

**The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project**

An Oral History with Umedali and Gulshan Nanji

Archives and Research Collections

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*The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project*  
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Narrator: Umedali and Gulshan Nanji

Researcher: Shezan Muhammedi

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**Abstract:**

Umedali Nanji and his eight siblings were all born in Uganda. His parents migrated in 1925 and eventually moved to Kampala in 1950. Umedali recalled a very pleasant upbringing as his parents' business expanded in the wholesale industry. Gulshan was also born and raised in Uganda.

After the expulsion decree was announced, Umedali and his entire family were rendered stateless. At the time he had two children and applied to be resettled in Canada. They were initially resettled in Wallaceburg, Ontario until Umedali landed a job in London, Ontario as an auto mechanic. After many enduring months in London and a fire at the business they owned, the Nanjis decided to move to Calgary in 1974 to join Umedali's sister.

Once in Calgary they began their own business which they happily transferred their business to their son and retired.

The interview was conducted at Umedali and Gulshan's home in Calgary, Alberta.

**Shezan Muhammedi: “So this is an oral history being done on July 27<sup>th</sup> and yeah I’ll let you start with your family and growing up in Uganda.”**

Umedali Nanji: “Where I was born or anything like that?”

**Shezan: “Yeah, so were your parents born in Uganda as well?”**

Umedali: “No, my parents were from India and my parents came in 1925 to Uganda and we were born in Uganda, all of our family. We were six brothers and three sisters. One passed away here in Calgary, the oldest one. So to Calgary I came in 1974, October.”

**Shezan: “And then... so you grew up in Kampala?”**

Umedali: “No, a small village. So in Kampala I came in 1948, I was studying at the state university for three years and I was studying in Kampala. Then in 1950 I came to... my family moved to Kampala. So we started a small business and then we grew and started doing business we grew and then we had a really big business, a wholesale business, four or five stores. Then we had a used car business too, all my brothers look after this business then after a while we made good money, we had a coffee business, you know...”

**Shezan: “Growing beans and stuff?”**

Umedali: “Coffee business, yeah so we made really good money in that, then we bought property in Kampala and after we bought one property we bought another and three to four properties. After that in 1972 when they announced that we have to... all the British people have to leave the country, you know, British subjects or whatever. So we left... they announced it so we don’t have to worry, they have to check us with the British Protectorate, British subjects or something like that. So if you are Ugandan you know, if you had a Uganda passport. So we don’t have to worry to leave the country but after a while, after two or three weeks he announced again, Amin, all the Asian people have to leave the country. Then we started to line up the business and all these things you know. We can’t sell the business to anybody because everybody will leave the country so nobody wants to buy. We have two African partners with us so we give all the business to the African partners to run the business, you know. We thought that we might come back after three or four months when everything is settled, you know. But she can’t so all of the African business got the money an all this business.

Then our parents were there so we were worried about my parents, so my sister was in Rwanda so we sent my parents to Rwanda and they left before us. And then after that we packed up everything and we

went for an interview, got through the interview and the interview was on the twenty third of October. Then I said I had 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, the twenty sixth is flight number two, that's the ticket for your flight."

Yeah so we left everything because you can't take anything you know. And we were in the car business so we sold lots of cars to the army so it was high purchase... you know high purchase whatever you call here, where you buy car on the loan and we finance the car. So had really good influence with the army, you know because the guy was an army guy was our best friend you know. So he gave us lots of customers. So one night the army came to my place with a gun and took out his gun and put it on the table. He said, "I bought a car from you, you need to clear it that I already paid, and I want some money." I said, "I'll give you money, yeah. You paid for the car and I don't have money right now at night, I don't have money, my money is in the bank." He said, "No, right now." I said, "Okay, I'll go... I can write a cheque and I'll give you that if you want." So I wrote down a cheque, a thousand shillings cheque. I said, "You... this is a cheque, you come to my office tomorrow and I will give you cash. Bring the cheque there and I will give you cash." So he left with the cheque and the next day morning he came to my office and said, "I want my money." "Okay, here is ten thousand." I gave him ten thousand shillings and the next day we had to fly so... if you said we are leaving then they'd kill us, you know. So I said, "Anytime if you have any problems, come here and I will help you," and this and that. The next day we had to fly so we left all of our cars, business, everything.

