

Nasheima Sheikh

11/12/2014

Interviewer: Katy Wade

Interviewer: I

Respondent: R

00:05 I This is Katy Wade interviewing Nasheima on the 11th December 2014. Nasheima can you please tell me about your family?

00:16 R Erm my background or just my family? My family, I'm from an Indian background. I was born here so I'm one of the first generations of immigrants that were born here. My parents came over in, I think my father came over in the mid 50's and then my mum joined him around the early 60's and I've got two brothers and a sister.

00:39 I Do you have any memories that strike you as being very special from that time or anything?

00:44 R Well it's funny you know, I don't really have many memories of when I was very little, and my memories are of, I mean it was nice memories of playing on the streets and things, but also memories of a lot of overt racism. I remember skinheads, I remember the National Front. I remember my father being chased down the road, and I remember my parents always telling me that you mustn't go near dogs because they are trained to get you, and yet at school, infant school, I have lovely memories of infant school, I have lots of memories of just playing and that was really nice, but then there was, it's funny isn't it that your experience of racism which you can classify as racism but at the time you wouldn't have thought of it as that, like the teachers saying you've got beautiful hair, now we're going on a school trip, make sure your mum doesn't put all that oil in your hair, which you just thought was oh well you know they're just trying to be nice (*laughing*) but actually when you think back now you think maybe that's not too good, but I do have nice memories personally of that time because as a little child you probably didn't have a take on that being racist, and then other little things like not being able to eat with a knife and fork, so when you went on a school trip, normally you'd take your own food with you or you'd come home for lunch in those days, but if you went on a school trip you can't do that so I wouldn't have a clue (*laughing*) and I remember me and my brothers and sisters sometimes sitting at home, I think this is probably when we were in junior school, and pretending to try and eat a chapatti with a knife and a fork, probably the only knife and fork (*laughing*) we had in the house, so we could practice. So that was quite funny.

- 02:37 R But on the whole I think quite a lot of people were in the same boat, so although we were quite poor, I never really felt poor, and although there was racism, there was also quite a lot of white people that were really quite nice, but I can't remember mixing much, although we played with kids at school, but then I suppose you don't really have that much opportunity to mix, because we were just a few Indian families in Nuneaton so, I suppose there wasn't that much chance, and in secondary school I remember having friends at school and mixing with kids at school, but then those kids would not come to my house to play or anything. So it's funny isn't it, when people say oh can we just keep themselves to themselves, actually nobody talks about your experience of racism and how that might influence or the fact that although white people kept themselves to themselves and wouldn't mix with Indian people in those days, so I thought that was quite you know when I look back now I can make those sort of connections.
- 03:44 I Can you tell me about when you came up to Birmingham, when that was and why you came up?
- 03:49 R Well I was the first Indian girl from my community to go to university and because I wasn't really allowed to travel very far I came to Birmingham (*laughing*). It was Birmingham, Leicester or Warwick, because I had three offers and Warwick, I felt was just too out on a campus on its own, Leicester I thought the university didn't have a sense of being a university because it was strewn all over the centre and Birmingham I thought was great because it had a lovely campus but also you were in the middle of a city, so that was about 1980 that I came as a student to Birmingham.
- 04:26 I Can you tell me about your experiences of life at university?
- 04:29 R Oh fantastic, I loved it because I came from such a narrow minded home environment and I don't mean narrow minded as in my family being narrow minded although obviously they were very traditional, very Islamic, so quite religious, but not religious as people are now, there wasn't over wearing of hijab or covering your face, or none of that. In fact I had been very religious when I was a student at college at A Levels. I actually wore a hijab from head to toe in black and nobody ever did it and I think that was because I really, I think people of my age struggled with their identity, either you were western or you were what? You know? And I think because of that I became very Islamic and even my father was saying "why are you wearing that? What do you want to wear that for?" And I was saying "no I want to wear it, I'm Muslim." "But I know you're a Muslim but you know you don't need to go that far" (*laughing*).
- 05:27 R So it was like something that was not done but to me it was like forging my identity, and I think that helped me get to university because I was more trusted, because in those days I think parents were very scared that if you went to university that was it, you'd lose your culture, you'd go off and marry

a white man which I actually did) but anyway (*laughing*). It allowed me to come to university because my parents were a bit more relaxed and I loved university because I just discovered, you know when you come from a small town, any small town, it doesn't matter what or where, I think when you come into a city you are obviously going to meet people and university environments are wonderful for that. You meet people from lots of different backgrounds, you come across different ways of thinking. I had never really I don't think met anybody, met another Muslim that drank (*laughing*) and I can remember sitting in this bar and watching this Muslim man drink a pint of beer and thinking oh my god he's drinking (*laughing*). That's how narrow minded it was, so to me it was just this opening up of the world, I loved it.

