

**The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project**  
An Oral History with John Nazareth

Archives and Research Collections  
Carleton University Library  
2016

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Narrator: John Nazareth  
Researcher: Shezan Muhammedi  
Date: March 21, 2015  
Session #: 1/1  
Length: 102 minutes  
Location: Toronto, Ontario

**Abstract:**

Mr. John Nazareth along with his wife came to Canada in 1973 after being granted an exemption to stay in Uganda by government authorities. This oral history covers Mr. Nazareth's childhood and upbringing in Uganda as well as his new life in Canada.

He reflects fondly on his upbringing in Uganda recalling numerous sporting activities and enjoying collegial relations with classmates and Ugandans. Working for the Ugandan government, Mr. Nazareth was well liked amongst his colleagues and was deeply saddened by the expulsion decree. He recaptures a particularly interesting experience when describing how he was able to attain authorization to remain in Uganda. Recognizing a fellow classmate who worked in the army verifying documents enabled a quick stamp on his citizenship papers confirming his eligibility to remain in Uganda.

Upon arrival in Canada, Mr. Nazareth began working for the de Havilland, a Canadian aircraft company. Eventually he moved on to bombardier and has been working there for over 30 years. He has remained incredibly active in the Goan Overseas Association in Toronto serving in various volunteer positions within the organization.

This oral history was conducted in Mr. Nazareth's home in Toronto, Ontario.

**Shezan Muhammedi: “So we are doing an oral history interview with John Nazareth and it is March 21st 2015. So first John go ahead and just tell me a little bit about yourself.”**

John Nazareth: “Yeah, I was born in Uganda, in a town called Entebbe which at one time was the capital of Uganda. In fact, Entebbe means seat, it was the seat of the Ugandan government at least certainly for the civil service. So born there in 1947 and lived my first 25 years of my life there before leaving and although I didn't leave in the expulsion, really I left because of the expulsion. Had the expulsion not have occurred I would not have left. So I spent most of my life there, studied there. Uhm had the good fortune to actually study with some Africans in my primary school days, although there were a lot of schools were very racially based in colonial times. But some of them, there were a few pockets, and we did in fact I went to school, elementary school we had a few Africans and then a whole plethora of people. Went in high school, went to a boarding school, St. Mary's college Kisumu which was just 7 miles out of Entebbe. It was one of the best schools in the country and certainly, uhm the best Catholic school. At that time, you know it was, it was founded just for Catholics but over time really they would admit anybody who wanted to come and was able to qualify whatever. And it's, in that school, I learned a lot about politics. Uhm and in fact latter on a lot of my old classmates and schoolmates went on to become politicians, very significant politicians, one of whom for example is currently the vice president of Uganda and whom I know very well and several others. But to go back a bit, I'm born to a family of four siblings, I have three brothers and a sister. Uhm my parents, we're all of Goan origin, my father was born in Goa when it was still a Portuguese colony. My mother was born in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. Essentially a lot of Goans left Goa for jobs because the Portuguese it looks like gave a taste for the good life but couldn't give us enough jobs to satisfy. So we ended up moving around. My grandfather was a big musician. He had an orchestra at the time of silent movies and he got a contract in Kuala Lumpur with the British. He went up and settled and orchestra there and my mother was born there. And just to digress a little bit, he was such a great musician that he ended up teaching music to Chiang Kai Shek's children. And Chaing Kai Shek was the leader of China at the time and fighting Mao. While he was fighting Mao he kept his children in Kuala Lumpur, and my grandfather ended up teaching music to them. Just a slight digression.”

**Shezan: “Fascinating.”**

John: “So my father and mother got married. In those days, a lot of people got married through arranged marriages and that's why the huge distance between Malaysia and Uganda. They got married

in Goa and they came to Uganda. And uh most of the time in Entebbe, although we did spend time, a few years in a town called Fort Portal which was in Toro province, a few years in Kampala, and I did go to university in Kampala, I did my degree in mathematics there. And then worked in the ministry in finance for a few years in Entebbe. Uhm and it's funny how I ended up studying there. They happened to blotch my application for a scholarship to go and do post graduate studies so I said ok let me work in the ministry while I'm waiting for the next chance and I kinda liked it. It gave me a chance to take part in the, you know, it was so soon after decolonization so I got promoted to a very senior job, very young in my life. I was the head of one of the departments just because the British was running and left and I was there. I got a chance to write backgrounds to the budgets and so on. It was you know a phenomenal job, you know there was very little discrimination against Asians at that time. So you know if you were a Ugandan, whatever colour you were, you got treatment. I went to university, the country paid for my whole education. They even gave us some money for books and so on, we never had to pay a thing. They even gave us pocket money, they were equal. They didn't say oh you were an Asian you can afford more. It wasn't like Kenya, in Kenya for example if you're an Indian there was a meanness, they gave you much less than what they gave Africans. Not so in Uganda, they gave us an equal amount. When it comes to jobs they never discriminated against us. So in the government there was loads of people of Indian origin and Goans were very big in the civil service.”

**Shezan: “Huge in the civil service”**

John: “They really liked Goans, in fact Obote once actually commented and said that and praised Goans. The reason he did and people asked him, he said we Africans were good at making the big plans but these guys will look at the smallest things and do them well. And maybe that's something, we became good at that sort of thing and we became good at looking at the smallest things and it grew into the civil service. It wasn't always so, Asian. I'm told that we did loads of different works, there were Goans who may have originally left Goa to work as diverse things as cooks and sometimes tailors and music. And somehow over time we gravitated towards um civil service. When we first went to Zanzibar, they were opening up bars and they even became social clubs for the British. At that's how they started these social clubs in a Goan bar. And then of course other things transpired. Life was very good in Uganda. In the sense that everybody felt safe. You know, there may be some times for adults where things were more dangerous in certain areas but as children you were absolutely safe nobody would touch you. We would wonder miles away from our own home and it was quite acceptable maybe because all around town everybody looked out for you. It was not just your parents, every house, if they saw you were

misbehaving, they would tell on you and they would come and correct you. I guess it was a typical, what Hillary Clinton would call, it takes a village. Well that's what it was with us, everybody corrected you. So life was good and I lived in Entebbe which was like a little paradise. I never realized how much until I left and went back. Let me stop for a moment and let you jump in.”

