



SID-0024X0001M0

Date: 11 September 2014
Interviewer: Clara Aguilar Falguera
Respondent: Asifa Hafiz

So today is the 11th September 2014. This is Clara Aguilar interviewing Asifa Hafiz in the West of Scotland Region of Quality Control for the project Stepping into the Diversity. So could you spell your name please?

Yeah, it's ASIFA HAFIZ.

Okay, thank you. Where were you born?

I was born in Bolton, England.

Yeah. And when were you born?

1975.

Okay, thank you. So you were born during the 70s. How do you describe that date?

Oh, well I was quite young, in the lateral part of the 70s. [pause] How could I describe that? I was in England. In all honesty I don't have a lot of memories. [laughs] Just had a lot of fun, I guess, at school.

Do you think it was a good moment for a child to grow up in England?

Well, looking back at it now, when I spoke to my grandmother, who passed away just recently, speaking to her she said there was a lot of respect. There was a lot of love for neighbours and she was an emigrant. My mum's mother and father came into this country from Indian and then moving into Pakistan after the partition in the late '50s. And so they were in this country for quite a while. And I don't know if they ever understood racism but from the way they spoke I don't think they really experienced it to a big degree at all. They actually enjoyed living in England.

And why did your family decide to come to England?

My family have always travelled. My grandfather was a diamond merchant in India and he would travel the Far East a lot to..... looking for diamonds really and bringing them back into India. When the partition happened, the fight for independence there was a lot of bloodshed on both sides, both Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs all killing each other. And in terms of safety all Muslims fled to Pakistan and the Hindus and Sikhs fled from Pakistan to India. And my family lost everything, absolutely everything. Being, you know, top of the game, they were homeless, no money, and whatever money my grandfather had, he didn't want to build a life in Pakistan because he bright enough to understand that this is a new country, there is nothing here yet, nothing has been put



SID-0024X0001M0

into place with its politics or systems to run a country. He left. He moved to England and made a life there building his company. Well he had a market stall then selling various socks, underwear and he had that market stall up until his death. And my uncles, my mum's brothers took over the stall and both my uncles now own factories that make.... That make the stock, you know, the socks, underwear, the vests which get transported all over the world. So from a small little stall they made it quite big, yeah.

So your parents, mum and dad were born in India, Pakistan, or....

My mum..... my for what it's worth..... We're across all continents. My mum's eldest brother and eldest sister were born in India. The Partition happened and my mum was born in Pakistan. Her and her younger brother were born in Pakistan. They then moved from Pakistan to England and the rest of my mum's family were all born in England. So we've got India, Pakistan and England in the one family, so yeah. So my mum came into this country when she was a little girl. I think she was five, six years old at the time. And then she married my father much later on, and my father was in Pakistan. And he came into this country when he was twenty four when he married my mum. That was in 1975.... Yes, yes. They married in January 1975 and I was born in November 1975.

What are the differences between the way your parents grew up and yours?

What are the differences? Huge differences. Coming from a working class Asian background there was a lot of cultural influences. My mum and my..... my mum had to endure so she never had access. Her generation is quite fun because her younger brothers and her younger sister had access to education. It was just..... and there is a bit of any age gap between her and the younger siblings..... so again you can see the mind-set changing in the family as well. My mum upwards, you know, the girls never had much access to education. They boys did but not the girls. Whereas below my mum the girls... My mum's younger sister because there was only one sister, she had access to education. But I think it was just coming into this country, my gran was probably scared, you know, what the people are going to say if, you know, they're educated, it's not right. Because what they do, they're just home makers, that was, unfortunately that was the thinking she had at the time. But again, I can understand, you know, coming from where you're coming from to an alien country not knowing what's going to happen from one day to the next. You know, it has a huge impact. So my mum suffered that but she was not going to let that happen to us. So me and my sister and my brothers, we had access to everything really because she believed in openness. And one of the things I think my parents indirectly done was give us the identity of being British. I know there's a lot of British Pakistanis or Scottish Pakistanis out there that still have their links to their homeland whereas all my mother's family live in England. We don't have any relatives back in Pakistan or India unless they're my mum's second, third cousins, but they're far relatives. All my mum's immediate family all live here so I don't have much of a link with the sub-Indian continent. And maybe because of that our identity in being British and Scottish is quite strong.

