strength of our mothers

interviewed by SuAndi

STRENGTH OF OUR MOTHERS

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www.ourmothers.org

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Cover image Mrs Ada next to her husband Alfred Lawrence (Anya) in his circus outfit in the 1930s. Courtesy of their daughter Coca Clarke.

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INTRODUCTION

"Of course they are interesting tho' often painfully honest. Don't think I've ever seen any accounts that are less rose-tinted. This is not a criticism by the way".
When I received the above text (not from Sally), I was somewhat taken aback but only for a short moment of time. Then I thought this is exactly what I hoped for; honesty.

In order to reach the truth, you have got to tell the truth.

SOM was not intended to fictionalise life but to tell it just as we live it. Sometimes it is cruel and heart-breaking but even then, families pull on through. In many cases hardship and heartache makes the bond of family stronger, especially when Mothers have stepped away from the relationship into single parenthood. Fathers too became the sole carer of their children when mothers left because they couldn't or didn't want to stay in the home.

This is how life rolled but for these women, as mothers, wives and partners of Black men, society has made cruel and derogative assessments of their characters. This was particularly so for those whose husbands, partners and fathers of their children were Africans who arrived in the UK mainly from 1925.

I wanted a hot line to Mike Leigh after I watched the scene where the daughter first meets her mother in "Secrets and Lies" (1996 Drama film). Not only does the character Cynthia deny the relationship, she has little recall of it ever happening. Did this reflect Leigh's assumption of low moral characters of White Women with Black men?

Not surprising therefore that I glowed inside when Estelle said, *'I have no regrets about marrying. All the way through life you make choices about what you are going to do and sometimes you regret those decisions or those choices, but not in this case.' And laughed out loud with Avis 'But I don't give a shit, I am not arsed. I choose my own friends; I don't need people to say whether they like me or not and you can tell I have gone through life like that.'*

Everyone interviewed made sure that mothers were honoured for their strength, diligence and determination to bring their families up with the dignity that society in many cases denied them because they were with Black men. None of the children were embarrassed by their white mothers or ashamed, rather they felt it gave them added character.

Ann Sarge wrote *"… the project … opened my eyes as to not just how our parents but geography had an effect on our lives; African tribal cultures, Irish/English all affected our outlook on life. Potatoes or Garri, Fou Fou or chips. No bloody wonder we are characters.... wouldn't change it though … x'*

Whenever my late brother and I talked he always said, "my mother" whereas I said "our"; I tell you this

to because it is unavoidable for each sibling to have widely different memories of their parents. While I did interview two children from two families it proved to be very difficult to present on the page. The reality of oral history is that it is almost impossible to bring together every member of any family into one voice.

In the UK, advertisers have gone to the extreme to over compensate with the largest number of television commercials now played by bi-racial couples. In fact, I have started to count when then couples are of the same race and it is rare!

But has the bigotry ended in this era of Meghan and Harry? I would like to think so, but I doubt it. In March 2019 this headline appeared in The Guardian 'New interracial couple emoji marks victory for partners of color (sic)' https://tinyurl.com/yyvh4w9j

There are still occasions when I find myself holding my breath when, for example, being told that someone rejected their child because of their partner not being of the same racial heritage. I have left parties to avoid losing myself in a debate over Mixed Heritage and felt a huge sense of sadness when a parent (of either race) has told me their child was simply brown!!

From the heart, reaches the heart.

The journey of SOM has left me personally feeling strengthened by the achievements of the first, second and third generations. Each interview made me miss my late Mother, Margaret Josephine Andi, even though she lives on in my own publication; *'The Story of M'.* Had my mother lived longer, I would like to think she would have the appetite for life that Madge Abbey has with a twinkle in her eye and the biggest smile. I found her such a joy to talk to.

So, there it is. The purpose, process and reasoning.

SuAndi OBE D.Litt, D.Arts

In June 2014, the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust published online a toolkit titled "What is the point of oral history?". This reflected years of the Trust's experience of both delivering its own oral history projects and of supporting other community organisations to deliver theirs. I was the champion of the AIUET's oral history work and for some time its Director (now retired). I remain convinced of the incredible importance of oral history collection, particularly in relation to Britain's Black communities, so let's here reiterate the point of oral history:

To widen official history by recording 'ordinary' people and everyday experiences, forgotten and untold narratives.

To fill gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the past and provide insights based on the memories of individuals and families.

To acknowledge the lives and achievements of groups that are usually overlooked and often subject to discrimination.

Oral histories can be used to encourage younger community members to learn about their heritage and to share experience and memory with other communities. But this only happens if the histories collected are both made widely accessible at the time of collection and preserved for future generations through the process of archiving. It is a sad and sobering fact that the majority of British archives contain very little material that reflects the lives and experiences of ethnic minorities in this country in spite of the very long history of migration to this island nation, itself reflecting centuries of British imperial engagement with Africa, the Americas and the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, many previous efforts to gather and share these histories have proved vulnerable and short-lived. I'm thinking particularly of the admirable 'Moving Here' website – itself now archived since 2013 as if the collecting was done and the histories no longer of interest!

'Strength of Our Mothers' has collected oral histories, memories and reflections of white women in mixed race relationships and their dual heritage children, across a period in which racist bigotry was the norm and daily life was often difficult. Yet through the hardships emerge stories of love and personal strength. This collection complements the histories collected in National Black Arts Alliance's previous project, 'Afro Solo UK' (www.afrosolouk.com) and will also be added to the digital exhibition and archives of Manchester Central Library. In this way it becomes an enduring resource for future generations and historians as well as a legacy of the struggles and triumphs of two generations.

Jackie Ould

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for their contribution and support in making this historical publication possible.

Off course the Mothers' themselves for their trust along with the sons and daughters.
From the start fate was a cruel and unwelcomed visitor bringing the sadness of death to many of the families with the passing of a son, daughters, a brother and a sister

Special thanks must go to the family of Ellen Forrester for allowing her chapter to be included following her sudden passing within weeks of the interview. Also, to the Williams family when Jo died within weeks of sharing their mother Bernadette's story. Muli's Mum Dorothy passed before any work was done on her interview.

The format was seemingly simple. I recorded the interview, each session could last four or more hours during which there were many tears shared between us along with laughter.

Then **Sadie Lund** transcribed every word without exception. It takes between two or three weeks to mould it into a chapter.

I meet up with the interviewee again to read them the moulded chapter. I leave this along with the interview transcript and an edition of the draft chapter clearly showing any additional text and parts edited out. During this process the copyright remained with the interviewee.

Once the draft chapter is approved **Kate Swainson** set about proof reading without stifling their voice. Authenticity has been a crucial element throughout.

The project was supported by team of volunteers: Beth, Steve, Claire, Terry and particular thanks go to Adelle Robinson for the many hours she spent on the web researching historical information. The volunteers received Time Line Research training from **Dr Kim Foale** and how to manage oral history interviews from **Jackie Ould** (Co-Director, AIURRCET. Retired 2018). **Sally Medlyn** was the reader on the publication

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CONTENTS

MOTHERS

DAUGHTERS

SONS

CONTEXT

MOTHERS

BETTY SWEENEY
December 1920
by her daughter DELSIERENE

SuAndi: Initially it wasn't my intention to publish Delsierene's interview as a conversation and I meant to keep to the format of a mother's story, but even though our fathers come from different parts of the world, our lives have such similar experiences that it made sense.
Tell me your full name?

Delsierene Elizabeth Waul, maiden name Sweeney. I was born August 1955 in St. Mary's on Whitworth Street, near Oxford Road train station. It's now a Sainsburys supermarket.

SuAndi: Same hospital as me.

My Mam Elizabeth and my Dad Robert McKay Sweeney were known as Betty and Sweeney. They had been married for five years when they had me. I was their first and the only child they had together. At that time my parents were living in rooms at 131 Broadfield Road. Then they bought a house at 6, The Grove, Moss Side, just beside Whitworth Park and we rented out rooms to people.

SuAndi: Where is your Dad from?

Savanna-la-Mar[1], Jamaica. He enlisted in the RAF and came to England in 1944. Dad came with two of his cousins, my uncles David and Wilfred. Sadly, Wilfred died of pneumonia after three weeks of being in this country. Uncle David lived next door at 8 The Grove, then he moved to Canada. They were my father's only relatives

1 *The chief town and capital of Westmoreland Parish, Jamaica.*

My Mother came from Newton Heath[2] part of a very big family – a mixture of staunch Catholics and Protestants. Elsie, my Mam's mother died at the age of 29. She was pregnant at the time of her death. She had eight other pregnancies; only four of the children lived. This included my Mam. If I am asked what she died of, she probably died of exhaustion – but she probably smoked about 20 odd cigs a day. It was 1933 after all. My Mam was eight when her mother died. She had three brothers. The family was devastated and were not in a position to take on all the children. In those days, orphanages were single sex so the boys went to live in one. My Mam was sent to live with her maternal grandparents. My Mam called them Mama and Dadda and referred to her aunties and uncles as sisters and brothers. Quite a complex family situation but not unusual.

Within six months of Elsie dying, my grandad re-married. She was an extremely cruel woman and so she was quickly shown the door! My grandad then married my Nana and they had three children. Funnily enough one of them was called Errol (he never liked that name) – so when I talk about him everyone assumes, he's a Black man. Sadly, he died in 2016. I still have regular contact with my two Aunties. One lives in Canada and the other in Chester. So yeah, I came from a very working class, mad crazy family, full of love, secrets and lies but a family that was very inclusive.

As if my maternal great-grandparents didn't have enough on their plate caring for their own six children plus my Mam, 'our Betty' as she was known. When my Mam was fourteen her best friend was abandoned by her family so she moved in as well. A few years ago, when one of the family was researching our family tree, he said 'well, this Auntie isn't going on the tree, as she's not part of the family'! Her ashes are buried with my Mam's in the family grave so how much closer as a family can you get?

> *SuAndi: You gave a letter of support to this project's application for HLF funding Then later you said that you didn't want to be interviewed as a contributor. Please explain your reasons.*

Well one of my issues is you talk about the 'Strength of our Mothers' but I was brought up by both parents as well as other male and female adults. I didn't want to idealise the white women and pathologize the Black men. There have been lots of problems with mixed relationships due to various reasons including domestic abuse, but I think one of my strengths is the fact that I had such good Black male role models and that has helped my Mixed-Race identity in a great way. I didn't want to suggest it was only the women that forged the way.

> *SuAndi: To give some background, NBAA's previous project was Afro Solo UK archiving the life stories of Africans who came to the UK from 1925 thereby disrupting the 1945 Windrush timeline of Black migration. There was a concentration on men because very few women came over but so many of the children talked about their mothers that NBAA decided after long discussions to look at this unspoken history, (unspoken away from academic research). It definitely wasn't to put the mothers on a pedestal and leave the fathers behind – it was just to tell the mother's story. Because of the timelines of the research it includes periods of economic hardship and bad housing. I have interviewed someone who said 'do you remember when the ice used to come down on the inside of windows?'*

We both know that many of the mothers were not perfect but today I hope to record not only your Mother's story but your knowledge as a social worker and your observations of how life was for many of us 'back in the day'.

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2 *Area north-east of Manchester city centre*

I think economically we were all poor and that was the thing, nobody was richer and there were no disparities, everybody worked. But that poverty was all around, everybody had it. My mother was a very good machinist; she earned a lot of money compared to my Dad. He worked in Oldham and on occasion would have to walk back home[3] because of the fog. He had a number of jobs, including working at Dunlops[4] and McVities[5]; always, mundane labouring types of jobs, but my Dad always worked. I had two hard working parents who grafted, and I use the term in a positive sense not how it is used negatively today. I felt that I was quite well off, I never wanted for anything.

We went on holiday every year, sometimes twice. My Granddad worked for the railway, so he got discounted travel and accommodation. I used to go with my Nana and Granddad and Mam to Dawlish in Devon and then to Wales (usually Rhyl) with my Mam and her friends.

Yes, we had condensation; we all had coats on the bed, we twisted the newspaper to make the fire last longer. Shovelled out the bigger cinders and re-burnt them. Always had bread and butter with your dinner no matter what it was. But we were all like that. There were some poorer kids. I remember when we played out during the school holidays, at half eleven the kids who were on free dinners used to go to school and get a meal. There was the convalescence home that my Mam desperately wanted to get me to go to, but as I was an only child, I didn't fit the criteria. I was so envious when the kids came back with new plastic sandals, singing all the songs they had learned at Dr Garretts.

SuAndi: Tell me about Dr Garretts, because it has come up in other interviews.

Dr Garretts was a charity that hosted kids from Salford and Manchester for a period of 'convalescence'. Usually they would stay for between four and six weeks. They would have meals, a bit of seaside air that I suppose was nourishment from the countryside, for inner city kids. Things started to change for me when my Mother left my Dad and moved with me to a room on Monton Street. I was five years old. When I was nearly eight she had my brother. My brother wouldn't settle in the nursery so she couldn't work; that's when things started to change for me.

From when I was nine months old, I went to Broadfield Road nursery then to Greenheys Primary school and in year four, the last year, you went for two weeks to Parkside[6] in Heaton Park; that was our countryside experience. We were taken every day by bus from the school to the middle of Heaton Park. For us it was like we had travelled far from home; it was only six miles. These activities were designed to keep children healthy mainly because of the fog and smog.

It was while I was in Year Four when we moved from Monton Street and my Mother took an awful flat in Bennett Street Ardwick. I still went to Greenheys on two buses but when it was foggy, I was allowed to leave school early. When the smog[7] was treacle thick, somebody would walk in front of the bus with a lamp to guide the way. There was no such thing as not going to school. Fog was the only thing that we never played out in. We played out in the snow, when it was teeming with rain, but not in fog or smog.

SuAndi: Prior to this project I had never heard of Dr Garretts or Parkside and I am just above you in age.

Society was more benevolent then. Your Doctor had a social care responsibility and would refer families

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3 Approximately 2 hrs 34 min (8.0 miles)
4 Dunlop Rubber was a multinational company involved in the manufacture of various rubber goods
5 A British snack food brand owned by United Biscuits.
6 Parkside School Sheepfoot Lane Prestwich
7 Fog or haze intensified by smoke or other atmospheric pollutants. It can cause or aggravate health problems such as asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis and other respiratory problems

to Dr Garretts.

There was the NSPCC [8] 'Cruelty Man', that is what he was openly called. There wasn't a stigma attached to having a social worker or going to Gaddum House . The posh people used to come and help us. We never felt there was any shame; maybe it was accepted that it was their duty to look after us and our duty to accept their help.

SuAndi: And everybody had nits?!!

Oh yeah, there was Nora the school nit nurse. That was quite an intrusive, kind of inspection. Also, teachers could be cruel. I remember on my first day at Junior School[9] getting the strap[10] because I had stayed in the outside toilets with the Year Fours[11]. I went back late, and Mrs Jones gave me two straps. There was no discussion with your parents. Even when I went to High School[12], coming out of swimming I cut my leg on a broken mirror. They took me to the hospital where I had four stitches in the wound, and all this was done without even phoning my Mam. There was this accepted authority that adults had over the care of other people's children.

SuAndi: What was that that purple stuff they used to put on the skin, I always wanted that.

Gentian violet[13], it was scabies[14] wasn't it? No not scabies, impetigo[15]. I had a blister once from eating some fruit, it was massive. I went to Mr Morris, the Chemist on Denmark Road. He just put a needle in it. People used to just look after you and if you were cheeky, people would think nothing of hitting you across your head or going and telling your Mam and then you would get battered. There was a real sense of community, even though we were all very, very different.

I never experienced direct racism until I was eleven. I had obviously experienced ignorance. I remember being about five on holiday in Devon and we were in the camp shop and somebody saying, 'can I touch her hair?' and my Granddad saying 'no you f***ing can't!' My Nana said, 'oh my God, we can't go anywhere with him'. But he was defending me.

SuAndi: So, your family unit was three generations, Grandparents, parents.
I want to go back a bit to house ownership and the myth that nobody owned houses until after the Windrush timeline. I heard two Black guys on Radio Four's Listening Project talking about how the council took their houses off them and I was thinking 'rubbish' forgetting that my Dad had owned houses, but he ended up living and dying in a corporation maisonette.
We know the houses weren't brilliant. Some of them had bugs, some of them had damp, but our parents did own property!

Yes, that was the Compulsory Purchase[16]. My Mam's job was paid on piece work[17] rate so there were weeks when she could earn twenty quid. Dad earned seven quid, no matter what he did. So, by being frugal they were able to leave Uncle Pip's house on Broadfield Road and buy the house on The Grove

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8 *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children*
9 *Aged 5-7 years*
10 *A strip of leather used by schools as an implement of corporal punishment.*
11 *8 year olds*
12 *From age 11 years*
13 *An antiseptic dye used to treat fungal infections of the skin*
14 *Tiny mites lay eggs in the skin, leaving silvery lines with a dot at one end*
15 *Contagious but not serious skin infection.*
16 *Councils have the right to enforce the purchase of privately owned land or property for public use.*
17 *Paid according to the amount produced.*

as their own property. They also rented rooms out which obviously helped. We occupied the ground floor; my bedroom was on the first floor. One room on the first and the two attic rooms were all rented out. We all shared the bathroom and toilet. We also had a toilet in the backyard. The lodgers shared a kitchen on the first floor.

Letting rooms wasn't unusual. There was a Polish woman at the end of the street and she rented off all her rooms. On The Grove we had Irish families, my Uncle David lived next door and some Jamaican families. There were no Indian families on our street. I use the term Indian because there was no Pakistan as such then. We had the Singhs on Monton Street. On Marcia Street which was behind The Grove, Irish travellers used to set up their caravans on the croft[18]. There were the Polish kids – they had their own Church on Moss Lane East and they went to Ducie High School[19] on a Saturday for Polish lessons. We were totally mixed and that was incredibly grounding for me. So, when you talk about a melting pot, that was it.

Because my Dad was pre Windrush[20], most of his friends came over during the war in the forties. At school, I only ever knew one other girl that had a Jamaican Dad – her mother was mixed race British/ Barbadian. There were African Mixed-Race people, but to connect with my heritage there weren't many people. I have a school photograph and I am the only Caribbean Mixed Race girl in the class, everybody else has got a different heritage. They have either got a Mixed Race Mam like Lanka Hooker whose Mam was Mixed Race or they have two Black parents.

My Dad used to cook on a Sunday, and everybody came to our house to eat. So, if you came from Jamaica on Friday, you went to Sweeney's on a Sunday for your dinner. They had a little bit of something going on that built up a community and that is how they went on to develop the Colonial Club which now is on Westwood Street[21]. It was predominantly Jamaicans, wanting to play cricket and have somewhere to play dominos and stuff.

Even though Mam and Dad split up when I was five, they continued to share parental care which was quite unusual in those days. I loved going back to The Grove, because I had freedom – I had my own bedroom, I didn't have to share a kitchen, we had our own, and the back yard was mine, so I could play and do what I wanted to do at my Dad's. Then my Dad tried to kidnap me when I was ten. He and Uncle David decided, in a good way as I was about to become a woman, I needed to go to Jamaica to my Grandmother Delsierene, who I had never met. Dad came to pick me up one day for a visit and as he walked out of the gate, he said to my Mam 'you are not going to see her again'. It is quite funny really, I don't know why Mam didn't give chase. Anyway, the Police came and I got sent to live with my maternal Grandparents. I adored the ten months I lived in Salford with my Nana and Grandad. I was the only Black kid in the school, and I do not remember experiencing any direct racism.

SuAndi: Do you think taking you away was a judgement call on your Mam?

It wasn't that my Mam's parenting was being questioned, it was more that I needed something extra. Before Mam and Dad split up, she went to see the Doctor and said 'I am going to pay to send Delsierene to boarding school, because I think it is what she needs'. That stopped me in my tracks! Thank God, that we had a sensible doctor who said, 'that is the worst thing you could do'. Their outlook on parenting was always in my best interests but a bit off key. Though God help me had I gone

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18 Waste land often where housing had been demolished especially after WW2
19 2000 Ducie High school became Manchester Academy
20 Those arriving in the UK between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries have been labelled the Windrush generation
21 West Indian Sports & Social Club

to Jamaica.

After Salford and back home, I went to Barlow Hall Secondary Modern school[22], as it was called then. I had never been to Chorlton before. Mam didn't take me on a trial run. I had to navigate from Ardwick on two buses and of course I was late. I get to school, I've got my mackintosh on, my blazer, my jerkin, my jumper, my beret. I am only about four foot nine and I have got a satchel that is bigger than me. I walked into the hall and was asked, 'Who are you?' 'Delsierene Sweeney'. 'We thought you were Irish', came the response. I had never ever been questioned about my name before. At my primary school, yeah, I was a quirky kid, but my name Delsierene wasn't considered to be unusual. To face that after a long journey was intimidating. In the same week I do my first PE[23] class where the teacher asks, 'What is your name?'. 'Delsierene'. 'Oh, we are not having that, we will call you Della from now on'. So, I was called Della for years. Della or Bella were the names given to the prostitute in Cowboy films. I am eleven. I have got explicit instructions from my mother to behave myself, I am bettering myself, I'm going to Chorlton; how dare they, but I can't challenge a teacher. Even today in my big 60's, if anybody calls me Della, I go ballistic because it takes me back.

Yes, I experienced racism in some way or other, but I never absorbed it.

> *SuAndi: From your perspective reflecting on your childhood what were your Mam's experiences as a white woman?*

I was in that old adage of 'the family is racist, but when they have the child, they love the child'. My Mam and Dad met at the Ritz Ballroom[24]. My Uncles, (my Great Uncles), would drop Mam off at the Ritz because they didn't want her to be messing about. Then the Priest knocks on my Great Grandmother's door in Newton Heath and says, 'Do you know your Betty is going out with coloured men?' Great Gran Sabina says 'Yes' and totally accepts them as a couple. My Grandad came all the way from Salford to meet my Dad and immediately adored him as he adores me.

Sabina died in December '55 when I was four months old. I have got a letter she wrote to my Mam. It's a funny letter really, and it's' how are you', 'how's our Delzi, don't be plaiting our Delzi's hair' *(laughter)*. 'Give my regards to Sweeney, Uncle Ayo, Uncle Pips'. (My auntie's then husband and my godfather). Then she calls my Auntie a BB which means a Bloody Bastard because she didn't tell my Great Gran how much she got for a car she had sold. It's a lovely letter and I love reading it.

I never picked up one negative vibe from the family. I had loads of safe places to go and stayed with extended family often.

When I say I didn't experience racism, I am not saying that when we were kids on the streets and fighting, that we didn't call each other names. I am not saying that.

'Little Black Sambo[25]', was one of my favourite books, you know when he puts himself in a bowl of water in order to swell to fit in a jumper, that was one of my most favourite books ever. It's so contradictory, the difference is there, but the acceptance is there too. My Mother walked out of work one day and got everybody else to leave with her because they called the cotton 'nigger brown', and my Mam wasn't having it and she said, 'you are going to have to change it'. I don't know what she thought they were going to call it, but she got everybody to walk out of the place.

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22 *Barlow Hall County Secondary School. Date: [1963-1965]*
23 *Physical Education*
24 *Built in 1927 notable for its sprung dance floor.*
25 *The Story of Little Black Sambo a children's book published in 1899*

SuAndi: I remember Marks and Spencer selling 'nigger brown' polo necks.

So, there were moments like that. Mam was fiercely protective of me. There was always something about my presentation – clean knickers. When we moved to Ardwick, this lad racially abused me, and he was with a Black lad. My Mam went banging on the door and in her rationality, she pulled my clothes up and said, 'Look she has got clean knickers on' *(Laughter)*. I used to go to the Rene Claro salon when I was ten and sit there like some sophisticated… *(laughter)*. We would even come home early from our holidays if my Mam had arranged for someone to do my hair.

SuAndi: Where do you think our Mothers were positioned/viewed in society?

I think they were totally marginalised because of their relationships with Black men or coloured as it was known in those days. But as I look around, although some came from regular homes, a lot of the women were already on the outskirts of society; brought up in Care[26], estranged by their family. There were some women that were prostitutes, so they were on the edge of the communities.

SuAndi: Barrie and David George said in their interview, they were 'lucky' that their mother didn't have to turn to prostitution. For many it wasn't done out of choice but to get by, to survive. History tells that in working class families, women turned to prostitution, sometimes unbeknown to their husbands – to bring that extra bit of money in. Here I am talking about white families only. It is the oldest trade in the world isn't it?

There was sex work, but I think it was quite open. It went on in Lewis' arcade[27], quite a lot of women around Moss Side ran that. There was Tiger Lil (I won't use her proper name), she ran a lot of the girls. It wasn't uncommon to see women on street corners like Withington Road in Whalley Range, or even just trolling[28] around Denmark Road, late at night. There was also the stigma wasn't there, about not being married, so you had a few white women who had white children who were considered not to be morally right. They ended up with a Black man who married the woman and took on her child or children. Or the other way where white families had a Mixed Raced child, but nothing was ever said about that child's skin colour. There were things obviously hidden.

SuAndi: In Afro Solo what became very apparent is that so many Black men were prepared to take on a white child.

Well maybe that was so they could get on with their own lives, or maybe their perception of a family was different. Maybe they thought outside the box. Maybe that was it, I don't know really, and I don't know what the statistics are.

But there was a stigma attached, because obviously Black people were demonised, so if you had a relationship with a Black person that was the worst thing that could happen – you were betraying your family.

Some of these Black guys had already had a family and weren't therefore true to the white women. So maybe they were accepting, because they had their own secrets.

One fact is that growing up I didn't know many Black women. The Black women came later on, many

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26 Children's Homes and other institutions

27 The Manchester department store opened in 1877 it included a full scale ballroom on the fifth floor, which was also used for exhibitions.

28 When one finds themselves in an undesirable situation.

with their children.

My Uncle David went out with Black women who were nurses; again, a stereotype. I remember saying to my Mam that my Auntie Lucy, uncle David's then girlfriend was 'navy blue', she was very dark skinned.

> *SuAndi: Like you I didn't know a lot of Black women, but the Black women I began to know were from the Caribbean. I was unprepared for a certain level of prejudice. Even from the family that I grew to love, and I refer to as my other family. 'Mummy' as I call her, straightened hair[29], and I would listen to conversations about Africans being from 'out the jungle', and about all the white women being prostitutes, and I thought you are talking about my Mum and Dad.*

Oh yeah, there was definitely an overt prejudice insofar as people stayed within their country. You had Nigerians, you had Ghanaians, then you had the Jamaicans and they referred to other Caribbean people the Kittitians, Barbadian and Guyanese as 'small islanders'. Even though my Dad was a labourer, he mixed with a man from Guyana who was in the RAF but was a chiropodist, so maybe it was because he had a profession.There was a definite divide and I know in our house we had Jamaicans, a couple of Indian Trinidadians who were training to be Doctors, so there was that professional leniency. We had no Africans. One time my Auntie's husband needed to stay in Manchester, but my Dad at that time wouldn't give him a bed because he was a Nigerian. We had other Mixed-Race couples, they were predominantly Irish women. So, within the marginalisation, they also had their own demarcation lines.

> *SuAndi: I always say when my cousin Alan Tottoh died and I got out of the car, it was like getting out in to a Mixed-Race village of Half-Caste lads, because of that generation I am using the term Half Caste.*
> *The terminology; half-caste now Mixed-Race now dual heritage, I don't know what bloody line it is.*

Bi-racial. Yeah,

> *SuAndi: Thank you, Megan[30]. In this project, as with Afro Solo UK, I interview people and discover that we all lived 'next to each other' and all know each other. So, although they came from different parts of Africa and brought with them their differences and they kind of lived together as Africans, in a way that didn't happen with the Caribbean's, separate islands. I was quite shocked by the division. I need to draw us back again to the women because this is about the women. Our Mothers, were they brave or were they stupid?*

I don't think anybody that I know of – and I will still say it of today - embarking on a Mixed-Race relationship sits there and analyses it and thinks 'this is what is going to happen'. I do not think that at all. Some of them fell in to it and just got on with it. My Mam was quite clannish, so the sense of family was there anyway and that was passed down to me. The sense of looking after yourself, the work ethic was always there – you would never live off the state. All these principles combined with my Dad's because he was a grafter, we never went without. A tin of pilchards and a bit of flour made a dinner. My Mother had a thing called Mother Sweeney's stew that was neck[31], potatoes and an OXO cube shoved in the oven. Or cabbage and ribs[32] braised in a pan. We never starved, even though at times we were hungry. But I know if we were hungry, my Mam went to bed even more hungry.

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29 *A comb is placed directly on a heat source and used to straighten the hair from the roots*
30 *Megan Markle now the Duchess of Sussex*
31 *Lamb's neck*
32 *Bacon ribs*

I know when I was a teenager if we went to bed on a Sunday, because the lights went off – we all went to bed. It wasn't as if my Mam was drinking or going out – it was something that impacted on all of us. Then we got up on a Monday and she got her 'nasshey'[33] and we were all alright again for the rest of the week.

I also think that we need to be really cautious, because there are Mixed Heritage children with Black mothers and white fathers - so what is their experience to our experience? Is it different?

> *SuAndi: Do you think they were aware of how they were perceived; going to the schools to deal with teachers, going to the Doctors, were they on their guard?*
> *I think sometimes they were on their guard, but sometimes I think that sometimes they were complicit.*

I had real problems in secondary school with racism, with a German teacher who taught short hand and typing. Things like – 'where do you come from? – the jungle'. 'Don't they have capital letters where you come from?' You couldn't be more overtly racist than that. So, then going and reporting that 'oh it's all in your head', 'oh you are exaggerating', 'oh it's you, you have got a chip on your shoulder'. Yet at parents evening when my Mam came face to face with her and picked up on the snide remarks, Mam practically wiped the floor with her.

> *SuAndi: Do you think they were trying to give us armour?*

No, I think that because you are white there is that unconscious bias – so you don't actually know it. I can say to you, I have been in a shop and somebody hasn't put the money in my hand, and you know what I am saying. If I say to a white person, 'I have been racially abused', it will be 'well what have they said?' or 'don't you think it was maybe your…' so you have got to justify yourself. I think I would be worried if a white person over emphasised or told me that I was being racially abused.

I have two boys and I was shopping in Copson Street one day with the youngest, he was seven years old. There were two elderly white women in front of me looking at a novelty cake. One of them said to the other one 'oh look at those little niggers in a bed'. The other woman nudged her, and she changed it to 'oh look at those three coloureds in a bed'. It was three bears actually, she needed to go to Specsavers!!![34]

When we walked out of the shop my son looked at me and said, 'You didn't say anything'. So, I said 'No there is a time to speak'. I'd thought about it but if I had reared up at two elderly white women, I would have fulfilled every stereotype going and you know what, I haven't got many wrinkles, that is because I choose my battles. You understand totally when I say when you go in to a shop and they do anything but serve you. You have to decide to either stay and make your presence felt or you walk out because you don't have energy for it on that particular day.

> *SuAndi: I love it when they ignore you and say 'I thought you were with.....' whoever else in the shop who isn't white. 'I thought that was your husband' for the Pakistani guy stood three feet from me or 'Are you two related?'*
>
> *I want to go back to your German teacher. It reminded me of secondary school, when you start sewing. My Mum eventually asked 'What are you doing in sewing class?' because she knew I should be asking for material for the lesson. I said 'Washing'. I had been dreading this question. 'What do you mean, washing?' I said, 'when the other kids sew, I wash'. The teacher had lived in Nigeria and*

33 National Assistance was the main means-tested benefit in the United Kingdom from 1948 to 1966
34 You need to go to Specsavers is an advertising

she was bringing her washing in for me to do by hand.

So, you had your role?

> *SuAndi: My Mum came in to confront the teacher. I dreaded her coming, even though she was defending me, because of how the school might see her as a battle axe. Even now in my show 'The Story of M*[35] *there are parts of the show where I could say 'fuck' to illustrate her anger or heartache, but I won't say it because that makes my mother look as though that was part of her language and she never said it. So, I say 'bleedin' and every time I say 'I'm so sorry Mum.' My Mum hated the word 'bleedin'. I am still concerned how she might be perceived. But I do agree totally, no matter how much they loved us, they couldn't live our lives for us.*

I always put it this way; my Mother would have put your windows in if you ever did anything to me, but to sooth me, my Dad would have been the one to, I am not saying that he wouldn't have reared up, I am not saying that at all, because my Dad was quite capable. But there was such a special connection with him.

We were in C & A[36] one time, me and my Mam and my brother who is eight years younger than me, and he was running round, when a woman came up to my Mam and asked her if she could have one of us. Because my Mam had two beautiful kids. So, that is the bit about 'brown babies being beautiful'. Mam's jaw just dropped to the floor. Pulling my brother and me close, we quickly left. Later on, in the day when I had probably had a bit of an outburst, it was 'I'll go and get that woman from C & A to take you' *(laughter)* – maybe she didn't understand but like a lioness she would defend to the death. There was nowhere I wasn't allowed to go – and yet I know other Mixed Raced people who were taken back to their Grandparents who were lied to and told 'I am minding these kids'. I know of a fellow who said that his Mam threw a blanket over his face when she took him out. I was put on show. I was always put on show. I had the frilliest dresses, if it wasn't bought from C &A or Lewis' then we would get it on tick from Masters. Even now on a Bank Holiday Monday I still wonder 'why am I not going to Blackpool?' We went on holiday every summer; went to Blackpool and if money was short, we went to Belle Vue[37], but we always did something.

Easter was always a new frock for Good Friday, new frock for Easter Sunday, new frock for Easter Monday and new white sandals and socks, and underwear of course. For Whit Walks[38], it was 'go and get the orange box from O'Neill's on Denmark Road'. We would meet outside Lewis'. All the family came, we didn't have phones, but that is where you met and then over to Ancoats Lane. Mam would have a few good stouts and I would get a good few bob[39] from the Kerry Pipers[40]. The family was full of traditions, and even when my Mam and Dad split up, the family was always there. At Whit Week I am still there – on Ancoats Lane, well not any more, now it's Piccadilly Gardens, I love all that.

So, there was a pride in having me and my Dad was proud of me. Everybody used to have to sit down during a party while 'Delsierene sang and danced' and I still think that people should still do that today *(laughing)*. I never was babysat. I either went out with my parents or they didn't go out at all. So, for me, they got it right but whether it was 'we will sit down, and we think how to parent this girl'. No.

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35 *Is on the new A-levels English Literature syllabus*
36 *C&A clothes traded in Manchester for 72 years since 1928*
37 *Belle Vue Zoological Gardens*
38 *The traditional "Procession of Witness" has long been celebrated throughout the North West. For many, Whit Friday remains the most important date in the calendar.*
39 *Money*
40 *Irish marching band*

SuAndi: We know that some mothers walked away. One of the guys in Afro Solo UK, his mother was very young when she had him. Later she lived locally but he never forgave her. Do you have an opinion about the women who walked away and never came back?

I think there is a definite correlation with the amount of Mixed Heritage children that were and have been consistently in the Care system, with racism and women not being able to go under the wire. When I was five, I was in an advertisement campaign, 'Delsierene Sweeney is crying at the corner of Monton Street, but she has got two parents, but please foster coloured children or Black children'. My parents were divorcing at the time, which was a bit ironic.

But if you were white and had white kids, you could quickly be absorbed, you could go away, but if you had a dark skinned child, then that would hamper your survival. So, I think that was the dilemma that women had. To be abandoned by any parent is devastating, and how you repair that fracture, I don't know. For me, we were all different, yet we were all the same. We had transvestites who lived on Carter Street; a family who were brought up by their Dad who dressed up as a woman and when fights started, all the stuffing from his bra would fall out *(laughter)*. But there was nobody without a Mam on my street. There were kids without Dads, there were kids with multiple Dads.

I lived in quite a moral society. We all went to Church on a Sunday, we ate fish on a Friday, everybody had an input in your life. My Mam had a relationship with Black guy from another Caribbean island, (which probably irked my Dad). Mam wasn't married when she had my brother, but on his birth certificate she is a Mrs and that was in 1963; there was a deep sense of morality.

I can see why parents did abandon their children because life was probably daunting and there could have been mental health issues. There were some families with a white kid, then a Mixed-Race kid and then a white kid. We all kiss a lot of frogs but if they are all different colours, then there can be consequences and to be fair, contraception wasn't as fluid and as freely available as it is now.

When I got older and was married, a white guy fancied my Mam and she said, 'well what do you think?' I said 'Well, what do you want me to think – if you like him'. He was a butcher so all I could think was we could get 'cheap meat' *(laughter)*. When I was younger, I wouldn't have wanted her to have a white child. So, you know it is complex.

In those days, women were thought of very differently. I still think women are thought of differently, but I also think that Black women who go out with white men today are thought of very differently. But white women who are with Black men are not Black – they are white women who are in a relationship, end of.

SuAndi: And abortions were illegal until 1967.
When my brother was in Kingston Prison Portsmouth, we stayed in a pub. They knew why we were there because a charity had paid for it. I can still see the bloody room. We were in bed when something woke me up; the landlord is trying to get in bed with my Mum with ME IN THE BED. My Mum wakes and starts screaming 'Get out', but she is not screaming loud, because there is a landlady downstairs who could turn on her and put us both out in the middle of the night. He said something along the lines of 'You are only a f-ing prostitute'. Because of me her Black child. I wasn't a kid behind the door, I know loads, because I had seen loads, even though I am only primary school age. But that stayed with me - how dare he do that to my mother. My Mother who worked nights, 10 hour shifts in the night, how dare he.

I knew things like when she worked in the canteen at the Guardian[41], I wasn't allowed to go to see her at work until she felt secure in the job. When I finally went, some of the printers recognised me. It turned out that they caught the bus across from our house on Radnor Street and I was always put out in my pram and they would bring sweets to give to me. I know, the 'beautiful brown baby' syndrome again.

I know there were times Malcolm and I were a secret, but not a secret that she was ashamed of, if that makes sense. At 11 when she bought a house in Levenshulme, we didn't go to see it until she had the mortgage signed and secure. Sometimes the secret was to enable things to happen. For me that was the strength she had that I am very proud of.

One thing that does horrify me is some white women's' racial abuse towards their children and partners. So my question is, if you have Mixed Race children, is there something special about you?

No. No there isn't, but I will tell you now, when I go out now, I can tell a white woman who has Mixed Race children because of the way she relates to me. If she tells me without any prompting, she has got Mixed Race children, I find that quite offensive. I then think - well just because you sleep with a Black man doesn't mean you are not racist. Then for them I am either the daughter they have always wanted, or I am their worst nightmare, because I have got a gob[42], an opinion and I am very grounded. I have always been grounded, I have never wanted to be Black or white. I used to say I am Half-Caste[43] and proud, because that was the word I was brought up with. I used to say I am one of milk and I am one of coffee and I would never want to be anything different. When I got to about sixteen, I thought I had missed a bit out of my development because I thought 'oh my God, I've never wanted to be white'. There is a social misconception that when you are mixed, that you are mixed up.

SuAndi: Exactly.

I am not mixed up. I have got a white English mother with Irish connections and I have got a Jamaican father. The first time I got off the plane in Jamaica I felt I had been away for the weekend! When someone shouted 'Delsierene', and it wasn't me, *(laughter)* imagine that. So, when people tell me 'you have got an exotic name', 'no I haven't, go to Jamaica lots of women are called Delphine, Delsierene, it is like Ann, Jane, Susan yeah?'

I am quite ordinary, I am quite different, but I am very special in that my parents would not have sat down and said 'how do we bring this girl up?' – No, they brought me up with love. As a mother of Black children, I would say that I have consciously thought about how to grow them. I have seen society's attitude change as my boys grew. I have been in an office with my 6ft 1 son and women have looked at their handbags. I have been more conscious about how my boys are perceived. But then again it is also because they are boys that it is a new experience to me. Things are different. I am not bothered who my boys have a relationship with, that is not influenced by my heritage. But I always knew that my Dad would have preferred me to have married a Jamaican, and I did. I just did, it was not ever said, not ever said.

SuAndi: My Dad said, 'I would like you to marry an African, I would be very upset if you married a white man, but please don't marry a Jamaican'.
They say we grow like our Mothers is that true for you?

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41 Manchester Guardian & Evening News
42 Irish word (Gaeilge) gob, transferred as slang in English for big mouth.
43 A term for a category of people of mixed race or ethnicity. It is derived from the term caste, which comes from the Latin castus, meaning pure

My Mam would do anything for anybody. During the 1974 bread strike, she would get the pram and walk miles to buy bread for the old people on the street – I would be with her, of course. She would take anybody's kid in and she would give you anything that she had. I was brought up with the door always open. My door is closed! I am not saying I wouldn't open it to you, but I can't have that neighbouring that my Mam had. It was definitely half a cup of sugar, a dash of milk and a spoon or two of tea.

Like my Mam I can go from nought to ten in no time. I wouldn't pull my kids' clothes up and say they have got clean underwear on, but I would do something like that.

SuAndi: When did you lose your Mam and Dad?

My Mam died at 51. My Dad died aged 89

I think both my parents were fearless, nothing would frighten my Dad, and my Mam was like that too. I am fearless, I can go anywhere, I feel comfortable in myself.

I went on holiday and I was the only Black person on the plane going to Barbados! Not that I was counting, but it became apparent, which was interesting.

What I have taken from my Mam is that if you have got something to say, you say it.

FAMILY
Betty Sweeney December 1920 – May 1979
Robert Mackay Sweeney Dec 1920 – January 2010

MILDRED MAYER
October 1927
with her son ERIC Jnr & Grandson JAMES

Mildred: It snowed when I got married, 22nd of December 1951 at the registry office on Deansgate, Jacksons Row. I was so excited planning the wedding I hadn't realised that it was so near Christmas. It was through my Mum that I met Eric in the first place.

I left school on a Friday when I was fourteen in 1941; on the Monday I started work in a little bakehouse with a shop. One side was the cakes and bread the other side was sweets. I worked there until I was twenty-one.

Mum and I lived in Marley Place in Harpurhey with my Grandma and it was Grandma who looked after me until she died when I was seven.

Mum worked at the CWS Biscuit Works in Crumpsall . They said that she had a job for life because she had a bad accident to her hand. They gave her the easy job in the cellar. At 21 I managed to get a job there packing the biscuits. Mum had mentioned this young man Eric, who would get her a cup of tea and something to eat lunch time and pass on the newspaper. The other lads started pulling his leg saying, 'next thing you know you will be going out with Annie's daughter!!' He said, 'Annie hasn't got a daughter'. 'She has' they said. The day I met him he tried to throw the paper to my mum, but it went askew and hit me on the eye and that is how we first got talking.

For Christmas they had decorated the cellar. During the dinner break I would go down with Eric to talk to my mother.

I was sat on top of a tea chest when Eric said, 'I am going to do it whether you smack my face or not!' I thought 'what is he going to do?'. Then he came towards me and went to kiss me as I fell in to the tea chest. My legs were stuck up in the air *(laughter)* and everybody couldn't stop laughing. I was still in the tea chest with my legs stuck in the air, I couldn't get out when the boss appeared. He was a German chap one of those very nasty people. I thought 'oh heck, we will get the sack now' He looks about and says, 'What do you think is going on here?' Eric said, 'I went to kiss her and wish her a happy Christmas and she fell in'. The boss said, 'instead of standing there, watching her stuck there, go and lift her out, Happy Christmas' and then he walked off. Then Eric pointed up, someone had stuck up a piece of mistletoe that I hadn't seen. He gave me a big kiss and asked, 'would you like to come for a drink with me'. 'Oh' I said 'No, I don't drink'. He said, 'come on it's only just around the corner, will you come out with me?' I started going out with him from then on.

Eric Edward Mayer was born here in Manchester. He lived with his Auntie in Caroline Street, Hulme and his Mum lived in Orchard Street. His father came from Liberia. He had been in the Merchant Navy. He was in the Royal Navy too but all that ended just before he met me. He had a good record, never a bad one – every record was good. Our son David has his record book. He told me, when the cook was ill, they asked him to do the cooking. Mind you what he was like I don't know, though he wasn't a bad cook really.

I remember one day when I came home from work, he said 'take your coat off love, just go and wash your hands and sit down, I have got your tea ready for you'. (she laughs). I said, 'What is it?' 'rice' he said. I was thinking rice pudding because I had never heard about curry, *(Laughing)*. What he had cooked was pilchards with rice; well I was nearly sick. *(Laughing)*. From there on we had that sometimes on a Sunday, I don't know why!! But a few months after, he started doing it with oxtail, the curry, and I started to like it and I have liked it ever since!!

My granddaughter says, 'courting is old fashioned' I say, 'well that is what we used to call it in those days'. We were courting for almost two years before we got married.

I loved dancing. I still do. Eric didn't dance, he could jive but that was about all.

My friend Margaret and I used to go dancing at the Blackley Palais at Harpurhey. The shop opposite was what we called a Temperance Bar , they sold hot Vimto , and dandelion and burdock, no beer. When Margaret first saw Eric, she wasn't very happy. I hadn't told her that Eric was Mixed Race. He offered to buy her a Vimto and she said, 'No thank you' *(delivered with venom)*, then wouldn't speak to us but that was the only time that anyone said anything.

We went regularly to The Empire on Factory Lane, opposite Moston Lane. You had to climb a flight of stairs to the pay desk at the top. They got that used to us going that they saved a double seat in the corner for us. *(laughter)* One day I was going up the stairs and I tripped, someone shouted down 'That is the sign of a wedding' I just started laughing. Eric said, 'you marry me now or you don't marry me at all!!' We were in a public house near what used to be the old bus station, I can't think of the name of it. When got married, we went to a big Café on Oxford Road, near the Museum somewhere it was, that I can remember.

We went to live in Cheetham Hill. He managed to get a big room on Wellington Street East next door to a Children's Home. Then we moved in with his Mum in Orchard Street off Greenheys Lane and then I became pregnant with Eric.

We were going up Princess Road one day when I met Barbara who had started work the same day at the

Biscuit Works. She had married a week before me and I hadn't seen her up to then. She and I became best friends.

Our son Eric was born on the 10th December. At the time I thought 'if he goes any longer, he will be born on my wedding anniversary'. *(Laughter)*. And just like on my wedding day it snowed when Eric was born. I remember the snow was that deep I couldn't go out with the pram. It seemed as if the cold weather was following me around. Back when Eric was still going to sea, sometimes when a voyage had finished, they used to go to a (white) mate's house. The lad's mother had twenty children and when our Eric was born, she said 'bring your wife up sometime and her little one'. I said, 'Oh she has got enough of her own- without having more'. 'The more the merrier, bring them'.

Eric Jnr: My father had a lot of friends and he was well respected.

I was about four when he first started to teach me how to fight though I never understood at that age why. Obviously, he knew how to fight, and he must have experienced some racism– to what level, I don't know. I only witnessed it once at the Baker's club on Great Western Street. He had taken me in there to play snooker with him. A tall, broad, maybe six-foot Irishman sort of brushed past him let's say, knocking Dad aside as he asked the barman for a beer. Dad turned around and said, 'excuse me but you have just knocked my beer all over me.' The man turned around and made a racial comment. When Dad didn't get the apology he wanted, he just locked his arms round him, carried him through the doors to outside and punched him!! Chris Tottoh[1] used to take me to school, at Webster Street Primary[2], on his back. It was a happy school and the kids represented many different nationalities and cultures. Obviously at Webster Street I didn't experience any racism.

But when I got to Old Moat Secondary that is when I experienced racial prejudice from both sides, not just one. I would get called the 'N' word and 'a white honky' . But I had an advantage because I had been taught how to fight and knew how to box properly. This taught me to suss peoples' personalities out very, very, quickly. Then my motto became 'I will beat you academically, I will beat you at sport and if you put me in a corner, I would have no option but to come out fighting'.

Mildred: Eric and I were stood in a little pub one day and it was absolutely packed, and he had to squeeze past me and this chap pinched me. I called out 'Oh' and then he set off laughing because he had had a few drinks, this fellow. And Eric just – Well, I thought he was going to punch him he was very jealous.

Eric Jnr: He used to take me and my brother Dave out on a Sunday to different pubs. I was about six, seven. My Dad was a Navy man wasn't he and a lot of them liked a drink in those days. We would sit outside with a lemonade and crisps. His mates as they passed in and out would give us money, but it was different in those days. My Dad could walk into any pub coz he used to play darts and he used to play all over the place.

Mildred: Lily and Kenny Williams's Dad used to go and have a drink with Eric and they used to call him 'Dolly'.

I will tell you a story now. When we lived in Rosebery Street[3] there were a lot of prostitutes around that area (sniggering from the son), now shut up, don't be laughing. Eric had a friend Bob, a white man

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1 SuAndi's cousin

2 Webster Street was known as "The League of Nations" due to the diversity of nationalities on the school roll

3 Moss Side

that lived across the road who was very, very quiet, or so I thought. They had been out to the Legion[4] for a drink and were saying goodnight by the front door. I was in the front bed room when I heard a commotion. A car had drawn up and I heard this voice say, 'Hey what is going on here?' Eric went to the car – and I don't know whether I should say the word he said, 'Piss off' (she laughs). 'Don't come picking up outside my door, now go on'. Next thing Bob comes back across asking what was going on. Evidently it was plain clothes police and with Bob interfering, they went and arrested them both.

They were locked up in the cells overnight. When I looked at him, I asked, 'Where are the buttons off your shirt?'. He told me that when they had grabbed him, they pulled every button off his shirt. I was upset about it especially when he had to go court. When the British Legion found out what had happened, they drew up a petition and they fought the case for them because Eric helped there a lot and he and Bob were very popular.

Eric Jnr: They took him to court, but it got thrown out because the two CID guys were obviously looking for a stooge (it was on TV). When it came out that they had been lying and the account that my father gave was the correct account it got thrown out of court.

Mildred: I had an operation on a tumour in my throat in 1999.

James (Grandson): It was sixteen, seventeen years ago, so Grandma would have been 74 probably, 75.

Eric Jnr: I had to have Dad committed; he had become a danger to himself. A doctor came to confirm if he was suffering with Dementia. You know how they switch back to childhood then forward to an adult again. The doctor is quizzing him, and he seemed as sound as a pound, as if (clap) he just switched just like that, back to normal. But the Doctor knew he was playing games.

Mildred: They took him to Wythenshawe hospital where he seemed quite happy and settled because he was wearing his own clothes and things. They kept him in there for about six months or more then something was wrong with him, so they sent him to Withington Hospital, the old Withington it was then.

They sent me in a taxi. I got there not long after him and I could hear him screaming. He was at the dormitory door as I came in 'Mildred, Mildred, take me out of this place' – he said, 'it's a madhouse'. He was in a right mess screaming and banging on the door to be let out. I said, 'I want to see the matron'. The curtains were hanging down, there was an old sewing machine in the corner and all the staff were gathered round talking to one another instead of looking after the patients. They ignored me at first and went on talking then a doctor came to see what this commotion was about. I told him that Eric had only been there a few minutes but not a soul has been near him and he had messed himself and they had just left him. Nobody had bothered, nobody was talking to him.

About three days later the machine had been moved into a spare room and it was one nurse to one patient, just as the doctor had instructed the Matron.

One Sunday just before Christmas and they asked me if I wanted to stop for my tea. I noticed that Eric had hardly ate anything and they just took away his food before he had started eating properly – so I complained about that. Next thing, he needed the toilet, so I asked for someone to take him. There were three of them, two white men and an Indian man with a turban. They hadn't been in the toilet long when Eric started screaming. It sounded as though they were murdering him, and it went on for quite a while; they had only been bashing him.

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4 The British Legion was on junction of Upper Lloyd Street and Moss Lane East Moss Side

Eric Jnr: Obviously when you have got dementia you go from one thing to another; be quite childish or aggressive. My Dad might only have been 5ft 4, but he was still quite capable of handling himself, even with dementia. He had been a little bit obstreperous in the toilet, so they had grabbed him by the testicles.

I can remember walking in one day and he was stood at the side of the door. I could hear him through the door saying to the nurse, 'You are in trouble now my son is here'. At first, he wouldn't tell me. When he did, I took this nurse to one side and had a quiet word with him, I said 'if I ever find out you are doing that again, you are going to be in mega trouble'!!

Mildred: One of the patients used to think I was his wife. Frank was a very nice quiet man. He would put his arms on my shoulder and his cheek near me and said 'Ta ra darling'. I was always frightened of opening the door in case he got out. There was a woman who had got a Black eye and they were blaming Frank for it. I knew it was never Frank because he is too kind. Later they found out that it was the staff who were beating the patients. It was all reported in the newspaper. One of the men who had been mistreating Eric said and this is the truth, I can remember it as plain as anything. He said, 'I might be the son of a bitch to my mother' he said, 'but these men, I have never heard anything like it in my life'. That was printed in the paper. I kept it until not long ago and I don't know why I got rid of it. Later, he had an operation. He was being fed through a tube into his stomach. It was our wedding anniversary and on the big mirror, they had put 'congratulations'. I took a cake in about as big as that table for the patients and not thinking, I took a load of drink *(laughter)*. Not thinking that they would be on medication. So, the staff had a good 'do'. The staff said they would give him a little piece of cake and he said, 'is that all I get?' I used to take in salmon sandwiches and he asked 'where are my salmon sandwiches'. I said 'you can't have sandwiches – you can have a little piece of cake and then you have got to have liquids. 'Who said so?' 'The doctor' I said. Well, then he started swearing which he hardly ever did in front of me – 'f***ing, f***ing salmon sandwiches – he is not going hungry, I am'!
He died in Wythenshawe. I didn't put it in the paper, but some of his friends found out and came. I was that upset. I didn't have a reception, they came here because we have been here since 1992 since these flats were built.

My friend Barbara came; Barbara loved him, Irene loved him, everybody loved him.

When my Mum lived up in Harpurhey, I was going up to see her one day with both my sons – I think Eric would have been about seven – I can't remember now. We were sat on the long seats when this lady said, 'Excuse me don't think I am being rude, but did you ever live up Harpurhey and go to the picture house'. I said 'Yes'. 'Oh, my god' she put her arms around me, 'I remember you, we often wondered did you get married'. I said 'well here are the two results' *(laughter)*. 'Wait till I tell my friend' she said. It was the lady from the box office who said when I tripped 'that is the sign of a wedding'.

I loved him – we had our arguments but we lasted fifty years.

FAMILY
Erica Mayer Senior February 1924 - May 2002
Eric Junior Mayer
David Mayer

MADGE ABBEY (Mrs Marjorie Adama)
January 1934
with daughter MARIA

I came to Manchester with my friend, I can't remember the year, for work. There was no work in Barrow in Furness where I was born in 1934. My Dad worked in the Ship Yard and my Mum was a cleaner there. I was about eighteen leaving behind my two brothers. My sister lived in Stretford Manchester, she was married to an Irish man. We both moved in with her and got a job in Trafford Park at the Carborundum.

I didn't go out a lot, but my friend was a bit more adventurous so one weekend when we were fed up, she said, 'Oh Let's go down Moss Side' and off we went!

We went to the Big Alex , had a few ciders then we said 'Let's go in one of the clubs', so we went in the Reno . It was good, yeah, really good. You had to go down some stairs, and of course it was all Black people. I had never met any Black people before then. We just went in, got a drink and started dancing and that was it really. Lots of the men kept coming up to us and asking us to dance, asking to take us home and all that. We were the only two white girls there at the time. But we never went home with anybody. Possibly because we had to get back to Stretford, to my sister's.

When we told my sister she wasn't very happy, she wasn't very happy at all, but she was the type who didn't say a lot, but I could tell she wasn't very happy. It didn't stop us though, we had enjoyed ourselves, got a buzz out of it, so we went back the next week *(laughter)*.

I was in the Reno when they filmed it for the TV. Me and my friend went in and they told us they were filming. A friend of mine asked me to dance. We were jiving and the next minute we found out that

we were on the television. *(laughter)*

Me and my friend were sat there on another night, and the lad that was at the door said 'Oh, look who is coming in, it's the Inkspots.'

Willy Acquah worked on the door then. He has died now. Mary my friend married him, and they had three girls Maxine, Theresa, Vanessa (she is married to somebody out of the Happy Mondays), and Ian. It's not long ago that Mary died , of course I went to her funeral. It was quite a long time, maybe a few months before I let anyone take me home. He was called Adama Abbey Everybody knew Adama and he ended up being my husband.

He was a fire eater and did shows in the Reno, and of course I was fascinated. When I first saw him, I thought it was so exciting. He was all dressed up and had feathers on his costume; eating fire. After the show, he came over and spoke to me offering to buy me a drink. I thought 'Oh I like this', *(laughter)* but I never went out with him for a while!!

I can't remember his age; my memory is terrible. I would say we were around about the same age. But my daughter Maria says her dad was a year younger. He would take me for a drink at the Alex, to his friends sometimes, just regular social things that couples do. We used to go to Hulme, we never went to the City Centre or anywhere like that. There were no reactions when we were out together. I think that may have been because we stayed in the area. My sister and brother in law didn't meet him for a long time. But when they did meet him, well, he was a charmer and could charm anybody. So, my sister liked him.

I was pregnant with Maria in 1958 when we married at the Manchester Registrar on Deansgate. I told my parents 'I am coming home with my husband'. Mum said, 'What I want to see when you come home is your marriage license'. So, I had to show her our marriage license. My Dad was the type of man who just sailed along, but my Mum didn't like the idea. She wasn't happy, but she supported me. But as time went on it didn't get better so after a while, she just didn't like it at all.

He already had a house in Bedwell Street. I didn't work because eventually I had three children. My husband was a gambler who spent his nights in the Shebeens on Denmark Road. I'd be sat in the house waiting for him to come home with some money. Often if by three o'clock in the morning he wasn't back, I would go out because I knew where he would be playing cards.

I remember I went in one night and he had a handful of cards and when he saw my face he just started laughing and said, 'Thank god you have come, I was losing'! And he left with me.
He performed under the name of Prince Bosambo. (I'm not sure if the spelling is right). He used to have shows in Belle Vue and he used to do the side shows .

He went abroad a lot to Finland, Germany, all over Sweden. When he went abroad, he earned quite a lot of money that he was supposed to send to me every week, but he never sent a penny. My sister was good, she used to help me a lot. My parents didn't know half of it, I never told them.

He won the pools once, we were still living in Bedwell Street then. I wouldn't say it was a great deal of money, but he brought me a couple of fur coats and gave his friends money. It didn't last long, the next minute he took my fur coats and sold them. He was from Ghana he liked semolina Fufu and Garri; he was quite a good cook. He wanted to take me to Africa to Ghana, but it was all talk. I knew that I would never get there because he never had any money. Life really was terrible. He was a gambler, when he had no money, he used to beat me. I don't like going back and remembering.

I left him because he was going to get the house taken off him, because he hadn't paid the mortgage. We could have had a lovely home. If I knew then what I know now I could have probably got that house and sold it and got a better one, but I didn't really know anything. I was more interested in my kids, in feeding them!

I went to live in rooms in Acker Street just me and the children. The landlady was Mrs Acquah, she was a nice Black lady. I think she was alright with me because she knew I couldn't go to work because I had three children that I looked after. I just wanted rooms and a bit of peace, kind of thing. I always looked after my kids – I never went out drinking or anything. I just looked after my kids, and when I could go out to work, I did a couple of hours of cleaning to get a bit of extra money. I always found that people respected me.

My children were my life definitely. They were good kids, Yeah *(laughter)*. Anthony wasn't he was a ... little boy, he was alright really, he was just boisterous.

My parents knew I had left the kids' father. I think my mother was relieved, but I never let them know too much. It was always my sister who helped me out. She used to have the kids a lot for me.
In 1969 my life changed for ever. My son died and my heart broke and I got divorced. After the divorce everything changed for the better. I got a job, I was working, the kids were growing up, and I could see where I was going. Whereas before, I had no money, sometimes we didn't have food to eat, all due to my husband's gambling.

We had moved to Wythenshawe by then. I got a house, well a council flat. Maria, I think, was about seven. Maria was at Woodhouse Park primary school. She used to frequently faint in assembly because she couldn't stand being in crowds. The head mistress sent for me and said, 'You will have to take her home because she has fainted in assembly'. Then she said, 'But it's only natural because she has just come from Africa, hasn't she?' So, I said 'No'. So, she said 'Err if not from Africa, then from a hot country' so I said 'No'. 'Isn't she adopted?' she asked. I said 'No! She is mine'. 'Oh, I thought you had adopted her' and that was the head mistress! How ignorant are these people? I've always remembered that.

Me and my friend Kath, Michael Acker's Mum, used to go to Denmark Road Market. Maria was just a baby in her pram. Next minute, these Black women came up to us, they looked more African than Caribbean because they were very dark. They said 'You have been taking our men off us', we thought they wanted to hit us because they could see Maria was Mixed Race. We said, 'why don't you leave us alone'. Of course, I went home, and I told her Dad, and he said, 'where are they, where are they?' He got his coat on and he went out. Of course, we couldn't even remember who they were.

> *SuAndi: Trying not to lead the conversation I ask Maria if there were there any negative comments in school about her racial identity.*

No not at all, no, because we had lived in Wythenshawe for a while. Though there were only three or four Mixed Race children in my school, nothing bad was said about us or anything like that, no nothing. I was quite fortunate actually – no racism as far as I was concerned.

Maria: I am partly African and English. Mixed Race, aren't I? But even though I have never been to Africa I always say I am African.

I love being around Black people, it's weird isn't it? I love the music.

When I was younger, I was close to my Dad, but then when he went back to Africa obviously I couldn't go over there. Anyway, I never wanted to go really. I used to work at the Harp Brewery in Moss Side, and my dad would come back to England on vacation. He used to always surprise me by coming to the brewery to see me and that was nice.

Dad died about ten years ago, but I still feel the connection. I have got loads of sisters and brothers in Ghana that I have never met *(laughter)*. About fourteen!

My step brother told me; he lives here. My Dad sent him over with a relative when he was four. In summer clothing - in winter, so I clothed him. He is forty now

> *SuAndi: I return to Madge to ask when she became a free woman did she resume a social life because she mentioned somebody who used to give her the eye!!!!*

Maria: Yeah, after a while, yeah. yeah. I never really went out with him. He used to follow me about, come to the house but he was more of a friend - nothing more than that.

