

“Here to Stay” (2019) Documentary Transcription

Participants: Jamal Hasan, Raju Vaidyanathan

Minute 1:48

Jamal: '76 was Southall, and then Newham, and then *East London*. What happened in East London, at that time, the community leaders, they were discouraging us not to take direct action and then one day Altab Ali was murdered here and he was working in Brick Lane. And then he was passing by after work. He was going home and he was attacked by three youths, and unprovoked, just stabbed him, and he just went to the hospital to die.

And he was brutally stabbed, so he was stabbed to death. Now the thing is, as soon as that news came up, the whole community, it was like a spark and the whole community was exploded.

Minute 3:33

Jamal: Within minutes, the whole community was informed that somebody had been brutally murdered. Who was murdered, nobody knew Altab Ali that much, but that was immaterial. Somebody has been murdered. And all of us were, in fact, scared, fearing.

I must tell you one thing here. Before Altab Ali, there had been racist murders before and there have been quite a few afterwards. But Altab Ali's murder was quite different in a sense. He mobilized and awakened the whole community that, if we wanted to stay here, we were scared. So the youth came out. They're saying "here to stay, here to fight," that meant we're here to stay, that's our slogan. And the elderly people, they had to be, they had to change their attitude, there has to be done something. So we'll do a demonstration, a peaceful demonstration.

Minute 4:40

Jamal: And the youth, so far as we are concerned, we said no, a peaceful demonstration is fine, but we have to show our strength. Show of strength was very very important for us and for the racist people too.

And then what happened, for the elderly people there were some community divisions. And the youth took the decisive role of uniting the whole community together. And then, with ten days' preparation, we organized a national demonstration. And at that time, the Bangladesh Welfare organization was a national organization. The numbers were from Birmingham and

East London, all Bangladeshi people who are refuted here with a welfare organization. So they had a network. And the elder people joined us and then, within ten days, we organized the national demonstration.

Minute 6:25

Raju: We, I mean I was a Brick Lane boy and we were all, you know, young boys and just a minute from here playing football, but I mean, our lives revolved around football, that's what we were doing.

And people like Jamal would say, "you have to bring the young kids down, the footballers, for support," I mean like moral support, but at that age you don't know what moral support means.

So on the day of Altab Ali's funeral we went to the Mosque (the East London Mosque), outside the Mosque, where it was starting and there was two big crowds and us youngsters we thought this is too big for us, we knew they were going to come past Whitechapel, here, right past this park, it wasn't called Altab Ali park back then.

So we stood on that side of the road and waited for the funeral cortège and the crowd to come past, to go past us, you know, and we was on that side of the road, you know, and we knew faces in the crowd and everything but we thought you know, we're not going to walk to Parliament Square, Westminster we were too young, we weren't sure whether we can go there and come back. But we were on that side of the road and you know the funeral cortège came past.

Minute 8:10

Raju: It was honouring Altab Ali but it was also, one of the main slogans I remember was "here to stay" you know? Because it was assumed we would be going away. Where is my father going to go? Where I'm going to go? You know, my father had paid taxes all his life you know, he was waiting for his pension, he was getting old by then, you know and I remember that we were *here to stay* and, I was, that always rang with me. Does that mean that we have to go back? You know, where would I go back to? Things like, that and, it was just this feeling that you know we're here to stay now. We're not going to, they're not going to push us out, you know, we're here to stay. Where are we going to go? It was that feeling. It was also in memory of Altab Ali as well but it was just the sense of, they want us out because we're not going to go now, as if we were going to go anyway, but as in we're here to stay and I remember that wording 'we're here to stay' and it always stuck with me that *we're here to stay, here to stay here to stay ...*