**Shezan: “Yeah uhm, I'm just curious as to, then what happened next. What happened next once the expulsion decree was issued? What happened to your family members and to you? What was sort of the sense of what was going on?”**

John: “Well the first time we heard about it, it was bizarre. I went for a 21st birthday of a friend, Kenanhou in Jinja. So I drove my car, I took a bunch of friends and on the way back we're just enjoying the scenery and we hear on the radio that Amin's announced that Asians have 90 days to leave the country. We couldn't believe this, we said this is bizarre, it can't be true so we just carried on. It's only in the next few days, it became clear that this guy was serious. Now very many strange, things, and I'll grab at stray things that happened with expulsion. First, Amin declares that only you know those who are non-citizens in Uganda would have to leave. And uhm so they were already, I mean out of, it's not totally clear how many Asians there were. Some say it was as low as 50,000 cause some had left, some say it was as high as 80,000. Certainly of these something like 24,000 were Ugandan citizens. So this thing about Indians not wanting to become citizens is nonsense. Some 24,000 had citizenship and probably at least 20,000 had applied. But if you applied for citizenship somewhere after the end of the 1963, it looked like they just stopped processing. I don't know why? Nobody knows but there were 24,000 or so. Now many of these citizens had no intention of leave. I know certainly among my friends that were citizens we had no intention of leaving. We said no, we are gonna stay. Uhm but things are getting hotter but not from individual Africans, they never harassed us. It was always the government, not even the government, it was Amin and his henchmen. Because those who were running the government were so horrified that he was expelling so many useful people and so many of those who were working in the civil service. SO what they started doing, is that Amin would make an announcement saying this group of people must go, and they would then issue exemptions. They would say ok, if you are working in these areas you are exempt. So a whole bunch of people, even if they weren't citizens, if they were crucial, not even crucial, just senior positions they were given exemptions and a whole bunch of my friends were exempted. It almost became some sort of a joke. Amin kept declaring that further and further people had to leave quickly and they would be going and declaring no, there are exemptions. You know, I've written about this in some articles and I said that if it weren't for the fact that it wasn't so serious, it would be downright hilarious about how this dance was going on between them. But it slowly

sank in and uhm the worst thing about the danger and some people were going through dangers. But in the background, there was a lot more danger among Africans because they started dying, they started being killed, bodies started being thrown. And as far as I'm concerned Amin just came to Asians as one more scape goat. He could never run the government and I knew from the day he had overthrown Obote that he would never manage. So he just kept picking one more scapegoat after another about the country because he couldn't manage the country. And I just think that it was our turn. He thought ok, this is a nice way, maybe we can strip some assets from these people, give it to the people, maybe that will make them happy for a little while. But he had no idea about running the government. Uhm you know even the people were running the government would get scarred. People were so scarred that even when Amin even suspected you , you were dead. If he had even a minor suspicion about you he would have a person follow you and then he would put a person to follow the person that is following you. So nobody trusted anybody. So this is what is going on in the background while we are in the foreground. People are going and they had to leave jobs, they had to start verifying their citizenship. If you were Ugandan citizen, you had to queue up and get it verified that yes you are a Ugandan. I remember when we started queuing, pretty soon it stretched a mile long, we started having to sleep on the streets because if you got out of the line and say I'll come tomorrow, when you come the next day there was another huge line so we ended up staying. I know I had to queue up 36 hours on the street to verify my citizenship and then they gave orders to the people who are verifying citizenship to withdraw as many citizenships as they could for whatever pretext they could find so they were doing that. I know in my case I couldn't find the original of my citizenship certificate. I just didn't know what happened. So one day just before the expulsion, actually maybe during the expulsion, I didn't have anything so I went to my friend, an African friend, who worked in the ministry of internal affairs and said you know I can't find it, I don't know where it is. He says, I'll help you, I'll get you the original. He gave it to me and he put it in the newspaper and go and ask a friend of yours to go give you a photocopy and luckily my cousin was working in the next building. So I took it to her, made a photocopy and returned it to me. This guy you know, took a big risk by giving it to me. So here I'm verifying and all I had was this photocopy. And the guy was telling me that we can only take the original and uh I said I can't find it. He says ok, I'm gonna rip this. I said no no give me some time. So from the corner of my eye I notice that one of the guys verifying citizenship was one of my old school friends from Kisubi. So I immediately went to him, I left this guy and went to him, his name was Katabola. And he says, hey Nazareth how are things and he pulls the things and stamp stamp and I was through. Mind you I ended up finding the certificate what had happened was when I working for the government they had sent me on a course to New York for 3

months and it was to do with trade and I had to give my citizenship certificate and then I put it all in the scroll and then I forgot about the scroll. So regardless I found it many months later, anyway thanks goodness to my old schoolmate I was verified. My younger brother was verified, my sister was rejected because she didn't have a particular certificate and they didn't know that she was not required to have it ok? But my sister didn't know that but I later on, did my research and found it and tried to get her citizenship back, it was too late, it was gone. My elder brother was one of the earliest persons to become a citizen and he went off on a scholarship and he went to England to do his postgraduate in English. This is Peter Nazareth who became a professor later on. And he uhm, his citizenship and his renunciation of citizen. Oh yeah, if you had another citizenship, when you became a Ugandan citizen you had to renounce your previous citizenship. Well the British kind of blotched that thing up because he was one of the earliest and nobody could find it so they just took his citizenship away. Mind you in his ministry he was pretty senior so they ended up exempting him. It's funny about him, he had such a role in the ministry, he had worked there too and he ran Uganda's first lottery and ran it for a few years. So he did too, and funny thing he became an English professor and he always told me that thanks to the ministry he learned about life because originally when he tried to get a job in the Makerere after doing his post-graduate it turns out that he had been blacklisted. He had been blacklisted because he didn't cower to the British, he was independent thinker. The British still had a neocolonial hold on Uganda and they still controlled the university still at that time in the til the late '60s. And so they blacklisted him, made sure he never got, not only not getting a position in Uganda but they blacklisted him all over East Africa. And he got a job in the ministry, and it ended up being a blessing in disguise because he learned something about life and that helped him write his first novel. And uhm, so he lost his citizenship, so of my family two lost their citizenship, two could keep them. My mother had no become a citizen, my father had passed away. My mother never became a citizen and my father and my mother thought at the time they were too old to change citizenship. I mean they never even thought what that meant. Did they mean could they stay? Just to go back a bit, just the decision to stay and become citizens was not automatic. Originally we thought well, my father thought we should leave the country and we tried to go to Malaysia because that's where my mother grew up. And Malaysia rejected us the first time around and this was now late '62. So my father asked us, and he said I can apply again and they'll probably say yes this time, do you want to go? I don't know what made him ask us and then all four of us said nope, we want to stay here. This country is everything we know and then we became citizens. My mother had not become a citizen, she was British and in the end she had to leave the country and so did my aunt. Very close to us my aunt, my father's sister. And and so you know that was

