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*Interviewer:* **Francis Ball**

Interviewee:

**Interview Details**

**Name of interviewee: Satnam Singh**

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**Name of interviewer: Francis Ball**

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So I basically teacher trained in Hull and there weren’t kind of jobs up there so I came down back to Newham, well I lived in Ilford, but worked around mainly Newham and community involvement activist work I suppose. Yeah so I started working with the XXXX (0:00:35.3) Hall community basically involved in the unit. There was also a volunteer bureau they had, I worked there and over time got into teaching, in the early 80s in fact. So I started teaching first as a peripatetic teacher at Woodside School, then there was Cumberland, but as far as teaching properly, permanently I was based at Trinity School on Barking Road. Young people used to come from throughout the borough but mainly XXXX (0:01:15.7) area - so you had the Asian community going in from outside of the Canning Town area and the white young people around there. There were racial problems arising, I was only there a couple of years but saw that development of racial attacks and kids being attacked on the road, at a bus stop opposite the school, at Trinity School. And so I was quite concerned about race issues and equally the Section 11 money started being used for the first time and that money was supposed to be specifically used, and there’s been misuse like most authorities in Newham. Slowly we got round to using it properly but they misused it. So we were concerned with those issues and I think same sort of timing Newham Monitoring Project came about, I’ll go to that in a minute, as well as Stardust Asian youth club where Caroline XXXX (0:02:29.9) she was a community worker employed by social services. And she and I worked to develop the Stardust Asian youth club. We went to Kensington youth centre and over time, over four/five years, we built the membership from what was about twenty young people to about five hundred, four/five hundred members and the attendants came to about a hundred young people on the Saturday morning and they felt safe, supported etc. in that youth club which was on a Saturday morning. The youth service was not aware of the needs nor the concerned in the same way, primarily Afro-Caribbean young people and white young people but Kensington youth centre is where we moved to over time through pressure and getting the youth service to recognise the needs and thereafter we developed further. Alongside these issues was these racial attacks, the growth of BNP, National Front - various XXXX (0:03:47.4) different organisation. But the racial attacks are quite highlighted in the media and therefore it was apparent to young people about this idea of, you know, black young people or Asian people being outsiders, not part of the community. So we had, we bean to challenge these things, sort of on the one hand Newham Monitoring Project, Police Monitory Group as well as taking up racist cases - and on the other, supporting young people through the youth club and I had introduced them through knowing them from school etc. Those things came together with us calling a school strike around the Newham 8 and I was giving out leaflets at Langdon School and I was recognised and reported to the authorities and I was in between two jobs - I was leaving Trinity School and going to

**[0:05:00.00]**

Plashet School, XXXX (0:05:01 –Plashet Girls’ School?) So I was going to get a promotion through that but anyway, everything was on hold, I was suspended and you know the case was settled over time because we got the councillors to obviously XXXX (0:05:18.5- Labour?) so 40 odd councillors signed to the effect that no actions would be taken against young people or those people involved with the strike. The strike was first around Stratford Magistrates Court and then Old Bailey and a lot of young people did go past there etc. But they were also actively involved with some of the marches around these cases and therefore after others, the feeling was obviously through the youth fund organisation people, then their parents got involved in the marches ‘cos the youngsters went home, shared problems etc. and obviously the adults were aware of that anyway but they weren’t doing much about it. Now all of a sudden these young people weren’t accepting things, they were challenging and there was support for them. People like myself, Umnesh Desai (0:06:19.7) who was employed as a first worker at Newham Project, we worked together. Another guy XXXX (0:06:27.9) Patel, we three were close friends you know, for about ten years we worked on things and he was involved in Newham Immigration Social Advice Service. A lot of older people came for advice and support and so us working together, having access to the community at different age stages of the community and generally having a rapport with the authorities in terms of the council departments - social services, education etc. and then politicians, many who were on the left, you know, at that time it was more left even moreso than it has been currently and XXXX (0:07:22.0) prior to all that was Fred Jones and others who were leaders were much more to the left and we got on with them and were able to have things delivered like XXXX (0:07:33.0-interest?) education policy, housing policies where you know incidentally XXXX (0:07:39.9-victims?) perpetrators and those sorts of things. I think it was one of the first cases that in Newham where a council tenant was moved who seemed to be racist so you know, set a benchmark for these things. So on one hand we were doing things on the street from the organisations able to influence their policies etc. Much of the time we were in conflict with people as well as working with them so the police for example and with that I was also involved with the Racial Equality Council in Newham and I was a chair at one point and therefore had to liaison with the police and profile. But it was always seen as a conflict between the community relations role that the Racial Equality Council did and the kind of the anti-establishment thing that Newham Monitoring Project was seen as, and I was part of that, so there was a kind of conflict there. That other side, XXXX (0:08:53:00) were working with communities. Anyhow, through these needs were beginning to be met in a way they weren’t before. I have to acknowledge Karen XXXX (0:09:09.1) in much of this, she has unfortunately passed away since with cancer I think in the last five years or so. She was very much involved with providing these things and politicising I suppose you could say. And I certainly, you know, XXXX (0:09:31.0- can’t criticise?) working alongside her. So I think she made quite a contribution to this. But then you also had people like Umnesh and then those who were all really particular in their work. XXXX (0:09:48.6) was another one who played a role in various organisations - women as well as like the

