

Umedali Nanji

Uganda Collection Oral History Project: Departure

Umedali Nanji: "It was 1972 when they announced that all the British people have to leave the country, British subjects or whatever. They announced it so we don't have to worry. They have to check us that we are British Protectorate or British subjects or something like that, that you are permanent British subjects—no, that you are Ugandan, you know? We had a Ugandan passport so we don't have to worry about leaving the country, but after a while, after two, three weeks, Amin announced again, "All Asian people have to leave the country." Then we started—we lined up our business and all these things. We can't sell the business to anybody there because everybody had to leave the country so nobody wanted to buy it. We had two African partners with us so we gave all the business to the African partners to run the business. We thought we might come back after three or four months when everything is settled, you know, but we can't, so all the business, the Africans got that money and all this business.

Our parents were there so we were worried about my parents. My sister was in Rwanda so we sent my parents to Rwanda and they left before us. After that, we packed up everything and we went for an interview, we got through the interview. The interview was on the twenty-third of October, and I said, "We have all this business," and they said, "No, you can't stay now, you've already got your visa. Today is the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, your flight number is twenty-six—there was a flight number too, so they gave us flight number twenty-six. They said, "You have to go, that's your ticket for your flight."

We left everything. You can't take anything, you know? We were in the car business so we sold lots of cars to the army, it was on high purchase—you know high purchase? What do you call it here, when you buy a car on a loan? Financing."

Shezan Muhammedi: "Financing, yeah."

Umedali: "So we financed the cars for the army, we had a really good influence with the army. The army guy was our best friend. He gave us lots of customers. One night, the army came to my place with a gun and he took out his gun and put it on my table. He said, "I bought a car from you. You need to clear it that I've already paid and I want some money." I said, "I can tell you, you paid for the car. Money—" I said, "I don't have money with me right now at night. I don't have money, my money is in the bank." He said, "No, I want money right now." I said, "Okay, I can write a cheque for ten-thousand dollars if you want." So I wrote down a ten-thousand shillings cheque. I said, "This is a cheque, you come to my office tomorrow and I will give you cash. Bring the cheque back and I will give you cash." He left with the cheque, the next morning he came to my office and he said, "I want my money." I said, "Okay. Here's ten thousand." I gave him ten-thousand shillings, that's it. The next day we had to fly. We don't have to tell them—if you said, "We are leaving," then they'd kill us, so I said, "Okay, anytime, if

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you have any problems, come to me and I'll help you." The next day we had to fly so we left all our cars and business and everything, you know.

From Kampala to Entebbe, we have to go by bus, so there's a check on the way from Kampala to—every ten miles, the army is there and they stop the bus, they check everything, our bags and everything like that. After ten miles, they check again. It usually takes forty-five minutes to an hour—it took three hours to reach Entebbe. Then in Entebbe, I had some money in my pocket, he says, "I want to check your pockets." He took me by the waist and checked everything and found some money. He took the money and they checked our bags and everything, there was nothing in the bags."