06:42 I What did you study?

06:43 R Sociology.

06:45 I And did you do anything in particular in your leisure time, any clubs or...

06:49 R Well they weren't clubs, I did go to some well, I suppose yea nightclubs in Five Ways, but there was a lot happening on campus and student union. I'd never been able to go to a disco or anything like that before, I think I must have gone out virtually every night of my first year, that was a bit bad wasn't it. And dancing, I'd never danced before you know, and actually it helped, I started thinking differently so when I was when I got to university I didn't wear the hijab anymore, because I'd already started struggling with my beliefs at home in Nuneaton having you know worn this hijab for about one and a half years, I'd started thinking I don't know if I enjoy this really or I find it a bit oppressive, so I'd already started thinking in my head and when I got to university, and I thought well actually I'm having a nice time here, I like listening to music, I like dancing, what's wrong with that, I'm not hurting anybody and it just started, made me start to question my beliefs in Islam.

07:51 R And also I discovered politics on doing sociology, and also just coming across people with different views, I discovered Marxism because you know, you studied that, black politics I discovered, I'd come across a friend of mine, I think they set up a group called Birmingham Black Sisters and I became heavily involved in Birmingham Black Sisters, all throughout my university years, and at that time what was so great was that there was quite a vibrant voluntary sector, I didn't know what a voluntary sector was in those days but thinking back, there was a lot of feminist politics, there was a lot of discovery of like the lesbian movement, the gay movement, I think the disability movement came a bit later, but there was a lot of funding of projects and I remember going to conferences, women's feminist conferences in London and there was a whole swathe of movement of black women and black feminism and that was really exciting. Quite apart from my degree, this is outside of my degree and I just found that really fascinating coming across lots of very interesting women and doing campaigns around racism, that was

the time of the Handsworth uprisings or riots as other people might call them. No that came a bit later sorry, I'm getting mixed up now. Not whilst I was at university, it was a few years later but, Birmingham Black Sisters were involved in that. We campaigned for this Asian woman who had murdered her husband, but it was a result of domestic violence and she was put in jail so we campaigned for her release and that's the sort of things we did.

09:26 I Would you say then that when you were at university you had good relations with people outside of university?

09:33 R Erm at university probably not so much because you're so, because you're living on campus for the first year and then although we moved into Balsall Heath so it was sort of near you know Stratford Road and that area, so we got to know a few people but not that many. Probably in voluntary groups and where we met, you know there was the trade union resource centre in town, I think it was in Hockley where they gave us free space and there was another place by the end of the Magistrates Court, there was a centre there and they gave us free space to meet on Friday evenings, so we did meet a few but not that many and the people we would have met would have been through political movements really.

10:17 I So can you tell me what you did after university?

10:20 R After university I went to South Africa for a year because I had a lot of family in South Africa, I only went for three months but I stayed for a year because I liked it so much, because my family there were so westernised compared to here, they were really, you know I could appear in front of my grandfather who lived in South Africa in a skirt but not in front of my mum here (*laughing*) which was weird wasn't it and my aunt and my uncle, so I really enjoyed getting to know all that side of my family. We'd only known each other through letters as I was growing up, but they had been very supportive of my mum so erm when I got to South Africa it was great, I really enjoyed being in South Africa and it was during apartheid so that was a real eye opener for me as well, because being in Britain and you know going into a shop, you could go into the loo and I can remember going to South Africa and I had my little nephew and niece and they were only three years old, and they wanted to go to the loo and the shop wouldn't let us because we were black and you just think it's a child for goodness sake and so here you've got you know, although I had faced racism it certainly wasn't like in South Africa where it's so institutionalised and legal and it was a real you know I found it really shocking, and then what was so interesting was that sometimes like we'd be sitting around in the house with my family and you'd get this anti-apartheid leaflet shoved through your door and when you go out and you open the door and whoever had done it had vanished, you know because they weren't allowed to do that kind of thing then. So that was really interesting.