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domestic violence issues etc. Then also the Asian elders XXXX (0:10:05.7) I think she was involved in setting up and to some extent I believe she would have been involved in SubCo too. But this is more of a later development but gradually needs were met. But prior to this there would have been organisations like Gujarat Welfare Association and there would have been for Gujaratis, the XXXX (0:10:29.8) Federation and XXXX these people are no longer around now, passed away, and they were instrumental in trying to provide initial needs. In the same way that political organisations like Indian Workers Association nationally were doing things prior to some of the structured organisations now - giving advice and doing all those sorts of things, political as well as action as well as day to day advice and support. And they still exist but there isn’t the same role being played. I would say about from 1980 to 2000 I can recollect the kind of political developments. I would say things have slowed down generally and there’s been a shift to a right in the Labour Party. I think organisations not being so demanding or same sort of action, occasionally you get the national marches and so on but on a local level there isn’t the leadership, there doesn’t appear to be the leadership, they’re all working with and through organisations including the unions I mean their power has been reduced etc. So there isn’t the backing for workers in the same way that workers were able to take action. Anyway for my part I’ve had my ups and downs in different organisations I worked in through the teaching and then moved away, worked in Waltham Forest and then up to Derby in terms of career development. So I was a youth officer in Derby - youth community education officer. So I’d done my sort of promotional stuff and came back to Newham partly because I found the same barriers there over there and I knew work through my family with them they’d be here. So I’d been a couple of years- this is end of 80s beginning of 90s. When I came back to Newham I was involved with the community, the Aston Community unit at XXXX (0:13:03.6) Hall and thereafter into social services and I was a racial equality officer- well a senior racial equality officer. The race workers, there was a team being developed. The original social workers team had been moved on, working through XXXX (0:13:26) there were roles that had been changed so I came in from the outside as a senior racial equality officer and I think I was able to do things within in the department but less outside - still worked with various people but not the same impact in the 90s as we had in the 80s so things were slowing down. Umnesh well his part became a bit more political and more motivated personal interest of becoming councillor and then now he’s a GLA member etc. Umnesh Desai this is. He’d also made enemies I think within the project, Newham Monitoring Project, by now, people like Asad Rehman, XXXX (0:14:15.4-14:26.1 –names) various workers had been involved and came away. Carol BXXX (0:14:33.1 -surname) I can’t think of all the names but basically the various workers did make a very good contribution, particularly through the 80s, but some of them since the 90s but I took on backseat XXXX (0:14:46.5) from thereon. That’s in the early 90s is when SubCo I think was formed and those needs that were being met through older generations

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looking after their own became more formalised service provision and SubCo was part of that. I’m trying to think of the workers from the beginning but obviously the latest to my knowledge who was managing was Taskin but I think XXXX (0:15:22.2- name) would have had a role right at the beginning. I don’t know what you’ve been told but basically check back on those details. Those people, alongside others, were involved in the political demonstrations, marches and so on. Initially it was me XXXX (0:15:41.5) price campaign, all these sort of landmark cases, thereafter there were cases but not in the same way, the action and demonstrations. So the roles that we played were primarily in the 80s not so much in the 90s so therefore my contribution through my involvement in SubCo would have been really limited but it’s more about them involved, engaged, like other organisations, with some of the political work that’s still going on. I think I’ll hold it there for a while.

*OK that’s great, thank you. So if we could go sort of right back to the start and ask where and when you were born.*

OK I was born in Punjab (0:16:44.8 –place) where many of the Sikh community have come to this country. I was born in 1951 and came here in 1961. We lived around the Liverpool Street/Aldgate area. My uncle had a shop and we lived above the shop and, like that, many early communities when they came settled with their friends or families like that. But we moved to Ilford in 1965 and we were probably one of the first Asian families, first one or two families off the drive in Ilford and I’m not going very far we were, now in (Mayfair, Aldgate? -0:17:31.1) road, so we kind of stayed round here one way or another. And I’m now coming on to 67, so I am elder myself I suppose, retired, and in between you know various involvements particularly around on the local level in Newham and Redbridge since, and wherever I’ve been up north, similarly in community involvement. In fact, some of that started when I was in Hull, doing my teacher training I did youth work alongside it, voluntary first then employed part-time and in a way how I got engaged with community issues. But that was in Hull so hardly anybody who was Asian up there then.

*There’s something I’m quite interested in touching on sort of migration stories. Would you mind talking a bit about your experience moving to London from Punjab?*

Yeah, well we were living in a village, I can’t remember much of it, I was only eight and a half, nine years old but what I do remember is obviously the poverty and basic living out there. And for the first fifteen odd years I didn’t go back so I was probably about 21 or thereabouts and I’ve been back several times since, in fact I had a marriage arrangement there, and got married here but engaged over there in ‘79/’80. When I came to London, quite a dismal place in those days- had smoke, smog etc. obviously since controlled, and the other part I recall clearly is the whiteness of snow and obviously as a young person your legs are shorter, so I remember being knee deep in snow,

**[0:20:00.00]**

I think it was in ‘62/3 soon after we came anyway, and maybe (0:20:07.7- once or twice in?). And I clearly remember a guy, we lived upstairs, didn’t know the language, a young person whose name was Alfie, he lived opposite. We’d lived in Artillery Passage, number 13, and opposite was where he lived. You could tell they were quite poor, they used to look outside the window staring across to us and I’m not sure what he used to say, I don’t think it was abusive but we used to ask if he wanted to come and play and join XXXX (0:20:40) in that way. I also recall some nightclub down the street and from what I recall it was mainly Afro-Caribbean attendants and in those days I didn’t know about communities and problems but I know one of my uncles who XXXX (0:21:08.4) he, because I had two uncles and my father, he got attacked one night but more for robbery I think, and the clan if you like went down with hockey sticks to sort out that problem, so you had to look out for yourself in that way, but that was then. In terms of school, this is going to Vallance Road, I can’t think of the school name, and we did used to have problems but you took it as young people fighting, didn’t know what racism was in those days. In fact that I wasn’t aware of race issues ‘til I was in my twenties, late-twenties ‘cos I went always to schools with white people, college with white people - another school fight as well. But I thought I was just fighting someone you know but he was prejudiced and racist you could say at the time, I wouldn’t have called that as a terminology so used to say it was a fight because someone was picking on you. So there would have been that but I wasn’t aware of these things until much later. So I went up north for teacher again with a white community, not aware of the racial expectations so I was not that self-conscious in the same way as I would be now and conscious about others you know being racist or dislike me because of colour or where you’re from etc. And that I think will have been my experience growing up, but parents, others would’ve had the problems at work, they would’ve just accepted it as probably I did, laughed it off if it was verbal, but obviously if it was physical then you would fight back. So it wasn’t really ‘til the late 70’s and the 80’s that some of this sort of challenging came about.

*What led to your developing that awareness of racism?*

I think it’s more working with young people in Newham, and seeing the other people getting abused and attacked, and support them as a professional, either as a teacher or a youth worker and so on. Because they complained, XXXX (0:23:47.3- concern, explain?) you could see what was going on as well, which I didn’t see maybe because I wasn’t physically attacked in the same way - I was rugby player, I was in a physical, strong weight-training etc. so maybe it was some of that as well that people don’t pick on you in the same way. But these youngsters were being picked on and you could see clearly the abuse etc. And it was quite overt and much of that has died down now that it’s not so open, not so obvious, probably more institutional rather than kind of direct racist abuse or attacks. Sometimes you get it, but not so much as it was 80’s and 90’s I would say. 2000 is what I would put as a landmark of how things changed.

