

MARIANNE SALMON

Interviewer: I
Respondent: R

00:00 I My name is Napheas. Today I'm speaking with Marianne Salmon. Marianne was born in 1960 in Peterborough. Marianne you told me that your mother was pregnant with you when she first arrived in England, please can you tell me about your family history and background.

00:30 R My mother was born in St Elizabeth in Jamaica erm in the 1930's. Erm she came to England in 1960, she was, well 50's, she came to England in gosh she came when she was six months pregnant with me, so it would be 1959 yea. Erm.....

01:08 I A little bit about the family history where she came from?

01:13 R Ok she came from St Elizabeth in Jamaica and St Elizabeth is quite a large erm Parish in Jamaica. My grandfather I was told was err a painter and decorator. He did public buildings, so he would do like the courts and places like that, so he knew quite a lot of official kind of people. Erm my grandmother was a seamstress so she would sew plus also she was a baby deliverer that means like a bit like a midwife, so she would actually deliver babies to women who couldn't afford to go to a hospital. She was like one of those old time women that served the community in so many different ways. Women would come to her for advice and for guidance, so she was a bit like a social worker in the community, unofficially paid social worker. She was an active Christian as well, she was a seventh day Adventist and my grandfather was also a seventh day Adventist. They had between them they had six children. My mother was the third eldest out of her six children. Erm she, my mother was like very close to her mother, so she would be the supportive one where my grandmother was concerned. She followed my grandmother everywhere, so to speak and this is the story she used to give me. My grandmother even though I never ever met her because she'd died before I was born, erm she just sounded like a person that I would have loved to have known and which is a shame really. My grandfather I didn't meet him at all because my mother never went back to Jamaica until the 1970's. I saw pictures of my grandfather but I didn't actually meet him in person, which was a shame really because I think I missed out on my grandparents side of growing up.

03:54 I You had six aunties and uncles?

03:57 R Yes I had three uncles and three aunties. My uncles are now all passed away,

erm my aunties are still alive living in America and in Jamaica. Erm my auntie that lives in America, she used to be a domestic in America for a Jewish family, she worked with the Jewish family for many, many years. When they actually passed away, they looked after my auntie and my auntie was able to buy a house actually in America which she still has that house today. My uncles were, one of my uncles was a bus driver in England, he used to do the number 11 route and the number 8 bus route. So as a child I used to jump on the number 8 and do the circle around with him which was exciting to me. Not having to rush home, but I could go on the bus and just do a journey with my uncle. One of my other uncles use to work in Digbeth in a factory, erm I'm trying to remember the name of the factory in Digbeth, it's no longer there no more. But he was there until he retired in the 1980's. Erm my mother worked for Lucas's for many years down on Shaftmoor Lane in Tyseley, prior to that she also worked at the same place that my uncle worked as well down in Digbeth for a short period of time.

05:51 I Can you tell me a bit about the time when your mother first arrived in England, where she settled and your memories of that area.

06:01 R Well as I said before, that when my mother came to England, she was pregnant with me. She came to Peterborough where she had one of her sisters living at the time in Peterborough because that sister had come to England at least two years prior to my mum coming to England. My auntie was married and had four children. In those days, you'd have classed her as quite affluent because by the time I was born and growing up a bit, her and her husband had one house that they lived in with the family and another house that they had that they rented out which was quite unusual, especially for Afro-Caribbean families in those days. Erm my mother had me as I said in the 1960's, in April I was born 1960. She lived with my auntie for a while in Peterborough until she found her own accommodation in Peterborough and got a job as well working over there. It's very difficult to sort of say what my memories were of Peterborough because I was so young, so have no really recalled memories of Peterborough.

07:36 I Right, at some point your family moved to Birmingham.

07:42 R Yes, my auntie stayed in Peterborough with her family, my mother moved to Birmingham where she had an elder brother that was living in Birmingham, my uncle who was the bus driver and my other uncle who worked in Digbeth. She basically came to Birmingham and she lived for a while with my uncle that was working down in Digbeth. They lived in a house which they would call those days tenement house on Green Lane in Small Heath. The tenement house meant that there was more than one family living in that house, they shared a kitchen, shared a bathroom, but they would pay rent to the landlord for those services.

08:39 I Can you tell me something about your infant school, maybe you went to

nursery before that.