12:03 I And when you came back to England, what did you do then?

12:06 R When I came back to England I obviously had to start working, so I started working in the voluntary sector, I went to Leicester. So I lived in Nuneaton, I had my social life in Birmingham but I worked in Leicester (*laughing*) only for a year and then I came and worked in Birmingham and I worked at Birmingham Voluntary Service Council. And what was really great about that was that I really got to know loads of the community, it was my job to work with community groups in Birmingham and that was a wonderful job and I worked with lots of different groups like I remember a coffee and chat group a (*illegible*) association, I helped a group set up their constitution, their management committees, you know just how to function as a voluntary group, get funding that sort of thing, so I really enjoyed that, and then I slowly moved into the council in the Race Relations Unit and then in Social Services in the Training Department, that's what I did for quite a long time.

13:03 I So what was your first experience of the Stratford Road?

13:07 R Well I suppose I'd experienced Stratford Road all the way throughout that, because we used to go for concerts at, not concerts, well Ruby Turner used to be at The Mermaid on Stratford Road, and they had lots of comedy nights on Stratford Road at The Mermaid in different pubs and when Birmingham, this is after our meetings, we'd go down for a drink in the pubs and it was really weird how men hated that, a group of women coming in, and we'd get, and even groups of Asian men would hate that because you've got a group of black women with Asian women in it who are sitting there drinking and this wasn't on so we had quite a lot of conflict with Asian blokes but obviously we could give as good as we got (*laughing*). So you know I'd sort of experienced Stratford Road and I'd found Stratford Road quite amazing anyway because from where I came, there were no Indian restaurants or any sort of identity of the Asian community in Nuneaton, but in Birmingham because it was so much bigger and it had established itself and especially down Stratford Road where you had Indian restaurants. I'd never been to an Indian, I'd never been to a restaurant other than Wimpy (*laughing*). So that was great you know just going out for a meal and socialising and feeling as if you're at home you know and because I had quite a lot of overt experience of racism in Nuneaton and I didn't have that in Birmingham and I think it's also because you stick to areas where you feel there's more of your community there, so I'd lived in as a student as well in Balsall Heath, and then bits of Moseley which just were on the tip of Balsall Heath really, but we did quite a lot of socialising down Stratford Road.

14:49 I Can you describe the types of people that you met along the Stratford Road?

14:53 R I suppose at that time in the 80's, late 80's as well and early 90's in Birmingham you had, I would say that the Asian population, the sort of Pakistani, Indian, Bangladesh population were of a similar size to the African Caribbean population, so we had, and obviously Birmingham Black Sisters, we

attracted as many African Caribbean women as we did Asian women and it was mostly that I think there might have been one Chinese woman but really it was mainly Asian women and African Caribbean women and we worked together, so and similarly down Stratford Road you had a similar type, but I would say it was more Asian, in Handsworth you had more African Caribbean women businesses and people. So Stratford Road it was more Asian people, but you know as a group, we would come down Stratford Road.

15:47 I Can you describe any events that you remember around the road whether it was carnivals or a public event or a big gig?

15:54 R Well the only gigs I went to were at The Mermaid and The Mermaid was a wonderful pub because it had such historic resonance and oh yea the Piccadilly Cinema that showed Indian films, that was great, oh my goodness I went with my friend to the Piccadilly Cinema to watch an Indian film and I can't get over the audience let alone the film, because there was so many people, and they just kept streaming in and out and there were all these children at the front as well and you know nowadays it just wouldn't be allowed, and they'd go out and bring like a takeaway and bring it in because the films were so long, they were like three hours long, so that was great. And I think later on because we did settle in Sparkhill overlooking Stratford Road, overlooking Sparkhill Park which is on the Stratford Road, I am an avid, oh yeah I completely forgot this, I'm an avid swimmer so I've always swam at Sparkhill Baths, always, you know I must have swam there now, I'm fifty two now so for thirty years I've been swimming at Sparkhill Baths and I've met loads of different people and I've made friendships through Sparkhill Baths, you know met women and then gone out for a meal and there's one friend that I've known for about twenty years and she's lived in London, I only knew her for about ten years and then I've kept in touch with her just by Christmas cards and we met at Sparkhill Baths.