I didn't get married again but for about twenty years I went out with Ozzy Dylan. He was very good to me and very good to my kids. He used to take me all over. He always wanted to take me to Jamaica, but I wouldn't go at first, and Maria said, 'oh go' and I went for a month to Jamaica. So, though I never married I did find love. It's nice to honour him here now that he has passed

> *SuAndi: Once or twice while talking Madge has become tearful so Maria closes the interview*

Maria: My Mum has done a lot for me, looked after me and that, clothed me, always helped me with guidance; yeah, she has always been there for me. When I need anybody, my Mum is there, she is like my best friend as well.

FAMILY
Maria Manuna Adama
Adamah Emmanuel Adama
Anthony Arunah Adama

AVIS BLAKELEY (Mrs Turner)
June 1957

I was born in Crumpsall Hospital in North Manchester in 1957 and grew up in Bradford. Not Bradford Yorkshire, there is a Bradford in Manchester, near the Gas Works actually, just down the road from where the Etihad Stadium[1] is now. That used to be the colliery when I was a kid. The only Black person that I knew was my cousin's friend's daughter. They lived next door. She was called Lorraine, but everyone called her Bubbles.

The whole family lived in the area in various corner shops. We lived in a Bakery on the corner of Rylands Street, my Grandma had the corner shop on Nelson Street, and we had another one on Hinchcliffe Street. My Dad was only thirteen and my Mum nineteen when they first met. Mum walked alongside the canal to work at the Co-Op pharmaceuticals or something down in Droylsden. My Dad would follow her wolf whistling. She used to call him a 'cheeky young upstart' and ignore him. Of course, it would be dark as she walked back, so he would break the street lights on the canal so she would let him ride alongside using his bicycle headlight to guide her along. Eventually they must have started to chat but then he went off to war when he eighteen. Three years later when he was twenty-one I think and Mum twenty-six, they finally married. I am the middle child; my brother is eight years older and my sister seven years younger than me.

Slum clearance started in the sixties. Inner city living was two up two down[2]. When I was a kid nobody shut their front doors, you just went in to everybody's houses. Everybody sat outside on chairs.

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1 The home ground of Manchester City Football Club

2 A small house with two main rooms on the ground floor and two bedrooms upstairs. Often it is part of a terrace. Widely built in British industrial towns following the Industrial Revolution.

Everybody knew everybody else and you played in the street.

Woodley was like going to live in another world. It was a little place called Greave - very rural. We were on top of the hill and when you opened the bedroom curtains, all we could see was hills and cows. I was in my element – at the bottom of our road was a wood. I didn't realise how much I loved being in the countryside, until we moved from Bradford.

We kids used to go on the moors with our Dad wimberry[3] picking. We had a lot of freedom until the Moors Murders[4] then you weren't allowed to move from the front of the window, where you could be seen. If you went out of sight for ten minutes, your name was screamed down the street and you got in to trouble for disappearing. We moved again when I was eleven, so I left Woodley County primary school and I loved it there. We moved up to Stockport, a town, it wasn't as countrified, but it wasn't inner city.

I had passed my eleven plus and was supposed to go to Marple Hall, Marple Bridge, but because we moved, I went to Goyt Bank and that was where I met my friend Jane on the first day and we have been mates ever since.

We had quite a big house which was fabulous. My Aunty, Mum's oldest sister lived with us, that is what they used to do in those days. She never married, she stayed at home with Grandma to bring the other children up. When my Grandma died, she came to live with us.

My Mum and Dad were very strict – although if you compare to some parents now, not as strict as them. I used to get my own way because I could talk my way out of most things. I would go and stay at Jane's house. Her Mum was divorced, so she would be off out. Then we would go off and as long as we got back before her Mum came home, nobody was any the wiser. The things that we got up to!
I became a naughty girl. I went anywhere – anywhere the music was, but my favourite place was Belle Vue[5]. The music was Reggae and awesome. We also went to Moss Side to a couple of the shebeens[6], I can't remember many of the names, but for the Nile[7]. There wasn't a door on the toilet just a curtain, no light, so somebody had to stand in front 'don't move because I am having a pee!' *(laughter)*. But we only went for the music. I used to go to the Warren in Stockport[8], the Poco-a-Poco and most of the pubs around Stockport.

I met Kevin at a club in Dukinfield. I was working at the hospital as a cadet nurse. Angela, who I worked with, said 'oh there is a good club opened in Dukinfield called Hiccups'. So, we went on the Friday or Saturday night and I met him there. We just got chatting. He was only seventeen, I was eighteen. But I didn't realise at the time, because you don't – you just assume you are all the same age!

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3 Commonly called "bilberry

4 Carried out by Ian Brady and Myra Hindley between July 1963 and October 1965, in and around Manchester, England. The victims were five children aged between 10 and 17

5 In May 1963 the Top Ten Club was opened in the Elizabethan Ballroom. • It hosted popular bands and had DJ's. The club was advertised as the largest teenage dance club in Britain and some people say as many as 2000 young people went on a Saturday night! • Young people listened to pop music played by bands like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the Kinks. For the first time, girls and boys danced on their own rather than in a couple.

6 Unlicensed establishment or private house selling alcohol and typically regarded as slightly disreputable.

7 The Reno and The Nile were two clubs within the same building, on the corner of Princess Road and Moss Lane.

8 It later opened in 1978 as Quaffers and over the next two decades would play host to some of the biggest stars in the music world including Shirley Bassey and the Drifters. The club closed in December 1998 and was bulldozed in 2004

He was very debonair, he could talk the talk, good laugh – really nice bloke, we got on really well. We just became an item after that – he always said it was because I had big boobs and a car *(laughter)*. I would drop him off and he would go and stand in the garden of this house on the corner. Something didn't ring true. Then one day as I drove off, I saw him coming back out. The next time I saw him, I asked 'why did you walk out after I dropped you off?' 'Are you lying?' because I can't stand lies, it really annoys me. When we were kids the one thing that you got seriously in trouble for, was telling lies. I don't tell lies, I just tell the truth; whether it gets me in trouble or not, it doesn't really matter.

He got really upset and said it was because I came from a really big house in Stockport and I had a car so he thought I was rich and that I wouldn't want to go out with him, if I knew where he really lived. I said 'Well that is ridiculous – you don't like a person just because what they have got. And, me and you are getting on ok'. Then he took me round to meet his Grandad and Mum and I found out he was the only Black person on the Ashton estate. We got married about six months or eight months later. I just told my parents I had met this guy and we wanted to get engaged. My Mum said, 'but I haven't even met him yet'. 'Well' I said, 'I will bring him home, but I am telling you now, it doesn't matter what you say, it won't make the slightest bit of difference'. 'Oh, and he has got a red triangle in his hair, so I know you won't like that anyway' *(laughter)*. Kevin was a trainee hairdresser; he had Afro hair with a red triangle in the front.

I brought him home and my Mum just sat there looking at him – she never even said hello! She could be like that my Mum; cut you dead if she didn't like something. That was it, there was no talking about it, no persuading her. Anyway, she didn't say anything, but my Dad made conversation and what have you. After I drove Kevin home and when I got back she went 'what is that bloody thing in his hair?' I said, 'it's a red triangle, what is up with you?' *(laughter)*.

SuAndi. The fact that he was a Black guy, did that mean anything?

It didn't bother me, but it did bother my Mum and my Dad. I don't think it was so much because he was Black, I think it was the problems that they thought were going to arise from having a mixed marriage. Plus, I was only eighteen and he was seventeen, I think they were also worried about that. We got married in Stockport at Heaton Moor Methodist Church and no, I wasn't pregnant! Nobody ever said anything... I think my Mum said to my friend Jane 'do you think she is doing the wrong thing?' and Jane said, 'well it is a bit late now isn't it and anyway she will do what she wants anyway, you know she will'. We lived with his Grandad on the Ashton council estate staying a couple of years while we saved up and bought a house on Manor Road in Droylsden, opposite the school. I will never forget it. We had not been there very long; we came home from work one day and I picked up this leaflet off the floor. It was a National Front leaflet with pictures of Black children on it and some rubbishy writing. They must have put that through our door on purpose; I just threw it in the bin. To me it didn't matter, I didn't care less. My Mum always said that Droylsden was funny. She had a house in Droylsden, and she didn't like it there so moved.

Kevin was a mobile hairdresser. He was one of the first to work outside of a salon in the 70s and the amount of money it brought in was absolutely ridiculous. We moved to the house in Droylsden. We were not there very long, less than two years. He was making that much money that we moved to a massive Victorian house on Taunton Road in Ashton, just around the corner from where his Granddad and his Mum lived on the Council Estate. Now Kevin had his big house. Then as we had more children and needed more room, we ended up in a big detached house in Glossop where he had always wanted to live.

In the beginning it was a really good marriage we worked together but then cracks started to appear.

I lost my first baby; that would be in 1977. It hit the pair of us, really badly. To be perfectly honest I think that was the start. We went downhill from there. We were very young – it was hard to cope, and it was when the drink came in...

We socially drank up to then, in the 70s that is what you did. You went to the pub, you went on a Sunday, on a Saturday. But once his business took off and the money started to come in, he seemed to spend more and more time in the pub. I don't know whether it was his way of dealing with losing our baby or what. In hindsight looking back, I think maybe he had some mental health problems, I don't know.

Kevin's father was from Jamaica, he came over as a student and was working in the Goods Yard at Guide Bridge when Kevin's Mum met him somewhere in Ashton. When she realised she was pregnant they wanted to get married, but her Mum and Dad just said 'no'. So, he left the area leaving her to bring up Kevin more or less on her own. Except that his Grandad became the father figure in his life.
His Mum did love the man who made him, but she wasn't allowed. Apparently she left home to marry him, but they found her and brought her back. The only thing we could get out of her was his name - nothing else. She said, 'I will only tell you the rest of it on my death bed'. Obviously, she has died now, I don't know whether she told him any more – I don't know. I remember we tried to find him, early on in the seventies, through the Salvation Army but the details we had were so limited that we couldn't get anywhere.

> *SuAndi. It doesn't make sense though does it, that they would rather have an illegitimate child in their home, than a child with a father?*

I could never understand it and the more you asked her, the more upset she got about it, so you could only get certain bits of information from her. His Mum loved him, and his Grandad did. The whole family adored him, he probably got away with a lot more than he should have. They just didn't adore his father, the man he looked like which was the sad part about it. His Mum always said that she loved his Dad. It was in the fifties and they wouldn't let them marry so they split them up and she never got over that, she never ever got over that.

His Mum later had Kevin's sister and then married just before we got married actually, when Kevin was about seventeen, to Brian a white guy, who was lovely. Kevin didn't really take to him much. But I said, 'you can't expect your Mum to be on her own for the rest of her life, we have got each other now, she has got nobody, you can't just expect her to sit there'. Together, they had a son; of course, he was white as was Kevin's sister. Still his Mam always said if she could turn the clock back, she should have just gone off and married Kevin's dad and not let her parents force her back.

Our Sharl was born in 78 and then I lost another baby between her and Lucy who was born in 80. Kevin was born in 82 and Rio was born in 83. They were all together. *(Laughter)*. We didn't get a lot of hate or people saying nasty things to us. Probably because we moved back to Ashton where Kevin had grown up, so where we lived were people he had been to school with and grown up with. He wasn't a stranger and so therefore we didn't get – or I didn't see that we got a lot of racist stuff; we just carried on with our lives, normally.

Because he was the only Black person on the estate, he didn't have any Black friends. The only people that I think he knew that were Black, were maybe the people whose hair he did and got to know them that way, or friends of friends. There was a lad who lived in Hattersley that he used to knock about with when we used to go to Hiccups, I can't remember his name. And there were a couple of Black lads

in Ashton that lived on Hurst[9], on the other side. The names will come to me – I am so bad now, but one of them died when he was about thirteen. There was an older lad and if we went out in Ashton and he was there, then we would meet up and have a chat, but they were really were the only Black people that he really knew.

I remember before I met Kevin, going out in Manchester with another Black friend of mine and we tried to get in to Annabel's and we got turned away at the door. We went in a couple of places and even though we were not asked to leave, we didn't get asked to stay or made to feel welcome or anything like that. I used to say, 'oh sod them – you are not having our money, I don't want to give you our money, if we are not good enough to come here, you are not good enough to have our money then.' We would just walk out and find somewhere where we were not made to feel uncomfortable. So, I was used to racism. I experienced it sort of secondary, but I just wouldn't let it affect my life. It was a changing world in the seventies, a very changing world. I found it harder as a woman, than I did as a woman married to a Black person.

Even though it was the 70's there was still an attitude from the 50's that expected the wife to stay at home and do as she was told; you do this, and you did that...what? No, not in my book, that didn't work on me.

Yeah, he tried to be a bossy husband. His Grandad was in his late 70s, so him and his ways was the only example he had. His Grandad would say 'well you shouldn't let her do that', so, Kevin would come home saying 'you can't do that' and I would go 'who says I bloody can't do that?' 'Don't start telling me... My Mum tried that, and my Dad tried that, and that didn't work, so it ain't going to work with you telling me!!' *(laughter)*. So yeah, things like that, that was when he tried being bossy with me that is when the core of Avis came out and it was 'no that ain't happening'.

When he first started his business, I worked with him. He couldn't drive, so I drove him, and my Mum would mind Sharl. When I got pregnant with Lucy, he had to learn to drive, then he could take himself. Of course, I had to stay at home with the little ones. I think that peeved him a bit, because all he kept saying was 'well you are home with the kids not doing anything'.

There was a bit of animosity I think he thought he was doing all the work and I wasn't actually doing anything. I don't know where that came from! He became very selfish with money. He would give me housekeeping but then would complain if there wasn't enough to last the week, but then he wasn't giving me enough. So, yes, it was very strange. Don't forget Kevin had a lot of money, but Kevin never shared it with me and the kids. So, although we lived in a big house, me and the kids were living poor, because he never shared anything with us.

He was becoming paranoid. Very paranoid about different things. Previous relationships that I had, before I had even met him. I was a bit of a wild child, but they were previous relationships. It was like 'where do you know him from?' or 'where do you know her from?' or 'what do you mean?', or 'who have you been talking to?' and all that sort of stuff. With the kids he was full of fun, he had good times with the kids, but it was me that was the parent. It was me that did everything. I basically looked after the kids.

Oh my God when did I realise that he was drinking? Quite early on really. It would start with he would go for a couple of pints after work and come home. But then it would be that he wasn't coming home. It would be eleven o'clock at night, twelve o'clock at night or even the next day or sometimes, two days. He would just turn up and if I challenged him about it, then all hell would break loose and we would

9 *Hurst Cross in Ashton-Under-Lyne*

just end up fighting and screaming at each other.

Yeah it got physical, but then I would give back as good as I got. I am not saying I was the angel in this just like I am not saying that he was the bad guy, because it was probably six of one and half a dozen of the other, I don't know. Me, not being a very yielding person, if I can't see that I have done anything wrong, then I am not going to admit that I have done something. My argument was I was staying home with the kids, but it just spiralled, and it went ridiculous.

I knew that we weren't going to last from the way he was. By that time, I had got a job. I know it sounds awful, but I had a plan by then. It had got to such a paranoid stage where if I went out to the shop I was timed and if I was taking too long, I would be up shit street without a paddle when I got back. I have left shopping in trollies at the supermarket and run home, knowing that because I had been out longer than I said I would, I would be in for it when I got back. But he probably wouldn't do it then, he would wait until later on in the night, so it would be – you know the gas lighting[10] – I was gas lighted. I was double and triple gas lighted and I didn't even know I was being gas lighted.

Some of the beatings were really bad. I have spent nights sat in the car in my nightie because he has thrown me out in the middle of the night – and luckily the car was open because I got to not locking the car, so at least I would have some where to sit in. I would have to wait and shout through the letterbox to get one of the kids to come down and let me in. You know, it was getting to the point that it was getting more and more regular and I knew as the violence was erupting even more that one of us was going to end up dead and I had no intentions of it being me!

He said there wasn't other women, but I never believed him, you know when you just... Well, he was a hairdresser wasn't he? He was handsome, he really was so handsome and had such a charm. He was the most charismatic person you could ever meet, so charming, so lovely even now after all these years. If you met him right now you would say he has got lots of people skills.

Maybe he learned to be charming when he was hairdressing, because you have to be sociable when you are doing somebody's hair. But I think he probably learnt that through school as the only Black kid you can't fight the whole school, so instead he was the clown. As soon as the booze took hold he turned into a completely different person. He did have a lot of paranoia - things going on in his head that we tried to talk about, but on some things the shutters would go down.

Possibly, he told me the truth and there weren't any affairs. I just know I had never been unfaithful and that was all that mattered. I couldn't tell whether he was lying or not at some points, and I said, 'well why are you not coming home then?' It got to the point where it was getting ridiculous and there were more fights than good times so, I just called it a day. As for his position as their father during this time I don't know, I don't know to be honest with you, because at that point he didn't have one, because he was drunk. He would just come home shouting his mouth off and demanding things. That is how he saw himself as the man of the house 'I earn the money, so you will all jump'.

You had to be very careful of what you said or what you did around him, otherwise a happy place would suddenly turn in to something... It affected the kids quite badly to be perfectly honest. We had lots of crying, lots of tantrums, lots of screaming.

He didn't bother if the kids saw his violence towards me. But towards them he was not violent, no I wouldn't say 'violent' violent. He used to smack them if they were naughty. I dismiss that, do you know what I mean. He did show them love, no he did, he did show them love, but he could turn on a

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10 Manipulate (someone) by psychological means into doubting their own sanity.

sixpence because of the drink.

I am not even thirty years old; Rio was 5, Kevin 6, Lucy 8 and Sharl 10. I have got four kids crying. It was getting to the point where we couldn't live like that any longer, it was awful, it was a horrible... The eldest was jumping in to stop the fights, which has affected her really badly. She is forty now and still certain things will affect her. She is only really coming to terms with most of it... sorry, I have gone off on a thingy, I don't know where I am up to.

I tried, because me and him didn't get on, but I knew that he loved his kids and I didn't want him not to see them. We hated each other by this point, but they were his children and he loved them, so, I tried to make arrangements. But it was awful, absolutely awful – it was a nightmare.

I'd say 'we will do fifty, fifty – you know you do four days and I do four days' but that didn't work out, he didn't want that. So, we went to 'Relate'[11] and we did this thing where he would pick them up and take them to running club, but he never turned up the first time he was supposed to pick them up – he never turned up to get them.

He just never kept to anything that I tried to organise for him. In the end the kids said, 'Mum do we have to go and see him'? I said, 'well he is your Dad' 'but every time we go, he just doesn't come, or he causes chaos'.

During the earlier days I left the children, I left our home and went to live at my sister's which was only about four or five streets away. After a couple of days, they rang and said, 'me Dad's not come home'. This was like at ten o'clock at night. I said, 'well have you had your tea?'. 'Yes, Sharl has made our tea'. Sharl was ten or eleven by this time. I said 'Right, let me know what time he comes home'. Later Lucy rang me and said, 'he is home now'. 'Is he drunk?', 'Yes he is drunk'. 'Right, well just go to bed and stay out of his way then'. But then he did it again the next day and she said, 'he has not come home' so I said 'right,' and I got in the car and I took them back to my sister's. They had the bedroom and I slept on the sofa. I don't know when he went home but it was two weeks before he phoned me to find out where the kids were. I said 'oh, it's taken you two weeks to see where the kids were'. 'Well I knew where they were, they were with you'. I said (just to see if I could get any reaction, which I didn't), 'but they weren't'!

By this time, everything had gone…. They would go to their Dad say every weekend, but he was always paralytic drunk. It wasn't long before the girls refused to go. 'We are not going any more Mum, there is no point, when we go, he is just drunk, and we are just sitting there, and he is just being horrible'. So, the girls stopped going, but the lads carried on, because they were only young still about six and eight. One day, I got a call from Kevin (Edward), 'Can we come home Mum?' 'Why darling?' He said 'my Dad is drunk. I've took 10p, when his money fell out of his pocket to ring you, because we don't want to stay here anymore'.

As my Dad lived nearer than I did I said 'I will ring your Grandad and he will come and get you. He will get there before me. I will pick you up from his house. OK?'

When my marriage started to break down my parents were very supportive. Mum bit her tongue and never said 'I told you so'. It never got said but I knew she thought it. I think the only reason I stayed with him so long is because I knew my Mother would say 'I told you so'. He had his own little house by then and I found out that he had two girls on the go. One of them was a really nice girl who looked after the kids when I dropped them off. Sharl told me that this girl was lovely, she used to make their

11 *A charity providing relationship support*

tea. 'He treats her horrible Mum.' 'Well that is none of our business love, you know – we can't interfere in that way'.

Apparently, he also had some rich woman. So, my son Kevin (Edward) dead innocent, bless him *(laughing)* said, when Julie the nice girl was there, 'why are you being horrible to Julie, does Julie know that Diane is coming later?' He launched our Kevin (Edward), punched him, because obviously he had let the cat out of the bag. I didn't find until later what he had done. The boys just said, 'We don't want to go anymore Mum'.

When we went to Court, I told the solicitor 'I don't want any money off him, I can look after myself, but they are his children therefore he needs to pay something towards the upkeep of his children. We were awarded £2.50 per child per week, when the dinner money was £7.50 for the week for one child. I think my Dad used to give a quid. I got three or four payments I think off him.

The lads said they only went to get the money and the girls said 'We are really sorry Mum we can't go anymore' – they hated it. I got three or four payments I think then he stopped paying. I think he stopped paying for Lucy when she was fourteen or something, I said, 'it doesn't matter we will do without his money after all what is a tenner[12]?' The children never went again they refused to see him. He insisted that the house was sold. The Judge told him, 'Well you won't get the money, because you need to provide a home for your children to live in to the standard they are used to living in. 'I don't care' he said. By this time, I had moved out and had my own house because he wouldn't move out the house. Then he moved out and I ended up with two bloody houses. I was 'how the hell do I juggle this?' but I did. I don't know how the hell I managed it, but I did.

I put my house up for sale and the housing market goes in to a massive recession doesn't it? With the divorce settlement I got the family house, but it took two or three years to sell; I nearly lost it, because I couldn't afford it and we lost a load of money. But on the day the buyers were moving in, he refused to sign. They were coming from Wales; all their stuff was in a van and we were exchanging and completing on the same day. I had been up all night, moving the furniture and cleaning, because it was a massive house. Then I got the phone call from the Solicitor saying, 'He won't sign it. He wants £1,500'! I went 'for crying out loud'.

What it was, on the sale of the house he was supposed to get so much but the Judge said 'no' all the money was supposed to come to me. Plus, he also owed about two grand in back maintenance for the kids – but he wouldn't sign it, without getting this money. So, I just said 'Just give it him, just give him the money'. 'He is not stealing it from me, he is taking it from his children, but just leave him to it, just give it to him – if that is all he wants'. So, he got the money, and that was it and since then I have never spoken to him, I refuse to speak to him. I did love the guy, we could have taken over the world, you know? We had an amazing relationship and it just went to pot and as to why I just couldn't understand. That hurt me and it has taken me a long time to get over him, you know.

I finally managed to get rid of him then. Up until that time he kept turning up in different places. We moved to the other side of Manchester, we moved to Partington so that he wouldn't find us. Then one day the kids came running 'we have just seen our Dad'. 'What do you mean?'. 'No honestly Mum, we were coming down that road and my Dad went past in a car, so we hid behind the fence'. They didn't want him to know where we lived. 'We don't want him here Mum messing it up'. After that I told him never to come to my house again, he never turned up at the house - he knew better.

There were more Black people when we lived in Partington. Yeah, there was a few more – a mate of

12 *A ten-pound note.*

mine, Steds, and all his family lived there for donkeys' years. Even so Kevin (Edward) got some stick at school mainly because he was so good at everything he did.

One time he was trying to do something when they ganged up on him. He completely lost it and broke this kid's nose. They sent for me and two of the teachers were sat on him. Literally, he was on this teacher's knee in the headmaster's office. She was holding him because he wanted to go and kill this child who had upset him. That is really the only main incident that I can think of. He had spent hours making this model then taken it into school and the kid that broke it had been spitting at him for days, so he retaliated.

I know when we lived in Glossop, they didn't like us because we had this massive big house. I lived there for ten years and I must have spoken to only one person – they didn't want anything to do with us. I think the kids got more animosity there in the posh area than they did when we lived in blooming Ashton. But I don't give a shit, I am not arsed. I choose my own friends; I don't need people to say whether they like me or not and you can tell I have gone through life like that.

There were a couple of incidents at school that came I think from jealousy more than anything, then fuelled into other things. With my children it was, if you wanted to do something, you did it. We weren't just sitting in the house being vegetables watching telly or feeding rubbish. We would go off and do different things. It didn't matter what other people said or thought. My kids were raring to go at things; they did the Duke of Edinburgh, they went to dance group, they went off on their bikes. Nothing would stop us, and if we turned up and it was a load of white kids, then it was a load of white kids. But because they were good at what they did there would be jealousy from the other kids. I don't think it has had any effect on them to be perfectly honest with you.

Because Kevin was brought up in a council house in the middle of Ashton with a white family, he didn't bring any cultural awareness with him. There was nothing there that he could crib on to and relate to, but that was the times that we lived in, you know but we used to try different things. We didn't do 'the food' when the kids were little. I am a rubbish cook, you ask any of my kids, a rubbish cook! It is a wonder that any of them got to the age that they did – my speciality was blooming corned beef hash – that is about the most exotic… and egg and chips. I am still no good now. When Kevin (Edward) went to University, he met his friend Yasmin. She was a student living in the same house and she taught him how to cook a lot of things. So, Kevin (Edward) is a very good cook and all the children are good cooks. Sharl, she cooks a lot of Caribbean food because her ex-partner was Jamaican Chinese.

Lucy and Sharl had a friend from Broadoak. She was called Charmaine and was African adopted by a white family. She didn't know she was adopted as a small baby; she didn't have any clue. She lived at our house most of the time and definitely was part of our life. Everybody was learning.

We did explore different things. Like with the music, we always had the music playing. We would explore things and if some things came up in conversation, we always chatted about stuff. Kevin (Edward) has a very inquisitive mind, so he would ask things about all sorts, and if we didn't know, we would look it up and chat amongst ourselves about it.

> *SuAndi: When my brother died, I found all these notebooks which I hope I have still got somewhere. Every page is covered in writing. I opened one, one night and it said, 'As much as Mother loved me, this white woman could not give me as a Black man all that I needed', so my question is, could you for your children? Are your children just Black kids, are they just Mixed-Race, are they kids of Jamaican heritage, how do they…?*

I don't know how they see themselves, to be honest with you. We don't put labels on anything in our house. I tried to bring them up to be well adjusted people who look at everything and take from the world the bits that they need and to throw away the bits that are rubbish.

Do you know when my children were little, that is when you first had to fill in those forms and put your ethnicity. I wouldn't fill them in. I wouldn't fill it in and do you know why I wouldn't fill it in, because I had something horrible in my head that people would have a list of all the Black people and they would turn up at my house and something horrible would happen, you know a bit like the Jews, you know when people had a list? *(laughing)* That one day somebody would come and take my children away because they were Mixed Race and I wasn't having that and so I just always refused to fill that stuff in. I just wanted to keep my children safe.

From the kids themselves I had 'Mum what am I supposed to put on this form? It says blah, de blah, de blah'. 'Well what do you think you should put on?' 'I don't know'. 'Well just put whatever you want, who cares?' But then if it was a college one, 'put down you are Black you will get in'. *(laughter)*. I didn't mean that nastily.

SuAndi: I know, you're right (laughing).

Put down you are Black; you will get more. Whereas, where I used to work when we had interviews, I know the Black candidates they would think they didn't have a chance of getting the job. But I am not one of them people who will interview somebody and go on 'what you look like', it's what is in here that matters to me. I couldn't give a shit; they could have a thing on their head for all I care. I knew and know what racism is like.

My four kids are all light skinned. Kevin (Edward), is the darkest out of all of them. I always think that he and Sharl look Spanish, they have that Spanish look about them. Actually, when Sharl was born, this is what my Mother said, 'Ohhh, she looks just like us'. 'Thanks Mum, what is that supposed to mean?' Lucy and Reo, although they haven't got the colour, they have got the Jamaican features, they have got larger lips and the nose and the hair. My youngest son Reo has got red afro hair and white skin, but he looks more Jamaican than Kevin (Edward) does, although his hair is curly, Lucy's hair is beautiful massive blond ringlets and she has got blue eyes. Sharl is the only one who has got brown eyes. The eldest, Kevin (Edward) has got greeny blue eyes, they change colour; ridiculously. The other two have got blue eyes. I think they have experienced racism, but I don't think that they have had it as bad as they would have had if they were pure Black.

SuAndi: I know that growing up I didn't get as much shit as my mates who were full Jamaican, but now, I am considered as quite dark skinned compared to what is 'considered' to be Mixed Race now. Do you know what I mean? The old term for any one light skinned was Quarter Caste.

I got in to trouble for saying that – 'Mum you can't say that anymore, it's not politically correct'. 'Oh, sorry love, right ok, I won't say it'. They were so rude some of the names, Mulatto, and all of those wicked terms that really meant, oh go away. They were and are all really vulgar.

Sharl my eldest she went to college and got her HND in Graphic Design and went on to be a teaching assistant in a primary school. She has finished her level 3 teaching assistant. Lucy also went to University she teaches sport and specialises in Dance in a secondary school in Sale. Kevin (Edward) went to Dance school. My youngest son Reo – he did go to college but decided he didn't like it and left. Then he went to work in an office and decided that is not what he wanted to do. So, he drives lorries, he likes driving lorries. That's my Reo.

When Sharl had her first child, Darcia, she said she didn't want her children to grow up and not know who their Grandad was. The first time she told me, I wasn't very complimentary with my reply. The next day I rang her up and I said, 'I am really sorry, I had no right to say that. If you want to go and meet your Dad and take the children that is fine. But you know what he is like, so don't come crying to me if it all falls apart'. She said, 'I have told him if he starts all that maudlin and 'oh woe is me' about all his problems, I have told him I am out of there'. So, she went to see him. Everything was fine, but then he said he would ring her, but he wouldn't ring, she would always have to phone him. Or, his new wife rang for him. There was no contact with him. In the end Sharl said, 'why am I bothering because he is not bothered?'

None of them are close to him, none of them – No. The youngest one hasn't seen him since he was five and refuses to go anywhere near him. He is thirty-five now and won't have anything to do with him. He said 'he wasn't there for me when I was a kid, so why should he be there for me now? Why would I want to speak to him? I don't know him, he didn't have time for me when I was a child so why should he have time for me now'.

Unbeknown to me, Kevin (Edward) rang him up and asked to meet him in Manchester. He asked his Dad point blank if he was an alcoholic saying to him, 'I want you to tell me the truth and dependent upon what your answer is, depends on whether this relationship goes any further'. His Dad said 'no'. 'Now you are lying to me', and he said, 'no I am not, I am not an alcoholic'. So, my son said 'right, end of conversation' and got up and walked away. But Kevin turned the story round and told the family that his own son had made him feel uneasy and had threatened him. Kevin (Edward) does have a bad temper and if you upset him he will scream at you, but it takes an awful lot for him to do that.

Kevin has another son called Harrison with his new wife. The kids made every effort to embrace Harrison in to their lives, keeping in contact, going places like Alton Towers. Then after the row Kevin (Edward) had with his Dad, Harrison took his father's side saying, 'Well, I have got to take my Dad's side' and that was that. Whether Kevin follows the kids on the internet or what… I don't know. I haven't got a clue because we parted on such bad terms that we can't even speak. I can't bring myself to speak to him anymore.

It is just hindsight looking back at the way things progressed. At what sparked it or what started the chaos that happened. There was nothing there that you could see. Maybe Kevin does have some mental health issues looking back now on some of the things that he did. I think he was probably using the alcohol to self-medicate and as you know with alcohol it soon gets to the point where it controls you and you can't control it. We only sort of came to that conclusion when Kevin (Edward) started to exhibit very similar behaviour to what Kevin did when we were arguing, and he would go off on one of his thingys.

I had that conversation with my ex sister in law about it. There are a couple of cousins on Kevin's side of the family that are going through the same thing as Kevin (Edward) now. So, I just wondered if maybe that was the cause of it. But let's face it, in the seventies nobody approached mental health problems with any understanding. My Uncle was in Calderstones[13] when I was a child. He was just locked away. That is what they did with people who had mental health problems, so I really don't know, I would be lying if I said I did.

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13 Hospital is one of the last remaining long-stay inpatient units for people with learning disabilities in the NHS. Following the results of a consultation with family members, a decision has been made to close it early 2019

The rule in our house has always been 'don't let the bastards grind you down' and 'you get nothing in this world without getting off your back side and getting it for yourselves and you don't let anybody stop you', 'if you have got a goal, you go for it that is what you do'. I have always instilled that – if you want to do something and there is a problem, we find a way of getting around it, and we do it. Just because you haven't got any money, it doesn't mean you can't do it, you have just got to think of another way.

I have never forgotten a conversation I had with my friend Fossua, who is from the Cameroon, 'Oh, go and marry some white person then' in one of our many conversations about relationships. 'Oh, shut up you don't know what you are talking about'. Then lo and behold like forty years later I meet this white South African. His Dad was an engineer there and he was born in Jo'berg moving back here when he was about four. His passport says 'South African' but he's really not as he was brought up in England. He has got dreads now because he is just an old hippy, but he is like the male version of me. He's a nutter! He has got two kids from his marriage and he treats my kids the same way I treat his kids.

SuAndi: Did you say to him 'I have got kids and they are Black kids?'

No.

SuAndi: You don't give a shit do you? (laughing).

No. I have never once in all of my life, said my kids are Black. I don't feel the need.

SuAndi: But Kevin gave you a great gift.

He did, my children. You know what I say to my kids? 'Without your Dad you wouldn't be here'. So somewhere along the line all the shit we went through, had to be worth it.

SuAndi: It would be unfair not to give a little more information on Kevin (Edward) and how he has explored his health issue alongside his fellow dancers at Company Chameleon https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/gallery/video-my-creative-process. As a result of a television documentary in 2019 Dame Darcey Bussell[14] joined the company's board as their first-ever Patron.

FAMILY
Sharl L Turner
Lucy J Tuner
Kevin E Tuner
Reo J Turner

Kevin Turner ex-husband

14 *One of the UK's most successful and well-known ballerinas now retired*

RITA HIGGINS (Mrs Apenteng)
March 1936

When I first saw him, I thought 'He is a 'big head'.

It wasn't love at first sight, Oh No, no, no, no. He was very, and probably still is, very self-assured. He was a handsome bloke, a ward doctor.

I was a Physiotherapist I had trained at Salford Royal School of Physiotherapy I worked for a number of years around the Manchester area before I went over to the West of Ireland and then to Dublin which is where I met Ado and in time I became Mrs Apenteng.

Becoming a physiotherapist was the daftest thing I ever did! I really wanted to go in to the arts, to drama school to go on to the stage, but in those days 'nice' young ladies who went to Grammar school, didn't go to Drama school, they became teachers or something of that ilk, you know, something that was 'approved of!'

It was my Mother's prayers that did it (according to her that is) I was her first child to go to Grammar school.

My father was a Salesman from Manchester, but his family were from County Sligo. My Mother's family were from the West of Ireland with the status of landed gentry. So, a lot was expected of the next generation and education was of prime importance. My maternal grandparents were very much caught up in The Troubles. They were thrown out of their big home and you know went through a lot of deprivation during the time of the Black and Tans .

My mother came over to England when she was sixteen. There were periods when we were small obviously when she didn't work, but at the beginning of the war, when my Dad went off to the Air Force, she took over his job After the war, Mum went to work for Ferranti, the big electronic place For some reason I was quite a solitary child, I would like to say I was perfect, but I probably wasn't I didn't particularly fit in at school. My brother is three years younger than me. One of my sister's died when she was about six months old. My other sister was ten and a half years younger, so it was far too big a gap for us to be friends. There was also Terence my adopted brother.. My Mother's sister died when she was quite young, leaving three children. Mother adopted Terence her god child raising him as our brother. Eventually he left and worked all over the place.

We used to play out in the street in those days, and I was the only girl, if I wanted to play I had to play boy's games.

My Mother and her brother (my Uncle), who was also living in the Manchester area took us all to Ireland for a week when Grandad died. I became really close to my cousins who were roughly my age and I was fed up working where I was. I decided it would be nice to go and live over there and join the social life. I think the town was called Ballinasloe, where I worked in the local hospital. I had been to Dublin quite a few times and I really liked it. So, on deciding I would prefer somewhere a bit more 'towny' I managed to get a job in Dublin and I was there for a few years and that is where I met my first husband. Ado had a really bad shoulder that needed intensive physiotherapy and our relationship sort of developed from there. The thing that really intrigued me about him was he let me drive his car open topped sports car.

There were a few raised eyebrows when it became obvious that it was quite serious, plus he was a couple of years older. There were helpful friends - saying 'you have got to think about the children?' To me, it honestly didn't make any difference – maybe I was a bit naïve at the time, but the fact that he was Black, and I was white was totally immaterial, as far as I was concerned. I thought 'we'll cope'.

Mum and Dad were remarkably good, or if they didn't like it they didn't say very much. Ado could charm the birds off the trees, and he just knew how to handle my Mother, you know she thought he was wonderful, my Dad just accepted him for what he was, he wasn't particularly bothered. Possibly it was because he was a doctor if I had brought home a Black brick layer they might not have been so enthusiastic, but I think it would have been the brick layer bit rather than his skin colour.

Ado wanted to do his fellowship exams, and he wanted to do them at the college (I can't remember the title of the college) in London. So, we moved I had a very small flat a lovely little flat, it was tiny, but it was in Regent's Park, rather a super address while Ado lived on campus and would commute back to me.

In Ireland the bigotry wasn't openly expressed It would be the 'look' and the occasional crossing of the road sort of thing. I've always remembered when we went to the hospital Christmas Dinner dance and in those days, it was a full dress formal affair. I heard the remark 'Oh If I could get a bird like that I would Black my face up', or some sort of comment. Such talk never bothered me I just ignored it. I thought 'if you're thick enough to come out with those sorts of remarks I don't want to know you'.

There were other comments like 'Blackbird!' I used to think well they are beautiful birds. *(Laughter)*. Odd times when we were looking for a flat we were confronted with 'No we don't have Blacks here', then to me. 'you can come' and I'd say 'Sorry, we come as a pair.' I don't know, maybe, I wasn't looking for it. The people that mattered accept us and that was it as far as I was concerned. Sometimes I think people can be a bit over sensitive these days, maybe that is just me. But we didn't actually go out, 'go

out' if you know what I mean. We would visit friends, we did have some social life. The reality was Ado was totally fixated on medicine.

Then he got a job at Stoke Mandeville so we moved and rented a cottage at High Wycombe. No one knew I was pregnant with Kate yes, I was an awkward so and so.

Once Ado qualified he went back to Accra Ghana to sort out somewhere for us to live. For me marriage It never was important… The only reason we did was probably because of the children. I mean in those days if your parents weren't married then you were the lowest of the low, weren't you?

Oh, I loved Ghana, absolutely adored it. It is a lovely place and a beautiful country. The people are amazing and as for me being white Umm, it didn't make a damned bit of difference. Both his parents were alive at time and his sister lived at home. His three older brothers were considerably older than him and two had already died so it was a small family wedding. In Ghana, we were quite sociable in that we had a circle of friends and we would have dinner parties and they would have dinner parties and so on and so forth. We had staff so for the dinner parties the cook prepared the meals. I did learn to cook Ghanaian food because I liked it. I learned from the house boy. When I can get the ingredients I still cook now. I keep saying to Dominic every time he goes back, 'bring me some kenkey '. 'But you can get it over here'. I say, 'But Dominic, I can't, I have searched'. I loved the Ghanaian food, Grace his sister was a good cook. His Mum was a very traditional cook, you know with the big pot outside in the courtyard, I used to love her food. I did learn, but around our house most of the big stuff, we had people to do everything. I used to brag to friends when I got back to England, laughing I would say, 'I used to have a cook and houseboy, and a gardener, and a watchman and a nanny and', sounds good!! Being a cleaner doesn't mean that you are something inferior and if you get a good cleaner then you treat them like gold. We lived there for about two years, I think, until I was expecting Dominic. Ado wanted to come back he hadn't quite finished the fellowship, he had got so far with the exam and then he got his job at Stoke Mandeville.

Also, I had had a lot of problems when I had Kate. Fortunately, I was in Queen Charlottes in London, otherwise I don't think either of us would still be around. So, we thought it would be better to be back here in case anything went wrong during Dominic's birth. Again, Ado had to move into the college in London, so we thought the easiest thing would be for me to move up to Manchester where my parent were and buy a house. We thought about buying in London but even then, prices in London were ridiculous.

You know how light begins to dawn. I thought 'he has no bloody intention of moving back up here'. I kept finding houses and there was always something he would find wrong with them. If he was going anywhere I wasn't going to be the 'little wife at home' Not until I was actually on my own, In the end, I said 'look I want to know exactly what is happening. I am going buy myself a house and if that is what you want, then that is fine'. Eventually, I brought a nice a terraced house in Newton Heath not too far from my parents. And I got a job, locally at Ancoats Hospital . But what really galled me more than anything is that I had to get his signature on the mortgage application –and that really, really annoyed me. I insisted that he paid for the children's' schooling.

Kate was extremely bright and by the time she was three she was reading. I would have been quite happy for her to go to the local school but in those days, you had to be five and I thought having to wait two years she would be going barmy. There was a really good private prep school, not far away, so I got Kate in there.

Dominic was about two, two and a half at the time, fortunately the hospital I was working at had a

creche, so I used to take him with me and drop him off. He was very clever too and as soon as he was old enough, he joined Kate at the Prep school.

That was the beginning of the end of the marriage.

Once I brought the house he used to come up at weekends to see the kids and I would drive them down to London. But as they got older they didn't want to be wasting their weekends, as they saw it, because they had friends from school and as they saw it more interesting things to do with their time. I don't think they were bothered particularly about the separation. (If they had, they never showed it.). Dominic was two when all this happened, Kate had more contact with her father when she was a lot younger, but I think she was still too young for it to have any great impact. I think that Ado thought that divorce would suit him financially, because that is all that he was remotely concerned about, it didn't make any difference to me.

This particular summer Terence my adopted cousin had come home so my Mother decided she would have a party for him and my brother Michael inviting all their old friends, you know so Terence could spend time with everybody.

As it happened, my Terry, and a whole gang of them used to hang around together. Terry was in the throes of a divorce and had come back from where he was living in Abu Dhabi, for a month to make sure the Decree Nisi was finalised. As he happened to be at home that weekend he was invited to the party for Terence. I have known him since we were 'that big'. But He walked in to the room that night and (click) that was it, bang, crash wallop thump.

As far as I know Ado hasn't married again. He has I think, a niece who lives in and looks after him, I think he is quite erm, not exactly disabled, but he is not very mobile, he doesn't get around very much both Kate and Dominic feel that he doesn't try very hard. He is very much the patriarch who sits back and lets the ladies of the family run around like scalded hens and as for Kate doing the same, he has picked a 'wrong un' I'm afraid.

Ado feels that Kate should be the traditional, dutiful African daughter. But Kate doesn't agree. Kate doesn't see that at all, Kate doesn't do dutiful. No, she is quite happy to help out, if the need arises. But she certainly has no intentions of sort of handing her life over to look after her father. Kate goes over periodically to do her 'visit', but she seems to spend all her time trying to tell him what he should be doing and pointing out the error of his ways, and he is not doing this, and he should be doing that.
I think Dominic is quite happily totally split down the middle. He is one of those people who can change his persona, his vocabulary, his voice, depending on who he is talking to. So, he could talk to the Queen perfectly happily in perceived English or what you call it, or to a gang of kids in the way kids talk these days.

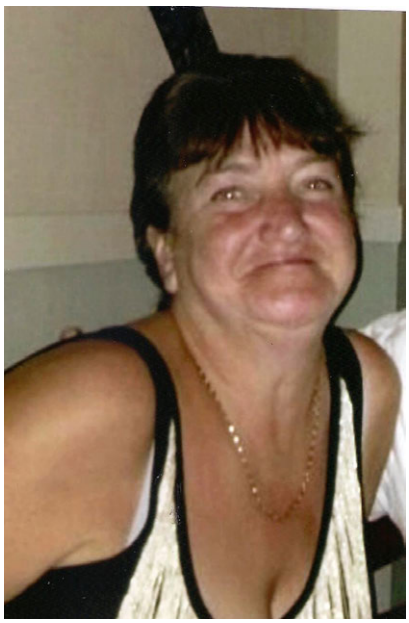
In some ways he is a charmer like his father. He is also a very, very, caring person. He genuinely cares about people and I think that is probably the way he feels about his father. I don't know if there is a lot of fraternal or paternal love there, because I think Dominic has seen what has gone on over the years and understands how life really was.

He sends me cards on Father's Day. He sent me quite a long beautiful poem about a bloke who was doing a spelling test and was asked to spell the word father and he said MOTHER and then explained why. There are occasions when Dominic's has made the point that I was both their Father as well as their Mother, sort of thing. I never thought that was my duty it is just how life went.

Do I regret my marriage? I mean obviously I regret that it didn't go the way it should have done, but I got two beautiful children out of it. Rita and (her) Terry will celebrate 33 years of marriage in 2018.

FAMILY
Kate Apenteng
Dominic Apenteng
Dr Ado Apenteng March 1931 Ghana - July 2018 Ghana

ELLEN FORRESTER
December 1952



I grew up mostly in Oldham. It was a dump of a house that we lived in. We had a shop; it had a living part, a kitchen and two bedrooms upstairs. There were seven of us kids and a mother and a father. Now, where were you going to put us all? It was horrendous.

There were really eight kids. My eldest brother, Frank, was raised by my maternal grand-mother and great grand-mother. I don't know what went on there, because Mother never said. What she did say was that if she ever took Frank Junior away, my great grand-mother would do something to herself! I always thought to myself 'oh my God that is ridiculous. How can someone just walk away with her child?' So, there must have been more to it than that, but we never got to know the truth.

I absolutely adored my Dad he was everything to me. Frank, my Dad, was a painter and decorator and a master sign-writer. He was good at what he did, but the trouble was that he liked women and drink too much. Soon the business and the shop went bust. He ended up doing what he could to survive and get money for himself, but we were left with practically no money most of the time.

My Mother was a spiteful old bitch. I know it's awful for me to say, but she would take her misery out on all of us. She was a horrendous woman, horrendous until the day she died. I swear to God, and that is not something nice to say about your own mother. She would cause trouble in an empty house, her. Her philosophy in life, because there were so many of us growing up, was to divide and conquer, turn one against the other, 'you said this', 'she said that', and that is how it went on for years, until none of us were talking to each other.

At seventeen I found a job to work in a hotel. I got a job for me and my sister because she was too chicken-legged to do it herself. So, I dragged her off and we went to St Albans and it was lovely, it was absolutely beautiful. I really loved it, until she messed it up. My Mother came down 'Oh I have come down for a visit', I said 'what for?' I hated her, we hated her, we absolutely hated her.

Years later I am back in the north. I had a lovely house in Oldham, with shag pile carpets, you name it, I had it. Because there was only me and my son Kieran, a three year old by then – there was only me and him. So, I had it really nice because I worked, I was the manager of betting offices.

My friend was renting in Moss Side; a flat upstairs in a derelict house. It was really nice, because this Irish guy had put the electric on *(laughter)* – he was a right lunatic him, honestly. It was 1980 when I was with my friend at the carnival when she suggested we go in The Nile Club. I wasn't even dressed. I had a pair of jeans on and these flip flop things and woolly cardigan and I said, 'I can't go in there, I will stand at the back where no one can see me'.

Jimmy Nicholson was originally from Green Pond, Jamaica. When I met him, I thought I just couldn't let him go, to be honest with you. It was love at first sight. Yes, absolutely. I moved house to Moss Side it was just impulse. I moved into a flipping dump, but it didn't really matter because I was with who I wanted to be with.

He was a plasterer. He used to make money even when he wasn't supposed to be working. He could always get jobs here and there. Kieran, he loved him, oh God they loved each other. He used to play outside, he was only three, and when Jimmy turned up, he'd shout to me, 'Mum my Dad is here', *(laughing)* as this six foot Black man got out of the car. Then a couple of years later, he must have been about five, he said 'Mum I know he is not my Dad, but he is my best friend'. I thought that was absolutely amazing that he could think that.

My father was dead by then and my Mother was the manager of a betting office in Chadderton. She rang me one Saturday and I thought 'what are you phoning me for?' and she said, 'blah de blah de blah, are you still with your friend?' I said, 'if you mean the six-foot Jamaican who I am living with and who I am pregnant to, yes I am and by the way he has got a name, he is called Jimmy'. Then I slammed the phone down on her and thought 'you can do one you'. I thought 'I am not interested, you have said what you have got to say, so that's it now; I am not interested'.

A while later when I was expecting and didn't have a baby sitter, Mother had Ryan and Kieran for the one day. She said, 'oh I took them to our Ann's (my eldest sister) and she said don't bring that Mixed Race child here again because the Heaps (Ann's ex-husband's family, who she was very close to while she was still married,) didn't know that there were any Black people in the family' and Ann didn't want them to know. I said, 'what are you talking about?' Years later when my Mother's second husband died, and we were at his funeral, I asked Ann 'did you say that?' and she said, 'not that I can recall'. I said 'right, I thought not'. My Mother you see, causing trouble again.

Most of my family were still living in Oldham. My youngest brother had left the army to live in Ireland with his wife. So, I didn't see him, although he wasn't bothered about things like that. He wasn't racist, it was my Mother – she used to pretend she never was, but she used to have these snidey little digs, you know things like 'your friend'.

Locally I never had any trouble with anybody – the only trouble I had was from this one woman who was a prostitute who worked at a hotel. She said to me 'are you sure that is Jimmy's son?' and I went flipping mental, I nearly boxed her down. I said 'yes, I know who I have slept with, I don't know how

many people you have slept with, but I know who my man is'.

Jimmy just loved kids altogether, he just adored them. He loved Kieran as much as he loved Ryan. If we went to the park, he had to collect everybody he could off the street and take them all with us. Then he would take them to the pub in the middle of the estate sit them all in a line on the wall and go and get them all crisps and a drink. I thought 'you are mental you are' *(laughing)*. Even our dog, a big Black Alsatian, even he got a Guinness in an ashtray. *(Laughing)*. He was just amazing, he was just something else, I can't explain him to you, he was so nice and so peaceful, he didn't want to mess with anybody. Because Jimmy was a plasterer, he would often have to wait at the houses for materials or for the other men to finish their jobs. I used to go mad at him, because I would go walking past with the kids to go shopping or whatever, and he would be waiting in a house with no doors or windows for plastering stuff to come. I used to say, 'stick a note on the door to tell them to come when they got there'. But he would stand there all day in the freezing cold.

New Year's Eve we went out and on New Year's Day he took Bruce the Alsatian into Alexandra Park. He was alright when he got back, then after dinner he said he didn't feel well. He stayed up, but when he went to bed, he said, 'I am cold' and he was absolutely freezing. I pushed the bed round and put the fire on. We didn't have central heating in that house. 'Is that better?' I asked, he answered 'yeah'. But he never warmed up.

Jimmy's friend Ricky the Rasta came round to see him. We were having a cup of tea and I said to Kieran 'Go upstairs and see if Jimmy wants a cup of tea'. Kieran came back and said, 'Mum he won't answer me he is just staring at the ceiling'. I went upstairs; he was still alive, so I got the nurse from up the street who said, 'there was nothing she could do'.

2nd January I got the locum Doctor out. Within a few hours of that Doctor coming, we got the ambulance and there was nothing they could do. They got him to the hospital, and they got his heart started but they couldn't get anything else started, they couldn't get his breathing started, he was too far gone. He died the same day. He was dead from bronchial pneumonia – it killed him, and I said, 'well good, otherwise he would be brain damaged after this length of time'.

His own Doctor came the next day, all happy and jolly and said 'I have come to see Jimmy' and I said, 'He's dead' and he went 'Ok' and just walked back out again, without even asking what he had died of. I was furious, absolutely furious. Devastated, because, oh God it was horrible; my little Kieran, the eldest one, was six; his little son, sixteen months old without his dad, it was awful.

Our Kieran got his work hat, the hat that he used to wear all the time. Kieran walked round wearing it twenty four hours a day. I just had to take it away when he was asleep. I thought he can't be going around doing that, because it just reminded him all the time that Jimmy was gone. The funeral was a farce because his best friend whose name I can't now remember said he was his brother. Then Jimmy's cousin came from Huddersfield, and said 'what branch of the family are you from'? It was embarrassing; anyway, we got over that.

His ex-wife came from London. He'd moved up here after they were divorced. I didn't do anything to her. Isis she was called, she should have been called icicle. Jesus Christ she was the most horrible woman I have ever met in my life. They got off the coach, came in to the house, never spoke to me, and just went into the kitchen and started eating all the food. I thought, 'you ignorant swines'. I was furious. Jimmy's daughter walked over to see Ryan, but the mother shouted for her to get away. (Ryan has recently been in contact with her she works in a London prison).

Outside his wife was saying 'who is going to carry the coffin?' I said, 'listen love, we have got to worry about how we are going to feed everyone - the men will sort out who is going to carry the coffin between themselves'. I thought I would be the bigger woman, so I said to her 'do you want to get in the family car,' you know because she was his ex-wife. 'No'. And she walked back around the corner, so I thought 'well up yours then, that is the last time I am trying to make any peace with you'. She was so horrible.

I was devastated. I was thirty-one/thirty-two with two young children. I was that stressed out, pushing the little one's buggy in to kerbs and walls and all sorts. I told the Doctor and he sent me to hospital, and he said 'stress, you are going to have to deal with the problem that is causing it'. I said, 'do you want to go and dig him up for me'. 'Oh' he said, I said 'well that is what is causing the problem, there is nothing I can do about a dead man can I?' He had gone, hadn't he?

Even the dog was moping, out in the back yard, moping, and I thought 'oh Lord what am I going to do with him now?'. Jimmy took him absolutely everywhere off his lead, which drove me mad, because when I tried to put him on the lead, he wouldn't go on and was like a lunatic. But Jimmy loved that dog, he absolutely adored him. My sister had a rabbit that kept running in and out of her garden, so I said to him if we can catch it, can we bring it home because it would be good for the kids. I caught the damn thing and made a cage for it. But would it stay in his cage? Would it flipping hell. It used to kick the front of its cage out and go to the allotments *(laughing)*. But it used to come back though it was terrible, it was like a flipping dog. Every morning Jimmy would open the back door and the dog, and the rabbit would be in the shed together. Bruce was a softie; he slept with the rabbit. Jimmy would bring them in, make them a cup of tea with a bit of rum in, and I thought that is more that I flipping get, isn't it? But that is just how he was, he just adored them.

Then the idiot got this other dog, I said 'What is that?' Another Alsatian. 'We are just keeping it for a while', he said. 'How long is a while?' 'Well, until it dies' so I said 'Well, that is good isn't it?' *(laughing)* Which I didn't mind but when we put it out the back, it wasn't like Bruce, it killed the rabbit and the boys wanted to kill the dog then. Oh, my lord. Life had always been Jimmy, the kids and me. I had a sister in Old Trafford who was at my house so often, to a point when he said, 'Ellen if she doesn't stop coming here, I am going to have to leave because we get no time together'. She would get a taxi in the morning and sit there on her back side all day long until it was time to go home.

None of my family came to the funeral. I didn't even get a bunch of flowers, or a 'what's it' card, I didn't get anything. No, they weren't bothered, they never bothered with us at all. Jimmy was about six foot tall and going bald up top. When I met him, he had his cap on. He was quite slim, because he'd had operations for ulcers. He had pussy killer eyes as I used to call them. *(laughing)*. Ryan has got them, only he's worse because he flirts all the time. He is not bothered him, he'll do anything he can to get a woman – uuummm. Ryan's eyes are like so animated, honest to god, you should see him. He is terrible. I keep saying to him 'Ryan will you stop with your eyeballs'. But he has his Dad's eyes. My Jimmy had beautiful eyes, he was such a placid, loving person. He was just so loving do you know what I mean? He was just so loving. I smacked him one in the head one time, because he really got on my nerves, but he never, never lifted a finger to me.

He said to me about a year after we had been together, 'when I saw you in the Nile[1] I knew you were going to be mine'. I said, 'oh, was that right'. The Nile was a dump. It was on the corner of Princess Road and Moss Lane. It was bare, there was just a few tables and chairs but the music they played was out of this world!

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1 There were two clubs within the same building, on Princess Road. The Nile played reggae and had the larger, better premises, upstairs of The Reno in the basement

After Jimmy died, we were living, if that is what to call it, on just what the Social[2] gave you. I moved house, over to Sigley Street in Rusholme. I couldn't bear it to stay in what had been our home because every time it came to a certain time of the day, I would expect him to walk through the door. I had so many memories, silly things like Dr whatever it was in America, the one who did the autopsies – Quincy, we always watched it together. He would be behind me and I would sit between his legs to watch it. It got to the point that I couldn't watch the telly. Keith, my old boss from the bookies, came and offered me a job. I thought, I might as well instead of just sitting around the place. My friend Pat who had been my only support after I lost Jimmy, agreed to look after my boys Ryan and Kieran She got a little bit of money and I knew the kids would be alright. I went back to work as it gave me something to do, to take my mind off things.

Surprisingly or maybe not, Keith sent me to one where Black men were causing havoc. They had come over the counter and put the manager before me in bloody hospital. I said, 'that is nice isn't it Keith just because I was with a Black man, you are pushing the boundaries here aren't you?'. They were wild. *(laughing)*. Well I could manage them - not so much if they lost. One Black woman who came in oh my Lord, Jesus Christ, she was absolutely wild, not wild, but you know what I mean, a roughy-toughy. She was in love with the white guy behind the counter that they put in hospital. She asked me if I knew her boyfriend. I fibbed and said I came from Oldham and didn't know who he was. I thought 'I am not tangling with you'. I said my fellow was dead and that I hadn't got a clue who she meant.

In the end, she liked me. I thought thank God for that. Before I took over, on most Saturdays they would have to close the bookies because of the fighting. She was on my side so if the young ones started, she used to xxxxx them out, she used to really tell them off. I thought that is really great as I needed her on my side.

Three years passed before I met Spence. Then I knew what Jimmy felt like when he first saw me because I said to myself, 'you are mine'. I just knew he was going to be mine. He was bald and looked just like Errol Brown from Hot Chocolate[3], I'll show you a picture of him, honest to God. Me and my friend were talking to these guys at the bottom of the stairs. I said, 'I really like him, he has a lovely bald head him'. Next minute they brought him down the stairs and Spence said to me 'Don't go home without me'. I thought 'that is very romantic isn't it' and that was that then, and twenty six years later I still wasn't going home without him. *(laughing)*

I don't remember where exactly, but Spence came to England from Jamaica when he was 16. His father had nicked all the workers' money from the farm they had and lost it all in the gambling house *(laughing)*. His Dad said, 'right you can either go to Canada where your sister is, or, go to your sister in Birmingham' So he came over here and I said, 'Oh my god that was a mistake wasn't it', oh Lord. He was determined that he was going to marry me, he really, really wanted to. I didn't marry either of them.

He was the total opposite to Jimmy. Oh my god, he was not the least bit romantic, not the least bit… Courting, there wasn't any courting with him. That was the biggest culture shock. He had been hurt, I knew this, but you had to try and get it out of him, which was very difficult with him. He had been hurt by other women in his life. One got him locked up[4] for six years. He wanted to marry the one that he had left before me, she said 'no' and that was that. But she had caught him cheating on her, before he asked her to marry him, and she told him to 'naff off'. He couldn't take rejection at all, and

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2 *Social Security for child benefit and helps with housing and general living costs*

3 *A British soul band popular during the 1970s and 1980s, formed by Errol Brown and Tony Wilson.*

4 *Imprisoned*

I understood that, because I had done it myself, so I could understand. He locked away his feelings because you just don't want to open up with somebody again after you have been hurt, do you?

When we were first seeing each other, he went now and again to stay with a woman in Wythenshawe. She was a horrible little swine, I hated her. It wasn't long after I had met him that he asked if he could move in. I said, 'where are you going to be?' and he said, 'here most of the time'. I said, 'and where are you going to be the rest of the time?' 'Well you know, here and there' and I said, 'No'.

Oh yeah, I wanted him, but I also was not that daft. I had bought a house in Levenshulme. I had worked hard to get it for me and my two kids and I wasn't having anyone walking in to my house, putting his name on anything and then taking half of it. No way, I didn't know him that well, so I thought no, no, no I am not that stupid. Don't mess with me that way, when it comes to my house, that is for me and my kids.

Charlton Road neighbours were alright, because there were loads of Black people there by then and obviously, I had a Mixed Race son, so they didn't bother me. There were two lesbians next door who were really nice, when Kieran went flying over a flipping ramp he had made, one of them asked him 'How many fingers have I got', 'two' he said. I said, 'hospital'.

Anyway, as time went on, Spence spent more and more time at mine, then he was living at mine. But we had our fights, oh my God, that man nearly killed me – I swear to God, he grabbed me by the back of my hair one time, punched me in the bloody face and I am thinking 'oh my Lord'. Then one time, he wanted to fight with my brother Ralph who had come out of the army and was living with me. Ralph went upstairs to get one of them flick things. I flew up the stairs and had to stand between them. The two kids were in the bedroom, oh Lord it was like a nightmare. It was because he accused me of sleeping with someone when I was pregnant, he was that stupid.

He was very violent at first, then he stopped when I told him I would leave him. So, he was really violent at first, then we had this argument. The fellas had all gone down to London for the carnival, so there were none of the normal taxis around, so this Irish woman from behind the bar, said, 'I'll get us a lift'. We got into the car and this other sneaky little Black guy told Spence that I had gone off with some guys. I hated the guy who made up the lie. He was a horrible sneaky, slimy swine he was. I said, 'you must be joking, I would rather die than sleep with that'. And, 'furthermore go and ask the lady who used to work at the Nile– she got the lift for us. She will tell you who got out and I got out on my own'. Oh, we had this argument and we were chasing round the bedroom. When I have a fight with somebody, I grab their hair, and smack their head against the wall, but he was bald as a coot, so I couldn't. *(laughing)* I couldn't get a grip on him. 'Stand still', I shouted, 'while I get hold of you'.