So have you gone to Pakistan or India?

I went to Pakistan for the first time two years ago, 2012.

And how was the experience?

I absolutely loved it. I went to Lahore, such a beautiful city and I loved it. There are embarrassment, you know, the negativity that the west likes putting out about Pakistan, it's such



SID-0024X0001M0

a lovely country. I.... I mean, I only went for five days but I enjoyed myself immensely, [pause] because I went as a tourist. [laughs] I didn't go and visit relatives or anything because I didn't have any relatives to visit. But going there and just, you know, visiting different places, historical place, do what a tourist does, I actually enjoyed it, yeah.

And so thinking about yourself, about your residence, would you consider yourself a Glaswegian?

Yes. Yes. I..... because I was born in Bolton but I moved up, my parents moved up to Scotland because my father's family, and I say family, I'm talking about his cousin and his aunt, his mum and sister lived here in Scotland and my father wanted to be near his family. So they moved back from England to Scotland. And so I've been here since the age of two. I'm now going to....well I'll be thirty nine in November. So I've been here, yeah, thirty seven years of my life and yes I do consider myself a Glaswegian. Yeah.

What does that mean for you, considering yourself a Glaswegian?

That I love Scotland. That I love Glasgow as a city. My roots are here. No matter where I went in the world, Glasgow is my home. Don't worry, I do go to Bolton, like I said all my family live there, all my cousins and my aunties and uncles and I do visit Bolton but Glasgow's my home. Yeah.

And how would you describe yourself in terms of nationality?

Obviously I'm British. But if you're..... this is where I get a bit angry actually because I don't have my title or, you know, when it comes to the quality, you know forms that you have to fill in. I call myself Indo-Pakistani because I'm not Pakistani and I'm not Indian but because of where my grandparents have come from my identity is Indian Pakistani. And I'm not going to give up one for the other. And like I said, when you fill in equality forms it's either you're Indian or you're Pakistani, and you're British, yeah, but when they want to know what you're ethnic origin is then it's either Indian or Pakistani. I then, with other, I'll put down Indo-Pakistani because I'm both.

And how do you describe yourself in terms of religion?

I'm a Muslim.

And do you have any place for worship? Is that the word?

Mosques yeah. Yes, there are mosques in Glasgow. There's many mosques in Glasgow but, again I call myself a liberalist Muslim. I don't believe in any form or institutional religion whether that be Islam or Judaism or Christianity or any religion that's institutionalised which I feel they are today, I don't believe in it. I therefore don't attend mosques. I don't go to mosques because I feel what they have to say, I'm not interested because it's to do with power, it's to do..... I don't think it's to do with the essence of the religion, more to do with people and power. And I don't think that's what religion is supposed to be all about. Or forget..... actually I don't even like the word religion, faith. I don't think that's what Islamic faith is supposed to be about or any other faith is supposed to be about. So yes, I practice a faith which is Islam but I do not go to mosques, no.

And how would you describe the word community?



SID-0024X0001M0

How would I describe the word community?

What does it mean for you?

Well, an example would be we recently had the Commonwealth Games and the Glasgow community came together to host the games to host the world. So community for me is a collective people coming together whether it's your neighbourhood, whether it's the world of work, whether it's a city. It's a collective people that are coming.....that have, you know, the same aims and objectives coming together.

And do you think you take part in a community?

Yes, very much so. Like I said, when the Commonwealth Games were happening I took part in different ways, many different ways to advertise, to put forward my city. So that's the Glasgow community. In terms of my neighbourhood, you know, speaking to my neighbourhood, seeing how they are because a lot of them are quite elderly actually, so that's my neighbourhood, that's my home community. And then, I mean at work, you know, getting involved in all the different projects that are running, so yeah.