17:23 R So Sparkhill Baths has a real importance, and then when I was pregnant with my son, going to antenatal classes and meeting women, it was strange because the antenatal classes on Stratford Road, it was me and a load of sixteen year olds, I was like the geriatric mum at thirty three, so you know you had to find your own sort of antenatal class which was more women of your own age who were interested in your pregnancy and birth and stuff like that. But I suppose I got to meet different people at different stages of my life because of what you're doing, you know, so when you're young and you're going out and then you get to meet different people, so as my son grew up, for example I'd take him to have his hair cut at the Italian Barbers at the other end of the Stratford Road, and you know you had this filter machine, you know the ones with the water, only his was squash (*laughing*), the whole thing would be full of squash which is the last thing you want your child to drink, you know it was red, and even when it's hot he'd be there with his shorts and a pair of furry boots on. Such a laugh and he'd never, you know I'd go in there and say yea could you do this to my son and he'd just

completely ignore you, he'd just do whatever he wanted to his head. But it was great, I loved it.

18:51 R I loved the fact that now you know you've got so many different people down Stratford Road, you've got Arab people coming in and the Arab the bakeries and down that side of the other end of Stratford Road now you've got internet cafes and the Somalis coming in. I love that mix on the Stratford Road, and I've discovered different things through my son, because obviously he's growing up and being schooled off Stratford Road so you know not too far, so he's grown up in this area in a way that I've had a different experience because I came in here as an adult to Birmingham and he's had a very different experience of Stratford Road.

19:32 I Can you tell me when you moved into the Sparkhill area and what your neighbourhood and house was like?

19:38 R When we moved in because it was so expensive to go to Moseley (*laughing*) like literally the road next to the road we moved to, you'd be paying fifty thousand pounds more for a smaller house than the one we had, so we were just gobsmacked, there was no way we could afford anything like that, and so when I moved in, I mean mostly there are Pakistani people on our road, there are a couple of Christians, Evangelical Christians, and a couple of old people, I think there were four or five households of quite older Irish people who had stayed there all their lives, and the people we bought the house off, they were Irish people who had lived in that house for about thirty/forty years, and they were moving to Hall Green and we were moving into Sparkhill, which is the migration route anyway, and it was so funny because the house is just like any Asian house that we'd walked into, but it was Irish. So you had exactly the same, you know you had the middle room, it had a dining room and table and it was covered in plastic, they'd never used it and I think they'd had six children and slowly the children had grown up and grown out and they only used the back of the house, they didn't use the front room even, and because slowly, it was just an old man and his wife and they were so proud of their house "*oh you can just move in, you don't have to do anything to this house.*" You know this house didn't even have any central heating (*laughing*).

21:13 R And the area was. I really liked the park, Sparkhill Park, I've become quite erm, fond of Sparkhill Park, but I think at first, I think for many years I felt a bit slightly alienated where I lived because although there were a lot of Pakistani Muslims, I didn't want to be judged, so I was moving in, I'd met Mark who's Welsh and writes and obviously I'm sure we were the talk of the street for a couple of years "*oh you know that couple...*" So everybody knew us but we didn't really know anyone, and then it was just through my son because he was small, and as he grew up he started playing with the other kids on the street, that's how I got to know more people down the street, and they were quite friendly and everything but I've always kept a slight

distance myself because erm I drink alcohol and they don't and I eat foods that they don't and so you know you just don't want that sort of judgmentalism, but you know if I need any help I could walk...

21:17 R My sister came from Malawi, she came to stay with me, and her son had malaria but we didn't know this, but in the evening one day she had to take him to A & E because he was very sick and we didn't realise he had a malaria fever and when they realised and when they sort of said ok at two o'clock in the morning you can go home. So she came home and she was knocking on our door, she got a taxi home. Because we were with her for ages but then we thought she'd be staying overnight so we left, and we were so fast asleep we didn't hear. The poor thing was heard that there she is, two o'clock in the morning with a four year old boy, and she just walked up the road and knocked on a door and, they were awake and they just said, ok you can stay here all night if you like until your sister picks up the phone. So I felt absolutely dreadful but I thought how nice that, you know as a woman she could easily just walk up the road and go into someone's house and they just see a fellow Muslim, or just a fellow woman you know, and allow her to stay there until like six in the morning when eventually I did pick up the phone and I felt really bad.

