

Leicester Migration Stories



Runnymede: Intelligence for a Multi-ethnic Britain

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Preface

During 2012 Runnymede, together with Professor Claire Alexander from the University of Manchester, has run a series of workshops with young people aged 12 to 14 years from schools and community groups in Leicester, Sheffield and Cardiff. These workshops formed part of an oral histories project involving schoolchildren across the UK. In these workshops we built on the processes of researching and conducting oral histories developed in an earlier work called the *Bengal Diaspora*.

The children who participated in this project interviewed, filmed and recorded their parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents, teachers and members of their communities, charting their journeys from the various parts of the world to the cities in which they are now settled. Leicester is one such city, and in this booklet we are highlighting the historical stories of migration and settlement of the various communities that now live and work there.

We have included quotes from the young people in which they talk about what they have observed in their

new roles as young community historians, what they have discovered about their families and what they have learned about their communities.

Some of the communities included in this book are those represented by the young people who have worked with us on the project, or the people they have chosen to interview. Others, though, are communities with long-established historical roles in the unfolding story of Leicester. There are other groups whose historical journeys to Leicester have not been included this time. For those whose arrival is a relatively recent phenomenon, reliable data about their migration was unavailable at the time of writing. What we have presented, this time, is a brief description of the many and varied groups whose presence in Leicester has been recorded locally in museums and archives and, most importantly, by our young emerging community historians.

Debbie Weekes-Bernard
Senior Research and Policy Analyst
Runnymede

“ We’ve learnt why people have migrated due to their experiences in life, such as natural disasters, poverty, war and family. Also, we’ve learnt to respect people’s reasons for moving to Leicester and understand why they did it ”

- Pupil from Judgemeanow Community College, Leicester

Introduction

Leicester, as noted by its Council, is a 'modern 21st-century global city' given that it has a historical legacy of migrant settlement and is home to an array of diverse minority ethnic, religious and new migrant communities. Statistics relating to the diversity of its population speak for themselves. For example, currently 42% of Leicester's population is from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background, the largest proportionately in the whole of England and Wales, and just over a third of its residents were born outside the UK. Twenty-eight percent of those living in Leicester are of Gujarat Indian heritage, and another large proportion of Leicester residents are originally from East Africa. An even greater number of Leicester schoolchildren have a minority ethnic background – 57% of them are BME – and 50% of all primary school children in the city speak another language at home, compared to just 16% of primary school pupils nationally. Home to 240 faith groups across 14 different faiths, Leicester hosts 123 Christian places of worship, 42 mosques, 23 Hindu temples, 2 Sikh Gurdwaras, 2 Jewish synagogues and 1 Jain temple. Indeed the latter is the first consecrated Jain temple outside India, and is a much visited architectural wonder.

It is little wonder then that Leicester has often been described as the first city in the UK where its minority residents are projected soon to become the majority. The movement of groups to and from this city has been continuous, with some of its newer arrivals coming from places that include Zimbabwe, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Congo and Iraq. Like other parts of



the UK, Leicester has played host to communities that are arriving here in response to conflict or as a result of expulsion, settling in areas where many post-war migrants, from countries similar to theirs, had already established themselves. The impact that its East African Asian communities have made on areas such as Belgrave is notable, but other migrant groups, such as those included in Cynthia Brown's oral history collection,¹ have spoken about arriving as refugee children from the Basque country in 1936, and settling in areas such as Evington. As with the stories, interviews and films made by the young people who took part in this project, these testimonies shine a light on the experiences of those who have travelled huge distances, both geographical and emotional, to set up new lives in Leicester and become part of its Migration Story.

China

Chinese people make up around 1% of the population of Leicester, with just over 100 new immigrants arriving each year. The people of the Chinese community, who arrived mainly after the 1950s, are well integrated and spread out across all areas of the city.² Migrants arriving in Leicestershire from China in the 1960s did so to seek out better opportunities for themselves and their families, many of them going into catering.³ Those running

restaurants and other catering businesses have become significant members of the local community, helping to organise social events and other activities. In the 1980s, when the agricultural sector collapsed in Hong Kong, there was an increase in the numbers of Chinese people travelling to the UK to start businesses. Today, when migrants from China come to study in the UK's many universities, many choose Leicester as a learning centre.