*Why do you think things started to change around then?*

I wrote a Commission for Racial Equality in the 90’s, under (0:24:55.0 - name), who’s XXXX

**[0:25:00.00]**

Then we were challenging policies, formulating policies and I think the responsibilities were being put on authorities to do something, so for example, the police, the councils had a duty to challenge things, even if they had that earlier they weren’t really dealing with it, so some of this started being addressed, yeah maybe ‘90s. But the effect of that was probably 2000 on. Yeah, it may be different for different areas up and down the country but certainly London-wide I would say, from my knowledge and experience. But having said that you know, up North, there are probably other issues - you’ve got communal prejudices, from one group to the other, like Indian to Pakistani, that’s how they refer to it rather than Asian. We, in London, talked about Asian or black, politically black, etc. Over there, it was more broken down into Indian and Pakistani. So where you get Asian Youth Centre, Asian Community Centre, they got an Indian Community Centre and a Pakistani Community Centre, that was the kind of defined community. That probably was on the one part what the communities wanted, or thought that’s what they needed, and that’s how the provision was as well - to local authorities, not recognising what, how that community difficult, so they provide it separately. When I was in Derby, for example, XXXX (0:26:36.2) there, there was also an Afro-Caribbean Centre, yeah the politicians probably weren’t concerned or involved in the same way. But Derby was also under Derbyshire, so the county council, so the XXXX (0:26:56) a vast area, they would’ve been removed from the issues. So in Derby, there would’ve been I think Derbyshire was Labour, Derby was Tory, from what I recall at the time anyway. So the Tories being more to the right, Labour to the left, so that kind of difference. But also how politicians used communities to get their votes you know, so they would fund them accordingly to get their support. And I think that probably happened down here too, Newham, Redbridge, whatever, because those officers, those politicians either weren’t aware or if they were aware they XXXX (0:27:44) because they wanted to get their votes. So if somebody made an application, somebody else would, another community, so you can’t give one and not the other, so they kept on dividing that way.

*You mentioned that Section 11 money, when it first came in, wasn’t being spent in the right way. Could you explain a bit more about that please?*

Yeah, that was more of a provision for needs because there are extra needs such as newer communities arriving, and there are different needs in terms of workers and staff to be employed - there should’ve been civic staff employed to work with those communities with those skills. Initially the money was just thrown into the overall budget of the council, and they used it as and how they needed to, suggesting XXXX (0:28:45.3). And thereafter, when the Racial Equality Council became - there were conflicts with those organisations as well - but when they became more established, and I certainly remember this, we used to challenge the appointments and expecting certain clause of the Race Act we employed like Section 5, 2.d. to do with employing people from certain communities with certain skills - that kind of thing wasn’t happening and they were just advertising for jobs. And the XXXX (0:29:21.5) is one of those examples that we mentioned earlier - they expected people to have five years local authority experience, that kind of thing. Well, newer communities first might have not even been there or they wouldn’t have had jobs in the local authority for that sort of experience, so they were the kind of obstructions. Then you had to challenge that as well as you know suggest that positive action should be taken, and those various clauses - or for training vulnerable sections now - but those of various sections being used appropriately in adverts

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and money applied in order to fulfil those needs - training, employment, particular services being provided.

*What jobs did your parents do?*

My father was a factory worker. He worked hard - often five to seven days a week, nights sometimes. My mother was a housewife. I think that was a pattern for the older generation at that time. The skilled and professional roles came about much later, probably for the second or third generation. In the late ‘70s, there was East African - Kenya, Uganda - those people who came from there, they’d been away from India a long time in Africa, so they had the awareness, the knowledge to have skills as well as financial power to invest. So when they came, the community started changing here - people started setting up their own businesses, some people got jobs, even those who were older had the experience, education I suppose as well. Through that, I think things changed. When I said about ‘80s, ‘90s, ’78/9 is when they came, Margaret Thatcher I think talked about being swamped in those days, and those Asians came at that time. Obviously immigration has been an issue over time one way or another, but they settled in their communities, so let’s say Leicester would’ve been the Hindu/Gujarati community; Bradford the Pakistani and Miripuri communities up north; I think London was more diverse, you had all sorts of people - that’s where the jobs were, that’s where the opportunities were, so again a lot of investment came in, people started doing things. And there was a culture change as well. So, let’s say us growing up would’ve gone out to discos and music etc. and accepted the English and European music. When the people came from Kenya and Uganda, they brought with them the Asian music, say, the Bhangra music for example. Clearly recall XXXX (0:32:48) in the 80s here. There were also others who became-- but they were one of the first Bhangra groups, and thereafter several others formed. I think young people started taking interest and pride in their own music, and people XXXX (0:33:09) would’ve had girlfriends going to places who would’ve been English because that was the community - white community, English community. Here now you have Asian young people mixing with each other at these functions, and more mixing and relationships formed within the community that way. As well some problems arose. So for example, you had intercommunal problems, you had intercommunity a bit more, the Hindu and Sikh community were a bit more liberal with their young people, and the Pakistani community a bit more - I’ll say I’m toward the Asian here, but there may be an Afro-Caribbean dimension but here I’m toward the Asian - they went along to the functions as Asians, but the Pakistani boys went not the girls. So they were therefore relating to Asian girls who were Indian - Hindu or Sikh - and there were those tensions within the communities about them taking our girls, or whatever it was, in the same way that white people would’ve said, look black people or Asian people are going out with our girls who are white. So those sorts of conflicts I recall clearly. Also, a culture of parents maybe not allowing them to go out and about in the same way, so they used to take time out of school to attend these functions, so Friday afternoon they would go off to functions that were sometimes organised in the daytime, in the afternoon, for that. Those were the issues,

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probably late ‘80s, early ‘90s.