There was a guy that said to me 'Spence is alright with men, but he can't live with women'. He used to snap at the slightest little thing and if he thought you were up to something, oh my God, some of the leatherings[5] I had, I swear to God. He calmed down for a bit, but then his daughters with their kids from the relationship with the woman who got him locked up came from Birmingham. At the time he was cheating on me with this bleached blond bitch. I phoned him, and I said, 'your daughters are here, you better do something about it'. 'They will have to stay with you' he said, 'what do you mean they will have to stay with me? I haven't got room for them. - but he didn't care.

They must have found out from one of his mates that he had a bungalow in Cheetham Hill. Later he came banging on my door, he was ranting and raving – I couldn't understand a word he was saying. I said, 'you know what, I'm sick of this' and I shut the door in his face. That was the biggest mistake of

5 *A thrashing*

my life because he tried to kick the door in. I thought I can't have him kicking the door on the street like this. I went to open it, he gave me one fucking punch and I went from the door all the way up the hallway and ended up on the stairs. I had concussion, oh my God.

So, I just grabbed Sadie. I thought you can't hit me again because I have got your daughter, a poor defenceless baby. I said, 'get out' and he went. The boys were upstairs, I also had Ashley by then. I asked them 'do you want to come with me to Debbie's, I'm not staying here'. But they stayed because they knew he wouldn't hit them. So, I left with the two youngest ones, Ashley and Sadie. I came back the next morning and he had already been to see Ryan and Kieran, to say 'Oh I'm sorry for hitting your mother'. I said, 'Oh, that is very nice isn't it – I've been up all night with a concussion'. I think he fractured my skull to be honest with you, but I didn't want to go to the hospital and get him in to trouble. My head was killing me, and it was like that for days, I couldn't lie down, I couldn't sit up –it was horrendous.

To cut a long story short, I got rid of his daughters by taking them to the Social to get money to get them back to Birmingham. I had to do that because they had taken Kieran to the shops and encouraged him to steal. Plus, they weren't my responsibility. I used to leave him for two or three days saying, 'if you do that again, I swear to God I'm going to fucking walk, or you know what, when you are asleep I will get something and I'll smash your head in' and he'd say, 'you would and all wouldn't you?'.

I loved him, and I knew that it was not the man that he really was – I knew that inside there was a different man. It was his anger from what had happened to him. Plus, I had a son and a daughter to him, I already had two kids with no fathers. I should have left him, and I could have left him, quite easily. But I knew, I just knew, if you understand what I am trying to say, I understood that his anger wasn't really directed at me, it was someone else's anger, because of what somebody else had done to him.

Spence calmed down after that to be honest. He parked up behind me outside the Social, so I locked the doors. He started to apologise. I said, have you seen what you have done to me, the state of my face?' (it was Black). I am in absolute agony, I can't lie down, I can't sit up, my head is splitting, you have probably fractured my bloody skull'. 'Why, just tell me this Spence, why after all I have done for you? Who bought you your car?' 'You'. 'Who has looked after you?' 'You' 'Who has spent money on you?'. 'You' was all he could reply.

I said, 'now you are running around with your bleached blond bitch from work because she has got money (her husband was Jewish, so she had money) you don't need me anymore, so 'bye". I said, 'I am not having it anymore'.

Later, he came round 'how about us, there is a guy selling settees outside, I will buy one for you.' I said 'don't bleeding bother. I don't want anything off you. You can't just stand up and be a man. I don't want bloody settees, what do I want settees for I already had one'.

That was that, I was like that for days and he kept coming round. Then he was leaving for Jamaica, he had been saving for a visit. 'Isn't that nice, you are not taking any of your kids with you'. I didn't want to go, because I wouldn't be able to stand the heat over there. When he got off the plane back in Manchester, she was waiting, the bleached blond bitch was there waiting for him. Her sister lived in Malta, so they went there for two weeks. He'd told me he was going for six weeks but if his money lasted, he'd stay for eight. I thought 'yeah, you think I am bloody daft'.

In the meantime, my son Ashley was crying his eyes out, because he hadn't seen his Dad and he thought

he was dead. They were only young, so I was absolutely furious. When he came back, I asked, 'Where have you been?' He said, 'You know where I have been'. I said, 'no, you haven't been there, not this length of time'. I went mad with him and said 'while you were swanning it around Jamaica and Malta your son was here crying his eyes out, because he thought you were dead. The son you profess to love so much!' He hadn't got a word to say. He brought his son a present back, but not his daughter. And not the other two boys either. No, no, no, only his precious one.
Was I blinded by love? Of course, yeah, but I wasn't that blinded that I didn't see his bad points, but I knew from day one that he had been hurt, because you know when you have been hurt yourself, you recognise it in somebody else.

He did mellow down a bit but then I caught him with the blonde at visiting time when he was in hospital for treatment on his legs. I packed all his stuff and I said 'Right, there you go, you have got your bleach blond bitch, you have got your clothes, but you are not having my kids – do one, I don't want to know you'. I changed the locks and everything. It absolutely totally shocked him to the core, because he never thought I would do that, and he dumped her straight away. He came to pay me money every week. Then one day when he was setting up the ironing board one of the legs poked him straight in the eye, and he had to go to hospital. They asked him who was his next of kin and he said, 'he hadn't got any'. I thought, how pathetic can you get.

I will tell you from the day Ashley was born, he was the reason for Spence getting up in the morning and taking breath – he absolutely adored him. He took one look at him when he was born and that was it, he was smitten. When I said I was pregnant again and it was a girl he said, 'I am glad it is a girl, because if had been a boy, it would never have had a chance next to Ashley'. Ashley was a little swine, he was horrible, he was a little horrible swine, because he used to 'parrot'[6] everything the kid next door said. I would say 'he has done such a thing and I smacked him and shouted at him and he is taking no notice'. 'Not my Ashley, my Ashley wouldn't do that' and I used to think 'Oh my God, how blinded by love are you Spence?'

When two of Spence's children from his previous relationship died, he started to realise then that all the people that he loved, he was starting to lose. Eventually life between us began to balance out. Eventually yeah, in fact I got control *(laughing)*. I got control, because I couldn't use my fists, but I used my mouth.

I sold my house in Levenshulme and we moved to Moss Side then we moved over here to Hulme. In Moss Side, my kids were into those great big rubber insects. I swear to God to this day I can see him. I was pretending to be asleep, but I was trying to stop laughing. He had taken his clothes off and stood there, stark bollock naked, pulled back the covers and this big spider was there. He threw it on the floor and started jumping on it. *(laughing)*. He had nothing on his feet, no clothes on and I was in hysterics. He said, 'you think you are fucking funny don't you', and I said, 'I am actually'.

We both worked at the Trafford Centre but then his car broke down. I said, 'I can't be doing this with the kids, because I can't leave that early', so I gave that up. He carried on until that work dried up. Then his back went, and he couldn't do it. And I thought 'uuuummm weakness here we come', I'm evil. I used to be horrible to him, I used to torment him terribly.

We went out to the pub or clubs when we were first together but when I had four kids, I didn't go out that much. Ira had sold his shebeen and bought a pub on the Crescent. He had it beautiful; the staff had matching uniforms. Spence had been in it and said, 'you want to see it' and I said, 'I can't see it unless you stay at home with the kids', because Kieran wasn't old enough then to mind them. 'Alright,

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6 *To copy or repeat what someone says without thinking about it or understanding it.*

I'll stay here and mind the kids and you go with Margaret'. We went, and it was absolutely gorgeous. Anyway, the Irish girl (her name is on the tip of my tongue) said, 'What have you done to him? I have known him for years more years than I care to remember, and I have never heard him rant on about a woman so much in my life – 'no other woman is fit to wash her feet" he said. I said, 'Why doesn't he bloody say that to me? He won't say that to me at home'. If I decorate, he says 'watch what you are doing -that's not straight" – criticising everything that I damn well do. It really got me down, and at one point I thought 'I'm going to box your ears, if you think you can do it better, do it yourself'. It was just me decorating, cleaning, washing, doing everything, making bedding and sewing for the kids and matching curtains, all sorts. Then someone else said 'oh yeah, he said such and such a thing' and I said, 'Oh yeah why is he saying all these things to everybody outside and not to me'

Spence was thirteen years older than me so not surprising that I ended up looking after him. I trailed him round everywhere until somebody eventually listened to what I was saying. At Wythenshawe, Mr Jones said, 'I want you in today, because I want to operate on you'. He had bowel cancer. He had his operation, they got rid of it, but he had a colostomy bag. I looked after him until the day he died. I changed his bag, got everything sorted, cutting the bags to the right size, running up and down the stairs with this drink and that drink, I was bloody completely knackered. I was up and down the stairs six or seven times a day, just to make sure he had the food and drink he was supposed to have. I got him a vacuum flask and filled it with ice cold water, because he liked that. Then I had to make him the special fluids that they send and make sure he took them, sort all his tablets out, making sure he took the right ones. Then in the middle of the bloody night if his bag burst, that was a flaming nightmare. He used to stand there and look so pathetic 'I don't know where to start'. I said, 'Can you get in the bath' 'Yeah'. I said, 'Right go, I will do the rest of it. I'd strip and change the bed.

It wipes away a person's dignity - it was awful for him, but I tried to treat it as though it was something normal, not something disgusting – all those smells were horrendous. It was like a military operation by the time he got out of the shower I would have all the bedding on the line, our bed was made, clean pyjamas and dressing gown.

The worst mistake I made was sending him to the MRI when he collapsed on the Monday. I should have sent him back to Mr Jones at Wythenshawe. The treatment there, oh my God, I complained, and I complained, and I complained about it. I kept saying 'this is not acceptable, I am not having this'. I had to bring all his stuff in from home and they said 'We haven't got any cancer nurses'. I said, 'I have seen all the bloody MacMillan nurses[7] walking around, don't tell me you haven't got them'. I was furious, he couldn't eat. I thought 'what the hell has gone wrong, has he got secondary cancer?' They took him to a room on his own where we chatted. Later when I was back at home, he phoned me and said 'Ellen you've got to come back' something had happened. God knows what time that was, about eleven, twelve o'clock, I was in bed. I went back, and this nurse came in and she said 'Oh, visiting time has finished you know'. I knew he was dying, he knew he was dying then I said, 'he is not well so he has called me back'.

For some reason they couldn't give him morphine in that room, so he had to go up onto the ward. They told me I could take him, but I couldn't stay so I told him I would be back in the morning. But by this time his colostomy bag was full of blood and I thought 'it's already too late'. I spoke to him when I phoned in the morning, then they passed me over to the nurse, because he was ready for surgery. When I got there with Sadie all the emergency team were with him. 'He sounds bad' I said. I knew – I had been with him for so long – twenty-six years. We were sent to the family room. Family room - it was like a bloody junk shop where this woman said, 'I am the one who has been looking after your husband'. I said, 'that's funny, I have been here for four days, morning, noon and night and I have

7 *Palliative care nurses*

never seen you'. I thought 'all you have is a few flipping notes, you have not been round to see him' or were you thinking he is going to die anyway 'so you won't bother'. Especially now he was bleeding inside, bleeding from his stomach.

I wasn't even with him when he died. They told me, 'he is not very well at the moment, he is a very poorly man'. I thought, 'don't give me that bullshit, I knew exactly what you are saying'. Then this surgeon came in, well he looked like a surgeon all in green. He said, 'it is looking pretty futile at the moment, if you want us to carry on, we will carry on treating him, but it is looking pretty futile'. In other words, he had gone. I said 'No, if he has gone, just let him go, don't keep pumping his heart, just let him go'. They said at Wythenshawe that it had one in three chances of it coming back, which all cancers have. Then this male nurse said, 'we will just clean him up for you'. I didn't give a shit. I just wanted to see him. I'd cleaned his shit up before. When I got there, he was so warm and had this most beautiful smile on his face, I will never forget it, never. This beautiful, beautiful smile on his face, like somebody had come to meet him or he was thinking of somebody when he died. Beautiful, beautiful smile I said to Sadie 'I have been with him twenty-six years and I have never seen him smile like that, never'.

My kids were distraught, they were absolutely devastated. It's 2018 now so Kieran is forty, Ryan thirty-five, Ashley thirty and Sadie twenty-eight. They have all grown up with Spencer. He was great with them, yeah, I think all Black men are great with kids, they really are.

For Kieran it was the second father to die. His own father dumped me when I was seven months pregnant, for a woman with four kids, four sons at that. Kieran and Ryan were going to go and smash his face in – but they never got around to doing it. So, two Black men in their different times and their different ways became his father. Kieran is like a Black man; the music, Bob Marley, he loved Bob Marley, and he eats all the Jamaican food. You wouldn't know he was white, except for the colour of his skin. When Kieran was young, and I was with Jimmy, he used to say to me 'are you sure you have got these the right way round and he is not the Black man and the other (Ryan) is white'. He adored Jimmy and Jimmy adored him. He was only six when Jimmy died, and he has never gotten over it, it proper still upsets him now.

I didn't have a problem with either of them in registering their deaths. Burying them was the next problem *(laughing)* because neither of them left any money. When Jimmy died the people in Moss Side collected to bury him, you know like they do. That was very good of them and the funeral was beautiful, it was absolutely lovely. We had the food in my house. I didn't know it at the time that a Black couple few doors up the road, they put food on as well in the Claremont pub. That's where we used to go for years it was very good of them. In the end it gets done, doesn't it?

Spence didn't have any money. When we were first together, he used to gamble a lot, until one day he gambled all his wages and we had no money for the weekend. I nearly killed him because we had two kids then – so I made sure he suffered, and he never did that again. I used to say to him 'why don't you get all your wages and send it to Ira's shebeen because you will just lose it all there anyway, it will save you carrying it'.

The most he would do is have a Yankee[8] I said, 'look how much you are losing on them'. After that he did "pretend" bets and watch the race on TV to see what he had 'won'. I would then ask what races he had also lost. I managed a betting shop', I knew that the bookies always win.

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8 The Yankee is a 4 selection wager consisting of 11 bets: 6 doubles, 4 trebles and a four-fold accumulator.

Then one day this guy turned up and I said, 'have you been bloody fiddling things?' It turned out there was a mess between his state pension and pension credit and the Government owed him £15,000. A nice amount so we are like 'ummmmm we can go to Jamaica, we will buy this...'. We had it all spent and it wasn't even in our hands. Unfortunately, he died before they paid him. I wouldn't have got it, because we weren't married but my daughter, God save her, is bloody brilliant on the internet where she found a clause that said if his was the only income, then he was keeping you. I was entitled to the money. I got it, £15,000; five of it near enough paid for his funeral, because the flowers and everything…. Oh God almighty.

What can I tell you? I was absolutely devastated when both of them died, but when Jimmy died, I had two young children, so I had to carry on, whether I wanted to or not. But when Spence died, I was fifty-nine, the kids were grown up and they had kids of their own and I just lost it, I completely lost the plot.

Now I don't have the responsibility of young children and have the space to grieve, grieving two husbands, the kids won't let me. They are down my throat as soon as I start crying. I used to say, 'For god's sake leave me alone, I was with Spence for twenty-six years, don't tell me I can't grieve for him'. Every day, I sing to him. I make songs up with his name in it, or songs with names in them - I stick his name in instead.

But truthfully, I can't let myself go. I just totally shut it off as I can't cope with it. Because they were both complete opposites to each other, but at the end of the day they both adored me. Spence did, no matter how he carried on, he absolutely adored me, he was like - I had a bodyguard.

> *SuAndi: I hope this isn't an insensitive question, but I am asking if you believe that we meet up with people when we die because you have got two beautiful men to meet up with.*

They will just have to fight over me won't they *(laughing)* they are just going to have to fight – the best man wins.

> *SuAndi: I met Ellen on August 8th she passed on October 18th. I doubt there was a fight knowing the love she had for both men the three of them are now happy together.*

FAMILY
Ellen Forrester (1952 -2018)
Kieran
Ryan
Ashely
Sadie
Partners Jimmy and Spence

ESTELLE LONGMORE
October 1944

I have no regrets about marrying. All the way through life you make choices about what you are going to do and sometimes you regret those decisions or those choices, but not in this case.

Interestingly, when we married, the local paper published our wedding photograph. A local couple, a white woman and a Jamaican man, saw it, invited us round one evening for a cup of tea and a chat. They had been married for a while and they had children, but she was warning me off which was a bit late by then as I was already married. She said, 'Be careful of Jamaican women', which I think was actually the only piece of advice that I thought was quite useful, because I have met some Jamaican woman who have found me a threat, but for most of them it wasn't really a problem. But these two were telling us all the dreadful things about being in a mixed marriage.

I think they were quite happy together, but the world didn't like them. I got the impression that they weren't very well educated, and they didn't have the resources to deal with it. Whereas we were both strong enough to know that having chosen each other we would cope.

I went to a fee-paying girl's school in Acton West London. The local schools were not wonderful at the time and I certainly benefitted phenomenally from the education and I thank my parents for that. But I think they regretted paying my school fees because they regretted the money, but they didn't regret my education.

Mother, with my two elder sisters were war evacuees from London to Hereford where I was born. It was her home town and they stayed with her sister. We returned to London when I was three months.

My Mother didn't work while we were growing up; women in those days didn't often go out to work. I was a teenager when she got a job in a local store. My father was a local government officer, rising to a housing director for various London boroughs. He was a civil engineer and a mechanical engineer, and a housing manager – well qualified for what he was doing.

Wyllie's father had no education himself, he came from a very, very poor family in Jamaica. He was married, but the marriage broke up leaving him to raise Wyllie and his two sisters. He paid for them all to go to the equivalent of an English grammar school. He wanted his three children to be professional people. How he earned that money, when he himself had had no education took great determination. He did a fantastic job.

When I told my parents, I wanted to teach speech and drama, they thought that this was a polite way of saying that I wanted to be an actress, but I didn't. I knew there was no way I would ever make it as a professional actor, I wanted to teach. I would have needed to go into the sixth form and get 'A' levels for the course I wanted to do. For my parents the sixth form fees were probably a step too far. 'Why don't you do a secretarial course?', said my mother the way mothers are supposed to do when their daughter wants to go on the stage. Not that I wanted to, it was their worry that I wanted to go on the stage. Anyway, I did do the secretarial course, and got a job and things went on from there.

Wyllie had arrived in this country two months before. In the middle of October, I was seventeen, so I was very young. We met when we both enrolled on a part time drama course.

I remember going home, and Mother asked, 'What was it like?' I told her there were two young men who I knew previously, and a young man from Jamaica and I think it was as matter of fact as that. I was intrigued I think but he had made no particular impact other than the fact everyone else was white and English and he wasn't. Her immediate reaction was 'Don't you go falling in love with him', and it hadn't crossed my mind that such a thing would happen. The family joke is that she put the idea in my head, but who knows.

Over the following weeks and months, I got to know him - admired him as an actor. At first he was just a class mate, then a causal friend and then quite a close friend. There was a group of six of us who did things together, go on holiday together, but there was never any romance in that, we were friends. There was one couple and the other four of us were just two boys, two girls having a pleasant time together. Then I think we both realised, quite independently, that there was more to this relationship than met the eye.

Over the next three years, my parents got to know Wyllie quite well as a friend of mine. They knew he was a good man, a kind man, an honest man, and an honourable man. They had respect for him. Wyllie in lots of ways was the sort of man you would want your daughter to marry, but they were concerned about the colour of his skin because of what the rest of the world would say.

There had been a point before we actually became engaged when my mother had said I wasn't to entertain Wyllie in the family home if they weren't there. Now, she had never said that about any other friends that I had wanted to invite, and I said, 'If I can't invite this man to my home, then I had better go and find a different home to live in', and I did, I moved out. And I think at that point, they realised that this was something that was serious, and I wasn't going to be browbeaten like that.

We had known each other for four years and had been together about three or four months. Once we had made that commitment, we knew what was going to happen. There was no animosity when we were out socially. Walking down the road, a young mixed couple holding hands, people might look and

stare, but if you look for it, you will find it. But if you don't look for it people might sometimes shout something, but you just think 'they are idiots' and ignore them. That wasn't going to put us off. We got engaged in the December and got married the following summer.

My parents weren't wildly ecstatic, but they accepted it because by that time, they knew that this was something that was going to happen, and, they had to make a choice I suppose, between either accepting Wyllie, or losing a daughter. My father was concerned about our children because you know, if we were going to get married, the chances are we would have children and he was concerned about that.

It was some while after getting married somebody said, 'Have you thought about what will happen if you have any children?' As if anybody embarking on marriage doesn't consider that as a possibility. You might decide that 'no we won't have children', or 'we won't have children yet' or 'we will have as many as we possibly can' or 'maybe we won't be able to have any children', who knows? But the thought that we hadn't considered it, that hurt!!

It was the mid-sixties, 'The Melting Pot ', where all the world's problems would be solved when everybody was coffee coloured, which was ridiculous – as ridiculous as anything else. I wouldn't say I wanted to ignore the situation, but it didn't actually seem terribly important. We were a man and a woman embarking on a life together and what would happen would happen. We might have children, or we might not and for a long time we thought we weren't going to have any children.

I think my mother was more concerned about what the neighbours would say – I wasn't terribly bothered about what the neighbours would say – if the neighbours didn't like it, the neighbours could go and jump as far as I was concerned.

Her sister, my aunt in Hereford, who was a very 'Christian lady' – I use the word in inverted commas - couldn't sit at the table and have a meal with Wyllie, because she didn't know how to speak to him. It's easy to think that was racism and there was a tinge of that, but she was in Hereford and fifty-five years ago, there were very few Black people, and any that she might have come across might have been the bus conductor or maybe the cleaner in the office! She wouldn't have met any socially, so she really didn't know how to behave; consequently, she behaved badly. Wyllie would say not very pleasant things about her. She was never my favourite woman, she was my god-mother, but anything less like a god-mother, I can't imagine. In my book, she was an ignorant woman, who didn't know any better. She didn't know how to like Wyllie, because she had just no point of contact. Racial prejudice was a term she might have heard, but racism was a term which wasn't in use much then. For me she was unimportant. Though it does hurt when someone whom you care about says something unpleasant, but strangers in the street, yobs who shout things, who cares about what they think?

Wyllie was angry at times, because it was hurting me.

Between us, we tried to rationalise the fact that they didn't understand, it was a new experience. In the middle of the sixties, it wasn't a common occurrence and there was a thought that the white women who went with Black men were slags, tarts, whatever. And it was unusual for a middle class educated girl to go out with a middle class educated Black boy. He had come to this country in order to train, (as far as his father WAS concerned), to be a teacher. But he was going to go to the Rose Bruford College that specialised in theatre and drama, so he could train to be an actor and a teacher, on the same course. When my father asked the question 'What are your prospects?' Wyllie had to say, 'Well I'm going to college for three years – I want to be an actor', it added fuel to the fire.

I did move back home. I had made that gesture partly because my mother wasn't very well and partly because we were going to get married and I needed to save some money. So, they accepted it and they gave us a nice wedding.

I think Wyllie's father was quite pleased; he probably thought he had done quite well to catch a white woman. By this time, his Dad with his new wife was living in New York so he must have been mixing with other white people, but probably not socially, only at work. He was a nice man who was welcomed into my parents' home, and they got on well. I think we did a lot for international relations, to be perfectly honest. It is difficult now to imagine a time in England when people didn't mix, because obviously people do mix now such a lot.

We got married in the August and in the September Wyllie started his three-year drama course on a grant. His fees were paid, and he had a certain amount of living expenses. I was working by then and basically I was keeping him which wasn't a problem.

We rented a top floor of a house in Lewisham. My father came and had a look at it mainly just to make sure that it was habitable and not overrun with rats or whatever. But he didn't help us. We just went about it the way any couple would. It wasn't a Black area. The other people in the house were all white, but that was irrelevant. We weren't going to go and live in what is construed as a Black ghetto; that wasn't where Wyllie had come from or where I was intending to go.

While Wyllie was a student, his social life was fine. I became involved in that to a certain extent but, I was working in central London and travelling from Lewisham every day. We still had relationships in Ealing with friends. We didn't lose any friends, we just got on with life. Obviously we didn't plan any children then.

Once he had qualified, he immediately got a job teaching at Rose Bruford, so we thought yes, fine, let's see what happens, but it was five years before our first daughter was born; eight years after we were married. She was born at University College Hospital.

He had had three years as a student at Rose Bruford and three years teaching then he went freelancing at various London drama schools, teaching and directing. Once we were parents, we realised that London was a very expensive place to live and it wasn't the fun place that it had been when we were fancy free and able to go out, because obviously once you have a child, you have to look after that child. So, we decided to move away from London.

Wyllie applied for two jobs. Two drama lecturer vacancies just happened to be advertised the weekend when we made our decision. He was only short-listed for the job at Manchester University and got it so, we moved. I had never been to Manchester before. We did quite a lot of research about where was the best place to live, in order to get to the university. Chorlton was an ideal place, bus routes (no tram in those days), we didn't have a car and neither of us could drive – Wyllie rode his bicycle into the university, and that was fine. We came up and bought a house in a day!

When we arrived, our daughter was four. She started full time school and I got a part time job at an insurance brokers – using my office skills. I had only been there about two months when I found I was pregnant again. Then I was in hospital most of the time during that pregnancy, so obviously I gave up work!

The birth had to be induced. It was about midnight. I phoned Wyllie about ten o'clock. He wrapped our daughter up in a blanket and took her up the road to a neighbour. Then got on his bike and rode

round to Withington hospital to wait in the waiting room. The nurse who I knew very well went out and asked for Mr. Longmore and was very surprised when he stood up. She told me that she was surprised, but that is just because she got to know me well but had never met him. So, she was surprised but not shocked.

I remember later on, I was doing a morning class with other women and we all had our pre-school children with us. A woman asked me, 'Are you a child minder' and I said, 'No, she is all mine'. She looked a bit taken aback, I mean, she just assumed I was looking after somebody else's child. People who knew us, knew it was likely that we would have brown babies.

While we were still living in London my parents would visit us, we would visit them, and then my father died before our first daughter was born. I spent a lot of time looking after my mother as, inevitably under this circumstance, she was deteriorating. She found it difficult when we moved away from London and this is not a very nice thing to say, but partly – she was one of the reasons why we wanted to move. Looking after an aged mother is not an easy thing, and, I felt I had two sisters who lived some distance away, so the burden fell on us. They did help to a certain extent; they organised life for her, it worked - it was alright, she wasn't abandoned, it made her a little bit more self-reliant, rather than being totally reliant on me, which I think was a good thing.

I do think wherever my father is now, he would look down on our daughters and think he had no reason to worry. Yes, indeed they are great. And when I think about my father's concern for these two good-looking girls who are very different in their appearance, have good relationships, good careers, lovely children; what more do you want for your grandchildren, really?

The elder one is a psychologist. She was a very clever girl – she was reading the newspaper at two and a half. Why she wanted to read the newspaper at two and a half, I don't know, but she did. She went to Cambridge, did a degree in Natural Sciences, specialising in psychology, and has worked ever since as well as bringing up three children. She is now working for a cancer research charity as a psychologist. As I say, she was a highly intelligent girl, but the one thing she wanted more than anything else, was to be married and have children. She met a blond, blue eyed, young man and married him and they have three fabulous teenage children. Theirs is a really good relationship.

Our second daughter was always a totally different kettle of fish. There was no way that she was going to go to any all-girls school. The world was made up of men and women and she wanted to go to a mixed school, the local comprehensive. She did textile art at university, followed by a fine art degree, and then a PGCE and is now lecturing in art at a local university. She is not married, but she and her partner have been together, oh must be about sixteen years now and they have two children – a five-year-old and a two-year-old. They met at a Birmingham University, both doing art/design. He is Mixed Race. He didn't know this because he was adopted and raised by a white Irish Catholic family in Leicester. Then he discovered that his mother is Mixed Race Jamaican and that his father was African. Now he is in contact with his mother and his half-sisters, and our five-year-old grandson, knows that he has three grandmothers but only two grandfathers. He hasn't yet enquired as to why and he is much too young to explain that to him. He knows that Wyllie and I are his Mummy's parents, and that Atta and Pops are his daddy's parents, but Nana Caroline is his daddy's mum as well. At some point that will be explained to him, but not yet.

Our elder daughter's children obviously have her Jamaican heritage, but they have also got their father's totally English heritage. She has encouraged them in school projects to explore their family identity. The children are very interested in Wyllie's part of the history. I sometimes wonder if he was an accountant, rather than an actor, they might not be so interested, because inevitably having a

grandfather who is an actor is quite a coup in school. They eat Jamaican food to a certain extent. Not a lot, but Christmas day, wouldn't be Christmas day without rice and peas with their turkey. I can cook rice'n'peas[1] but Wyllie does it much better than me, *(laughter)* of course.

When Jessica's partner joined the family, he had no knowledge of Jamaican cooking because he had been brought up in an Irish family. They gave him a very good life and a good education, sent him to university and gave him all the right values.

While Wyllie was a student, I did qualify as a teacher of speech and drama. I took a part-time course in London. Once both the girls were in school I started applying for jobs. I had taught a little bit, even at my old school in Acton, for a short while. So, I achieved what my mother said that I would never accomplish. I think that she was quite pleased in the end that the dreadful decision I made had never stopped me *(laughter)*. The qualification I had was a specialist qualification, but what I didn't have was a basic teaching qualification and with a change in the law, everybody had to be a qualified teacher with a degree. So, I didn't spend my life teaching speech and drama. But it was that grounding that started me off and led me on to really, a different sort of career. Finally qualifying as a career's advisor and lecturing in employment issues.

Let's not forget that Wyllie's father did not approve of his life as an actor. When he was a university lecturer, that was alright *(laughter)*. If it hadn't been for Wyllie making the most of his education and taking every opportunity and really understanding theatre and all its ramifications, our life would be a lot more difficult. If Wyllie had been a bus driver, it might not have worked, even though we have a good partnership. When he was a jobbing actor working in theatres all around the country, I was at home looking after two children and doing a job and keeping the whole thing together and that worked. That was ok, it wasn't wonderful, but I was happy for that to happen.

When his sisters heard we were getting married they accepted it, but they were both having terrible relationship problems. I think now they find it incredible the length of time we have been married as they have both been through two or three different husbands and partners often ending in disaster. I think that we have done a great job. *(laughter)* I think so and we have now celebrated 52 years of marriage, which in itself, says something.

FAMILY
Katharine Longmore
Jessica Longmore

1 *Classic Jamaican dish of boiled rice with beans normally kidney*

DAUGHTERS

LADY MAKING

My mother bleached
Kitchen tops
Toilet bowls
Curtain nets,
sheets that dazzled white
against the redness of her hands
Now I handle life in different shades
Of polished hue manicured nails
And thank my mother for all she did
To make a lady of her daughter

IRENE BARNES
October 1925
by her daughter TRUDY

SuAndi: Tell me what you do every year on Mother's Day?

I go to the cemetery. My Mum was everything to me; she died when I was twenty-one. I go and to put flowers on her grave and usually the sun always shines. I don't often stay that long. I tidy the grave and say a few words and then I leave crying. It took me a very long time to get over my Mum's death.
Irene Barnes was Welsh and was a very strong, strong but little woman, raised in Salford. My Mum was only 5 ft 1. Auburn hair, lots of freckles; she was a good-looking woman in her day. She was the second eldest of thirteen children; she had a hard life. She was very strong headed my Mother, no one messed about with Irene *(laughter)*. By all accounts she was a bit of a tomboy. She was very loyal, but she didn't take any prisoners. She worked all her life and had good jobs because she was a very clever woman. Mum was a supervisor for Hals Radios, and then she was manageress of Cassons Shoe shop in the Moss Side Arndale Centre.

I believe my Granddad's family were Gypsies and that he used to have a motorbike shop on Regent Road. He was a bit of a 'Kaganana' by all accounts. Kaganana is an Italian phrase for someone who is a bit of this and a bit of that – could be a bit shady you know. He drank quite a bit and had that Gypsy tendency to wander off, so he wasn't home a lot. But apparently, which I was really pleased about, my Mum was his favourite daughter and he brought her a horse *(laughter)*.
It was a hard life you know, they were very poor. It was hard for all the kids; they were all working from the age of twelve.

My Gran wasn't very nice to my Mother so when Mum got pregnant, she took her daughter. This meant

that she became her daughter's sister. Gran was a staunch Catholic to the point, and I remember my Mum telling me this, that she couldn't even use the toilet. It's not surprising that eventually my Mum left.

She lived in South Wales for a while. I know this because she used to mind Shirley Bassey[1]. She didn't see her daughter, Brenda, for a very long time. She was heart- broken about that.

Her first husband was from Belize. I think she met him in Wales, and they moved to Manchester where Mum worked as an orderly at Manchester Royal Infirmary. He was a very violent man to the point where when she was pregnant, he would beat her that much that she lost the babies. I don't know how many she lost, she didn't say, and, she lost an eye with the abuse. Then Irene won the Pools[2]. I believe she brought their house with some of her winnings. It was one of those Victorian terraces near Princess Road in Moss Side. And she bought herself a grand piano – don't ask *(laughter)* because she couldn't even play the piano. Her husband came home one night and was probably going to beat her up again, but Irene got a teapot and smashed it over his head *(SuAndi: good for her)* packed her things and left. Left the house and left everything!

> *SuAndi: I have always thought that you didn't have a regular Manchester accent. I thought perhaps you were a grammar school girl, but you came back to Manchester when you were ten?*

Yorkshire was where Mum met her husband, my Dad, Charles, or Victor as everybody called him. We didn't visit Mum's family; they had disowned her when she married in to Colour and so I never knew my grandparents or any of her sisters when I was younger. We regularly visited Dad's family in London. I was very close to my father's family.

We lived in Yorkshire until I was about ten. I didn't like Manchester at all, and then Mum got ill. I didn't know what the cause was, but she was in hospital for a very long time. So, I had to go and live in London for about eighteen months, it felt like forever. Actually, I really did love London.

In London I stayed with my favourite Auntie and Uncle in Brockley[3] and then we moved to Welling in Kent[4].

Just before she took ill, Mum got pregnant. I was really pleased and thinking 'great that will take the pressure off me'. She never carried the baby full term; when I got older, she told me about the violent beatings; the cause of all her miscarriages.

When I came back home Mum was really thin. I believe she was in recovery from cancer of the bowel. She was like six stone or something it was awful to see Mum like that.

I came back half way through my first year of secondary school. I was very shy because I was very protected, and I still had my Yorkshire accent. Well I thought I had an accent I remember never wanting to lose it. I got bullied a lot and Mum would always take my corner. When we first came from Yorkshire, I went to St. Mary's Junior school, that was very culturally mixed. but I got bullied terribly there

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1 Dame Shirley Veronica Bassey, DBE is a Welsh singer born in Tiger Bay Cardiff whose career began in the mid-1950s

2 The football pools, - a betting pool based on predicting the outcome of football matches taking place in the coming week.

3 South London district

4 Town in the London Borough of Bexley

SuAndi: So, the bullying was for the Yorkshire accent, not being Black and Mixed Race?

Both, a bit of both for the first year and a half at Gorse Park for Girls and then I got in a clique, then I was OK.

In my fourth year a fight broke out between two fifth years, one a Caribbean girl called Grace. Grace was really quiet, small and a bit stout, but a lovely girl –the other girl was very tall and gangly. They had a fight – a big fight, where they nearly ripped each other's clothes off (giggling). Miss Horridge, the headmistress used to walk round with cap and gown. After this fight, she got all the school in the playing fields and then she separated Blacks on one side (SuAndi: Oh God) and whites on the other! We were laughing coz it was like 'wait until our parents find out', 'wait until we get home', you know. So, for a laugh a few of us went up to her asking 'and which side shall we sit on Miss'? *(laughter)*. 'Get over there you awful girls' (in exaggerated voice) and so obviously of course, we did.

SuAndi: Putting you on the Black side?

Oh yeah, yeah, definitely. We would have gone on the Black side anyway, we just did it – just to appear – I don't even know what the word is. Obtuse. Yeah! The phone was ringing off the hook the next day and she had to resign. Yeah, she had to resign over that.

SuAndi: Were your friends both Black and white?

Yes, both and Mixed Heritage, yeah. But as I say…. I didn't have that many friends at secondary school. I used to have a very good friend called Barbara, but I was never allowed to go and stay at anybody else's house and I couldn't have anybody to stay at my house either.

SuAndi: That makes me laugh, because that basically was our house too. The house is spotless, but you are not encouraged to invite anyone in to see it.

Did your Mum ever discuss with you your identity, you know put you wise. I'm thinking about my own Mum – she always said, 'I will always love you but everybody else might not love you, I think you are beautiful..' you know?

Yeah, yeah. I mean she has always stuck up for me if anyone looked at me sideways. Most Sundays, especially in the summer, Mum would make the rice and peas with chicken in big flasks and we would have salads and go all over England having picnics.

We would go to a lot to the seaside. I can remember going to Fleetwood where a load of, I think they were men in kilts, had seen Mum and Dad drive up. They started being racially abusive. I was in the back and Mum was really anxious and saying to Dad 'Turn round, turn round.' Dad wasn't having it. Mum was like, 'you have got to turn around', because the men looked angry. So, we drove off.

Mum would tell me stories how she got spat at. She had lots of fights my Mum – knocking people out – so did my Dad actually *(laughter)*. Yeah, it was hard for my Dad. He was a carpenter and he was very good, but with work, he would get sacked a lot, because of the way they spoke to him and Dad wasn't having any of that. So yeah, I was very aware of racism growing up and maybe because I was their only child; they would talk to me. So, I knew what was going on.

But they always told me just to be me and colour is just a colour, and, just thrive and do your best. Education was a big thing with them. They always said you can do anything in this world if you put

your mind to it.

Even though colour was a big issue for them as an interracial couple, they never infringed that on me. I was taught to treat everyone equally. because I had quite a religious background. I tried not to lie and just be nice to people.

SuAndi: You lost all that (laughter).

I lost all that yeah. I remember when Mum used to send me back to the shops 'Go and take that back'. Oh gosh, I would be gone for an hour I would just be walking round because I just couldn't do it. Often I would come back and say 'Erm they weren't in' *(laughter)*, 'the man I had to speak to wasn't in'. I just could not confront. Confrontation, I couldn't do it all. Mum tried to toughen me up which usually was a waste of time.

My father was quite religious and a disciplinarian. Sometimes I thought he was a bit harsh with me. My cousins used to get me into so much trouble. They used to say, 'you are going to get a licking'. And I usually did yeah! *(laughter)*.

SuAndi: Were any of your cousins Mixed Race?

No, they are all Black. I grew up in a very Black family.

I thought I was born in Yorkshire. I didn't even know I came from Manchester. The only reason why we moved back was because my Mum's family wanted to reconnect with her.

We were planning to emigrate to Canada, Father had got a job. I think Mum really missed her parents, and siblings. Mum and Dad kept themselves to themselves quite a lot, Dad never went to the pub, but I think they liked to go to Bingo. We just always had our family. Mum and Dad had very close friends who they had had most of their lives and my Auntie Dot, my Auntie Brenda and a few others, but not that many and always Dad's family.

Also, Mum wanted to reconnect with her daughter after all this time, because Brenda was married by then with her own kids. So, we came back and then after some time we met up with Mum's family, which was good in a way because five years on my Mum was dead.

SuAndi: You have left school now where are you working?

At Harvey and Rupert[5] and Top Girl Modelling Agency. My Dad wasn't pleased. He wanted me to go to college, but Mum persuaded him that if that is what she wants to do, let her do it. Mum was dead proud so that was great. My Auntie and Uncle had emigrated to America, and I decided at sixteen that I wanted to go to see them, so I needed a passport. Mum was of the opinion 'if that is what you want to do' – she was very encouraging like that, 'you do it darling' she used to say. I thought 'gosh I am going to the States. My Auntie and Uncle have sponsored me to go'.

Then the bombshell came. They told me that I wasn't theirs, I was adopted. I knew Mum really didn't want to tell me, neither did Dad. I think they both wrestled with telling me.

This is how my Mum told me the story. I was six weeks old living three doors down when the neighbours told her; 'that baby is crying – she has been screaming all night, Beryl has left her again'.

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5 *Arguably the 1st designer hairdressing brand to hit Manchester*

Irene went in, apparently, she had to kick the door in to rescue me. Took me back and became my Mum.

Then Mum told me about her life, about the hardship she'd had. She told me about Brenda and what it was like for her. I have so many reasons why I really admired my Mum.

> *SuAndi: Rescuing you must have been the biggest thing she could have done, to compensate in some way for Brenda.*

Yeah, of course.

> *SuAndi: I can appreciate that at sixteen that was really hard to get your head around this revelation. Did you go through a phase of wanting to find your Mother, did you start ask those questions?*

No, no, not at all. They did ask me 'do you want me to find your Mum'? They told me they thought my father had died of TB and they didn't know where my Mum was.

> *SuAndi: Did she rebuild her relationship with Brenda – did you build a relationship with Brenda?*

Yes, she did yes.

I think Brenda resented me really, because I'd had her Mum and she didn't. I don't know when Brenda found out that her Gran wasn't her Mum, and my Mum wasn't her sister, but her Mother.

> *SuAndi: And not your Mum!*

And not my Mum. So, I felt a lot for Brenda. When I met her she was nice, but there was something there. My Gran, when I met her, was a real sweetie, I mean for all the stories they had told me about her.

> *SuAndi: But it is what people did, to cover up illegitimacy to take the child in. Giving the child up to an orphanage, in some ways, was the worst of the two decisions. We have to also consider how in those times women who got pregnant were judged even though with Brenda not being a Black child race wasn't an additional issue.*

To be truthful it all sort of took me down a different path really. I started to rebel a bit, sneaking out. I wasn't very good when I think about it. Yeah, it did me in quite a lot. I started being obstinate and wouldn't listen.

I got pregnant when I was seventeen, which nearly killed my parents. They'd had such big hopes for me. I'd only had sex twice and got pregnant while on the pill. My Dad disowned me actually because he was that... But Mum was always there for me. I actually went to live with my Mum's daughter, Brenda. I was only there for a couple of months, and then came back.

When I had Marcus, Mum was great. She said, 'if you want to go back in to modelling or to go to the States, I'll have Marcus – you can go, I'll look after him'. But I couldn't do that especially knowing that I was adopted, you can't do that to you own child can you - no.

> *SuAndi: And knowing as well that your Mum had been forced to give up her own child?*

And knowing… and as my parents said, 'You made your bed, you lie in it' *(laughter)*. I went back to work. I have always worked. It took me a bit to find my feet a little bit but yeah, I went back to work.

SuAndi: Can I at this point, and we don't have to put this in, it's up to you, were you officially adopted?

No.

SuAndi: Do you want this to go in or not, because I think that it is an incredible sign of love that she didn't need the paperwork.

I think they never wanted me to know that I was adopted. It was only because I was modelling at the time and working at Harvey and Rupert's who were sending all the staff to Spain for a tax break *(laughter)*. I kept asking for my passport, so they had to tell me.

SuAndi: how long did it take for your Dad to come back in to your life?

After Marcus was born, Dad was fine then. I still lived at home. I didn't leave until I was maybe nineteen and a bit. I wanted to leave home by then, so Mum got me a flat and she furnished it. Mum and Dad spoilt me rotten; always there for me.

Every year to help me out they took Marcus on holiday and Mum babysat. She was a great Grandmother. Oh, my son loved her (gentle laughter).

And then it was May, Mum got ill. It was 1980. Mum's health worsened throughout that year. When I went to collect Marcus after work Mum sometimes said, 'Marcus has been so good, oh I had a little bit of a wobble, oh and he ran got a cold cloth'. (Marcus was only four and a half then) 'and he dabbed my head and everything like that'.

Mum was getting really bad headaches. I kept on asking 'have you been to the doctors? Have you been to the hospital?' The next thing she was admitted to Stretford Memorial – with arthritis, that was what the Doctors said anyway and that was what she told us.

She wasn't happy there with the care she was receiving and used to say to me 'They have left me here to die'. 'Oh, don't be so silly Mum'. You know. We were at the hospital every day to see her, but she was just getting worse and worse. It was dreadful in every way and then Grandma died whilst Mum was in Stretford.

Mum was meant to come home on the Wednesday. She had only been there three and a half weeks. We had booked a holiday for her, then she went in to a coma and died that night. *(Crying)*.

SuAndi: I am not keeping you here just to upset you, but you are in a new place having lost your Mum and how is your Dad taking it?

Not well, when Mum died, I just thought I had to be the strong one for Dad. Outwardly I was strong but inwardly I was an absolute mess.

I still remember when I would have been about fourteen I think, coming home from school and Dad was upset. Mum told me that Dad's Mum had died in Jamaica.' Obviously, Dad hadn't been back there for a long time having left Jamaica very young. His mother died, then six months after his Dad died of a broken heart they said.

It took me a long time to get over my Mum's death. I only got over it about ten years ago, and when I say get over it, that I could cope with it, without breaking down crying. But yeah, it is hard because she was the linchpin of the family. It was Mum who kept us all together, even our family in London. Mum was the one who arranged everything, she did all the holidays, she did everything, she was the stable one in the family. You know I didn't get married until I was thirty-seven. My Dad came and told me 'your mum set up an endowment for you and it has just matured'. God bless her! I spent the money on my wedding.

My Dad was a widower for twenty years you know, but I was really happy for Dad marrying, because he had been on his own for such a long time. Though about a year after my Mum dying, he actually had a lady friend and I was furious. I can remember being furious at that, but it didn't last long so it didn't matter.

I called Agnes 'Mum' out of respect, but she was never a Mum to me. I didn't expect her to be either now I was an older woman with my own kids. She also had her own children. They are lovely but for me they are more like nice friends.

The first year after my Mum died, Dad came round practically every day – all my friends know my Dad. My kids loved their Granddad, but they didn't see him as much after he got married. Especially Danny, she felt it a lot. As I did sometimes you know, I felt as though she was trying to take my Dad away *(laughter)* – but that is how all kids are I suppose, that is how you feel.

One day Dad turned around and said 'I can't go to the cemetery with you anymore because I am married now. Your Mum has gone, and I have a life with Agnes'.

I could have bit my tongue off when fourteen years into their marriage I just let it slip one day that I was adopted. It definitely made a difference to her, I don't know how, but I think it did and it does. In my mid-twenties, I started asking around 'do you know anyone called St. Louis? I kept hearing conflicting stories, so I stopped asking. Mum had taken me before she had met my Dad, so Dad didn't know anything. I started enquiring again in my thirties, but I wasn't getting anywhere. She was elusive this woman. I didn't think about my father, then my Auntie June told me that my father was African, and his name was Benado and I went down that line, and that also came to nothing.

Mum said that I looked like Beryl which was a shock as I always used to think that I got my freckles from my Mum and auburn hair just like hers. People even said to me 'Oh you have got hair like your mum and freckles, oh look at your freckles'! But then everybody said I looked like my Dad who isn't my Dad.

When I knew that I was adopted, Mum began to share things with me about Beryl. I remember my Mum saying, 'She was really posh your Mum, but she swore like a trooper' and that not a lot of people liked her. Mum never put her down a lot though. Even when she told me how Beryl left me, she said 'but I saw a right side of her'. So that was all I sort of knew, plus I always thought my Dad was dead but that I was given this Maurice's name of St Louis.

I was at a kid's party about five years ago when my daughter Danny said, 'I think you should sit down, I have got something to tell you'. She told me that she had got an email that she was forwarding to me. She said, 'when you get home, I will send you this email'.

After reading the email: 'I think your Mother is my husband Mark's sister', I contacted Lizzie and she

told me then that I had two sisters – called Pavla and Manya. I thought 'do they live in Manchester?' as I had never heard of them. I got on the internet with Julie Hand who I totally trust. I found Pavla straight away and the resemblance was quite uncanny really.

Then it just snowballed. I got in touch with my half-brother Mark. Pavla I discovered lived ten minutes away from me in Withington. She didn't get back in touch for a while, so I just left it in her court. I couldn't get in touch with Manya who lives in Hulme because she wasn't on any internet format. Eventually Pavla did get in touch. I then met both sisters at the Midland in Withington. Their father, Maurice, had brought them up. They didn't know where their Mother was as they had not seen her for many, many years. What they did reveal was that I was a shock to them as was Mark. Mark is the youngest child, after me, the youngest girl.

Together we went to London to meet Mark who filled us in on what Beryl had told him. He said, 'I knew about you Trudy'! I was really shocked about that. I said 'why, what do you mean?' Beryl told him that Manya, Pavla and Trudy's Dad had taken all three of his girls to live in St Lucia. Well I was stunned *(laughter)*.

Manya and Pavla were born in London when she was with Maurice. He used to have Night Clubs. When he became a father, he decided that he was going to put the night life business behind him and be a responsible father. Then apparently one day, while Maurice was at work, she took Manya the eldest and left. So, when Maurice came home Manya was gone and there was Pavla left in the house on her own.

Together we have pieced how the story went. When Beryl took Manya Maurice struggled to keep Pavla. It would have been hard for him to carry on working so Pavla had to go in to a foster home for a little while until he sorted himself out a bit. After a while Maurice left London with Pavla and moved to Manchester. He started up again with Beryl, then once in that relationship, he took his two girls and left. I believe, that is maybe when she got pregnant with me, but Maurice didn't want to know her then because he had got his girls back.

It's amazing that we were all living in Manchester, yet I had never even met them. My Mum said…. that Maurice gave me his name. But Maurice couldn't have done – that will just have been Beryl, because Beryl was a Walter Mitty[6]. Beryl lied, she was just a Walter Mitty.

From what I have heard, Beryl was living in Benado's house, so she was mixing with a lot of Africans and Beryl, she was a Kaganana that woman, honestly. When my Mum told me about Beryl, I sort of gave her the benefit of the doubt, until I met my brother, and then from what he told me, then I couldn't stand her. I have had to really go deep within to try and forgive that woman. But I don't like her in any shape or form, to be honest.

I always thought she was Irish, but her parents were Scottish. She was an only child who I believe hated her mother so much she left home really early. Her father was a journalist, so quite an alright middle-class family named Montgomery, not St. Louis. She had lots of aliases.

She was a good time girl. She just liked to have fun, you know. She wasn't a very serious mother. According to Mark, she loved partying and going out. She put it out that Maurice stole her children which was…. *(laughter)* the truth was, he rescued them.

When she had us girls she was in her twenties. I don't know what happened to her. I have said to Mark

6 *A person who indulges in fantastic daydreams*

'did she have mental health problems'? He said, 'not that I know of'. But I swear that she had mental problems. From the stories that he has told me, she was not right in the head.

I have seen pictures of her with Pavla and Manya as toddlers and they are extremely well dressed. What annoys me about Beryl was that she was an extremely good looking woman from the photographs I have seen of her; a very attractive woman.

It was another seven years after me before she had Mark, so she was free to do what she wanted to do. She just wasn't a clever woman. She never got married.

She met a GI and told Mark he was his father – but he wasn't his father at all. I just looked at Mark and thought 'how do you not know you are half Greek, because for me that is what you look like. But when he was younger, he really looked Mixed Race. The reason that she couldn't go to America to meet up with the GI was because she couldn't get a passport, or a birth certificate. Lizzie, Mark's wife, has tried and failed to get her birth certificate; no one can get hold of it. She is an enigma that mother of mine, that Beryl. Maybe she was illegitimate too.

'Crying, in shit, in piss' is how she died. Mark reckons that she was riddled with cancer and she wouldn't have anybody to help her, because he reckons she felt guilty. They found her! It is a bit sad isn't it? It's is sad for a life. Especially because my brother loved her, Mark really did love his Mum. My future changed the night my Mum kicked that door in and got me, a very neglected baby, out of the cot. Taking me back to her house then waiting for Beryl to come back. Mum probably got someone to sit with me while she went back to Beryl's and battered her (raucous laughter). I always remember my Mum saying that and I was like 'that was my Mum'.

I really do feel disloyal when I do talk about it and doesn't it just complete the warning, you have got to be careful about what you wish for? Once I knew the story, I did want to know who I was, and where I came from. What my nationality is, and I am still none the bloody wiser actually. I am really sorry that I opened that can of worms.

> *SuAndi: I would think that any child would want to know where they come from but as a Black child and as a Mixed Race child again obviously you want that other bit – it's the whole of your character. It is easy for me to say without the experience of being adopted, but when adopted parents say 'you were special, we picked you out' there is a lot of truth in that. But for a woman to take a child and batter the neglectful mother, keep that child and raise her and then for a man to come in to that relationship knowing that story, bloody hell – you want to shout it from the roof tops. And I saw the church when we gathered for the last time for your Dad, he was loved – he was loved.*

Yeah, they were great my Mum and Dad. My cousins they still do not know. When I go to London it's like going home. Because I am the eldest cousin, they have such respect for me and … They really love me they really do. It doesn't matter if they have not seen me from one year to another, we just slot back together as a family.

> *SuAndi: You know the old adage, 'you can't choose your family' and you can't choose that family's response to you, but if there is something solid there, it's there.*

Maurice seemed to be a really, nice, decent man you know, because of what he did so that he could bring his girls up. But I am really, really glad that I had the parents I had – I really am. I had two very protective parents. I think out of the four of us, I was the lucky one!

FAMILY

Irene Barnes 24th October 1925 – 10th July 1980
Charles (AKA Victor) Barnes 3rd April 1933- 9 August 2017
Trudy Barnes
Irene's daughter Brenda
Beryl Montgomery. Unknown – DOD
Maurice St Louis and daughters Pavla and Manya

ANN (HILDA) BLACKSHAW
August 1939
by her daughter MICHELLE

Steve Albert Akinlolu Allen, my Dad, liked to sow his seed, so to speak *(laughing)*. I have a sister Remi who is Nigerian. She has a Nigerian Mum, but she has lived here a long time; we are very close. She told me the first time that she came to Manchester to look for our Dad, 'I didn't know what his address was. I went to the station and told the cabbies 'I am looking for my Dad, Steve Allen the electrician'. 'Steve Allen the electrician? I will take you to him'

I have a Nigerian brother called Femi, who has another different Mum. I met him once when my son Adam was a baby – thirty-two years ago. It was very funny how like my Dad he was. He looked just like my Dad, he walked like my Dad.

I have one full brother, same mother, same Dad, Steve. He passed away almost fifteen years ago.
I was born in Ardwick Green; on the settee, according to my Dad and I grew up around there then Moss Side, Whalley Range and Longsight.

My earliest memory is of my Dad leaving the room and me being in a cot and crying for him. I can remember that, and this would have been in Ardwick Green. I was raised by my Dad, yeah, yeah. I was really close to my Dad

My Mum was from a family of ten, from Higher Blakeley; a very working-class family.

Dad was more educated than my Mum. In Nigeria he was a Latin scholar– I remember my sister telling me that. Mum didn't like school; she couldn't read or write very well. She was always a bit in awe of my

Dad actually. I think she was bright, just because a person doesn't excel at school it doesn't mean they are stupid. She used to say, 'I can't reckon up very well'.

Grand-dad was called Jack, they used to call him 'Red Jack'. He died before I was born. There was a lot of red hair in Mum's family. Grand Mother died when I was really young. I do remember Dad saying that he was the first Black man that my Grandparents had met, and they loved him. They just fell in love with him – like a lot of people did with my lovely Dad. And you know, just how proud my Grandmother was. All the neighbours used to talk to my Dad when he took us on a visit, just because we were Black, we were different.

I can't really remember meeting my Grandmother very much. I have this vague memory probably not long before she died of going to visit her. I must have been about twelve and she said, 'tastes like piss this tea – who made this tea?' This is all I can remember about my Gran. Around that time there was a lot of trauma for me, so maybe I have blocked out some stuff, and all the memories of being at my Gran's went too.

My Mum was a lot younger than my Dad; she was about probably thirty-five years younger I would say. She just wasn't ready to have a baby. She was still wanting to have a good time, she was a good time girl as they say, just enjoying her life.

My Mum was beautiful, very voluptuous, a very shapely woman; I guess, I got my boobs from my Mum for sure *(laughing)*. She had lovely cheek bones, greyey-blue eyes and a little nose.

I saw one of my Uncles last week and he said, 'you look alike' and I know I look like my Mum. She always kept her red hair and in one of just the two photographs I have got of her, she had an Afro; you know when all the women used to have those curly perms. She was very working class, very outgoing and had a lot of friends because she was very kind.

Mum got pregnant more or less immediately. I was born in December '61, Steve in August '63 that was really close. She was jumping off chairs. She did not want to have another baby. She didn't really want to have children, she just ended up falling pregnant with us. I think she ambled away, she just did her own thing and went off as far as I know. But my Mum would always come back and see us.

She would always come back into my life. I might have been about five when Dad married this awful woman – there was a lot of physical and mental abuse towards me especially and to my brother and Dad didn't know. Dad won 'The Pools' twice – do you remember it? It was the Pools then not the lottery, but to win it twice! He never had any money; he brought a house outright. I think it was in Ardwick, a terraced house and married this awful woman English Kathleen, who had an awful son called Nigel. (Yeah white as well) who also bullied me and did awful things to me.

Mum was always trying to see us. I remember my Mum coming to the door with presents once and my Step Mother said, (Michelle is crying now) 'she is not coming in, I am going to batter you'. I remember my Mum's face, my Mum crying, I can remember that. There are so many things you can't remember – it's funny isn't it. It's like taking you back and you can just see the hurt.

I was young, I was about six. It was awful, there was loads of cruelty, but it's not part of this story is it? Dad didn't know. Eventually her sister told him and when he found out, bless my Dad, he just got me and my brother and left. He just left the house and he obviously loved this woman so much. But he left (Michelle cries again).

That Kathleen was the only woman ironically that he married – he chose the wrong one, didn't he? I think Dad was with her about three years. As far as I know, he might not have even got around to divorcing her – wouldn't be surprised. But he never asked for the house or anything, he didn't care about that. He just left; he just wanted his kids to be safe.

This was one of the times that I went and lived with my Mum. I remember it was the year that they went on the moon, '69, round about then. Mum lived on Peach Street, just off Broadfield Road in Moss Side – in a terraced house, and…. very bravely, she was having an affair with this woman. I remember my Dad saying, 'Your Mum, she is a lesbian', and I was thinking 'what is a lesbian?' what a nice word *(laughing)*. Oh, I was always a little bit posh, a little bit of a bookworm, a little bit you know different, and I thought 'oh that is a nice word' and it just like got to me. Judy had three sons and lived about three doors away. She was a bit of a female Elvis Presley, so when I look at KD Lang I think of Judy. Judy was great, she was really nice to us actually. My Mum was happy with her. When I look back now I think 'how bloody brave of you Mum'. It was a really normal cul-de-sac street in Moss Side in the sixties and there was Mum breaking the barriers.

She didn't stay a lesbian; she was clearly fluid with her sexuality like most people are. 'She ran off with a Black man', that is what they always used to say and then she also ran off with a woman! I thought 'Wow Mum'.

Mum always told me not to go out with a Black man, he will break your heart. She only ever went out with Black men, *(laughing)* so she was talking about herself really. Funny that, because her girlfriend was white, but she never went out with any white men, ever.

There was a man who beat her up for years. He was West Indian, I think Jamaican. He was horrible to her, I hated him.

Then Mum started going out with a guy called Dolly, a Bajan guy. His name was Adolphus Cancelprey - what a name - so they called him Dolly. Dolly was really quiet, the complete opposite to Mum who was very outgoing. You would really have liked my Mum because she was a good laugh. She really loved Dolly but still Dad would go round, they were still friends. I don't know how Dolly received my Dad's visits.

> *SuAndi: I have a vague memory of occasions, I don't know whether it was with little Steve, but probably when times were bad, and your Dad would appear, and my Mum would say 'don't leave those kids'.*

Because he would just dump us. It might have been one of those times you see.

> *SuAndi: My Auntie Josie would say 'I have had these kids three days'. I just wonder why in those times; he didn't take you to your Mum's?*

I think my Mum couldn't cope. She was in and out of Prestwich[1]. She had bipolar disorder and used to get really bad depressions. She also had psychotic episodes which I am lucky enough not to suffer from. But I think it was because my Mum was ill, she wasn't available to look after us – or he didn't think she could cope. I think that is what it was. What I do know is that she loved us so much!

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1 Opened in 1851 with 350 patients by 1903 it was accommodating 3,135 patients making it the largest asylum in Europe.. Between 1917 and 1919, its inhuman, custodial and antitherapeutic practices were exposed. Renamed the Prestwich Mental Hospital in 1923

SuAndi: Because your Dad had a great relationship with her family you could have gone there, but if they didn't know it would have exposed your Mum's illness.

Maybe, maybe that is it; it's an interesting one because she had such a big family. I remember staying with Auntie Vera who lived in Wythenshawe. I used to see her a lot, she had six kids too – all of them seem to have loads of kids. But most of the family were in Higher Blakeley and from Moss Side; it seemed like the other side of the world. (lots of laughing) My Dad never knew the way anywhere, and he drove about ten miles per hour, and I don't think he ever had any insurance.

I remember Dad putting me on the coach to see Remi my Nigerian sister in the summer holidays and we would go and because we were the only Black people in St Albans at that time, the people would go 'have you come from Nigeria?' and we would go 'no, we have come from Manchester'. *(laughing)*
In those days, parents relied on their extended family. Dad's extended family was my Mum's. Clearly it must have been really full on being a single parent and trying to earn a crust.

In a sense he had to turn to other Africans. There were loads of them always round at the house – and obviously your lovely mum SuAndi. There were others like an Auntie Jean, who was a really good friend of my Mum's. She wasn't really an Auntie, but everyone was an Auntie. In Liverpool there was Auntie Pam. So sometimes we would spend time with her.

It would have been very unusual in those days to be a male single parent. He must have been at his wits' end at times especially with my brother and me being so close in age.

So, after a short time with my Mum at Peach Street, Dad found a flat in Whalley Range and we moved there. That is why I love Whalley Range, coz I was dead happy. I had my brother and my Dad; no evil step mother. That changed me quite a lot actually.

Dad never ever stopped contact with Mum. I mean my Dad loved my Mum and I know Mum would have liked to have got back with Dad again.

My cousin Carol, the one who you SuAndi remind me of, used to look after us, but really, I was looking after my Dad and brother then. Do you remember Tunde from years ago? He used to come round and he used to say 'Landlady', that is what he used to call me, because I used to make tea for everybody. 'Make us some tea Michelle'. 'OK Dad'. We weren't there for long, in Whalley Range, I really loved it there and then we went to Longsight

Mum did try to look after us. She said, 'I did want you.' It was difficult for her – women are not supposed to not bring up their children. Imagine how she was regarded, imagine all the shit she got for that. 'Oh, so the Dad brings them up – what is wrong with you?' I can imagine all the gossip and then especially when she has a lesbian phase, can you imagine what that was like! I thought 'Oh my God, my poor Mum'.