kind of a heart break, she had to leave her job, she was working for East African Airways, she had to leave her job but her husband, they had just married for a year I think it was, 2 years. He was a Ugandan citizen and his citizenship was verified and she could stay in the country because of him. And uhm, uhm, that was ok but it was quite a blow to her, you know for her independence that she couldn't work, outside you know. But my brother-in-law he was a good friend of mine, he also studied at the same school in Kisubi. It's funny that I was the only one that studied in that school. My two brothers studied in Kololo Secondary School in Kampala. So that was, we could see slowly the danger ramping up but life was full of surprises. I remember once going on a picnic, the funny thing was that even though it was so dangerous, it was an intense period that was in some ways happy. Why? Because everybody was living like there was no tomorrow because there was indeed no tomorrow. And I know certainly among the Goans, our lives centered around the club. And here we are a formerly Goan club that had opened up by the way I think around, after independence, certainly my brother became president, Peter. And he was very, he mixed up with everybody and he got a lot of his African friends to become members and so on. And other Indians became members and even some Britishers became members and we changed the name of the club and it used to be called the Goan club and we just called it the Entebbe institute. So for many years it had been open with loads of different types of members and a lot of them had become executive members of the club so it was pretty clear that this was not just a Goan club any more. It almost became a civil service club because the seat of the government, the civil service was there. It became like a civil service government. So everybody went to the club and would drink, uhm, their sorrows away. You know Goans have a reputation of drinking. We can stand a lot of liquor, not so much in this country we don't drink that much anymore. I guess drinking and driving is a no no. We realize, I mean in the old days people would drink and drive, if you couldn't walk you would drive. I mean it was crazy you know. Perhaps thank goodness there wasn't much traffic so your chances of hurting somebody are significantly less. I mean the whole country and something like 40,000 cars. Uhm but you, you'd go to that club and you drink and drown your sorrows. And strangely enough, I was just about 24 or something and I started running the bar. They couldn't, I was one of the guys staying there so I started running the bar. Now the bar is where all the stories came and these stories were tremendous, they were not only our stories, they were stories the Africans would come and tell stories. I'll tell you one story where one day I was sitting down and there was this guy and I remember his first name, his name was Chris and he, his cousin came with him and they were drinking and we were all chatting there and uhm the cousin's eyes were blood red and I asked him what's happening what's with his eyes. He says don't ask, this guy works in Makindye prison which was a terrible prison. He says he was up all night



killing people, prisoners, political prisoners, with a hammer to the head and he's totally finished. I didn't ask anymore, so there were crazier things happening there. But from a Goan point of view, actually I think that little story must've happened after the expulsion, just after. But during the expulsion, because I'm just thinking if he had heard that story people would be scared out of their minds. But the people would come there and we would play games and so on and Entebbe was a little island of tranquility because the air force was based in Entebbe and the air force were highly educated guys. Probably the best educated whereas the army folk were in places like Jinjia, Mbale, which were dangerous places, especially Mbale, extremely dangerous. And there was the fear that was going on uhm, was quite terrible and uhm I know some people who got killed, uh but it was not that many. Some got killed by accident and uhm some were killed by the army folk but I think by and large, I think in totally I would say about 30 Indians got killed, but I should say Asians, all Indians of South Asian background. Maybe about 30-40 got killed in all this. In contrast 400,000 Africans were killed by Idi Amin. So I think by and large we got off lightly, although if you're one of those killed it's not light, it's your life but I think to most of us the crazy thing was about losing your home. My family though was still determined to stay behind. We said we are not going, except for that little time where Amin said everybody is gonna go, you gotta go, even citizens gotta leave, that really struck enough. Uhm but we decided we wanted to stay and within a few days Amin changed his mind anyway but the writing was on the wall for most Asians. They could see that even though he said already we've changed our mind and then he goes and makes a statement. That those who are gonna stay, I don't remember exactly when, he says those of you who are going to stay you're not gonna stay in your current jobs we're going to send you into the villages to become Kombalala chiefs which is a bit of humour there. A Kombalala chief, he's a chief of the village, on the one hand it's quite comical, I mean what do we know about running a village but he said that mainly to scare people. And it worked because a lot of Asians who had stores, that was their only livelihood, they didn't know anything else. What are we going to do? What are we going to the village and do? So many of them started saying, who were initially not going to leave, they said maybe we should? Never asking of course where are we gonna go? And what was a huge game changer was when Canada came and decided to take some people and a little later the United Nations came to take stateless people. The Canadians made it clear that they didn't care whether you were a citizen or non-citizen. It just so happens that one of the delegations that came had a friend of mind, formerly a guard and she lives in Hamilton now. She had left the country and got married and then came back on holiday and decided to help with the Canadian mission and she let them know a lot of the things and they became and it became very clear to them that Amin was so unstable that this thing about non-citizens, that he was

probably going to turn against the citizens so they decided they're going to take anybody provided you meet certain criteria and uhm, uh. Can we pause for a second.”

**“Shezan: Oh yeah no problem at all”**

John: “Yeah so uhm it was let's see I'll pick up again. Now one of the things is, here we are trying to, for the first time the Goans got together, to discuss uhm what are we going to do. SO this is not a total sequence, so we got together at the former Kampala Goan institute and uh to decided what it is, what is our strategy? Is there any strategy to all this? So the Goan association, which is kinda different form the Goan institute. The Goan institute tends to be more social, the Goan association looks out for the welfare of Goans when in need and they decide that they will pay for anybody, any poor Goans who want to go back to Goan, and they'll pay for them. So that's one thing, but my elder brother and I decided that we wanted to be the vanguard to the people who wanted to stay behind and we were gonna fight for people. I mean we were so idealistic and we are gonna fight for the people who had lost their citizenships and get it back and to stay. So this was before the Canadians came. And so we said, ok, we'll work with those people and we're gonna stay behind but then that's when the Canadian came and when they said, ok we're gonna take anybody and uhm the United Nations came and said they were gonna take anybody. Then all of a sudden the game changes, now everybody wanted to leave because Amin had shown his hand as well. He had shown his hand by saying all the Asians are gonna have to go whether you are citizen or non-citizen you're gonna have to go. So even though he had relented, you know, you still, now people were not sure. So we, uhm, it was pointless, we never met again. And all of a sudden everybody was going and queuing at different ypes of you know the British embassy to the Canadians, I dunno the others, there were a few. The Australians may have been there, they took a few people.”

**Shezan: “Yeah the Australians, New Zealand as well.”**

John: “So there were loads of people and some of the things sometimes were humorous. And you can always cut this out if you want to uhm I remember this one friend of mine and we were talking and he's going for his interview. He goes to the Canadians for an interview and he says to them, ok so passes the interview. They want him to do a medical exam. So he says ok they want a stool sample. So he says what is this stool sample at 2pm in the afternoon. I'm an 8 o'clock man, I can't give you any stool at 2pm but I'll tell you what but I'll go and give, I'll ask Alfred here, he's always full of shit, he'll do it. I mean I've changed the names. So the friend gave him a stool sample and he fulfilled his obligation and you know

fast forward years later when I met St. Vincent. What's the name? Roger St. Vincent and he told me you don't know have of it. We were keeping all these samples in a tent outside and it was in the heat. Can you imagine trying to go into that tent, oh man it was impossible. That's another story, hahaha. So now we didn't meet anymore as a group except you know to commiserate with each other and we carried on playing things. We played, sometimes crazily, we played sports, we went on picnics because we realized we can't take out money with us. Sometimes what Amin would do, when you had to leave the country you had to declare all your money, you're allowed to take some much out and then they would freeze the rest. Now should we ever see this money again, and people said you should just spend it. Then there were people where at one point they froze the money before the allowed you to buy your airplane ticket. Now your money is frozen and you can't even buy and airplane ticket. And people started doing strange things. For example, in one case, this one guy went and sold all the oven and so on that was given by the government to them and the furniture. If you worked in the government they rented you furniture at a very cheap rate and it included cookers and so on, and this guy went on and sold everything from his house and he bought his air ticket. Other people of course, Canada came and took everybody, you know they chartered planes, thank God, God bless them. They chartered planes and took people because this was happening. You know, it was pretty chaotic but we carried on playing, Goans loved sports, they could never get enough. I learned to play Badminton, we had all sorts of card games but we had a lot of African friends. And we carried on being very great friends with them. I remember my permanent secretary, what you would call the Deputy Minister today, one day he called me to his office, and he really liked me for some reason, he would always give me special projects. So he called me one day and he said you know John, I just wanted you to know that not all Africans hate you. Ok? We are just hoping that all this will blow over in time and then you'll be able to lead a normal life. In the meantime, you can come into work when you want, whatever time you want and you can leave whenever you want. So he did this and I was very grateful for his graciousness. So when I went back many years later, 20 years later, I actually went and looked him and found him.”