Leicester Chinese Christian Church

Mongolia

A small Mongolian population in Leicester is becoming one of the fastest growing in the city. Until the 1990s the Communist regime had made Mongolia a difficult country to travel from. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 allowed more freedom of travel, and some Mongolians have since left the country and travelled to European countries. In 2001, the national Census recorded that there were 299 Mongolians in Britain. Although urban myth asserts that Leicester's small population of Mongolians was founded when one Mongolian man stayed in the International Hotel for a period,⁴ it is now more reliably recorded that between 50 and 100 Mongolians live in Leicester, one of the largest Mongolian populations in Britain.⁵



Flag of Mongolia



Sri Lanka

A small nation south of India, Sri Lanka has been suffering many years of civil war, with 25 years of violence between warring ethnic groups. Sri Lankans have recently begun to settle in Leicester, travelling to the UK either directly from Sri Lanka, or via Germany,⁶ and in 2011, 447 children in Leicester schools have been registered as speaking the Sri Lankan Tamil dialect.⁷

Africa

Somalia

Somalis have been living in the UK since the late 19th century, when they came as seamen or traders. Later on, in the 1950s and 1960s, they worked in British industries.

In 1991, civil war broke out in Somalia when the president, Siad Barre, was overthrown, leading to a state of clan warfare. From refugee camps in the neighbouring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, many Somalis came to the UK. This attracted many other Somalis from around Europe, from countries such as the Netherlands or Scandinavia.



Somali Mother and son Mohamed

“ I’m a Somali person and my country is at war, that’s why I came to the UK. I feel sad, I’ve lost my country, there’s a war in my country, people are dying in my country. Obviously it’s not a good feeling, but I’m safe that I’m here now. ”

- Somali male interviewee, interviewed by pupils from the Somali Parents and Community Association, Leicester

The Somali community is the second largest migrant community in the UK. Leicester's Somali immigrants started arriving in large numbers in 2001, and the city now has the largest Somali population outside London, making up about 5% of Leicester's total population. Some claim that up to 15,000 Somalis arrived in Leicester in the space of a year.⁸ These migrants have come not only from Somalia, but from Somali communities in European countries such as the Netherlands, France and Germany. They currently live mainly in the St Matthews, Highfields and Beaumont Leys areas of Leicester.⁹



“ I came to Britain, from Holland. There was a civil war, causing me to come out of my country looking for asylum. The Netherlands granted me asylum and granted me also nationality and I’ve been living there for about 11 years. Then I moved to Leicester with my family and my children – first of all when I left from Somalia I went to Yemen, then to France and then to the Netherlands, that was my route and Netherlands was the first country who granted me asylum and gave me a home to live and an education like the Dutch language. When the thought came to my mind to come to Britain so many of my friends and almost all the family of my wife were in Britain at that time. I miss my country Somalia because that was my native country and I miss the weather, the food, the people, the country – I miss almost everything especially in the winter time, I remember my country because there is no cold winter at all. ”

- Somali migrant, interviewed by his son at the Somali Parents and Community Association, Leicester

Zimbabwe

After Zimbabwe gained independence from the British in 1980, and later, in the 1990s to early 2000s, migrants came to Britain in very large numbers. In 1999, Zimbabwean reforms put into place by the government disrupted the lives of many of its citizens, causing a 'crisis'¹⁰ and widespread related violence. As a result of this unrest, between 2001 and 2008 the Zimbabwean population in the UK more than tripled.¹¹

Many have settled outside London in cities such as Leicester because they already have family and friends in these locations. Living mainly in the Highfields, Evington and City Centre areas, Leicester's population of Zimbabwean residents was estimated in 2004 at between 2000 and 3000.¹²