I remember from being quite young, going to see her in Prestwich, seeing the after effects of electric shock therapy. It was like an old-fashioned asylum. I was quite scared at times.

SuAndi: I visited my brother Malcolm there. It was a terrifying place. that gave ECT randomly to patients

Afterwards she wouldn't be able to remember a thing; blank literally, no memory at all. But bless her heart, she had a great sense of humour. I remember when I discovered the Fall song, 'Repetition ' and

one of the lines is 'Oh mental hospitals – oh mental hospitals, they put electrodes on your brain, and you are never the same'. I'd play the song – so we could laugh about her mental health, but it was awful. I think I always wanted to save my Mum, so when I was doing my school 'O' Levels[2], I decided to move in with her.

I can remember the first time I went abroad. It was Mum who had saved up and gave me some money to go. I was seventeen; it was a school trip to Italy. 'You and me our Chell, we will go abroad one year'. She had never been abroad, like lots of people back in the day.

I fell in love with the country. Later on, I got a job in Italy; languages are my forte. Dad always encouraged me, bringing me different language books, so I moved to Italy when I was quite young. I had intended to stay for a while, but the job was really shit, so I came back after about two months. But the intention was always to go back – there is something about Italy.

I moved into a room with some friends over in Otterburn Crescent in Hulme. I guess you know there used to be cockroaches, flying cockroaches. I just got my duvet and I went to my Mum's.

It's funny how I didn't go to my Dad, really it was because Mum was nurturing. Even later when my brother Mark came along, Mum would welcome him and look after him as though he was hers too. Growing up there were loads of times where Dad didn't have any money and there wasn't any food in the cupboard, and then there would be an abundance of food, because Dad had got a job or something. So, there were lots of time when we were hungry. My Mum was always really careful with money *(laughing)* you know how people used to put money under the mattress, she used to put it under the carpet (more giggling) like a big bulge in the carpet.

Mum always made sure that there was food in, you know cakes that we liked. That was her way of nurturing us *(crying)*. She probably felt so guilty and she had to live with so much shit from people. She would do whatever she could to get money together to make sure there was everything that you are supposed to have for Christmas. You know putting tins away all year. Everyone did that didn't they? They were just saving the food in a cupboard and putting it away – horrible food you know, the tinned meats and what have you – spam, good old spam – putting all away even though she didn't even like Christmas.

While Mum was always careful with money, Dad was completely opposite. If he had it, he would spend it, or give it to someone. It was like easy come, easy go.

I like to think of my Dad as a man of peace – a Nigerian hippy. I think that is where my hippiness came from. But you know, because it was dangerous, they had to carry knives didn't they when they first came over. He always wore an overcoat …..*(laughing)* three quarter length like the actor Edward Woodward.

If Dad had any girlfriends, I became this strong kid. My poor Dad - I must have been a bloody nightmare. It was because I was thinking 'no one is going to do it again', you know, come and abuse me. Denise was from Rochdale. Dad probably picked her up in the car saying he was a taxi knowing my Dad. She had two kids – two white kids and her mother was an alcoholic. I was fourteen. He brought them home, they moved in to my bedroom – WHAT – but we were happy *(Laughing)*. So, our Mark, my next brother, is in his early forties.

When I first started dating my son's Dad, Andy (Andrew Platten), I remember we went to the Grant's

2 *Taken at fifth form or year 11 at approximately age 17 (or age group 14-16).*

one night (this was before we were married) and Andy asked me 'so how many brothers and sisters have you got?' I was trying to think when my Dad went 'and there is Alicia' and I went 'WHAT?' You know Andy is from a normal family and I thought 'don't show me up Dad'. What are you doing telling me now I have got a sister? 'Yes, in Germany and she looks like you', and I am like 'oh no' and there is another sister too and there could be more!

Oh my god, Mark's Mum Denise is only about six years older than me. My Dad was shocking honestly, but he was very happy with her. It was nice. Yeah for a little bit, she was really nice.

I don't know how Mum was with the wicked step-mother Kathleen, because the step mother kept us away from poor Mum. But she was very, very jealous of Denise. She really, really was; she really loved Dad. She would have loved to have got back with him.

I moved in with Mum because I was sick of looking after my Dad and brother. I went 'I am moving in with my Mum'. They were absolutely devastated; guilt tripped me terribly, made me feel really bad for leaving the family home. How dare I leave them?

Our Steve never really got that time with our Mum, so he always had that mother thing – he missed it. I looked after him like I was the Mother and he was like my little baby. But I bossed him around. I terrorised him but I did look after him, especially while we had the stepmother just to make sure he didn't get it. We were really close.

Steve's relationship with Mum was more friend than Mother and Son. I think she must have felt guilty. I think there was something – I can't put my finger on it, that was not right about their relationship, that jarred. Maybe there was some resentment because he felt abandoned, which he had a right to feel. Yeah, he did absolutely.

Anyway, Mum and Steve used to smoke pot together. They never thought that Michelle would 'do anything remotely bad'. I was labelled the good one. I was the posh one, the clever one, because I was always really conscientious at school. I was quite bookish as well. Steve was like the 'bad one' you know what I mean? People used to go 'oh you are Steve Allen's sister aren't you, Steve Allen is really bad'. Just because Steve did what he wanted. Steve was dead bright, he was just wild. I was the responsible one, typical Capricorn girl, looking after the family. People talk about 'rebelling' but there was nothing to rebel against, because my Dad was so easy going.

What is really sad for our Steve is that I was always our Dad's favourite. He used to come home and say, 'I bring you butter'. Butter for me and margarine for our Steve. I would give him my pocket money sometimes.

SuAndi: You sound like me and Malcolm.

Oh God really, that is so weird. I got shivers then when you said that. I always felt really bad.

I lost my Dad in December 1990. Cancer; he was a smoker, but he had stopped smoking many years before when he had a stroke in his fifties. He had prostate cancer. He was in pain, and they misdiagnosed him. He could have been saved but it had spread everywhere. So, in a way it was a blessing that the diagnosis was in the September and he passed away in the December. So, he didn't suffer for too long.

Oh, my Dad was such a rum 'un. He had lost the use of his legs in hospital. We took my nephew

Remi, Steve's son to see Dad. Dad is flirting with the nurses, and I will never forget, he held baby Remi in his arms, and he went 'Look I am still doing it'. In other words, 'I am still sowing my seed' is what he meant.

Do you know what? I feel terrible saying this, but I just remember going through an awful phase. I was a right bloody nightmare when I was sixteen – saying 'you never wanted me', throwing it in my Mum's face, just being really horrible, having these awful arguments. Mum told me 'I tried to get you', but Dad had loads of people to back him up. That was really difficult to hear, because I had always been a 'Daddy's girl', and Mum knew that. Poor Mum, I think she felt really left out because I was a Daddy's girl and I just adored my Dad.

I became the favourite even more because Steve was naughty; going out and having a good time, doing what normal kids do.

When Mum worked at Howells[3] near the Harp Brewery, near the Denmark Road Police Station, she was dead happy because she had a really good network of friends.

Then she had some psychotic episodes; she was hearing voices telling her to kill me. Then it was more medication; loads of different kinds of medication.

Then there were the Fulton Court years weren't there? She was on her own in Fulton Court. She (always) had a spare room so I could stay with her. They were sad times. There were a lot of suicide attempts then, in and out of hospital.

I was very unhappy then too, so I kind of understood. When I was a teenager I started doing it too, it just got to the point, it was almost like a competition. I don't really know; Mum felt absolutely devastated as was my Dad. After one of my attempts, it was Mum's boyfriend Dolly who found me, another time it was some strangers.

I was living in John Nash Crescent[4] – Mum and Dolly had moved near the Hippodrome[5], on the Estate on Allenbrook Walk. She lived there for years. I took some stuff, then changed my mind. I was going to Mum's. The people I passed thought I was drunk – I did nearly die that time it was one of the times I was resuscitated. I am definitely meant to be here. I can't really remember the other time and then my other attempt was after Mum passed.

I do remember saying 'I'm so glad you are here Mum, I love you'. It's funny the difference between them – Dad was really dramatic, really over the top. He would say 'I love you – you are my life'. Mum was from a typical post war working-class family – you don't say how you feel. When I told her I loved her, she would say, 'don't be so stupid' but I knew she loved me, but it was just embarrassing for her to express herself in words. They were polar opposites really. When I told her 'I love you Mum, I want you here' and she would always say 'I am not going to live until I am older' – it was always her intention, when she was really unhappy.

Steve was in prison when our Mum died. Fuck, it's so fucking shit, so shit coming to Mum's funeral in handcuffs. Why do they have to do that? I don't think it was necessary. It is so cruel.

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3 Founded in 1946 by Edward Stanley Howells as a radio and TV repair shop

4 A large housing development in the Hulme district of Manchester

5 Originally known as the Grand Junction Theatre and Floral Hall, opened in Preston Street, Hulme, Manchester, on 7 October 1901.

My Mum left a suicide note to me on the back of a note that I had left for her. I had just moved in with Andy, my son's dad. We lived in Hulme Crescents and I always checked on her – I always knew when she was going down. One of the things she wrote was 'please forgive me, I am so lonely since I left Dolly, please look after Steve and your Dad'. Our Steve was devastated.

Our Steve had addiction problems throughout his life, particularly heroin. While he was a user, he robbed to support his habit. Still he had that special something. All my friends fell in love with him. He went out with three of them. He was such a charismatic, intelligent, attractive man, and funny as well. He was more Mancunian than me, more down to earth.

I think Mum's death is when Steve's addictions took hold though he was always trying to get clean. He met his son Remi's Mum in rehab – I think that must be quite common. He was always a great Dad to his kids, that is another thing. I have always thought that about the Allen men, what great fathers they make. My brother Mark he is a great Dad to his kids too. The problem was that Remi's mother continued to take crack and when Steve moved to London she stayed in Manchester with their son. So, I would often take Remi to London to see Steve.

Steve met Nessa and they were together for ten years. He stopped his addiction and got a really good job as a drug and alcohol counsellor. He did really well, got promotion. The clients used to ask for him, but he got completely burnt out. They bought a flat in Tottenham so now he has a daily commute to Surrey; two hours there and two hours back. Then Nessa got pregnant with Issac who is eighteen now. Out of the blue Steve started drinking – he had never been a drinker. In the past it was pot, weed – and the heavy drugs. Honestly, it can happen to anyone. When you see people on the street what do you think? Well I think of our Steve.

Nessa wanted another baby and I remember him saying 'I feel like a sperm donor'. What he really wanted was to have Remi living with him. Then one day you turned around and Steve had lost his relationship. He was back home, but he was sleeping in parks drinking whiskey. It was so quick, so quick how it happened. I advised him to go to Direct Access, 'declare yourself homeless, you need to get yourself a Doctor and find somewhere to live'. Adam, my son, was really close with Steve because he was like a Dad to him at times. Regularly Steve would turn up asking to stay and I always said yes. Then I had a wave of depression and Adam said, 'you are not well enough' and it was the first time I said 'No'. I felt really bad, I had always been there, through all his addictions. He stayed with Mark which as it all ended was good that they had some time together.

August 2003 was Steve's fortieth birthday, and we had a lovely day together. He came round in the morning and I made one of my hippy juices and he even drank it. But then he ran out and he had to go and get himself some whiskey and I said 'Ahh do you need to drink all of that?' I knew he was struggling, he had to have a drink because without alcohol he was ill. Steve had done an arty degree, so we went to see, what was it? Robocop 3, or the Terminator – it definitely was an Arnie film. We walked into town, to that cinema on Deansgate and walked back and sat in the garden and lit some candles. This was Monday, Remi was coming on the Friday so we could spend the day together. Steve promised to sort out somewhere to live and the last thing I said to my brother was 'what do you want Chocolate Cake or Carrot Cake?' because I was baking for when Remi came. He went 'Chocolate, love you', 'love you', we always told each other we loved each other. On Wednesday I had a feeling. I didn't know where he was, I always needed to know where he was. Mark said he had gone and got himself a doctor. Direct Access had found him temporary housing in Miles Platting in this bloody multi storey. They had put Steve, 'vulnerable' Steve on like the sixth floor, in this high rise. Fucking stupid, this is someone

who has got the DTs[6].

Friday, I get a call from Mark, 'Steve has fallen'. When I went there the staff said Steve had said 'the So Solid Crew[7] were following him'. Steve had climbed out the window and he fell. He didn't fall very far, but he died. Why the fuck did they do that when someone was so vulnerable!

I think Mum carried around loads of guilt especially over Steve because he was young, just a baby when she left. Towards the end of her life she got back in to Catholicism– she really was into it. It was like a driving force for her, so she clearly must have been brought up as a catholic. It grabs them back somehow doesn't it? She's buried at Southern Cemetery with my Auntie Vera with her cousin Sandra, and Uncle Ronnie, Vera's husband. Yeah, it was quite a packed grave. But she is not buried in the Catholic part of the cemetery you know.

I can remember I was about twelve when my Gran died. It was the first time I had really properly seen my Mum cry. She came home with the nightie Gran had died in – it sounds really morbid doesn't it? But I can remember the smell of the nightie. I can remember my Mum's smell too from the bathroom. I think I look a lot like my Mum – I know I have got my Mum's body like I've said, but I think I also look like my Dad, do you know what I mean? I have always felt proud of being half Nigerian maybe because my Dad was my main parent. I always wanted an African name like 'why are we called Allen Dad, why Allen?'

Michelle Ann Abiodun Allen. It sounds a bit romantic. My Dad I'm sure was a bit of a Jackanory[8] at times. He told me there was a French girl during the second world war, who helped my Dad. She was called Michelle – who knows whether that was made up or not, I don't know. Something to do with the boats as I remember.

Annie was my Nan, and Mum was Ann though known as Hilda, she was never Ann she was Hilda. She was very much a Hilda *(laughing)* she suited Hilda too. And it's funny because sat here with you SuAndi, the way you are 'loving' your cigarette, – that is how my Mum smoked. Sat at the kitchen table, talking with her friends, knowing that I am listening, 'this is big people's talk now, out you go'. And she always used to swing her legs like that.

My nick name was 'posh Annie', which I hated. I had loads of 'posh' friends. I was always a little particular. I was always a little bit different. Oh my God, I always had to have cotton knickers - remember those horrible Brentford nylon things? No, I wouldn't have the nylon knickers, it had to be cotton knickers.

For a little while I was Afro European. Do you remember Francis Asumah?[9] Well I became best friends with Greta, his younger daughter and he always used to say to us 'You are not Half Caste you are Afro European'. I was about twelve and I thought 'wow that is an amazing thing' so, yeah, Half Caste, I was definitely Half Caste, because everybody said Half Caste. So, Half Caste, Half Caste, Half Caste, you know. And then when he told us Afro European, I felt quite proud about that, I thought that was

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6 Delirium tremens (DTs) is a rapid onset of confusion usually caused by withdrawal from alcohol. When it occurs, it is often three days into the withdrawal

7 An English garage, grime and hip hop group from Battersea, London they achieved wide success in the early 2000s.

8 BBC children's television series broadcast between 1965 to 1996 designed to stimulate an interest in reading.

9 Asumah was a barber in Moss Side his daughter Francesca became a successful model and one of the first Black models to be in a Marks and Spencer's photographic campaign. She is now a highly respected Yoga teacher in California

amazing.

My Mum is from a very musical family. Nan and several Aunts were singers. Dad played the saxophone. Her taste in music was diverse, it was great. From Elvis to a lot of the old Irish stuff but John Holt, Al Green, probably like all our Mums of that generation. So, we had good times. Mum had good parties. I was thinking – about nice memories, instead of only remembering bad things. Black and white films on a Saturday afternoon – Betty Davis, all the old classics. We would get all of the things that we liked to eat. I would always lie on my Mum – around her hips. Now whenever I think about black and white films, I always, always think about my Mum and I still love them, I love them so much.

I used to like sharing a bed with my Mum. Sometimes when I lived with her and Dolly and if he was messing her about by seeing other women, she'd get in bed with me, I loved that. It's funny how I loved the physicality of Mum. Cuddling up with her and her singing 'I'm writing a letter to daddy[10]' *(laughter)* I just loved that. I loved it when she got into bed with me.

If Steve was here, what he would remember? I would love to hear what he had to say. I just knew it was just dead painful for him and how awful to hear from a prison chaplain that your mum has taken her own life.

SuAndi: Malcolm was in prison when our Mum died

I remember Adam my son, said to me once, 'Mum you never talk about my Nana – why do you never talk about her?'

But I do talk to her every day because she is on my altar. I am a Nichiren Buddhist[11] so we chant and have a little altar and have a little scroll, a Gohonzon; it reflects your life. So twice a day she is there, she is there, she is always there.

If my Mum was still alive, I would say 'Let me take you on holiday Mum – I will take you abroad'. *(crying).* I would take her to Italy, we always talked about going away at Christmas because she didn't like Christmas.

Adam said 'You are going to have to talk about your Mother aren't you Mum? You need to do it, you have to do it' and he urged me to come here today you know, because I was half way here then I was like 'Oh my God, I can't do it'. I would have come though, I would have come, just because it was my Mum's birthday. When you suggested today 'Oh my God' chills, 'oh my God, it was meant to be'. I am here honouring my Mum and she deserves this.

FAMILY
Ann (Hilda) Blackshaw August 1939 - January 1988
Steve Albert Akinlolu Allen September 1917 - December 1990
Steve Akinlolu Allen August 1963 - August 2003
'Andrew Platten, father of Michelle's son Andrew February 1961- July 2016

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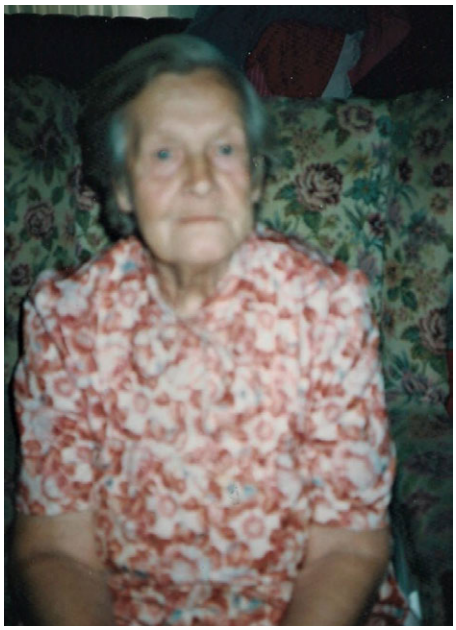
10 From the film "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane" (1962)
11 Nichiren Buddhism based on the teachings of the 13th-century Japanese Buddhist priest Nichiren (1222–1282).

MAY QUARTEY
May 1921
by her daughter LIZ



I describe myself as a human being, but culturally I am Ghanaian. As a child I had always been aware of the way people looked at me and talked about me. In those days I was unsure what I was, because I was living in a white society with very few mixed-race people around me. Yes of course I had my family, but I didn't have any awareness of what I was or sense of identity.

I think my mum would be OK about my identifying as Black because she would understand that our cultural heritage came more from our father than her. We mixed more with my Dad's family. My Mum wanted us to be whoever we wanted to be, so I would class myself as Ghanaian with Lancashire. *(laughter)* I have to put that in because I cook Lancashire dishes that my Mum taught me as I watched her, and I cook African food. My Dad cooked all the African food and my Mum cooked all the English food. She didn't cook very much after she had a nervous breakdown and what she did cook wasn't like she did before she became ill. Even so I can't say there isn't anything about my white side of the family which is more than the Black side, but my soul identity is Ghanaian.

When I first went to my secondary school, within a few weeks as we were queuing for lunch, another mixed-race girl pushed in in front of me and I said to her 'Oi you, don't push in front of me'. She turned around and punched me in the stomach. We got dragged out of the line and taken to the lower school headmistresses' office where I promptly threw up because she had punched me so hard and they made her clean it up. We both got into trouble but were best mates after that. I'm not quite sure of her parentage but her sisters had all been through that school and had all been very tough, so she was following suit. She was kind of the cock of the first year and took me under her wing. After that I never had a problem with anybody – because she would beat them up for me, so I never had to fight for

myself *(laughter)*.

I was lucky in some respects because the school I went to, Haverstock Hill Secondary School was a very multi-cultural school for that time. There were people from all socio-economic levels, disabled children and a mix of ethnicities from I don't know how many countries but not very many. There weren't many Asians at all. In our extended family there were different combinations of white women married to African men. We met these children in school and obviously the mixed-race children of my father's family and friends - we met them, but they were children same as us – there were few mixed-raced adults around at that time.

One of my mates was the daughter of a music programme producer. I used to go to her house where I met a lot of influential celebrities. I always remember when I met Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine , a Jazz musician and Jazz singer. I was thirteen or fourteen. She looked over at me and my sisters and said, 'Oh aren't you beautiful, you are such gorgeous young women, come over here and talk to me and tell me about yourselves'.

I knew Cleo Laine was famous; it was like 'wow this famous person is talking to me, a thirteen year old kid' and acknowledging that we are mixed-race and beautiful. Such positivity at that point in my life just didn't happen. Mostly you were ignored, spat on or people made faces at you or talked derogatory about you. There was nothing positive from the majority of people that I met as a child. It was important to me as a mixed-race child because I rarely met a mixed-race adult. The fact that I remember this so well speaks of its importance

I didn't get on with my Grandma. Do you know I don't even remember her name! This one day we had gone to Bolton to see my mother's mother. Us kids were dancing about up the road and my youngest sister, Jess, who can only have been about three asked, 'Can I go and knock on Grandma's door?' so she ran up and knocked on the door and my Grandma came out and said, 'Go away you little Pakkie bastard'.

She hadn't recognised her own granddaughter and that was her attitude towards a child of colour. From that day on I admit I disliked my Grandmother intensely. When she died, I wouldn't even go to the funeral!

My Mum had been married previously and had two children, Raymond and Margaret; my brother and sister. I am not sure whether she was divorced or widowed; my parents never talked about it. Not long before my Mum and Dad got together my Grandma made Mum give up Margaret for adoption. She was adopted by a family in Coventry, I never met her. Raymond was about fourteen I think when I was born. At seventeen or eighteen he got married and left home to live with his wife. Before he got married, my Dad wanted him to live with us in London, but my Grandma wouldn't let him go. Mum just gave in and said 'Ok'. So, he stayed with my Grandmother until he left home and had his two children. When I was about nine, he had a motorcycle accident and died. Later his wife married his best friend. I'm not sure what happened to them, I was three or four years old.

Quite clearly my Grandma and Mum's family accepted my dad, I don't know how happy Grandma was about it. Mum had five brothers and sisters, so we had cousins though we didn't see them very often.

Our home always felt happy because my Mum was always singing, and it was always beautiful songs and you could feel the emotion she put into any song. 'Always', was for us kids - she sang that song to us, but I could imagine her singing that in a club or a bar in Moss Side. The audience feeling and connecting with her, but she didn't sing outside the home when she went to London.

May Lomax was a very popular woman. She had a lovely voice and sang in the pubs and clubs in Liverpool and Moss Side before she married and moved to London. When my Dad first met her, they would go to the clubs and the people in the audience would say, 'Come on May get up, give us a tune or sing for us love'. She had such a beautiful voice. It may not have been a voice that would have gone very far, but it was a voice that people liked to hear.

When I was three and my younger sister Vicki was one, we left my Grandma's in Tonge Moor in Bolton and moved to the East End of London where Jessica was born. Every time I hear the old songs, I think of my Mum, because there were so many of them, but in London she never sang outside the home.

My Dad Issac Quartey Asuassa Quartey came from Tema Harbour in Accra, Ghana. He started working on the ships to Liverpool and then he met my Mum. He didn't really talk very much about that period; he talked more about from when he met Mum. I am assuming they got married before I was born, they never talked much about their early years as a married couple. Not that it was taboo or anything, but you know Dad would tell us little stories and Mum would tell hers, but really, they mostly glossed over.

My father was a handsome man; a charmer who, every time he went to any party, danced with most of the women in the room. He knew everybody so there was never any jealousy towards him. The woman loved him, and the men admired him. Our family are Ga . In London Dad was one of the founders of The Quartey Family Union to support and help any Ghanaians, not just Ga people, but anybody with the name Quartey and anybody who was a friend of a friend would be supported by this organisation. They raised funds and helped them to find jobs, homes to settle in to England. As far as I am aware, it is still going strong. Even though it is over fifty odd years ago I remember going to the Homowo (which was like a harvest festival) celebrations as a child with my sisters and Mum and Dad.

Dad worked for British Rail, so he got free passes. Because he had a lot of family and friends who lived in Moss Side and Cheetham Hill , we would come to Manchester and stay with family. He would visit family and friends and occasionally we would all go to Liverpool because he also had family in Liverpool.

Mum had no family or friends in London, I think it was very hard for her. She had moved with Dad and us kids. All the men were our uncles and the women Aunties, but you were never sure whether they were related by blood or by friendship. Ghanaian David Quartey and his white wife Marion lived about ten minutes' walk away. Mum and dad would visit them. Mum knew her, but I wouldn't say they were close friends even though she knew Marion quite well.

When anybody came to our house it was mostly the men. They would sit in the front room talking in Ghanaian, and we would all be in the kitchen making cups of tea and serving the food; we wouldn't be involved. They never brought their wives with them; it was a man thing and as far as I understand very traditional of Ghanaian society.

As a family we would go out and Mum would become friends with his countrymen's wives, Aunties of ours. Some of them were Black and some white. It didn't seem to matter because the white women like our Mum were obviously in the Black community, so they were friendly with her. She would also talk to the Black women who were mainly Ghanaian obviously. We would go and visit them; it was rare to my memory that they ever came and visited us. When we went to parties like the Homowo and any other celebrations, everybody mixed, and everybody mingled

I don't remember her having friends come to the house or her going to visit friends.

I'm not sure if this is an actual memory or there is a photograph of my Mum sitting on the sofa with us three kids, just cuddling up together and I think she was reading us a book. She always read to us, sang to us and she would knit our clothes. Funnily enough my Mum knitted all our clothes; beautiful pleated skirts, waistcoats, jumpers and suits. While Dad on the sewing machine made us dresses. That is how I know that we were loved as between the two of them they kept us well clothed. I remember Mum showing me know to knit and Dad teaching me how to sew, but he would never show me how to develop and print photographs because that was a boy thing. Yeah, we knew Mum loved us and we knew Dad loved us even though he was a little more distant. The Ghanaian way of bringing up kids is not to sit them on the knee and cuddle them and sing to them and play with them. Those memories of my Mum are very strong until she had a nervous breakdown

I accidentally knocked over an oil fire and set the flat on fire. She had to get us kids out of the flat. Then she went back in to get the dog and then went back in to get the cat before realising the cat was actually outside in the garden. She loved our pets. Mum got out without any injuries, but I think that the fire and the fear of what could have happened to us, plus all the stress of being in London and away from her family and friends, was the catalyst for the breakdown.

She had no close friends. She probably knew people in the street and the local area. I know this must seem like a contradiction; but she was a very gregarious woman, very outgoing, but she didn't make friends in Hackney where we lived so did not have any close friends. Quite possibly because of the fact of having three Mixed Raced children and no family In London.

Every two or three years Dad would go to Ghana, to visit his family out there. Mum never went. One time he got on a boat and half way to Ghana there was a coup . He'd gone with certain expectations, arrived, and everything was different. It took him over three months to get home because they took all his money, his passport and return tickets - everything. He ended up having to get a family member in England to buy him another ticket for him to get back home.

Mum was very worried at the time. This was after my Mum had the nervous breakdown. I realise now that what she was stressed about was the possibilities that he was never going to come back.

When my Mum had her nervous breakdown it's kind of quite difficult to figure out if it was any one thing, but I think it was a combination, possibly of the racism she suffered because of my Dad and her. I mean we lived in the East End of London, she obviously had to take us to school – there weren't many Black kids around in the school that I remember.

Mum was hospitalised on and off for several years. I remember my dad struggled when we were young, to keep us with him. He worked nights, took us to work with him on his push-bike. Vicky on the back on a little seat and me on the handlebars. He was a driver for British Rail delivering parcels, so he could do that – he used to put us in the van while he made the deliveries. *(laughter)*.

I know he struggled looking after us on his own. We went in to care the next time that Mum was in hospital. Jessica was only a baby at the time. I've some horrible tales of being in care as well if you want any of them. But at that point we were again one of the few mixed-race children in care[1].

Dad was determined that he was going to keep us with him as much as possible. He would visit every weekend and visit Mum obviously if she was in hospital and bring her to see us when he could. He was

1 *Social welfare made the legal responsibility of a local authority by order of a courts*

absolutely horrified one day when he turned up and we had our head shaved because we had nits! Dad always did our hair because Mum wasn't very good at it. Sunday nights it was roadmap plait time – we would get our hair done and ready for school on Monday. He'd come to the children's home to do our hair and we had none! He was horrified: 'Why did you not get in touch with me because I would have come down and I would have dealt with it you know'. Everybody had nits, so I am assuming it wasn't the first time we got them. The staff had no idea how to deal with our hair. The only way they could deal with it was to shave our heads. Yes, Dad struggled, and my Mum struggled, but she also struggled with her health issues as well.

I would have been about eleven when she went into a mental hospital. She was there for a couple of years. I spent a lot of that time travelling back and forth from St. Pancras, we lived around the back of the Railway Station, to Friern Barnet hospital. That was a notorious hospital that was.

Of course, I had no understanding what she was going through in a mental institution. The drugs they were giving her and the treatment because I think she had, was it an ECG or ECT , they were very popular treatments in those days. I saw some of the other people who were in there were influencing her behaviour. When she did come home, she had cigarette burns on the back of her hand because she had seen someone else self-harming and she started doing it. It broke my heart but being a child, it made me angry and I think I took my anger out on her. I do remember saying 'You are a mad woman you' but I didn't mean it, just the frustrations of a child.

As my sisters and I got older, we went into care in two, three maybe four different places due to my Mum's health. When you are a kid, you don't know necessarily what is wrong and why are going away for a while. The first time Jessica would have been six months old, she had to go to a foster family because she was a baby and we went into a sort of nursery type children's home and I'm not quite sure for how long or where they were.

I do remember Mum coming to the children's home to see us because there's a photograph of her with two of the nurses/childcare workers and me and my sister. I'm not sure if she had Jessica with her – whether she had gone and got Jessica and brought her.

One time when I was in care there was a full Black woman, a gorgeous Black woman and she was the only Black worker I ever saw in care. Like Cleo Laine she made us feel special, whereas most other people just made us feel like shit.

That worker was such a positive influence on me that I went on a training course and then to work in children's homes. I never forgot that I only met one Black person in children's homes. From my own experience I knew that Black children in care needed somebody they could identify with and help ease their sense of isolation and loss. The home I was in had a few hundred kids living in separate houses. It could have been a Barnardo's home, I am not sure, but it was a big, big place with lots of houses. I ended working in a similar home in Brentwood in Essex where they had twelve different units down a central drive with all the facilities. So, I had identified all of that as a child and at sixteen I trained and became a residential social worker.

One thing we know for sure is that it was definitely a strong marriage. They had their ups and downs naturally, they had their arguments and disagreements, but they were married for so many years. He was very loyal to her and she was very loyal to him and they never looked at anybody else!

They lived together in their Burnt Oak, North London home until my Mother got Alzheimer's. She started to get quite confused and forgetful. She would get very confused when she was cooking and

couldn't remember what she was doing. After that Dad took over doing most of the cooking for the family. We had rice and stew most nights because it was the easiest thing for him to make and for me to re-heat and feed to us. At the end of the day, she wasn't able to be the mother I wanted her to be, but it wasn't her fault.

At that time, I was in secondary school and would go to school in the morning and meet the girls outside having a fag around the corner. I'd be stood there 'Oh what did you have for tea last night?' 'Oh, I had rice and stew', 'Errrh what's that, nasty stuff, you people are so funny'. Of course, I had friends and some of them were ok and some of them weren't. I had difficulties with friends at school because of the simple fact that we ate different food.

Eventually Dad and Jessica agreed that mum needed to go into care and she moved permanently into a residential place close by the family home. He missed her even though they had been separated when he was away in Ghana several times, but this was not the same because now she was in a home. As far as I know he would visit her more or less every day. Every couple of days, he would be there. He may have not stayed very long, I don't know for sure because I was living in Manchester at the time and couldn't get to London to see her very often as I was a single parent with my three kids.

But the thing is with my Dad, he still had all his friends and family around London, so he was never lonely because he was out a lot. He was a dapper man, he always wore a suit – you never saw my Dad dress casually at all, always wore a suit and tie. When he wasn't working he would go to visit Mum or people he knew.

Mum had trouble breathing and passed away in 2002. She was 81. My Dad and my sister Victoria dealt with the funeral arrangements and invitations. They were mainly his friends that were there, there were none of Mum's family. There was the church service which was a religious one, but the wake was more in the African tradition.

A few years later my sister Victoria realised that my Dad wasn't coping on his own; that was when the dementia started. He was in his late eighties now, he wasn't dealing with his bills, he wasn't eating properly, he would get very confused. Victoria studied social work with the elderly at University so was able to recognise the problems. He sold the family home and went to live in Milton Keynes about ten minutes down the road from Victoria who became his primary carer from then on until he passed. My sister Jessica and I would stay alternate months for the weekend to give Vicky time to spend with her husband and family.

Living in Manchester, we tried every few years to go down and see my Mum and we would sit and talk. After I split up with my husband and I was down in London for work, I visited Mum and Dad. It was hard, once Mum heard someone say I should visit more often. I said 'Well I've got three children and I live in Manchester and I can't afford to come down more often and bring the kids. She said 'Elizabeth' because she always called me Elizabeth and not Liz, most people call me Liz. 'Look after your children, don't worry about me I will be fine, your children are more important, look after your children'.

That is why I always feel that my children have that connection with my Mum. They all met her, but they never knew her as the woman I did, because by that time she had Alzheimer's, and they didn't see her very often, so they didn't know her very well at all. But her priority was always me, Vicky and Jessica and that is what she wanted me to do with my kids. She wasn't unhappy, bothered or angry that I didn't visit very often. I phoned when I could. But she never thought badly of me for looking after my children because that is what she had devoted her life to.

For her, that is what I needed to do, particularly as a single parent. She always said, 'your children are the most important thing, look after your children'. That is what I have done, always devoted my life to - my kids. Even moving to Bolton. Ironically that is a funny one because I actually thought in a sense I was coming back to my roots when I moved to Bolton – Naaaahh, not at all *(laughter)*.

One thing I would say to my Mum is 'I'm sorry', because I didn't understand when she had the nervous breakdown, I didn't understand some of the eccentricities she picked up in the mental hospital. I wish I could have done more for her, I loved her very much

Dad passed away in 2010, he was just coming up to his ninety first birthday. When my Mum passed he got a double plot, so he could be buried next to her in Edgeware Cemetery in London. He was determined that he was going to rest with her when he went. That was him, he loved the bones of her and she loved the bones of him – they didn't always get on, but they were a very, very strong couple.
I am always going to be Black, joining Abasindi is where my political awareness of being a Black woman became important and what I needed to explore. I joined Abasindi through Diane to be part of the Drumming workshop.

FAMILY
May Quartey, (Lomax). 30th May 1921 – 17th January 2002
Elizabeth Alice Naa Oyo Quartey.
Victoria May Naa Kwateokor Quartey.
Jessica Isabella Naa Ahinney Kwatetso Quartey.
Isaac Quartei Asuasa Quartey. 08.10.1918 - 19.06.2010
Elizabeth's (Liz) Children
Nikki Quartey
Kaali Quartey;
Joedi Quartey
Granddaughter;
Grace Elizabeth

SHEILA JAWANDO (WALSH)
November 1928
By Her Daughter JULIE

We sort of lived a double life, because Dad was so strict. You didn't laugh when he was around, life was very, very serious. As soon as Dad went to work or out, the atmosphere in the house lightened – we just laughed and joked.

Our Father first saw our Mother at her home around the Fallowfield area – at the bus stop going and coming from work. Mum was only eighteen; he used to get on the bus and follow her to work. He even wrote a letter to her boss, about what I have no idea.

Mum was very attractive and slim with a really good figure even though she had ten children. The most amazing legs; we girls were gutted because only one of us got Mum's legs, the rest all have thin legs. Yes, very attractive, short dark brown hair and a lovely personality.

Mum's Dad was originally from Dublin, Ireland. Grandma was from Scotland. They were both very opposed to my Dad. I don't think Grandma ever spoke to my Mum after she met up with my Dad. Grandma had seven children. Her brothers were younger. One sister (Auntie) Nora, absolutely loved my brother Tony. He is the eldest. She would babysit him and take him out. Her two older sisters were married; one living in Canada, the other sister's husband was quite high in the CID . There was a lot of pressure on him from Granddad to find out where my Mum was living and meeting up with my Dad. So, he did a lot of following my Mum and trying to put her off …but don't get me wrong because he was a lovely man .

She even had pressure from people at work. 'What is this Black man doing hanging about outside?',

'you shouldn't have anything to do with a Black man'. There was lots and lots of opposition. Mum always said that it was mainly that opposition that pushed her in to the relationship because she felt so sorry for my Dad.

He didn't exactly court her. She would meet him, and they would walk. They would go to Platt Fields and places like that. Dad being Muslim they wouldn't go to a pub or anything like that. Then of course because of the racism and the friction because he was Black, she couldn't associate with anybody. She had one friend Joyce, who she worked with and would confide in.

Our father, Manson Mashwood Jawando, came from Lagos. He was in the Merchant Navy. When they met he was working at Manchester airport. He came over here around 1946. He was about 20 years older than what he actually said. He took many, many years off, which was the norm. He passed in 1986. We think he was late seventies, not honestly certain because there was so much we didn't know and never found out.

He wrote in the old Queen's English, so when he applied for a job, he would sign off his letter with 'I remain your humble, obedient servant'.

As far as I am aware, they got married at Gretna Green, but that is all I know. I suppose it all sounds romantic as I tell it now, but it certainly wasn't within the marriage.

He was very, very strict, exceptionally strict. Don't get me wrong because it served us well as we grew up. By the time you were five you had to know your tables, you had to be able to read and write. So, we could do all that because it was expected of you before you started school.

They lived in Moss Side, moving to Woodhouse Lane, Wythenshawe[1], when they built up the estate. That was our first house. It was a three bed house.

I am not sure whether we were the first or one of the first Black families to move to Wythenshawe. I know that the neighbours got up a petition and took it to the town hall. It said they didn't want a Black family moving in. The town hall wouldn't agree to it, so we moved in and within a matter of months everybody in the street loved Mum. They used to come and knock on our door to ask if we could go shopping for them. They would give us a basket and sixpence[2] for going. They knew, it was obvious that financially with that number of children we were not well off, so I think that was their way of giving us bits. They always gave us biscuits and sweets, and Mum stayed in contact with some of them up until she passed – they became really good friends.

I was born while they were in that house and I think my brother Alan was born there too, so there were seven of us living in it.

We are nine children altogether sadly one has passed so really there were ten of us. I am the fifth child in the family Julie Zariatu Amoka, we were all named by Mum and Dad.

I don't remember it being chaotic, I just remember having a really happy childhood, because Mum was so organised. We knew what time we were getting up, going to school, having our tea, bits of playing out, doing our homework, everything was... it had to be that, otherwise it wouldn't have worked. It would have been chaos!

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1 South Manchester the council started building a massive housing estate in the 1920s

2 Sometimes known as a tanner it was worth one-fortieth of a pound sterling

Every night we always sat down at the table together for our tea[3].

My Dad didn't sit with us. He would have toast in the morning. We were perfectly happy not to have Dad sat at the table because we couldn't have laughed, we would have been miserable. The only English food my Dad ever had was toast then he wouldn't eat all day. Then around six o'clock he would have his own food, usually neck of lamb and rice or fufu. Dad cooked African food, but we didn't like it, because it always had this big thick orange greasy fat on the top. I am into Caribbean food now. I cook a lot of Caribbean food.

We ate basic food. We always had a Sunday roast followed by jelly and tinned fruit. Pineapple cubes *(Laughter)*. We had things like eggs and chips, spam fritters and chips, potato hash.

There were only two soups we had; oxtail and vegetable, now whether they were the cheapest I don't know. On a Thursday quite often, we might even have eaten shredded wheat or porridge because the money had run out, until Friday. We were never starving, but what I always remember is going to a friends' and they used to have bacon – well we couldn't have bacon because Dad was Muslim. I always remember the smell and I always told myself that when I was sixteen the first thing I would do was buy bacon, which I did *(laughter)*.

You never heard Mum complain; the house was always tidy, we were always clean. The clothes rack was always full of uniforms, she knitted all our jumpers. I would think 'ten kids', how did you do it? We had our moments, when you came home and there would be candles alight, so you knew there was no money for electricity. But that happened with a lot of people. It didn't make any difference, quite the opposite, we loved it, we could sneak up on each other and tell jokes.

They never told us anything. We knew when there was no money, but it was never discussed with us that they couldn't pay the bills or anything like that. We were never told when Mum was pregnant, because Mum had such a good figure, she never really showed. One day you would come down in the morning and we would hear crying and there would be another one *(laughing)*. I remember going 'oh no another one! (more laughter).

We never heard Mum and Dad argue. We would know that something had happened when Mum slept downstairs on the settee. I do remember when Dave was fifteen or sixteen, he came in and Mum was on the settee. Dave said 'No, that is your bed'. Mum said 'No Dave' as he went upstairs and pulled the pillows from under Dad's head saying, 'These are my Mum's' as he took them downstairs and put them under Mum's head. Years later Dave started to mess around like most youths did, but he never gave Mum any trouble in the house. He was the first one to stand up to Dad.

Dave still has that nurturing and that caring, because when we had Kew Café on Church Road, when an elderly person needed help or a homeless person came in, Dave was the first there to help them. We were only there for eighteen months.

Mum was very, very anti violent, very naïve, and quiet. When she talked about her childhood, she was always the sheep. I am sure as life went on, she became frustrated with things. I don't know how she managed to feed, clothe and maintain a peaceful, calm life for us. I don't know how she did it, because I would have been so frustrated and so angry. She has got to be the most amazing woman I have ever known or ever met.

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3 Hard working class areas traditionally call their midday meal dinner and their evening meal tea (served around 6 pm)

Sometimes she might give us a slipper. When I say give us a slipper, she might just slap you on the back with a slipper. I remember her getting upset once when I had gone to get the shopping. We used to take a big holdall and the washing up liquid had leaked; the lid must have come off. It had leaked on the sugar and flour and Mum got really upset.
Mum was a very intelligent woman. When she was fifteen, the school called in her parents and said they wanted her to go to University to train as a teacher. Granddad said to Mum 'working class kids don't go to Uni – you get a job and contribute the same as everybody else' so that was that.

We used to watch University Challenge[4]. Mum would correctly answer all the questions. We used to say, 'Mum will you go on' and she would always answer 'I will one day'.

We had a set of encyclopaedias and one on the 11 Plus[5] that we studied from the age of five. You had to pass your 11 Plus. Most of us went to Grammar school. My eldest sister went to secondary modern, that didn't go down too well with our Father.

Dave went to Central Grammar, but then he was very good. He was very arty; they wanted him to go art school, but my Dad said 'no'. I think he only attended for the first year and then he was off. Well you know yourself if you have got a skill and then are told you can't do it, that is the worst thing that can happen to you. Three brothers went into the building trade, the rest qualified as teachers, lecturers and Social Workers.

From being young, the boys Tony, Dave, Paul, Stan and Alan went to go to the golf course to caddie[6] to get 10 shillings and give that money to my Mum for food. Mum relied on their money. They were very, very supportive of Mum caddying from around the age of eleven or twelve.

Dave always supported Mum. He was and is so skilled. He can make anything, put anything together. Whatever was broken Dave would repair it, he still does to this day. If you have got something broken, Dave will repair it.

Mum would say 'If we had no money, we had no television'. Dave sorted it out so that we didn't have to put in a sixpence in *(laughter)*. When the man came to empty the machine, he couldn't understand how little money there was compared to how many hours of viewing were recorded.

I started school at Crossacres Primary, then when we moved to Woodhouse Park, I went to Poundswick Junior then Poundswick Grammar. I am still friends with Mo - we met aged five, and with Sue who I met at Grammar school.

I had quite a lot of racial abuse from just one lad at Poundswick Grammar. At the time it was a very middle class school, not many working class kids attended. The majority were well mannered and there was very little racism within the school. When I think back to primary school, one of the teachers was quite racist, but I was too young. I didn't understand.

I always remember the headmistress, Miss Stevens; she had this briefcase that was like three in one. It was really heavy and as she walked into school, she would stop one of the pupils and say, 'you may carry my bag'. We would try to avoid her, then one morning she got hold of me. I am dragging this briefcase as she put her hand on my head and she said the classic of my hair, 'oh it's soft'.

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4 A British quiz programme which first aired in 1962
5 An exam in the last year of primary education, which governs admission to grammar or other secondary schools
6 The person who carries a player's bag and clubs

I was always good at acting and always got the lead role, then one year I didn't! I had this alleged friend who, when I think back, was actually quite awful. We both auditioned for the lead part and she had got it and I didn't. Everybody was shocked why I didn't get it and it was only years later did it come back to me that the part was Snow White (raucous laughter).

Mum wouldn't allow anybody near us if she thought they were going to be abusive. She protected us all growing up. I know with my brothers, especially since they were physically strong, especially our Dave, they would get challenged a lot. They might be at a football match and one of their friends might shout, 'get off the ball you black bastard'. 'Sorry mate, sorry Dave' and all that kind of stuff *(laughter)*. We used to go to Minsterley Parade shops to get my Dad's neck of lamb. Mum was in the butchers and had Helen in a pram – Helen was I dunno, maybe about two or three at the time. A mother and daughter were there, and Mum said they were scruffy. Then the girl said, 'Oh Mum, look at that baby with the dirty face' and our Helen said, 'I haven't got a dirty face, I am Mummy's lovely baby' *(laughter)*. When we were young and used to play out, there was this couple, they were artists who used to paint at the Sharston Gallery on a Sunday. They used to drive by and this was in the days when very few people had a car, they used to drive by and look at us. Then eventually they knocked on the door and asked could they paint our portraits. I was five at the time. They wanted to adopt us; they became our Aunty and Uncle. Aunty Moira and Uncle Jim. What was their surname? It was a Dutch name. I thought it was Vanderhyden, but it wasn't. I actually saw one of my portraits in Stockport Gallery about fifteen years ago.

We went to the cinema with Mum, where the Jehovah's Witness Hall is now in Northenden. We didn't go often to the Tatton, because we didn't have the money.

We went to Wythenshawe Park[7]. Mum used to take two packets of biscuits and bottles of water and we loved it. The neighbour's kids used to come with us to the point that one day she was approached by a man and he said, 'Where do you work?' and she said, 'What do you mean?' He thought she was a nurse with all these children *(laughter)*.

I will tell you of a few occasions, where a male tried to kiss her, because they would assume because she had Black children she... Yeah, there was a fair bit of that.

As she got older Mum's principles changed. She would never open anybody's mail – it didn't matter if it was us as children, she never opened anybody's mail. As things became more difficult with Dad, she decided to open post from Africa. It was from his children!

The divorce was really, really difficult, after she found out Dad had a wife in Africa *(laughter)* and children. When she first went to get help, I can't remember exactly what happened, but they more or less refused to allow her a divorce because they said, 'well if he is already married in Africa you are not married anyway and don't need a divorce'.

Then she went to see, I can't remember his name, but I think he was a very well-known lawyer. He rushed to help and got her the divorce. I think he specialised in anti-immigration, I could be wrong. It was his job, but I also think his motives were a little bit racist, but it benefitted my Mum, because he was the only one who pursued it.

After Dad left, Mum would save up to rent a flat in Blackpool for a week. We loved it, we absolutely loved it. We didn't know about abroad, anyway I don't think there were many people in those days that

7 *109 hectares of open parkland in South Manchester.*

went abroad.

When we went to Blackpool, there would have been at least seven or eight of us. They still had in those days the signs you know 'no Blacks' and stuff like that, but I think my Mum's appearance would just tell them 'No you will not turn me and my children away'. Mum protected us from whatever racial abuse she suffered – she didn't tell us, that was her way of protecting us.

When we left, the place was always cleaner than how we found it because as soon as we went in Mum scrubbed it – that was the first job. She would scrub it because it wasn't clean enough for us.
We were well behaved in the boarding house because of Dad and how we were brought up.

As kids we would make stories up and share them on the landing at night. My older brother Tony's stories were usually about bears, and we would all be giggling whilst my Dad was in bed. We laughed at anything, I don't know why. We do the same thing now when we meet for a family party or at Christmas, we do the exact same things. Tell daft jokes and laugh at the olden day at the things we did even the most stupid things. My brother Paul would go to the pub with all his friends that he had known from school and come home with the same thing, chips, curry and a pie. He would eat in the kitchen and then come through where we were watching television and we would say 'Come on Paul' and Paul would do Bruce Lee karate-ing down the living room and we would all be roaring, laughing. One time when two of my brothers came home Mum was out and Dad was in bed sleeping so didn't answer the door. So, they climbed in through the window! As Mum came in Dad was forcing them to go back out of the window because you weren't allowed to climb in the window. Mum said 'No, enough is enough' *(laughing)*.

I didn't suffer blatant racial abuse until I went to live in London. There was the anti-Nazi rally when Blair Peach was killed . That was when the National Front was becoming quite strong; that is when I became conscious of racism. Also, I was living in Hanwell[8] right next door to Southhall[9] working as an auxiliary nurse and I was shocked at the racism from other Black and Asian people! There wasn't that big an Asian community in Manchester. I wasn't used to it and I was shocked.

I honestly don't know why I went in to nursing. I used to work full time and part time, because Mum had taught us a very strong work ethic.

One of my jobs was at Conway Motors , and one day I thought I needed another part time job, so I went for a job as a waitress at Soames Casino. The next day they phoned me at work and said, 'do you want to train as a croupier?' I thought 'Oh that sounds good' so I said yeah, and they said, 'you will have to leave your job.' I went home and told Mum 'I am going to leave Conway Motors' and she said 'What?' I said, 'I'm leaving, I am going to train as a croupier'. She said, 'No you are not, do you know what goes on in those places?' I said 'No'. 'Dens of iniquity'. So, I didn't go. *(laughter)*

I am Mixed Heritage – I don't like the Mixed Race term because there is only one race. It is very, very strong in me that I am part white, part of my heritage is white as well as Black. My daughter is thirty-nine this year and is the same because her relationship with Mum was so strong and Mum gave her lots of advice and support. She babysat for me whilst I was at work and on the odd occasion if I wanted to go out. My daughter's father is Caribbean. She is darker than me, but you know if somebody challenges her and says to her 'well you are Black', she will say 'no I am not, I am mixed – I have got white in me'. When she was at school, if they went to the local shopping centre and saw my Mum, she would shout 'Nana' and the other kids would say 'That's not your Nana' and the she would go 'Why not?'.

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8 A town in the London Borough of Ealing
9 A large suburban district of west London

I think that Mum and Dad's relationship put quite a lot of us off marriage and because we came from such a big family, we all like our own space because you would share a bedroom with three sometimes four. So, we all value our space.

'Seeing Red' was Coral Aitkin's life story. She adopted children of different nationalities. Social care was against her because she was single. I always had this thing that if I had money, I wanted seventeen children of different nationalities and I wanted to bring them all up together in a big house away from the world. It isn't really surprising really that I became a Foster Mother.

I was eight or nine when we moved to Hatchet Road. I can remember coming home one day and Mum wasn't home. I remember going in through the front door and everybody was milling around. I didn't know what was going on, then all of a sudden the door opened, and my Mum walked in. I can still picture her, she had on a blue wool tight skirt and these big high heels. Mum always wore American tan stockings with a seam. Her hair was done as she had been for a job. Later in life it made me aware that my Mum was always there.

I might sound harsh, but when people moan and say 'oh I have got to pick up the kids', I look back and think for women then it was awful, they had no rights whatsoever, no support systems.

When she eventually went to work, obviously she was on half pay. She had to lie. They would ask 'How old are you?' 'Have you got any children?' so she would answer 'oh yes, my children are on their way to University'. She worked somewhere in Northenden, and it specifically said in the advert 'no children'. They wouldn't employ anybody with children or who wanted children. One day her and the manager sat down, and the manager said, 'I feel really awful Sheila, but I do have to tell you' she said, 'I have been lying all this time I have got five children' so my Mum said, 'So have I, I have got ten' *(laughter)*. It was very, very difficult because she couldn't have a house in her name, the house had to be in the man's name. It wasn't called the Council then, it was called the Corporation and when she went to register the house in her name, they refused. Even when she started work, she couldn't have a bank account

That is why she had to get the divorce. It was really, really difficult. I don't know how she managed to challenge the things that she did, because in those days there was no form of community support, none whatsoever.

I would say they split up around '78. I think they tried a couple of times to reunite, but it didn't work out. I think my Mum realised and did it for the sake of us kids. There were three still living at home at the time. Life was so different without him, it was just so relaxed and so easy.

I know she had regrets about certain things, but she never ever said that she felt that she had failed; why would she when she hadn't? She did feel that she had failed in as much as she did wish that she had got rid of Dad earlier. She said that if she hadn't had a relationship with him, 'I would never have had you ten.' That we were the best thing in her life. I know that she looked back and wished that she had done things differently, as in stood up to him, but she couldn't. She couldn't have done that.

Mum didn't have a social life until she started working at Seymour & Story, the bookies in Wythenshawe, and made friends with the women there. She knew a few of them from before and together they would go sometimes to the theatre. Before that Mum's social life was shopping and talking with her lifelong friend Margaret McKeown. She used to say she has some clothes which her girls had outgrown out of - but they were always brand new.

I remember her going to, I think it was her sister's wedding and she had to be home for six thirty. Mum didn't 'really' go out until I went to London, so it was in the late seventies. We took her to the local pub, the Cornishman in Wythenshawe with most of the family coming too and we coerced her in to having a Martini.

As we grew up and had our own money, we would regularly take Mum to the theatre and on holiday in England and abroad. We tried our best to give her the things she had missed out on. To compensate. After the divorce she wasn't short of admirers. She was friendly with a male at one point but then it didn't go anywhere. Even when we were older it was just about us, it was just about us and now that she had a social life she just wasn't interested.

Mum had glaucoma[10], so her eyesight was failing. Then she started with dementia. She had a stroke just after Christmas in 2011. She didn't come out of the stroke. She was 83 when she passed 7th January 2012.

I would say up to twelve months before then, Mum would walk ten miles on a Sunday. We always laugh, because when we walked with my Mum say to Wythenshawe Park, we got there so quickly – we would all be running.

When she moved from Wythenshawe to Marple in Stockport, we used to walk by the canals and get lost. I would be absolutely exhausted whereas Mum would still be marching on.

She would always be prepared even if we were going shopping. So, we might go out to Boundary Mill in Colne, which is like a fifty minute's drive and as soon as we started driving, because I have never been a breakfast person, I would think 'I could do with something to eat'. All of a sudden, there would be a rustle. She always did it, all of a sudden, there would be sandwiches, a flask, always. Later in life, we used to say, 'Come on Mum we will go and get a cappuccino', 'oh, I am not wasting money, we are having this'. Because that was her life – it was budgeting all through life, organisation all through life. Mum had a fear of hospitals and the dentist. So, when she was in her sixties I said, 'Mum I have got a lovely dentist please come and see him'. She went. She still had all her own teeth and after they were cleaned, they looked lovely. Then when she moved to Marple she stopped going again. I can still remember at Wythenshawe hospital they had even cleaned Mum's teeth. She was treated like royalty; the care was just amazing. She was in a room on her own. Sometimes there would be fifteen or twenty of us, but they just accepted that.

When she moved to Marple she had to go to Stepping Hill hospital. She absolutely hated it and so did I. The times I had to call an ambulance for her, and I used to say, 'please can she go to Wythenshawe' and they used to say 'No, she has got to go to Stepping Hill'.

When Mum had the stroke, the ambulance man looked at our faces and said, 'Where do you want us to take her? Wythenshawe or Stepping Hill?' And I said 'Wythenshawe please'; they took her to Wythenshawe. Honestly the treatment, the staff were just absolutely amazing. As I say it was just as if she was royalty. They combed her hair, they just did absolutely everything.

When we were young, we had our own hi-fis in our rooms, so we all had our own music. One of Paul's favourite songs was 'I'll always love my Mum and she is my favourite girl'[11] (she sings). When Mum was ill, when Paul visited her, he always played that song for her and they would have a dance and a laugh you know. Paul lived here with me for a while and I would hear him playing that and all the music

10 *Optic nerve damage*
11 *The Intruders*

Mum loved especially soul music.

I got the phone call at around one in the morning and went to the hospital. My sister Sara was there, I think Paul wsas there. When I got there, Mum had passed.

I remember standing outside the hospital. It was just like the day we came home, and Mum wasn't there. We just didn't know what to say to each other; we just stood looking at each other, and just didn't know what to say. You just don't realise how it affects you,

I can't remember when a friend took some photographs of her family with me in the shot. A few years later I was looking at the photos and asked, 'who's that woman there?' I thought it was a woman in her seventies and it was me! I had lost so much weight, nearly two stone. You just don't realise how much it devastates you.

I know that the family still struggles, still struggles. No matter how old they get, you just expect parents to be there for ever – and Mum was so significant. She wasn't just a Mum. As we got older, she was our friend, she was the person we went on holiday with, the person we went for coffees with. I used to work in Offerton , so I would go three times a week in my lunch hour and I would go at weekends and we would go out. One day a colleague asked, 'what are you doing for lunch?' 'Oh, I am going to my Mum's'. She said 'Again? I really envy your relationship with your Mum'.

I hear of people saying that they might see their Mum once a week, or once a month, or – it just doesn't make sense to me. Other people's relationships; I don't see theirs as normal, I see ours as normal. I just don't know people who have the same interaction with their parents the way we did with my Mum. I have only seen it with my friend Judy Shaw and her Mum.

My Mum came everywhere with us, she met our friends. One evening a month, I would go from work to pick Mum up to go to the Lowry arts centre. Later I always took her back to her house. She came to my house every Sunday for her dinner, all the family would join us. Ours wasn't like a lot of relationships that I see where children only see their parents because they are babysitting. Our relationship was very, very different. We were very close.

No one could criticise my Mum, because they would see her children all playing out, all very mannered, all very well dressed, so nobody could criticise her.

I loved her, just that I love her still so there is nothing else. If I could see her one more time I would say, 'please stay with me'.

FAMILY
Sheila Jawando (Walsh) November 1928 - January 2012.
Anthony Jawando
Linda Barikisu Asiki Jawando
David Larry Big Bay Foloruasian Jawando
Stanley Williamson Jawando
Alan Yisa Jawando April 1951 – December 1984
Paul Utrman Jawando
Sara Ganiat Jawando
Helen Rafatu Jawando
Vanessa Ashiata Jawando
Manson Mashwood Jawando passed June 1986

MARGARET ANNE HORAN (Mrs Rufai)
May 1928
by her daughter ANN

We used to have some good laughs, me and my Mum. She was a very earthy person who loved plants and nature. She loved to dance, do painting and was an avid reader. She loved to cook and was a fantastic baker, and she sewed and knitted. By god she was a grafter, yeah, she worked really, really, hard. Mum also had a raging Irish temper. *(Laughter)* She was about 5ft 4 inches, very slim, very blue eyes auburn hair and a raging temper *(Laughter).*

My parents had two children before me: Samuel Kolawale and then David Olrewaju. Mum told me Samuel had Spina Bifida and for a mixed-race child he was very dark and absolutely beautiful. I think she was only able to hold him for about three days and then he went into the hospital where he died. I can imagine some of the nurses' comments when she lost her first child. 'Probably for the best love' David was her favourite, always. I think David was about eight months old and he was light skinned. She said he had an extended navel and they pressurised her to let him have the navel treated. He was discharged with gastroenteritis and died at home.

Her mother didn't bother much with her when she lost the babies. But her father did, my Irish granddad; she was close to him. Grandad never liked my Father: one, because he was Black and two, because of the way he treated my Mother. In turn my Father didn't like my Mother's father - they didn't like each other. So, it was difficult.

I was born on the top floor of 34 Shakespeare Street, Ardwick. Mum's sister Pat, and her husband my Uncle Samuel George lived in the middle floor. My cousin Barrie was born there too. Barrie's father Uncle George was gentle, just a lovely, lovely man, an absolutely lovely man. He was Igbo and my

Father was Yoruba so they were very different in nature. I remember there was an African fellow downstairs. They all gambled together, and I think there was a shooting in the house – the stuff that went on!

My Father wasn't a practising Muslim, but he always had a Koran. He drank a lot, he smoked, he was a womaniser, he ate pork. A real seaman, his ways never changed from the sea – never changed.

Tiamiyu Tinubu Rufai - a Yoruba Nigerian - Dad lived for a time on Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool, where most of the African seaman lived when they first came to England. The house is still there. I went to see it. He managed to get a room eventually. It was in the basement of a white woman's house and she used to make him clean the front steps. On this particular day the woman said he hadn't cleaned the steps properly and slapped his face. Garrrahhhh, I remember this rage in me, as little as I was. Dad said this was his first memory of being hit by a woman, and a white woman as well.
When my parents got married I must have been about 9 years old, so 1960, because I went for the wedding cakes. They were Viennese fancies, bright yellows and pinks and browns; they were lovely, and I was really proud.

He wouldn't marry my Mother for a long time. It might have been because (pause) my mother used to leave a lot you see, when she had had enough, she would just get up a do one. She always left me with Dad because it was safer there. She was quite unstable like that. He must have thought "I can't marry this woman she really is too unstable". But in fairness she didn't have a good life with him. There was a lot of violence, a lot of verbal abuse.

Sometimes she would go to her sister's. Pat was her favourite sister. I think she may have had a boyfriend that she would go to, but many a time she used to go to her sister's. She would just say "Right I'm going". My Father used to work nights you see, so after he left for work she would say something like "I'm going out Ann, but I will be back". I would wait and wait, all night for her to return. Then my father would come back in the morning and see me asleep on the chair and he'd say,

"'Where is your Mum?" "She went out". "What time?" "Oh, I think about 7 o'clock Dad, but she's not come back". This always followed an argument.