23:37 R So you know. And I will tell you recently in the last few years I've got involved in "Save the Sparkhill Baths" because it was shut down and I'm passionate about getting swimming in the area, and that really helped me understand and feel more loyal to my area, and passionate about it actually, because the group of people, there was such a mix. There's you know older white women, there's an African Caribbean woman, there's a Yemeni guy, there's Pakistani men, a white woman, well younger white woman who is the chair Helen, myself. You know it was a real mix of all the people on our road and near Stratford Road, and we were all passionate about keeping the baths open, and then when I petitioned I went all the way up and down my road and some of the roads nearby, and every single person signed that petition whether they were old or young or, you know they all had a passion for the baths, even if they hadn't used it themselves, other members of their family had used it, and I just thought that was wonderful. So when anybody says to me as many people do, "*oh these people they just keep to themselves*", I just get really quite angry about that because I just think, you never label any other community. White communities are never seen, they are always seen as open, well I can tell you in Nuneaton they were not an open community, I had to come to Birmingham, to Stratford Road, to find open communities, and so I think it's wrong to place responsibilities on communities when they have no power to do anything about that, and actually their experience of discrimination and racism was such even if you wanted to speak to somebody, you think twice before you do it.

25:30 I Can you describe what it was like politically in the area with MP's. Are there any incidences that stand out?

25:36 R Well I think that the labour MP's, because obviously labour just got in year in, year out, and I was a passionate labour supporter before, I couldn't distinguish between them, the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, so politically, I mean I was quite politically conscious through Birmingham Black Sisters anyway, and I can remember doing an interview actually for BBC at a time, I think it must have been about ten years ago or slightly longer, and it was when the labour party had said to people in our area, that in order to be bonafide labour party members, we had to take our passports to the office and show the passport, and I was so angry about this, I was thinking why? Because I think they were saying that some labour MP's were just, there were a lot of fake labour membership, so that they could get in, but you could say that about anything and investigate it properly, don't put all this, you know it just reminded me of South Africa and apartheid and in South Africa you had to walk around with passbooks, so every person, black person mainly, had to prove who they were and you couldn't access certain things unless you had your passbook and I thought this is just reminiscent of that.

26:55 R So I did an interview at the BBC, and actually that was the first month that we'd moved into our house, and so you know what happened? As soon as I was interviewed in my house, upstairs in our study, we've got a bedroom we just turned into a sort of study because we spend so much time on the computer, my computer, that night, our house was burgled and that was because *(laughing)* I mean I shouldn't laugh should I, but I suppose it was a bit funny because the Irish couple before they had a dog so they had a door which was glass with a sort of grill, you know a wire grill, but they'd had a guard dog so nobody would have come in and obviously the first thing we were gonna do was change that door and we didn't *(laughing)*. So I know it was somebody from up the road because the only thing they took was the computer, and maybe like a handheld radio, so it was a very opportunistic crime. I mean obviously I was quite gutted at the time, but I just thought probably youngsters or something.

28:05 I Did you ever experience any other crime in the area?

28:10 R Well I have been mugged twice in that area, but I think both, they are opportunistic crimes, you know muggings are like that aren't they. One was four young lads, I think they must have been only nine or ten years old, and I can remember, I mean they shoved me onto the floor and tried to get my handbag off me but they couldn't, and I can remember lying on the floor and thinking these are children. You know you're an adult and I just screamed and got up and ran into the middle of the road because the traffic wouldn't stop, so I made the traffic stop and then the kids ran away. But it was quite frightening, and the second time I had a gold chain and I was walking down Stratford Road actually and this guy just came up and pulled the chain off my neck, which I always thought you know you are stupid you know, you think

you shouldn't wear a gold chain, but you think it's under my tee-shirt, obviously it wasn't. So lessons to learn.

29:04 R But since then, so that was like early on, that must have been about twenty years ago, so over the last twenty years we've been burgled once, and that was my son's bike was taken out of the shed, so really not as much crime as you would think, and I remember I think it was last year, Sparkhill Pool, it was announced in the media that Sparkhill Pool was to get one of the Olympic legacy training pools from London and the feed underneath that on the internet was absolutely disgusting, some of the comments about why would you put it on Stratford Road? I would never go down Stratford Road. It's so scary, who would... you know very and I'm thinking Stratford Road is probably one of the friendliest roads. You know it's vibrant, it's diverse. When I go to Northfield you've got an equally deprived white area and it's dead, it's not vibrant and Stratford Road is very poor and yet it's vibrant.