Do you think Glasgow, the people who live in Glasgow are respectful in terms of immigration?

I think there's a lot of ignorance. You know, I'm not going to paint a rosy picture here. There's a lot of ignorance especially towards the Muslim community. And I think things have changed. I think racism has risen, understandably, because of the things that are happening in the world. And like I said there's ignorance that is prevailing on both sides, on Muslim side and the normal.... You know, the Glasgow indigenous population side. But..... yeah, I think [pause] yeah, yeah the ignorance has made it hard for certain people to move forward. And I think because of that [pause]..... because of that there's certain actions are being taken whether it's in family homes, whether it's out in the mosques....actually not so much in the mosques because they're trying to..... they are trying their hardest to bring the younger community, you know, to have a more balanced view about the world. But in the homes where there's ignorance prevailing on both sides I think that ends up sowing the seeds of hatred. So I think Glasgow.... Glasgow's always been a city of immigrants, always. But I think now there's a lot of hatred and animosity towards a particular group, yeah.

But you said you had the impression that this changed. If you look back to the past, like, maybe when your family came to England, did they experience any time, any bad experience because they were coming from a super different culture or different religion or different language?

Do you know what? I'm sure they did. I'm sure they did but they probably didn't realise that they were getting taken for a ride or they just assumed this is the way, this is the way it is. This very sort of submissive, "Oh well, this is the way it is, we just shut up and put up attitude". It's only the next generation that were thinking "No, we're not going to put up with this. You know, the white folk can't tell us what to do. They can't go around calling us certain names thinking they're going to get away with it". So like my generation basically..... No, so we have stood up for what we believe in whereas maybe our, my grandparents, my parents' generation have been very sort of passive, thinking well it doesn't matter, just get on with your life. Yeah, so.....

And regarding to your parent location, which values would you highlight?



SID-0024X0001M0

That they've passed on to me?

Yeah.

[pause] To [pause] understand the world around me. To be part of the world. To be a world citizen rather than being a Pakistani citizen. I think that my generation of kids unfortunately suffered a lot of that, like, oh no, even if you're born in this country you're Pakistani. My parents never done that to me at all. The encouragement was to get involved and part of what you are here. And I think that's what has made me and my sister and my brothers very strong in our identity with Britain and Scotland.

And again, in the interview you mentioned that girls in Pakistan I think you said, didn't have the same opportunity as like boys? Is that the same now?

I was talking about my mum and her older sister. Again, like I said, I think it was because when my gran came into this country she was scared, she, you know, didn't want the girls to go out, you know, what's going to happen, oh boys, boys are going to be there. You don't want her mixing with the boys. It was that sort of attitude. Whereas my mum's younger sister went to university because I think her brothers, my mum's brothers were pushing it saying, no she should have an education too. And therefore, she was allowed to go to university. No, I think from speaking from first-hand experience if you're living in England where there's a lot of... a huge Pakistani community. Unfortunately, the girls in those communities do have access to education and they do educate themselves but they will go into women friendly careers, for example, being a nursery teacher or being a teacher, where there's not going to be a lot of males and the teacher, it's being a primary school teacher, not a secondary school teacher. These thoughts still prevail in our community. I haven't see that much here in Scotland. I think the Asian community, whether you're Indian or Pakistani or Bengali, whatever, the Scottish Asian community are very different to the English one. They are more... they do put onus on education. The girls and the boys are both educated. They both have equal access to life experiences. So when I..... I mean when I..... the reason I'm saying this is because when I moved down to Sheffield after I married my husband - who is from Sheffield - I came across this in the very insular (s.l. Merriporri 0:18:57.0) community and I was quite taken aback because, like I said, I never experienced that up here. But me seeing that quite blatantly down south I was like, wow, you know, it was like living in the dark ages.

So unfortunately, yes, to some extent it might not be, I don't want the girls educated but it will be, well if you're going to take this course forward then make sure you're going into a woman-friendly environment.