Highfields, Laurel Road, Leicester 1982



Ogungbe Beach, Nigeria

Nigeria

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. Since the country gained independence from the British in 1960, Nigeria has suffered a catastrophic civil war between ethnic groups, and continued ethnic violence ever since. Levels of official corruption and the control exercised by groups of militants have made Nigeria unsafe for some. Prompted to leave Nigeria, some have arrived in the UK and elsewhere. There is now a small Nigerian community in Leicester, and in 2011, 102 children in Leicester schools spoke a Nigerian language or dialect, with Yoruba being the most commonly spoken, followed by Ebira and Iqbo.¹³

The Caribbean

In 2001, the national Census recorded 2841 Caribbean people living in Leicester, 1.01% of the city's total population.¹⁴ This number is estimated to have risen to 4% (including people of mixed race) of the population of Leicester by 2007.¹⁵

People from the Caribbean have been coming to Britain since the 1670s, but after the Second World War there was a rapid rise in the numbers moving to the UK. Indeed, in 1948 the ship *Empire Windrush* famously carried 493 people from the Caribbean to start a new life in Britain. The labour shortages of the 1950s, as the country tried to rebuild its infrastructure and economy after the war, encouraged many more to travel to Britain from around the British Empire and Commonwealth. Numbers were unrestricted, leading to a sharp rise in Caribbean migrants during the 1950s, when around 100,000 people moved from the Caribbean to Britain.¹⁶

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, ex-servicemen from the Caribbean as well as new migrants from the various Caribbean islands began to settle in the Highfields area of Leicester.¹⁷ Nowadays, Caribbeans in Leicester, particularly those of Jamaican descent, are still to be found living mostly in the Highfields and St Matthews areas, where they continue to settle.¹⁸ The volcanic eruption on the island of Montserrat in 1995 was another event that encouraged people to relocate from the Caribbean to the UK, with many again choosing Leicester for reasons of proximity to friends, family and community.

Over the years, a variety of community spaces and events have been created by Caribbeans settled in

Leicester to provide recreational and other forms of support to all those of Caribbean descent living in the city. The Leicester Caribbean Cricket Club, established in 1957, played regularly in Victoria Park, both recreationally but also competitively in the setting up of the Liga Cup, and the annual Caribbean Carnival has been firmly established in Leicester's programme of cultural events since 1985.



Writing about the Highfields Rangers, a football team set up in Highfields by people from the Caribbean who had come to live in Leicester in the 1970s, the oral historian John Williams noted how the historical emergence of this particular football club reflected the wider history of the Black community in the city.¹⁹ The team eventually became an African-Caribbean voluntary organization and an important part of the Highfields community, providing opportunities for young people seeking work, and playing a large part in trying to access resources for community members following the street disturbances in that part of the city in 1981.

“ Coming here, most people resided in one particular area [and] at the time a lot of the Caribbean community moved to the area of Highfields – so you could go down the road and meet another person, they might not be from the same Caribbean island but they were either from Jamaica, Barbados. Not everybody knew much about us and vice versa – our accent was different to the English Language, and in the 1960s there were a lot of things happening. ”

- Stuart Miller, interviewed by pupils at Judgemeadow Community College, Leicester



Eastern European communities

At the end of the 19th century, Russian Jewish refugees arrived in Leicester. They were joined in the 1930s by other European Jews – those who were fleeing Nazi Germany. This community settled in the Highfields area of the city, and at its peak comprised about 1000 people.²⁰

When Britain advertised a European voluntary working service after the Second World War, many single men were prompted to leave their home countries and come to the UK to work. Czech refugees were one of the displaced groups who came to Leicester from Europe after Hitler's invasion of the Sudeten lands. They were assisted by members of the Left Book Club, who provided language support and social events for their community. A personal testimony from one such refugee tells the story of his journey to and settlement in Leicester from his home country of Lithuania. Mr Kvietkaushaus was in Austria when the Second World War ended in 1945, and was encouraged by the authorities to return to Lithuania,

his home country. As Lithuania was at that time occupied by the Soviet Union, he refused to go back. This refusal meant he became a refugee, and found himself held in an ex-army camp. During their time in such camps, refugees would find themselves recruited to work in Britain and other countries by representatives of companies looking for factory workers and other personnel. Mr Kvietkaushaus found a place to work first in Manchester and then in Leicester, where he eventually settled.²¹

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 made travel around Europe easier, and the inclusion of Eastern European countries in the EU (2004 and 2007 respectively) enabled 6000 to 8000²² people from countries including Poland, Albania, Bosnia and Slovakia to come to Leicester for work. Eastern Europeans in Leicester have settled mainly in the areas of Fosse, Narborough Road, Evington, Inner City and East Park Road.



