

Interviewee name: Angela Dacosta

Interviewer Name: Barton & Ellock

Date: 1974

Session #: 1/1

Location: Carleton University, School of Journalism

Interview with Miss Angela Dacosta, Interviewers Barton & Ellock

Angela: "He used to work in Kenya, and then we moved out to Uganda and he worked for a while with his brother-in-law and then he had his own business and my mom used to work with him as well, she was always professional herself and we were four of us. Well I wouldn't say I came from a rich family, we're middle-class. And we went to school there, we did all of our education in Uganda and my sister was working with CUSO and she moved out to Canada with CUSO. Then my brother came down here to study and it was a good chance for me to come when problems started. We left... I left Uganda in September '72, that's when all the trouble started and I left my dad and mom in an older sister behind because they were going to India.

My dad has an Indian passport and another problem, was they wouldn't have been able to come here because my sister is mentally handicapped. I think there's some regulations, some things saying that mentally handicapped people are not to come here or something like that. And then my dad had a house in Goa and he had to come see about the house before he decided to come here. But then I came here, was sure about this regulation thing that mentally handicapped people were not allowed to come. My dad wasn't allowed to take any money out at all, he was only allowed 103 dollars or something like that and the rest of the money was left in the bank.

In fact, there were a lot of things in the house which we just had to leave because we couldn't sell, and even if we sold them we wouldn't have been able to bring the money out here. And he shipped them some of his equipment to Goa but I got a letter from my mother to indicate they hadn't gotten anything. She says the boxes that they had received were all broken and torn, there wasn't very much left in them.

Interviewer: "This is maybe going to be a silly question but there's no way you could get compensation?"

Angela: "No, none at all, I don't think so. Well the president said he was going to compensate us but I don't think they're going to get anything because the country itself is in bad trouble.

Interviewer: "Did it come as sort of a shock to you when the expulsion was...?"

Angela: "Yeah, it was a shock"

Interviewer: "You weren't expecting it at all?"

Angela: "No, we weren't expecting, no. He wasn't very happy with the Asians, he said that they were kind of leaving the Africans behind and not helping them come up in their own country. Well we heard that quite often and we didn't think that this would come close...that we'd be expelled.

Interviewer: "Some of our other subjects that we interviewed mentioned some [inaudible] Ugandans as well as well as Asians."

Angela: “Yeah, a lot of Africans died, in fact they were murdered and thrown into the lakes and the rivers and things like that. It was necessary for them to suffer as well because some of them were against what he was doing and so they voiced their opinions and, naturally, he wasn’t happy about what they were saying.”

Interviewer: “Was it as difficult for you to get out of Uganda as it was for your parents?”

Angela: “How do you mean?”

Interviewer: “Well, did you have trouble getting a passport?”

Angela: “No, I didn’t have any problems, not really.”

Interviewer: “That’s good. Did you have any expectations about Canada?”

Angela: “Yeah, actually, before Canada said they were going to take some of the people, I had written to my sister and asked if there were any possibilities for her to help me come down here and she was looking into it. In the meantime I was making arrangements to go to England because I’m a British subject. And in the meantime, between the time my sister was making arrangements for me to come here and I was arranging to go to England, we heard that Canada was arranging to take some of the people so that was a good chance for me. In the meantime, she got confirmation from [the Department of] Manpower and Immigration saying that the nomination was approved and so it wasn’t difficult at all for me. But it wasn’t very difficult, a lot of people had nominators down in Canada and had qualifications and already helped them quite a bit.”

Interviewer: “Did you end up in Ottawa because of family or...?”

Angela: “Yeah because my sister was here.”

Interviewer: “Oh I see. Well, how do you find Canadian reaction to you as a Ugandan Asian?”

Angela: “Well, from the time I’ve been here to now I’ve been very well treated, I must say, and I’m really very happy, I have no regrets at all about coming to Canada, none at all.”

Interviewer: “Oh that’s great. Well, are you attempting to maintain your identity as a Ugandan Asian, to keep contact with other members of your...?”

Angela: “Oh yes, I have quite a few friends – not too many – but I see them quite often and I talk to them quite often.”

Interviewer: “Is there any sort of social unit that is like ...there used to be Ugandan Asian association...”

Angela: “Yeah there used to be, I went only to one gathering that they had but I haven’t been to any others, just one of them. But I go and visit this friend quite often and they come and visit me too. We try not to lose contact and we get news from home as well from people who are in Uganda.”

Interviewer: “Is news from home hard to come by?”

Angela: “Yeah, it is very hard.”

Interviewer: “What do you hear?”

Angela: "Well always that somebody has been killed and things like that but of late we've heard that people are really happy there and that he's calling the Asians back but I do not know that it's true. And I heard that quite a few of them are going back, I don't know if that's true either [inaudible]."

Interviewer: "Who is left at home, are there other Asians that stayed?"

Angela: "Yeah, some professionals and some citizens who didn't really want to leave."

Interviewer: "You were a Ugandan citizen weren't you?"

Angela: "No I wasn't, I was a British citizen. I was born in Kenya so I was a British subject."

Interviewer: "What do you miss most? About back home before?"

Angela: "The sun. Yeah, let's see, the sun, the climate that we had. Most of all I miss my friends and my sister more than anything else really, didn't miss very much. I wouldn't say, I don't miss very much."

Interviewer: "Do you find much of a difference between the lifestyle of a single girl in Uganda and the lifestyle of a single girl here?"