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

Shezan: "So then were all of your children born in Uganda?"

Umedali: "Yeah, so the oldest was born in '63, she was nine years old. The youngest one, Riaz he was born in '71. This is Riaz he is the youngest one, number two, and this is the eldest, this is Munira, yeah so she was born in '63. Then we leave to Montreal, they were really nice to me and we were treated very nicely. It was winter time so we didn't have any winter clothes with us. So they had new clothes, all

winter clothes, everything and some money too. Then they said you have to decide where you want to go. I said, "We want to go... our sister is in Toronto so we want to go to Toronto." They said, "No, you can't go to Toronto or Vancouver because lots of people are going to Vancouver and Toronto." So I said, "Okay, send me wherever you want but somewhere around Toronto." So they sent us... we are two families, mine and my brother in law, so this is my brother his name was also the same. He has two kids, he had one Uganda born and one is also Canada born, she was pregnant at the time. We went to Montreal and then they transferred us to Wallaceburg. We stayed about two weeks there, most of the people there would come to us and take us outside to eat, shopping and everything. It was a small town, a really small town. After two weeks we can't find a job in a small town so they moved us to London, Ontario.

So London, Ontario we came there, they gave us a nice apartment and everything. They gave us money, every week they gave us twenty six dollars. So twenty six dollars was lots of money at that time, you know. So if you want to buy groceries, twenty six dollars will fill your buggy. And both of us together you know so fifty two dollars a week is lots of money, then we started looking for a job. They asked me what you have done in Uganda and I said, "I was a car salesman and I had a used car business." And I got a job in Ford in London, Ontario, so I started working and they said, "Okay, you are selling anything, working on commission." One week, two weeks, there's a different system here, you know. So I don't know how it works. And in two weeks I didn't sell anything so they said, "Okay for two weeks we will give you thirty two dollars. So he gave my thirty two dollars for two weeks and he laid me off. Then it was very hard to find a job. Then there was another job... there was another job CA, you know that auto?"

**Shezan: "Yeah that auto repair..."**

Umedali: "Yeah Canadian Auto... so it was DA over there, Dominion Auto or something, selling membership. So you have to go door to door every week, door to door and ask people and explain what is DA and all these things you know. So we charge them thirty dollars for the membership, but this company was good. They said, "Whatever you sell, you make, we'll give it to you." So the thirty dollars they would give to us, you know. To start in the morning... but we were together so all about Uganda you know."

Gulshan Nanji: "It was announced that most people left and are not coming back, they can't come back so there is no point."

Umedali: "So we were together and we both had the same job, so we started going door to door in big apartment buildings and knock on all the doors so in a day we'd sell one membership. So thirty dollars was lots of money for us. So like that we... we worked two or three months like that. Then we said we have to do something. So I said we should start some kind of business, you know. So I had about twenty five hundred dollars in London, England. So I brought that money here and my brother was in Sarnia so he joined me and he had some money too so we had about five or six thousand dollars and we decided to buy a business. So there was a restaurant called Hi-Fi restaurant in London, Ontario..."

**Shezan: "Yeah, it's still there!"**

Umedali: "Still there?"

**Shezan: "It is, yeah."**

Umedali: "Right by the university?"

**Shezan: "Yeah, right there."**

Umedali: "So that guy wanted twenty five thousand dollars, I said, "I've got about six thousand dollars." He said, "Don't you have any more money?" I went to the bank, the Royal Bank and said, "I want to buy this business but I only have six thousand dollars, I want to borrow some money." How can you borrow money when you don't have anything? I said, "This is the money I've got." So the bank said, "Okay I'll give you another six thousand dollars." So I asked the guy, "I've got ten thousand dollars if you want, I will pay you every month we make money." He said, "Okay every month you pay me two or three hundred dollars." I said, "Okay, I'm okay with it." So we went to the lawyer and we told him, we gave him ten thousand dollars, me and my brother. My brother in law said, "No, I don't want to join you." His sister was working in Toronto, so he said, "I will go in Toronto and I will find something there." So that we started and that restaurant was really run down and it's twenty four hours, we had to work day and night. She got a job in..."

