

Spinning Lifestyles – Husnah

Can you just start by saying your names?

My name is Husnah.

How long have you lived in London

12 years

Where did you come from?

From Bangladesh

When you first came to London did you come straight to Tower Hamlets?

Yes.

And was your husband here already

Yes

You were waiting for him in Bangladesh to bring you over? Was he working? What year did he come over from Bangladesh?

1963

And what did he do when he came to London?

He worked in a factory.

Where was the factory?

London E1

What did he make?

Ladies coats

So he'd been here for quite a while when you came?

20 years and he used to go back to Bangladesh every year.

When you came what was it like?

Definitely. It takes time there is a big difference.

What was so different about it was it the food?

No! No! No! No! Leaving family behind.

Where does your mother live?

In Bangladesh

Have you been back to see her?

She used to go every five or so years, but due to my sight it's a lot more difficult.

So you say you have family living in other countries, which other countries?

My sister lives in America and my brother lives in Canada.

So you are all over the place. So did you come here by plane or by boat?

By plane.

When I lived in Bangladesh I lived in Dhaka and Sylhet and when I travelled it was by plane.

What was it like living in Dhaka?

Dhaka is a city and Sylhet is smaller. Dhaka is like London and when I got married I went to Dhaka.

When you came to London and you first got off of the plane what did you think?

It was really really foggy. This had now changed.

Did come with your children?

Yes

How many?

3; 2 boys and a girl.

When you came over where did you live?

In Brick Lane

What was it like in Brick Lane?

It's same brick lane. There were a lot of Bangladeshi people.

Did you have difficulty cooking food because it's different from Bangladesh?

No! Because I'm used to it.

What was the hardest thing about coming here was it leaving your mum?

Speaking. Good communication.

What do your children do?

They work. One is 32 and the others are 28 and 26.

Did they help you with your English when you got here?

My children were in a similar position with little English at the time.

Have your children have a very different upbringing to you?

I tried to bring them up the same way. My father passed away when I was very young and the bond with my mum increased. My mother was still quite young when this happened and she couldn't remarry. With all the difficulties she had we didn't go without.

Do you think your children had different upbringing from living in London?

There is a difference, but the difference is just the city. You always try to bring your children up with the same principles.

What did you do when you came to London?

Working in a bar in a period hotel, then I left

Why did you leave?

It was a leasehold house. My family came over in 1953

What did they do here?

My dad and uncle worked in the same hotel. I worked in Columbia road in a factory making chairs, tables or things. Then I left London and went to Leeds. I worked in a factory. First I worked in a foundry making iron things then I left and worked in another factory for a long time making tiles. Then I came back to London and bought a shop. A grocery shop. There was one Bangladeshi and one Indian shop. Then I went to Bangladesh to see my parents. There was a fire in the shop and it was gone. Then I started working in tailoring for 8 years. Then it became quiet and I went into a butchers and worked there. Then I stopped work as one of my children was disabled and needed care.

How many children have you got?

5 sons and 2 daughters

Where in Bangladesh do you come from?

Sylhet

When you first came to the UK what did you think?

Very bad for me. Everything was dark and foggy. I lived with my uncle. I cried for my homeland and family. I had to work.

Were you sending money home?

Yes!

Did someone help you get a job?

When I first came here my uncle helped me to get a job in a hotel.

When you came, there must have been very few Bangladeshi's?

Yes!

Was it very difficult to...?

How long were you in Leeds for?

5-6years

Was that because the money was good?

Yes!

I got only £6 per week working in the Imperial Hotel. I worked 6 days. 8am-6pm. I got £12 then £18 then £25 then £35.

Did you live in a house with other people in Leeds?

Yes!

How many were in the house?

It was a four bedroom house.

It must have been hard working in a foundry?

I worked in casting, very scary. Everything was really hot. I got £35 per week for that

When did you come back to London?

1972

What was the area like in 1972 was it different?

My uncle and cousin lived in the same place, so I knew everybody.

Did you find there were a lot more people from your country?

Yes!

And your wife came over in 19...?

1984

What did your wife think when she first came over?

She knew no-one here.

And she didn't speak English!

Have your children had a very different upbringing from Bangladesh?

They were scared to go out. You got verbal and physical abuse if you went out. The police eventually started to visit us to make sure we were ok.

Is that still happening?

No!

Has your wife been back to Bangladesh since she's been here?

Yes, Many times. Here mother was in this country for a time. She likes going back to Bangladesh. My father was in the merchant navy during the Second World War as well.

Did they ever talk about it?

Very hard they found it. They had to do many jobs on the ships. The main boiler was where they mainly worked. They worked for the captain.

Thank you very very much!