08:47 R I didn't go to nursery but I did have a childminder, her name was Sheila. Sheila lived on Whitehall Road in Small Heath. She had three children and she was a white lady but she was married to an Afro-Caribbean man and Sheila was my childminder until I went to school, started school. Erm I'd forgot to actually mention that during those early years of my childhood, we also did move around to different houses, so I never really settled in one place. My mum was quite how can I say, she was unsettled in life, so she would move from one rented room to another, so we lived on Green Lane in two different houses in Small Heath, then we lived on Waverley Road in Small Heath as well and we also lived for a short period of time on Bankes Road in Small Heath as well and school wise, the junior school or infant school that I ended up going to was Marlborough Junior School in Small Heath and Marlborough junior school was quite a multicultural school at that time. I loved my uniform, I think of anything that stood out for me than anything, was my uniform. My mum was quite fussy when sending us to school and my uniform was immaculate every time. I had a grey pleated skirt, a blazer with the logo in it. I'd have a hat like the St Trinians, the berry hat with the badge on it, I'd have my purse across me with the badge on it, erm she was very fussy, my mum when it came to you know, how you looked in appearance and erm she was always insisting that I wore uniform, even when some of the other kids didn't wear uniform, I had to wear a uniform and I think I've grown up to liking to put myself in a particular kind of order because of it. My junior school starting when I was in infant school, erm it was a very vibrant school. We were very sporty, it was a very sporty school, so there was a lot of activities that went on in the school from drama to erm netball, football, rounders, those kind of activities that we did.

11:42 I Any teachers at the school that stand out in your memory?

11:46 R That's so funny because I was talking to a school friend of mine that I do still keep in contact with some of them from junior school as well as senior school, but one of the teachers that did stand out for me was Mr Burbridge, he was the drama teacher. He was so kind but so such a lovely man, you know he would make sure he gave everybody Christmas cards at Christmas and things like that, and erm he used to you know push us forward for doing sort of performing arts, so we'd go to different schools and do performances and things like that. I think I've jumped the gun a bit as well because sort of going back to when I was about six years old because I can always remember going back to six years old and when I said we had to wear uniform but I can always remember the first clothing I wore, wasn't a uniform when I actually started, it was this little dress that used to itch my skin **(laughing)** I will never forget that, before my mum got round to buying my uniform and I sat in a class in junior school with people like Philip Whitaker who is now a music producer and also erm Sharon Lawrence who is now married to Bishop Webley, I don't know if you know Bishop Webley who went for Police Crime

Commissioner. Erm I went to school with people that have now become very you know popular in their own rights.

13:30 I Can you tell me something about the routines at school, lessons.

13:35 R Routine at school was when we got into school in the mornings, we'd stand by the desk and we'd stand by our chairs and we'd say a prayer before we sat down, but obviously when a teacher came into the classroom it would be "*good morning Mrs so and so or Mr so and so*" and then we'd do a prayer and then we'd sit down and then we would start our lessons. Assembly was the same thing, assembly when we went into assembly, they always, always played how can I say, classical music when we walked into assembly, it was never a quiet kind of arena. We always had a very faint classical music in the background and then the headmaster would say a prayer and then he would go onto whatever topic he wanted to talk about and the school was I would say, it was a good grounding for us because of the way they erm did things I would say.

14:44 I Can you remember any friends?

14:47 R Oh my goodness yes that's why I just said I keep in contact with erm quite a few of them from junior school, erm the ones that were in my year were like Audrey Plummer, Sharon Lawrence, Derek Gardener, Timothy Clark, Desmond Williams, Doreen Lee, many of them I still keep in contact with today. Maybe not all the time, but sometimes we keep in contact now through Facebook, modern technology.

15:26 I Can you tell me about time outside of school, after school, school holidays.

15:35 R After school, during the times in junior and infant school obviously you were a child so you know you're controlled by how your parents you know say what you're gonna do. My mum was a religious person so she went to a church in Camp Hill which is off the Stratford Road and it was a seventh day adventist church which still exists today, just that the church is a bit more modern now they've built a new one. So we went to church every Saturday and we'd spend the whole day at church. So from the time we went in the morning, we'd have Kindergarten class which was for the younger ones and my mum would go into the adult class. At Kindergarten class we'd have a lesson book that we had to read during the week day and then we'd come to church on the Saturday and then we'd discuss about what we've read about god and you know his teachings and things like that and also there was like a little thing in the book that we had to learn to recite for when we came into church on a Saturday as well. Then we'd have lunch and then we would go home, have lunch or we'd go to someone else's house whoever decided to cook or whatever and then we'd go back in the afternoon, and we would have afternoon service and then we'd also have afternoon youth club, but that was when I was a bit older. But being young, it was more or less being

with mum all the time, until church had finished about say six/seven o'clock in the evening. So the home life was focused and my life at that young age was focused around church a lot.