30:03 R You know people invest in their own businesses, there's people who have very few opportunities to just go and get jobs, so what do they do, they become taxi drivers, they set up their own businesses, they have no grants or anything to start those businesses off. If you look at the bottom of Stratford Road, I think it's fantastic, such entrepreneurial spirit. It's really, I mean there's only so much you can do when you've absolutely got nothing, so they can't do an awful lot about prettifying the area, but if you compare it to what it was five years ago, it's amazing the difference, and I suppose one of the things is it's quite male dominated because a lot of the businesses is where men hang out in the cafes, but you're not gonna change everything overnight. So you know to me I can see the positives of being on Stratford Road, and the sort of myths that people have about the area, which do grate on me because I think I've lived here all, well most of my life I've lived here in and around this area and I've just found it great you know.

31:06 R In fact at one time the council on Phipson Road which are some of the roads just slightly off Stratford Road, at the end of the road they've just got a bit of green area and the council were going to build houses and people really campaigned to say there are such few green areas in those highly dense built up, how could you possibly get rid of the tiny bits of green area, and because people care about the area that they live in, and if you become involved like I have with local politics because I'm also involved in the Sparkhill Community Neighbourhood Forum, you realise that people do care about their area, they care about the poverty and they're trying to do their best within the limited resources they have to do something about that and I love that passion and you know I'm a bit of a geek about Sparkhill pool, 70% of the people that use Sparkhill pool walked to it. Now you tell me any other leisure centre in the country where 70% of the people walked to that facility. It was so well used, I think it's like a goldmine in terms of the money, the income it generated. All the local schools, all the kids and generations of kids that have learned to swim there. When I used to go Early Bird Swimming, because that's when I

would swim, you know you'd get a really diverse set of people that would swim in that pool. More so than Moseley Baths, where I go now which is in Balsall Heath, where there tends to be more white people. In Sparkhill Baths, there was a real mix of Asian people, Arabs, African-Caribbean's, English people, you know it was really great.

- 32:45 I Can you tell me about any other changes you've noticed to the road over the years?
- 32:49 R Well I think recently over the last two or three years, because of the cuts, the last five years in particular, you can see the area has got more grotty and that's just because the council does not have as much money to do the window boxes. I mean one of the things that we did in Sparkhill Community Neighbourhood Forum is you know you see those boxes, planting boxes on the roads, we campaigned to get some more money so that we could have them planted up, and we haven't got access to that kind of money anymore, but we would try and raise that and we would try and get the local businesses to invest and try and keep their bit of their area clean, and we've done things like litter picking, doing campaigning around litter picking to keep it clean, but there's only so much that people can do and I can see that people really do want to.
- 33:43 R In fact one day my mother-in-law came to visit me, and they're, you know white middle class people from Thornbury outside Bristol and she said she just went for a walk round the park, and she was shocked that this guy in a BMW, white guy walked up, drove up and dumped a washing machine in Sparkhill Park. Obviously not from that area, now if you saw that washing machine you'd think oh god these people, they're so, they don't care. Actually it wasn't him, people dump their rubbish in our area and that really makes me angry. You know it makes me angry that people just make statements about people in these areas thinking this is what they're like, when actually they're trying their absolute best within the resources they've got, all the funding that's available to do something about it.
- 34:34 R There's been a lack of youth facilities, because another thing we were going to campaign, what I'd like is, to see equipment in the park. You see it in some parks in some areas where, you've got equipment that older people can use. There were walks in the park as well, where older people were encouraged to walk as part of their health drive. There was a "Be Active" scheme which is a scheme that at one time, in Birmingham, every Birmingham citizen could access the leisure facilities for free, because they saw the health benefits, and I could see how that paid off in Sparkhill. In the park, even now you will see lots of older Asian men and women walking round the park, because I go running around Sparkhill Park, and I see that, so I can see that it's got more grotty, that people have tried to do their best to maintain some sort of decency in that area, and it feels like, I suppose at night it's a different character, but then it's interesting that recently Birmingham City Council did

a report around "It takes a city to raise a child" about children's views, and one of the biggest things with children is staying safe in Birmingham, and I think the parks are problematic, because you haven't got the youth officers, you haven't got the funding to be able to put on youth activities. They used to have like cricket lessons and football lessons and things like that in the park. They would have Eid Melas and things like that, that would be funded through the council and there's no money for that anymore, and that's a shame really, so I can see that those are the changes recently.