**Shezan: “Awesome!”**

John: “You know and found out that his wife went to the same school as my wife. My wife happened to go to an African school too, in high school called Gyaza high school. And uhm so it was something that we had more connection with Africans then most and a lot of Africans risked their lives for people. I hope some people will give you those stories of how some people, and some actually not just risked but they lost their lives trying to help Asians in a time of need. Uhm, in one of our picnics, uh in one of the

beaches it was called Lutembe beach I think, between Kampala and Entebbe, we actually went there and we were playing games and so on. Suddenly, Amin appeared, turns up he owned that beach and he was selling, he owned the place that was selling stuff to people and so on. And one of the strangest things occurred, we had of course brought our own drinks, in Uganda there was no regulations against drinking beer anywhere. And we had taken our beers to the picnic and suddenly the guy, the African bartender at that place, rushed towards and said you know guys Amin has come here and we don't have any beers do you all have any beers that I could give him? So we gave him a few beers and who knows he might've lost his life. For simple things you could lose your life, Amin could be the craziest guy. I know during all that time for example. He was a sex maniac, if he liked your girlfriend, he could have you killed and then buy an apartment for your girlfriend you know. And one of my friends that worked in the government with me was killed like that because he was very friendly with this woman who Amin did not want anybody else to be friendly with and he killed. So in the paper it was in mysterious circumstances and so on. Another person almost had the same thing happen to him, and African friend again and luckily when Amin started befriending his girlfriend, Tanzania attacked on the border and I was just checking in the book, we were just talking about all those articles. Tanzania attacks on the border, Amin had to flee to the border to fight them. This guy, his girlfriend told him you better leave and they both left the country and I met him again twenty years later, he got a job with UNESCO in Nairobi. So it was dangerous like that, and everybody felt the danger and not just us, even Amin's own family was scared stiff. One of his wives was friendly with one of my Goan friend here in Canada and she was telling me that they had a tail shop and he father used to do a lot of stitching for well-known people including for Amin's family. So they knew Amin's, two of Amin's wives very well. And they came, Amin's wife, this one wife, I don't remember the name now. She came to them and said can I help you all in any way, she said ask me for anything, just don't ask me to help you stay here, in fact you're lucky that you're leaving. And we don't know what's going to happen to us. In fact, that particular wife, Amin ended up killing her. So he was a, just unstable, unstable guy. But he could also be, he was a strange guy. There was one time, uhm this story was published in the papers. Amin is going to look for the former vice president of Uganda, who was VP under Obote's time, I think his name was Obiya. And the guy was, when Obote was deposed he decided his only chance of survival was to go and live in his remote village as a non-descript guy. Nobody knows him, he just lives there quietly, he doesn't raise any noise. Suddenly, one day he realizes, he hears that Amin is looking for him. So Amin is coming, so this guy says to, wishes all his family goodbye, he says my days are over, I'm gone. Amin comes in a helicopter, this guy sees him, gets out of his house and starts running. This guy is older, he's over 80 years old and he

starts running. Amin's helicopter lands and Amin gets up and he's running after him. Amin finally catches him, and Mr. Babiya falls down on his knees and says, why do you want to kill me? I'm just an old man. And Amin says, who wants to kill you? I want to ask you to be my special advisor, and takes him back in his helicopter. This was all in the paper exactly as I've told you so even in all this bitterness.”

\*Break\*

John: “So even in this, there were humourous times but what it did tell people, especially Africans is man you are living on borrowed time here. So this was a whole country that was living in fear. Not just Asians, we were all living in fear. And so now comes people slowly leaving you know. One by one, planes are coming and I lived in Entebbe, so this is where the airport was. There's roadblocks, they're stopping you everywhere, you could be stopped anytime but one time for example I was stopped and this one guy, one of these army guys and he wants a bribe. Well I had never bribed anybody in my life, some people are so good they put it in their license, here's 10 shillings in their license. I didn't know anything. And what I did was I gave this guy 10 shillings but I'm not looking at him and I just gave it straight and I gave it to the wrong guy and this guy turns to me and says hey mister do you know what you have done? And he says, I'm going to take you to Makindye, and now I'm like what am I going to do and suddenly in the corner of the window and among those guys, those army folk was an old schoolmate of mine and I said, I called his name, I said can you help me out, I'm in some trouble. He told me that I'm gonna take this guy to one side, I'm gonna talk with them. You don't look back you just drive. And that's what I did.”

\*Break\*

John: “I'll tell you another scary event about the general fear going on in the country. There was, I was in Kampala and uhm suddenly I notice people in the city running. Ok, and then another story, what had happened, that was the day the chief justice was arrested. He was arrested because he had just found these American reporters who were tried, he had found them innocent and Amin wanted them to be found guilty. He was so furious that they had been found innocent that he sent his army guys to the high court. He was dragged out from the high court, stuffed into the trunk of the car and dragged him off. So the people who were there, were so afraid, that they started running. People saw these guys running and they started running. People saw other people, pretty well soon, the whole city of 300,000, maybe

half of them were running. People didn't know where they were running, why they were running, it's just that tension was so thick that you could cut it with a knife and somebody said Entebbe has been bombed and I was in Kampala and I had driven there. I had come to see my wife who was a girlfriend at that time. So I phoned home and I said mom, is Entebbe being bombed and she said no nothing. So we had no clue, it was only later on that we found out that it was the chief justice had been, and he was shot. And uh so the tension was there and people started leaving and I know some from my, I was telling you, the store keepers, wonderful people. They left, they were Ugandan citizens, so there were a lot of Uganda citizens who left. For the longest time there were non-citizens who were exempted and could stay. And the Africans never gave us trouble. In fact, I remember this one time my brother-in-law, he was at the taxi stop and someone started needling him, saying oh Muhindi, so my brother said to him in Swahili, you wait you are calling me Muhindi, you wait when I become your Kabola chief, I'll show you. So all the Africans are said, yeah that's telling him, who does he think he is speaking to you like that. You know the people, I'm sure there were some who were pleased with the uhm, a lot of people knew they were next and in fact many months later after the expulsion when we went fishing somewhere. All the Africans were so happy to see us. They said oh my God we thought all the Asians had left, so they were happy to see us. So as the different groups are leaving and now here's my brother, he had his girlfriend and his girlfriend left. My brother David, my younger brother, and she had come to Canada and we had all said we are not going, we're staying here. If everybody goes, we are staying. My brother suddenly realized that he couldn't live without his girlfriend. He just buys his airplane ticket and he goes. He just left, and I forget whether he left before the deadline or just after the deadline, I just don't remember anymore but it was within a few days and he just got on a plane and left. No visa, no nothing, and to his luck he lands in, in , I think it was Toronto and he meets in the immigration, somebody he knew that had immigrated many years earlier so there was no problem he was able to get in. IN those days visas were not that strong but if they thought that he was coming to stay here for good they might not have let him

