

Senator Mobina Jaffer

Uganda Collection Oral History Project: Announcement

Senator Mobina Jaffer: “August fifth, the day of my brother-in-law’s wedding, Idi Amin made this announcement. You know, we all laughed. We didn’t take it seriously. We were at the wedding in the evening, and “Ha, ha ha. He wants us out, now what next? Ha ha.” Honestly, we were laughing, truthfully. My family had had a close call with my dad, but we were laughing. This is ’72, August fifth, I still remember. Then, when we were coming back—the wedding was in Jinja—when we were coming back, returning to Kampala and then back to Fort Portal, we saw all these cars, Mercedes after Mercedes leaving and we were wondering what was happening. So many Indians were—I guess people were just packing their stuff, their money, their gold, and they were leaving. We didn’t have that fortitude or that vision because we didn’t take it seriously, we really didn’t take it seriously, and so we just went our merry way, we went to Kampala and then went to Fort Portal really not worrying about it. For a few weeks we didn’t take this seriously, you know, the first two, three weeks, I don’t think we took it seriously.

Then we realized we had to go, and his family made the decision that since my husband and I—my husband, because of his father, had British rights and so I could get British rights, I didn’t I was a Ugandan. It was decided that we would go to Britain and then his parents would follow us and we would look after his parents and two siblings, and the rest of the siblings, we did not know what was going to happen, so we left. On the way of leaving, before we left, the army picked up my husband, which wasn’t a very pleasant experience, he suffered a lot. But happily, because of my father-in-law’s influence, they didn’t take him to the army barracks because just the day before we lost one Ismaili and we never heard from him again, from Fort Portal. If they had taken him to the army barracks, I know I would have never seen him again, and so happily they took him to the police station because my father-in-law had educated this police officer and absolutely insisted that they go to the police station. It wasn’t pleasant, it was very unpleasant what happened there, but he did come home and then we left right away. On the way, it wasn’t pleasant, there were many stops and it was difficult, but we made it to Kampala. We made it to Kampala. We had a ticket and we went off to the airport, that was not pleasant. Anyway, we made it out and we made it to London.

Then in England, my dad took this oath to himself that he would not settle his family until every Indian family, Ismaili family, had settled, and for two years, he went from camp to camp. He even went to India and brought the people back either to Canada or England or elsewhere, settled people. So for two years we stayed in London and then in 1974 my father came here, and we came here in ’75 to Canada.”