17:20 I Can you tell me something about the long school holidays.

17:27 R School holidays, right if I break it up from I was a young child to when I was about eleven, as I said before, it would be guided by my mum, so my mum went out to work, she would work from eight o'clock in the morning til six o'clock in the evening, so erm having to be taken care of was done through various different people looking after us while my mum was at work. When I got into the teenage age, going to senior school and you meet friends and you start to get to know people, you'd go to like the local park, so we used to go to Digby Park on Mansell Road in Small Heath. We'd go to Small Heath Park off the Coventry Road and we'd go to oh gosh there was a park, I can't remember the name of the park, but it was on Green Lane, it's still there today. There was quite a few parks in those days and we'd hang around in the park, but I have to explain and say this, we weren't allowed to go to the park, we'd just sneak out to go to the park (*laughing*) so we weren't allowed to go to the park. By the time I was eleven and my mum used to go to work, she would leave us at home. Those times you didn't have those safeguarding and child protection issues, so she'd leave us at home and she'd just make sure there was food and things like that for us to eat and erm she would go off to work and we sort of took care of ourselves. So my younger brother cause I forgot to mention I did have a younger brother and he was one that loved cooking rice, even from a very young age, so he would always cook rice. So rice was part of the staple diet in our household when my mum was at work.

19:21 I Can you tell me a bit more about the secondary school that you went to.

19:26 R Oh my secondary school that I went to was Mount Pleasant Comprehensive in Highgate. I always remember you know when you're leaving junior school and you put down all the schools that you're supposed to go to. I wanted to go to Bordesley Green Girls School. My mum put down Bordesley Green Girls School, she put down Chilton Road Girls School and she put Mount Pleasant down. The reason why she put Mount Pleasant down was because she had a friend whose daughter or two daughters that she had went to Mount Pleasant and my mum's friend used to tell her you know "*send her to Mount Pleasant because she will be looked after, my daughters will look after her.*" I was hoping to go to one of the girls' schools, but unfortunately I ended up going to Mount Pleasant School. When I started the school, I started the school with funnily enough, four or five other people from my junior school ended up going to that same school, so I didn't feel so much alone. But when I actually started going there for the first year, I realised it wasn't a simple school to be in. It was quite a challenging school. They had quite challenging young people that went to that school. There was always fights. I always

remember the first fight I saw in that school was when I was about eleven and it was two girls fighting and they fought and they sort of stripped off each other's clothes when they were fighting and I thought oh my gosh what kind of school has my mum put me into (**Laughing**) and I realised from then that I would have to be able to stand up for myself in that school cause as I said it was quite a challenging school. But it was a very lively school, we did a lot of sports at that school.

21:22 R Academically erm it was quite a learning school, we had to learn, we had quite strict teachers in that school. A few of the teachers that actually taught at that school were ex-army teachers so their way and their approach to dealing with things were very strict. We had a headmistress called Miss Hanks. In those days there wasn't many schools that had headmistresses in senior schools, they were mainly male headmasters, so it was quite unusual to go to a school where there was a headmistress. She had more of a softly softly approach to things. Erm I'm trying to sort of remember. There's so much when it comes to senior school that I could sort of talk about. We had a choir at school called Gospel Flame. Gospel Flame Choir actually came on Central News a few times singing and I became part of that choir when I was about fourteen and although I didn't go on Central News and the bigger girls did, you know it was quite a popular choir at the time. Also in that school it covered a lot of general knowledge, it very, very much pushed about general knowledge, so we would have general knowledge quiz competitions and these quiz competitions would be like, I would use it as an example, it would be like erm watching University Challenge where you had to press the buzzer you know and answer the questions. So you'd have two different groups and what they would do is they would pick kids from different classes that had an interest in general knowledge and I was one of those that had an interest in general knowledge and about the environment and the world around me and so therefore I was one of those that would be on those quiz panels. I also did a lot of dancing, so we had a dance group as well, so we used to do performances at Christmas and things like that and parents evenings we'd do that. My mum didn't like it because she was a Christian, so she didn't believe in us dancing to sort of inappropriate kind of music. Also I have to bring in the fact that my mum never allowed us to read comics and she didn't allow us to put posters up on our walls, that's how strict she was with what she believed in, she felt that it was too worldly and it would be too influential in our behaviour so erm but I was a bit rebellious and so I wanted to do what the other girls did. I would also like to say Small Heath was a very residential area. The Afro-Caribbean families that came from Small Heath were quite proud people and we were all brought up with certain standards. When I went to school in Highgate, I found that the parents over there, they were more liberal and their kids were more liberal, they could go to clubs and discos and things like that, whereas we weren't so much allowed to do that and I think that sort of influenced my behaviour in the sense where I wanted to clubs and to discos and go to cinemas and things like that. So that was mmm.