Poland

Polish people came to Leicester as exiles around 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, and have continued to settle in the city ever since. After the war, many Polish men serving with the British army found they could not return to Poland, as by then it had been occupied by the Soviet Union. As a result, many Poles (130,000) settled in the UK.²³ Living mostly in the Highfields area of Leicester, the community set up a Polish church and a Polish club there, both still in use.

The Polish community that put down its roots at that time has since attracted newer Polish migrants wanting to settle here. Since Poland became a member of the EU in 2004, the numbers coming from Poland to the UK have grown exponentially. Mainly economic migrants in search of opportunities not to be found in Poland, their numbers today, together with other European migrants arriving since 2004, have been estimated at between 6000 and 8000.²⁴

Kosovo

When the War in Kosovo, 1998–1999, made many people refugees, a Humanitarian Evacuation Programme was set up to safely resettle them in other parts of the world. Leicester was one of the first cities in the UK to take in people under this programme, and a Kosovan community has been developing in Leicester ever since.²⁵



Portugal

The Portuguese community is relatively new to Leicester. Between 2005 and 2010, it is estimated that 640 migrants from Portugal have arrived and settled in the city, the fourth highest number of new migrants, exceeded only by those from Poland, India and the Slovak Republic.²⁶ Portuguese communities live mainly on the west side of the city, and the local authority notes that there are currently two such communities in Leicester. The first are migrants from Portugal, and the second are migrants from Daman, a Portuguese principality situated on the west

coast of India. Whilst these latter individuals and families are Indian, their passports are Portuguese, and about 370 children attending schools in the city report Portuguese to be their first language.

Portugal is a fairly stable country, with an imperial past, which has recently been suffering a series of economic difficulties. Migrants to Leicester from Portugal are generally economic migrants, seeking career advancement or further opportunities.

Ireland

The Irish community is one of the longest-established migrant communities in Britain. The 2001 national Census recorded 3602 Irish people as living in Leicester,²⁷ though this is generally thought to underestimate the true numbers. It was after the industrial revolution of the late 19th century that many came from Ireland to Britain looking for work. Migration has continued steadily from that point into the 1980s and 1990s, since when a 'new wave' of Irish immigrants has been arriving to study, or to further their careers.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community

In 2010, there were approximately 2000-3000 gypsy and traveller people in Leicester and Leicestershire.²⁸ They live in houses, as well as on authorised and unauthorised caravan sites in Braunstone, New Parks and Beaumont Leys. There has been a Gypsy and Traveller presence in Leicestershire for over 500 years, since around the time of the first official record of a Romany Gypsy in the UK, which was noted in the Scottish court of King James in 1505.

English and Irish travellers make up the majority of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Leicester. Irish travellers have been migrating to Britain since the 19th century and have their own cultural practices and dialects.

The Roma community have most recently arrived in Leicester from parts of Eastern Europe, including Slovakia and the Czech Republic in the early 2000s, and they number between 700 and 800.²⁹ The Roma people historically originated in India and are now distributed across both central and eastern Europe. However, whilst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have been in Britain for many hundreds of years, they can still suffer discrimination in their day-to-day life here. Indeed, a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller person may find it hard to access employment and healthcare, or be free to enjoy their own way of life, whether nomadic or not.