My earliest memory of that was probably when I about 10. She would just go, *(laughter)* just take off. Dad would go looking for her calling around asking her – "Peggy come back". Peggy they used to call her. Then she would come back, everything was fine again and then they would row. Weekends were the time that they would row, when he drank.

Because he threw nothing away, I've got a massive big trunk under the bed which is his Navy trunk that he took everywhere. I've got everything, everything. Little diaries detailing his life like the day his Mother died. Everything. The day Peggy left – 'Peggy caused trouble at my house had to call NSPCC.' 'Peggy leave, I take Ann to Pat's', (my Mum's sister). Another comment 'I got Ann back, Peggy come home' a month later 'Peggy leave, a big fight' – and it's all documented – he kept everything. A hard man to live with. No wonder she would kick off. "I'm not having it", she'd say.

My Mother was ostracised and looked down on. People wouldn't talk to her. She had quite a lonely life. She was always on her own and excluded. Maybe that is why she spent so much of her time reading.

My earliest memory is when we lived on Cambridge Street near the old Dental Hospital . I can vividly remember one evening hearing a knock on the door. I came downstairs. There didn't seem to be anyone there, but there was a newspaper on this table, a lit dinky candle (because we had no electricity) and a

very tiny me; I am only 5ft 2 inches now. I got a chair, dragged it to the door, opened it. Outside was covered in snow. This tall Black man asked, "Oh Miss Tinubu is your Mummy and Daddy in?" and I said "No" and he said "OK you close the door now and I'll go. Go on now you close the door". So, I closed the door and put the chair back but then I decided to play out in the snow. There was an Irish family next door, Bridie the mother and about twelve children. The next thing I am in bed with all these children with these coats over us, lovely and warm and my Mum is downstairs having a cig and a cup of tea with Bridie. There has always been unity between the Irish and Africans!

My father bought a great big house in Cheetham Hill and we always had lodgers. I went to St. Thomas's Infants then I went to Cheetham Hill Secondary School. So, from South to North of Manchester and we lived in many, many, different houses.

At that time Cheetham Hill was mainly Jewish, poor Jews, who were up and coming. Enterprising really because they would knock on the door and say, "We can do sewing" and they would sell bits of stuff. People in the area were mainly Jewish, Ukrainians and Polish with very few Jamaicans but a lot of Africans. So, it was quite mixed, it was OK, it was fine. Then we moved to Blackley , where it was very racist; very very, racist, awful. Cheetham Hill was fine, Blackley No!

If anyone called me names, the names at the time then were 'Blacky Sambo, Choc ice and Gollywog'. If I went home and told Mum, "So and so has called me…" she would be out. She would fight anybody, she would fight for me, she would cause murder, she was one of them.

If I said to my father they were calling me names, he would say "you have to get used to it, because this is how it will be". It never phased my father, it didn't seem to anyway. But my mother "No, she doesn't have to get used to it, no" and they would fight.

My father was hard with me because being a Muslim he preferred boys to girls. It wasn't that he didn't want me, he did, but I think he wished I was a boy. My mother also preferred boys to girls, and her favourite was Barrie. She absolutely adored him. In her eyes, Barrie could do no wrong. She adored him. Even so my Mum loved me without question. *(laughter)*.

I think my mother was an incredibly brave woman, ostracised from friends and her family, who she loved and not being in a good relationship with my father. I remember she worked in the 'In and Out' café in Lewis' . If I went in to see her it ruffled her feathers that her work mates saw me. She was alright, but I could tell, and she couldn't fight in there, could she? No. So yeah, how brave were we asking these women to be? And they were extremely brave, extremely and I have no regrets about her behaviour.

When she couldn't cope she put me in Nazareth House Prestwich. It was a home for Catholic children. I think I was about five or six, because I can remember a mosaic Black and white floor, a huge hallway and every so often there was a podium with a statue of 'Our Lady' I can still see them now. (Jesus Christ.) This long beautiful hallway and stained-glass windows.

I remember standing near someone or something; I didn't know what it was or what I was thinking. Either way I think it freaked me out a bit, but now I know it was a Carmelite nun.

Eventually Dad came and took me home when Mum was back at home. I remember her saying they were Carmelite nuns from France I think. They only accepted Catholic children. I can't remember how long I was there for, but I remember that it was horrendous, they were very strict. Everything was prayers, prayers, prayers until my Dad coming to get me walking together back out the gate, down the

path.

What is really eerie is that about 10 years ago when I worked for St. Mary's Sexual Assault Centre they asked me to do some training at Sedgley Park, Police Training School, where they train all the new recruits about rape and sexual assault. I parked up and as I was thinking which way to go I saw the 'entrance' and the steps (she shudders). Walking in I saw the mosaic floor. I got directions to the workshop space did the training, went back to the office. They signed me out and I did it again the following week. I thought - I need to ask a question about that house. As the Detective Constable was signing me out I asked, "Before this became the training school what was it?" He said, "Oh many years ago, it used to be a convent, an orphanage". I asked who owned it and he replied it was Italian families, but he couldn't remember their name and they let nuns run it to house abandoned catholic children in the 1950s, and I said, "oh right". I asked what had happened to the records and he said, "oh they will have been archived in London somewhere". Strange isn't it how the past can return.

When I had my children; Lisa is 45. Ayodele who is 39, Louise, 35 and Apdolie who is 32, you couldn't have had a better grandmother. Something changed, the way she was with my children and I thought "You're wonderful - what happened?"

My father was so strict. I was terrified of him and did everything he said. He never wanted me to marry a white man, but it didn't matter as I never wanted to get married and I never wanted children; I wanted a career. Then I met Brian, but Dad still wasn't happy, and I said "Why?' – he's Black, he's half caste". "He's Gambian!!" said my father. I thought "Can't I do anything to please this man". Still it didn't stop him giving my children African names. He said they must have African names because wherever they go, Nigerians will know their roots, which is Yoruba.

I can remember when I was young and I asked my Dad "What did you fall in love with when you saw my mum?" and he said, "Her long auburn hair and her legs" and I said "urrrgh Dad!". You know when you are young such things sound yucky. Then I asked Mum the same question and she said, "He was very, very handsome, with a wealth of life experience" because he had been all over the world and he came from a very wealthy family. I saw just how wealthy when I went to Nigeria to visit them.

Sometimes they came to stay with us in the big house my Dad had. They would stay for six months, it was great! When his family was here Dad was brilliant, he didn't get drunk, no fighting, he was brilliant. They were really good times when his family came over. Around about every three months my father received a big barrel stacked full of coconuts, pineapple and Garri and yams. I loved it.

My father always ate his own food. He taught mum how to cook African food which she was brilliant at. I don't know if you remember when they used to sell chestnuts in the street, hot chestnuts. My Dad used to buy me a little bag of hot chestnuts, I loved them.

At the weekend he always dressed in his beautiful African clothes and my Mother looked so proud of him. She would say "Doesn't he look good?" He did, he looked brilliant. Mr Pereira and my dad always wore African clothes. I used to love it when my Dad talked in his own language and to this day, it doesn't matter where I am, I can recognise Yoruba I just know by the tones.

Interestingly, my father was a Communist, really hard core. He went to secret meetings at a Russian family's house in Cheetham Hill. One of his first journeys after leaving Africa was Mombasa He was very good friends with Jomo Kenyatta. We might think "Oh my god", but to them it was normal. It was like being friends with the Queen; no big deal!

'Why Communism'? And he said, "the theory of communism, if it works, is that everybody is equal". So, I could understand as a Black man, him wanting that, from the hospital cleaner to the surgeon – everybody is equal.

I would say to Mum "What are they doing?" and she would say "They are having a meeting about politics".

I suppose it was his communist beliefs that made him frugal. He taught me that you were your own boss and didn't have to rely on any man for any finance – always 'save for a rainy day' and don't tell anybody just put it away, put it away. I loved the way he saved in a tin box with different slots that one was for gas and that one was for electric. If ever I wanted anything he would say "I will give you half if you can earn half". It was never handed on a plate. So that is what I loved about my Dad.

I lost my Dad first. He died of Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 1983. At the time we thought he was about 73 but nowadays I think he was probably eighty. He first worked at Central Station. I remember on a Friday going with my Mum for his wages. Then he got a job at Victoria Station where he worked for the rest of his life as a shunter.

They had divorced fifteen years before the illness took him. Mum had changed her name back to Horan, because she didn't want his name. But she said, "I'll help you" and she did, and he let her. I don't know if he would have done the same thing for her! She was upset, heartbroken really, she said "After all he has been through" - the war and life in England.

He hung onto life a long, long time because he had a heart like a drum, and I kept thinking "Will you please take this man?" I remember there was this smell from everything inside deteriorating. But his heart was still strong. I had been to see him, left and got home when I got the phone call.

I rushed back and said, "Prepare everything, I will lay him out and wash him". The nurse said, "Are you sure?" and I said yeah. I had done it before when I worked at Withington Hospital. A lot of the Muslims said "No, no. you're not allowed" but I said, "I'm doing it, it's my Dad, it's the last thing I can do for him".

I got a lot of stick. They took the body to Nigeria House and then we went on to Southern Cemetery. It was just mayhem, I was glad when it was over. But I laid him out, and why not? He was my father. He is buried in the Muslim sector of Southern Cemetery.

You know I adored my Mother and Father - still do. I was always well fed, and my mother was spotless, absolutely spotless. She kept me spotless too which wasn't easy in the cold with smoke coming out of chimneys, Jack Frost on the inside of the windows and blankets on your bed. Horsehair furniture, the smell of paraffin.

Life was hard for everyone. I appreciate that but sometimes things happened that were so unexpected. I remember when she was working at Schon Brothers on Bury New Road, a Jewish toy firm. She was going to work, and I caught the bus with her, because I was going into town with a friend. We were sat together on the long back seats. As her stop was coming up these guys came down the stairs and immediately I saw my Mum turn away from me and look out the back window (oh my god). I said, "What are you doing" she said, "Nothing, nothing". I said, "This is your stop" she said, "Oh leave it" and she didn't get off. It hit me like a ton of bricks. At the time I never said anything but when she came home I confronted her "You were ashamed of me – you are ashamed – did those lads work at Schon Brothers?" She said "Yeah". I said, "They don't know that you have got a Black daughter, do

they?" and she said, "No because there is a lot of racism within the company, you know comments from the workers, not from the Jewish owners but from the workers". She said, "and I didn't want to face it" and I understood, but it was very painful. Very very painful, I've never forgotten that. But still I challenged her, and she accepted the challenge and took responsibility for her behaviour.

She wasn't a very huggy, huggy woman with me, but when she did, it was great. But right back I could be a bit frosty. Ours was very patriarchal family. I wasn't allowed to cry, I wasn't allowed to show any feelings and I was taught to live life on my own. It wasn't because of my Mum, it was because of my Dad and what he said because he ruled.

Dad used to say never let anybody kiss you on the mouth Peggy and when you kiss your children you kiss them here, if you want to, there on the head. I still do that now with my own grandchildren. I love those little things that Dad gave me, and my Mum used to say, "He's right" because she was proud of him in these ways.

I love the support she gave me with my children and how when I was little, she always stuck up for me if I was having a hard time, which was nearly every day. I loved her food and the lovely clothes she bought me. I did the Whit Walks in town Mum bought my clothes from Stewarts[1] in Ardwick facing the Apollo

Nothing changed how I felt about my mum despite what went on.

Unlike with my Dad, for Mum there was only 12 weeks from her diagnosis with ovarian cancer to her death in 1996. There were no signs, but when I look back now "Oh my back, my tummy is extended", constant burping, they were the signs, but we didn't know what they meant.

She asked me to prepare her funeral and I asked her to give me an idea of what she wanted. I went away and said, "This is what I have managed to come up with" and she said that was exactly what she wanted. I had Barrie and everybody helping me. They just said, "What do you want us to do?" Although they are my cousins they are like brothers. And their sister Christine who passed in August, she was just like my sister and for her, I helped arrange her funeral the way she wanted it. This was an honour and a way of thanking her for her help with my mother.

At first, I cared for Mum at home but eventually she had to go into hospital. I would regularly sleep over in the ward. I was there on her last morning when the nurses came in to turn her and I asked them not to, but they said, "Oh pressure sores". I told them that she was well rested, and they could turn her later.

I checked that everything was OK, and the breathing pump was going then went to the toilet to freshen up. The mirror was in her room, so I started chatting as I put on my lipstick telling her what I was doing and that I was going to pop off for a while, but I would be back later. Then I noticed a change in her breathing and thought "This is it".

I went over and sat on the bed and as I cradled her, I knew.

I said, "Just relax, it's me Ann, you relax, I'm holding you, everything is OK" (clicks her fingers) then she was gone. I just stayed there for a while just holding her. Then I shouted the nurse and they got the doctor and he confirmed she had died.

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1 James Stewart & Co.

They already knew that I wanted to lay her out. I said, "Please bring a bowl of water and I will prepare her now". I washed her and laid her out. Her favourite smell was lavender, and I always had lavender oil with me. I put the lavender on her. Then I phoned the family, but I was alright doing her on my own and that was it. For me that was a great honour and the very least I could do.

OK it wasn't an easy life. No, it wasn't easy, but she did what she could do at the time and so did my Dad and no regrets; I have got some good memories. To be honest it took me a long time to come to terms with everything. I've had to do a lot of healing which is absolutely fine. It took as long as it took. Who knows we might meet again in other life times and other guises? Who knows, who knows. *(Laughter)*. What I would say to her is "I always loved you, in fact I adored you." I loved it when she was wild and angry, but not with me, but when she would kick off and I would say "That's my Mum, fighting my corner".

FAMILY
Margaret Anne Horan. May 1928 – October 1996
Ann Eva Mariamo Sarge (nee Rufai)
Samuel Kolawale Rufai
David Olerewaju Rufai
Tiamiyu Tinubu Rufai passed November 1987

Ann's children
Lisa Marie Aduke Omagara Sarge
Leon Ayodele Sarge
Louise Menghe Sherifatu Sarge
Apdolie Adekunle Sarge

EVELYN MASIE LAWRENCE (Bayliss)
March 1926
by her daughters ANGELA & ELAINE

Angela: Mum and Dad always said they didn't have to get married.
Our Mum first came to England as a war bride from New South Wales. She married a local man living in Newcastle. He was in the Navy. All she has ever said about that marriage was that he wasn't a nice man, so she left him.

We think she must have agreed to be a war bride to make a new life for herself. Her parents died when she was seven, so she was raised by her Grandmother. She had two children that were put in to care; taken off her because of her young age. She was always seen as the Black sheep of the family and made to feel that way. Looking back at her life, it seemed that no one had any understanding of how a child suffers emotionally after losing their parents, so it is not surprising she came to England and saw it as a way of starting over again.

She shut it away, hid for near enough forty odd, fifty odd years.

Her only brother came on visits. There was a curiosity about how she was getting on with Dad and just wanting to know that she was happy and that things were going ok for her. He kept the ties open with her grandmother until her death. When her brother died in a train accident, Mum was really torn. He was such a lovely person, he wanted to know everything, and he was really close with Dad.
She didn't want to keep in contact with what little family she had back in Australia probably because of all she had been through. But when her brother died, she went over. Dad paid for her.

Leaving Newcastle, she came to stay with a friend in Manchester who was dating a Black man. One

night they went to the Rose and Crown on Oldham Street and that is when she met our father. Dad, Victor James Lawrence, came from Halifax, St. Marys, Jamaica. We think he came in 1939. He didn't realise that he had been signed up into the army; he thought he was coming for a job. Instead he went straight into uniform. That was a bit of a disappointment to him

Mum told us that in Australia for fraternising with coloured people you could be put in jail, so she didn't have much experience with Black people; it was like two worlds apart really. For a time, Dad worked for a family that emigrated to Australia and I always remembered Dad saying 'no we can't go - we are not allowed to go '

It was the same with Mum. When asked she'd say, 'They don't allow Black people'.

When they were courting, we think she lived on Chester Road, Old Trafford near St Georges Church. She has told us that Dad would never walk her home; it was too dangerous. So, they always met at the Rose and Crown and she would then have to get the bus back.

They rented a house on Denmark Road, Moss Side and went on to live together for seven years before they got married. We realised as we grew up it was quite common to be living together and not being married until years down the line. A couple of our Aunties did the same. What is important is they didn't have to get married, they chose to marry.

Dad comes from an open and welcoming family so family really means a lot. They totally just embraced Mum and became her family too.

Mum is the type of a person who has never had a full circle of friends. She is friendly on the outside quick to say 'hello, how do you do?' but she has never had a massive circle of friends. She is quite a closed individual.

Dad came from a farming background. They had done very well land wise. His Dad, our grandfather, even had a car, back in the day. So, they weren't without money.

Dad didn't believe in credit. He worked as a drilling engineer for Massey-Ferguson for a long time. He gave Mum housekeeping money and she would work for all the extras and bills. She did a lot of cleaning and factory work to make sure everything got paid. But if we wanted to go anywhere, we would have to ask our Dad 'Ask your Dad'.

If you looked from the outside, it looked like Dad ran the household, but it was Mum really. They both did it together. For the day to day, Dad earned wages every week and gave Mum money for the house. Dad was frugal, very, very frugal. He was wise with his money. He never dreamed of like splashing out unnecessarily. He would save for things and he would always pay cash. We couldn't get the luxuries that we thought we wanted, you know what I mean. When we wanted certain things, he would go out and make it, like our first roller boots. We had two TVs. Both Black and white. *(laughter)* We weren't rich in any sense … and we weren't poor – we never went without food. Friends would always say 'you always get new shoes and clothes,' and we did because he and Mum just worked hard.

She was from the old school of you support your husband as the man of the house. But she wasn't the inferior wife, but the dutiful wife in the pecking order of life.

We grew up with a very cultural diet; a lot of green banana, Ackee and salt fish. Dad would cook, and Mum learned (from him) to cook Caribbean food. Then we would also have Spam and beans and

eggs and stuff like that. Like most West Indians he had an allotment where he grew potatoes and lots of other things to eat. Mum's connection with Australia was lost when her brother died so she just adopted to Dad's; we had a very Black diet.

Thinking about it now, Mum always made sure that we were always well presented, always, clean clothes. She scrubbed floors, so we had anything we needed. Subconsciously that was her way of showing people 'listen, my kids are just as valuable as everybody else's'. She said when our eldest brother was born, the nurse was shocked to see the baby was Black.

We grew up just off Chester Road, in Old Trafford, where the Old Kellogg's building is. There were just these four avenues in the middle of nowhere. We were quite isolated in a way but had a lot of space too. We had the Manchester Cricket ground down the road - a lot of space to move around in.
Possibly we were over protected; certainly, we were. We could go up the road, we could go to the park, so long as we were back by a certain time. It was most likely just the nature of where we lived, because it wasn't a very busy place all the time.

There were older English families that had lived there for many years and they were very approachable. Children-wise it was friendly, and we all knew each other, and we all played together.
Mum said that when they were buying the house, Mum had to go alone one evening to see the people 'cos they wouldn't have sold it to us if they had seen our Dad.

We were the only Black family on Queen's Avenue, and then a few years later Dad's cousin moved in to Princes Avenue. Then his sister came over from Jamaica and got a house in Royal Avenue and lived there few years before immigrating. When the Shivermangles moved in, we got our first Black neighbours and we grew up with them.

Elaine: I can't remember really stepping out of any kind of boundaries, not until I was a teenager. I think I was a bit reserved as a child because we were aware that people would call you names or stare at you.

We all went to St Hilda's Primary school on Warwick Road South in Old Trafford and we were the first family of coloureds to be there. Then I went to Gorse Park, which is not there anymore. Parents' evenings were always the same 'you could do better.' Mum and Dad would just listen to what the teachers would say and that was that and they would then go home. They thought that because it was England, we would just get a good education.

I was chased home from school many a time and called names, just by local lads. I didn't tell my parents. I didn't want to upset them, what could they do? I didn't particularly know where these people lived, they were just school kids coming home from school. They could try and follow them and maybe get called names themselves. I wasn't scared of them. I had a big brother, I just avoided getting too close. I'd bring school friends to the house and they would see my Dad on the street and say, 'Who is that Black man?' I would say 'well he is my Dad, what do you expect?' I don't know it's hard to say, because people talk about you, you don't use the term coloured, but I always saw myself as being coloured. I wasn't Black enough, I wasn't white enough, but I grew to think 'I'm me, if you don't like me, there is nothing wrong with me'.

But I had no compunction to say that he was my Dad, and what was the problem? Because there weren't any problems as far I was concerned within my family life. It was just their attitudes; there was nothing wrong with my parents'

It seems unkind to say anything about it really, but Mum has said things to me that I have felt 'but I am your daughter, you shouldn't be talking to me like that'. When she has been angered or stressed from going out to work, providing, putting up with other people's issues.

Some friends have told me their Mum would call them a Black bitch. That never happened to me with my Mum. I didn't grow up like that, she wouldn't even call me a 'bitch' or anything like that. It seems alien to me to hear such name calling, because that is not how we grew up. I used to think that, where you come from – it's racist.

There would be times where I would get a slap, but I think it's just the stress and strains of growing up. It cowered me and it made me feel a bit smaller in myself preventing the sharing of my opinion of how I felt. So, I kept it to myself. It was hurtful, but I kept it to myself.

So, whereas I might have been more verbal and said 'you know' but I grew to answer back *(gentle laughter).*

Dad took all of us to Jamaica at some stage of our lives. I didn't have the connection that Angela had, then I went again when I was a lot older. But I did know my Jamaica family more when they came to England and I connected with them – Auntie Laura and Auntie Erma to a main extent, not so much with Auntie Polly as she was much younger. My sadness came when my cousins who were born here and were taken to live in Jamaica – and that was like 'why aren't they taking me?!' You know, why couldn't I grow up there in Jamaica and really that is my loss.

I'm 62 now and I think I've kind of always been very insular. I like to think I would be a friend to anyone. If people want to know me then fine.

I suppose I was too old to go to the clubs that Angela went to. They weren't there when I was young. I suppose it was on the end of the hippy trail really. There was the odd youth club, but they were all very white, few coloured people. My coloured friends at Gorse park, they never invited me out to go places. I have not had many Black men asking me out on a date. I don't know why, maybe I'm just too English. (no that's not it).

Angela: I always, always identify myself as a child of God first! Because I don't answer the questions on questionnaires.

Elaine: but you didn't go to Sunday school regularly like we had to go to Sunday school.

Angela: No, no, I had to go for a while Elaine.

Elaine: But we had to go every week.

Angela: So, did I, I had to go for a while.

I just say my Mum is Australian and my Dad is Jamaican. You know, if I am asked about where my people are from, that is how I answer it. I am proud to be who I am. I don't necessarily see myself as Mixed Race in that sense because I have always had a Black Culture. It dominated my childhood and it's kind of dominant now. Sometimes I am accused of being racist, or that I don't like white people, but it's not like I don't like white people but the institution yeah, the institution and the systems the unfairness and the unjust – but people don't like to talk about it too much and if you can say it as plainly as you can see it, they like it even less.

The first time I went to Jamaica, we went for six weeks when I was eleven and I loved it. I went back, in my early twenties for three months. I class Jamaica as my home. I feel like it is a part of me, and I just mingle in you know, and, I think that is where I want to end my days. The fact that we have land there means we have something that we can call our own.

It wasn't as bad for me as in Elaine's era. Because when I was growing up it was the start of Black consciousness for us, for me…

We were fighting at school in terms of fighting their perception of us as young Black girls. The teachers would try and break you down from the first day of term, so it was a constant battle against teachers. But it never got to the point where it came home, they just kept on about 'my attitude, my attitude' and not being like the other girls.

I remember in primary school going on a summer trip and Dad dropped me off. In the camp that night they started making fun of my Dad saying that your Dad is just a Black 'ra ra ra ra tart'. So, I started fighting one girl, and they said, 'I think we are going to have to send you home'. No words to defend me

My brother Bryan is two years older than me, we clung to the same thing. A lot of his friends and my friends were like related in some way. When he began to get in to the Sound System he would build them in our back yard. The music we listened to like Megatones . The way my peers and I dressed and socialised all contributed to a consciousness rising.

At the age of fifteen I started to grow Locks and I classed myself as a Nyabinghi Dread.
Dad's reaction was to never actually condemn it. He never said to me 'take off that Tam '. He spoke about when the Rastafarians and Haile Selassie went to Jamaica and wouldn't get off the plane. That is the most my Dad would say about my having locks.

At the same time my Dad was becoming more aware of things like 'Stop and Search ' and its impact on my brother more than me. I think he kind of knew why we were choosing to live and look the way we did so he didn't want to stop us; but sometimes he would laugh about it.

Yeah we were on this journey, I was on it for a long time. Can I just say – I have my family and I have always been very proud of them. They have always been very loving and giving and that's why I know I'm ok. There is nothing wrong with me and if you don't like me….
Elaine believes she is like her father

Elaine: I would say I am like my Dad (At this point Angela looks sideways). I just know I am more like my Dad, he was a bit cantankerous but a friendly person. I can be a bit cantankerous. I love my family, but I resonate a lot with my Dad,

Angela: I used to say to my Mum all the time, 'one day Mum you are going to be left with just Elaine and you are going to have to get on'. I can guarantee had my Mum come today and Elaine had been here, at a certain stage she would have argued with her because they are just very alike.

Elaine: She would have me put down

Angela: Also, it's the way she asks questions that probably gets on her nerves She loves Elaine and knows Elaine is there for her, but she says 'sometimes she just asks questions'.

Elaine: Mum always says to Angela 'you always manage to get loads of answers out of me, I don't know why I talk to you the most'. Then she would talk about their Saturdays when Dad would sit in front of the fire and then go to the bookies before they went to the dance.

Angela: We don't know exactly where they went but maybe the social clubs in Moss Side. Dad would talk about doing the Jitterbug with the English women when he was in the army. Lots of his friends were people who had been in the forces. They were very socially-politically minded in wanting to set up a mutually supportive community for themselves as with The Jamaican Society . Dad was a Pan-African and attended the Congress in Manchester Mum went along to The West Indian Centre at Carmoor Road and was turned away because she was white. That really hurt both of them.

When they were first married and maybe already pregnant with Lloyd Dad sent Mum to meet his parents in Jamaica. Mum said as a white woman she was obviously very nervous about going and how they would respond. She said they were lovely people who just accepted her, and she got on really well with Dad's sister. She never felt she wasn't wanted by them, even now the relationship is strong. That helped her and in turn helped all of us. There's no denying probably there were people who frowned upon their relationship but that just made them stronger together. They also had a network of at least seven or eight other mixed-race couples – Black men with white women (in the beginning) – yes, they had that as well.

They took part in a BBC programme about mixed marriages – that was a few years later at the old studios on Dickenson Road in Rusholme. They talked about it often particularly if the BBC showed a more recent programme on the same topic.

They were married for sixty-eight years and so in those sixty-eight years they have gone through the worst, including not being able to feel comfortable together outside the home, to being able to recognise who they are. So, they have experienced quite a lot. But what they have shared with us is the fact that without saying the word 'love', they were committed, and they put family first.
Dad knew about who our step brother and sister are. They always had an open and honest relationship. He respected what Mum wanted and never told us which was kind of weird. For him it wasn't an issue. He supported her.

She did try to make contact with her son, Robert and was given the cold shoulder by the family. That is what turned her. That was that and she said OK I will have nothing to do with them.
When Yvonne - her daughter, our sister - found Mum, Dad was just as welcoming. She tried to ignore it for a while. Elaine spotted a letter from New Zealand and was told 'Don't touch it, you touch that letter, don't talk to me again'. Angela was the last to be told.

Now Yvonne and her are reunited she is a lot happier in herself. In making sure we looked good, making sure we were looked after and making sure we had everything she wasn't whole in herself. There was a missing link and now that link has been found.

Looking at old pictures, she had auburn hair and freckles. I wouldn't say she was beautiful; a nice smile and nice features. Medium build and not a bad figure. In one picture Mum and Dad are on the beach at Blackpool and they have both got sombrero hats on. They had obviously just started dating and they looked really in love – (and my Dad is wearing a suit on the beach.

Whenever we asked Dad why he fell for our Mum he would answer in flippant way 'what you mean, what you mean' that kind of thing 'it's your mother'. 'But Dad what did you feel when you saw her?' 'What do you mean' then she is just like everybody else? 'No Dad, why did you marry her'. 'Why did I

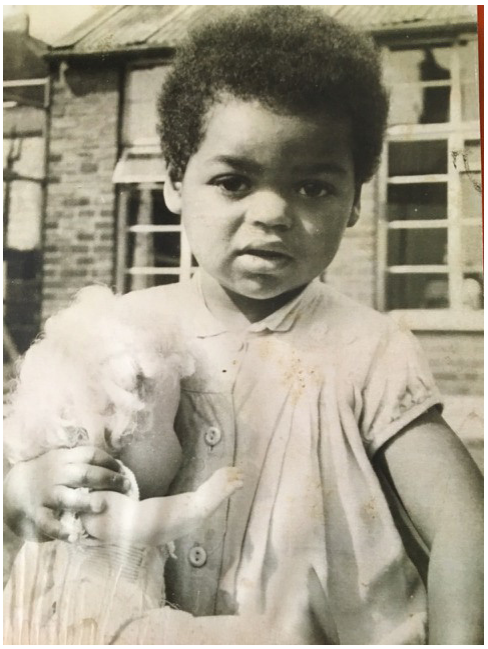
marry her?' He never really answered, that is all he would answer. In later years he was more, 'what can I say about my wife'

When Mum was ill in hospital (this was shortly before Dad died) one time when he went to see her, they were kissing. Oh my God it was so embarrassing, *(laughter)* you could just see and hear the slurps going on. He was kissing her, holding her hand and stroking her leg and stuff like that. As the years got older, he began to appreciate her a lot more. Without doubt but he worked hard for his family.
After Dad died and she was in hospital she would tell us 'see your Dad everyday he comes and asks, when am I coming'.

Our elder sister Judith did a painting of Dad that Elaine thinks looks nothing like him; even so Mum talks to it and says, 'I'm back home now and I won't be long'. She still deeply misses him, deeply. She has been 'communicating all the way through'. She has got that faith that they will be together soon and that is lovely.

FAMILY
Yvonne Leven
Robert Baylis
Lloyd Lawrence. March 1954 – July 2018
Elaine Joyce (Lawrence)
Susan Louise (Lawrence)
Bryan Earland Lawrence
Angela Lawrence
Victor James Lawrence. February 1921 – March 2017

AGNES McLARDIE
April 1938
by her daughter HELEN



My Mum's name is Agnes. She named me Helen after her friend who she came to England with from her home in Scotland

I was a feral child, and I do believe when I consider where I am now spiritually, I was always protected; there were always Angels protecting me. So, I give all thanks and credit to God Almighty for sending those angels to guide me.

I am an African. Why? I am an African from my heart, I have always been from being a child– I was an African princess.

My maternal Grandfather had very strong morals he was an Orangeman , I know that, and he hated Catholics. Mum said that she used to have really, really long hair and my grandfather used to beat her, you know, because she would sneak out the windows to go dancing. She loved dancing. Mum doesn't speak about my Grandfather in a very good light. She has spoken vaguely about her Mother and how she would defend her and let her off with certain things. Mum had a brother who she hated, and she had a sister called Jean.

I don't think she ever felt that she was loved as a child, so it was very hard for her to show affection to me. Mum had a child before she left Scotland and she had it adopted, so I have to assume this is why the relationship with her family was the way it was. When I speak to Mum about the son she had adopted - 'Don't blinding bother me'. That is Mum's answer to everything, it's like she just doesn't want to revisit her past.

But one thing I will give Mum the utmost respect for is that she could have had me adopted, but she kept me. She is not Catholic, so it is not guilt (wild laughter)! I give her credit for that. I give her a lot of credit for that.

Also, there are quite a lot of the so-called African and white kids of my generation whose mothers were prostitutes. At the end of the day, it was survival, because what some of those white mothers went through with regards to their own families disowning them and social and personal rejections. I understand, they had to put food on the table and keep a roof over their head for the children. Honestly, I respect them to the max, prostitutes or not prostitutes. I really and truly do.

When I started to mingle with more Mixed Raced people I'd hear mothers taking about 'oh yeah, you know her mum used to be a prostitute' but I never heard that about my Mum.

Mum was a bit of a tearaway. She left Scotland with her friend Helen for Manchester. My Mum had never seen a Black man in her life. They headed to Moss Side – why they had headed to Moss Side, I don't know. Anyway, to cut a long story short, Mum has told me her friend Helen was hustling and got in with a Black fellow. That was not what my Mum wanted so on her own she found a room in Salford. Higher Broughton had a lot of Polish refugees but predominantly Hasidic Jews. I think on the whole of Murray Street there must have been about three families. Two families and me with my Mum.

We lived in rooms of the house of Auntie Phillis and Uncle Rick who was a Polish refugee. They had six, it may have been seven children and as far as family was concerned, the Korkivishes were my family too. I was just automatically incorporated into their family when they used to go to Wolverhampton where Auntie Phillis used to live, and I would always be with them.

The nursery I went to was right next door to Mum's factory, Manchester Metal Works, where they used to make parts for aeroplanes and gas meters, and all those kinds of things. She used to operate massive big machines

I was in Nursery from being six weeks old and I was the only Black child in there. All the nursery teaches loved me.

The nursery teachers used to take care of me; even when they got married. The one I called Auntie Linda, when she got married and moved away, her Mum and Dad used to still come for me every weekend. I remember Murray Street was a very, very long street I used to meet Auntie Flo at the red post box. I always used to be running down there to meet her on a Saturday.

Both Aunties were white professional women. I used to go to them every other weekend, one weekend this Auntie and the next weekend the other.

I remember Auntie Linda's Mum, Auntie Nellie, would always take me to the Whit walks and I always felt a sense of pride from being small. I always felt that I was special and different, but I didn't know why. On reflection they were looking at me because I was the only Black one there, so I just stood out. I can't ever recall my Mum even having any form of communication with 'my Aunties"; those things are very sketchy in my mind. I think the only time I ever remember Mum even speaking to them is when I was a bridesmaid for each of them and we went to their weddings.

There must have been occasions when they spoke, such as when they brought me home. I am sure they didn't just leave me at the bottom of Murray Street, but drove me to the door and handed me over to her.

Mum was very insular; probably not having no family and being in a strange town.
As I have said, my Mum loved to dance, so even when she was in Salford I think she used to still go to Moss Side because she loved the music, she loved to dance.

Let's not forget there were loads of Clubs in Cheetham Hill as well. There was the Ghana Club; Mum was very friendly with the owners, I used to call her Auntie Mary, a white woman with blond hair. Sometimes we would go around there to see them and have something to eat. But how she actually met my Dad, I don't know.

We lived in a few rooms actually. It was more like board and lodging really. Big houses with several rooms rented out to various people. In the room you had your pull-out bed settee, a little sink and then you shared a communal bathroom. I am sure my Mum had a two-ring stove. You ate in your rooms, it was always food on your knee, never a table.

I remember the first house we moved to; one of those where you walk in off the street. It had a big, old fashioned fire range (a Black widow). Oh gosh, the floor was concrete slabs and there were always snails and shite like that. *(laughter)*. It was very, very cold; it never felt homely, it never felt comfortable. I was in the junior school at the time, all my friends' parents were professionals. They were Doctors, prison officers, they had beautiful homes, and I would never invite any of my friends to my home, because my home was….

My Mum was never house proud. I was always in different people's houses. When they got new things in their houses, I would ask 'Oh can I have that'. I started to decorate from when I was ten about the same time we got our first council house

Mum used to go out at the weekends, always down to Moss Side with my Auntie Doreen; she was with Uncle Francis – he was from Sierra Leone. On a Friday night, they would sew dresses for the Saturday. Mum always had very expensive tastes for her clothes. I really was the best dressed kid. Wow, nobody could beat my Mum for shoes, so much that she would buy her shoes from Derbers[1] and I would put them out in the back yard. 'Right I am off to school now' and I would run round, take off my school shoes and put my Mum's shoes on and go to school. *(laughter)*. That is something that has been passed through to me because I am a shoe lover. My Mum always drummed it in to me 'never ever buy cheap shoes because you are always going to go back' and still to this day, in her late eighties, she is paying like eighty, ninety pounds for her shoes.

She was an attractive woman yeah, yeah. Medium build, lovely blue eyes with beautiful skin.
She had many boyfriends both Black and white and I didn't really take to that. You know, it was just horrible seeing someone different all the time. I have got three children and I keep my relationships away from the house because I always felt that what I experienced and some of the things I saw, I never wanted my children to experience.

Mum was always a very nervous woman. I remember she was on barbiturates or something back then - I mean Jesus. What were those tablets? Yeah Purple Hearts . When I realised what they were, I used to steal them and me and my mates would get off our faces.

Yes, she was a very attractive woman and I think always searching for love, but then when love came, she wasn't able to recognise it.

I think she did find love not once but twice. One of them was a man called Edwin Etadefe, a Nigerian

1 *A shoe store chain regarded as top range no longer in business*

student studying Psychiatry. Edwin lived in Prestwich. It was right down the bottom of this really long lane, the back garden was adjacent to the land of Prestwich hospital , where the horses were stabled. It was just beautiful. I was a Princess living in the Palace – from the Pit to the Palace.
We would stay three quarters of the week in Prestwich. Mum always kept her accommodation, that was her security just in case anything happened.

With regards to my Mum being loved, I know that Edwin loved my Mum, he loved her dearly. And I think that she also loved him. When his family visited from Africa, Mum and I were always introduced to them. Edwin took me on like I was his own child. But then after two years, I don't know what actually happened, whether she was seeing somebody else and went off with them and ended their relationship

Then Mum was with this Bajan guy, called Ken. She was with him for years and honestly, she loved the bones off him and he loved the bones off her, but he also had a wife and children! He would spend most of the week at our house, he kept his clothes there. I think it ended when he went off with somebody else. They were the only two prominent relationships that I can actually say lasted and could be called a relationship, and also two men that I can really say loved her.

In those days, I had a Barnardo's worker; the first Black prominent woman that I had ever met in my life. She was from Trinidad, very middle class. She used to come once a month to give Mum a clothing allowance that was rotated between Mum and me every other month.

I don't know why that Barnardo's worker was allocated to me. I used to call Mrs McKenzie, the social worker, Auntie Maisie, she used to take me on holidays. Thinking about it now that I work in residential homes, some had a cottage for children's holidays.

Once a month Auntie Maisie would fill in a report as to how our relationship was and what I had been doing. She might have been allocated because I was always getting in to trouble.

I wasn't really happy within myself because a child at school called me a 'black bastard'. I didn't know what that was because as far as I was concerned, I was the same as everybody else. I ran home and got a photograph of a white child in a pram; I took it in to the school and I said to this kid 'look this was me as a baby. My Mother must have just left me in the pram, and I got a suntan'. After that it was pouring bleach on my skin and getting the scrubbing brush and trying to get this brown off.

I went to North Salford High School on Leicester Road. Roxanne Boscoe was several years ahead of me, but she was like a protector to me. All her sisters went there.

I remember I had to do a project for the Mexico Olympic games and I had to mark down who got what medals and der der der and it was the time when the three Black Americans did this (Helen raises her fist in the Black Power salute). When I saw that it was my awakening.

The Sibthorpes' were one of the families that lived in Salford, and I don't know how I was connected with them, but Angela, John and Victor, they also took me under their wing, and they were in to the Black Power Movement . So as a young person I was exposed to these things that raised my cultural awareness and identity.

I was always in trouble at school, sometimes I was responsible for the things but then other times when things happened 'It was Helen McLardie'. They knew that I didn't have a Dad and how weak and feeble my Mum was – it was easy for them to apply more pressure on her based on the fact that she had a

Black child. Yeah, without a doubt. The bigotry that comes in that assessment. Without a doubt. I don't even think my Mum was that aware, to tell you the truth. She had no awareness of the fact that I was a Black child living in a predominantly white environment and that effect on me.

My Mother couldn't even do my hair. I was taken to the barber's where my head was shaven. I dread to think what my skin was like. But yet, I always had food, I had a roof over my head, and I had clothes on my back. I think my Mum, because she provided the three basic necessities of life, thought she fulfilled motherhood.

Mum always told me that my Dad was dead. Then one Sunday morning she threw a telephone number at me and said, 'Your Dad wants to see you because he is going to Africa'. And I said, 'My Dad?' and then to myself 'has he been resurrected?' It was about 1972, so I was thirteen turning fourteen.

Now I am going to meet a man, an African man who, as far as my Mum was concerned, was dead, and he is my father. I was really excited, really excited. Having a Dad meant being able to tell my friends at school, 'I've got a dad and my dad is coming to school to pick me up and der der der'.

My Dad David Lagbodo Emare told me he heard through the grapevine that my Mum was pregnant. I think it was whilst pregnant she may have even gone off with one of my Dad's friends or something like that. Dad said that when he heard of my birth he went to Hope Hospital, and as he entered the ward, he heard this child crying. He found where Mum was saw me and then he said, he just touched me, I stopped crying!

He asked her 'let us try and work something out' and she said, 'I don't need you, I will do this on my own' and that was her attitude and it is still my Mother's attitude to this day, hence why she is still a very lonely, lonely woman.

The relationship with my Mum changed after I met my Dad because I would play one off against the other 'I want this, oh well if you don't get it for me, I will go to my Dad'. It used to really get to her. Yeah.

Who do I look like? Both of them, both of them, I think so anyway. You know what I wonder as 'Mixed' (I hate that term Mixed Race) for me, I have always wanted to have that affiliation from my Dad to my African heritage, in my looks, my attitude, my ways. I don't think I have really got anything of my Mum in that sense, but then again my children might say something different. I do have an independent attitude very much like her, I have raised three children on my own and there is still nobody in my life.

I was fifteen when I got pregnant. Oh Jesus Christ, my mother didn't talk to me for the first seven months, and we lived in the same house. It was (the late) Tony Cole that I had to ask to tell Mum because I was scared. Our relationship was really tarnished, it was horrible, very, very cold. I remember one time, running a bath and staying in it, and I thought 'I am going to see if she cares about me or bleeding not'. Well didn't the bath go freezing cold and she still hadn't come in to see if I was alright. Eventually she did, so I jumped out the bath then.

Throughout my pregnancy she wasn't interested; she was ashamed. When she saw me coming down the road she would go to the other side. Mum had to leave from work to come to the hospital when I went into labour. I was on the labour ward and she looked at me and said, 'To think you are going through all this pain for a worthless bastard like him'. I could see the expression on the nurses' faces. Why couldn't she have put that to one side just for this one time and said something like 'it happens all the

time darling' and just maybe have a little bit of compassion or a little bit of empathy for a young child, her child, going through labour. Very cold.

I had Auntie Maisie as a social worker right up until I had Curtis. She brought me the most beautiful, beautiful wicker basket on a stand. Not these crappy ones, the real McCoy. It was like - Wow. Curtis is born and she kind of bonded with him straight away, she really did love Curtis. I left home when he was about eighteen months and moved down to Liverpool with Carol Brennen and we lived with Deli in his Mum's big fancy house. Then we got a council flat in Carl Gardens. While I was in Liverpool she didn't contact me. I had been through major operations and still my Mum wasn't supporting. One day this lady I used to call Auntie Dot, came to visit me. When she saw the environment, I was living in she said, 'this child isn't living here' and she took my baby Curtis to Manchester. It was only for about three weeks, and then I came running back to Manchester, because I couldn't be without my baby!

She loves all her grandchildren. She has been blessed with two beautiful grandsons and she loves the bones off them, but in her way of loving, to her understanding as to what love is. You walk in to Mum's and it is just pictures of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. It's just really strange. Mum always paid for my School pictures. Has she has got them now? Has she heck, has she heck. Not at all, not one school photograph. Facebook has set up all these school pages and I have asked many times has anybody got any picture of me from me being small?

It was while I was pregnant that Ken left her. I don't know if her feelings are too hard for her to bear or what. But when it comes to her feelings there is always this huge wall.

Every time my Mum looked at me, she must have seen my Dad who she hated for a long time, but this is the twist in the tale. When I was forty, I had not long come back from Nigeria with my Dad, and my Mum is sat there with the man I have always called my Uncle Francis. Mum just started crying so I asked her 'What is wrong?' and she said, 'I have got something to tell you, David is not your Dad, Francis is your Dad'. I am forty years of age now, don't forget I have been led to David who was dead, but resurrected, and now my Mum is telling me that Francis is my Dad. (Helen is crying as she tells this) I remember turning round to Uncle Francis and said, 'if you are my Dad you better get some money together and send me to Sierra Leone coz I need to find my people, but you know that I have just come back from Nigeria with my Dad'. I said, 'Mother as far as I am concerned you pointed me to David, and David will always be my Dad, end of story'.

Even when my Dad died, two years ago, my Mum said, 'Well he wasn't your Dad'. And it was always something that played on my mind, so much that when my Dad was dying, and he was in the hospital, I remember calling one of the nurses, and I just said 'listen, is there any chance we can have a blood test? Coz I just really want to for sure that David is my Dad'. She said she would go and enquire. Anyway, I was churning it in my head, and then I told myself 'do you know what Helen, it doesn't matter if he is or he isn't, as far as paper and DNA are concerned, because he will always be your dad'. Francis didn't deny it, and he didn't acknowledge it. When I look at my one of three pictures of myself as a child, I see Uncle Francis, but then David, my Dad, I can see so much of him in me; his broad face, his thickness.

I went to Nigeria how many times with my Dad and Uncle Phil. We would all travel together because Uncle Phil was wheelchair bound so our assistance was needed. Once he was settled in Ikga we went on to Benin. When we went to the village you know, everybody reacted– them see me, them know me, you understand what I am saying.

When a man or a woman takes on a child it's a responsibility, you know what I mean, an identified responsibility. It doesn't mean because you didn't come from their sperm or out of her womb – family is family.

My Dad was of that calibre anyway, because when he met my half-brothers and sisters' Mum, Auntie Alma, she was pregnant with a white child, and she got my Dad's name. I didn't get my Dad's name. She got my Dad's name, he raised her. Dad adopted Carol at birth. She was raised as a true Nigerian being taught how to barter from an early age.

It's really strange, every time I go to Nigeria my heart cries out 'leave me in my village', 'leave me in my village'
My father is Nigerian, and my Mother is Scottish; that is exactly how I say it, my Mother is Scottish, my father is Nigerian, I am African.

I met my Scottish Auntie June once in 1973. She came to Manchester and I remember saying to her 'how come nobody has ever invited my Mum back to Scotland?' I remember my Auntie June saying to me 'You know there were a lot of things that went on and that is just how it is'. So, I said 'Well what is wrong with you Scottish people, don't you know how to forgive?' Cut a long story short, not long afterwards Mum got a letter with some train tickets in it and went on her own up to Scotland, and she saw her Mother just before she died.

Now Mum and her sister have stayed in touch via birthday cards and at Christmas. Now I wear my Grandmother's ring, but Mum has never shared what happened on the visit. Mum was and remains a loner.

Mum was always very cold. I don't think I got a love that I understood was love. Because when I compare the way I am with my children to the memories that I have of the way my Mum was with me, it is worlds apart.

My Dad always said out of all his children, I am the only one who brought myself up. I think I was a feral child, I really and truly do. She would take the strap to me because I was just wild, I was just a wild child. Just for clarity *(laughter)* Mum would give me the rent money to pay the rent. It was something like a pound back in those days and I would go and spend it. I remember I used to wet the bed and waking up to 'Oh you blinding bastard you have done it again' and I would be getting slapped because we would sleep on the same bed, you know the pull out settee kind of thing. So, I would get beatings for that and when things happened at school, I would get beaten for those too.

When I have said it to her 'I love you Mum', 'Yeah, blinding love you'. You know what I mean? Ask her anything about her life, the same reply almost she always said, 'don't blinding bother me'.
One time when something happened, I was trying to talk to her about the almighty, (Mum is an atheist) her saying 'Oh, God bless you my love'. That to me was priceless.

Mum's affection towards me, her love towards me I could only identify maybe five times, maybe throughout my life. Those moments – they are my treasures, they are priceless for me.
Christmas/birthdays I always get a card, I always get twenty five pounds in it and sometimes I will go to her house and 'there is your birthday card, you can write it'. But then there are other times, when she has taken the time to write a real nice, nice verse.

She is about 89, or is she going to be 89 this April 2018. She lives in Higher Broughton. It was one of those fifties' old folks' flats, she has been there years. The housing situation has changed now, and

younger people are moving in. It is literally about five minutes' walk from where I grew up in Murray Street.

Now I see her about three times a month. There's no hugging or kissing; it's very hard to describe She is a very cold person, she kind of melts around her grandchildren, especially my Curtis. She melts around Curtis, but I would say as she has got older, she has got kind of worse.

I think my Mum's relationship with her own family was destroyed long before I was even thought of, but then I became, I feel as I am talking now, I feel like maybe I was the scapegoat. She saw me as the big mistake in her life. For a mother to turn around when they were angry and call their child 'black bastard' - there was a resentment, a real, real resentment.

You know when you see an African and ask them 'Oh so which part of Africa are you from' and they say Nigeria and when I push for more details, they reply 'Lagos'. Don't forget they are looking at me, my dreadlocks they think - Jamaican. Then I say 'Oh, where in Lagos? Ecaga? Anthony Village? Sulerio?" 'Yeah, my Father is from Benin, just past Agbo and my father's village is Egbanke and it's all part of Omelera'. And they look at me...

I remember going to Scotland one time to play netball in Glasgow and Paisley. I never even thought of looking for my Mum's family because I never felt any affiliation to the Scottish side, not at all, it has always been my African side.

I have got three photographs of myself. In the main one I have I am in the nursery grounds holding a white doll. Sometimes I just look at the picture and it is just sadness.

Helen shared the following which resulted in an "epilogue"

In 2017 I was working at Barnardo's at the mother and baby unit. Talking to one of the workers there I said, 'I used to have a Barnardo's worker' and she said, 'Oh you could maybe access your records'. I applied and got notification at the beginning of January that my file was available. If I wanted, I could go to Liverpool and have someone read them and explain them to me. I said, 'just send them to me'. So, from that part of my upbringing, I know I am going to be able to read this through the eyes of this social worker, Auntie Maisie.

FAMILY
Helen's Children
Curtis McLardie (Carlino)
Autumn Jerusha Gayo
Grand Children
David Rafiel
Davier H
Haile Helen

SONS

Old ladies tell me I look like my mother
And I can see her perfectly
I paid the price of love to have her etched into my heart
When I think of who I resemble,
I see my father's hand
The fingers are bent
Permanently
The skin is shiny, taunt, like deep brown leather
In him
I see my face reflected in perfect symmetry
Funny that
Because old ladies tell me, I look just like my mother.

DOT (DOROTHY) DAVIES
February 1932
by her son VINNIE

We didn't have a baby sitter, we had a shepherd. *(laughter)* I was one of thirteen children; I was child number ten. As one of thirteen children you just competed for attention. I was the only Mixed Race Black one and that transpired with me just wanting to be different, and to do something different. My Mum was from Collyhurst[1], literally in the next street from Les Dawson[2]. It was a 1930's life you know, really, really poor. She had a sad childhood because when she was eight days old her mother Martha Peedon died of Milk Fever[3]. After her mother died, she and her older brother were farmed out[4]. Mum was sent to an Aunty, who never let her forget… 'you know that don't you? I brought you up, I didn't have to take you in Dorothy, I didn't have to….' I am sure that my Mother was never made to feel good enough, there was a bit of the orphan syndrome. Years later this woman, who by default became my Nana, was taken in and cared for by my mother. She regularly threw a cup of water over me; she was senile and would say 'that squatter is in again Dot'. And she would throw a cup of water over me and I would say 'For Fuck's sake, I live here'. *(laughter)* And she would kick us on the floor and say 'Get these dogs out of here' – and she would kick us in the head. *(laughter)* I loved her though.

[redacted] Ronnie's children are Linda, Maureen and Terry's father. Sean's father was Billy McGuire, he was born following a short relationship. Sean's father was not just acknowledged but celebrated even though Our Mum kept

1 *On the fringes of the city centre, Collyhurst is one of the most densely populated areas in Manchester.*
2 *The comedian, actor, writer, and presenter.*
3 *Mastitis is often caused by a build-up of milk within the breast.*
4 *To put a child into the hands of another for care.*

Ronnie's name – so I am Davies, even though I am nothing to do with that man.

She was in hospital having her last child with him when her best friend told her he was 'knocking about'[5] behind her back, while she was in St Mary's about to give birth. When he visited her, she said 'you will never see these fucking kids after today'. 'I am going to teach you a lesson lady' and he went to the Hulme Hippodrome watched the film 'Love Is A Many-Splendored Thing'[6] and then hung himself! His head must have been on a different planet or it was temper. Temper is a dreadful, dreadful thing especially when people take their own lives out of what is really spite, spiteful to the people they leave behind. Temper, if they could just take a day – just to think it through – what are the implications, what are the ripple effects? because those four children grew up fatherless [redacted]

She found a best friend, not particularly politically correct but he was called 'Queer Jimmy'. Bleached blond hair, fight any fucker. *(laughter)* In those days people didn't seem to have an issue with sexuality, he was just 'Queer Jimmy'. He would go into the laundry on Broadfield Road and pinch as many clothes that he could for the kids.

I think she had to reinvent herself after Ronnie's suicide. After all that tragedy her name was mud. She was living on Arnott Street in Hulme, (Arnott's Crescent I think you would call it now). She became part of the community. The big families took care of one another, so they could survive.

I remember those survival techniques; as a child I was fascinated with women's conversations I would hold on to Mum's leg and she would forget I was there. I would hear them arranging to pay 'The Clubman[7] and then for him to be mugged. *(laughter)* So, the three would plot – you pay him first Dot, then he will go to Lily's, then Viv will pay him and then Steven will mug him in the entry. Of course, the word wouldn't have been mug would it, but yeah.

They would sit there and get drunk on cider – the three of them in the living room on the old sofas, the old Black PVC fucking awful sofas. One of them would leave and the other two would turn to each other and say, 'she is a C* – you know she got her money today *(laughing)* didn't she, she is a fucking old bastard' and you would just think 'ooohhh'. It's not surprising I became an actor, I could mimic. I started to impersonate her friends once they had gone.

I had never seen anything so wicked and so vicious!! Once, Mum's mate Lily must have borrowed some money from her but hadn't paid her back. She got drunk in our house and then asked my oldest brother to take her home. Mum sort of winked at him so I followed him. They went out and he just threw Lily over the hedge. *(laughter)* Mum closed the door with the most satisfied look on her face as if to say, 'that will teach her'.

My life is literally 'A Taste of Honey'[8]. She had difficulty introducing Les Parcheartsingh, her next partner. Plus, Les was from Clarendon, Jamaica. She would have met him in Moss Side in the Denmark[9] or the Alex[10] or somewhere like that. With Les she had another four children, then me then three after me. Making thirteen altogether. We are talking about the Anson Estate, in Longsight in the late 60s early 70s, so just a few Black people dotted about and then they just seemed to be more and

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5 Spending time with another woman
6 A 1955 American drama-romance film set in 1949–50 in Hong Kong
7 Also known as The Tally Man who sells goods on credit, especially from door to door.
8 Jo becomes pregnant after a brief fling with a Black sailor
9 Denmark Hotel which once stood nearby at the junction of Denmark Road and Lloyd Street North.
10 Known locally as the "Big Alex" (the "Little Alex" was nearby on Alexandra Road), the Alexandra Hotel was on the corner of Princess Road and Moss Lane East, opposite the Royal Brewery.

more Mixed Raced children appearing slowly but surely.

All Les' seven kids are Black but West Indian 'Indian', so he is a West Indian with straight hair, and I am the only child who has Afro hair, so there was a very clear distinction. As a kid there were moments like watching 'Sesame Street', (he sings) 'one of these things just doesn't belong here[11]'. I was like 'fucking hell it's me' – I am the only one with an Afro, everybody else's hair is straight.
Plonk in the middle. The first few are white, then the West Indians, then me plonk in the middle and then West Indians again.

How powerful is love because when my brothers and sisters, obviously not the white ones, looked at me they didn't see any difference, they didn't know any difference either, they just always accepted. Often younger kids out of curiosity would ask if I was adopted. 'Are you adopted, are you adopted you?' because I had Afro hair and they didn't. Whereas my brothers and sisters never saw anything, didn't know anything, because they knew nothing else. I am only ten months younger than my brother Mark, who for all intents and purposes is a light skinned, Coolie Jamaican[12], so we look very, very different. Other children in primary school never ever asked him if he was adopted, they would always, always ask me.

In those days there was an inclusivity of children of different races. It was so much more embracing. My Dad's friend, Gatur (we called him Kafoo) from Pakistan, would come and cook food for us. African, Indian, Sikh we were just 'one' together – it was more about the streets where we lived. We all had our electric turned off. Just because there was a little old lady who was white and proper from the 1920s – when her electric went off, we all knew she couldn't pay her bill either.

Mother used to have a friend called Electric Jim who had a massive growth on his head, so he couldn't get any women to sleep with him. My mother would find women for him, so he'd turn everybody's meters back. *(laughter)* I remember Norweb[13] coming to read the meter and they would step over ten or twelve children, look at the meter and the reading would be something like £3 for the whole year. *(laughter)* You would see the look of complete confusion on this Norweb guy's face. My Mother got away with this for about ten years with her selective friends and herself. Then unfortunately Electric Jim dropped dead on the job!

SuAndi: Which job? (laughter).

That job!
Next thing the bills went from £3 to three and a half hundred pounds a quarter and that is when Norweb worked it out and came to the house with the Police. Mum said 'It wasn't me, it was him' pointing to my father and he took the rap. They arrested him and took him to Platt Lane Police Station. I went as his interpreter, but they became so frustrated because they couldn't understand his Patwa; they told me just to get rid of him – take him out and don't bring him back again. *(laughter)*. They couldn't charge him, and they said to me 'he won't stop smiling when we are taking his mugshot'. *(laughter)*
Those were the days of sticking together.

There was an understanding so there just seemed to be a lot less division really. But I was still being told about the fact that there used to be signs on doors, pubs[14], which I don't think you will remember, but

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11 One of these things is not like the others. One of these things just doesn't belong. Can you tell which thing is not like the others. By the time I finish my song? Sung by Ernie
12 Used in the Caribbean (primarily Guyana & Trinidad) to refer to anyone of East Indian origin.
13 Electric supply company.
14 No Irish, no Blacks, no dogs.

you will have heard of. *(laughter)*

SuAndi: He got that in quick and I am not sure if it was a compliment or a sly age dig.

What we both know SuAndi is that our Mothers were regarded as shit because they were our mothers. My Mother told me once at 'The Washhouse', in Moss Side, she had finished with the machine when the white woman waiting after her, wouldn't put her stuff in. She wouldn't put her stuff in because my Mum had Black kids.

My first experience of racism although I didn't realise it at the time, was when I was about six. There was a dinner lady at primary school and every time I went past her, she would poke me in the back. I didn't know why, because I was quite a charmer you know. I knew how to charm because I had been born in to a culture where the more you charmed, the more you got, the later you could stay up. 'Do your Shirley Bassey'. You know, that kind of stuff. So, I didn't recognise racism, but it started to have an effect on my sunny disposition. Despite having thirteen children, my Mother spotted it and took me to one side, which when you are one of thirteen was an honour. It was like being invited to a meeting with Mandela. *(laughing)*. 'You come here'. I thought 'oh hell'. 'What's to do with you?' I said 'nothing and she kept on and on and on at me. Then without even thinking about it I said, 'it's that dinner lady at school, she pokes me in the back'. I looked in my Mother's eyes and realised she knew in an instance what it was. She said, 'I want you to go to school and I want you to never worry about it again'. So, I did. I was playing in the playground at dinnertime and it was a lovely sunny day and then suddenly it became very overcast when I looked up it wasn't the clouds, it was my Mother. She had her biggest Blackest fur coat on *(laughter)*, and she comes striding across that playground. When she got to me, she asked 'Which one is it?'. *(Laughter)* 'It's her there' and she picked up this woman by the throat, about three or four foot in the air and said, 'You see him, that is my fucking boy. You poke him once more lady and I will kill you'. She said 'I'll kill you. 'I know why you don't like him' she said, 'But he is mine and I will fucking kill you.' And that was it. She walked out and I never got poked in the back again. I knew she didn't like me but why I didn't know. I had really analysed it knowing I had not given her any reason. The only thing that I could think of was that I asked for seconds[15] because in those days you could – and I would always go back and get seconds – a bit greedy yes, but also sometimes at home there wasn't that much food to go around. Certainly, it was not a crime, not enough to dislike a child for – it was racism.

I went to Birchfield County Primary School in Longsight, then to Burnage High School which wasn't a very pleasant experience.

Funerals were just a very, very, small part of them all getting pissed and the stories coming out, all the old songs and all that sort of stuff. I was about thirteen at my first Wake. My Auntie Googoo, who has Mixed Race children of her own, let it slip that this lad had never been told the truth, so she told me. It was very strange SuAndi, as I kind of had to kind of man up and confront my Mum with it and ask, 'Is it true?' So, I did. She couldn't speak the words, but I could see on her face that she was relieved. She had throughout my life kept this secret; her part of the deal, even to that moment when I was saying 'please tell me who I am', she was keeping her promise, but I knew then.

I told my family. It was easier to tell the older ones, who were relieved, because they already knew. 'We remember him', because she used to bring him to the house. I think her and Les might have had a little fall out at the time. She was famous for cutting his passport up – she used to do it all the time. *(laughter)* A lot of the White women used to do it and say 'don't think you are F-ing going back either' – cut, cut, cut. *(laughter)* My older brothers and sisters knew. They had nice memories of this very

15 *A second helping of food*

handsome, lovely, exotic, exciting Portuguese chap, who was about for a bit and then vanished very, very quickly.

But my lot; "Leslie's children" it really knocked them quite badly. They had an emotional response. What everyone has to understand is that there was shade: in Manchester in the 60s there was a lot of shade as you know yourself.

Now when I look back maybe that is what spiralled my life downwards and my behaviour plunged downhill. I had always been beyond my years but maybe it was my reaction, a negative reaction to my missing father.

At fourteen I had a protection racket. I really thought it was a public service. *(laughter)* Every boy in Burnage High School had to give me 10p a week and I would resolve any arguments, any difficulties like if they were being bullied or threatened. It was that big a school that I started giving money to my mother – I had too much. I had socks full of 10ps – lots and lots and lots and lots of 10ps.