*You mentioned the political conception of blackness, how did that meet these prior divisions along racial and religious…?*

Yes, I think the Asian community was pretty united despite the issues. There were historical issues obviously in terms of India and Pakistan - they separated off - but here people didn’t have that baggage. But this issue came more to light in the ‘80s, late ‘80s, when Islam was being- become an issue with the West. So, the Pakistani young people in particular, maybe Muslims generally would’ve then related to that and become more aware of this, and challenging, abusing, I don’t know whatever the problems and issues were. But with the Afro-Caribbean, I think where they were initially coming to be accepted because they had the advantage of language - they had English, and were able to mix with white people and culture, music, etc. - the Asians weren’t, had their own. So sometimes you had racial issues where black and white people were together - black as in Afro-Caribbean - in groups and gangs, etc. as well. Asians were not part of that. Asians formed gangs like Bengalis around Brixton and all that- sorry, around Tower Hamlets - in terms of fighting and challenging racial stuff, but plus their own problems with gangs, with each other. And that shifted as they moved out towards- you know there was a ripple effect going from the centre outwards, so you know they moved from there to Newham, now they’re moving out from Newham to Redbridge, etc. so there’s a gradual moving out. And those communities who were there then started moving out further, but they also XXXX (0:37:26-29) people would move the next county, they’d go much further out. So Newham, and maybe Tower Hamlets areas, all those white people went out further, like the elderly went to coastal areas, sold off their houses and bought flats, etc. then you would have families moving out to – can’t think of places now – but Harlow, etc. you know newer towns, or maybe places along the route to Southend. This is the east end movement. I think maybe west London and north didn’t have the same movements in the same way, but the east did and it still continues up to a point. So the population changes demography of the areas affected therefore the needs and what happens. With Asians, tensions with each other to some extent still exist, but often they’re united. With Afro-Caribbeans, there still is this prejudice in race – the darker you are, the more likely you are to race the problems, in terms of Afro-Caribbean. So Asians come in between, and white at the other end. So Asians tend to relate more to white than to Afro-Caribbean. So they’ll accept the white more than they’ll accept the Afro-Caribbean. But somehow the Afro-Caribbeans relate more to white than Asian as well, for whatever reason. But the concept of politically black was about problems that were common with each other, you know - racial attacks, police harassment, etc. So through that I think the demonstrations, the challenging the policies etc. they were united on that, and when uniting, the way the terminology went was to say black, not in terms of colour, but we are politically black – that’s how that term was used. I don’t know exactly how it came about, but it was certainly used early ‘80s, maybe ‘70s too, but certainly ‘80s onward. I think it again XXXX (0:39:55) roughly turn of the century, around 2000,

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Asians began to question that and the Afro-Caribbeans talked about them being black. They also didn’t see Asians being black, so that tension came about where you’re black and you’re Asian - black and Asian - or the local authorities using terminologies like BME, black and minority ethnic communities, or just ethnic minorities. Those were the different terminologies. And the other part being how you speak about political correctness where you can talk about people dark or brown or whatever, you know. They were conscious more of- to what BME was and black or Asian, didn’t want to offend you know. But politically yes, it was used as a term to some XXXX (0:40:54) but not so commonly, I think.

*Would you mind talking a little bit more about your involvement in the school strike?*

Well, through-- the Newham 8 case was to do with eight young people, who were arrested, they were members of our Stardust Asian youth club. One of them XXXX (0:41:26-name?) got involved with a fight and the other friends to support, and they got tooled (?) up if you like, to challenge these people and also to protect others, you know, they thought this other XXXX (0:41:44) gang was gonna come, etc. ‘Cos you get that threatening thing, once you’ve had a fight. This is ‘round Ilford school – there was a couple of areas like Warrior Square, XXXX (0:42:00) estate, so the white young people from the youth-- see these Asians attending their schools, mainly Asians, and the racial tensions between them. So these guys, what they did, they used to go to a weight training club near the Rosemary temple – Sikh temple – and what hap-- I think some of them got bars from there, but they also picked up other stuff. And when they went there, somebody must’ve called the police, and the police turned up-- I’m telling you the case first, yeah - they thought they were racists, because they were plainclothes, etc. and jumped out the car, they thought they were being attacked so they fought back. So they had a fight with the police, you know. They got arrested as more police came, etc. Ins and outs of it is a matter of the case, but then because we heard it on the radio, XXXX (0:43:09 –name) and I went to the police station to offer support, liaise-- we knew the police officers, or I knew them, and we wanted to offer them food, let the parents go in, etc. etc. Anyway, slowly other people got to know, there was a little demo, or a picket outside, and they got eventually released but the case went on. And we through the Monitoring Project decided to call a strike of young people as a way of protesting that there are problems in the schools and no one is doing anything about it. I used to teach in Trinity School, and I had a free lesson on that particular day towards the end, and so I asked my housemaster, or manager, to say “oh I need to go to the bank, there’s no point coming back, it’s towards the end of school”, so but yes, it was arranged that I was going to pick up leaflets from Newham XXXX (0:44:16) Centre on Romford Road, in Forest Gate. And so I went to the bank, got whatever I needed to get from there to demonstrate I went to the bank, picked up the leaflets, and we were supposed to give out the leaflets to various people like parents, hand them out and so on. But unfortunately, XXXX (0:44:37 -name) whose son was in my tutor group, Khalil (0:44:41 –Bhatt?)’s dad, he never turned up that day, and Ilford Recorder was there, XXXX (0:44:48) had taken place, so I had no choice but to give out the leaflets. So I was giving out the leaflets, and the headteacher came up and recognised me, and then reported me. So then I was