he. But he was, in fact he and his girlfriend got married, and as I was mentioning to you earlier. They were told that they were the first couple to get married in Canada of those who had been expelled. His wife's name is Lydia and uh you know, I thought then when I was looking at my brother leaving, boy when will I ever see this guy again. I never thought that just two years later I would be here. In my wildest dreams I didn't think. I remember tearfully wishing my mother goodbye and my aunt goodbye when they had to leave. I think I said so many goodbyes that the permanence of goodbye doesn't just register anymore. Whether people die or they're going, there were just too many goodbyes in Uganda and I think I must've wept the last time my mother really left. Uhm so then after that uhm you know there was still a community left. And the funny thing is that you know, after that they had slowly, even after the expulsion day, we had to verify our citizenship in Entebbe and one person found out that she had accidentally been exempted, the mother of a friend of mine. So they told her, you've got one day to get all your papers together and leave this country. One day! So I took her to the bank of Uganda, she had to do all her freezing, get her ticket, and everything and she had to leave and then there was a small group of people who had stayed behind. One thing that I began to realize as I stayed behind was how much the Goans meant to me. You know, um that all this time I've come to accept myself first as a Ugandan and then as an African you know. Yeah we're gonna be here, this is our country, I said yeah I'm an African. And then I realize, oh my god, these people, that most of my friends were not Goans now, but still it was a bit like your parents suddenly dying. You know when you've got your parents you've got all your friends, you make some new friends, you probably don't spend very much time with your parents suddenly when you're single. But when they die, you feel this great loss, and that was the kind of loss that I had felt that this community had gone. Even though I had a lot of African friends, I realized that man this thing meant a lot. And then when I came to Canada, I've played a big part in the Goan community and I've been president of the Goan Overseas Association here which is the biggest association of Goans uhm in Canada. In fact, it is the biggest Goan association in North America. I was

president and I had played a part which I had never expected because as far as I was concerned I was an African. Uhm, so in time everybody left. I stayed for a year after the deadline and I left, I think somewhere in late September of 1973. We still had a lot of African friends and the feud could still be there and the craziness. And Amin through one of his ministers calls me, the minister called me, he told me that Amin wants to take you to a non-alignment conference in Algeria. Now this is two weeks before I'm due to leave the country. Incidentally, uhm one part I forgot is that my wife and I. She was still my girlfriend at that time, she had left on a holiday just before the expulsion. She had gone to Britain on holiday and couldn't come back and she stayed in Britain for some time and then she got really lonely over there and her parents had just gone back to Goa in January of 1972. They decided that's it we're gonna retire and they go back to Goa. So her father told her, why don't you come to Goa and stay with us, why stay there? So she did, she was in Goa. So in May of 1973, I think it was, I went to Goa for the first time in my life. Never been before, again I got this money, we better use this money up and I was planning to study overseas. So we got civilly married and I was trying to get married in a church in Uganda, again I'm still tied to Uganda. I want to get married with all my African friends and all that. So I got civilly married in Goa, so that I could take her back as my wife. So I said ok, I'll do all that. So I go back to Uganda and all my ministers, the minister gives me a letter, my permanent secretary, a whole bunch of people support me, oh man, to ask the government to let me bring my wife back. And what happens is that they give me a date. The minister of internal affairs so now I'm driving to Kampala on an interview to discuss. As I'm driving, I'm listening to the radio and it says the minister of internal affairs has been dismissed by Amin because he dresses very poorly. So I said oh god there goes my visa. So I went there and interviewed and they talked with me and they were arguing all kinds of things and I was demanding my rights and so on and so forth but I knew in my heart that these guys are scared stiff. They don't want to make any decisions, there's no minister what if they do something what will Amin say? So nobody wants, so I knew that was it, so what I did was I decided well I've got admission to the London



School of Economics to do some post graduate studies, I took unpaid leave. The government gave me unpaid leave and I fully intended to go back. So I said alright forget this, we'll go to Goa and get married in a church and then we'll go straight to London. Two week before this, Amin wants to take me to Algeria. So I say, who do you say no to Amin right? And so I'm being interviewed by this minister, Henry Kyemba, people know him because he wrote this book in a state of blood."

**"Shezan: Yeah in a state of blood, I've read that."**

John: "Yeah so he told me, he says you know you should go with Amin to Algeria. Now I'll tell you as a political person, I would've loved it but he says you know we hear that you should go. Amin can be very good if he wants to be. And we hear that your elder brother has lost his citizenship, don't worry by the time you get back he'll have his citizenship back. And I hear you want to bring your wife here, don't worry by the time you're back she'll be here. So these guys know everything. How do they know everything? But they know. I'm thinking now, what'll I do? This guy's hands are full of blood who wants to take favours from him and not only that I'm thinking to myself suppose I go with him to Algeria and suppose he gets overthrown, which was not unlikely, there were 12 attempts on his life already. He was so good that when he drove from Kampala to Entebbe he would change cars 3 or 4 times. The wrong person would get shot and he would survive. So I thought if he gets knocked off, sorry overthrown while I'm in Algeria, will I now be able to go back? Because not this is Amin's men. So I said give me some time I need to think about it. So I went back home and I called up a good friend of mine. An African who worked with me in the ministry of finance and he was a good friend of the minister and I told him, I said please tell him, give him some excuse, I can't go on this. I mean how can I take a favour from Amin? I can't, uhm and I had found out many years later, that he was the brother-in-law of that minister actually but he was a good friend of mine and my brother Peter. I think he and my brother Peter studied in university together and you know there was a lot of, by the way just to digress a little but. He had so many friends Henry Kyemba, he was my brother's classmate, not classmate but university mate, same here. The former president of Tanzania, Ben Kapa was a good friend of my brothers' in university. In fact, they were both big Elvis fans and you know my brother teaches a course on Elvis in the university of Iowa and he's been teaching it for more than 20 years. And when Ben Kapa became president he sent him a congratulatory letter and he said by the way I gave this course on Elvis are you interested in knowing about it. So he says yes, so he send it to him and 6 months later Tanzania releases Elvis stamps.