Gulshan: "First insurance company, then..."

Umedali: "So she got a job, about three hundred dollars a month, you know."

Gulshan: "Plus it was summer so I said, "I can't work because my kids are home and I don't have money to send them to a babysitter." He said, "Bring your kids, all the activities and everything is free for you." So I'd go to work, I'd take them and I'd bring them back with me. Because they had a summertime

program so they were all free. I said I have no money to... I said I can work but I have no money to send them. He said, "Don't worry." I don't know how many applications, they picked my application."

Umedali: "We were refugees and they were trying to help us..."

Gulshan: "And they picked me because I have no money to send them, they said, "Don't worry, we will look after you guys." It was nice."

Umedali: "So we bought the restaurant and there was a residence upstairs so we moved from that apartment and... no, for a month we were living in the apartment. Then we moved to this apartment, there was an apartment upstairs, so we moved there and he moved to Toronto and we stayed in the upstairs of the restaurant. So about one or two months really we worked hard and we picked up our business, we were doing a hundred dollars a day. When we started we were doing three, four hundred dollars a day then increased to twelve hundred dollars a day. From two hundred to twelve hundred dollars a day. So we worked hard and my brother's daughter, she was only about ten years old. She at nights would come and help us, as a waitress and all these things you know. One day I was upstairs doing... I was upstairs in the middle of the night, you know and something happened and we had a fire. I was downstairs?"

Gulshan: "You were downstairs, I just finished and you went downstairs."

Umedali: "I was downstairs and we had a fire and the restaurant burned down and my kids were upstairs. But how it happened, who knows. Because there was another restaurant across the street and he saw our business growing and growing and he was jealous. That we think... you know, we think he came with gas and they put gas all on the stairs."

Gulshan: "At the back door there was stairs and then a door, the front door and you can go in the restaurant, but the apartment from the back door."

Umedali: "So our worker, cook, said, "I smell gas." So I said, "From where?" He said, "I can see the gas is dropping here." I said, "Woah," I went to see what was going on, all the stairs had the gas and the fire. All my kids were upstairs."

Gulshan: "I just went up and then this thing happened."

Umedali: "She was working with me, I was up in the middle of the night, I worked all day and all night..."

Gulshan: "I said, "I'm going upstairs," and this thing happened after midnight."

Umedali: "We had a fire at this time and then the fire people came and everything is gone. I don't know whether we knew the source or not but my lawyer was really good. We already took our insurance, you know. I didn't pay him or anything, he knew that we are refugees so he wants to help us, you know. He says, "I heard... don't worry, I will insure your restaurant." Thank god, so the insurance people paid everything and we restarted after fifteen days."

Gulshan: "We were scared to go upstairs, we didn't want to sleep there."

Umedali: "On the stairs there was a light and they wanted to pull out the bulbs and everything so you can't see, it was dark you know. I don't know how..."

Gulshan: "So many times it was late..."

Umedali: "If it was gas you burn right away, but I don't know what's happened."

Gulshan: "You can't die. That was a scary time, very scary. I said, "I don't want to live here now."

Umedali: "The insurance paid everything and they fixed everything, and they restarted. The next year somebody said, "I want to buy this restaurant." So he offered us a really good price, at that time twenty thousand dollars is a lot of money, so twenty thousand dollars more. We paid twenty five so we said, "You want to pay forty five?" He said, "Okay, but I don't have enough money." I said, "Okay, you pay this and the rest you pay in one year." So the same as I bought it from the other guy, he gave me this over two years, and he was paying every month and that's it. Then we came to... we sold that and we came to Toronto. Toronto... we wanted to settle in Toronto but everywhere we go they asked us, "How many kids you have?" We say, "We have three kids." They say, "No, we don't take kids more than one."

Gulshan: "Two because two kids, you can have two bedrooms, you know. Three bedrooms but you have three kids."

Umedali: "So we tried and tried for two weeks, now we have to do something. So my sister was here in Calgary, the one who passed away I told you about. So we come here from a small town. So we don't have enough money to fly over here, we didn't have money to take the kids and all that. So I left my two kids with my brother in law and the younger one Riaz was with me. So I had an old car, Ford Capri, a small car. So we put some clothes and all things in that car from Toronto to Calgary. So we drove. We don't know the road, don't know anything, new driver, you know. I don't know... how I did it I don't know. It was an old car."