**[0:45:00.00]**

like I said, between the two jobs. I was getting a promotion, going to Plashet Girls’ School. That was on hold, and took a while, but we started getting signatures of councillors, and no actions were taken. Eventually, I was cleared, and you know, was told no action would be taken, etc. There was other councillors, like Amarjit Singh was a councillor. He didn’t wanna sign, he thought of himself as a councillor, he said, “oh I’m gonna be on the education committee, if you get sacked on your appeal, I won’t be on that board so it’s probably best if I don’t get involved”, you know, that kind of thing, and one or two other people might’ve had excuses, but on the whole - like I said - they were more left-wing councillors, they all signed up, the majority anyway. Plus, I think they could see what we’d tried to do- recognised-- and it was, in fact - because we’ve seen in a letter since - it was head of the Plashet School who complained and therefore-- then they realised that I was going there, so that’s how I got suspended from there. But we had various other problems before, like through the youth clubs thing, we used to challenge the youth service as well. So one time, I talked about Kensington Youth Centre but we wanted to expand the youth work, and we wanted to apply for a youth centre through an aid grand. And we had to identify premises, and the Labour Party had a premises on High Street North, and we wanted to go for that. XXXX (0:46:49) was the secretary of the Labour Party there, who obviously was a mayor recently but has been ousted now, he didn’t take a very supportive role then. And that particular time when we wanted to go for this, what happened was youngster went and decided to have a sit-in, into the premises and XXXX (0:47:18) was on etc. and you know the whole emulating XXXX (0:47:28). And while they were there, myself and (0:47:27) felt we had to support-- you know they were XXXX young people, but it was their decision so we’d support it. To go back to the strike, this is background to that as well. So they’d taken action, we supplied them pizzas and things, and they were passing messages up and down with a rope on a bucket, and they wanted to call the leader of the council there, Fred (0:47:53- name?) came there and the *Recorder* was told, and they were taking pictures and it was all front pages, etc. but all that publicity, we were seen to be behind it. so to some extent Caroline but me in particular involved in the youth club, was being challenged and saying, “you’re behind this”, or even if they didn’t say it, that’s how it was taken. So, when he came there, he said, “look, I can’t talk to you here, you know passing messages up and down, can you come down to the town hall?” and I drove them to the town hall XXXX (0:48:33) sat round the table, and they did say, “okay, we’ll give you use of it”, etc. - you can have the place, you can make use of it, in between somewhere there was a little fire as well, nothing serious but again that’s what angered the Labour Party as well, people like XXXX (0:48:55). I have a feeling they weren’t insured at that time so they were all worried but nothing much came of it, but we don’t know how that happened, who did that. It was either the youngsters - you know, XXXX co-ordinated, you don’t know what they were doing all individually - or might’ve been outside others. Similarly with the strike, you know I’m trying to say how I got a bad name and seen behind these things, same with the strike you had leaflets. So already we had supporters in the party, in the council, there were others who saw us as troublemakers. Similarly, with the inquiry I think of Newham 8, I had an understanding with Unmesh, so I took him along met the deputy leader at the time - the name escapes me for a minute, but Irish guy - he had a meeting with us and somehow we had an agreement. But what happened was, Unmesh went and told the press and

**[0:50:00.00]**

he didn’t take kindly to that, and blamed me for it, so again, these things you know kind of add these things-- so you had officers, the council, politicians on the one hand, then you’ve got police role liaison but on the one hand working with them and the other one XXXX (0:50:21) didn’t do much for my reputation. But you know I was happy that we were doing things and active. I mentioned Nasar Patel, we used to plan and plot and do things in the evenings. I used to go to school in the morning about 8 o’clock XXXX (0:50:43) 12 o’clock, after school XXXX (0:50:47-50) and planning things and doing things and producing leaflets. And you know the strike went well because as the distribution of leaflets took place, buses were provided, we had a good attendance and a show at Old Bailey and that was national media as well. And there was interest in these cases so there were other recording-- can’t remember exactly the programmes, but there were features of the youth, young people and the cases XXXX (0:51:27). In the same way, I think we worked with each other, people like in Greenwich XXXX (0:51:33) anti-racial project there, we liased with-- in a way the same problems there, when I was working at the Commission of Racial Equality, they were funding the local RECs and the Greenwich project had a problem with their local REC who were trying to take over that- some areas felt the Racial Equality Councils and MPs XXXX (0:52:04) anti-racist project should be working together and be funded together. But anyway they tried to take over and my friend XXXX (0:52:14) there whom I knew through the marches and demonstrations as well as through the race equality work called me and chaired a meeting and didn’t allow the officers of the REC to speak because they were the ones who were causing problems, and they reported me again- same sort of problems about complaints. Another one was from Redbridge, Iford, where Pam Ballantyne I think she was a chair at the time and somebody had applied for a grant who was a friend of mine XXXX (0:52:52) so he called me to come and speak at a grants committee to support. When I got there, they saw that the work was to be supported, and they gave the grant to this group but not the REC, so the REC complained that I was undermining the organisation XXXX (0:53:15). So now you had a couple of cases where they were gonna take action against me- they are the kind of problems I went through.

*Could you talk a little bit about the Youth Centre, and how it got started and what sort of activities that you offered?*

Yeah. I think initially XXXX (0:53:41) a social worker whose name I forget, an Asian guy, along with Caroline who started supporting them. They had based at Shaftesbury school, as I say, table tennis and that kind of thing, we played, so basic activities- there were not even 15/20 members, but I think it started because social services started seeing problems with young people arising, them get into trouble one reason or another. So these social workers started supporting the young people. That’s how that started. But when I joined on, first as a volunteer and then got employed, the social worker took a backseat, Carol and I carried on, she was liaison person. And we went from one part-time youth worker to a few youth workers and by the way the local authority employed us a youth worker as well through Section 11 funds, the outreach team. And later on- I was the first Asian youth worker in the area as well. Then XXXX (0:54:56) formed a network of Asian youth workers,

**[0:55:00.00]**

called a conference and meetings, etc. So initially XXXX (0:55:04 – names?) and some of those people, those who became youth officers in various areas were then originally part-time so you see their development as well. So this was early ‘80s, so up to then there was hardly anybody employed as youth workers around London, thereafter all this happened. Wouldn’t take the credit for all of it, just saying that’s how it happened. There were obviously initiatives being taken in other areas. So the Stardust, while it was Shaftesbury had a limited role, but after about a year or so we felt we could make the case for a proper youth centre, and we asked for the Saturday [??] and made a case for it and got it. But when we did it, a youth officer at the time John Boyd – he was a lazy so-and-so, he’d always say, “look I’ve got piles of work here” and yet he used to go out and play ruddy golf on certain days, you know that kind of thing. When this sit-in took place at the Labour Party hall, he said, “Satnam, you ought to be careful”, he was kind of warning me to not get involved too much on that level, anyhow, at that time. But so he wasn’t very supportive, so he XXXX (0:56:37-39) so he said “well go along to on Wednesday first” and we did but we started after a few weeks, we started mixing it, starting saying “look, you’re there now”, XXXX (0:56:53-54), we said it wouldn’t work but anyway the youngsters went, then the others came in because the Afro-Caribbean community youngsters were already actively involved and were dominant in that particular place, Kensington Youth Centre, which no longer exists by the way in East Ham that centre.