I had collectors; four boys from each school year, so it was a very well-oiled machine. It was all going extremely well. What I needed was somebody to get hold of me and say, 'who do you think you are?' and give me a boot up the arse. That is what I needed, but I was to a large degree subsidising my family – I was bringing in money. I only wanted a pound out of it, so they had the other thirty! At fourteen I was wearing the most expensive deer stalker you could buy, smoking those multi-coloured cocktail cigarettes *(laughter)*.

SuAndi: You have also referred to Burnage High School as not being a good experience.

Yes, because I was allowed to get away with it. There was only a handful of Black kids at the school. So, they gave me my own classroom with my own kettle and a pack of cards. More or less they said, 'you stay there for the next three years, we won't bother you, you don't bother us.' I thought it was a great deal at the time. But it wasn't. No, because they cheated me. I was a problem, because I was touching base with people like yourself, people like Gareth Richards[16] who if I remember correctly worked on the Black Studies course at North Hulme Centre. So, when they were standing up in history and saying, 'Britannia rules the waves', I was standing up and saying, 'Britannia waives the fucking rules.' They didn't like it, I was rocking the boat. I was saying 'what about the Slave Trade Triangle' and they said 'get out, get out of this …' I was a problem, because I was asking the wrong questions.

It was during assembly one day when some Police walk in. I thought to myself 'not more road safety?' Then I heard 'do we have a Vincent Davies here?' and the blood ran out of my soul. I turned around to my Generals and they had gone, they had run. Those coppers took me on the stage, and they shook me upside down. Money fell out, cigarettes, a milk token and a peg *(laughter)*. They said, 'this boy has been demanding money by menace off all of you 900 boys and you never used your head to stand up to him together?' Not one of them said a word. They said, 'he is going straight from here to court, the Juvenile courts will sort him out'. And they did, they took me straight to court and made an example out of me, sending me to Cumbria, to an Approved School . The Arrow Project (it closed 12. March 1993) was the best thing that could have happened for me. Absolutely the best thing. I was a danger to myself, I knew too much, I had seen too much, I could get out of situations, offer excuses. I was too good at surviving.

SuAndi: You have talked about how we inherit genetically do you think your so-called skills were "inherited" from your Mum?

16 Co-Founder of RED. Revolutionary Education Development

Yeah, very much so. From overhearing the women planning a mugging. Yeah, absolutely and kind of needs-must, you know what I mean? 'We won't hit him hard, he will hand it over'. That sort of thing. What I didn't realise was that there were boys who were frightened to come in to school because they didn't have 10p. How I actually got caught? Nine Pakistani boys got German Measles and I said, 'you still have to pay' *(laughter)*. I went to their houses 'All of you throw ten pence out, no sick note here, 10 pence each'. One of the fathers caught me, dialled the police and my house of cards started to tumble. 'Where was the money going? He was taking a fortune, he was giving it to his family, let's get him away from his family'. I was in Cumbria for a couple of years, the best thing that could have happened. I went home with the Social worker and the Police Officer. I said, 'have you heard what this lot are saying about me and what I have been doing blah blah blah' and she said, 'well you have haven't you, your bag is packed'. So off I went, and I thought you are so sly, the lot of you.

SuAndi: Do you think she is sly now?

No. She knew, she knew. 'Get him up there in them hills. Leave him there' – she'd found out I had been in Genevieve's[17] – I was thirteen. I went in to Genevieve's and they said, 'We have a Black side and a white side in here'. I said, 'well I am Half Caste I will stand in the middle' and I got thrown out. So, she did the right thing.

SuAndi: How do you think your Mum emotionally felt about it all?

I think she knew, she knew me well enough to know that I would be off on an adventure. She knew me well enough to know that had I not been taken out of all of that learning process and all of that ducking and diving, I would have been a danger to myself.

SuAndi: Were the other kids' naughty? I use the term naughty…

Not really no, they had their own way, their own little things. I don't know how to kind of express this, but it was at a time when your sisters didn't get much freedom really. My older sisters' kind of inherited one of my mother's children – that is how it was. 'You take Leslie, you take Neil, you take Simon'. So, these poor girls who were fourteen or fifteen wanting to go to Platt Fields to meet someone, couldn't go unless they pushed a pram with a baby in it.

Once when I was about twelve and starting to get a sense of what was right and what was wrong. I went in to the kitchen and started to fill the sink to wash the pots and my mother said, 'what the hell do you think you are doing?' I said, 'I'm washing the pots' she said, 'you are not!' She went ballistic, it scared me a bit. Male and female roles had been imprinted so definably on her, that she had passed them onto my sisters and now onto me. One of the lads doing housework? What would people think? When I came back from the Lake District, I had completely reinvented myself, I was an actor. I went back to school. There was a drama teacher called Celia Russell – there is always the one teacher and she was the only good thing to come out of Burnage High School. Ms Russell said, 'please just go one night'. I went to the Contact Youth Theatre[18] at the Brickhouse. I met other little Black lads who acted, some African lads who could act, and we started writing.

My sisters and brothers are doing bits and bobs, getting by. Here is 'our Vinnie' a bit different, wearing a long coat, with an Afro and stuff like that.

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17 *Manchester discotheque*
18 *Now called Contact Young Company.*

Granada Television[19] were auditioning four or five lads from the Contact Theatre for Coronation Street[20] – I knew what to do. I went into the audition and I broke my heart. I said, 'my mother can't believe I am here today, because it is her birthday'.

SuAndi: Before Britain's Got Talent[21].

Before it. I looked up and the Casting Director was crying. Granada Television sent my Mother a large bouquet of flowers – middle of July and her birthday is in February. They gave me the part *(laughing)*. I have been taught to blag – not to hurt anyone by it, just to blag to get that job.

My Mum was extremely proud and now there was money… oh lend us £50! I remember getting an IOU off her. I had one radio audition where they wanted a Marlowe[22] piece. I just made it up *(laughing)* and they just said, 'you've just… for your cheek'. We hadn't been born with one foot in to Radio 4[23], we had to graft for it. From there on I had an acting career.

To be honest with you, when I became an actor around 85' to early 90s, there was a lot of support for young Black lads who wanted to better themselves – the North Hulme centre for example; a lot of mentors around in Manchester saying, 'go for it', 'do it'.

I have been an actor for 25 years. I have done some really, interesting films, series, theatre. I am also a Celebrant Minister. I am currently writing a television series about a Celebrant based in Manchester. I left home at sixteen; the minute I turned sixteen, I was gone. I didn't know what privacy was until I left home.

Now I had the space to act on Auntie Googoo's words. 'I'll tell you because no one else will. You have the right to know that your father was a Portuguese sailor called Santos. Your Mother used to meet him at Salford Docks and together they would sit in the Big Alec on a crate listening to The Platters[24].You are the product of their affair'.

In the sixties anybody with any sense would make their way to Salford Docks[25] if they wanted decent stockings *(laughter)* and good looking Black men.

A bit of excitement came her way and she took it, as the mother of nine kids yeah, she did, she took it. Obviously, she didn't plan to get pregnant but there were things that she could have done to prevent the affair from being exposed but she chose not to, until years later when she had to.
I got some help researching him, and I thought there might be money for me basically, so I really invested in it. Still all I had was snippets of information – he was handsome, Portuguese, we think his name was Santos, he had a gold tooth, wore winkle picker shoes[26]. I just kept scratching and scratching and asking and getting little bits and bits. Then I went through her phone book and I spoke to somebody – twice. They said, 'we don't know what you mean', 'we don't know what you mean', and then they rang me back. 'We know who you mean' and that is when I found out who I was. I was devastated to find out that he had moved to Toxteth *(laughter)*. He had left from Salford and jumped ship in Liverpool.

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19 *North West England regional television company*
20 *Britain's longest-running soap covered since its 1960*
21 *Entertainers compete for a cash prize and a chance to appear at the Royal Variety Performance.*
22 *The foremost Elizabethan tragedian of his day*
23 *BBC spoken-word radio channel*
24 *African American vocal group formed in 1952*
25 *The Salford & Manchester Docks. The Manchester Ship Canal Company was set up in 1882-1982*
26 *A style of shoe or boot worn from the 1950s onward by British rock and roll fans*

He died two weeks before I found him. I did find a sister that I never knew I had! The Portuguese community in Liverpool, were incredible with me. They invited me to the Algarve Restaurant where they put a banquet on for me in his honour. When I walked in his friends couldn't speak – it was like they had seen a ghost. Then I went to his grave, so it is quite a sad story.

Santos was a Portuguese African from St. Vicente, part of the Cape Verde Islands. I had uncovered this whole new world to discover that I was a product of an affair. My older brothers and sisters remembered him being around, but they had all been sworn to secrecy.

Santos knew about me, he most certainly did, but he had agreed to stay away. He loved her – Dora he called her; I have got a picture that he kept in his wallet for forty years!
My birthday is the 14th July. When I got his passport, he was born on the same day as me. I couldn't believe it. Born on the same day and he was from the island of Vicente, and my name is Vincent.
My biggest regret is that I will never know what he sounded like – his voice; because SuAndi I am a polyglot[27]

SuAndi: I had to look ploy glot up.

I only have to listen once or twice before I can mimic a language. Surprise, surprise - just like my biological father, who having sailed the world, could speak Russian, Libyan, Lebanese. You can't tell me that it is not in the genes!!! Yes of course it is.

I am writing about that experience now. I can understand how things played out. But I feel like everybody seems to have got what they wanted out of this but me, until it was too late… but that is life. What I do appreciate is that my Mum could easily have had a back street abortion. Easily, easily. My childhood was one of the best childhoods ever and that is why I can write, because I have got so many stories.
When it all blew up, it really quickly settled down again. Les, who I call my Dad, when he saw reason – he really saw reason. I still find that very hard to appreciate and to understand how anyone can be, I am not sure if forgiving is the right word, but understanding and prioritise the emotion of the child, over the misbehaviour of its mother.

I adore that man, because when that man Les found out, he said that 'this child must never know'. That was after he tried to chop her leg off *(laughter)*. And he did try to chop her leg off, she had about forty-six stiches. He was devastated, he was going to take his own life then thankfully changed his mind. I never knew that I was anything other than his son until you get to the age when you look around and think 'hang on'. My features were different to his other kids who had… very straight noses and hair, slightly darker skin than mine as Mixed Race – 'Indian' West Indian. But he is an incredible man, because he brought me up without me knowing my true heritage.

Les is still going, he is eighty something. I quite often get a phone call from Lidl[28] or wherever he can walk to, to get tuppence[29] off a loaf. 'Somebody tell me say it's two pence off Warburton' *(in a Jamaican accent)* and he will walk five or six miles.

He still doesn't know that I know about Santos. No, he must never know. What kind of a thank you would it be for him, for him to know? That all that investment and all that pain he endured and all that

27 *Sometimes used to refer to a person who learns multiple languages as an avocation.*
28 *Supermarket*
29 *Two pence (in pre- or post-decimalisation currency).*

silence as a proud Jamaican – was now worthless. It means too much to him SuAndi for me to take that away from him. My brothers and sisters, they always knew. It was just very, very carefully managed. They adore him because he is a good hard-working man. When he took her on they were eighteen, nineteen. She was still feeding them, so they have got absolute respect for him. Of course, he brought a rich knowledge into their lives, not just the peppers and a different type of cooking. They have all grown up with that richness.

Les worked like a dog, the poor bastard at Dunlop and Smith's Crisps *(laughing)*. His happiness has always been all us kids. I have this proud memory of my father when the buses went on strike. When everybody else's fathers were lounging about, he walked – he strode off and walked to Cheadle and I have never forgotten that. It has given me a work ethic, because I work extremely hard SuAndi like yourself, we are grafters. We will pay the bills (when we have to), we will keep the lights on, and I got that off him.

Because I can mimic, I can emulate Les. I only speak to him in Patwa. I have never spoken to him like I am speaking here to you now. I listen to him and then I give it back to him, and he likes that. He loved it because I am the only one who does. How ironic is it that from the only one who isn't biologically his!

Mum never talked about racial identity. It was not something that was seen, it wasn't acknowledged, it wasn't different enough I don't think, to merit discussion really. I think that with Dot probably it was 'we will cross that bridge when we come to it'. If we come to it, we will cross it, if somebody says something, we will deal with it.

One time, Mum said to me 'you are getting f-ing lazy you, fifteen, galivanting, go and pinch me ten paving stones, the council are putting them down'. So, I got a wheelbarrow, I was lifting the last one, exhausted when the police caught me. Back at our house 'He has been caught Mrs Davies'. She said, 'He's has been doing WHAT?' *(laughter)*. 'WHAT, WHY?' and I looked at her and I thought 'you told me to do it' *(laughter)*. 'Well do what you must with him'. They said, 'Don't worry we will'. They took me to the station and said 'Name?' and I said 'Vincent Davies'. They said 'Religion?' and I said, 'Half Caste' *(laughter)*, and Longsight Police Station screeched to a halt. I didn't know why. They said, 'Half caste isn't a religion'. I said, 'it is mine'. It was all I knew – I hadn't got to 'I am a Protestant', 'I am a Catholic', I was a Half Caste.

People talk about hearing white mothers say to the children 'black bastard'. They are not saying black bastard to the child, they are saying black bastard to the man who left them with children. The white woman is demonised when we should demonise him who made those children and walked away. Les never left and he took on all Mum's kids. My mother never racially verbally abused any of us. The fact is the villainous world that her first five children had been a product of, meant they could easily have had racist attitudes not that I am saying crime and bigotry goes automatically one with the other. But somehow because of Les – because of his dignity and how he played it straight, they could do nothing other than accept him and then they got to love him.

When I was little, she treated Les terribly, cutting his passport up because he wouldn't give her money. He would sit on the end of the bed in his white briefs crying and singing 'I love my baby but my baby don't love me'[30]. I'd think, what are you crying for? She has cut you passport up so you can't go back to Jamaica.

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30 "Everybody Loves My Baby (But My Baby Don't Love Nobody But Me)"(from Doris Day "Love Me Or Leave Me" soundtrack)

White women were genius at hiding stuff from Black men. There were loan books under the floorboards. There was the hamper[31] people who weren't allowed to come to the door. They had to meet her down the alleyway. If he found out, he would go ballistic asking 'where is the money I give you?' 'I've given you money for the clothes – and now you have to go to Stewarts in Ardwick to beg for clothes' which is what she had to do for our school uniforms. Life was that false economy of milk tokens and grants – do you remember when we were kids getting uniform grants and women trading them?

It was just survival when you have got nine or ten kids at school. I think at one stage Securicor thought it was quicker to deliver, than for her to go and cash ten family allowance books.

When she mellowed, and knew that he wouldn't run away, she encouraged him to go. She sent him with the kids 'take your Dad back to Jamaica'. His kids, that stopped at me, the younger behind me couldn't go because they would have smelled me a mile away. Later my younger brother took him on a visit, but I haven't. I did take him to the Jamaican Embassy, which is a tale because it was then fifteen years ago that I became aware of the Windrush debacle when they said, 'We have no record of you, when did you come here?'. 'Who gave you your paper?', he said, 'I have no paper'.

In my late twenties I started seeing her do things which I just thought 'you are hard core lady'. She started breeding Black poodles. The male dog was called Ambrose, the poor bastard, she had him 'at it' so often that he went grey *(laughter)*. She rang me up and said, 'Are you on Dickinson Road' 'Yeah'. 'Go in the Chemist and get me 'Just for Men – Black[32]'. She put him in the sink and dyed him so, when they came and bought the pups, she brought him out. 'Look this is the father, he's six years old'. He was fifteen and fucked!

Seeing how she was making money, Les rang me up and said, 'I want to buy some pigeons will you take me?' Two weeks later he put them in the Loot[33] and sold them and they flew back *(laughter)*. He sold them twice, they were homing pigeons; I am not joking, that is on my life.

It was all about survival, especially for the women, sticking together, protecting each other, making the most out of each other's tragedies. My Mum was so accepting. There were no questions asked when the Coppers turned up. It was automatic hiding each other's lads in the loft, 'He is not here, he is not here'. No, because he is two doors away at Viv's.
It was the women's survival technique. I dread to think what would have happened to me if I didn't put my best foot forward, you know, learn how to blag from holding on to her leg to listen and observe. It got me through.

Mum loved dirty jokes and had a vicious tongue which I really liked. An example of this is when I was about five and Mum, Lily and Viv were all getting legless in the living room; I had hold of my Mother's leg as usual. Lily got up to poke the fire and my Mother said, 'that reminds me Viv I must get a new mop' *(laughter)*. Even then I thought 'you're wicked'.

'Big Dot' was moody, but only if she didn't have money. It was down to her to get white socks for the girls for Whit Week[34]. Down to her to feed us all. If she had no money you would hear the whoosh – and a cupboard door slam, bang, bang, bang. They would slam that loud as a child the banging made you jump.

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31 Christmas savings schemes mainly covering tinned food, cakes and chocolate.
32 Head and facial grey care products
33 Offers free classified ads for buyers and sellers
34 The week following Whit Sunday is known as "Whitsuntide" or "Whit week".

I think there are about thirty-two grandchildren. With the grandkids she was softer and kinder, and enjoyed it more, because times had changed. It wasn't her responsibility; she didn't have to slam those cupboard doors anymore.

She made things happen which don't happen now. For example, 'let's all put twenty quid in and get Salford Van Hire. Let's take these kids away, it's Whit week'. I would just look her and think 'you are a queen'; thirteen children, thirty odd grandchildren, ramming them all in the bus to get them to Somerset. All get out, a bit of robbing, back in – Dot made it happen.

At one stage Mum was about twenty-five stone. A very fair, fair faced woman, but big.
When I was in my thirties, she would have been in her fifties or sixties, it became a competition over who was taking her out at the time that suited her, not necessarily them, the best. Mother was one of them, very, very demanding people who would say 'Are you doing 'owt' on Sunday at 7 o'clock?' You would think 'I hope sleeping for another five hours'. She wanted to test you 'oh right, it doesn't matter then' causing you to say 'No, no what is it?'. 'No, it doesn't matter, only I have seen a car boot in Stockport, but it doesn't matter though'. She would manipulate the situation, so you ended up begging to take her. Occasionally 'oh it doesn't matter, forget it' and bang the phone would go down. Then you would ring her back 'what was it you wanted?' Total emotional Blackmail.

She was around sixty-five when she was diagnosed with heart disease and she wore it like a badge of honour. My sister and I took her to the Royal Infirmary, when the consultant said 'Mrs Davies, you have got very serious heart disease – you really, really do need an operation, but it carries its risks'. She said, 'Not frigging likely – no, I have had my fun'. We were sat there thinking 'what about us?' 'what about us – don't we get a say in this?' She had made her mind up and she wasn't having it.

One day in our local pub, one of the local gangsters pulled a gun out on my brother. When she found out, she went in and said, 'Pull your gun on me, you C! I'm dying in three or four years, I don't care, I'll stick it up your arse'. He shit himself. She wasn't frightened, she had become a bit fearless.

She started to look tired, but still going, you couldn't stop her. She was a formidable Manchester woman. You would push her wheelchair around Sainsburys' and back at the car you would find all the expensive cheeses stuffed behind her back. 'I'll fucking kill you' *(laughter)*. So, she never stopped.
Christmas 2007 she insisted that me and my sons had dinner with the family. At one point she just looked at me in a way that she had never looked at me before, ever. And I will never, ever, ever, forget it. It is one of the strongest memories I have of anything I have ever experienced in my life, ever. She looked into my soul, and then looked away. That is the last time I saw her. She died the next day.
She and Les were home with a few of the grandkids. She got up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet and – out like a light. No one will ever persuade me that she didn't know.

I went through a stage of not wanting to go on which was very selfish because I had my own lads and they were only seventeen, eighteen and the centre of my world. I just thought if I drop dead tomorrow at least I will be with Dot, it will be more fun with her. Like most Northern mothers you always know that with them it will come out alright and they will keep you safe. If they have got to roll their sleeves up to fight for you then they will. Different breed, completely different.

Les was devastated, still is, absolutely devastated.

She is buried at Southern Cemetery. The inscription is 'Devoted partner of Les. 'Those you love don't walk away, they walk beside you every day'.

FAMILY
Dorothy Davies. February 1932 - December 2004
Georgie Davies
Linda Davies
Maureen Davies
Terry Davies
Sean McGuire
Les's children later changed their names from Davies
Neil Parcheartsingh
Denice Parcheartsingh
Mandy Parcheartsingh
Mark Parcheartsingh
Vince Davies
Leslie Parcheartsingh
Simon Parcheartsingh
Stuart Parcheartsingh
Vinnie's fathers
Leslie Parcheartsingh October 1932
Avalino Samuel Dos Santos. July 1930- August 1997

MARGARETHA LEADER (SOUCEK)
September 1937
by her son ANDREW

My Mother grew up during the war, so she could recollect the bombing. UK was at that time Austria's enemy. With peace came the understanding that it is the people at the top that create war – the people at the bottom just want to live and have a good and a peaceful life.

England was crying out for people to help and rebuild the economy. My Mum loved travelling. 'This is a very good opportunity for me to go to England'. With a few other Austrians she made the journey to London. Like a lot of Austrians, she was a Roman Catholic, so her religion had nothing to do with her leaving her homeland. When the opportunity arose, my Mum left Vienna– finding a job in Stalybridge in the Cotton Mills.

My Father, Lionel Hamilton Leader came from St Kitts, his brother was here first. He already had a place in Moss Side, so it was natural that is where Dad came to. Fate brought Mum from Stalybridge to Moss Side.

According to my Mum, they met in the Ritz, in Manchester City Centre, on a night out. Apparently on this particular night, the universe brought them together, did their courting, then just clicked from there.

Mum was pretty looking, I am not going to say attractive because she was my parent. She was beautiful, you know both in spirit and physically which manifested in things that she did. I can see my Mum; brown hair, very upright, strong, never wanted you to carry her shopping. She would say 'as long as I am strong enough, I want to be able to carry my own shopping'. Her mind was positive – she had a

mentality of 'just get things done', regardless of what was in the way, you can overcome those kinds of things, just go through it and it will get done; that is if you really want to get it done.

Dad was an upright, strong character; very proud, verbally very well spoken and I definitely think, because of the way he spoke, it may have offended some English people. Here is someone from somewhere else, who can speak 'our language, better than us'.

He was very, very, smart. He was a fireman, in the St Kitts fire service. In England he did a few jobs before he got one at Steel where he worked the longest.

He always wore a shirt, tie, blazer and checked himself in the mirror just before went out, because your outward appearance means a lot to a Black man, so he was always very, very smart. He had a very pleasant character and was loved by many.

Mum told me that parts of the family were of the opinion of 'whatever makes you happy go ahead, do it'. Some questioned 'are you doing the right thing, are you sure you are doing the right thing?' I don't personally know the extent of the attitude of all the family in Austria, whether they had any underlying racist thoughts about Mum meeting a Black Caribbean. If they did have any, they kind of kept it to themselves.

We did visit Austria a lot of times. Now there's a question, why did Dad not come, would he rather the time free to do what he wanted to do?

The Austrian trips were an eye opener because there we were surrounded by a whole load of white people. Who knows what views they had! When I went out with my cousins their friends used to say, 'can we touch your hair', 'what is your hair like'. My Mum on occasion would dress us up in Lederhosen, I am sure you know what they are. It didn't lessen us, it never made us feel inferior; it empowered us, because we were different.

Mum and Dad had married in 1957 and had their first son, my brother Lionel. I have another three brothers, Samuel, Manfred, Malcolm. Two have passed. Manfred died at two, one brother lives in the Bahamas. I was born in Moss Side in 1970 then, in 1972 we moved to Old Trafford where I grew up most of my life.

We have a sister, Linda in the Caribbean, so born before my Father met my Mum.
My Mum had an inkling that there was another child, but when you can't ask the person and they are not going to say anything, then you know it's pointless. You just carry on. But Mum always had an inkling.

I don't know whether people thought that this sister would have been disruptive to the family. Or who was playing (psychological) games; I have no idea. We know she would have just been another addition to our family.

Did a family member tell her, 'don't come over here, he has got a new family, there is no need for you to come…'
I don't know whether my Dad's thinking was 'I have left that world, this is a new world, this is England that I am in, it's a far bigger country, there are far more people, I will try to forget about the past'.
It was only in 2005, probably a year before my Dad passed away, I actually got in contact with my sister. I have friends whose family have got brothers and sisters over there, who they brought over here, later in stages, though in my case, never.

Of course, it was a different time. Dad just tried to adjust the way he thought he should adjust, rightly or wrongly. There was a way that the African Caribbean community thought of European people, they had their own ideas. My parents at that time, had their own particular ideas. Some of those ideas were broken in the sense of my Dad and my Mum. 'Look here we are we are taking a different step, Black and White together'.

But at the same time there was a young woman waiting and thinking 'he is going to call me, he is going to come for me', and he never materialised.

Mum was in charge of the house and the reason why I say that is because of her always being there. My Dad was out working a lot, which he had to do to bring in the money for the family. She did everything; she was a nurturer, an educator, she would tell you what was right and what was wrong. Mum looked after the family; we their children, doing the gardening, in that sense Mum was a very important 'cog' in the wheel that kept the family moving forward. She was at the centre and everything revolved around my Mum, though I am not denying that there were ups and downs and there were a lot of difficulties within the household.

Mum was also a foster carer. The Council would bring any children that had a disruptive or chaotic family life to my Mum to look after them.

They were young, I can't be precise, elevens, twelves, things like that – even probably eight to twelve, something like that. Not an easy age. The Council would bring the children and say, 'Look after this child, and if the parent's come round, don't give them the child'. As far as I remember they were Black children.

**One day when Mum was walking through Stretford Arndale Centre a man came up and said to her 'Are you Mrs. Leader?' 'Yes, that is my name'. He gave her a hug and said, 'You probably can't remember me, but I used to be one of your foster children'. My brother obviously recalls that far better than I do but it is a testament of what Mum did and the positive effect she had on those young people's lives. I can say 100 per cent that there was no mollycoddling even when we were young. Mum allowed you to go out and play with friends that lived on the road. She would say 'you better be back at such a time' and we were, because it wasn't worth coming in late, it definitely wasn't!

Mum enjoyed doing the house stuff, cleaning, washing up, all that kind of stuff so we were mollycoddled to a degree. But even at a young age, we chose to go out and do things. Even simple things like collecting and returning Tizer and other brands' bottles for the deposit; we could make 10 pence a bottle[1]. We would go to Lancashire Cricket ground and ask them if we could collect and return bottles the fans had left. It wasn't that we couldn't ask but we felt that we shouldn't ask my Mum for money.

With my Mum, I went through finding out who I was. I used to first think I was a Christian, and Christians love everyone as one people, there are no problems, the world is a nice happy place! There is a difference –Dad went to church, he was a Christian; Mum was a Roman Catholic. Dad tried to get Mum in to the Christian church, but Mum wasn't having it, 'I have got to feel something first, before you can tell me that I am feeling something, so don't tell me I have got the holy spirit, when I can't feel that I have got the holy spirit'. So, my Mum kept to her church and we went to the Pentecostal, for you know Sunday school and so on. My Dad was well and truly versed in the Bible, but that doesn't stop you doing wrong, in fact it probably highlights the wrong things that you do, even

1 *From the 1960s, a money-back deposit scheme was introduced in the UK for glass bottles - but this died out with the advent of cheap plastic bottles in the 1980s.*

more. In our household, as well as I would say 90 percent of African Caribbean households, regardless of whether it was with a white mother or a whole Black family, there was a white Jesus on the wall. Now that was very disruptive for me because we were told in the church that this person was a saviour, but he wasn't, and even my Dad was saying that this person was a saviour but look at this person.
Mum wasn't an academic studying books; She knew from watching the TV what the Europeans had done. Many times, she would turn round and say 'you know, as white people we have done a lot of wrong. There are a lot of things that have got to come out and be corrected'.

She had a lot of Jamaican friends. Her vocabulary and speech pattern changed so when Mum said 'He favour this person' or 'he favour that' with a German twist on it, some people made the mistake on the phone of thinking that Mum was Jamaican, because of the way she spoke. She never spoke her own Central Austro-Bavarian dialect. (Language)

Our parents came with a different thought process supported by a lot of respect, respect for themselves and their neighbour. There were hardly any problems; doors could be left open in that particular time, there was a community feel.

Mum, she was very strong, and she believed that there are only two types of people, the good and the bad. Now the good comes in all colours as do the bad. So, it is not who you identify with, but it is who you have around in your circle – so if you are surrounded by good positive people, negativity won't get in, it is not about a colour thing.

I understand now that genetically this colour I have is not from my Mum, the melanin can only come from my Father. So, this is from my Father, it can't come from my Mum, I know that I am a person of colour. That is what spurred me into research. And if you look at associated terms, like Mulatto, they are just mules, like when a donkey mates with a horse. That creates a mule

Funnily enough when I was young I had friends whose parents were both Black and they were lighter than me. I used to scratch my head thinking 'How did that work out, I have got a White Mum, so how come they are lighter than me?' Obviously, we get to learn to understand these kinds of things, but in our house, there were never any colour issues.

I went to Birley High School. No, it wasn't the perfect school. What can I say? There was a different mentality with the people from Old Trafford to Moss Side. It was an environment where the name calling targeted the person who probably had the darkest parent! 'Your Dad is this' or 'your Mum is this.' I couldn't understand, well I could, because I am in that environment – but I didn't take part, we didn't talk like that in Old Trafford.

Growing up, I went through a battle with myself. Who do you see yourself as? What do you see yourself as? The term at that time wasn't Mixed Race, it was' Half Caste', or 'Quarter Caste' or even 'Three-Quarters Caste'. I took the time to learn and understand things from my own perspective.

The term, 'Half Caste' didn't really trouble me; it troubled me more that I didn't understand what it meant at that time. How can anyone be 'half of a caste'? A caste is one colour and a caste is another colour, you can never get half of a caste. It annoyed me more that the people had no understanding of the definition they were using.
When African American speakers came over, their teachings changed my view on things.

Later when I was in my twenties, I came across a shop owned by a Senegalese man; he changed my mind, my perspective on life. Mum never felt that there was a threat or that there was going to be any

kind of problem between her and me. Mentally can I say that there was a problem with me learning what the Europeans have done and that is tough to reconcile but it makes us tougher.
I found that my change was empowering. And I was not becoming a white hater. I was becoming, how can you say, spiritually aware, historically aware.

I never had a confused identity. I didn't understand the use of certain terms. African scholars would talk about Mulatto mainly as trouble makers. That made me go and search out things and then I found out that for example in Jamaica, the Europeans would write down the slaves' skin tones, and that there were far more dark skinned Black people in the household than there were Mulattos. But history has mis-recorded that we were always the ones in the house.

Everything I have learned came through self-study. I used to go to the University to listen to speakers on African and Caribbean history. I was learning this new knowledge, but Mum didn't feel that I was against her. In fact, what this knowledge did, this self-learning, it made you aware, it made you realise, well it should, that there is good and bad in all people.

It was an empowerment. The word I could never embrace, is mulatto, never embrace, yellow, high yellow, low yellow, I don't know that kind of terminology. If anything, what I did embrace was the terminology of African Americans as well as some Africans that were in my group; that we were all different shades of brown, that's all, there was only one colour and that was brown.

My ideology, my spirituality, is African natured, so that is how I see myself. Although we are from the Caribbean, we all came from Africa. So, my nature, my spirituality is African based – that is through my own learning – my own studying. Mum saw, and she understood, and my Dad was exactly the same.
It was 1985/86 when my parents got divorced. My oldest brothers were Lionel 27 and Samuel 26, but they had moved out along with my other brother Malcolm who was 20.

I was just 16 and the only one living at home. They were very hard times, because nothing is ever rosy, and those particular times were very hard.

You see, one characteristic of mum was to hold things in regardless of what she was going though.
I can say I did have a happy childhood. We all had our ups and downs, we all had family problems which probably a lot of families went through. I can say personally that the love that I had far outweighed the negative parts of what happened in normal day to day living. There were a lot of problems, a lot of arguments and that took a toll on me during the last year of school. I think for my Mother it was a case of 'I can't take this, I have got to go through it for my own sanity'.

Whatever pushed them apart seemed to bring them close after they got divorced. It was a strange set up, but my Mum continued to cook and say, 'come round and have some….'

Even when she was living on her own she used to cook like there were people coming. I used to pop in out of the blue, just from work. 'Mum, why is there so much food in the pot?' 'Well you don't know who is going to come – anybody can come, any family member might…'

I should say here that Mum used to cook the rice and the peas and the chicken and so on which I suppose would be strange for an Austrian lady to do. And in the African Caribbean way of thinking, you always cook more than what the family needs, just in case anybody was to come.
Dad was always there for Christmas or if there was a birthday.

I think there was just a clearer understanding. So, for us, the children, we almost had a better

relationship when they were apart than when they were together. Mum could give us all her time, Dad could give us all his time. When they were both together Dad would be out working, Mum would be doing her thing; so, it worked well for us.
As a sixteen year old, you wondered if there was a possibility that she might get someone else. Hell no. No chance. Mum had that saying 'once you are married and you divorce…. There was no one else' and I think my Dad knew that.

I was a single parent from 2003 with my eldest two children. Joel the oldest is in his early twenties now and Ayanna is two years younger. Due to their mother's circumstances I had to fight for my children in court, which I did, and I got granted custody. Which believe me, I wasn't expecting especially when I was told at that particular time, the biological father had no rights.

There was a lot I had to go through the first year just to get on equal grounds with their Mother.
All I know from my own relationship, is that when we got angry, and when I didn't like something about my partner who was European, I would say things I didn't like. In turn when they didn't like something, and they didn't think they were getting through, out would come words in reference to my colour. That kind of threw me then because why did my colour come into it?
Believe me I was prepared for the loss. I was saying to myself 'if I lose, I am going to St Kitts, and call it a day'. I would have been fed up with the system – three or four years then losing. So, when the Judge turned around and said, 'We award you the custody of your children', my legs turned to jelly. I now had to take a role similar to my Mum who had supported me 100 percent.

I lost my father in 2006, he would have been 76.

Dad was strong, always the lion that now looks like a pup. He had Parkinson's Disease, he had lost the vision of his eyes, so for quite a long period was in a residential home.

Before he went into care we used to go round, get things for him, cook for him and so on. It was quite difficult…Mum went anytime he needed anything. She would buy him any food that he needed, cook and clean. I think at that time it was the company that was very important for my Dad.

Although as a single parent I had my children to look after, I would regularly leave the two eldest with Mum, while I went to care for Dad. Dad kind of left me in charge of everything.

He was in a coma, the nurses were saying he was holding on, waiting for someone to come. When I spoke to him they said not to bother as he couldn't hear me. But maybe it was part of my spiritual learning that moved me to tell my father 'Dad it is time to go now. The ancestors are waiting Dad, it is now time to go'. As soon as I said it, the heart machine went down.

That was very hard, because even though I had spoken out I didn't want him to go. But I know that something told me to tell Dad that and he went, and it was peaceful which was very, very good.
Later when I reached my house, I knew he was around. I just started to speak to him. Even my Mum was the same saying 'He will be around us'. So, my Mum was well aware of certain things, even though she couldn't label it Catholicism because she wasn't practicing any more.

Dad had asked Mum is she getting cremated or buried? When he said 'Look I want to get cremated' he was saying the way his wife goes, he goes.

Mum was a person who said, 'Don't waste no box on me, don't go through that expense', even though we know there is still an expense.

I was visiting my brother and my sister in the Caribbean to be with my sister for a month. We needed the time to discover all the things that had been kept secret from us.
My partner Lorene Rhoomes had stayed home with our children Mirembe, Nzinga and Amari. I was concerned about Mum, so I asked Lorene to go with her to see the doctor.

They carried out some tests and then next thing she has got cancer. When Lorene tells me, I am shocked, I now can no longer enjoy myself over in the Caribbean.
They said that it was the final stages; Mum had maybe three months to live. This was a battering for your mind; you just couldn't fathom this for such a strong person that Mum was. Pretty much after that, she just started to dwindle.

Probably she knew she was ill, because she was getting dizzy spells and so on. Mum was like 'If I have to go, I have to go, we all have to go one day'.

I used to take my Mum out a lot, she loved travelling and seeing different places in England. She would say 'This is a very beautiful country, you have just got to go out and see it'. So, I took it upon myself, maybe the ten years prior to her passing, every year I would take her to places I knew she would like such as Lake Windermere, Llandudno - those types of places. She loved the fresh air, the open spaces probably because of the Austrian hills and mountains Many a time I would ask 'Would you ever go back?' 'No this is my home now, I have left that behind, this is my home'.

But we would still ask her the question, because we didn't want Mum to feel like she was doing something for us. 'It is your time Mum, what do you want, what do you like? We will give it to you. If you want to do something, we can do it for you'. But she was more than happy being here. She had her friends here and when it came to birthdays and family events we would all go and see her and make a fuss of her. She loved that, having a massive family around; family meant everything for her.

We were preparing ourselves for three months. She was at home, three months came, four months came, five months came, and Mum was still around, but she was getting thinner. She ended up going into Trafford General Hospital where she stayed probably another four or five months, until she passed away. She remained with us for a year and I can recall the Doctor saying, 'This generation were made of a different kind of substance than the next ones, because we don't know how the older generation do it'. That made me feel good because it kind of reinforced that my Mum was as strong as an ox and that she was passing this mentality down to me. Still it was very hard to take, because she was our hub, and that hub is gone now for ever.

All my children used to love going. 'When are we going to Oma's'? Oma was the person that they would want to see because she would always say 'Where is your Dad, alright have some of them'. (gentle laughter). Mum being Mum, she always cooked lots of food. She expected everybody to eat lots of food and if you didn't, she would say 'What are you doing now, are you being on a diet' or 'what are you doing, you need to eat food'.

As part of my own spirituality, we do libations. Recently a candle was lit to think about Dad. We do exactly the same for Mum.

When I do my own libations and spiritual practice, that is when I talk to Mum and tell her that she is missed and that she is still part of our life. It is that connectivity, it is that continuation that is very important to me. And I hope to bring my children up in that same continuation.
Dad ain't gone, and wherever Mum is now, she is preparing that place properly for when we her

children's time comes. She is cleaning out that place before we get there.

I do say that the love is still there, you know 'We love you'. I don't necessarily talk to Mum alone, because there is everybody else in the ancestral realm. I do tell her she is missed and if she has anything to say, 'You better come and tell me', 'You better tell me at the right time, at the right place'.
Mum and Dad both did a good job on me, on all of us. They both had their problems, they both had their negative parts, but in my eyes, the positive outweighed the negative.

Do I miss her? 100 percent, 100 percent – my Dad as well. The physical side you miss but there's more than just physically, it's spiritual for us now.

Who do I look like? Different people have different views, it is hard to say. I have got the European nose so that will probably come from my Mum's side that. In my personality, I am going to have to say in equal measures. Dad had his own way of thinking as a Christian and though I was beginning my African spirit thing, we still found a common ground; 'If you are going to do something, do it properly.' From my Mum I have the 'I can do it myself attitude'. I can be stubborn at times, and I can stand alone when needed.

Family means everything. You have a close family and then you have an extended family and they are all equally important - and I believe there is a spiritual family as well. So, family doesn't only relate to people who are living but it extends to the ancestors and beyond as part of the family and it is all part of what makes me, me.

Our parents' ashes, we left them under the same tree in Southern Cemetery

FAMILY
Samuel,
Manfred,
Malcolm
Lionel Leader September 1930 – July 2006.
His daughter Linda

Andrew's children
Joel
Ayanna
Mirembe,
Nzinga
Amari

WE BRING OUR MEMORIES WITH US

ANONYMOUS

SuAndi: Sometimes not even rose-tinted glasses have the capacity to disguise painful memories brought about by poverty and related abusive life circumstances.
Revisiting the past can bring into the present heartache that has lain dormant.
Memories can evoke emotions ranging from discomfort to a sense of shame and often this is not from the actions of the person remembering.
It is for some of these reasons that these contributors have requested to remain anonymous because for them privacy and family is their priority

The first time I left home I think I was about sixteen or seventeen. I had plenty of trouble with my father. He ruled with an iron fist, an iron fist. He threw me out one time, I think it was Christmas, I had nowhere to go so I went to the men's accommodation. Do they still have them these days? I think it could have been Walton House. I knocked on the door because I was chucked out, but they wouldn't let me in, and I am knackered.

I got really, really, really abused; so, abused. My father was a drummer and he had drumsticks. One time, I had done something wrong and he had come home from work in the afternoon for his dinner, because we all had to come home for our dinners and then go back to school. I had done something wrong – and he got some drumsticks and started to beat me with them. But I was so fast that he couldn't get hold of me. So, he made my brothers hold me, then he laid in to me. I had welts on my back; really, really bad welts. That was grievous bodily harm, he could have got years for that.

Later I had to go to hospital I think it was with pneumonia, so I had to have some check-ups. I still had

these big "lashes" on my back, they were scars. SM[1], she said, 'when the doctor actually examines you and looks at the scars, just tell him that some boys did it because you were Black'!
What choice did I have? It was either that or tell the police and he is going to end up...and it's hard times isn't it?

The first time I left home, I ran back to Derbyshire, to the foster home. It had always felt like it was a real home run by a lady called Mrs Clayton. Ohh she was lovely. Nanny Clayton. I'd lived there for years. I mustn't have been happy because when I got a bike from my Dad and Step Mother I rode it back to Derbyshire. Yeah on a bike and somebody gave me a lift, put the bike on a wagon and took me down there. I could have been killed, couldn't I? (Oh my god!!)

I must have been about ten or eleven when I did that.
For a holiday, we went back to her. You know what I mean, we went back to her and stayed a couple of days. I can remember that – a lovely place, right in the countryside, just like here it was. This is why I like living here. Why are you in the countryside friends have asked me? I don't tell them it's because I was always trying to get back – to those days, you know what I mean, away from the city, because I know about country.

I was born in Matlock, Derbyshire. My father came from Ghana. He was an engineer, he had learned his craft in the air force. Then he worked for one of these big tractor companies, called Massey Ferguson. Not Massey Ferguson – it wasn't that, it was – I want to call it James Brown, it's not James Brown as well, it's something Brown. – DB, David Browns

My mother, my real mother, she was from America – I've got some photographs. There was some communication because we used to get presents from America.

That's all I know; that there were some presents that came from America. That is why I like Christmas so much. You know, the Yankee way of Christmas; Bing Crosby and all that stuff. I think she must have been very light, very light. SM used to say she passed for white, I would wonder why SM said that?
SM came from Moss Side, Manchester. I think she must have been about twenty-two. A blond, a pretty blond, you would say. They start a relationship, then I come along. At some point, she has got to have the conversation with him, 'who is this boy?' and 'where is the mother?' and stuff like that, and 'why have I got the kid?'

She tried to portray me as 'my big son' and she might even have thought that I was her big son, sort of thing, but no I was a second-class person in that house. I called it the inner sanctum. We (my brothers and I) got the margarine and SM's children got the butter. Is that a good way of putting it?
Did she rescue me? It could have been that I was worth some money to them. Could it have been that? I don't know, it's just something after all these many, many years I have thought. They must have got some money for me, you know what I mean, when they brought me in to the family, all those years ago?

I was three. I was the first one to come. My brothers? I don't know when they came, it must have been a few years later.

One brother is eighteen months older than me, he's the middle child. I was still at school when my eldest brother died. He was quite brainy, had a good job at the College of Commerce or something like that, then he died of stomach problems when he was sixteen, so I must have been young.
I was nine or ten when the light came on and I suddenly realised that I had a gift, as it were, of the gab;

1 *Step Mother*

that is my first memory. Only I knew it, it's not a thing that everybody would have realised. Yeah, only I know that I had it and it was a revelation.

I went to Every Street Primary School then Burley Street, in Ancoats
There weren't lots of Black kids at the primary school, but I don't think I was bullied. I can remember a guy called Frankie Bostock being the boss of that school. I am laughing now as it comes back to me. Frankie Bostock in primary school he was top dog . I ended up fighting with him in the playground and all the kids got around us two fighting. It must have been a lucky punch, but to all intents and purposes it looked like I had given him a corker , *(laughter)* but it was a lucky punch! The teacher gave me the thumbs up, but it was a lucky punch. I was the cock then, but he was always after me after that, so I had to keep out of his way.

They must have got money for me until I left school. Ok, so I got a job, and Alan Tottoh was at the same place. It was called Stopfis, he was a sheet metal worker. He was already there when I started in the Easter after we left school. When I came home with my first wages, I remember it was 30 bob, . Yep 30 bob. SM, she said 'that is no good to me, you will have to get another job'.

30 bob is no good! So, she took me out of a trade, because that was a trade and I had to go and find another job, which I did. I went to Apollo street to a Rag & Bone Shop
Do you remember when the Rag and Bone men came around and collected everyone's left overs? Well they had to take it somewhere didn't they? They took it to this place, a sort of factory where all the rags got ripped up to be used as cleaning rags for oil and stuff like that.

Awful isn't it? I might have still been a welder now. Anyway, that is where I ended up, though I had a few jobs after there, but then that was it. Actually, Foo Foo, you know Frank Lammar , he was the manager there, at that rag shop. *(laughter)* That was his day time job. Ended up by being a millionaire, or something like that. That is what people say, with a big Rolls Royce.
People used to say to me later on in life 'she must have gone through a lot of stick', you know what I mean, just going in to a white area with these…., you know a Black family into a white area. As I said, she must have had some stick, but I didn't see it. They did have a social life, they went out on a weekend. He was also a musician, a drummer. I think he had gigs in working men's' clubs, but before that he used to work in Jazz clubs to supplement his wages. He was a jazz drummer. Pretty good apparently.

I don't know when he died. I said to myself when he dies, I am not grieving for him and I never did. SM died in January, she passed away in January 2016.

There was this one time when SM was talking about the pubs in Ancoats and the Crown came up and she said 'I remember the Crown and Band on the Wall when all the Canadian soldiers were there' so I thought I would keep that because she had always told me that she couldn't remember anything. So, about a couple of weeks later I got on the phone and said, 'Seeing as you can remember the Canadians and that is before I came over, can you tell me anything about me?' 'I can't tell you anything, I have forgot', she said. So, they weren't going to tell me anything.

I asked him about what happened, where we are from, you know, who was my mother?' He just said, 'I'm not telling you nothing'. I kept going on about it 'I want to know about my family' you know what I mean? I'm sure SM knew a lot more.

They stayed together, but I used to hear a lot of crying and screaming and stuff like that. It's one of those things that I can remember. So, there must have been things going on if someone is screaming

and shouting, somebody must be getting hurt. But I never saw anything, it was always in that back bedroom, but maybe it happened in every household. There was a lot of stuff that was taboo - you didn't talk about it. I don't think anyone said don't talk about this, but it was taboo sort of thing, you didn't talk about those things.

Those flats were really good, weren't they? Three-bedroom flats in Ancoats. I didn't go to Moss Side until I was eighteen, that's when a lot of people did like Johnny Savages, and others. The flats had air raid shelters underneath them. We never knew that for years and years and years. When we did get down there and found them, it was like another world underneath there, because the flats ran a full street. They were solid those flats, yeah, big bedrooms and front rooms.

I can remember going to the baths. The Galleon . Yeah – has anyone else said that?
Holiday? Would be no, but I did go somewhere with SM and her mother, no not her mother, her friend, to I think Fleetwood, or Southport. I remember peeing in the bed. *(Laughter)*. I was the biggest "pee'er". That's when you know you've not got a good upbringing when you pee in the bed constantly, isn't it?

I don't know what a mother's love is, that is the best way I can put it. But I remember that lady, yes Mrs Clayton, so kind.

They took me away; they dragged me away from her. Or they might not have dragged me away from her, but they dragged me away from the home. We were called whilst she was dying, so they knew that we were special. The neighbours called us to say that she was dying. I can't remember going to the funeral, but I can remember her. I was just there running around the hospital so that I didn't have to actually see her. I was only little.

These days people are always saying to each other 'love you,' 'love you', 'love you'. Everything is 'love', 'love', 'love'. I don't think we ever got that. That's why I can only say I had that as a baby. As I got older I began to understand that people just say that to each other, or is it a new thing, or has it always been like that? … I don't know what love is, put it that way.

> *SuAndi: During the interview he took a telephone call from his partner at the end of the call he said, "I love you". For me I left a man who has finally found a place to live a life in happiness, in a location that reminds him daily of the best years of his life. A place like Matlock, living with someone who loves him and who he loves in return.*

PAT GEORGE
April 1930
by her sons BARRIE & DAVID

SuAndi: There are two voices in this interview, Barrie's and David's. Despite the age gap of over thirteen years, they agree life hadn't changed that much in the family; it was always the same standards.

Barrie: Mum did all sorts of jobs; she cleaned, she was an auxiliary at the hospital, she worked in care homes. I can't ever remember her not working.

She was the strong one in the relationship, what she said went, 'if we are having that - we are having that, if it's no, it's no' and that's the end of it. There was no in between, there were no grey areas. He came straight home, there was no pub after work. Mum was the dominant one, whatever she said went – my Dad would always say 'yeah'.

She gave him his bus fares and his money for the bookies[1]. We thought he was soft, but he wasn't. He was strong, because his strength was in saying 'you run the house, I go to work and you run the house'. Someone in her family had been a housekeeper. So, she was quite big on etiquette showing us how to use the right knives and forks and spoons.

We had to practise saying 'How now, brown cow', you know *(laughter)*.

Mum gave us the grounding for impeccable manners and to be confident anywhere knowing what cutlery to use. If it had been left to Dad, we would be using our fingers.

1 *Betting (gambling) shop. Licensed legal May 1st 1961*

David: I think there are similarities of Mum and Dad growing up when they were younger. They both suffered physical abuse.

I will start with my Dad, Sammy George, and then try and link that into my Mum. From what I understand, as a child in Africa, Dad and his mother lived in the village, then his Mum met a 'friend' as they called it, and they moved to another village. This 'friend' was polygamist[2] with other children and the eldest brother of his first wife's didn't like our Dad because he was also the firstborn son. This caused resentment resulting in Dad being abused by the brother. Dad in retaliation became a bit of a rebel while carrying his younger brother around to protect him. Eventually Dad had to return to his birth village.

I'm not a hundred percent sure of this, I got this from my sister Christine, maybe our Ann (Sarge), might be able confirm it.

From what I understand Mum was treated badly by her Mum and possibly her Aunt.
Gran had a sister who lived in Shropshire who couldn't have children, so my Mum was given to her. Then the Aunt got pregnant and sent Mum back. But Gran didn't want Mum and that was it. She was sort of left to fend for herself from twelve to fourteen and she had periods of homelessness.
At one stage Mum lived in a big house in Didsbury. She always talked about that, there was a tennis court in the back garden.

Definitely she had a difficult childhood, but you wouldn't know it.
Mum and Dad ended up in the centre of Moss Side in Manchester. Maybe they were both looking to get away from their pasts (to build a new life).

Barrie: Gran was a hypocrite the way she reacted to Dad because she married a Chinese man. I was about five when Dad left the sea. Something went on. I suspect it was an argument about my parents causing Gran to disown my Mum, her daughter. So, we never saw our Gran, I never saw her.

David: I've always liked to think that they discussed and agreed that the kids would always come first. I don't think they ever discussed their pasts.

I didn't know about my Mum's past until we met Uncle Brian and I didn't know about my Dad's until I went to Nigeria. It was then I thought about the similarities of rejection they endured; they were virtually orphans. I think that helped keep them together.
They knew having gone through a lot themselves how harsh childhood can be, and they wanted to protect their children from anything similar.

She would dish out the physical punishment, the slaps, not Dad. Dad had two ways to punish. One was the one finger, one leg position. This meant standing on one leg with your body bent towards the floor using one finger to keep you balanced from falling over. Or he would lecture you, that was his biggest one, lecturing *(laughter)*. We would be sat there thinking 'just give me a crack[3]' *(laughter)*. Mum would say 'Well, you know you asked for it' and let him do his thing.

Dad always said, 'My hands are too big to hit them', so my Mum was the one who would give us a crack saying to Dad 'He deserves a crack – I'll punish him'. He was a strong man; I have seen him lose his temper. I've seen him have a go at full grown fellows twice the size of him and really there was no coming back from it. But for us, his children it wasn't ever going to happen.

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2 *A person who has more than one wife or husband at the same time.*
3 *A slap*

Barrie: She was always moody in the morning – When I was about eight (David wasn't even born then) we were living in a two up two down in Lamb Street, Ardwick. I had come down the stairs when Mum asked me, 'Have you washed behind your ears', so I said 'Yeah'. She looked behind my ears, got the teapot and turned it upside down over my head. Now I am covered in tealeaves. She said, 'Now you've got to wash behind your ears, haven't you?'

David: Because our brother Mike, was going to work he had three Weetabix. I am the youngest and still going to school, so I only got two. It was a daily argument.

On this one morning he left me just the one Weetabix, so we had a bit of a barney. Afterwards I'm stood cleaning my teeth in the bathroom; it was barely four feet wide. Mum comes in and my head hit every wall in the bathroom *(laughter)*, bang, bang, bang, bang. 'Don't you bloody back chat me first thing in the morning'.

We were living in a flat then and I had a friend who lived upstairs, and we'd walk to school together. He was waiting at the door but ran off when he heard the racket.
At school he asks me if I am alright, I said 'Yeah, why, what's the matter?' 'I heard your Mum shouting'. 'That's just normal mate, that's just normal' I told him. I just copped for it[4] that morning.
When I got back from school it wasn't mentioned. She never held a grudge, it was just how it was. Mum had to have a cigarette and a drink of tea, a proper drink of tea, before anyone could speak to her. You just didn't speak in the morning, just kept to yourself. If you did speak her response would be 'Oh no, now is not the time'.
She believed in a short sharp shock with anything that was (always) on hand. But other than that, she was very calm really, very easy going, always got on with people. She was placid amongst other people right, but a firebrand in the house.
If anyone, our Mike got the affection, because he was that type, everyone loved Mike. Barrie was Aunt Peg's favourite. But, hugging and showing affection? No, I don't think it was the done thing in them days.

Barrie: She had a funny side as well. Mum worked as a cleaner for the big houses on Hyde Road. I remember once when I was left to look after our Christine and our Mike and gave them both a haircut. It was a mess. I thought 'I'm going to get murdered here!', but she just burst out laughing. 'What did I do to make you the barber?'

Dad was away at sea, so for the first five years of my life and our Christine's, Mum was like a single parent. We lived in rooms. Mum's sister, my Aunt Peg[5], lived above us. They would take turns in looking after us when they went out to work but sometimes we had to look after ourselves.
I remember when I nearly burnt the house down. She had left me in charge of our Christine and Mike. I was making fried bread when the frying pan caught on fire. I've stuck the pan under the tap and the flames shot up, caught the curtains and I have burns on both my hands.

I ran out the door, jumped over the fence and run to my Mum shouting 'the house is on fire'. Mum was working at the Norman's Hotel on Hyde Road where truck drivers stayed overnight. She has to run back from where the Apollo is up to Shakespeare Street, (no one had a telephone in the house). Fortunately, I think a neighbour had pulled the curtains down, which meant the house hadn't caught ablaze. She never chastised me, just wrapped my hands in bandages and took me to the MRI. 'I bet you don't make fried bread again', she said. And that was it.

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4 David got the slap instead of his brother
5 Ann Sarge's mother

Dad was away at sea for so long. He was in Canada when I was born. I must have been about two or three months when he came home, to see this 'white kid'. His friends said, 'She must have been unfaithful'. Dad said 'No, she's not'. He took me round to all his friends and said, 'now then'. They had to say, 'He is the spit of you'.

David: Mum was tall, slim, blond and always well dressed. She always carried herself well too. People would look at a white woman with a Black man as being cheap and easy and it wasn't the case. Yes, there were working mums[6] they had to put food on the table. There were alcoholic mums; who knows what drove them to alcohol. Was it the abuse they suffered from being in the relationship, was it that that drove them to drink? Was it their different cultures that put pressure on the relationship? We know families with African fathers and English mothers where the African side dominates. Not with our parents they managed it together, but we do know that it went on.

So, people's perceptions and reaction of white mothers in the sixties, fifties and early seventies was to look down on them.

In the late forties, early fifties especially, white people used to think that a white woman with a Black man was a prostitute, full stop. It was far from the case. Of course, there were prostitutes. People had to put bread on the table, there was no such thing as the National Health then and DHSS, so everyone had to do what they had to do, to put food on the table. We were fortunate that our parents were grafters as was Aunt Peg. So, we were lucky really or just fortunate.

Barrie: I remember going to a friend's house after school and he asked his Mum where she was going to which she replied, 'I'm going out with a Black man'. I looked at her with a shocked expression of 'excuse me'. She got all apologetic saying, 'Oh I didn't mean that', but she meant it because what she was really saying was being with a Black man meant 'I'm going for a good time'.

A lot of people thought women like our mum were just good time girls. In reality in the fifties and sixties, they were only girls, but they were girls raising families, while their husbands were away at sea or in the army or in the air force. It was difficult at times especially between the late twenties and post war because there was an influx of Africans coming over on ships. The women had gone through the war years as children, so they had all that trauma. Then they meet the fellow who they fall in love with, who happens to be Black, then they have to face bigotry. So yes, strong women, very strong women. Our Mum had the three of us by 1956/57, right through the sixties, she is bringing up children. She would have been about seventeen, eighteen when she had Barrie in 1949. So, she had no life.

Mum had one Auntie who was well off - had the tenners[7] in the bank, lived in Didsbury! I am not sure how positive or supportive she was to Aunt Peg and Mum marrying Black men. We always had the impression from Mum, that she never lived up to their expectations, but we can't honestly say.

David: When I was growing up at sixteen, seventeen, I don't think that perception about white women had changed then from 'what all they are good for is sex'. You would hear comments from white lads and think 'that's a bit out of order'.

I remember starting at the airport and working with guys there and they would make comments. I would turn around and say, 'Well I am coming to take you daughter out tonight, how are you going to like that?' So, it was still there in the eighties.

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6 Prostitutes
7 Ten pounds

Barrie: I remember going to town once with my Mum and our Christine in the trolley. I think we were going to Lewis's, around that area and Mum was spat at. Dad wasn't with us, just our Christine and me. She just carried on walking.

In Wythenshawe, the bigotry was less obvious because Mum worked at Wythenshawe hospital and Dad worked at the Gas Works. So, people didn't see them that much, mainly walking to and from the bus stop. They didn't have any friends when they moved so no real socialising.
I think Mum just got on with it; went to work and ignored them but could sense some people talked about her behind her back.

The Black people no matter where they came from, all liked Dad, and accepted Mum with him.
A lot of the Jamaican women got on quite well with Mum too. But there was always a bit of an overtone from other white women for being a white woman with a Black man; there was a bit of that, particularly on our street.

Barrie: Mum always said that she 'rued the day' we moved from Ardwick, because until then I just got into little scrapes, scuffles and fights, as you do as a kid. On the first day in school in Wythenshawe somebody tried to put my head down the toilet. I battered him and got 'the strap' . After that came the name calling 'liquorice all sort' and all that.

I wanted to make them more frightened of me than I was of them, plus I had in the back of my mind, our Christine and Michael coming behind me, (David wasn't born then in 62) so I fought them back.
I genuinely thought that she felt she had made a mistake with Wythenshawe. It was better for them, but I never really found my footing. I made friends after a while, but I think it was I was tested. Once I had beaten them, I became more accepted.

David: When I was a kid, things did change. Mum would sort of counsel neighbours, and I know when my Dad left the ships people would seek his advice. He told me he knew Bassey, (Shirley Bassey's Dad) and all the things that Bassey went though. People would come and offload their problems, probably because they saw our parents as a tight unit.

Mum accepted Dad's African customs while keeping her own English ways. It was a bit like living in two different worlds. You would sit with Dad and it would be all African, with Mum it was all English. Mum and Dad's food was a big part of our lives.

The only day we got a cooked breakfast was on a Sunday, the other days it was porridge. Mum would cook a full Sunday breakfast and you'd wake up to the smell of eggs and bacon floating up the stairs. Dad was 'famous' for his breakfasts, everybody loved it. So even after we all left home we would always make sure we got there for breakfast.

Mum would cook a Sunday dinner, then we would all sit and wait for my Dad to cook his food – coz that was like our supper (laugher).
We had the best of both worlds, we had the English food, we had the African food; we had the African upbringing, we had the English upbringing. Together they were just rock solid.

Barrie: Before we had televisions, I would sit down with Mum as she did the crossword. 'Barrie here is a clue, tell me what it is'. I must have been about ten. She believed in education.

Any brains we have, come from. She wanted us to understand where we were from. Most likely she and Dad had talked about the benefits if we went to Nigeria. She was always aware of how we were as kids

being brought up in an England while being half Nigerian. It is important to share the fact that she was aware of that and encouraged us to know our African heritage.
When Margaret Thatcher brought in British nationality law, Mum was furious. She more or less said, 'Your Dad has worked all his life for England'. She was always aware of what was going on in the world, she was pretty politically astute.

David: I came home once wearing a Krugerrand. Mum wanted to know why I was wearing it. For me it was flashy. Then she asked me if I knew the significance behind it. She always tried to educate me. Barrie. As a way of getting the kids on a holiday that parents couldn't afford, they were sent to Dr? in Conway. It was for the six weeks school holiday. We used to call it 'convalescence'. Christine and Barrie went twice, and Anne Sarge went once. Parents could visit once a month or once over the six weeks. Mum and Aunt Peg made the trek (remember it was steam engines in the fifties) Manchester to Conway, and then back home again! Mum was always upset when the visit was over. The last time, I had caught an illness and she had to leave me taking Christine and Mike home. I remember being sat at the window crying, and even though I went home two weeks later, for her to look back and see me crying at the window must have been hard.

Dad would stay at home and once he tried to decorate. When we walked in the house he had put the wallpaper up at an angle, so she never asked him again!! I learned that quick from my Dad 'do it wrong and I won't ask you again'! David always says he wasn't spoilt but he was, he was taken on holiday to Cornwall. Devon was one of them wasn't it, and the Isle of Wight.

Barrie left home at sixteen, so only knew Dave as a baby. He would return at weekends. Christine left when she had her own family and then Michael, leaving the fourteen-year-old Dave home alone. As the only child they could spend a bit more money on him and give him the things they may have given their older children but couldn't afford at the time.