Gulshan: "We left Toronto and went to the gas station, we went to the one gas station and he says, "Where do you want to go back, do you want to go front?""

Umedali: "Halfway through, yeah we stayed one night in the hotel and then we decided... we phoned my sister we are halfway. Then we said, "Do we go back or do we go to Calgary?""

Gulshan: "Well we didn't know the road, so we put in the gas at the gas station. I said just take any road, wherever the road goes, we will go there. It wasn't going to Toronto, it was going to Calgary."

Umedali: "So we turned left going to Calgary and Riaz was one year old. After the third day we reached Calgary, we took three days. We had all this fuel, a couple hundred bucks in our pockets and we arrived in Calgary in the middle of the night, we had to go. Whatever the first hotel, we can go in that hotel. So we stayed... because we don't know before to wake my sister in the middle of the night to come and pick me up. We don't know anything, so we stayed there."

Gulshan: "Right by the C train station, it's just right across from the thing. We still pass by and say we stayed here one night when we first came."

Umedali: "Then we phoned my sister in the morning and they came and picked us up and we stayed with them. We had to do something, we had to find a job or something like that. And what I started... I found one Tanzanian guy, he said, "Okay, I'll find a job for you." And he found a job for me in a windows... Western Windows, it's still there. So I started working there two dollars... three dollars and twenty five cents an hour. I started in November, December. So I said I can't do this, all of the apartment buildings we have to go and fix the windows... I don't have anything so the guy was teaching me. He taught me and still I said, "No I can't do that, it's not my job." So in December... Christmastime I quit the job. And the guy who was my supervisor was so rude so one day I got mad. I said, "Here is your things, I am leaving.""

Gulshan: "He was expecting him to do some work, but he didn't know how to do anything, he got mad. I got a job right away."

Umedali: "She got a job so there was... she always got the job."

Gulshan: "I was the breadwinner. I was working for an American company in Kampala for ten years so to me... my resume, remember I said I went to the Y[MCA]? Out of forty applicants they picked me and I got mad because I said, "I have young children, I can't work. How am I going to look for a job if I can't work?" He said, "Don't worry, we'll look after you." And here I got the job."

Umedali: "Now I am always thinking about the business, how to do some business. So there was a grocery store, the owner is still living across from my house, he is the previous owner. Mayfair so it is a good grocery store. He said, "Okay I want to sell for forty five thousand dollars." I said I don't have that money, me and my brother in law. You are also working, you know... I said, "I don't have your money." He said, "Don't worry," my brother in law said, "I have some money, you have some money, let's put it some money, twenty thousand dollars," and paid them twenty thousand dollars. We said, "We owe you twenty thousand dollars and we'll pay you every month." They said, "Okay." Now we had a meat store and a grocery store, a butcher shop. So nobody knew how to cut meat so the guy said, "Okay, I will teach you." So he taught me as a butcher, so I worked as a butcher. My brother in law was working in the front grocery and everything. I had another brother who came from London, England to Toronto. I said, "We bought this business if you want to join us." He said, "Yeah okay, I am coming here." So he came here and the three of us we started... good business.

I went to college, safety to learn how to cut the meat so I took the course and became a butcher. So at that time I learned everything about meat and all that. So I worked in that department and my brother in law is looking... my brother in law is working in another department. Then after a year somebody came and wanted to buy this business, so I said fine. So an Ismaili family came and said we want to buy, so we said, "Okay, a hundred thousand dollars." Then we settled at about ninety thousand dollars. So in a year we made forty five thousand dollars profit from them, plus it was a good business and we made good money out of that. Then after we finished that business, what to do? So my brother said, "I want to work back home." I said, "I don't want to come, if you want to go, go."

Then I started... because I was a salesman always in the car business... no, then I got a friend and we worked in the video store. So me and my friend... he is from Kenya, so he bought the video store. The video store was running good and everything was okay and after a year I took my partner and said, "We have to expand this business, it is a small store. If not, one store is not enough for the two of us. What do we do?" He said, "No, I don't want to expand." I said, "Okay if you don't want to expand, you buy or I buy. I don't want to stay in a small business for... he said, "Okay I am buying yours." I said, "Okay, give me my money." He said, "I don't have it." I said, "Okay pay me half money, half payments."