*Whereabouts was it sorry?*

Off the High Street North, near East Ham station. We came I think XXXX (0:57:20-23 – sth about youth centre?) social service provision then it got knocked down I think it’s not even there. The youth club we went to, as I say, the youngsters started, but then went when it got mixed, so we made a case for it again, so we got the Saturday mornings about 10 o’clock or so ‘til about 1 o’clock a session, so the attendance picked up on Saturday morning really well. The activities, apart from the routine activities of pool or snooker or table tennis, apart from that we had the Asian music, we got Tara Arts involved, the drama group. They did a play called ‘Chilli in Your Eyes’, a guy called Chilli actually threw red pepper in a copper’s face, he was being chased and then when he was running off, somehow that happened, and they used that as the title for this play and based it ‘round racial issues after Newham 8 XXXX (0:58:34) around that time in that area. So they based the play on that, and that play was then performed at Stardust. So we tried to sort of, if you like, reflect the community issues there and we used to have discussions, problem-sharing, you know, that they will have faced elsewhere. That’s how most of this support and XXXX (0:58:56-9) too. We were told that this was too political, but we said it’s not capital P it’s little p, and that was one of the XXXX (0:59:10) objectives of the youth service – social, political, recreational education. So that’s how we used it, and it was relevant and needed as well. And we felt that we were not being political in the same way as people saw it, we were providing the needs and reflecting some of the problems. I was alongside a teacher as well and the youth worker for the service, but various other workers came in Abdul Karim XXXX (0:59:49) he was a part ti-- a volunteer at first, then a part-time youth worker, and eventually became a full-time youth worker. So again we thought we made

**[1:00:00.00]**

a contribution in those terms as well, so the spiritual learning going on to professional development - and others, workers XXXX (1:00:09 – name) worker, I think by then we had a full-time youth worker for Stardust as well, so again development that way. The provision over at Labour Party hall, I remember involving a Bhangra group, so the young people being taught Bhangra, and so we were paying someone to teach that. They were performing locally so they became established as well. I can't remember their name as a group but that-- through the ‘80s, yeah. So I think all in all one way or another we did more than what would normally happen in a youth club, more than recreational activity.

*Yeah. That sounds really great. You’ve mentioned previously your relationship with the councillor, how at times it could be good and it could be quite proactive, and other times it could be a bit more difficult. How did you see the relationship between the council and the Metropolitan police? Because obviously your relationship with the police was more antagonistic.*

Yes and no. What it was, on the one hand, the councillors- there were some councillors more supportive than others, but we obviously related to whoever we needed to. And the way we were antagonistic weren’t personal. We’d, let’s say, go along to meetings and distribute leaflets, when the meetings affected other policy or discussion around certain issues, more relevant to some of the problems we’re referring to here – either race or community need. In terms of the police, when I was a chair for the Racial Equality Council 1985, for two, three years I think it was, he – the officer Peter Cartwright – was more close to the police, and siding with the police, whereas I would challenge him and the police as and how need be, reflecting the demands and needs of the community via the NMP. So, let’s say, on a demonstration, one of those roles that we would have is observers, see what’s going on and if they were to arrest the young people or whoever on a march then to question you know, why, how? But then the police would be quite dismissive at that time, they felt they were the authority, they would do what they like and remember XXXX (1:03:02) saying, “look, Satnam you move back”, I mean they would start by saying “yes fine you come along and watch”, etc. but where it came there and then, they would have a different approach. So we would challenge that accordingly afterwards or at meetings. There were specific times when I think, there was a particular meeting at Labour Party hall actually, where Peter Cartwright and I were sitting together and this guy Herbie (1:03:38 -Boudier?), he was a reverend as well, since passed away as well, he was chairing the meeting and the MP had called the meeting. And I think Paul Boateng was one of the speakers at that time, he was an MP-- Lord Mayor somewhere, and I think it might have XXXX (1:04:02) campaign issue at that time, Peter Cartwright wanted to speak but like I said, just as I didn’t allow the racial or the council people to speak in Greenwich, he wasn’t allowing him to speak, because he saw him as siding with the police, must’ve been around the march or something. So, he turned to me to say, “Satnam, you say something supporting me”, and I basically turned and said, “look he’s responsible for his own actions, but as far as I’m concerned as a chair, we support the campaign, etc.”, you know, “what happened wasn’t right”, so there was a conflict between us then, so he then started kind of divide and rule a bit, which is getting other committee members to go against me. There were two Afro-Carribean-

**[1:05:00.0]**

Marvo Rollins, I think was one of them on the committee, and Lou Boyce who was a councillor, there were on the committee, and they were challenging me. I remember doing this article in the Recorder, the Recorder at the time, saying you should look in the mirror and see what side of the story you’re on, or basically something like that, and they didn’t like that either. But basically saying, look you’re black and we’re talking about black issues, and you’re siding with him who’s also siding with the police, so you know that kind of-- but I think it was just the way it was written, and it came out as a story. But there were confrontations between us, and over time it was resolved that he would leave and I would step down as a chair, through the national CRE, that was the compromise in the end.

*What was the work that the CRD did, sorry?*

REC, racial equality council

*REC.*

The national organisation was the Commission for Racial Equality, CRE- policies, campaigns on the national level, they were funded by the government obviously but they had funding for local Racial Equality Councils, who were then doing the same sort of thing on a local level, in various local authorities. So they would work with the council, but they weren’t as effective as they should’ve been or could’ve been. But they were the kind of softer approach whereas we were the more hard-line, through organisations like the monitoring groups.