So besides all these political things, there is pervading it all a youth culture. A youth culture that's common throughout the world. Not only are we thinking about politics, we are thinking about Elvis. So uhm, just to digress, so there were all these connections so I told this guy I can't. He said I'll give you an excuse. And you know, this things was sad for Africans, this guy told, the same fellow from the ministry, he told my brother I am so, I hate my mother because of her I'm staying here. If it weren't for her I would leave the cursed country, man this country is cursed you know. So many Africans would deeply troubled about everything. So many of their friends, there were so many, there were people were, Asians were married to Africans and nobody knew because they were in remote villages. And when we were queuing up to verify citizenship, among them were some Africans. Why? They were married to these Asians so it's kind of crazy. So finally, anyway, so I left by way of finally, when I had to leave Uganda, I left by way of Goa. But at the time, the point when I left there was just three Goans in Entebbe and a few other Asians. And these three Goans were all living in my house. And you know what a sense of loss it was to go but I still in mind I wasn't thinking that I was leaving for good. And I, I went to Goa, now the second time in one year and in September my good old friend who stayed with me in Entebbe, he left and went back to Goa many years ago and he helped me arrange everything. My godfather's son was also in Goa, he was our best man and so on. And we got married and strange things happened when we got married, when we were signing something in Goa, they also needed a lot of signatures they said they needed to post up this things saying I was not married before and give people a chance to object. I said we're not staying here for three weeks, I can't wait. They said if you get a high court judge to give you dispensation then you can do that. So I go to a high court judge, an old friend of my fathers'. He gives me a dispensation letter, meanwhile we've signed everything. I said ok, here it is can I have my marriage certificate? Now you are gonna get married. I said how can I get married now, I don't have any witnesses, I had ten witnesses before now I've got nobody. They said don't worry we'll pay 2 rupees to these guys on the street and they'll be our witnesses. I said I'll be de darned if some strangers are gonna be signing my wedding certificate. So I rushed and got this friend of mine and his father-in-law and they signed. Later on, I'm telling my mother this story and she says you know the exact same thing happened to your father in Goa. He used the same words that you did, I'll de darned if some stranger is gonna sign my wedding certificate. So we ended up going to you know finally leaving Uganda was pretty tragic, I never wanted to leave. We go to Goa and we get married and I just told you about my father and me. And then we went off to Britain to London. Excited for a year at the London School of Economics. Then I wanted to continue to do my master's, so I did my post-graduate diploma there with the intention of doing my master's there at the London School of Economics and I got placed there. But

now I'm starting to itch, you know for the first time you know we've put all our eggs in the Uganda basket and Amin had made a mockery of it. People had been sending money out of the country, we never did. So as I told my African friends, many of whom that I've met here. I said you know, Amin made a fool of all of us who were true to Uganda. He made those other Indians who sent money out of the country, he made them look wise because we invested everything in this country and then it's all lost. So now I'm hedging, I've got to prepare that maybe it won't work that I'm going back. So then, I actually applied to go Canada, because also some people, let me think now about coming to Canada. My whole family now had come here, in the Toronto area except for my older brother who was in the US. In fact, that's another story. My elder brother got a fellowship to Yale university because of his first novel and he went there as a fellow for 5 months. And it's funny, he wrote his novel, and if I can digress another, it was released, his first novel in a brown mantle was released two weeks before the expulsion. In it he predicted the expulsion. He talked about the problems and the country declaring expulsions and so on. Two weeks before, he had to keep a very low key because there was a big opening for his novel and just then the expulsion occurs. Anyways, so he got a fellowship and he ends up being in the states. He went to the university of Iowa in the end. He had a really rough time for a while and then in some times he get welfare over here and finally he became a professor and he did well for himself. So anyway most of my family is here and I'm thinking well I gotta think about it. And even my wife had some family here, so I said maybe I should think about it. So then as I was coming to thinking, we actually went and applied and we got accepted, and I said alright and someone told me about this problem that they have in Canada not having Canadian experience so I said what about this. Why don't I come and do my master's over here. So instead of continuing at the London School of Economics, I came to the University of Toronto and uhm I went and discussed it with them and actually discussed the program with them. The way I was doing it, actually getting admission was the most complex process. It was not like the British institution, these are the points, you jump through these hoops, if you jump through these hoops we'll get you in. In Canada everything is negotiable, it's not if you do this then you are in or you are out. The guy said, but it's not absolutely clear but if you can go to your professors and negotiate a program then we'll let you in. So I got there I talk to them and they say yeah we've got a program they'll let me in. So I did my Master's here at the University of Toronto so now after studying for a year in England we came to Canada uh still now then tension even though I was a landed immigrant, still thinking 1 year and I'm going to go back. So I studied here for a year finished my Master's and now Uganda's become a mess. Because uhm, Amin gets overthrown in 1979, here I am in 1974, uh sorry 74, yeah so Amin's still there, that's rights. So in spite of my fondest hopes and expectations that Amin would have bumped off he

doesn't. So I decided ok this is it. I finally throw in the towel and I actually wrote to the Ministry [of finance] and formally resigned and I actually sort of remember telling them that I'm so thankful that you gave me a change to really contribute to my country and uh, you know, when I wrote that and signed it I really, I shed a few tears because that was a break

**\*Break\***

"I can never think about that without breaking, I can't. But that's when I finished university anyway and I went for an interview and I tell you life is strange with Africa, I mean I left Africa but Africa would not leave me. Because when I was doing my Master's I befriended this Sierra Lionnese guy, uh and his name was A.B. Konte, in fact, I named my son, second name after him. We were good friends and I helped him with his homework. He was doing a PhD in sonar monitoring of geology and minerals and that sort of thing and I was helping him with his statics because he was not very good with that. So we became very good friends and when I was finishing, now I was looking for a job and I didn't know, I was finishing a Master's in statistics and I didn't know now, waiting for a job and he told me, apply to de Havilland, it was an aircraft manufacturer, now bought out by bombardier. And he says, "apply there, they're looking for people" you know. So he gives me the name of this guy, the guy was hiring for engineering. He says don't apply to HR, HR never gives bloody anybody jobs but um you apply to this. And I said how does this student have this information. He's the most amazing guy I knew, this is a guy that got every job he ever applied for. He owned property and so on, and he's a student. And so thanks to him I get this interview. Now I go for an interview and strange enough this interview occurs on the feast day of Martyrs of Uganda, this is June 3rd. I go for this interview and I get a job. So I don't know, you know, in Uganda. So these guys became saints as well in Uganda and so on their feast day I get my first job and I worked at de Havilland for about 10 years and I left them and I've come back, I came back to them. So all together I've worked 30 years at Bombardier and I've become an expert in the field of aircraft reliability and I've helped now create uh a lot of world standards in the whole business about collecting specific data which monitor aircraft. You know in the aircraft business at least in Bombardier, we don't just sell and airplane, it's gone. We collect statistics to the point where every month we get a 170,000 records of information. So much information you need statistics. So uhm, I wrote most of the programs and so on and now I'm close to retiring. So here I am thinking that Amin has contributed to a distribution of people around the world and one digression. I did my DNA analysis to find out where my roots are from and so on and it goes back and traces the roots all the way to 60,000 years ago. So I do my DNA analysis and find out that my earliest ancestor the male, I was doing my male side because it's easier to the Y chromosome. My earliest ancestor came from the Rift Valley in Kenya and so I am now beginning