And then... now what to do? So one of my brothers was in Toronto, he came... car business we were together. So he started a car business here and I joined with him. So he had his brother in law too was with him you know. So we worked the three of us. After a while I said, "I have to have my own business" so I said, "I am going out," or whatever. So then I started a car business with my video guy... the one

who... he sold the video store and then we started again a car business. After six months he said, "I want to go back home." I said, "Go, I'll look after the business." I worked for two years but I didn't like it, you know. Because in the car business you have to tell too much lies, you know, this is good, this is good. Used cars are no good. So I said no, I don't want this kind of business because I can't lie to people. It is my nature, you know, so I quit that business." Now what to do?

Then his cousin was here from Kenya, he owned... wanted to sell his furniture business, you know they want to go back to Kenya. So I said, "Okay, I'll buy. I don't have enough money, you want sixty thousand but I don't have the money, and no experience, nothing." All the businesses I bought, I didn't have the experience but still, you know. So I bought his business, he said, "Okay give me twenty thousand cash and another twenty, twenty five thousand later on. After a month he said, "No I want all my money," because I really didn't have anything in writing he said, "I want my money." I said, "I don't have money," then I went to the bank and borrowed some money to pay him. That was in 1994, January 1994. That business brought me really, really good... there was a small store of four thousand square feet and my lease expired after a year. The landlord said, "I want to double the rent." I said, "I can't."

So Riaz has already grown up and was about nineteen, twenty years I think, so he was in university and then he was helping me. He said, "Okay, forget about it, I'll find another place." So he found one place about thirteen thousand square feet, so we took that one with a really good rent and then we started the business me and my son. We stayed about five to six years there and then we moved from there, we came... there's a mall here so we moved into that mall. So that store still was running and Riaz was running that store at Northland Mall. After six months the lease expired, so somebody came and said, "I want to buy this place." I'm ready... he was a Chinese guy who gave me a really good price, fifty, sixty thousand dollars more than what I paid. So I always am lucky you know, so I sold him that store and he paid me cash. Then in Northland mall we stayed about five years and it was a really good business, Riaz said, "Let's open another one." CrossIron Mills... so we went there and my daughter Farrah, she was with us, too in business. So she was working in the store, Riaz was working CrossIron and I was helping them.

The Northland Mall lease expired. We were paying twenty thousand dollars rent every month, still it was good. And then that mall had gone down, you know so most of the stores closed down there, you know. Business was gone down so our lease expired and they said, "Oh don't worry, we'll give you good rent, you pay five thousand dollars rent." I said, "We don't want to stay here." Still we stayed about another five or six months and then we started CrossIron, CrossIron was thirty thousand square feet store, it was

really, really huge store but we got a really good rent because it was a new mall so they gave a really good deal.

We were five years over there and the lease expired. Now they want more rent. We were paying twenty thousand and they wanted thirty five thousand rent plus staff, you know sixty-odd people with us. So every month we have to make fifty thousand dollars to break even. So now Riaz decided we want something else. Because they want that place, you know because they have another American company that wants to come there so they are squeezing us saying they want more rent. So the lease expired.

Now we are in the South, but not a big store because we didn't find a big place, you know. So temporarily we are now there... so this is my story. My kids are grown here, Farrah went to the University of Calgary and Riaz went to Mount Royal, right? Munira was in SATE. She got married... where?"

Gulshan: "She got married 25 years ago."

Umedali: "Her daughter is in university in Montreal, McGill University."

Gulshan: "McGill. She just finished in April, so now she got a job."

Umedali: "She has a job in Vancouver."

Gulshan: "Bank of Montreal for the summer program or something like that."

Umedali: "Riaz got married, he has two kids. Farrah married..."

Gulshan: "You met Riaz?"

**Shezan: "Yeah so I met Riaz in khane, I met one of the kids... I think I met his daughter."**

Umedali: "So Farrah married two years ago, she's in Toronto. And Munira is our oldest daughter, she's here, they had a really good business. She is working with the university."