*Was their ineffectiveness because they didn’t take such a hard line, do you think, or were there other reasons?*

They were more pro establishment people, and their role was probably seen as working with- were fine, to some extent they were fulfilling their role. But it’s all about- you could sort of work with the people, and be challenging if you think something’s not right, but they weren’t doing that, they were conscious of getting funding from the local authority as well. So partly it was also individuals, so Peter Cartwright, he’s a white person, I’m not saying he was racist, as a white person you’re not concerned, but he would’ve been softer. And it was XXXX (1:07:39 –name?) was like that anyway and that’s him in particular but obviously there were other officers as well. Trying to think of another name, but- a Muslim officer who was equally weak but he took the job as being kind of a career, I think he’d been from one-- from Barking he came to Redbridge, Redbridge Council, they were like managers, but they wouldn’t get involved in the actions or challenging in the same way. Maybe I’m being slightly unfair on these people, because I was a community activist, being more flexible in my own approach but then I’ve also done that in my own roles- still been challenging, and paid the price to some extent [laughs].

*[Laughter] What form did your activism take within the NMP?*

I was on the managing committee, but also even if I wasn’t or when I wasn’t, we were-- had an emergency 24 hour service, so you can phone in if you got a problem-- so I’d be on that list that way, or training people for that service to be provided, the volunteers. But also in terms of plotting and planning, if you like, with the workers, in particular with Unmesh but others too-- that, they are-- ‘80s, yeah mainly ‘80s, not so much the ‘90s, different people got involved, partly because I moved away and my role was more on the outside. But maybe in the same way, I learnt to adapt my way of working, partly senior posts etc. you had to survive to fight another day, so you had to do some compromising. But you had different influences, so

**[1:10:00.0]**

I might let’s say if it was a recruitment where I would be concerned from the outside, this is my-- this is what should’ve been happening, you’re part of that organisation, you’re employing and sitting on panels, and monitoring panels that kind of thing, so you had a different role to play then. And that’s about employment but in terms of services, you were in a position to do certain things as well, influence the provision by being in the meetings as a senior person- this is social services in particular, youth service maybe not in Newham, but senior in terms of in Derbyshire you know.

*How did the way that local government- their relationship with monitoring groups and charitable bodies, how did that change and develop over time in relation to the politics of race?*

Yeah, I think whether it was financial constraints or just the thinking- where there were specialist people, let’s say, a race person in the particular department, then you had several people involved with-- if you got one per department or a team even - you might have had race workers - they couldn’t then start addressing other equality needs while employing for people for disability, gender, the same way, so the terminology became in terms of equality officers, rather than specific race or gender. All the while, some of them still existed, but there was a gradual changeover that way. So the reasoning behind that might have been financial but also I suppose it might have been a practical one of saying, you know, we don’t want to have endless workers so let’s put the onus on someone to highlight and monitor these things, but the department has got to take the responsibility not the workers employed especially, but to some extent it was said that way that the senior officers must take responsibility. So we would be advisory support etc. but not responsible for the actual issues. I think again political correctness language changed over time as well. You had to adopt what was politically acceptable, so you couldn’t really talk about communities in the same way, and provision. You had to be conscious of what the funders wanted, expected. But that’s the statutory- on the voluntary side, it was a little bit easier to get funding according to specific needs. But again, from one time to another, it’s about how much money there is and what work you did, so you had to then do more with the same resource. You couldn’t say I need to do this, so go for this resource and that, so that changed. Local authorities were giving grants, their policies changed. So where they might’ve continued providing them, they would’ve had to limit every three years or five year grants, or they would say, right you need to work together now to certain groups, kind of a hub, if you like, way of working. All the funding would go to voluntary agencies, council, and they would be mainly funded and other groups had to work with them, through them also- that kind of change happened. I think people became more professional, experienced, and so forth, so the whole way of working changed over time. XXXX (1:14:19-) that I also moved, and my priorities changed if you like, from job to job or era to era. So as I moved and started taking a backseat, I probably wouldn’t be involved in the same way as my perception of what was happening would be limited in terms of how other people might see it. So those who are working in the system now might have a different view to mine. I think mine would have been predominant, like I said, ‘80s to 2000. After 2000, I think

**[1:15:00.0]**

some of my roles changed. I mean I’m still involved, either teaching or race and so forth, or even the Punjabi centre and the community, or trying to influence- and even now, the rest of the role I want to play in the next few years if you like, would be trying to influence constitution because some of those groups- including our community in particular- more into power-grabbing and managing, taking control, and some of that is a misuse either resource or their power. So I’m more involved with trying to influence that. An example of that would be the Punjabi centre. When it started, again in the early ‘80s, XXXX (1:15:54) some of the people were there twenty odd years on the managing committee, and weren’t knowing, and obviously their age- I was about 27 when I joined- you could see how things weren’t changing. So you had to work with these people or challenge them etc. and you had to be unpopular, so I was in and out depending on whether I was in favour with them or not. But then I decided to influence the-- working with them, but influencing what I think they could do structurally, so constitutional change. One of the things I did was to- through proposal- that a person has to step down after six years. They do two year elections, every two years, so you had be (1:16:45) for two years before you can come back, rather than be continual- that’s an example of it. There’s a few more things to be done here, but it takes a long time, and it slowly changes unfortunately with the communities. And it’s a generational change as well, they are fulfilling their own needs. And where I was more concerned about younger people, now I tend to be more engaged with the older people’s concern, being older myself as well. Not because of my own need, but in terms of how I relate and I can’t be seen to be a youth worker any longer. So in that respect I’ve moved on as well. So I would-- the change I go through happened through generational change as well. So it’s the next generation, how can they be involved, how can they trade their needs- provision for their needs? So I’m concerned particularly around the Sikh community at the moment, how some of the people are dominant in key organisations. So in Redbridge, the gurdwara- it’s the same sort of people there as with Punjabi centre, same kind of grouping, and they unfortunately got a stronghold on it, so you don’t get the changes unless they want that and it’s what they want, and they want the power and control.

*Talking about organisations with not little change in the upper echelons, how are your experiences with working for Newham council under Robin Wales and where do you think the borough’s headed since his losing the election.*

This Rokhsana who’s coming now is much younger- obviously part of the Muslim community, who are dominant. I’m not sure they are necessarily the majority, but predominantly there, the community-- would be able to relate and get the support of the community. The question is: who are the councillors? And the councillors, I don’t know exactly, but they’re not necessarily reflective of the community sometimes. So we talk about Muslim, but there are Pakistani and Bangladeshi, and they got that divide as well- bit like the Asian, Afro-Caribbean thing, or Indian and Pakistani- so you got that kind of thing. Then you also got community moving out- I think the Sikh community’s moved out, but the Pakistani, Bangladeshi community is there, so the management or the political management has got to come from those communities, those who are there. There are lots of newer communities that are coming in, so some of those problems and issues are gonna go through another cycle again. And they will have issues with the other people already there- either in the community or in the XXXX (1:19:52). Really, there are going to be new leaders coming out of those communities.