Roma children playing in the street

Middle East / Arab Communities

In Leicester the Middle Eastern communities are few in number compared with the Indian or Caribbean communities. In 2009, it was estimated that 1000 Kurdish and Iraqi people were living in Leicester, and 500 Afghans.³⁰ They were living mainly in the Highfields, City Centre and New Parks areas of the city.³¹



Turkey

People from Turkey are reckoned to constitute one of the biggest migrant groups in Europe overall. In response to unemployment and conflict, Turkish people have been migrating to the UK in relatively small numbers since the 1940s. The 2001 national Census recorded 1404 Turkish people living in the East Midlands in that year.³²



India

As with the present-day countries of Bangladesh and Pakistan, people from India have been settling in the UK for centuries. Principally, they have been leaving areas that experienced unrest during the Independence struggles and the years that followed Partition in 1947.

A different kind of mobility is found among people from the Gujarat area of India, who have been travelling the world for centuries, exporting goods such as cotton and other textiles to the Middle East. From the 17th century onwards, these trading routes became important to many European nations, Britain among them, in the process of establishing their own trade links with India.

When Britain colonised India, more links were established and employment opportunities emerged as Indian soldiers travelled to the UK with some regularity. Indeed, seeking jobs on the merchant fleets, boatmen from some regions of north-western India began to assert 'a virtual monopoly as engine-room stokers on British ships sailing out of Bombay and Karachi'.³³

After the Second World War and India's Independence, more people travelled to the UK to work, particularly in the 1960s. In Leicester, Indians settled mainly in the Spinney Hills and Belgrave areas, where affordable housing could still be found.³⁴ Abdul Haq, for example, came to Leicester from India in 1938, and intended to return in 1947, but the social upheavals associated with the Partition of India at this time meant that his family lost their home and possessions. When the family then moved from India to Pakistan in order to make a new home, a return to India became an impossibility.³⁵

I came to England in 1993 because my husband is a British citizen so after my wedding I came to join him. My husband lived in Leicester before and his family is here. The life here is very different from India – I was 39 when I came here so it was really hard in the beginning to settle down and to understand the lifestyle and things like that. I would like to go back after my retirement, a few months there and a few months here, but my kids don't want to go back, they just want to stay here!

- Dinesh Kaur, interviewed by pupils from Judgemeadow Community College

People from the Daman area of India have recently begun to migrate to Leicester. This area was ruled by the Portuguese for 450 years, and many people from this part of the world have Portuguese passports and speak the language too.

Today, the Indian inhabitants of Leicester are its largest ethnic minority, at an estimated 72,000 people, 28% of Leicester's total population.³⁶ With an estimated 1000 to 1500 people migrating to Leicester each year, these numbers are still growing, increasing the vibrancy of this midlands city, as prominent Indian festivals, such as Diwali and Vaisakhi, attract tens of thousands of visitors every year.

East African Asians

The arrival of East African Asians in Leicester in the 1970s was part of a longer history of migration that began at the time of colonial rule in India, when people were moved to other British colonial territories like Kenya and Uganda to support major infrastructure projects.³⁷ Around 30,000 Indians were transported to East Africa from the 1860s onwards, working on the railways and other public constructions. Many Indians returned home at the end of their contract, but approximately 7000 stayed on in East Africa; meanwhile others from the Gujarat coast travelled to this part of Africa to take advantage of its increasing economic opportunities.

When, however, during the 1970s–1980s the former British colonial territories in East Africa gained independence, they sought to create a strong sense of national identity for Africans. Kenya and Uganda implemented ‘Africanisation’ policies designed to ensure that government, business and other influential positions were filled by Africans, making life difficult for those Asians who had become successful, and thereby forcing many of them to leave. Asians (mainly Gujarati Indians) living in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania began to leave these countries, as the new government policies included restrictions on trade.

“ I moved to this country in 1976. It was a major upheaval for us, because we had to just pack up and come and that was because Malawi the country where I was born was being run by a dictator, Dr David Banda, and he decided, political decision, to shut down some of the smaller towns, and Asians could only trade in the bigger towns. So my dad decided, when our shop had to be shut down, that it would be too difficult to start up again and he thought we’ll just pack up and have a new start and that’s why we came to England and we came to Leicester. I missed Malawi initially when I first came over but I don’t miss it now because I’ve more or less grown up here. I missed the weather – I used to live in a little village where there was a stream at the back and we’d go fishing and rockclimbing. I missed that but not now. ”

- Shabir Aboobaker, interviewed by Khadija, Sarabjeet and Meerab, Juggemeadow Community College, Leicester

Kenyan and Ugandan Asians

Between 1965 and 1967, around 23,000 people of Indian origin were forced to leave Kenya following restrictions placed on them by Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of the newly independent Kenyan government. Concerns about the numbers of Kenyan Asians fleeing to Britain were legislated for in the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1968, preventing those not directly descended from a British-born person from moving to the UK.