**Shezan: "So then has Riaz kept the business?"**

Umedali: "He is looking after the business and everything is the last five years his. I'm retired, semi-retired helping with all these things. We have a big warehouse, you know. So I go and help him in the warehouse when a shipment comes from China or anything. So we look after all this warehouse, you know."

**Shezan: "So is there more than one store now?"**

Umedali: "Just one store. We had two stores and then we sold it when we had to move out. So now there is only one small store, not a big one. But we are looking for a big place, you know."

Gulshan: "But he has done such a nice job you know, the stuff he has ordered..."

Umedali: "He has a good reputation from the supplier and all this. It's a really good store."

**Shezan: "Yeah, all your hard work."**

Umedali: "He's got some properties... so we are well settled now. Thank god we didn't fail anywhere. Wherever we go our experience... we survive."

Gulshan: "We came as a refugee with no money. We were spoiled back home, we had a driver, we had a business, a big house, an American company job in the car sales business. We came here penniless and the kids would say at the grocery, "I want to buy this, I want to buy this." No money to buy this, you know it was so sad. Munira said, "Whatever you guys have left, I'll give you three times more when you left." They know everybody left everything, properties, business."

[Interruption]

**Shezan: "So you guys met in Uganda?"**

Gulshan: "Yeah, we were born in Uganda."

Umedali: "We were born there, we studied together in one class, and we married in Uganda, yeah."

**Shezan: "So you were married for how many years by the time you came to Canada?"**

Umedali: "We were married '60... 1960."

Gulshan: "Fifty years."

**Shezan: "No way! Congratulations!"**

Umedali: "My eightieth birthday is in August, born in '35. So that's my life story"

**Shezan: "So your siblings, they didn't come to Canada?"**

Umedali: "Everybody is here."

Gulshan: "Everybody except Amir."

Umedali: "One of my brothers was in London, he left Uganda in 1960 so he was in London. So he stayed in London and he had a restaurant business, then he sold the business and he's in Spain now."

Gulshan: "Now he is retired."

**Shezan: "That's a nice place to retire."**

Umedali: "One of my other brother's passed away five years ago, and my younger sister, she passed in 1985. My parents passed away in Toronto."

**Shezan: "So the sister that was in Rwanda, did she come with your parents?"**

Umedali: "No, she's in London right now."

**Shezan: "She's in London, England."**

Umedali: "Yeah London, England. They had a good business over there, they are retired now too. One sister is in Vancouver, the oldest, she's ninety."

**Shezan: "And then your... I guess you guys decided to come to Canada just out of...?"**

Umedali: "We had no choice, and we got the visa, so why not?"

Gulshan: "You know how I was working for the American company? Then I said to him, "We have to go to Canada." He said, "I don't want to go to Canada." So because I was doing everybody's applications for all our staff over there, because I was in human resources, you know. One day I said, "Maybe I should apply for a Canadian visa." I went and wrote the application, I told him to fill out the form and then we got the interview. My brother went for an interview, we went at the same time, everybody goes for the interview. And we passed the interview because he had a business, I had an education, I had a good job with an American company. They knew they wanted us to go to Canada, we're going to work.

[Inaudible] It's not all of them..."

Umedali: "Some of them, all Ugandan Ismailis went."

Gulshan: "So when we went for the interview my brother was so excited, he said, "Let's go for dinner!" Everyone was so excited because we got in to Canada. They said, "Oh you have to leave in three days." I said, "No way, I'm not coming, my parents are here. My family will go." He said, "If the head of the family is not there, nobody is going, or the people stay here." So we had no choice, so then we left and so his parents went to England and then slowly we sponsored them."

Umedali: "So I went in '73 again to England to bring my parents. They were in Rwanda then they came to London, England. They got visas in London, England, so I went in 1973 to bring them here, you know. I brought them here and they stayed with us. I didn't have any money and when I left London at the time with my parents I had twenty dollars in my pocket. My stop was in Paris so my dad wanted to have tea. I had twenty dollars in my pocket so I said, "Okay, you guys go get tea and all of these things with the twenty dollars." When we land in London, Ontario I don't have money to pay the taxi guy. So I said, "You brought me here," and then I borrow ten dollars from my brother in law and give it to the taxi driver."