Barrie: He was spoilt. He would regularly get new shoes, new trousers. We would get them at Whit week,

David: They say I was, but I don't necessarily think I was.
I couldn't get away with anything me because they had seen it all with my elder brothers. I could push it a bit more really and I didn't get as disciplined. I think my Dad had mellowed a bit, but I still felt the wrath of my Mum if I did push it.
OK I was a bit spoilt! Yeah.

Barrie: I never had any disagreements with my Mum. I would rant and rave and be the awkward teenager, but she would just laugh at me, kind of thing, we never clashed over anything. So, it was never a case of 'I'm leaving home and I am never going to speak to you again', because there was no reason to. The only thing my Mum ever said was, 'I don't want to find you dead in a gutter because that is where you are going to finish up'.

This one time there were a few of us in Painswick Park Wythenshawe (this was before they built the lake where I learnt to fish). We had 'acquired' some drink, bottles of champagne. Mum was walking through and I said to her 'Mum do you want a drink of champagne?' and she said, 'I'll see you when you get home, our Barrie', *(laughter)* and carried on walking.

The only time I had an argument with my Dad, I was fifteen thinking 'I'm a big man'. I had come home about eleven o'clock and his rule was that I was in for ten o'clock. So, it was 'booff', a brush in my eye. He said, 'You bloody won't do that again' and gone out. Mum said, 'You had better go and

get him because he has said bloody, so he is mad at you'. 'Bloody' was the strongest word my Dad ever used, so I had to follow him, and apologise for upsetting him so much that he hit me with a brush.
I lost my temper once with my youngest Whitney when she was a young woman and we fell out. Later she said, 'You went all African on me and you started talking like that, 'I am your Fadder". I didn't know how it happened, it had just come out. I now find as I've got older that I have turned in to my Dad.

I remember Dad coming to court once and standing up for me. You know how Africans are 'he's really a good boy'. I got bail and we drove back home together, but he never said a word. When we got home, he told me, 'You are at a point in your life when you are at a crossroads of choices; good or bad'. Me being me, I didn't listen - you never listen to your parents, do you? I wish I had done sometimes now, but you don't, right? I finished up going to jail. My Dad never visited but he never held it against me when I was released and got back home.

We got a knock on the door one day and I was in the kitchen. It was the murder squad asking if I was home. Mum came through so white and she was shaking. I thought 'I can't put her through this', and I left the next day.
Off course I hadn't murdered anyone. The suspect had got out of a taxi in Wythenshawe and given their name as Harry or Barrie. So, the police had come straight to my Mum's.

I actually saw my mother visibly shaking and that had upset me. When you are 'up to no good' you don't think about any repercussions until it is in your face. Now I knew she was frightened and terrified. Ours was a fairly happy home. Sunday's Dad would go and get a load of drink and invite the neighbours in. Over time Barrie, our sister Christine then Mike our brother got engaged. Cousin Anne would come most weekends because she loved coming because there was always something going on. It was as though the family was the centre of attention. Mike would bring his mates to sleep over as did Barrie. Many mornings there would be bodies crashed out all over the bed. Everybody was welcome, there was no sort of discrimination or anything, everyone was welcome.

Occasionally they would go out, possibly to the Reno or to the Dogs[8]. This particular time, they were going to the dogs. Dad dressed up and Mum put on a dog tooth check coat and put her hair up and that and I just thought of like 'wow, flipping heck', they looked really good, as a couple.

Barrie. Mum was always concerned about how we looked. In the mid-sixties I had been down Moss Side to buy some weed. I was walking down Princess Road when unbeknown to me, Mum and Christine ride pass on the bus and she says, 'There's our Barrie'. Mum said, 'Don't look at him, he will only look up and wave'. Chris asks why, and mum replied 'Have you seen what he has got on? Just look away" *(laughter)*. I had chessboard draught hipsters on, brown and white with a white belt, I always remembered that, and we often laugh about it.

Mum started to suffer from some health problems. At first it was just overheard talk. She wanted to enjoy a bit of life and went away with a couple of friends, with Margaret, Mark's wife's Mum. She wanted to try new things, live a bigger life.

Because she had worked in the hospitals she knew what was going on. She must have thought 'I'm too young for this. I still want to enjoy my life' It was a difficult period for her because she began to struggle.

David: I had no responsibilities so, I was free to focus on my Mum with only me and my Dad at home.

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8 *Belle Vue Greyhound Stadium*

Barrie, Mark and Chris, they had their own families. It was left to Dad and me care for her.
People tried to tell me that things were pretty difficult, but I wasn't accepting that. I just thought things would be alright. I didn't know what it was all about, to be honest with you.
Then it started to become known that she wasn't too well. Christine lived nearby and would pop in and out and doing a bit. Towards the end everybody mucked in.

Barrie: It was breast cancer. She had a Mastectomy[9] so I thought 'great – everything's great' and she did well for a good five years or so. Then it went to her bones and that is when she started to deteriorate – but it didn't stop her doing anything in the early days.

I took her to Christies for her Chemo about twelve months before she passed. Do you remember how you used to buy videos off the street? She said, 'Can you get me a couple of videos Barrie?' so I said 'Yeah'. I got her 'The Postman Always Rings Twice'. The following day she said, 'What was that bloody video you got me?' *(laughter)*. I didn't know what she meant because I hadn't seen it. Then I had to go away to serve an eighteen month's sentence.

David: I did get away with quite a bit in terms of getting in to mischief, but I was never looking at any prison time. I have got a criminal record for shop lifting, nicking a bike, petty things. To be perfectly honest I knew my Mum wasn't well and I didn't want to put her through it because I thought she's not well enough to cope. That kept me on the rails a bit really, coz I thought I can't be getting in to trouble because she is not well
I had a bit of kudos so to speak because our Barrie paved the way. Somebody would go 'Are you Barrie's brother?' 'Yeah, yeah', 'Ok' and that was it. I managed to keep out of lumber a couple of times

Barrie: Mum showed her strength again because she wouldn't go into hospital for palliative care. She lived each day and she didn't want to go into a hospice. They tried giving her drugs but towards the end she became housebound and bedridden. It was a case of continued palliative care. Nobody knew when the end was going to come. You just got on with it, do you know what I mean, you just kind of got on with it and it just became part of your day.

David: I was mostly ignorant to be honest. I didn't know anything about the prognosis, and what the eventual outcome was. I think they kept it away from me and anyway at the age I was, I would have been in denial. So, it did come as a shock. I was like 'bloody hell, right'. You have to adjust, try to just get on really.

Dad was still working at sixty-two. He was ten years older than Mum when she died at 52 years young on the 12th December 1982. To lose someone after all those years and all they had been through did affect him a lot. He was devastated, 'What am I going to do now, what are we going to do?' You could see the loss; he would talk to other people to Aunt Peg, because they shared Mum, but he never burdened his children.

Barrie: I remember the cell door opening when the priest walked in. I said, 'It's me Mum'.

David: Because Dad wasn't in a fit state, we had to arrange the funeral. He didn't know what he had to do really. We did talk about the arrangements. She was a big Jim Reeves fan, so he was happy for that music to be played.

He really did need someone to walk with him. It was Christine who walked with him throughout the funeral. It was the only time we ever saw Dad cry. Dad was a strong character a little fellow, but strong.

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9 *When all breast tissue is removed.*

Barrie: I got to go to the funeral, and I was cuffed-up [10]. I said to the screw 'look right, it's my family.' They were good, they took the cuffs off and let me mingle with everyone.
Dad was at a loss, definitely at a loss. He didn't know what he was going to do. He had relied on Mum to run the house, pay the bills, everything, because he didn't read.

David: I wasn't particularly going anywhere, so I was happy to stay at home and try and do what my Mum would have done and manage his money. It wasn't a big deal for me. But when she had passed I went off the rails a bit. I hated school and once I had left I just wanted to go to town, big lights and go out with my friends. I always felt that I had missed out because there had always been stories of 'the good old days' from when the family lived in Ardwick. There were Italian families and other Mixed Race families for an inclusiveness, I didn't feel that in Wythenshawe. Probably because when we came to Wythenshawe, we were the only half caste family. And then a lot of the Jamaicans came, but for me it was trying to fit in, who do I hang with and everything else.

I have got to get this in; There is a picture of Barrie, Christine, Mike and Ann with Aunt Peg and Mum in the park. Even though I may have had holidays, they had the happier times because they were all happy together.

I was growing up in the early seventies, I started to be a bit more aware of my culture, influenced by my elder brother wanting to go and join the Biafran war. My cousin Ann looking similar to Angela Davis . Plus, it was my mum because she was knowledgeable what went on in the world who had first guided me. It was around the same time I was looking at going to Nigeria, so that kind of helped Dad to stay focused.

Barrie: Mum always used to say, 'Our Baz, I wish he would settle down'.
She wrote me a letter to read after she had died and the gist of it was that one day, I would settle down and she would be happy. That was her dying wish, to see me settled.
I promised myself that on my release I was going straight to the crem[11], which I did. Brian Sarge picked me up from Preston and I went straight there. I have to live with the knowledge that I was in prison when she died, when I should have been there for her. Of course, with hindsight you know better, don't you?

Maybe I could have been a better son, I don't know, but I am what I am, and I can't change that, and I can't turn the clock back.

David: I think we all could have been better.

Barrie: Hers was the first big death in our family really. We used to go every Sunday put our flowers for her. Dad felt that he needed to go and every Sunday, he would wait for David or Chris to take him up, and if we couldn't, it would be like 'what are you playing at?'

Every Sunday it was religious. He wouldn't say anything out loud. We would give him time to attend the grave and do what he wanted to do –then we would come away and be back as normal. He went for about three or four years, every Sunday.

He was still going when Barrie came out of prison and started taking him. Outwardly he didn't change, but inwardly he was heartbroken. His routine was always the same he would get up in the morning, go

10 Handcuffed
11 Crematorium

in to the bathroom, clean his teeth then dress for his day.

On the 18th November 1997 when Dad passed, David opened the wardrobe and all Mum's clothes were there; he hadn't parted with anything.

David: The sad part was when in seeing the medical stuff like her wigs, that brought back the sad memories.

Some of the clothes could pinpoint to certain times like the seventies, when they were all very floral and big. In my head I would go 'oh - I can remember my Mum wearing that at such and such a time'. Like the dog tooth coat, I could remember that – bang, you know, so they did evoke more happy memories and that is what I sort of stuck with.

At the time mum passed I needed her guidance because she had seen it all and done it all and would have advised me better. I felt I went off the rails and I needed her to keep me from making some crazy decisions, because I have made some stupid decisions.

I work for a care leavers organisation. Because she would have had a better understanding of the type of work that I do, she would have stopped me, 'because you don't know enough about it'.
I can't blame her for passing away and I am not looking to do that, but I'll always miss the guidance. It wouldn't be an in-depth conversation, but a case of making me see sense.

Growing up in Wythenshawe, the first school I went to there was me and another half caste girl. Straight away I knew the difference and it was like 'where do I fit in here?' I have got a British passport, I was born and brought up in Britain. So, I am British, however nobody can ever take away my Nigerian heritage. I wanted to know about my Dad's culture, I have to uphold that. It was my Mum who encouraged me to understand my heritage and she would have been proud of me for that. She would have been proud that I went to Nigeria and proud of my daughter.

I think it was her pushing that has helped me keep going really. Some of the things that she would say like ', OK so it is a bit tough, well tough luck, get on with it'. They are the sort of things that you use to keep you going in life really, don't they, do you know what I mean. I have tried to pass these on to my daughter, but I don't know if I have been successful.

Barrie: I have got my mum's colouring and my Dad's physicality. My Mum she would be over the moon about her grandchildren and great grandchildren. She did meet Barrie, Danielle, Yvonne and Vincent, sadly not the others. Of course, if my Dad were alive, we would still be going every Sunday. Replying to the letter she left me when she died, I would say 'well I am there now, really, I am there now, be happy'. It took a while, but I believe that I got there, and she is happy now.

All we can really say is thanks to our Mum and Dad for being two incredibly strong people, incredibly strong and to give our love to Christine.

FAMILY
Pat George. April 1930 – December 1997
Barrie Olkachookwu George
Christine Flanagan (George) April 1950 – August 2016
Michael George
David George
Barrie George Snr January 1920 – November 1997

JEANETTE MURPHY (Lincoln)
November 1941
by her son BRADLEY

I have a great relationship with my Mum, it's fierce. I had a great relationship with my Dad, it was very smooth – very easy, there was no need to push there. My Dad was a bit of a smiley, smiley guy who thought he could get everything with a smile and apparently, I employ the same tactics. Whereas my Mum is very 'meat and two veg'. When you articulate a relationship as it is in its status quo, you realise all the gaps that are there and all the missed opportunities.

I was just one of the Lincoln boys. I remember having a happy childhood. My older brothers would say 'don't go messing about causing Mum any trouble'. There was a kind of protection there, that was my sense of it. I don't know how that got filtered through, but it did. Because my older brothers hadn't brought any trouble home there was no point me bringing any.

I was pretty obedient in school. I wasn't over academically bright, probably I had to work harder than others, and because of that it made me mess about a little bit, but not ever too much.
I was raised in Wythenshawe in Manchester. There are five children; Karl the eldest, then Anthony, then David; they have a different father than me and my younger brother Darren.

David the closest brother to me, has blond hair and blue eyes; a really good looking lad and I used to think 'Ahh why can't I look like him?' My elder brothers in the UK are white and I have an older brother in Jamaica, Michael, who is Black, who I didn't meet until I was sixteen.

My brothers' father was Irish. Mum didn't marry him. She was born in Wythenshawe and later

her family, her brothers and sisters moved to Denton[1] and Sale[2] I think, because I would see them occasionally.

I remember my Grandmother and even though we didn't have a great relationship with her, Mum still encouraged some contact with her parents. She has told me a little of what caused the rift between them but not everything. I don't think it was regarded favourably when she first had mixed kids, but she handled that because she just didn't see race and identity.

Lincoln is Mum's maiden name. My father's name was Deans and when she and Dad split up, she wanted all of her kids to have the same name. I always knew we were the Lincoln boys, especially within the house because we have got the same food, the same licks[3], the same telling's off. You could physically chastise your kids then.

Mum was the eldest, so she looked after her siblings and I think that shaped her quite a lot in being independent and mothering, creating an identity and having a purpose in life. I do strongly believe that women who have lots of children, it is their way of using their intellect. She didn't have much in the way of a schooling, so she wasn't academically educated, but I would definitely say she has a high intellect. Raising five lads, forecasting and budgeting, the emotional intelligence it requires to keep the finances together that all requires a high level of communication and intellectual skills which I think were well within her capabilities. I have always thought she could run a good business. I never felt like 'oh I could have one over on her' or 'I can take advantage here', even though there are all these lads running about. She was the one who was managing every aspect of our lives.

She'd had all her children by the time she was twenty-eight, so she must have been in her early twenties when she met my dad.

I think she used to work at the airport, and she would do some cleaning in between, but mostly the pub. She worked at the Red Lion pub in Gatley[4]. I used to go down there with Mum at breaktimes, it was really nice. She was probably there for about a good fifteen or so years. Back then there was a different communication between men and the barmaids. It was a bit flirty. These days it might be considered politically incorrect. She had really good banter with them. It was like they were all good friends but there were definitely boundaries, so the men knew how far to go. Quite a few guys had tried to take her out on a date, but she kept herself to herself. I always thought she was very attractive. She was never a showy person, but she was always very elegant.

Dad had gone in the pub with his friend my Uncle Ted. He liked mum and asked her out on a date. He said Mum had really good legs and he tried quite a few times to get her to go out with him, but she wasn't having it. Originally, he had a bet to see which of them could, you know, get a date with her, so he badgered her for quite some time and then he did; he won her.

I don't know if it was it her first Black man. Mum is interesting because she doesn't really talk about things in terms of race and identity. I am the one who is overly sensitive about that. For her he was a nice bloke who had his own car. He would take her out to dance, for a meal, treat her in a way something maybe the guys who were around at the time weren't too much in to. He took her out for a Chinese I think the first time and then to a club.

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1 *Approximately 10 miles away*
2 *Approximately 6 miles away*
3 *A small slap*
4 *A suburban area of Stockport*

Today I think wow – back then it must have been a big thing for her to have these kids and then to go out with a Black man. Now I admire her independence – she was fiercely like – probably a lot of women didn't like her. It must have taken a lot of bravery then 'I am going to do this the way I am going to do this' or maybe she didn't see it as bravery. Maybe she just thought 'I am not going to go out with a guy who is going to sit in a pub all night. But if someone is going to turn up, dress nice, play music, take me out somewhere'; I think she enjoyed, for a time, that side of what became their relationship.

Dad was just a year older than my Mum when they got together. He did have a previous relationship before Mum when he first arrived from Jamaica. Dad told me he just absorbed Karl, Anthony and David my older brothers. He never talked about the kids being a hinderance.

He liked the parenting role and they worked along pretty well together. I don't know whether it is a cultural thing because a lot of my family in Jamaica have extended families. The shapes of families there is different, they are fuller and rounder with different edges.

They broke mainly because my Mum's family were always around making demands on her so Dad felt he wasn't getting her attention.

One thing I have learnt about my Mum and I hope I am not being impolite saying this – I think she knew she was meant to be a Mother, but probably not meant to be a partner. She knew her capabilities, and I think her happiest times of being a Mum was when we were all really young and she was managing it and in control. I think lots of men found her too hard to handle because she is quite strong and independent, and I think also she found men a little bit like weak.
When they split up, I was four or five. In spite of the obvious difficulties, both of my parents always ensured that Darren and I saw our Dad. I remember missing him for a time because I was quite close to him.

Dad moved to Wilmslow with a woman who already had a child from a previous relationship then she and Dad had married and had my brothers Marvin and Steven. Dad would pick us up at weekends, which on reflection cannot have been easy, but I respect my Mum for that, and I also respect my Dad for making sure that that happened.

I didn't find out until later on that the woman he left us all for was Mum's friend and by then Joyce had shown me all of this kindness. I had all these conflicting emotions because she had hurt my Mum, but then she had been kind to us in all of these ways that I couldn't count, so it was pretty complex. There was nobody helping me to navigate through and as a child you can't articulate it, but you get that your Mum is upset. I can remember feeling a bit disloyal to my Mum because I had such a good relationship with my Dad's new wife, and not knowing how I was supposed to handle that.

Every once in a while, she would lose her temper a bit about Dad. I was always over protective of him, so we would get in to these arguments that is why I remember some of the flash points because it wasn't something that went on all of the time. On reflection she must have been hurting a lot, but she must have held all of that down and must have thought 'why the hell does this child like that man so much' because all I would ever do was go on about my Dad, and she was doing all the work.

Her life after Dad left must have been really hard. She was a really competent mother in the way she handled having us five. There were things obviously in the background that I didn't see. Mum just did everything effortlessly. She was always really well organised. I remember we always had flowers in the house and when I used to go to friends' houses from school, I was surprised that they had frozen food,

because she always cooked from scratch.
One thing in particular which used to irritate me was when we went to see Dad at weekends, every other weekend or what have you. My brother Darren and I were always nicely dressed kids, I think we were my mum's girls really – she dressed us up so nicely and pretty all the time. People would say 'Oh your lads are really well-mannered Lloyd, they are a credit to you'. I remember I used to feel a bit affronted by that - because I thought the credit should go to my Mum, because she dealt with the bad moods and my attitude.

I would say 'we are easy for you Dad because you only get this nice side of us. But me and him had to work on our relationship, because he had to know how I felt about him and his wife and how I felt about him making this new family and ask why we and especially our Mother weren't enough for him. At Dad's I was mostly on my best behaviour, so that was a funny and complex thing. I liked going to my Dad's because I'd get a little bit more access to my culture, to my other culture, but my Dad had overly, and this is not a judgement, this is an observation, - my Dad had overly assimilated I was digging to learn about my Jamaican heritage. I used to have more conversations with my Dad about my racial identity than I did with my Mum, but my Mum created the space for me to be open and to talk about it, even though she didn't have the answers.

I do remember on quite a few occasions when I was younger playing outside the house and people drawing my identity into question. It's like asking you know 'where is your Father from?' or 'is this your Auntie?' because of my Mum's red hair and blue eyes. As a child I couldn't understand why they would think she wasn't my mother. And over a time, I guess I became over sensitive. I took it really personally when people called me negative names as boys do, because you are silly when you are younger. I suppose I internalised it a lot and kept it on the inside because it wasn't something that I could articulate at that time. I felt really loved, I felt really looked after, but I also knew that at a point I didn't look like my older brothers, who I looked up to a lot. I was obviously different – coloured skin and curly hair. These were the things that played out in my mind but thankfully and always for my Mum we were always her Lincoln boys.

When you look at kids today and things, they are doing it makes me wonder if I had an emotional block when my Dad left. I can remember primary school in particular not really getting on with stuff and I wonder if that was an emotional effect. I think I am quite bright now, now I have allowed myself to be more open.

I grew up white, absolutely, because I was one of the Lincoln boys. In the early years of my life, I felt I didn't have "the permission" to own my Jamaican heritage. At school there weren't many people who were mixed or there were a few, but they were in different years. At the time where I lived in Sharston , there weren't any people who were non-white.

I had such a happy childhood, so I wasn't looking for happiness, but I was looking for an identity. I had this kind of straight-ish, curly hair and both Darren and I were so light I didn't feel like I was proper Black, whatever proper Black was.

Darren I would say has tastes more attuned to the middle class white experiences when I bring him into the things that are Black to me. So, we will sometimes battle on that.
When I was getting close to leaving home there were lots of changes going on and I think Mum sensed that I was really struggling for an identity, searching. I just hope she never felt a disconnect, because everything was Black.

I was in what I would call a 'nowhere-ness' where I didn't feel either one or the other, Black or white,

and then I went to a place which I call 'somewhere-ness'. Now 'somewhere-ness' to me is like a temporary hotel – you stay there, but you can't stay there forever – but I stayed there for a time, so I over identified with the Black side of my culture to try and re-address the balance. And I did that in emotional and in physical ways; physical in the way I dressed and the way I walked and also the people I went out with. I think in emotional ways it was almost like a rejection of anything that was white, including my Mother for a time. This is hard for me to admit because she must have sensed that, and I wasn't emotionally mature enough to have empathy for how it must have hurt her at that time.
I went from just being Bradley who just does this, to this very different Bradley doing other things which was hard for my family to take in. Because it is such an internal experience you don't know how to monitor it because you are just really emotionally clumsy lurching forward into the next disaster or next emotional break up with somebody, as you try to find a sense of yourself. I definitely went through stages – of 'nowhere-ness' where I didn't feel Black enough to be Black or white enough to be white. Then I moved to 'somewhere-ness' when I overidentified, more with my Black culture cheups (sucking my teeth) and trying to grow my hair in little China bumps[5]. Dad witnessed everything, and I think that eventually allowed him to speak. Up to about me being sixteen Dad and I didn't really have a very good relationship but there were these stirrings in me and given the personality that I am, I had to do something about that.

I had to confront Dad and say 'look, it's like you have given me this suitcase and I am carrying it around and I don't know what is in it. You know your heritage, you know what everything looks like back in Jamaica, and you think that I am having a better lifestyle here, but I will never be white enough to be white, so you need to help me to understand so that I can fit in and feel comfortable with my Black peers'. I think then that struck him, because none of his sons had spoken to him like that. I am his eldest son here in the UK. I think that it made him really think outside of himself about 'actually yeah, I have got all this heritage that I am carrying around, but I haven't actually transmitted any of that to my kids'. Then I kind of took on the role of being the advocate of drawing all that stuff out of him and I filtered that down to my younger brother.

But I definitely had periods when I overidentified with my white culture. Then I got to a place and I don't know how that happened, a place which I call 'grounded-ness', where I was able to go 'oh I can bring elements from both parent's cultures and create an identity which isn't specifically like either', but I had all this catching up to do with my Black side first. I went through this searching for a number of years.

In some ways, but not totally, I think it was what spurred me into developing the 'Mixed Race[6]' project. Mum had always been supportive, but she never really got it or thought it was overly important.
Today I realise my family saw that anything I did which was Black as a rejection of them. They weren't able to understand how much I felt I was rejecting a side of myself.

My mother has definitely given me insights into the difficulties in her life and how emotionally she felt at certain times. In those moments I was really proud of the quality of information that we shared when she seemed very open, so it was like I was talking to a woman, I wasn't talking to my Mother.
She talked about her lack of confidence, her not understanding when other women would say to her 'oh you think you are fucking lovely'. Inside she was quite a shy person, but she would present in a way that looked confident and on top. So small things like that, that you go 'oh yeah, I had never really thought about your Mum being shy because your mum is always somebody who is doing stuff'. But then when she shared that with me, I understood.

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5 *China Bumps / Bantu Knots on type 4b Afro male Hair.*
6 *Multiple Heritage Project.*

I think your strength can be your weakness – so obviously there were vulnerabilities because she became so strong. She must have had a really hard time that she didn't let us know much about, having us kids, but I don't ever recall you know her not getting out of bed, or not brushing her teeth. She wasn't a make-up wearer, but she always had nice hair. So, I rarely saw those downtimes and there must have been downtimes, there must have been a lot, especially when my Dad left, and people began to know but she handled it with great dignity.

I think for her she found people to be nosey and not overly genuine, so she wasn't a woman's woman. She didn't have people around chatting as I remember. She was always friendly, if you were out on the street, she would have a chat – but never too much. My friends' Mums for example, would have people round the house – but she didn't; never really – it was our space – that is where we were. Then I realised that some of the people on the road were quite gossipy and it was more of a news gathering exercise than a friendship that they ever wanted to build up – so for that reason I think she just thought – OK let me just keep this.

She has also inferred about making incorrect choices in relationships and not really looking for the right things and feeling just a lack of confidence, a lack of worth in herself, so those type of things – very general.

She starts to lose her eyesight in her early forties – she has a condition which all of us lads have called Macular Degeneration.

Obviously, us lads are growing up, I think I was fourteen or fifteen when her brother's wife died, and she took his kids in. And then she got married. I don't know why she took so long to do it. So, in the space of a couple of years she really transformed a lot her life.

He was an older white man who hadn't had kids, so it wasn't easy for him to take on this large family of boys and men. I left home pretty soon after Mum married so I didn't have a close relationship with them. Sadly, for mum he died in 2017.

She is registered as blind now and only has peripheral eyesight. Her central vision has gone, but you wouldn't know it. Though she can't do lots of things on her own like going out, she needs aid. She does go out on her own, but she shouldn't. She functions really well in her own environment around the house. She lives still in the same house – it's the same house that we have always lived in 48 years. When they performed the operation, they shouldn't have done some of the process they did – but she handled that so well she just took it and lost her eyesight.

In 2013 the doctors told me I was going to lose my eyesight within six months. Macular Degeneration is passed down through the female gene; four of her boys have it. I started having needles in my eye, once a month to keep my eyesight. This affliction brought us closer and because she has modelled herself as not being a victim, losing her eyesight being more of an inconvenience, it was a positivity that helped me get through.

I just said, 'Look Mum you know I don't carry any bad feeling about this at all, I see you show me how to work with this and when my eyesight does go you have shown me how to cope with it'.
There isn't one ounce of anger or frustration there towards her, more just pure compassion. 'Shit I would hate to carry that'. But I am not like that my mind isn't. I am fortunate that I don't have the Macular gene – you land where you fall don't you. And I am glad that it happened to me first in the way that it did, because then I could be the example to the other guys. You have got to give things a spin haven't you so that they don't take it as a complete negative. And I think mostly they have, but

they have different personalities, so they have taken it on in different ways.

She became really ill at the same time as my Dad, so it was a very strange experience for me. I have been more inquisitive about her as a woman than my brothers have – she is not just a Mum to me. So, when she was poorly, the other boys were also looking after her. But I was also looking after my Dad who my older brothers obviously are not related to and my younger brother's relationship with our Dad was fractured. I was caught in a really difficult place because of the time I was spending with my Dad. Boys measure their love by time, how many times you have been to see someone is how much you love them. So, they wrongly saw that as an indication that I didn't love my Mum as much. I just thought how stupid of them? I know, absolutely I have loyalty to both parents and that in spite of them being who they were to each other, they were still a lot to me, individually.

When they split/separated, she would see him when he came to pick us up. He would stay by the gate; there was no need for them to have more contact than that. She didn't speak nastily about him, but she didn't speak favourably about him either.

On occasion when out they would see each other Dad would smile trying to ease over twenty years of pain, and she had to be thinking 'it's not working'!! It would amuse me to see their stand-off, because I knew they loved me in lot of ways, while having very different feelings about each other. All of my childhood there has always been that distance between the two of them that I learnt to accept.
And at times there were times when I laughed about the "stand-off". Dad would say 'say hello to your Mum', he wasn't taking the piss, but he would say 'say hello to your Mum', and I'd say, 'I certainly won't Dad' – 'you know I am not going to wind her up today man', coz she didn't want to hear from him,
When he was dying I would say to him 'do you know what Dad, it would be good if you apologised to my Mum one time, just say sorry to her, just to acknowledge the humiliation and all of that stuff that she went through – it's not that she is holding it – she doesn't want you back and she doesn't feel she is lost by not having you, actually I think she has probably had a better life than you two being together, but you know as a matter of grace – I think you should one time just acknowledge your responsibility and lack of it"

SuAndi: Bradley has found his own place of identity and formed the highly respected Mix-d http://www.mix-d.org (Multiple Heritage Project) a platform for mixed-race conversations. Leading educational based sessions to help combat prejudices towards Mixed Race heritage and helping hundreds of young people particularly those raised within the Care system to find their own place of fullness in society.

VICTORIA SIBTHORPE
July 1928
by her son JOHN

We were born in the fifties just after the war really, so things were just the way they were. Ours was the kind of home where your Dad ruled. Life had its ups and downs; some days we would have loads of money, some days we wouldn't'. My Dad Ronald Victor Sibthorpe was a gambler, but he was also an entrepreneur. He used to make shakers and he would import fish from Africa and sell it at the market. He was good at what he did, so we would never starve. There was always food on the table, you know what I mean, and we had good clothes.

Victoria S Robert, my mum, made our clothes. When I went to school she made my trousers. When I was young and couldn't afford flares , my Mum made them for me.

My Mother was half Spanish, half Irish, she had long Black hair. I suppose a bit of a beaut' really. She was one the few whose hair stayed Black, most of my Aunties went blond. I don't know why, probably because they thought that it was – Black man's kryptonite. Nearly every one of my Aunties or Mum's friends who were with Black people at some point or other dyed their hair blond, but my Mother stayed Black haired.

I think they met at a forces club and got married at Salford – Registrar, I believe.

Mum's sister married a guy from Sierra Leone. Her brother married a white girl, so it's weird to say, that we have a white cousin, whereas all the rest of the family are half caste. Mum had six siblings; my Auntie Marion, Auntie Adie, Auntie Doris, Auntie Minnie who died, a brother called George and a brother called Victor, who died.

My Uncle George treated us alright. It was just that we have this side of the family who we just don't have contact with. I couldn't tell you where any of them are. I know one has got a daughter, but apart from that, I can't tell you anything. The only connection we had was my Mum, who when we were little, would drag us along, to my Aunties, and that was it.

There were only two Black families that lived in our area. One of them was the Walkers, and the others were the Davies who lived on Camp Street. The others lived on Broughton Lane and we lived further down. But, there weren't many coloured people at all. My Mum didn't seem to have any problems with it, no.

Mum very rarely went out; she only went out when my Dad took her out. She wasn't one of these people who went, you know, raving or anything. You know what I mean? She would go to the Western Social Club when it was open, but I don't think she would have gone to the Reno or anywhere like that – never.

My mother was really a bit timid. She stood up to him, but in a way, I considered her timid.
At times I didn't think it would ever work between my parents because like she was always leaving him, and we would have to hide. At one point we lived on Acker street which is up near the MRI[1]. I remember I had to take my brother and sister to school on Waterloo Road, in Cheetham Hill. We had to get two buses and hide from my Dad, so he wouldn't find out where we were living, coz he would come and get my Mum back. But she always went back.

He used to hit her sometimes; we witnessed it, but you tended to accept it because he hit us as well. It was the old way like 'you don't listen, you will feel'.

When I was young he ran a book-makers. He was pretty talented, very intelligent and well respected. He used to stay out. He'd go gambling and not come home. I remember once he went gambling in Moss Side and my mother took us down and said, 'Is Ronnie in there?' They said 'Yeah', 'Well tell him his kids are outside' and just left us outside. Of course, he went off his head.

Mum always worked. She was a machinist, she worked for the same bloke, Davis', for thirty, forty years. We went to wherever she could get a flat. It wouldn't seem like planning to us. We would just come home, and she would say 'we are going' and we move out to a place she had arranged.
She could have gone to my Aunties, but then my Auntie was also married to an African from the same village in Sierra Leone. Obviously if they were to meet up he's going to say 'Well, I don't want to tell you but'...
My father passed away first. I was a disappointment to him because I was the first Black boy, well the first coloured person to go to Salford Grammar School. In all the six years that I was there I was the only one. Dad expected great things from me, but I chose not to realise my potential.

My mum was made up. Like I have said, she used to get my school uniform and would make sure my shirts, and everything were always right. My Dad was the same, he was proud of me, he got me a tutor – all the normal things. But he was very strict, so we had our little clashes. When I got old enough, I just decided that I didn't want to speak to him, and I didn't speak to him for about eight or nine years. I just used to drop my wife and kids off, and if there was a party I'd ask, 'Is my Dad in there?' 'Yep' 'Not coming in, no thank you, see you later when I pick you up'.

I liked being cuddled, yeah, by my Mum I suppose; at sometimes I must have, yeah. But with my Mum, it was like carrot and stick wasn't it? As soon as my Dad went out of the house you did what

1 *Manchester Royal Infirmary*

you wanted, and your Mum would threaten you with your Dad. Then as soon as you heard your Dad's key go in the door, you start begging your Mum not to tell your Dad. If she tells, she is horrible, if she doesn't tell then you have got one over on her and you would do it again. Sometimes she would tell your Dad then you would get beaten, so, it's just life.

I thought it was a bit strict, but I mean, they are your parents aren't they and you can't do much can you? You can't do much until you are like fifteen or sixteen, then you get the hell out of there.
I got caught climbing on a garage and they took me to court. My father gave me a choice, to go home or to go in to a Children's Home. I said, 'I would rather go into a Children's Home'. They didn't let me go, they knew it was my bravado. I just didn't want to be at home. But I was happy yeah. I always did what I wanted to do, so I was happy.

I look more like my Mum because I have a straight nose. Whereas my brother and sister look more like my Dad. But I have got my father's ways, do you know what I mean? I have got my father's determination; like if I think I am right, I don't care what anybody else has got to say. And I think most of my confidence comes from my father.

There is nothing at all I would like to ask my Mother or my Father – nothing at all. As far as I am concerned when someone is gone, they have gone. I have nothing to ask them, nothing to discuss with them; after a while, I don't even think about them. The reason that picture is there is to remember what she looks like, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to tell you what she looks like. I couldn't describe her, I couldn't describe my father either. People probably think I am heartless, I probably am, but I just don't have that bond.

My sister and my Mum had a bond because she taught her how to sew and my brother being the youngest – they also had a bond, but me, I just didn't care about anything, I just cared about me. I don't care about things that basically - that you can't do anything about.
What I liked about my Mum was that she was so kind, do you know what I mean? You just couldn't fault her for anything; she would do anything for anybody. She loved cats and dogs for instance and would give money to them. But you can't really do anything with them can you. I mean I won't donate to anything. I tell a lie; I have got a dog for the blind which they have ripped me off for. They said donate ten pounds a month, so I've gone 'yeah'. I paid for a year, then one day one of the blokes comes around trying to sell me something else. And I said, 'You sold me a dog' and he goes 'Which one was it?' and I said, 'The Black one, how many others have you sold it to?' He told me he had sold it to ten donors. So, I said 'In other words you are getting a hundred pound a month to get this blind dog up and running', so he said 'yeah'. So, I've gone right,' well don't sell me any bumph because that costs money'. So, he's gone 'ok'. About three weeks ago, and this is true this, I can show you the letter; I got a letter telling me that Domino, my dog, has failed to pass training for blind, you know to help assisting the blind because he was too boisterous, so they have handed him over to his handler to keep. So basically, for a year and a half I have paid for a bleeding dog and now they have turned around and told me 'that it's ok, don't worry, you can sponsor another dog!!' *(Laughter)*.

My Mum used to have a hearing aid that whistled, and we would say 'Granny, turn your hearing aid down,' she would just look at you. She would moan all the time. I thought to myself, I am going to learn to moan like you.

I used to say to her 'Do you want some cheese' and she would go 'What?', 'Do you want some cheese with that wine?' She used to say 'uuuugh, nag, nag, nag, nag' and I'd say, 'One day I will be like you, I am going to grow up to be just like you and moan all the time'.

I'm not really a family person. I don't do all that contact stuff. I used to go and see her regularly when I worked in Trafford Park just before she died, and my brother lived around the corner we used to pop in all the time.

I don't know when my Mother died, I have no idea whatsoever. I know when my brother died, because he was more important. Sometimes I think of her, but I don't feel any like 'oh my God my Mum is dead'.

I do think about my brother Victor sometimes, but not often, but that is only because it is fresh in my memory. Sooner or later it just will be like 'Right, he is dead'. 'When did he die?'. 'Oh, the 4th December'. 'How do you know it is the 4th December? 'Because it is Derek's birthday, that is the only reason'.

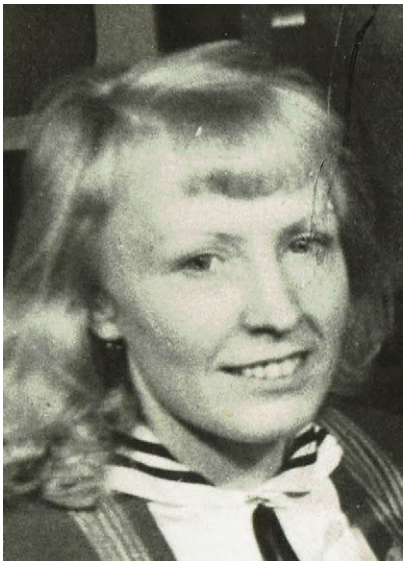
My brother's son found her. As I have said, we used to go every morning before we went to work. It was the weekend and I wasn't working, so not due to go until Monday morning. My brother, his son, (my nephew), they lived around the corner, so they always used to go in the morning. The back door was always open on the latch and my nephew went running in and then came running back out and said to my brother 'Granny is not answering, she is just staring at me'. She was dead in the chair. I think it was bowel cancer or something like that. She didn't have chemo or any treatment. She just died in her sleep. Some of her ashes are in America with my sister. When my brother Victor died, we sprinkled Dad's ashes because my sister is a bit like that, you know, keeping things shipshape, but not for me. We knew that he also wanted some of Mum's ashes. I was like 'Where the fuck am I going to get them from?' It turned out that four years earlier when his friend transported my Mother's ashes from the cemetery, then split them up in to two caskets, he had spilt some in his car, but he had never cleaned the boot. Her ashes were still there, so they went and got them out and sprinkled them on his grave. So, half of Mum's ashes have been to Rhyl four times *(laughter)*.

Sometimes my mum would just sit there and say, 'I can't wait to be with your Dad in heaven' and I used to think 'what the fuck for?'. She did stand up to him by just walking away when she wanted to, do you know what I mean? Obviously, they were in love in the formative years of the marriage. I'm sixty-seven, and if she died like five – eight years ago they were together all the time I've been alive, apart from like the break ups when she took off with us and that would normally be caused by either him hitting her or coming home or not coming home or something like that.

But she loved him and that was just how it was. My Mum loved my Dad and my Dad loved my Mum.

FAMILY
Victoria Sibthorpe July 1928 – July 2006
John Sibthorpe
Victor Sibthorpe 1954 - December 2009
Angela Sibthorpe

LILY KELLY
June 1926
by her son STEVE



Aston Alexander Kelly, my Dad, was Jamaican; slim, dark, handsome, and strict - strict, beating strict. He died when I was eleven, he was forty-six. Do I remember him? I have still got the fucking marks to prove it. *(Laughter)*. He did care and was a provider, done his duty, but as so many Black men were in those days, he was a bit of a whoremaster. But yeah, like me with my children, he didn't shirk his duty.

My Mum was raised with her grandmother, an Irish woman I think in Scotty Road Liverpool. She had two sisters. One ended up pretty big, posh-ish, the other sister sadly was a prostitute.
We are talking obviously the twenties or thirties. Life was pretty tough, I guess. They didn't have a lot, they had fuck all. She was always cleaning, you know, that was always important to her. Because they had nowt, they obviously kept their houses spotless, and our front step - that was as clean as most of the neighbours' houses. *(Laughter)*.

In describing my Mum well, instant flush, I wish I had brought you the pictures today because as soon as you see her you know, she looked like an angel. Beautiful blond, medium height, slim, heart of gold, eleven kids. Lily Kelly was from Liverpool. Nine of the kids were hers; three sisters and six brothers. Two of them were her sister's – the one who was a prostitute. She put her kids into Care and my Mum and Dad didn't want that, so they took the kids and adopted them so all of a sudden there were eleven of us. And those two are my brother and sister. Owen is a couple of years younger than me and his sister Anita, our sister – is younger too. The father was Black but very pale Black, a White Black sort of thing, so it makes them very pale, but they are Black. Black. OK. Dad trained me. He used to take me on the ships to pick up the weed and shit that the Pakistanis brought in (can I say all this stuff?) to make money. He came to England as a Merchant Seaman then after the first couple of kids were born, he became a chef .

In those days there was just police on the dock gate. We would give them a few beers to look away. Dad would go upstairs to get ready and he would come down you can imagine – Smart; On a mission. We would all be sat there on the couch watching the television. He would just point at me – it was always me, and we would off. He knew….the other kids were jealous about me getting picked out all the time by our Dad. I used to get sly little digs and all stuff like that. They didn't know what was in his head, they didn't know he was training me up.

My brother Gary[1] was two when my father died. Mum and me, were like soul brother and sister. I don't know why, but she always chose me. Mum would somehow get the older ones to look after the younger ones while we got the bus down to Walton Hospital to see him. I remember the day he died. We were ready for it because we had been visiting for weeks. We knew but we hadn't told the kids because we didn't want them to get upset. I remember walking out of the hospital, and saying to her 'Mum what are we going to tell the kids?' I am eleven, but I was a man because she treated me like a man, and she said to me 'let's go and have a Chinese son'. And we went over the road *(laughter)* sat down and decided what we were going to tell them when we got home. Then we went home to tell the kids. It was like he wasn't my Dad, because I was a bit of a dad, if you get me. He knew he was dying you see which is why; he trained me to stand in for him – he knew he was going to die and leave this squad, and out of this squad, he knew that I was the one who would be responsible enough to look after them.

I think that Mum was ready for him to die because they hadn't had a great life together. He used to beat her a bit and that shit. What I mean. looking back, she might have been a little bit relieved. Obviously, she never worked. She couldn't, could she? There was no child care in those days was there? You look after your kids and that is your job and she kept the house as clean as a pin.

We were the sharpest kids on the block. She had us mint[2] because she used to say to us 'let me tell you now son, you will never be stood in a bus shelter waiting for a bus and people be able to say, 'maybe you should have seen him as a kid". We would be walking through the market or whatever and some bastard would say something, and my mother would get one of my sisters and lift up her dress and say 'Look at these white knickers'. Yeeeah. 'Are your kids' knickers as white, and look at her socks?' Because we were pristine! Great on her, we were all mint. Then she'd say, 'now fuck off'. She was always ready to stand up for us at the drop of a hat. I used to love when the neighbour would pop one of our balls or something and she would 'hitch up the skirt' and leap over the fence. Yes, like that, over the fence, she was just a whippet. Over the fence – 'what did you just do or say to my kids?' *(lots of laughter)*. Yeah, me Ma, Lily Kelly. My granddaughter is called Lily Kelly, which is just great.

My Mum got a lot of shit, so did my Dad. I remember it like it was yesterday. Where we lived there was only us, as a Black family, and the Contehs' (the boxer, John Conteh) they lived three, four miles away. So, there was only like a couple of Black families where we lived in Kirby, so it wasn't good. There were more Black people in Toxteth but that was like seven miles away. We got a lot of shit and we literally had to wait until we grew up knowing that one day we would turn the tables. *(laughter)* and we did. We got together with the Contehs' - they had eleven - so we had a little army between us, and we showed them that 'it's time to play' had stopped now because we are not little boys anymore. We are prepared to fight you back *(laughter)* and that we did.

As kids, we didn't get into that much trouble, we just toed the line. There were that many of us I guess once a week one of us did something that meant Mum was asked to go to the school. Now and then my Dad went. That was not good because you knew you were in for a whupping. After the Old Man died the house changed to a lighter house. Yeah, you can breathe now. But more pressured because when he

1 *He is now Muslin and is called Akeem*
2 *An expression used to denote as displaying virtually no imperfections*

used to go out he'd come back three days later with a bag of money. He ain't doing that no more, so I guess it became a poorer house, a lot poorer house.

She got a bit poorly with the stress and that made me realise I needed to earn a bit of dough to take the pressure off her. I just dropped out of school and started doing what I had to do.
Mum trusted me. She used to give me the fiver on a Saturday. A fiver[3], with the pram and the list, a fiver SuAndi. That pram was full to the top when I came back. I had my little job on the market, my wage was ten shillings[4] and I would give her five shillings. If she was well off, she would say to me 'no I don't want it this week', but I would make her have it. It was me Ma.

I remember going on little missions with her like when the old fellow had gone off for too long a time - not just three days, but a couple of weeks maybe. Yeah, he liked his woman. Mum used to call him a 'whore master'. We were skint, so off we went to Birmingham to see if we can either find Pops or find our Aunty, her sister, who was a prostitute. Because we need dough - remember twenty or forty quid[5] in those days was dough[6]. I can't remember how old I was, but I was young, hell, I must have been. I remember walking through Birmingham, me and her and I'm like looking at the women in the windows pretending it was nothing.

Balsall Heath, was Amsterdam; it was an eye-opener. Wow, in the window just like Amsterdam, wow! It was just a different world, you wondered how they had allowed it.
She had a couple of close, good decent friends, but she was a loner my Ma. Yeah, she was a really good looking woman, a beauty. Thank God, she didn't go to waste; eighteen months, two years after, she went out and met the prince. Ken, pearly White, silver grey hair. A draughtsman, a gentleman, proper educated, diamond. Met my Mum with her eleven Black kids and took her on.

I am twelve or thirteen. I am a pretty good boy. I am a hustler, but I am not a thief. I am not a bad boy – anything I do is legitimate in our world is what I am saying – even though I know that sounds a bit weird. My sisters are at that devil age of seventeen and nineteen when they are wild, and they are not going to have this White man come in to the house just like this – they are just not. Because me and my Mum were soldiers, this one day she said to me 'Stephen, do me a favour son, go round the corner, you will see a man sat in the car, in a little blue', a Sunbeam kind of thing, 'have a look at him and see what you think'. Obviously no one else knew so, 'Ok Mum' and I walked round, walked past him.

I think he must have been reading the papers because he was there with his glasses on. I was taken-aback from Black to White, but I got my head around it straight away because I always wanted the best for my Ma, and I could see 'Wow – this is going to be a different life'. I walked back and checked him out again and I think we looked at each other. He must have known. She must have told him that her kids were Black. Back at the house she asked, 'what do you think son?' like you would say to a mate 'what do you think son? I said, 'Mum I am impressed, what I mean is I like him' - 'Oh that's good–we won't tell the kids now' *(laughter)*. 'No, no Mum, we will give him a few weeks and see how he is first'. After a few weeks she brought him to meet everyone. The girls weren't happy, it took her time to really get him as her man. He always had his own place, but he would stay at ours – and then eventually, when Mum got poorly, he literally scooped her away and took her to Wales where they bought a house.
I was only seventeen when Stephen was born and he came out pale, all pale. I am seventeen trying to run away from responsibilities. I asked Mum to come and see him, I wanted her approval. She looked

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3 Slang in England for a five pound note (£5.00).
4 There were twelve pence in a shilling, and the pre-decimal Pound sterling was equivalent to twenty shillings or 240 pence.
5 One pound sterling.
6 Slang for money

at him and then looked at me and said 'Yep, yep – he is your son', and that was my first child. Yes, Stephen[7] is a star now . He lives here, he wouldn't live in America. He is one of us, he is just one of us. If he was sat here with us, he would get stuck in. He would love it, he really would. He has found out all about our family tree. Once he phoned me up about my Dad's name and where he is from, so he is keen.

I have had a lot of money, a very lot, I mean a lot. It was different money. I used to get five grand a week. Every week I gave half of it away and I felt justified then in keeping the other half. I would take my half, give it to Ken and he would put it in the loft to the point when my Mum said to me one week 'son, we don't have to have the heating on any more *(laughter)* the dam loft is insulated'. (more laughter).

I remember as you say the good times with my Mum. I remember when I was going with Helen and it was her birthday – I thought 'Hmmm ok'. I made her take a day off, and I took her and bought her a brand new car – I forget what it was now, four thousand something – a week's wages nearly. But anyway, happy as Larry, she was buzzing as you can imagine, but I swear to God as I am driving home, I thought to myself 'if you can do that for her... Mum's birthday in ten days. How can I not?' … I felt obliged, so the day before Mum's birthday I drove up to Wales. I had already spoken to Ken and he said 'we'd love a little' – I forget, a little mini or something so we knew where we were going. The car was brand new in the showroom, you can imagine my Mum's face.

Obviously, Mum knew I took drugs - I am talking weed– we were mates. But then I fell down the pit and became a heroin addict. I would drive from Manchester to Wales to take the loft insulation and stay for an hour, maybe two. But out of that half the time I would be in the toilet. One day I said to her 'Just going to the toilet Mum' She said, 'SIT DOWN', I thought shit! She went 'SMOKE IT THERE' – 'what do you mean Mum – smoke it there?' She's like 'SMOKE IT THERE' – 'YOU COME HERE FOR F-ING TWO HOURS AND I SEE YOU FOR TWENTY MINUTES. SO, SON, JUST SMOKE THE F-ING THING THERE'. I had to because she would rather me smoke it there in front of her so that we had the time together.

When I stopped the drugs, she was the proudest mother. She used to say to me 'Stephen man, you are so intelligent, you are so with it, but you are like a dribbling idiot'. It was breaking her heart. So, she is over the moon happy, one happy woman. But she would rather of had the time talking instead of her waiting to say something to me while I tried to waste my life away in the toilet.

Eventually I stopped all my activities, so, slowly the money dries up. I used to get five thousand a week. I used to be paid five thousand a week, *(whispering)*. Now after working for the last twenty-five years, a long stretch without doing any activities. I have never managed to save five thousand. I have got it up to a couple maybe three, then the kids – whoosh, it's gone!
Years back she phoned me and said 'Right son, me and Ken want to speak to you –we have decided, that out of the eleven of you, you are the only one who has ever done anything for us. I couldn't argue with her, because most of them had just caused her a lot of grief, 'So, we are going to give you the house'. I said, 'but what about the rest?' 'That is up to you, we are giving it to you, I know what you are like' she said 'so, if you want to give them something, that is up to you' she said 'but we are giving this house to you'

I wish I had seen her a bit more, but there was a bit of distance. Guess I wish I had phoned her more often. It is loss isn't it? It is exactly what it is. She was always 'not well', always a bit poorly. I guess she was getting a bit oldish – seventy-six.

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7 *Stephen Graham has starred in many films and is in the 2019 hit show Line of Duty*

On the day my son phoned me and said, 'right Dad, come and meet me after work, I need to speak to you'. I was tired and I said 'Ahh can we do it tomorrow?' He went 'No, no, no, I just want to speak to you'. I met him at the park. I said, 'oh lad I am tired'. We walked through the park to where there is an old moat and sat on the bench. I was not in the mood. 'Sit down Dad' and I sat down then the penny started to drop a little bit – 'hang on what are we doing here?' I am sorry to tell you, but lightening has struck today' and I said 'who' and he said, 'Your Mum'. *(He sighs)*

'Fuck' – *(sighs)* and it's like the bomb is still dropping. It's pointless in me asking 'are you sure'? It's like 'OK'. Ken had told him because he couldn't tell me. I went to see Ken, he is a very cool man and doesn't show his feelings a lot. I was like 'fucking hell Ken what happened?' 'Stephen' he said, 'She gave me a five pound note and said, 'go and get me some milk and bread Ken'. He went to the shop and when he came back, she was laid down, dead on the bed. It was like she just knew, she just knew. She had been a smoker all her life and had the oxygen things and a bit of OCPD or whatever you call it. Still we didn't know she was going to die like that, but she did.

After my Dad died and when times were hard, I used to walk to the cemetery in Fazakerley about three miles away and sit there by his grave and ask him things and shit. I don't even like to go to gravesides. A lot of my mates used to get a whooping, and they were all White. But they didn't get it like we got it. I think our fathers must have got it a lot worse from their parents; canes and the like. Mind you we got the belt. Still I would rather that he was beating us instead of our Mum. He was calculated. He would be sat in the living room, and if you had done something that day you wondered if he knew. He wouldn't say anything as he sat there after dinner watching tv. Then he would go like that pointing his finger, to whichever poor bastard, say it was me and he would say 'Stephen go upstairs and run the bath'. You would think I hope it is for him, 'for you Dad?' and he would go 'no, no, no and don't put no hot water in'. And it would be like 'yowl,'. Then just before you left the room he would go 'you, wait in there until I come'. Yeah in the cold water with a belt man. Obviously, it hurts but, you became immune – never immune, but accustomed. I guess it's like being in jail and knowing that you have got to do the next days so there is no good crying about it, it's like - get on with it man.

What I used to hate was when he had overdone it, and you would let out a few yelps because you had taken a few and it would start hurting. Mum would be there busting down the door, 'that's enough now' – and he would open the door and seeing her he would punch her, and it was never just like – it was a punch. She became deaf in one ear, teeth were missing. That used to hurt me more than him hitting me. I used to think 'if I could take him out. Bang, I would be right out of that cold water like a shark and I would eat him'.

My Dad used to bake bread three times a week and I remember sat there by his grave speaking to him when there was this pungent smell of bread - it was like he was answering me.

Psychologists or whatever they are called would say a child, particularly a man, a boy child, who sees his father beat his mother is going to turn in to a wife beater. Oh my God, how wrong are they. I have never laid my hands on a woman, never – I think it can make you totally the opposite. I think it is either in your genes or it's not in your genes. No, it's not, you either can or you can't, I can't hit women. It's just against my grain, no, so that is wrong. Yet my brother, my other brother, he has hit one woman and got in trouble for it. Wow - the total opposite to me.

I mourned my Dad secretly on my own, I didn't want anyone to know. No one was glad, but everyone was relieved. But I wasn't because as tough as he was, he did want the best for us. He was a mixed up Black man in the White man's world. It is only now that I have got older that I have more respect for him, whereas when I was younger, I would just think about the beatings, the way he treated my Mum

and his faults. Sometimes I have to stop and think like now when I get dough, then it's where has it all gone? – on the kids and the grandkids. When I relate back to him and think he had eleven to look after, it was hard, and he went to jail for just trying to do his duty and make money for us.

Mum was a Jehovah's Witness. I might have gone with her a couple of times, but she never forced none of us. I think that she wanted us to choose our own. Mum treated everyone the same. She was a sucker for the underdog. She couldn't pass tramps in the streets without her heart was out, giving them what she didn't have. She didn't have nowt, but she would give something, a penny or whatever.

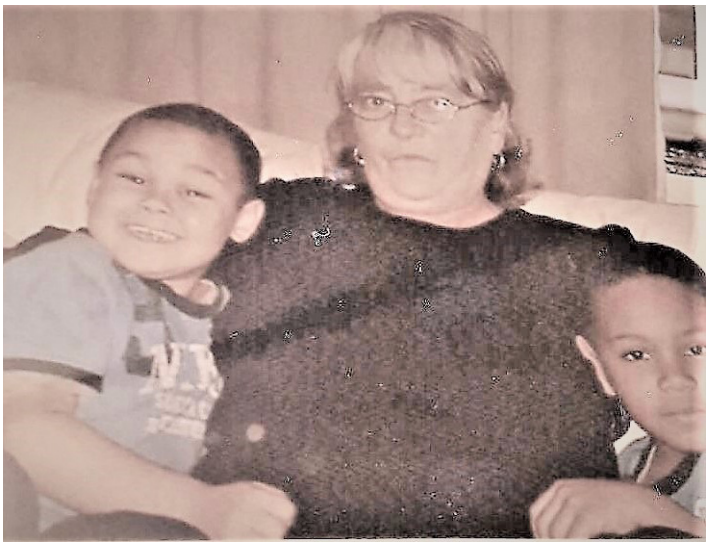
I have never been given, I have always been a giver. Then Ken the Prince asked me to go to theirs (he has a new partner now). He told me he had cashed some bonds in. 'Stephen, I have cashed some bonds in,' he said, 'and I want to give you some money' and I said 'Don't be silly Ken' I said. 'Get a new car or do something' and he went 'Stephen I don't need a new car'. I said 'Ken, there has got to be something you want' and he said, 'there is nothing, I would rather give you this money now, whilst I am still alive – I know anyway what you are like Stephen anyway – I know it is not just for you', he said. I left theirs, I was starving – so I pulled in to MacDonald's, and sat eating it outside and having a spliff at the same time. I thought 'shall I? No, no, no'. So, I drove straight to Didsbury to my daughters', pulled up outside then looked. It was five grand. I was shaking– five grand, no one has ever ...only the Prince.

I have got a little spot that when I am having a drink on my own, I think about my Mum. It's in the kitchen and in the corner there is, a little…piece of something that sticks out from the wall, it's there. As daft as it may sound. I don't sit talking to it *(laughing)*. Sometimes, if I have done something that day, I will speak to her. I thank her for a lot. I thank her, believe it or not, by using religions, because they call God Jehovah, so I thank Jehovah. I can't sit and pray because I would feel hypocritical, but I know I am a good person. So, what I do is, I thank Jehovah for not giving me pain today, or on a Sunday night I thank Jehovah for keeping all my kids safe that week and I think about my Mum. Am I am allowed to say I am a half caste sixty- one hard-working, family man. My family are three sons. Stephen my oldest is forty six, then we have got Aston who is thirty five, Zak who is twenty one, and Dalia, my daughter, who is thirteen and my saddest regret is that she never got to meet my Mother. My Mother was my queen.

> *SuAndi: While reading the draft of his chapter the light in the room flickered. Steve just raised his hand and said, "There Mum". A gesture so full of love. Then we laughed as it flickered again and again as it normally does for some unknown reason but who knows, maybe that night Steve's Queen was with us.*

FAMILY
Tony
Anita
Pauline
Peter
Stephen
Owen
Aston
"Leadro " Anita
Paul
Mark
Gary
Aston Alexander Kelly 1922-1968,
Lily Kelly 1926-1971

BERNADETTE JEAN VERONICA THOMPSON
December 1947
by LESTER JOSEPH WILLIAMS AKA Jo and son OTIS



SuAndi: This chapter, within a few weeks of the interview, is now a dedication to Bernadette and Jo who passed on October 1st, 2018.
Jo came to England from Jamaica aged 16. It wasn't until he saw his birth certificate did he discover that the woman who had raised him was not his natural mother. This gave some explanation as to why he was treated differently in the family.

Jo: I was ill treated at home. I used to get all the beatings. Unlike my brother, his mother and our father were from Hong-Kong. I didn't know that until I came to England and looked at my birth certificate. My Mother was called Phyllis Billings. She was born in the parish of St. Elizabeth, Jamaica; a little place called Ginger Hill.

In Jamaica there was nothing like racial discrimination, we never knew anything about that. Yeah, we were a mix of nations and different cultures, but as Jamaicans we are all the same.
We Jamaicans never experienced discrimination until we came to this country. People used to call us 'Blackie' and the Indians were called 'Pakkies'[1] so, I think that was the English way of saying that they were more superior than us. What we wanted to show them was that we were just as good as they were, with all the rights to live on this earth as their equal.

I was sixteen when I came to Manchester, leaving home for the first time. I was met by two friends who looked after me. It was as if I was drawn to come over here for some strange reason.
I found a job working at the railway. I was only getting five pounds a week in those days *(laughing)*. I

1 *An insult to anyone who resembles a person from Pakistan.*

have also done a bit of waitering as well, I have done it all actually! I stayed with a family called the Andersons on Park Street near the Police station. They looked after me, they were quite caring. Growing up I was a bit of a good boy and a wild boy *(laughing)*. You experience things when you are growing up without much understanding. But the most amazing thing was that I met Otis' mother, Bernadette Thompson. I used to call her St. Bernadette. We met in a club. I think it was called the Cosmopolitan Club across from the Temple on Cheetham Hill Road.

At 18 she was about three years younger than me. I met her brother Terry, and Joe, he was the eldest. At this stage in life it is hard to recall if I ever met her parents. I don't know if they were alive at that particular time.

> *SuAndi: It always slightly difficult interviewing two people at the same time be they husband and wife or siblings. In this case it is a Father and his son attempting to clarify facts*

Otis: My Mum had long hair that was down her back. It was dark like a brunette, but in the sun, it used to go bit lighter. Later on, in life she cut it short.

You know how you always have that picture of your Mum and in it she is beautiful; beautiful inside and outside as well. She always put people at ease and people knew she wouldn't let them down.
My Mum's eyes were green. She told me when I was born, one of my eye's looked grey and the other one a greenie-blue. Dad's eyes are brown. Mum's side of the family say that in certain pictures 'you always look so much like your Mum' but a lot of people say I look like my Dad. I think sometimes it's more the mannerisms. You do something especially for someone who knew them years ago and it reminds them, and they say, 'bloody hell you are like your Mum'.

Jo: It's your behaviour Otis. When I say you are so much like your Mum it is because you are always questioning things. You are always willing to help people who have a problem and then you'll forget your own needs.

Otis: I will tell you a little bit of my Mum's side of the family. She grew up in Longsight on Shepley Street just behind where Asda is now. There were four brothers. The youngest, Eric, died at a young age, Uncle Vincent was the next youngest, then Uncle Terry and the eldest Uncle Joe.