36:16 I Did your work ever mean you worked in Sparkhill or Sparkbrook area?

36:21 R Well we do, I work for Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid which is a domestic violence agency, and we have done quite a lot of work around that area, and what we found is that, especially recently because of the cuts and the benefit changes, lots more women and children that we see, are facing poverty, and do you know what was so nice is that St John's Church, which is in Sparkhill on the Stratford Road, they run a food bank and they have been so good with our service users, they've given us so much food and they're very secretive about, I can remember, because of domestic violence, obviously women and children, there's quite a lot of safety and confidentiality issues, and they're really good about understanding that, and some of the children centres we've worked with have been very good with the kind of work that we're doing. We've been able to have groups in those children centres and our women and children have been able to go there, so it's been a very welcoming area in that respect, and people and businesses, the central mosque for example during Ramadan which is the fasting month for Muslims, gave us loads of food that the stores off Stratford Road and other areas had donated to them to give to food banks. I know some of that came to us for our women and children, so that is wonderful. It just shows how big hearted people are, even though they have so little.

37:57 I Can you tell me a bit about how worship has developed in the area and faith?

38:02 R I don't know that much about worship and faith because I know was a gurdwara built just near us and we were quite apprehensive that it would end up with lots of car parking issues but actually it hasn't been, and I actually even know this Muslim guy and his friends who go for morning prayers at the mosque and then go to the gurdwara for their food (*laughing*) so I think there's quite a lot of mixing of people across the religions, which again is a bit of a myth that people say oh you know people don't mix and Muslims are there and Sikhs are there and I don't see that on Stratford Road at all.

38:39 I And finally are there any shops that spring to your mind that you used to visit a lot?

38:45 R Well all the material shops down Stratford Road, I've bought quite a lot of

material from Midlands Textiles and shops like that, and then quite a lot of, I mean I just like driving down Stratford Road and looking at the shops, all the vibrant colours and I've noticed that they have become very upmarket these last couple of years. I am surprised quite how upmarket those shops have got, and another thing I've noticed is, I used to go to, there was a restaurant across Sparkhill Park, and it had all of its furniture inside was sort of turquoise colour and bright red, and they had bought that furniture over from their area in Pakistan, and it was lovely, I loved it, but just recently they've dumped all of that to become like any other restaurant. You know they thought they've gone upmarket, and I thought what a shame because before they were trying to reflect their own homeland and now they're trying to reflect the other restaurants on the road which is a shame. And the other thing I've noticed is there's a trend towards "Dessert Bars" which you know, I think that what young people are doing, and this is young people forging their own identity in the area. You know they can't go to pubs so what do they do, they've got these dessert bars so they just go and have a dessert and a milkshake, and there's quite a lot of young people and families, who go to these bars and I just think it's fantastic how I can see it changing.

40:19 R I suppose one of the bad changes is there are so many more fast food places which are halal, and I mean you won't see a McDonalds or a KFC down Stratford Road because they can't compete with these fast food outlets, so that is a shame because obviously you're getting the same diseases and obesity and all of that, but you know white people have faced is now going to be faced by the Asian communities, but on the other hand, I never thought when I was growing up in Nuneaton so many years ago where you had nothing. There would be two Indian shops that were in Nuneaton as I left when I was eighteen. I never thought I'd see a day when I could walk down the road and you'd see the entire culture on that road in terms of food and how it's changing. I was saying about my son and his experience is quite different, he's really into music and one of the things that I've loved and I've loved about being involved in Sampad as well, is to see the fusion that young people bring, because they don't like to label themselves as mixed or black or whatever, I think they're more about being young people and just accepting things as they are and forging their own identity, their own music and I think that's great. I think having a mixed and diverse population has just enriched Britain so much. You know when I go abroad and you go to, like Paris for example, is so mono cultural and well some aspects of it because the black populations have been shoved out onto the outskirts and you don't get that in Britain, it's mixed, you know on the whole people rub along very well together and there's a vibrancy, a richness that you just don't experience if you don't have that kind of diversity. So I just love it.