On 26 August 1972, the military leader of Uganda, Idi Amin, gave all Asians living there a deadline of 9 November for leaving the country. Many Asians who had become successful and wealthy while living in Uganda were forced to move away, leaving behind their homes and businesses. Around 30,000 chose to come first to England,³⁸ and between 1968 and 1978 Leicester received more than 20,000 displaced East African Asians.³⁹

Before the migrants arrived there was a degree of panic in the city as to whether they could cope with such an influx of people all at once.⁴⁰ One of the consequences of this panic was that Judgemeadow Community College in Leicester was forced to open its doors in 1972, earlier than planned. Originally designed as a girl's grammar, the school opened in a half-built state in order to cater for the number of Ugandan Asians who came to settle in Leicester.⁴¹ Local concern about the arrival of so many migrants from East Africa is also reflected in an advert Leicester City Council placed in the *Ugandan Argus*, urging those hoping to settle in Leicester not

to do so: *'In your own interests and those of your family you should accept the advice of the Uganda Resettlement Board and not come to Leicester'*.⁴²

However, those coming to Leicester did so to join relatives and friends among the Gujarati Hindu population already settled in parts of the city. Ugandan Asians have settled in the Rushey Mead, Milton Road and Belgrave areas in particular, making very successful lives for themselves, and turning what was once a declining part of the city into what is now known as the 'Golden Mile', a symbol of the achievements that diverse and multicultural settlement can bring about.



Belgrave Road Shops

Pakistan

Britain's Pakistani community is one of the largest and most prominent internationally, and with one of the longest histories of migration to Britain. Early migrants came here in the 10th century; but in the 20th century, two major events can be said to have contributed to the more recent migrations from Pakistan to the UK. The first is the Partition of India, in 1947, when Pakistan (East and West) was created, and the second is the construction of the Mangla Dam in the 1960s.

The formation of Pakistan in 1947 was enacted with considerable violence, and about a million people are thought to have lost their lives in the process.⁴³ In addition, it is estimated that around 8 million people were left homeless through being moved across the new borders, in either direction, as a consequence of the division of the country. As a result, many decided to leave the Indian subcontinent altogether to make a new home elsewhere. It is estimated that 75% of the Pakistani migrants who came to the UK before 1970 were from areas directly affected by Partition.⁴⁴ These areas include the Northern Punjab, Mirpur and the much-disputed Kashmir.

In the 1950s, migration from the former colonies was encouraged in order to fulfil post-war labour needs; and many economic migrants from rural areas of Pakistan came to Britain with the intention of returning when they had saved some money. When work began on the Mangla Dam in 1966, many villages were flooded, making thousands of people homeless. Having been encouraged by the Pakistani government to look for work in the UK, many responded and made the move. As with Indian and

Bangladeshi migrants, the majority of those who came to Britain to help fulfil its post-war labour requirements were single men whose families joined them later.

At this time of post-war need for workers, migrants from India and Pakistan who came to Leicester began to settle in the Spinney Hill and Belgrave areas where private housing was more affordable. Today the Pakistani community in Leicester is relatively small, amounting in 2009 to about 2% of Leicester's inhabitants,⁴⁵ living mostly in the Highfields area.⁴⁶ In the 2001 national Census, 11% of the population, a large proportion of whom are Bangladeshi and Pakistani by descent, defined themselves as Muslim.



Bangladesh

Formerly called East Pakistan, Bangladesh can be said to have gained its Independence only recently, having been occupied by the British until 1947, and been part of Pakistan until 1971 when it broke away.