Grandma Nora Thompson was married to Matthew Thompson. He was a bit of a playboy; he met some woman and ran off leaving Nora to bring up five children on her own. But Nora was bedridden since my Mum was about ten or eleven, so my Mum did all the housework, was her own mother's carer and looked after the two younger brothers. Joe and Terry worked with Joe becoming the head of the house as was the tradition in those days even though my Mum managed the home for everyone.
Then Eric got into a little argument with a young girl who was a little bit older and she pushed him, he fell over and banged his head on a piano. Dazed he was taken to hospital where he died. This really affected Mum, because she had looked after Eric from him being a baby.

Vincent was about ten or eleven at that time when Granma passed, and he was sent to live with a cousin.

Mum's first partner was a lout. In those days there was a pub mentality. Men went out, had a drink and if anyone gave them a bit of shit they would go home and beat their wives. Stan Jones was one of those. Jones was a bit smart – when he hit Bernadette, he would hit her in the stomach to try to not leave bruises like in certain places – coz my Mum's brothers were pretty rum. They would probably have done him in. She had five pregnancies; two she carried full term and lost all five – through beatings. When

the doctors told her, she would never have children it was enough, she left and ran off.
While visiting her aunt and uncle (who became our Nana and Grandad Tony after our Grandmother died) in Haughton Green Denton , Mum met Christine Billington and they became soul mates.
Mum and Auntie Chris were so close they were considered sisters, yeah but they weren't proper sisters, they were from childhood best friends.
I think Chris introduced Mum to Jo, my Dad. Dad was a good looking lad, who dressed smart and a lot of people said he had the gift of the gab!

Dad was always very caring, the complete opposite to Jones.

Uncle Joe was a Ted[2] and in those days Teddy Boys went in to town looking for Black guys. They called it 'nigger bashing'. I don't want to use the term but when I was younger you would hear the stories of what so many Black people went through when they first came over, so this is just one example.
When he learnt that his sister, my mum, was with a Black man they more or less said 'you either choose your nigger or you come home' and she said 'Well, I am staying where I am'. Over the next two years she had no contact with her family.

Jo: We lived in Cheetham Hill in a room on Halliwell Lane. In those days it was very hard to get a house, so we roomed with maybe four or five or families in the same house. We were still in Cheetham Hill when we had Otis.

Otis: Mum told me that she used to sometimes have cravings in the early hours of the morning. My Dad would go down to the Jewish bakery to get red hot bagels. Yeah, he would walk down there and walk back. Mum would always say it was his caring nature that made her fall for him. After all she had been through, it was a completely different world. Mum said she would silently ask people 'why can't you see what a good man he is instead of looking at his colour first?'

When she was having me, Dad had left her to go somewhere when a nurse came and said in a whisper, 'Mrs Thompson, (her maiden name) I think your husband is here'. I must have been very, very, light as baby – I had very curly hair, but I was light. The so-called husband turned out to be her eldest brother with a big bunch of flowers and a big smile on his face. That time alone was enough for her to share her experience under Jones's fists, so that when Dad came back Uncle Joe said to him 'Listen I thought you two wouldn't last and I didn't want it to but from what she has told me you are a nice guy'. Then he offered him his hand in apology and said, 'I am going to shake your hand, let's start from here'.

Jo: After Otis and Carla were born and Bernie was pregnant with Simone, we put in for a Council house[3] and moved to Bickley Walk on the Alexander Park Estate.

There were more people from the West Indies living in Moss Side; in Cheetham Hill it was mainly Africans. At the beginning West Indians and Africans, we never really got on but as time went along, we had no choice. We had to pull together because there was so much racial discrimination in those days. Nowadays it's subsiding, because the younger generation has grown up together.

Otis: I grew up around a lot of Africans when we lived in Cheetham Hill, like Banjo who used to own the Cosmopolitan Club. We lived on the middle floor of Banjo's house and there was Alex Davies who was African with Betty, who was Scottish.

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2 Teds' had a violent and criminal reputation. Some carried flick-knives. The name "Teddy Boy" was not used until September 23rd 1953

3 A form of British public housing built by local authorities

My Mum and Dad lived in Bury before I was born and his best friend, a Jamaican I think, was Roy. I forget his second name, but everyone called him Batman because he used to wear long, long coats, like a cape. Dad did have a lot of African friends simply because in those days in Cheetham there was a large African community. Then in 1975 the council did a lot of demolition, built the Alex Park Estate and we moved. I was only like five at the time, but I remember we got one of the first show houses, they were semi-detached. There was no tarmac on the road, it was just cinders.

Jo: I had changed jobs to working on the private hire taxis. The Black cabs were a different badge, they were called Hackney Carriages, so they could pick up passengers off the streets. We could only work by the radios *(laughter)*. But we would do a bit of pirating in between. Then I had an accident on a motorbike. I broke my leg, so I was unemployed for a while.

Otis: He was unemployed for a time, then he did pirate taxi driving before joining Salmon Cabs where he worked for many years. Salmon operated from the same building that was A1 taxis, run by Preacher (with the big hat).

I remember as a child when he worked nights, coming home and going to bed around 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning, when we were getting up for school.

Every morning when we heard his car and we would say 'Dad's here'. He would come through the door calling 'St. Bernie, Bernie, make a cup of tea.' Then one day my Mum was sat in the living room and she heard 'Bernie, make a cup of tea'. So, she went to the kitchen to put the kettle on, walks back out to look for Dad but he's not there. Then one day when one of his friends was visiting, Dad nipped out and just before he came back a voice said 'Bernie, make a cup of tea'. A lot of people don't realise that budgies can talk, but ours did. He was called Chapeta and he used to mimic Dad and the weird thing was that it sounded just like him, it sounded just like his voice.
Anyway, by the time we got home he would eat some dinner and be off out working. So, my Mum really had the free reign of the house.

Jo: My wife was in charge of the house. Well you always leave the house to the woman. I went out and did the earnings to provide for the food that went on the table.
When the kids were growing up, a little voice said to me 'bring them up the way you would have loved your father to have raised you' and that is exactly what I did. I don't think I have failed, plus they never needed to be disciplined.

Otis: When he had to step in, then it was because Mum had a talk with him. But very rarely did Dad give you one[4] so you remembered Dad's more than Mum's. Mainly it was if you had done something stupid or you had done something that could have hurt someone, then for sure you would get one.
We had a nice upbringing, we didn't have everything, but we always had love and we always had food on the table. Dad taught Mum how to cook. In the end, she got to be a dab hand[5] and had quite a following for her meals.

Jo: I was from Jamaica, I am not from China, my ancestors are from China, so obviously it was Jamaican food. Everybody has got their traditional dishes which we still stick to and we hope our kids will continue to cook them.

Bernadette had an infection in her ovaries when she was carrying Carla our next child. She was only given a certain amount of time to live, because they couldn't operate because she was running a

4 *Several meanings. In this case it means a slap*
5 *A person who is an expert at a particular activity.*

temperature. The hospital got in touch with me to let me know that the Priest had given her the Last Rites and I should come down. When I got to the hospital something said to me 'she is not going to die'. I said to the priest, 'Excuse me father, no disrespect, but she is not going to die, she is going to live'. I held her hand all through the visiting time while she struggled to breath then the moment I left, her temperature dropped. Straight away they rushed her to theatre and performed the operation. Now she only had one ovary, so as far as the doctors were concerned she couldn't have any more babies. But she managed to have Simone, Samoya and then Curtis. So, she had three more after she was diagnosed. Every time I looked at her I always called her St Bernadette. She always said to me 'these children are gifted –it's amazing'.

SuAndi: I ask Otis to tell me what it was like growing up, and how does he define his racial identity you are Black, you are Chinese, you are white….

Otis: I class myself as a Mixed Race. Black, White, Irish – which at one time were all discriminated against. One of my first memories as a kid was seeing 'No Irish. No Dogs' on the same sign. I do remember – I was a very young lad – when the National Front marched through Moss Side . It was a hell of a thing. The people all got together and my Dad too and they chased them out of the area. If you went to other areas, you would get looks but people weren't vocal. Sometimes when we were out together there were dirty looks. Some of my friends were more discriminated against. Maybe because I am very light skinned they probably didn't realise that I am Mixed Race.

We all grew up together, everybody was just one of us, because it was our community. Like Dad said before, sometimes you don't look at someone's colour. Anyway, I am the type of person who can mix with and get on with anybody.

Even today through shared experiences that we have been through and in certain times of need, we are still connected in friendship. We used to pull together. We left our front doors open. If anything went on, you could go and knock on next door.

There were never ever any issues for Mum. Never. Even today people we haven't seen for years and don't know she has passed, the first thing they always ask is 'How is your Mum?'

My Mum was a Mum to everybody – there were a lot of children who had home issues – my Mum was the type of person who would see something and try to take care of them. So, she was very popular. Yes very, very popular. It was what my Mum was known for, she never gave up –that was the kind of person she was.

Jo: There was a lot of community spirit. If a child came home from school and Bernadette or I weren't there, there were neighbours who would take care of your children. Within that section of the Alexandra Park estate there was a good community spirit. Even though now the older ones are beginning to pass away and there is a new generation, people still remember. When you look at our children – our children are us.

We were a poor family; a lot of the time we were working just to survive. We had no fears in creating a family, we planned as we went along.

Otis: For school stuff, Dad did the odd visit but mainly it was Mum, and she would volunteer for the school trips. Mum would always volunteer, because she knew all the kids and all the kids knew her. I remember one time when we were kids, I must have only been about seven or eight, when Faye Charry turned up. She had a court date. Her three kids lived with us for three or four months.

It wasn't a one-off; it happened on a couple of occasions with different women who knew they were going to be jailed, that Bernie would look after their children. They would give her their book .

Jo: She was like a childminder, that was her little thing. But in those days, we would call them unwanted children. The women who took them in were amazing and the majority of them were white women. I call them patron saints.

Otis: Simon Chin's Mum, Lola, when she first started her nursing course, she used to drop her three youngest off at our house about half seven in the morning – they would have breakfast with us before school. It's not that long ago I was with Simon reminiscing. He said, 'do you remember when we used to be at your house and your Mum used to look after us?'

Jo: Otis has got such a terrific memory it's amazing how gifted he is. You see, at this moment in time I am living in the state that we call equilibrium. It's a case of suspended animation when I am in between, and I can see both sides – and none really bothers me. Because you know, the answer is at the end – so it doesn't really bother you. There are people out there who can't sleep at night. Why? The voice in the head, I call it the voice of reasoning. Some people can't cope with that situation because they haven't got the understanding.

With Bernadette I was naughty, and the result was my son Yoseph, so I had to leave her but even when I was working, whenever she needed something she would phone and in twenty minutes I would come to her side. To me, she was a fantastic lady, even though we were no longer living together.

Otis: We were living in Reddish now, me with my mum as she had a pacemaker fitted and wasn't doing too well. The rest of the family had their own families and where I was working was only around the corner. The day before Mum had been with us all at my sister's engagement party. Because of work I had called in earlier then got off. It was a bit of a hot day, I was watching television but really I was dozing.

At first, I thought I heard knocking at the front door then I realised it was coughing. I called out to her and she said, 'Yeah son, I am just getting my breath back'.

I helped her up the stairs to her room, but she couldn't breath and said, 'do me a favour son, can you just unclip my bra', so I did that and went to make her brew while she got changed in to her pyjamas. My thoughts were that it was hot and a long day with the engagement so not really surprising that she was struggling a bit.

Previously when she had been short of breath, once she sat down her breathing would sort of regulate, but this time it seemed to be getting worse.

She turned and said, 'Son I've got to tell you something - I've got a really funny feeling'. I asked her 'Why? where is it hurting Mum', she goes 'No, no not hurting, I've just got a funny feeling'. I still thought that she was in pain, so I said 'Listen, I'll phone an ambulance'. But she wouldn't let me she just wanted to use her inhalers.

For the rest of the evening I'd get up to check on her but eventually I fell asleep. When my alarm went off for work I decided not to go plus it was a Friday when we finished at dinnertime. But when I told my Mum she said 'No, listen son, you are going in work, because I am not having you losing you job blah blah blah', that was the way my Mum was – 'don't be stupid, I'll be alright'. 'Don't worry I will phone your sister Simone and get her to go with me to the Doctors'.

So, I went to work, and Mum went to the doctors (alone) who made her an appointment for a chest x ray. After Mum went to Simone's who was out. Toni, her daughter let her in and left her to make a brew and have a roll-up[6] sat in her usual place in the front room.

Later someone knocked on the door and Toni called out 'Nana, can you get the door'. She opened the door herself as she didn't get an answer, then went to see what was wrong with her nana, our Mum. Mum was just sat there, cigarette in her hand, so at first Toni thought she was dozing but getting closer she realised Mum had died. She rang the emergency services who tried to instruct her to put her on the floor and do CPR.

When I came home to the empty flat I went around to a mate's house and it was there that Kiola and my sister Carla's daughter rang me and said, 'Uncle Otis, Nana's heart has stopped'. It was like my whole world fell apart, my whole world fell apart.

We found out later that the pace maker battery should have lasted for a certain amount of years, Mum's had only been fitted about eight months earlier and the battery had failed. My whole world fell apart.

Jo: Simone was here with me when somebody from the family rang telling her that Bernie had died.

Otis: At that time Dad had been diagnosed with a seizure so he had lost his license. Preacher's son, Clifford who is like his brother, dropped everything and picked him up, so they were with us within a matter of half an hour.

My favourite memory of Mum is taking us to Butlins as a kid. The High School were doing one of those draw things; pay a pound and buy a ticket and there were some like big, big prizes at the time. Paul, a lad who lived across the road, came one day and said, 'Bernie you have won an all-expenses paid weekend trip to Paris'.

At the time Dad had, as a Jamaican, his old Commonwealth passport and he was scared to use it, plus Mum knew as he was working he wouldn't want to go, and it was only for two people.
So, she asked if she could exchange it for a trip somewhere where she could take her kids and that's how we all ended up going to Butlins. It was Clacton in Essex, down on the South Coast. It was the farthest we had ever been.

It was sunny – boiling. We all had new shorts. Everything was free. My sister won the bonnie baby competition which made my Mum so proud.
Before that we'd all jump in the car. Mum would make a picnic and we would go to Blackpool, Morecambe, Rhyl. Those were the trips when Dad came too. He used to have pigeons, so they would come along in their basket.

Jo: But there were many occasions to be quite honest with you, where we couldn't afford holidays.

Otis: The day Mum died, I laid there with her in my arms, and I said, 'I'm going to make you proud', and it's been like that from that day onwards.

I never got into trouble until I was about twenty-seven. I went through a trouble streak over a year and a half period. The way I look at it, I let myself slip and made mistakes, but it's all about learning.
When Mum came to visit, she would come on to the visiting suite, and before she got to me, about four or five of the lads would jump up and give her a hug. Everybody knew my Mum.

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6 Cigarette

It's prison, but it didn't feel like prison because you knew you always had somebody if there was some kind of dispute to come to your aid. If someone tried to bully you, they'd say 'na na' because you've known them since you were a kid.

I never really got in to trouble after that – you know you sort of open your eyes. And It used to break my Mum's heart to see me in there.

Jo: Sadly, I was also in prison at that time with three sentences combined in one - a total of eighteen years. Thankfully I ended up doing the longest one of seven years at Strangeways, Wakefield and then finished off in Bishop Sudbury which was an open prison.
That's not a good memory but I have countless better memories that I can't remember because they were all special moments.

> *SuAndi: To stop here would mean this interview is incomplete. Not just because Otis and his siblings now face a future without their father but Jo revealing his criminal record towards the end of the interview really does not tell everything about him.*

Otis: Dad played percussion alongside Uncle Tommy Udusu and his good friend Taffer. He then joined Harlem Spirit which during 1981 brought out the record 'Dem a sus in the Moss' just before the riots . It became pretty much an anthem at the time, then it got banned because they said it was inciting riots. But the band got signed up by EMI for a record deal.

Jo: During the Moss Side riot, I got a bravery award for saving a Policeman's life. I couldn't let someone die for doing his job.
At the height of the riot there was police all over the place to control the crowds. We lived right on the corner of Raby Street, and the crowd was at our back gate.

Otis: I was about eleven at the time. I was upstairs and watching out of the window. I saw the rioters charge and then the police vans came; they jumped out and ran at them.

There was a ginnel that ran between the two houses and a young lad, wasn't much older than me, about fourteen was being beaten by four officers. They had come from both ends of the entry and trapped him. I ran down the stairs and I said to my Mum 'Mum, Mum, they are killing him, they are killing him'. Dad went out with the dog and let him loose on them, so the boy could get away.
My Dad was on the drive way when the police told him to get in and he said, 'No, I am making sure nobody comes on my property'.
There were local lads and there were others because you would hear the different accents.

Jo: The crowd charged and police forced them back in retreat, but one was left behind. He tripped and fell.

Otis: He got up ran and jumped through the next door's house bottom window.

Jo: I knew they were going to kill him that night and not just because he was a policeman. Someone shouted, 'Petrol bomb the house'. I shouted, 'what are you saying – my family is next door and you want to petrol bomb the house?' I couldn't let the people get involved in something like that, it was totally unnecessary.

I was well respected and well known, I said to them 'If we kill him, what is going to happen to our families? All the kids are going to grow up with no fathers because we will be locked away, because they

are going to make an example of us.

Otis: The local lads recognised my Dad so that gave them a few seconds to think. They ended up giving the policeman a bit of a beating, but they didn't kill him. It was very scary at the time to watch, because I was only a kid.

Jo: They gave me a commendation, a provincial award for bravery.
The policeman thanked me for saving his life. I said 'I didn't actually save your life, I saved the guys from getting themselves in trouble. If they had killed you, they would have been made an example of, all of us? I saved a life to save lives. It wasn't a choice because you haven't got time to think, it was spontaneous.

Bernadette was proud of me when we went to Manchester Town Hall and Chief Inspector Anderton gave me the medal. He asked me 'How come you are Chinese, and you are speaking like a Jamaican?'. I said, 'I didn't tell you I was from China'. I said, 'in Jamaica we have Chinese living there too'.
It is good sometimes to have a dual identity because you could pass as both. But most of my true close friends were Black.

SuAndi: Jo also wanted to speak of Gwendoline, the mother of Caroline his first born.

Jo: Caroline was born in 1962 – only a year after my being in the country. I never actually had a relationship with her because the parents were very racially discriminatory. They didn't like the idea….. Gwendoline Johnson's family lived on the Merseybank[7] years ago in 1961. We never actually lived together, we were just like going out together. We were just kids really.

Otis: I grew up as the oldest, but I always knew I had two sisters, because my Dad was always very open with my Mum. So, when Dad's two daughters came to look for him, it was Mum who welcomed them with open arms. The way she looked on it was that they were more children of hers *(laughter)*. Honestly, because they were his children and she has got children to him, so they were her children as well.

Jo: Caroline was kept away from me. Her Mum is ok. To be quite honest with you, I don't think she had any choice because of the parents. I have a lot of respect for her for the pressure that she had to go through. I've seen a lot of women in this country who have really, really, suffered which is why for me the women are the strongest species.
In those days there was nobody like her, a Black kid in the family – so I think the mothers were faced with prejudice. A lot of them left home because they couldn't bring a Black person to the family.

Otis: Both of the women he was with only had the one child, probably they were treated in a certain way because of their child... You know what I mean? Once you have had a child with a Black man... No one …

Jo: But when you have got a good name, it goes around, and people remember you. You always have that recognition. So now my daughter Caroline and I do have contact and have built a relationship. It is wonderful because she looks so much like me. Mandy, my other daughter, died eighteen months after Bernadette leaving her two sons who were fifteen and seventeen old.

SuAndi: Towards the end of his life Jo (as he preferred to be called) began to suffer from Dementia

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7 A small council estate located 4 miles south of Manchester city centre, England, within the suburb of Chorlton-cum-Hardy. It was built between 1927 and 1932

which naturally interrupted his memory, but it also heightened his perceptions which is why he believed he was being united with his mother through the spirit world

Jo: I never had any relationship with my Mum, but I am having one with her now spiritually. She is guiding me and telling me things.
A voice said to me 'say the Psalm 92'. It was amazing because I remember that Psalm from when I was a young child at school. I had never repeated that psalm in England, because I never felt there was any necessity.
At the very beginning I didn't know what I was experiencing. I am quite sure there are a lot of people who have experienced the same without understanding what is happening to them. So, they have been diagnosed as hearing voices. But if you understand what is really happening, they are not crazies, it is their inner self.

Sometimes when I feel in despair, I always turn and look at the phone and say, 'I have tried Babe, I have done everything, what else can I do?' Always ten minutes later, one of the kids will ring up. This is a sign to me.

My smelling has gone, but there are lots of time that I smell perfume and that perfume is Channel No 5, so I know that Bernadette is here with me in spiritual form.

FAMILY
Bernadette Jean Veronica Thompson December 1947 - July 2012
Otis
Carla
Simone,
Samoya
Curtis
Lester Joseph Williams December 1944 – October 2018
Caroline, Amanda & Yoseph

THE BACKDROP TO STRENGTH OF OUR MOTHERS: INTERRACIAL FAMILIES IN BRITAIN

1950-1970

A royal engagement always provokes a level of public interest in Britain. Yet the usual social excitement was given additional impetus in 2017 when it was announced that Prince Harry, sixth in line to the throne, was not only planning to marry a divorced American woman but one who also happened to be of mixed racial parentage. In April 2018, Meghan Markle, the daughter of a White father and Black mother, became the Duchess of Sussex in a ceremony watched by an estimated two billion people around the world. At every step of the way, the interracial nature of the relationship has attracted never-ending interest and commentary, not least the heralding of the couple as representative of what has been titled 'the new normal', that is, where the racial mixing and mixedness occurring in Britain is seen as illustrative not only of the country's increased racial diversity but also of its increased racial tolerance.[1]

Though the Sussexes' relationship has seen the 'new normal' perspective explode across the mainstream press, the idea has been steadily building since the introduction of the 'Mixed' category in the 2001 UK Census when those who had ticked the box – dubbed part of 'Brown' or 'Beige Britain' by media commentators – were heralded as part of a young and new multiracial population. Along with their parents, this cohort is frequently held up as the face of multicultural contemporary Britain, a recognisable shorthand to advertise the idea of the country as modern, progressive and inclusive, one far removed from the 'No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs' Britain of their parents and grandparents' past.

Yet, what is often forgotten in this celebration of modern multiculturalism is that Britain's mixed race families did not spring forth whole from the loins of a twenty-first century diversity, nor do they unequivocally live unassailed by racism and prejudice. For all their wealth and privilege even the Sussexes have faced public censure, hostility and threats as the highest profile couple to endure the racism which has been longstanding in Britain's response to its centuries of interracial relationships. Such racism, however, has not been monolithic. The truth is that racial mixing in Britain has both a long and a complex history. While for many people the crossing of racial boundaries has been positioned as unwanted and unacceptable, for others it has been seen as common and even, at times, 'normal'. Glimpses of such attitudes can be seen in the comments of White Britons writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whose wider shared despair and fury at interracial relationships and people in the country also underlines the commonality of their occurrence:

'The lower class of women in England, are remarkably fond of the Blacks, for reasons too brutal to mention; they would connect themselves with horses and asses if the laws permitted them. By these ladies they generally have a numerous brood.'
Edward Long, colonial administrator and historian, 1774[2]

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1 Mixed race relationships are no longer an exotic rarity but the new normal'. The Daily Telegraph, 28 November 2017. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/mixed-race-relationships-no-longer-exotic-rarity-new-normal/ [accessed 08.02.2019].

2 Cited in Fryer, P., 1984. Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain. London: Pluto Press, pp157-8.

'In every country town, nay, in almost every village are to be seen a little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkeys, and infinitely more dangerous.'
Captain Philip Thicknesse, author, 1778[3]

'Who that has any sense of decency, can helped being shocked at the familiar intercourse, which has gradually been gaining ground, and which has, at last, got a complete footing between the Negroes and the women of England? No Black swain need, in this loving country, hang himself in despair. No inquiry is made whether he be a Pagan or a Christian; if he be so disposed, always find a woman, not merely to yield to his filthy embraces, that, among the notoriously polluted and abandoned part of the sex, would be less shocking, but to accompany him to the altar, to become his wife, to breed English mulattoes, to stamp the mark of Cain upon her family and her country!'
William Cobbett, journalist, 1804 [4]

As Peter Aspinall and I have argued in our book Mixed Race Britain in the Twentieth Century, while accounts such as those above bear testimony to a longer and wider history of racial mixing in Britain than is popularly assumed, they deliver only partial and fragmented insights. With the recorded history usually written from 'outsider' perspectives, the result has been that past experiences have tended to be painted as a one-dimensional picture, in which mixed relationships are portrayed as relentlessly negative, tragic, hopeless, and peripheral – just as modern accounts tend to veer towards the relentlessly positive, uplifting, celebratory and integrated. The reality tends not to be so easily contained but, as is usually found when the voices of 'insiders' are included, is instead complex and complicated, messy and multifaceted – as the Strength of Our Mothers project so brilliantly and poignantly shows.

The memories collected by the project shine an important light on a set of experiences – the Black experience in wartime and post-war Britain – that are commonly assumed to be well-known but are in fact frequently either by-passed or misunderstood. In the modern 'celebration' of racial mixing, for instance, few mixed race faces are seen from those generations who grew up in the 40s, 50s and 60s: rather, the emerging image of the British family as a beaming, vibrant multicultural grouping is a predominantly youthful one – typically a thirty-something Black Father and White Mother eating a meal, playing, or relaxing on the sofa with their school-aged children rather than the depiction of an elderly interracial couple or parent enjoying the company of their middle-aged mixed race child and their young adult grandchildren. Yet those who arrived to Britain or grew up in the country in the post-war period of mass migration from what have been called 'New Commonwealth' countries (and their families with White Britons) are a critical and significant part of Britain's interracial present, and certainly of its history. While the racial mixing that had occurred in Britain during the 1920s and 1930s had provoked reactions from the establishment that has an enduring legacy today (it was during this time that the idea of mixed race families as socially and psychologically abnormal and marginal became entrenched as 'fact' in popular though), that which occurred in the initial post-war decades provoked a widespread and enduring debate around race, citizenship, belonging and 'Britishness' that had significant effects on the shaping of modern politics, policy and society.

The scale of mass migration of people from 'New Commonwealth' countries combined with its gender imbalance – most new arrivals tended to be men – meant that not only did racial mixing occur on a larger scale than it ever had in Britain's history but the widespread geographical patterns of settlement meant that it was more visible than it had ever been. While early twentieth century patterns had seen

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3 Thicknesse, P., 1778. A Year's Journey through France and Part of Spain, Vol II. London: W. Brown, p108.

4 Cited in Fryer, P., 1984. Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain. London: Pluto Press, pp234-5.

interracial mixing – mainly between White Britons and those of African, Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern backgrounds – tend to be concentrated in historically multiracial port communities, or sprinkled in individual, isolated pockets throughout the country, as well as briefly emerging in regions where Black GIs were posted during WW2, the new populations – taking up their right to British citizenship and residency – began not only to inhabit new settlements and bolster existing ones, but also to put down roots establishing families, including with White Britons, on a scale that was hitherto unknown. The crossing of racial boundaries was thus no longer seen as an anomaly, or something that only happened in 'unsavoury' portside neighbourhoods, or the result of 'slack' wartime morality. 'Think: 150 more West Indians a day…' the Daily Express intoned to its readership in 1956. 'Sooner or later you will come into personal contact with one of them; sooner or later the question will be faced by someone in your world: "Would I let my daughter marry a Black man?"'

The answer, it appeared time and time again, was clearly not. 'What most of us instinctively recoil from is miscegenation' declared the Daily Telegraph in 1958. Surveys certainly indicated this was the case: throughout the post-war decades of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, opinion polls consistently recorded a high level of opposition amongst the British population to racial mixing, such as a Gallup Poll taken in September 1958 which noted that 71% of respondents disapproved of interracial marriages. Such opposition was clearly visible at all levels: whether via the prurient, scandalised articles on racial mixing in the media, or the discrimination found in adoption and fostering services – which saw mixed race children overly-represented in the care system – as well as the verbal and physical abuse directed at mixed couples and people on the streets. Alongside this, vicious attacks and fearmongering spewed forth from politicians, such as the Conservative MP Duncan Sandys who declared on ITN news in 1967 that 'the breeding of half-caste children would merely produce a generation of misfits and increased tension'.

Clive Webb notes that hostility to interracial relationships was so pervasive in the post-war years that in 1958 Punch magazine included the phrase 'I'm a pretty reasonable human being, I hope, but frankly I draw the line at miscegenation' in its 'clichés of the week' section[5]. Certainly, even those surveys that showed a general widespread support by White Britons for racial equality in society also showed that these views generally did not tend to extend to interracial marriage, particularly if considered within the context of their own families. The hollowness often contained in supposed liberal attitudes towards race were astutely critiqued in the 1958 play Hot Summer Nights in which a trade unionist who is furiously opposing the colour bar at work is aghast to learn that his daughter is planning to marry a Black man. Later adapted into a 1959 television production - thought to be the site of the first interracial kiss broadcast on television – and then a 1961 film version titled Flame in the Streets – the drama across all its formats extends beyond the more familiar depictions of the prejudices of landladies and teddy boys to also critique a liberal hypocrisy which advocated for colour equality in British society yet balked at its extension to within the White home. Such attitudes remained steadfast for decades: a nationwide survey commissioned by the Daily Express in 1969 indicated that although six in ten White Britons believed immigrants should be given racial equality, almost 1 in 2 would not 'let' their daughter 'marry a coloured man'. Such was the backdrop of wider social prejudice and hostility against which the interviewees who have shared their experiences with Strength of Our Mothers lived their lives.

This backdrop, of course, was rooted in a much older history. As they also had throughout many other British cities, interracial relationships and families had been occurring in Manchester for hundreds of years. In the 17th and 18th centuries, for example, having a Black servant was a popular way for the British aristocracy to indicate their wealth and status, and in Manchester as elsewhere it was not uncommon for these men and women to marry White Britons and raise families locally. The parish registers, for instance, note that Juba Thomas, a Black servant to the Percival family of Royton Hall,

5 *Webb, C. 2017. Special Relationships: mixed-race couples in post-war Britain and the United States, Women's History Review, 26:1, 110-129.*

married a woman named Betty Mellor in 1765 with whom he had four children, while 'two West Indian girls' named Immy and Fanny who were the 'natural children of Mr. Campbell of Scotland' were baptised in Cross Street Presbyterian Chapel in 1771[6]. The expansion of Empire over the subsequent centuries saw continual and diverse migration to Britain, and archival accounts of life in Manchester repeatedly shine a spotlight on incidents of racial mixing and the ways in which it was both accepted and rejected, integrated and marginalised, often depending on location. For instance, Mary Brady, a White resident of Salford who participated in Paul Thompson's ground-breaking oral history project 'Family Life and Work Experience before 1918', vividly recalled four sisters from her neighbourhood marrying Black men towards the end of the First World War, as well as the hostility one of the men encountered when he left Greengate – a nearby neighbourhood in which Black people had begun to settle - to visit his sweetheart:

'Eeh, always remember this girl, this - the - this family it was, the Brennans and they lived just near us and I'd gone to school with 'em, they was Catholics and - they used to be - in Greengate, this - after the First World War these - these negroes started coming, Blackies, you know and she come walking down this Cannon Street arm in arm with this 'ere - this 'ere Blackie […]. And I must have been about sixteen 'cos it was 1918 and she got in with this coloured man and down the street and they all started, 'ooh, here's Annie Brennan with a Black', see, so all the women come out, all the neighbours and one thing another, not having them down Adelphi like Greengate – Greengate was the first to have 'em and they called it Dixie, you know, called Greengate Dixie - and they said, 'we're not having 'em here.' So all the women - and I remember this old woman that lived next door, can see her now with her sleeves roiled up – 'come on out now, you dirty old dog, come on, get her out, get her out.' And the poor fellow had to run out the back road, the poor Blackie and - course then there used to be fights in the street and try - trying to get 'em out of the house 'cos there - there was four daughters and they was all - at the finish the four 'of 'em was co-habiting you see, with - with these - and they had a - a very old father. [….]. Annie took the others with her to where - to down Dixie - Greengate - to where the Blacks lived in all these houses and rooms, you know […]. I think they all married them any road, all married coloured […]. Ooh, they was a good looking lot of girls, lovely wavy hair you know.'

However, it was in the post-World War 2 decades that racial mixing in Manchester attracted significant public attention. As with numerous other areas that saw the formation or bolstering of visible immigrant communities and related racial mixing in this period, the interracial relationships occurring in Manchester attracted attention from the authorities, with the Home Office undertaking surveillance of such populations at the local level. In the early 1960s, the Home Office requested data from the Chief Constable of Manchester on 'intermixing, miscegenation and illegitimacy' in the city, leading to a 1962 report that, amongst other information on its Black residents, reported back the number of 'half-castes', as the Home Office deemed the children[7].

Furthermore, local antipathies also exerted their own pressures as well as shaped day to day life. During the 1950s, further immigration from the Caribbean, South Asia and West Africa (the latter building on a community that had previously settled in the 1920s) saw the city's multiracial population rise from an estimated several thousand to more than 10,000 and by 1966, Brown and Cunningham note that Manchester had 14,000 immigrants from the New Commonwealth, giving it the largest Black population outside London and Birmingham[8]. While Manchester escaped the violent racial unrest and riots that targeted Black communities in London and Nottingham in the post-war decades, the

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6 See Revealing Histories website. http://revealinghistories.org.uk/what-evidence-is-there-of-a-Black-presence-in-britain-and-north-west-england.html [date accessed 08.02.2019].

7 Home Office, 1962. Immigration of British Subjects from Overseas. Coloured communities. Report by the Deputy Chief Constable on coloured immigrants in Manchester. HO 344/41.

8 Brown, L. and Cunningham, N., 2016. The Inner Geographies of a Migrant Gateway: Mapping the Built Environment and the Dynamics of Caribbean Mobility in Manchester, 1951-2011. Social Science History, 40(1): 93-120.

city was similarly rife with discrimination and prejudice. In 1958, the Manchester Evening Chronicle's investigations into the city's growing immigrant population reported that due to a rampant colour bar in housing, the West African and West Indian communities were mostly resident in Moss Side and 'of all the foreigners in Manchester….this section of coloured people is the most maligned'. As well as the discrimination in and shortage of housing – which frequently led to cramped, miserable conditions - job opportunities were also limited due to widespread prejudice amongst the city's employers. The paper reported that 'of the 9000 unemployed in the Greater Manchester area, over 5000 are registered at the office which embraces Moss Side.' The article cited Oko Johnson, a Ghanaian man, who said that he would like to return home but couldn't raise the fare as it was impossible to get work. 'Before you can speak sometimes,' Johnson told the reporter, 'the boss shouts 'No, No' and waves you away.'

As across many other parts of the country, suspicion and hostility towards Black communities was further flamed by widespread attitudes towards those who dared to form intimate relationships with White people, particularly if these constituted Black men partnering White women. Continuing previous longstanding patterns of stereotyping and assumptions, while Black men who entered into relationships with White women were often seen as predatory, hypersexual and dangerous, they could also frequently be cast as the 'victims' of White women of a 'low type'. 'Good women', declared the Daily Express in 1959, were not likely to be interested in the Black man which meant he ended up with 'the "bad" women, the white trash, the outcasts, the prostitutes at the end of their beat.' Social scientists too frequently reinforced this view, many of their studies of what were labelled the 'coloured' communities of post-war Britain bolstering the long-held stereotype of it only being 'morally loose' White women who partnered Black men. The esteemed scholar of race Michael Banton categorised the majority of White women he encountered in interracial relationships in Stepney, London in the 1950s as 'psychologically abnormal', with some appearing 'to be nymphomaniacs' and 'frequently […] mentally and educationally subnormal […] incapable of maintaining a stable relationship with an Englishman[9]". Similarly, Sheila Patterson, in her 1960s' study of West Indian migrants in Brixton describes the women she came across as 'White 'misfits' and 'declassed women[10]", while Dennis Marsden's field notes for his cutting edge 1960s' study of lone mothers living in the north of England reveals how the 'loose woman' stereotype that the White mothers of mixed race children constantly faced in their communities was one that he himself also casually drew on, his comments on the friend of an interviewee who also had mixed race children derisively stating:

'Mrs Whiteman's friend from London looked a real slut, a greasy, obese young woman, but carefree enough, and the children were beautifully dressed. She looked as though she might be a prostitute. She was the one who had led to Mrs Whiteman meeting Stephen's [West Indian] Father in the first place.[11]'

Thus, for all their sympathising and castigating of racial prejudice and inequality, many sociologists during the post-war years – peering in from their middle-class, outsider perspectives – contributed to the denigration of interracial couples in working-class areas, as well as their children who had long been stigmatised in popular and scientific thought as 'half-castes'. Underlying this then commonplace term was the idea that racial mixing produced a 'marginal' people who were accepted by a Black parent they looked down on while looking up to a White parent who regretted them, with wider society pitying or despising them – thus provoking a life doomed to be full of psychological confusion and social ostracism. Throughout the post-war decades, the types of vicious stereotyping found in Muriel Fletcher's

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9 Banton, M., 1959. White and Coloured. The behaviour of British People towards coloured immigrants. London: Jonathan Cape, p127. Banton, M., 1955. The Coloured Quarter: Negro Immigrants in an English City. London: Jonathan Cape., pp153; 158-9.

10 Patterson, Sheila, 1965. Dark Strangers. A study of West Indians in London. Harmonsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, p339.

11 Caballero, C. & Edwards, R., 2010. Lone Mothers of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Children: Then and Now, London: Runnymede, p10.

notorious 1930 report (see below) commissioned by the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children – in which she castigated the children as having lives 'full of conflict' and with 'little future' – continued to be repeated by scholars. 'The future lives of [mixed race] children,' wrote the sociologist Susan Benson who researched interracial families in Brixton in the 1970s, 'must, inevitably, be fraught with difficulties[12]'. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of accounts presented by government official, social scientists and the media would all seem to point to what I have called the assumed orthodoxy of the interracial experience – 'marginality, conflict, rejection and confusion'.

'There is little harmony between the parents, the coloured men in general despise the women with whom they consort, while the majority of women have little affection for the men. They regret their union with a coloured man but stay with him for the sake of the children. The mothers are generally good to the children, while they are small, but later resent the fact that they cannot get work. They grudge having to keep them when there is no money coming in, and are continually telling them so. The children find their lives full of conflict both within themselves and within the family, and all the circumstances of their lives tend to give undue prominence to sex. These families have a low standard of life, morally and economically, and there appears to be little future for the children'.
Fletcher, M., 1930. Report on an Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and Other Ports. Liverpool: The Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children.

Yet, between the lines, other realities can be glimpsed. As David Olusoga highlighted in his book Black and British, while racial prejudice towards interracial relationships was prevalent during the post-war years, it was not all-encompassing. The more open-minded minority of Britons, he notes, 'are often forgotten in our telling of the dispiriting story of the rise of British racism in the 1950s and 1960s'[13]. Certainly, in some quarters there existed a clear opposition to racism and discrimination as well as support for interracial relationships – indeed, regardless of mainstream attitudes, racial mixing was clearly occurring throughout the country: 'mix marriage is the fashion and the world is saying so [...] It doesn't take no glass to see how it come to pass, coloured Britons are rising fast' sang the Trinidadian Calypsonian Lord Beginner in 1952. In addition to the involvement of White Britons in opposing racism at a structural level - such as the campaign to bring in race equality legislation supported by members of the Labour Party from the 1950s onwards – many ordinary people decried prejudice, expressing their dismay and anger at racist behaviours and attitudes, and their support of racial equality, including racial mixing. 'Good luck to Sammy Davis, Jr and May Britt in their forthcoming marriage', wrote "Well-Wisher" in 1960 to the Daily Mirror commenting on the Black American entertainer's impending interracial union which was announced in London, 'Britain is not free of race haters. But an overwhelming majority of decent people throughout the world believes that love knows no colour bar.'

Even within the generally hostile establishment, more open-minded attitudes were also in existence. In 1953, Peggy Cripps, the daughter of Sir Stafford Cripps, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, married Joseph Appiah, a wealthy Ghanaian law student and son of a chieftain in a lavish London ceremony attended by high society, and while the South African media raged, there can be found a respectful, even fawning tone towards the wedding and the births of their subsequent children in the UK press, with one paper proclaiming that the picture of the happy couple in its pages was one 'we are proud to print'. Of course, less aggressive social attitudes had long been in evidence towards the wealthy upper-classes who crossed racial lines, but acceptance towards those occurring outside this milieu can also be found: the same Daily Express article which had dismissed White women in mixed relationships as the 'white trash' of society nevertheless went on to defend interracial marriage, the reporter stating that many of the marriages he had come across were good and that the children produced from them

12 Benson, S., 1981. Ambiguous Ethnicity. Interracial Families in London. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p144.
13 Olusoga, D., 2016. Black and British: A Forgotten History. London: Macmillan, p502.

were 'normal like any other children, and many I saw looked better.' This sense of normalcy also runs strongly throughout the brilliant but now largely overlooked research of the Black Jamaican sociologist Sydney Collins who, in the 1950s, studied the Muslim, Black and Chinese communities in several working class neighbourhoods of Tyneside, Wales and Lancashire. Contrary to many of his peers accounts' – who seem to start from a premise that viewed racial mixing as problematic for both society and the individual - Collins' work is striking in its balanced and sympathetic attitudes towards the men from these communities and their families with the White women many of them had married. What is particularly conspicuous to the modern reader is the thoughtful complexity with which he presents their everyday lives, noting the problems, joys and ordinariness they encounter - from the foods cooked at home to more serious examinations of the roles of racism, gender and class in the families' lives.

For, while there were discernible patterns in the types and experiences of interracial families, noted Collins in his 1957 book Coloured Minorities in Britain, these also unfolded in very individualised and multifaceted ways. In terms of extended family relationships, for example, Collins noted that although mixed marriages often resulted in the estrangement of the White women from her parents, he added that cases of complete estrangement were few. The level of hostility and opposition could vary, he remarked, particularly between family members; furthermore, over time and through varying efforts and circumstances, reconciliation was often achieved. Citing the renowned sociologist Kenneth Little, Collins agreed that amongst the White British, 'a great deal of latent friendliness underlies the surface appearance of apathy or even of displayed prejudices [and] there are many people in every section of society who display a complete absence of prejudice'. Such attitudes were certainly encountered by Collins in the working-class communities he studied. 'Some members of the girl's family,' he remarked 'may condone or even support the mixed relationship. These individuals will visit, spend a holiday or live with the couple.' Yet, even in the face of vehement opposition, mixed families were not doomed, Collins noted. 'The many cases of very happy marriages I found during these enquiries', he wrote, 'some so touching in their demonstrations of affection and intimacy that I should never care to describe them in a report – are another example of man's ability to find for himself a corner of happiness in the midst of an environment so often unfavourable to him.[14]'

Like Collins, by looking more closely, by asking different starting questions and – perhaps most importantly – by centring the voices of those who experienced racial mixing from the 'inside' rather than relying solely on outsider perspectives – scholars are increasingly demonstrating that another picture of racial mixing in Britain during the post-war years starts to emerge[15]. To such understandings is added the contribution made by *Strength of Our Mothers*. Certainly, as so many of the memories collected in the project testify, life as part of an interracial couple during this period could contain many if not all of the negative experiences assumed to be an inherent part of intimately crossing racial boundaries. As the testimonies of the mothers and family members tell, yes, at many times there was marginality, conflict, rejection and confusion which caused great pain, hurt and damage. Yet – and this is very important – such experiences were not the only or dominating experiences of the family members' intimate and everyday lives. The types of intimate first-hand memories gathered together by Strength of Our Mothers remind us that despite the hostility the mothers and their families frequently faced, and despite the pain caused by ostracism and rejection, their lives were not inherently or inevitably steeped in tragedy but - as with those from White and other 'monoracial' backgrounds - consist of complex, multi-layered patterns and histories, both on a group and individual level. So we hear from those who were verbally and physically attacked or ostracised by family members or

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14 Collins, S., 1957. Coloured Minorities in Britain: Studies in British Race Relations based on African, West Indian and Asiatic Immigrants. London: Lutterworth Press, pp48 & 60.

15 See, for example, Caballero and Aspinall (cited previously) and Lucy Bland's forthcoming book on the 'brown babies' of World War 2 in which she draws on thirty five firsthand interviews with the children of Black American GIs and White British women. Bland, L., 2019. Britain's brown babies: The stories of children born to Black GIs and white women in the Second World War. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

neighbours, and others who were accepted and integrated; from those who experienced family discord and breakdown, including as a result of racial assumptions and prejudice within their relationships with each other, and from others who experienced long-lasting and close relationships; from those whose children experienced identity issues and marginalisation, and from others who grew up with a strong and positive sense of self, accepted by and integrated into their families, local communities and wider society. Also importantly, we hear how such experiences ebbed and flowed over life courses – where difficult and painful relationships and situations are a part of rather than the sum total of lives led.

Such accounts play a critical role in highlighting how the diversity and complexity of interracial relationships and people in Britain is – both then and now - so much deeper than can be explained by the casual generalisations and assumptions that have defined their history so far. In the case of those mixing and of mixed racial backgrounds in the post-war years, their story is woven deeply into the history of Black settlement in Britain during this period, thus sharing a history that, as Barnor Hesse has observed, is frequently told through a 'formulaic' narrative that represses not only the longer standing history of Black settlement but also the wide-ranging differences of experiences and location. As with many groups whose history has been primarily defined by those on the outside – when this history has been seen at all - there is thus great power and strength in not only challenging and resisting mainstream narratives but by recovering, centring and preserving the voices of those within these groups themselves – and particularly when done so by those who are rooted in the communities whose histories they are telling, as is the case with Strength of Our Mothers. The result is thus an honest, moving and important contribution to the foregrounding and development of our knowledge and understanding of ordinary families only made extraordinary due to the social attitudes towards them.

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For more on racial mixing in the twentieth century, see:

Caballero, C. and Aspinall, P., 2018. Mixed Race Britain in the Twentieth Century. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

and

The Mix-d Museum
http://www.mix-d.org/museum/timeline

FURTHER READING

- Afro Solo UK. www.afrosolouk.com
- A House with no Angels – Muli Amaye Crocus (ISBN 9780946745296)
- Alex Hall Mixed Race Relationships in the UK Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations June 1996 University of Warwick (Reading list) https://tinyurl.com/ycb7d679
- Ambiguous Ethnicity: Interracial Families in London - Susan Benson CUP Archive, 1981 (ISBN 0521297699, 9780521297691) https://tinyurl.com/yctyhqft
- Beyond Loving: Intimate Racework in Lesbian, Gay, and Straight Interracial Relationships - Amy C. Steinbugler, OUP USA, 6 Sep 2012 (ISBN 019974355X, 9780199743551)
- Black and British - David Olusoga Pan Macmillan (ISBN: 9781447299769)
- Black Skin, White Masks - Frantz Fanon, Pluto Press, 1967 (ISBN 9780745328492, 9780745328485)
- Black, White, Or Mixed Race?: Race and Racism in the Lives of Young People of Mixed Parentage - Barbara Tizard, Ann Phoenix, Routledge, 1993 (ISBN 0415097088, 9780415097086) https://tinyurl.com/y9lrp2pk
- Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race,. Robert J.C. YOUNG 1995 Routledge ISBN: 9780415053747)
- Colour Prejudice in Britain: A study of West Indian Workers in Liverpool, 1941- 1951, Anthony H. RICHMOND, 1971 Negro Universities Press: Connecticut.
- Dark Strangers: A Study of West Indians in London - Sheila Patterson, Penguin Books, 1965 (ISBN 0422707503, 9780422707503) https://tinyurl.com/y9l7xa6c
- Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience, Ronald HYAM, Manchester University Press, 1990 (ISBN 9780719025044)
- Family Life and Work Experience before 1918' by Paul Thompson https://tinyurl.com/y7uhlbdu
- Half Breed. Written and Performed by Natasha Marshall.
- Hotbeds: Black-White Love in Novels from the United States, Africa and the Caribbean - Pia Thielmann Kachere Series, 2004 (ISBN 9990876231, 9789990876239)
- In 1864, a pamphlet entitled "Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro" began to circulate on the streets of New York. https://tinyurl.com/y6p4vs6t
- In "Beyond the Pale", an essay for Margaret Busby's anthology Daughters of Africa (1992), Melville wrote that, with her slave ancestor's baptism certificate in her drawer, she was well placed for "stirring up doubt, rattling judgments, shifting boundaries, unfixing fixities" – and surveying the ludicrous. Of the now-faded fad for roots and identity politics, she wrote that, had Bob Marley chosen to pursue his father's Anglo-Scottish ancestry, "he might have ended up in a kilt in the Highlands, singing 'will ye no' come back again?'" Guardian Interview - https://tinyurl.com/yc3g43rw
- Inter-racial marriages in London: a comparative study - Dr Chirayil Thumbayil Kannan, Brill Academic Pub, 1972 (ISBN 0685791076, 978-0685791073)
- Interracial Relationships - Eating the Other, or loving the Other? https://tinyurl.com/yclp4kql
- Love across the divide: interracial relationships growing in Britain https://tinyurl.com/yabrqj4x
- Mixed Race Britain in The Twentieth Century Caballero & Aspinall (ISBN 978-1-137-33927-0) https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9781137339270
- Mixed Race Britain: charting the social history https://tinyurl.com/ybg7mdq2
- Mixed-Race Relationships in Four Nations https://tinyurl.com/yb2psja2
- Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain (Get Political) Peter Fryer Pub 1984 Pluto Press (ISBN-10: 074533072X)
- Tangled Roots https://www.tangledroots.co.uk/
- The Colour of Love: Mixed Race Relationships - Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Anne Montague

Virago, 1992 (ISBN: 1853812218, 9781853812217)

- The Creolisation of London Kinship: Mixed African-Caribbean and White British Extended Families, 1950-2003 – Elaine Bauer, Amsterdam University Press, 2010 (ISBN 9048512522, 9789048512522) https://tinyurl.com/y9ncf8ux
- The Story of 'M'. Written and Performed by SuAndi. Oberon Jan 2017 (ISBN 9781786821157)
- There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation – Paul Gilroy Routledge Classics Jul 2002 (ISBN-10: 0415289815
- What it's like to be mixed-race in Britain By George Alagiah https://tinyurl.com/6grorbo

DIRECTORIES & RESOURCES

- Directory: organisations supporting mixed race people and families https://tinyurl.com/y8l4ouax
- Mix-d: http://www.mix-d.org/about
- People in Harmony http://www.pih.org.uk/

EVERYDAY PEOPLE

- Alice Martin named her son Samuel Coleridge Taylor after the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge Alice lived with her father Benjamin Holmans and his family after she had the boy. Her father was a skilled farrier and was married to another woman than her mother; they had four daughters and at least one son. Alice and her father called her son Coleridge. (via Wikipedia)
- David Russell was a Black Jamaican and thus a British national who lived in Leipzig, Germany where he had four children with his German partner/wife. The wife and children were sent by the German authorities to Britain in January 1915. He remained in the Ruhleben internment camp in Berlin. His wife spoke no English and all five were soon in a workhouse in Hull as they were destitute. The mother was kept apart from her children (the rule in British workhouses: some visits were possible) but at least the children had been sent to the seaside on the summer of 1915. The German authorities had sent the five without liaising with the British (done through the American embassy, usually).
- My Father Threw Me Out of the House': 1940s Mary and Jake Jacobs https://tinyurl.com/otmzm98
- Pensioner is caught on camera unleashing shocking racist rant at woman and her Nigerian-born husband telling her to 'stay with your own race' https://tinyurl.com/yc6xton3
- Richard van Emden, Meeting the Enemy: The Human Face of the Great War (Bloomsbury, 2013) using the National Archives Kew file FO383/60.. Page 89: "What is interesting about the Russell case is that the British authorities did not seem to have been aware of Mrs Russell's imminent arrival. She had met David Russell, a Black Jamaican and British subject, in Leipzig and the pair had cohabited for eleven years, having two 'illegitimate' children before marrying and having two more. The Foreign Office paperwork states that Mrs Russell had been sent to Britain seemingly without discussion and not at the behest of the British. There was no policy in either country of enforced repatriation of women who purely through marriage had changed nationality. There was, perhaps, more than a whiff of racism attached to this particularly sad case."
- Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in 1875 in Holborn, London, to Alice Hare Martin (1856–1953), an English woman, and Dr. Daniel Peter Hughes Taylor, a Creole from Sierra Leone, of mixed European and African descent, who had studied medicine in the capital. They were not married and Daniel Taylor returned to Africa without learning that Alice was pregnant. (Alice Hare Martin's parents were not married at her birth, either.)
- Second World War Digital Living Memorial. Telling the veterans' untold stories. Jake Jacobs https://tinyurl.com/yac94gsz

- Trudy and Barclay Patoir https://tinyurl.com/hhvapsn

THE FAMOUS

- Author Diana Athill https://tinyurl.com/y7tl5sta She says she was a "sucker for oppressed foreigners". One lover, the Egyptian author Waguih Ghali, a depressive, committed suicide in her flat. Her most remarkable affair, about which she later wrote a book, was "a fleeting, and distinctly odd" relationship with Hakim Jamal, an American Black radical who asserted he was God and was a cousin of Malcolm X. Jamal's other lover, Gale Benson, was murdered by Trinidadian Black Power leader, Michael X. Jamal was killed by others a year later in 1973. Athill's account of these events was published in 1993 as Make Believe: A True Story. Her longest relationship was with the Jamaican playwright Barry Reckord. The affair lasted eight years, but he shared her flat for forty. She described it as a "detached" sort of marriage. https://tinyurl.com/ybsgy9sa
- Len Johnson https://tinyurl.com/y9j637h4
- Peggy Appiah Daughter of Stafford Cripps and collector of Asante folk tales. https://tinyurl.com/y8lkl52k Teacher Peggy (Eleanor) Boateng mother of Paul Yaw Boateng, Baron Boateng is a British Labour Party politician, https://tinyurl.com/y8kyfl5r
- Tupac's break-up letter to Madonna in full https://tinyurl.com/y94eejzj

FILMS

- BBC 2 Black and British https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082x0h6
- Mixed Britannia #1: 1910-1939 - YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTOSFKs_JpQ
- Mixed Britannia #2: 1940-1965 – YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKVu9urKyoA
- Mixed Britannia #3: 1965-2011 - YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wpmco_d3Wa4
- interracialandmixedarchive https://tinyurl.com/msmq53x
- "Dwelling Together" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7HMHt6LNu0

Sapphire is a 1959 British crime drama. It focuses on racism in London toward immigrants from the West Indies and explores the "underlying insecurities and fears of ordinary people" that exist towards another race. The film was directed by Basil Dearden and stars Nigel Patrick, Earl Cameron and Yvonne Mitchell. It received the BAFTA Award for Best Film and screenwriter Janet Green won a 1960 Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America for Best Foreign Film Screenplay. It was considered a progressive movie for its time. The body of a pregnant young woman is found stabbed on Hampstead Heath. Although she appears to be white, when her brother (Earl Cameron) arrives at the police station to give evidence, the investigating police officers see that he is Black. He confirms that he and Sapphire were both the children of a white father and a Black mother, but Sapphire has recently been passing for white. Sapphire's white boyfriend, a student, immediately becomes the chief suspect, but, as the investigation proceeds, other aspects of Sapphire's life in London bring to light other possible suspects. (via Wikipedia) 57 stills from the film: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053242/mediaindex?ref_=tt_pv_mi_sm

'Flame in the Streets', a 1961 film directed by Roy Ward Baker and based on the 1958 play Hot Summer Night by Ted Willis. It opened at the Odeon Leicester Square in London's West End on 22 June 1961. Racial tensions manifest themselves at home, work and on the streets during Bonfire Night in the burgeoning West Indian community of post-war Britain. Trades Union leader Jacko Palmer fights for the rights of a Black worker but struggles with the news that his own daughter, Kathie, is planning to marry a West Indian, much against his own logic and the hysterical prejudice of his wife Nell.

In his autobiography (published in 2000), Roy Ward Baker noted the film had recently been shown at a Brixton cinema "to mark the 50th anniversary of the arrival in Britain of the steamer Windrush, bringing Caribbean's to work here... Some of the older ones [in the audience] testified that it was a true picture of the conditions the incomers faced and in some areas still do face." (via Wikipedia)

OTHER RESOURCES

- Interracial Marriage Laws History & Timeline https://tinyurl.com/y8hxawyt
- Interracial Relationships that Changed History | PBS https://tinyurl.com/y74rtjsf
- Manchester Centre For Public History and Heritage. https://mcphh.org/public-history/
- Mixed race in the UK: am I the future face of this country? https://tinyurl.com/y97w8pyf
- Mixed-Race in 1920s & 1930s Britain MDPI https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/2/3/21/htm
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/JwLitwiLW6SGIw
- The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre http://www.racearchive.manchester.ac.uk/
- The Mix-d: Museum http://www.mix-d.org/museum/about

Free Libraries app allows users to search Manchester's extensive collection of books, e-books and audiobooks via a smartphone or tablet and has been downloaded by over 9,000 new users this year. Use it to scan the barcode of any book, to see if Manchester Libraries have it in stock and reserve for collection from your nearest library. Members can also quickly and easily renew their loans using the app. The latest new digital service provided by Manchester Libraries is Zinio,. To access Zinio, or learn more about Manchester Libraries, go to https://tinyurl.com/y73z5xlb

IMAGES

SOM does not have permission to include actual images in this publication

- Photos of 19th century interracial couples are incredible examples of love triumphing over law https://tinyurl.com/yc2m5fw9
- Mary And Jake Jacobs https://tinyurl.com/y9gm7tmo and https://tinyurl.com/y9noluuo
- Alice Hare Martin https://tinyurl.com/y834jq8t
- Diana Athill https://tinyurl.com/ydbvp6bw
- BBC Two - Mixed Britannia https://tinyurl.com/y8pml7ht
- Sapphire https://tinyurl.com/ycgavg75
- Flame in the Streets https://tinyurl.com/y8f5ambq
- Seretse Khama Ian Khama (English mother and father from Botswana.) born February 27, 1953 in Chertsey, England. He became president of the Republic of Botswana on April 1, 2008. https://tinyurl.com/y7g88rcj
- Crown Prince and Sinnita Ankrah

A 17-year-old blonde Finnish schoolgirl was married to an African Gold Coast prince in London and became the princess of a 300,000-member tribe with the approval of the prince's father, Chief Niikpakpo Oti, who said he has "no color prejudice."

It was good to see my Parent's wedding made it into Jet Magazine - it was also in the News of the World I can see why my mother always said do not believe all you read in the news- daddy was nearer 40 then 30. He died in January 2001. https://tinyurl.com/yaku626n Thank you for sharing the image - blessings always Alexandra Naa Aduwah Ankrah' [Surrey, UK] https://tinyurl.com/yaqt6arl

- Seretse Khama, chief of Bechuanaland's Bamangwato tribe. Khama was banished from his kingdom for five years by the British after he married former London secretary, Ruth Williams, in 1950. https://www.flickr.com/photos/vieilles_annonces/2648734796/ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Williams_Khama

Finally, I want to acknowledge two more mothers
Muli's mother was the first person I interviewed but sadly within days her health deteriorated, and she never recovered. Muli asked for the interview not be included but said she was happy to have her Mum's picture in the book

Dorothy Steadman. July 1930 - August 2017

Coca Teresa Clarke June 1933 - January 2019

The cover image for the book was donated by Coca the daughter of an African father and English Mother she shared her parent's life story in Afro Solo. (www.afrosolouk.com)

ALL YOUR FAMILY

I am, your family
Which wasn't the truth
Or a lie, either.
My father her husband
Lived outside our days
Leaving by his own choosing.
We, mother and daughter,
Were so different, yet similar.

No one questioned my father
But my mother fought for recognition
At parents' evenings
Hospital appointments
Everywhere we went
Together

I am your family
She told me
Cursing the air
Every time I risked my future
In the foolishness of late nights out
Close canoodling with boys too young
To make their own families

Saturday nights
Her one day of leisure
I would watch my mother
And worry that the swell of her breasts
And fullness of stomach
Might pass gene to gene to my slim form
I looked close and slightly disapproving
Of the pale alabaster of her skin
Compared to the rich nutty brown of my own

Now she is gone,
I find her habits and rituals
I remember as hers,
Are now mine.
Now alone I understand
I was loved totally by my mother
She was all my family


Ahmed Iqbal Ullah
Education
Trust


Manchester
Metropolitan
University


Manchester
Cathedral

Since 1985 SuAndi has performed across four continents.
Originally a performance poet her field of work has expanded into Live Art writing narratives for exhibitions, one-act plays and gained a following a prolific conference key-note speaker.
Her writing in embedded in her cultural heritage, born in Manchester the Nigerian daughter of a Liverpool mother.
She says "I am constantly pushing against the barrier of racism in my writing, but it is cloaked in humour and the celebration of humanity in all its shapes, colour and laughter"
A recipient of numerous awards in 1999 the OBE for her contributions to the Black Arts Sector and in 2015 an honorary doctorate for literature from Lancaster University. July 2019 she will received a honorary Doctor of the Arts from Manchester Metropolitan University She is a Creative Writing Fellow at Leicester University
Her acclaimed production The Story of 'M' is offered by EdExcel Examination Board (2017).A-levels English Literature syllabus
She is the freelance Cultural Director of National Black Arts Alliance

nbaa

NBAA works across art forms to create productions that challenge perceptions of Black culture and that celebrate the many dimensions of Black heritage. NBAA delivers education & community workshops; teachers CPD; exhibitions; performances; community cohesion seminars; conferences; prison & mental health engagement; public art; leadership; and creative participation opportunities

"This collection of stories is curated and written with love and is about love.
It is also about hidden lives, sometimes painful, sometimes heart-breaking, always important.
This book collects oral histories of relationships across the divides of race and celebrates the ways in which women sustain and support their families over time. The book opens our eyes to the experiences of white women who married Black men in the 1940s, 50s and 60s and represents an important contribution to the untold stories of Cheetham Hill, Hulme, Moss Side and the Greater Manchester area. They bear witness to courage, honesty and love in good and bad times. Like all hidden histories, these stories represent living knowledge that can inform future generations and can help us think differently about the experiences of children from interracial relationships. Thank you to SuAndi for her courage and perseverance in listening to these important stories and bringing them into light"

Professor Kate Pahl, Manchester Metropolitan University

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