm opportunity to know what your religion tells you you can apply that and you know you can live the multi feed the Multicultural Society how you give them respect and how you erm live side to side erm having differences in fact we have established actually erm there is this big women's organisation in Lanarkshire erm so Women Alliance and I'm the Chairperson but part of the group we have our erm Christian and Muslim Women's Group which is called [0:41:05.8] Group so erm the Muslim Christian women meet every month and we have lecture looking at the similarities from the both traditions and we become so close friends and went to [0:41:23.5] which is a place for Christians for their erm pilgrimage and we understood what and experienced over there similarly the Christians sisters they came to know a lot about you know the pilgrimage in Mecca we go and you know about Prophet Abraham who is the – who is the erm great great sort of erm father of all the prophets so there are a lot of similarities there and that's was Islam is all about actually it's



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not just err for Muslims it's for the whole humanity and it's only if we understand better and work together.

Uhm hmm. Erm do you think that Glasgow or Scotland in general and Scottish people are respectful in terms of immigration nowadays?

I – I think the Scottish people are very friendly – I find them fascinating how they accommodate the differences as well. There may be some individuals, as I say they will be back home in my country you go to the holiest place in the world and those are the people who are still there and in general yes, they are tolerant and they are friendly people and they respect your – your erm – I sometime and I hear news about you know what's going on in the world – not that everything is true that's being erm told in the media but what story come up and sometime I feel if it was me, my country, I don't think so I would have that much respect for you know people that this news I hear about and yet in Scotland we do get all that respect still. People are very tolerant. So err I'll do the see in the news the negative picture but they don't perceive you immediately negative. They will still treat you with respect and I think that is something which I value about Scottish people. And that's what makes me to feel like at home. No matter, obviously even though from the news but they hear – they have accepted me what I am. They are not perceiving me, you know erm any – any worse and – so that's – they gave me respect by – by doing that actually.

Hmm. When you came here in the 70's did you experience any bad experience for having a different culture, different language, different religion?

Yeah. Yeah, definitely. I think at that time it was for instance again, because I wasn't – I was too young, I didn't know so different world. I was under a lot of stress myself financially otherwise away from family and everything so I don't think I had the ability to reach out and make good friends so we did not make – I was mostly within my own community, you know, the friends, those who were err sympathetic to my situation and helping around. So I didn't make many friends outside and the worst experience was where we lived – it was [ph. Catcar Road 0:45:17.3] we lived in Glasgow and erm we lived in a sort of closed they called it with the stairs and houses erm first floor and second floor and like of that and we lived on first floor and next to our lived two other houses – two other families sorry and these – out of those families there was one elderly man who was the nicest person you know, one could have err a neighbour but the one in the middle – they both used to drink a lot and they'd really scare me after they used to shout and then I said to my husband I wasn't going to clean the stairs so he would do it and one day my husband wasn't in and he came at our door and then he said "Oh, women why don't you clean the stair? Why your husband does?" so that was very sort of frightening experience and I didn't tell my husband because I thought if he goes over to him and there will be sort of fight so I was so scared I used to open door and see if he's – his wife or his around if their door was open I would stay inside, you know so it as quite a bad experience I must say but that was just a one off. I wouldn't say it was a very common. When I went to - for instance you know when we moved to another place we had very nice neighbours erm I went to College, I had wonderful people around me and everything so I started this work with err you know the Community Education and from different people, I must say after that I don't think so I had any bad experience.

Uhm hmm. Erm my last question is would you – when – what does like the word community mean for you?



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Err community is part of the erm – the process like you start with your home right, the very first, your unit is your home and you can't isolate yourself, you know within the home there has to be a link with the community that you live in, in particular the people who are around you and if I go back to my faith obviously within my faith is about your duties that your duty is to look after erm at home for instance, your parents and your children and your siblings, if they need help – it is your quite cascading sort of structure that you follow and your – you're of course grandparents and uncles, aunties, however err after your home is immediately your next door neighbours so you would and as for the neighbours are concerned it doesn't say just one neighbour or two neighbours, you know up to 27 houses around you – are your neighbours so there are very clear commandments about neighbours you know how you would treat your neighbours, how – if some – one member of your neighbours is in pain and you did nothing about it obviously you are going to be asked by your creator that you had the ability and yet someone was in that sort of situation and you did nothing so that immediately your responsibility to ensure was going on around you in the community and so quite often and that's the reason see the model that I err started here that was following exactly okay, my family and then the people around us and that you know and the Christian and the Muslim, it wasn't just the Muslim so this women's group is sort of mixed group there and this is another befriending group that I have started recently that's on so befriending is not only for Muslim, it's for Christian – okay the needs are different which we need to look at and we can accommodate so the community is very much part of it. I call it community is my extended family and that then extends to for instance it's not the community where you are living, than it goes further to the community – the whole country as a community and then you look at the international level and you see the whole world is your community because they are the creator of the same creator and you are – you're you know creators family. So that's the way I see the community.

So thank you so Bushra. I don't know if you would like to say anything else? Or that's fine.

Erm I – the only last point I would like to say is As-salamu alaykum [0:50:45.7] which means that Peace be with you and God's blessing.

Thank you.

Transcript ends 0:50:57.8