When the UK was experiencing a sharp rise in its need for workers following the Second World War, migrants had arrived from all over the Indian subcontinent, East Pakistan included. These were mainly poorer men, who came alone as they could not afford to bring their families with them. In the 1960s, these workers were joined by their relatives, who created Bangladeshi communities all over the UK, establishing their own places

of worship, education and community centres.

Most of the people from Bangladesh who live in Leicester (indeed in the UK as a whole) are originally from the region of Sylhet. Some of these men worked as chefs on the ships that brought them, using that experience to go on to set up or work in many of the UK's successful 'Indian' restaurants. In 2007, it was estimated that Leicester's population is approximately 1% Bangladeshi.⁴⁷ In the 2001 national Census, 11% of this population, mainly of Bangladeshi and Pakistani descent, defined themselves as Muslim.

I was born in Bangladesh in 1979. I've actually celebrated Eid back in Bangladesh and that's always been my favourite memory because all my family is there. It's very difficult for first generation immigrants such as myself who moved to the UK because we've left a lot of family behind. Back in Bangladesh when you have festivities such as Eid, you don't have that family – you have your immediate family but your uncles, aunties and your cousins, you don't get to see them, so when I go back to Bangladesh, I do enjoy having that family atmosphere. The whole country celebrates Eid so all the programmes on TV have a theme of whatever it is that you're celebrating. All the shops get decorated, the streets get decorated, literally the whole country is celebrating together, so even people you don't know, you're congratulating them that it's Eid. I miss my family but I don't miss Bangladesh enough that I would want to move there, I like to visit now and then.

- Saiful Islam Chowdhury interviewed by pupils at Judgemeadow Community College

Bazaar



What's special about Leicester

The clear ethnic and religious diversity found among those living, working and studying in Leicester marks this city out as somewhere with a particularly interesting migration story. The journeys made by some of its largest minority ethnic groups, including those expelled from East Africa during the 1970s and their successful contributions to the identity of the city, are certainly worth noting, as are the stories of movement told by some of its newer arrivals, including those from parts of West and North Africa, from Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Many of these journeys are replicated in other parts of Britain, but certainly the identity of Highfields, Evington, Spinney Hills and Belgrave among other parts of Leicester are indelibly marked with the presence, the personalities and the experiences of the migrants who have journeyed and settled there. As Marie Clare-Bayle, born in the south-west of France and one of the teachers at Judgemeanow Community College, told her interviewers Sohail and Kamal, Leicester has now become her home, somewhere she commends to family and friends, and a place rich with diversity and warmth:

“I am from the south-west of France, a city called Toulouse, and I came to England more than 10 years ago and the only thing I knew about England was the experience I had through school. I wasn't used to English food, I wasn't used to English weather! But I loved England straightaway, I loved the countryside, I love the people. I found that it was very open minded. The community here (in Leicester) is very mixed, I think that's what I liked the most about coming here, lots of different nationalities, lots of different cultures and I think everybody is living very well together and I think the people are so friendly, so welcoming.

I've always had people who are very curious about my experience as a French person so I really like the community here. I always encourage my French family to come to Leicester during the religious celebration especially during Diwali because we don't celebrate Diwali at all in France and it's very special. Come with an open mind, to embrace the differences, to get to know people.’

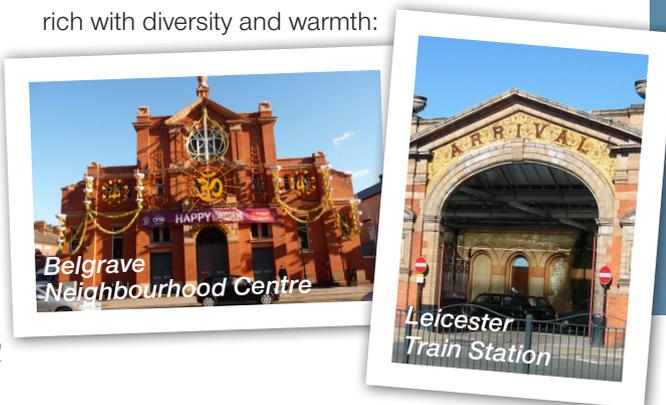


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