And how did you come here in this organisation?

I started working as a Community Champion with Roots of Scotland. My Community Champion contract was coming to an end and there was a project called Branching Out that they were advertising in January for two posts, a Project Co-ordinator and Development Assistant. And I was encouraged to go for the Development Assistant post because Project Co-ordinator was going to be full time and I couldn't... I can't do it because I've got children. So Development Assistant was basically fitting in with my time as a mum and picking up the kids and the activities that they do after school. And so I applied and here I am. [laughs]

And thinking about the future, how would you describe your life in ten years?



SID-0024X0001M0

Okay. So I'll be thirty nine. Gosh! How do I describe my life? Busy. Being there for my daughters, first and foremost because I have got very ambitious daughters. And when you have ambitious daughters they need to have a very strong foundation to fall back on. And even though I'm working and I'm happy working in my community sector I believe in, me and my husband are the ones that are going to provide those strong foundations for our daughters who want to make a very beautiful life for themselves. They're thinking is, like I said, very ambitious. My eldest daughter is aged thirteen. She wants to work for, whether it's Marvel Studios, RDC, the comic world. I don't know if you've heard of Ironman or Spiderman, or if you've watched the films, it's the studios that makes the films. She wants to work in the Marvel RDC or Universal. And so the girl..... and she doesn't work in Britain, because they have offices in London. She doesn't want to work here, she wants to go to the United States, so the girls got high ambitions. I'm like, you go girl. You go. But like I said, in order for her to have that there needs to be a strong foundation at home. So I think a lot of my next ten years is going to be taken up with providing that strong foundation, whether that's materially, emotionally, anyway. I need to be there for my girls. So the next ten years looks like, giving that foundation to my girls.

And my next question, so how do they, your daughters feel about your origins? Do they ask you questions?

Yes they do. They do because they were..... where I live there's not many Asians that were in their class so being the only Asian face amongst a lot of white people it sometimes works quite hard. Well for my eldest it was quite hard, because like I said, ignorance prevails unfortunately in a lot of middle class, white middle class families. And when it came to certain activities or certain things she felt that she was getting left out purely because of the colour of her skin unfortunately. But to give her an understanding of her foundation of you know, our India Pakistani roots it's made her a stronger person. We've always said that your British, because she was born in Sheffield as well so she's British. Both my daughters were born down south. She's, you know, got a very strong British identity. And the fact that she loves the heritage that she comes from, you know, she loves the clothes, the food, you know, the arts that come from..... she doesn't associate or identify herself with Pakistan or Indi because it's not the country, you know, she doesn't know and she doesn't know the politics and she's not really interested but she identifies with the arts, the food, the things that you want to bring to everybody and share. She identifies with that and she loves it. And because she feels it makes it a stronger person she likes to talk about it with others as well as sharing her British identity with her friends as well. So she feels she's getting the best of both worlds, and why shouldn't she? But yeah, again, it's about sitting down and talking to her. It's taken a long time for her to get to that stage. It wasn't like, oh yeah, as soon as she was born she was happy. It wasn't, it was because like I said, when you're at school and you're seeing some things that are different happening in different families and you know, just coming from where I come from, my ethnic origins and we do things slightly differently, it's trying to say "Do you know what, there's no one way that is right." You know, no matter what way you do things it's up to you. It's about being individual but it's about enjoying what you can take, it's from your heritage, taking bits from you know, your Britishness because the history of Britain is just as much your history, you know, King Henry and the Stewards and the Tutors. You know, Mary Queen of Scots, they're just as part as much my history and my girls history as the history of India, the mogul empire and everything else. They're just as much..... they're both my history and I'm proud of it. And it's giving that proudness to them and well, yeah, I'm happy to have all these different you know ethnic ideals I can share. So yeah, it's taken time to get there but it's been worth it.

Thank you so much Asife.



SID-0024X0001M0

No problem.

I don't know if you'd like to say anything else ?

No thank you. [laughs]

Yeah?

Transcript ends 0:25:45.6