to tell people that when my father immigrated to Uganda, all he was doing was going back home and these ancestors happen to be the ancestors for every known African. So your ancestors too came from the Rift Valley in Kenya. Any way so I come here and so I'm living here and the Ghost of Uganda slowly has got to be exorcized and that was a strange thing. We kept meeting uh people here ... so anyway I come here and I'm still you know Uganda is still in the, it's very difficult and I slowly find out that there are a number of people Asians who are working with me. There's a guy Minu Patel who I knew in Kampala whose father owned DL Patel press, he's an engineer we're working together and uhm in fact I should give you his name as well, well did he maybe he left earlier may be left before the expulsion. Anyway so one day I'm here and I decided to do my MBA and I was doing my MBA and my brother who in the meantime is in Iowa and he became the President of the African Literature Association of America. So one of the conferences, he meets this guy who's doing his PhD, and African from Uganda doing his PhD in English at York University where I was doing my MBA. So he tells me, and the guy's name was Claude Duxiede, and he says to him why don't you go and talk to my brother, gives him my phone number and we talked. And he says hey man, we become friends and he invites me to his wedding. I go to his wedding I meet a whole bunch of African friends! The guys I knew! I met classmates from my old school who I didn't know who were here. I met some of my friends who were in university, one guy was Museveni's right hand man, he was his really his philosopher of his movement and who had come to and he came to Canada to escape Obote's forces because Museveni was fighting in the bush now and in fact later on this guy became Museveni's, he was designated as Museveni's uhm ambassador to the UN and he got meningitis when he was here so he was recovering and everything. He recovered, he thought, and Museveni wins and decides to make him ambassador to the UN and so he goes back to Uganda to collect his credentials and he has a relapse and dies. He dies in Uganda. His whole family are here and I'm with them, in fact, I was with them when they were having some religious ceremonies and so one and uhm I met him there. So I met all these Ugandans, and I couldn't believe. So now not only have I left Uganda, Uganda was coming to me! And you'll see from the book I've given you on Uganda. I made so many African friends and they left for very much the same reason. They had to escape Amin! Because Amin hated educated people because he wasn't educated. He probably had grade 3 education uhm and so they were escaping from Uganda. Many of their stories are so strange and funny. Many for example in South Africa when I went there I found out that actually a lot of Ugandans are there and it turns out that when apartheid ended and they wanted to Africans in good positions there were no Africans. Because the white people could gave them much of chance to get educated. And here was this bunch of very educated Ugandans and Ugandans love education. So they were getting all these jobs and

the South Africans got really mad and they resented them. And I met a South African, you know it's more than you think they're not only pinching out jobs they were even pinching our women because all the girls they love these guys because they were educated and so and they had no education there. You know, so I met all these guys and so I'm still friends with them and many of them my school mates I find that there are now comedians here. There's a well-known Ugandan comedian at this point I uh I don't remember his name but he is in Toronto. There's a wonderful film maker who's Ugandan who's here, who's uncle is this guy I mentioned worked with me in the Ministry of Finance and I just found out by pure chance as I was trying to find the uncle. I was googling on the net and I find this girl. So there are so many and they've done, they've become Canadian now and their children are, have, now become localized and are wondering about their lives. I met one guy for example, there was his name was John Coconge, who was one of the leaders of the UPC in Uganda, he challenged Obote for the leadership of the UPC pre-independence and barely lost but mind you he challenged him at a very young age. I don't know how he even had the guts but in the end. So he was young he got married to a young woman who was my age. I was young at that time but he got killed by Amin so his whole family had to leave Uganda and they were here. I met his wife and I was talking with them and I met the daughters and so on and the daughters are asking me about their father and they were asking about what life was like in Uganda. They didn't know and as I was talking to them and telling them about their father because I was so involved with politics in Uganda, I mean I was too young to vote then but I knew so much because of my school, uhm, and all those guys were so political and I realized then that I was more Ugandan than those African girls and I was more African than them because they were losing it and they asked me to give a talk to their community when we formed the Ugandan community. And I told them, I said you are going to learn now that you're going to have to teach your people, your culture. You just took it for granted when you were in Uganda. We had to do it and you're gonna have to do it and one day they asked me to speak for the Indians because I was the only Indian who was there for the forming of the Uganda Association. And I said you know is a very funny thing when I was in Uganda, I considered myself an African, it took Amin to remind me that I was an Indian again and I embrace that ok. I now accept that I am a Canadian uhm a Ugandan an African, an Indian and a Goan. You don't have to choose except if one goes to war with another then you might have to choose but I don't have to. And I embrace all of them, they are all part of psyche and when I am with Ugandan Africans something almost goes click in my brains and I joke like a Ugandan and the humour is not always the same and some other time I'll tell you about their humour. They don't have a sense of irony for example. Africans don't have it and they love language and you could see where rap comes from. So all that, you know, you realize it's full and you

asked about the question of where will our children, what do they think. I've taught them that you've got to be Canadian first. I said you don't have to reject all your past to be a Canadian, maybe we are lucky because Canada has encouraged people, I wouldn't say full well. Multiculturalism is misunderstood, I think so anyway, multiculturalism is a policy that says we don't want you to reject all your past while you learn to embrace Canadian. But I think that your generation, uhm, will definitely embrace the country and many of the countries and will be more Canadian than their parents. And my children are but you don't have to forget that. So when we took our children to Uganda they loved it. You know they could see that yeah, there was some sense of belonging that this was it now. In the same way that I tied myself so much to Uganda which probably surprised my father maybe, my children embrace Canada and you can have all these things and why it's easier in Canada than elsewhere is that Canada in many ways has been, had the angst of a Third World country. When I first came here, maybe you don't see it but Canada used to love foreign things. Ok the Canadians, they appreciated foreign things more than their own. For example, if you wanted to be a lecturer in a University in Canada you had to first go and become a lecturer in the US. and in Britain and finally if they recognized you were good, then the Canadian universities would recognize you as good. So they were just like us, they loved all these foreign things and so on and you know we can identify it's like a colonial people. In fact, I was once president of our association, I gave a speech on this. I said look learn from Canadians. This is where they started but they found their confidence and they found their place and you will too and learn to throw off your colonial past and when you throw it off then you can embrace it. Because all those things that came with you, I mean the British taught us so many things, you can't help it we've got them. But you've got to reject them first and that's when you're ok. So I think I'll stop there. It's been a lot anything you want to ask?"

**Shezan: "Yeah um, that was great that you touched on that multiple identities on your own that was awesome. My sort of question is, when you first came to Canada, what were things like? I guess you already had some exposure to things like winter. Did you come straight to Toronto?"**

John: "From London, I came straight to Toronto. From Uganda to London. In London there was winter but it was nothing like here but I had one exposure that really helped me. When I went on this course to New York from Uganda when the government sent me. I think they sent me in early September, maybe end of August and the last few days I was in New York, the temperature just fell. The temperature fell to something like 5 degrees Celsius or 4 degrees Celsius, then I knew what cold was. Until that time I didn't know what cold felt like, I had no warm clothes. So it went 5 degree, up to 25 degrees, 5 degrees, I left

the country. So I went back to Uganda and I never used the sweater again because Uganda wasn't cold. And to give you an idea, Uganda's temperature in Kampala, Entebbe, and certainly parts that your mother would've known, it was 26 degrees every day. I have an imaginary weather forecast. The temperature today is going to rise drastically to 26.5 and tomorrow it is going to drop drastically to 25.5. I thought this was all in my imagination until I looked at a book in York University and that's exactly what it was. Hardly varies, the highs, the lowest temperature is 17 in the night and it rains a little bit all the time, so we don't know what the meaning of top soil was because everything was top soil. We never saw plague, you could just throw seeds and they grew and that's what I read in this magazine. It said in Uganda, you can just throw seeds and they grow. You don't have to water them because it rains a little bit all the time. The cardinal of Uganda came on holiday once to visit and went to visit the whole Ugandan community and I was among them and I decided to take, Cynthia and I decide to take him around and we took him to all the sights and so on and so forth. I first took him to our home and showed him my garden and I had to explain to him that we had to buy the soil, top soil, to put there. He laughed for 5 minutes straight, hahaha. He could not believe that anybody could buy soil because in Uganda it's all top soil. So um yeah?"