**[1:20:00.0]**

But Robin was one of the- when I talk about power, control- he was becoming like that- unpopular and a right-winger who dictated, directed- that’s how I hear it ‘cause I’m not there, but that’s how I hear it. And I could see, because he’s been there a long time and these people feel they know best- so I think it’s a good thing he went, and changed. In order to get development, you need change- I’m of that view wherever. So I think XXXX (1:20:39) betterment of the community there. I don’t know Rokhsana too well, but I just hear positive things about her, so we’ll have to see what happens there.

*How has the needs of Asian elders, you think, changed since the founding of Subco to the present day?*

Well some of those needs are always going to be there, because as you get older you are reliant on various provisions. In terms of Asian elders, where some of the needs were met by extended family, I think the nuclear family - as in the Br- as in the English or European communities - the elders are kind of put to the state and the state provision, rather than the community doing things for themselves, or families doing for themselves. Depending on which way it goes, it could be that the politicians put the resource to the community and say you provide as a community for your community needs, but I doubt it. I think it’s still gonna be institutional provision, so the local authorities will one way or another provide, and maybe get guided or advised or supported by community. Yeah, I do not see authorities giving adequate resource to the community to fulfil their own needs, but in terms of the community and the families, the younger generation are more concerned about their professional career- their own relationship in the family, rather than for the elders. I’m not saying they totally throw them out, but it is changing gradually and XXXX (1:22:42) there’s no difference between these minority communities, how they look after their young pe- oh, the elderly, as opposed to how the host community does.

*Yeah*

So, I can predict the fact that for the moment, for the next ten, twenty years, I would say the community needs to highlight and provide for their own anyway for the moment, ‘cause some of the communities are not doing what they should be doing for their own either. So whilst Subco were doing advisory support etc. not all communities are doing that. That was in Newham obviously, but you got all the different areas- Redbridge, for example, wasn’t doing enough for the community under Tories, now it’s a Labour control, it’s just come about, so it’ll take time before they provide it in the way that socialist politicians would support. They may not- it might go back to Conservative control but I doubt it. So I think there’s more chance now of communities doing things, but they still haven’t fully recognised how they could. They want grants but they don’t know how to get them, they haven’t got the younger professional people involved enough to be able to do that. The older generation, for whatever reason, one reason not the other rather, they haven’t been able to access the resources that they’re entitled to. Suddenly, support or financial support is also abused, misused- not personal level, but more about providing not necessarily the way it should be used. Or- yeah that’s right, so maybe that the- what’s the word- creative attempting, I think that kind of thing…

*Yeah. A while ago, you mentioned schisms and splits*

**[1:25:00.0]**

*beginning to develop in Newham Monitoring Project. Would you mind explaining a bit more about that, like what sort of issues created these tensions and how they manifested themselves?*

Umm… I think with NMP in particular, it was all about the person who started it, thinks their baby, etc. so Unmesh was the first worker, we were on the committee and involved with employing him and so on. As he became established, you know, he wanted to control and do things his way, but that’s okay- the only thing was he didn’t always carry people with him. So the new people had to be taken (1:25:38) but they then thought-- saw that as a challenge, that he’s doing what he wants to. But they also saw him being pers-- politically motivated to want to become a councillor, and work for the Labour Party and do things that way, and maybe used by the Labour Party. So through that, and especially when he became a councillor - although most of the problems were there before that, I’ll go into particular detail in a second - but through that, I think, he was alienated, various individuals on the committee as well as workers. And Asad was one of those in particular, but maybe you can achieve. That was around late ‘80s, I would say. And also there was a specific occasion where - I know ‘cause I was there, and we discussed - where local authority wanted to stop grant to them, and he told me that he had-- you know, he was aware that they’re gonna cut, and he was going to speak in favour, but had spoken to them, the various key councillors, to cut the money. That’s when I fell out with him, and, or- openly it was declared that he was not working with the interest of the organisation- he either wanted to control it or destroy it, almost.

*Is that why he went to remove the funding, do you think?*

Err…I would say so. I mean I wouldn’t like to accuse exactly, you know, in and outs of-- but I do remember that particular conversation. And he’s- like I refer to myself, Nasar Patel and him- we used to be for a decade or so together, you know, working. He’s no longer part of that trio, he’s like, you know- and he has, yeah, made a personal agenda about political career. He’s doing cases but I d-- ‘cause he was working with Robin, depending on what happens, he’s no longer with Robin, he’s off the scene from what I understand, he’s in the area, so therefore he may not have the same backing. But ‘cause he’s at GLA level, it’s possible that he will still progress, will wanna become an MP, but we will make sure he’s not challenging around- he’s not around here.

*I guess my final question is do you have any particular strong or cherished memories of your work at NMP, on demonstrations, or project work or?*

I think the proudest stuff is really the Stardust because I saw the development of that- maybe went full circle in the end and stopped. But NMP-wise, I would say, yes, working with these guys and despite some of what I might say about Unmesh- we worked together and a lot of things. And I think we did tread waves and we did influence change, we did bring about change. But more than that, I would say I took a lot away from it, you know experience, and good memories of even demonstrations, you can’t say it was positive, but through that action, you bring about positive change whilst a march might be seen as negative, or pickets and things like that, by the particular authority, if it’s against education or council or police, they won’t be happy about it, but that’s a means by which you bring about change. And those were the happy times because we did all that very successfully. But that mode of change is coming to an end I think. National level yes, demos, but local, I think, it’s dying out.

*Do you think*

**[1:30:00.0]**

*there’s a particular reason for that, and a value that’s gonna be lost because of that?*

Well, I think, there just-- maybe that was just one way and tactics, or means by which people did things, maybe there are alternative ways of doing things. The social media stuff and other things may be just as productive, but it’s not engaging in the same way, and not involving people in the same way. I think it’s a-- yeah, I think it’s through people like Margaret Thatcher you know stamping down on things, the move to the right of the political parties, including the Labour party under Tony Blair, etc. *[phone rings]*

**[End]**