**Shezan: "And then Gulshan aunty it says here that your... I think your brother had come to Canada a year before?"**

Umedali: "Her sister."

Gulshan: "My sister."

Umedali: "Yeah we visited her sister who was here..."

Gulshan: "'69, she came on her own. She and her friend."

**Shezan: "And she came to Calgary?"**

Umedali: "No, Toronto."

Gulshan: "Montreal, right? But then they went to Toronto because they didn't know French. She knew French, but they wanted to settle in Toronto. Then she was working for a while at CNIB and then she was working for some other company... then she went to work for the university. Then she knew we were coming because she came to Kampala... she was leaving and when we went to the airport we heard on the radio that all the Ugandans were given ninety days. She said, "Do you want me to help you guys?" But then she said Hazar Imam [The Aga Khan] came here and had a meeting with Trudeau. She knew that all the Ugandans are coming. So she said, "If they ask you, then come to Ontario because I'm in Toronto and I can help you guys." So this is how she came on her own. She studied, she helped us..."

Umedali: "We knew there was somebody here to help us in Canada."

**Shezan: "Do you know why she left?"**

Gulshan: "She always wanted to travel, she was always outgoing. Study, study, study, nothing but study. Here she came and she did French but three years and she was working for the president of the

university, then she got married and then she got the job at the university in Vancouver. She just retired three years ago.”

Umedali: “She passed away about two years ago.”

Gulshan: “She was tired and somehow she went to the doctor and got this test and this test and they found that she has cancer. But the cancer went in the back and just grew so fast and in five months she was gone. She was a person... so educated, so smart, she was one of the...”

Umedali: “Aggressive.”

Gulshan: “Very aggressive, she wanted everything done. Do this, or she’d push it on everybody. My children... they had to send the report card to her. “I want to see all your report cards.” And she’d look at my grandchildren’s report cards. “You’re not doing good in this one, you should do this.” And then she is the one who is gone, very, very close you know.”

Umedali: “Now onto dinner?”

**Shezan: “No, I won’t intrude. I’ve had a lot of dokra, I’ve been eating... it’s good.”**

Gulshan: “You won’t get this at your friend’s house.”

Shezan: “It’s true, I won’t. I’m good, I’m good, thank you. I’ll have one more.”

Gulshan: “Have more, I made it just before you came.”

Umedali: “So there’s enough information from us?”

**Shezan: “Yeah! That’s perfect, I guess the only... the last question I’d have for you guys is, today how would you identify yourselves? Would you say you’re Canadian Ugandans? Ugandan Canadians? Ismaili Canadians? There’s no wrong answer.”**

Umedali: “Canadian.”

Gulshan: “Canadian. We’ve been here forty years. You can’t say oh we came from Uganda, but we are not Ugandan. We are Canadian, right? So we have to tell them we are Canadians. Once you get your passport and you work here, everything is here.”

Umedali: “Every year we are travelling, we go all over. After we retired we travelled lots, you know. India two or three times, Turkey...”



Gulshan: "We took a cruise in Spain, Portugal."

Umedali: "So every year we take one or two trips."

Gulshan: "In January we went to Singapore, Malaysia and took the whole tour. It was a vacation for two weeks."

Umedali: "So we are happy and thank god, you know. All my kids are very close."

**Shezan: "And lots of grandkids. What, six?"**

Gulshan: "Four."

Umedali: "Four girls, no boys. [Inaudible] "I've got Ugandan flags and everything downstairs if you want to see."

**Shezan: "Sure, yeah I'd love to. Is this the red card?"**

Umedali: "This is my ID."

**Shezan: "This is the kipande card? No way! I've been dying to see one of these! Because they made you guys carry these, right?"**

Gulshan: "Yeah, yeah, yeah, because otherwise..."

**Shezan: "So this is what it was. Yeah because this is March 10th I guess, '72?"**

Gulshan: "Yeah. Then we left on the twenty fifth of October."

**Shezan: "So nationality Ugandan [inaudible]"**

Gulshan: "Instead of carrying your passport you could carry this ID."

[End of transcript]