**Shezan: "So I guess your exposure to Canadians, so kinds of interactions, they were for the most part pretty collegial?"**

John: "I'll tell you something, what I found was this. It's not that there was no racism, but there was hardly any and I found that if you did not give them a chance to be racist, they wouldn't be. And what I mean by that is, if you behave absolutely normally in your interaction to them it never occurred to them to be racist and nothing happened. I did face one racist incident and it's only sort of indirectly racist and I'll explain that. When I was at de Havilland, it was almost closed and I was looking for another job and I was interviewed by a bank. It was the Bank of Nova Scotia and uhm the woman who was interviewing me was so excited she said oh my god this is exactly what I want. She said you know what I was gonna call you for another interview but why wait let me go and try and get my boss and try and get the second interview right here. She goes up for 20 minutes and leaves me. She comes back and she's kind of apologetic and makes some excuses and we'll call you. I never heard from them again. So I can only guess, ok it was not a direct thing, but I can only guess that when she told him that I was a coloured that maybe, that was about it, I didn't really face anything. And strangely enough sometimes I was mistreated too, and not because I was coloured, I was treated like anybody else and they mistreat me just like they mistreat everybody else. In the end, it's not so today, today we try our management tries



very hard, there are all sorts of programs to be good managers. But I had a director who was terrible, plain terrible. You know, and I felt very badly treated and I was not the only one. So he treated me quite equally but he mistreated me as a human being not as somebody who was coloured so I did not face a lot of it but there was some. You know but we were just the latest group, let me also tell you something that nobody will tell you. When I came, first came, it almost looked like that everybody took a turn being at the bottom round and taking people's um, uhm, I dunno insults or whatever. At that time it was the Italians, they were the ones that were at the bottom. They used to be called whaps by the local populace. And they, so they loved it when we all came, when all these Asians and all came because all of a sudden they were not the bottom anymore, and they started creeping up and they were not being mistreated. Now, boy, they are doing really well. So I think some of it was more like that. Yes we heard the term Paki and so on, I didn't personally but some people did. And uh, you know, I tell some of my friends, you know, it's not that India is free of racism, you know you've got a fair shot here than you do in India. I mean in India, there's so many people you need to know just to get a job. When I came here, certainly you didn't need to know anyone, it would help but you didn't need to. And none of us had a real hard time getting a job. Now it's a bit tough, it wasn't then. There wasn't the overt racism, nothing that, I mean you hear about how everyone hates Toronto. They don't hate Toronto because your brown or your white, they just hate Toronto. You know there's always something, there's always seems to be a culture of resentment that I say, that's in the human being and there's some of that. So yes there was some, I didn't see much of it, I got jobs, I was well treated in my work, never had a problem. Uhm and from what I observed also, it's not just me, many people you know, I did not see very much, just very little. And some people might even tell you that we came from a country, I'll called it racialized. For example the different racial groups you know were conscious and even said things about each other. You know in our ways we made fun of each other. Maybe not in a nasty way but we did, and we had nicknames for each other. For example, Goans were by other Indians would call us *sukhimachi*, what ia *sukhimachi* it's soft fish because we lost eating soft fish. And you know each, some others we probably called them choroko, why because you liked eating cow. So we had um, friendly nicknames for each other. I remember we called each other monkey. Everybody would derogatorily called Africans monkeys, well we decided to call each other monkeys in swahili, in swahili it's nugu, so we'd call each other nugus. And we'd call white people pongo, which we found out was a white monkey, so we called everybody monkey. There was so of it but not much.”

**Shezan: “And then I guess the Goan community here, you played a really big role in that. How did they sort of fit in with the settlement and integration process for you? What sort of role did they play, I guess did the overseas Goan association start before you were in Canada?”**

John: “Yes in the 1970s, but my wife is gonna hate me for telling you this but I found out by back calculation that uhm I met my wife for the first time one day after the Goan association was formulated in Canada. She's not very fond of the association, no, no I won't say that. But it was formed in 1970, they were just probably just 3 to 500 Goans then, very few. Today we are about 30,000 yeah. And we're not a huge community.”

**Shezan: “In Toronto or across Canada?”**

John: “Yeah in the greater Toronto area. I would say in the rest of Canada I would say maybe about 6,000. Maybe more now, maybe more now but not a huge number, the big Toronto areas is where it became the most. They were helpful, in fact, it so happens that I have written the history of the first 25 years of the Goan community in Canada, the Goan association. Maybe I'll copy that and I'll give you the history, because in this, one of the things I found out was the role that people played during the expulsion and how they helped people as individuals not as a community, sponsored some people to come here but they helped a lot in settlement. They would meet people at the airport. A huge amount of people, Canada was so helpful, people came forward to help you. You know I think it's a great story that you know when you talk, and I'll give you names of other people, of who met them and so on. I think it's not only the community the helped but it certainly helped. The biggest help was when you got here you found friends. And in our case, it is both a blessing and a curse. All the people you knew, half the people you knew or maybe more came here so you have a set of friends already. It took a real effort, to make place, to make friends with other people. Otherwise you could live your whole life with your old friends. So because of this club attitude, our social club you could have 30 very good friends. Over here that's impossible you can't here you might have 5 good friends. Then slightly larger you could have 20 reasonable friends, and it grows larger. But because of the club you intensely knew people, you could know more people. So it was a challenge then to get to know others. And the one loss has been with knowing connecting with the other, the rest of the Indian community. There are still some people here, who are from my hometown and I don't know where they are. I would love to meet them, but I don't know how. Now their names, like this guy Gufur Mohammad, if I were to ever google Gufur Mohammad, there would be loads of them, you're not just gonna find one. But I will still occasionally

still meet some. Mind you, we are getting older, I met one guy who was in the boy scouts with me, when I was very young and when I met him he didn't remember me. So there's that too, we had a little get together. So it's, yeah it played a big role and in fact that Goan association is trying to find out exactly what the role is and we're trying to redefine our role now because the role we played at the beginning was of one type, social and so forth. As the community became so large and people are marrying outside, both my children are married to people who are not Goans, my son is married to a girl who's um Phillipino origin, but Canadian. They're Canadian, that's how they met at university. And my daughter is married to a boy who's, as my wife told you Irish-English-German background and he was my son's best friend in university. So and if I were to tell you about their friends, they've got a group of friends, I'm really happy with them. There's every community in there, there's Vietnamese, there's Chinese, different types of Indians, white people in there. All of them went to university together and they've remained good friends after university. With the exception of one they've all married outside of their race. Everyone of them, so one Asian if you want to call it that way, you can't call it Asian because it means something different here. One Indian person married a Chinese person, a Turkish person has married a Vietnamese, and you know that sort of thing all in their group. You know because of that, we now as a Goan community gotta redefine, what is it that we really want you? You know what'll happen 100 years from today? It's a good question."

**Shezan: "Well awesome! Thank you so much, this is fantastic."**