Angela: "Well at home, you hardly found any girls that lived alone, most of them lived at home. So it took a month or two for me to adjust being alone because when you're at home you had your mom doing things for you, stuff like that. Well, you hardly found any girls alone."

Interviewer: "Do girls go out on their own and work, or is it a very family centered...?"

Angela: "No, the girls do go out and work, yeah."

Interviewer: "Well, do you think, is it as easy for a woman to get an education?"

Angela: "In Canada than it is in Uganda? There are more facilities here, more opportunities than there were in Uganda... like you can go to night school, take all kinds of courses, and things like that. There weren't so many in Uganda."

Interviewer: "But was there any sort of problem that entailed specifically being female?"

Angela: "No, not really problems, no."

Interviewer: "As far as goals in life, of a normal Ugandan girl, are they sort of the same as what you feel are the goals in life of an average Canadian girl?"

Angela: "That's hard to say really. I guess we've been brought up differently and in some ways I think it will be the same."

Interviewer: "Do you notice a difference in customs among the people in Canada as compared to what you knew in Uganda?"

Angela: "What kind of customs would you say?"

Interviewer: "Just social customs, meeting people, the way you act..."

Angela: "Well, a slight difference, at home the girls mostly went with an escort, you know if they went to dances and things like that. Here I found the girls would go, would get together in groups and go out and

they'd meet men at the dance and things like that, but at home it wasn't common. Am I right when I say that? Maybe I just saw that among the few girls, I don't know. But I felt if somebody didn't have a date for that day, they'd get together with the other girls and they'd go and they'd meet some of the boys there and things like that.

My name is Angela Dacosta and I work as secretary to a Member of Parliament [MP] and I've been up on the Hill since November 1972. I like it very much up on the Hill, we meet a lot of different kinds of people and it really is very interesting dealing with constituents and the various jobs you have to do. It's different from what I was doing at home because I was working for a commercial firm for about nine years. I had about three jobs in Uganda but the last one I was in for about 9 years but they were mostly commercial jobs. And this is a different job that I have and I really do like it very much."

Interviewer: "And how did you find this job?"

Angela: "Through a Canadian friend I used to know in Uganda.

Interviewer: "And you had all the qualifications?"

Angela: "Yes I did, yeah. I've been working as a secretary for 11 years now and when I joined Parliament I was working for another MP and I was with him for about 7 months and then I left and I've been with this other MP since July 1973 and I really am enjoying it very much. I think that's the nicest place to be."

Interviewer: "Have you got any plans for the future, as far as the career goes?"

Angela: "Well, I think I'll stay there as long as I can, don't really think I'd like to change and go to another job."

Interviewer: "Do you have any personal goals ... maybe to buy a home or to get married?"

Angela: "Well yes, yeah I think that's one thing I've always wanted, in fact, the moment I got here and I saw all these beautiful homes, I said I must have a home of my own. And maybe you'd like to get married too... when the time comes. Yeah, I think I'd like to go see the place for a while, I've been to Newfoundland and I've seen a bit of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, just passed through in fact, and I've been to Montreal and Toronto but I'd like to go to some other places."

Interviewer: "What do you do for entertainment?"

Angela: "Well, I haven't been out too much really, but..."

Interviewer: "What do you enjoy doing?"

Angela: "I like sewing and cooking very much, mostly cooking. I've been doing a lot of sewing in the evenings, all kinds of needle-work."

Interviewer: "How do you find the availability of products in the stores here, as compared to Uganda? Do you find that you can purchase what you're looking for? For cooking or..."

Angela: "I found it really difficult at first because, you see, we got a lot of our food from England and I found, whenever I went to the stores to get certain things like black treacle and gravy browning, the people in the store didn't know what I was talking about. I found it a little difficult at first and quite a lot of food was different from what we were getting from England. Well some of it was local, of course, but

there were some food that was imported from England which I found we couldn't get here. Then getting used to using the new kind of food that you get here. But I was able to get black treacle this Christmas but I wasn't in Christmas 1972."

Interviewer: "Yeah, did you enjoy television?"

Angela: "Well, I wouldn't say I sit by it all the time, I watch a few programs but not too much of it really, no."

Interviewer: "How was the media in Uganda?"

Angela: "For a while we were getting TV programs from England and... I mean movies from England and from the U.S., but when Amin took over, we were having mostly African programs. It wasn't interesting at all because some of it was in the African languages, the various languages which we couldn't understand and the African programs that were in English were quite silly so of course we didn't watch them really. There are a lot that I see here."

Interviewer: "Is there any integration between Asians and Ugandans, native Ugandans, in Uganda?"

Angela: "Yes. There wasn't too much really, that was one problem because, well I'm sorry to say this but the Asians treated the Africans like they were inferior, which wasn't nice considering that we were living in their country. They had to treat them as equal. There wasn't integration and that was one of the problems, in fact, one of the biggest problems."

Interviewer: "Was it Asians in the middle and upper classes?"

Angela: "Yeah, all the classes"

Interviewer: "Was it a class division as well as a colour division or...?"

Angela: "Colour division mostly. I think that was one thing against us, but some people did mix about with them and I used to work with this African girl and she used to come over to my place and I used to go over to hers. We used to go around together, but whenever Asians would see me in the company of Africans they would always look down."

Interviewer: "Are there any religious conflicts?"

Angela: "No there weren't any, really"

[End of transcript].