25:04 R Teachers I can remember, erm sports teacher was Miss Fareham, Miss Fareham ended up being head of, when the school actually closed down, she actually stayed on and worked for Joseph Chamberlain College, erm so she was there for many, many years. Miss Fareham, when she first started our school, she was a student, just finished her teaching and so she was quite with it with us, so she was quite supportive with if we had concerns and problems about anything, she would be there for us to discuss things with, even if we fancied a boy or anything, we could turn round and tell her and she would advise us. Erm she was our sports teacher, as I said I was very sporty so I was in the netball team, I was in the rounders team, and I was also in the athletics team. Erm it was difficult for me because being doing sports, sports was a thing where when you had matches, some of them were like on a weekend and because my mum was seventh day adventist and went to church on a weekend, I wasn't really allowed as much to do sports on a Saturday so I would have to argue with my mum and say I'd let down the team if I didn't go and things like that, so it used to upset me. Sometimes she used to give in and sometimes she didn't. Erm but in general I loved my sports, I really did love my sports and we had a wicked group of girls that did sports and erm yea that was that, yea.

26:52 I Thank you. Can you tell me about your expectations or/and ambitions toward the end of secondary school and leaving school.

27:05 R My expectations was erm I didn't learn very well, it was very difficult for me learning. I had a problem with reading, didn't understand why, had a problem with writing and structuring my words, didn't understand why, but I was very good at explaining myself and I would pick up knowledge along the way and use that as a form of educating myself in certain ways. Now I know as an adult that I was dyslexic but at the time I wasn't aware of that and neither was my mother. I wanted to be a nurse. Those days you had career advisors when you were almost leaving school and I'm not being funny but career advisors at those times weren't very favourable to Afro-Caribbean and Asian girls. They wanted us to go into factories and things like that. They would try and say "*oh no, no, no, we think this is the best thing for you*", but because we were very strong minded or I should say I was quite strong minded, I never wanted to work in a factory, had no interest in working in a factory. I didn't know which direction I was gonna go, but that's one thing I did know that I didn't wanna work in a factory and thank god I never ever did, I wouldn't know what it was like working in a factory. I used to watch my mum coming home from work and she smelt of factory, so it wasn't one of my strong points of wanting to do that kind of work. Erm as I said I wanted to do nursing but I really didn't know how to go about it, we were never encouraged on how to go about it. When I did leave school erm I was actually pregnant, I got pregnant at the age of sixteen. I know that was very young, very stupid, but it happens. My daughter from having her at sixteen is now thirty six years old, a married woman, very settled. Ermmm

- 29:32 I How... were you supported in your life at that time?
- 29:38 R No, I came from a very turbulent household. My mother had married a man which wasn't my father who was very violent, so I came from a very violent domestic household where every so often I'd see my mum being beaten up and the police would be called and you know nothing would be done and I used to remember standing next to my mum while the police came and I'd think why don't you just take us? Why don't you just take us? But nothing ever happened.
- 30:13 I Your daughter sounds like a wonderful young lady who's made a life for herself that you're proud of. Tell me about that.
- 30:29 R My daughter, as I told you I had her when I was quite young, well very young. Erm she grew into a very how can I say it, I'll start from going from junior school. She went to Regents Park in Small Heath Junior and Infant School and I always remember erm going to parents evening once and the teacher said "*I want you to have a look at this and tell me what you think.*" And it was a drawing that she had done, where you have to colour in and she'd coloured all the faces in brown and the teacher turned round and said "*this is very unusual*" cause normally kids would do yellow faces, green faces, blue faces you know. But my daughter painted every face in brown and she was saying she found that very unusual. Anyway as time had gone on cause I always taught my kids to be proud of who they are and where they come from. She left from, we moved from Small Heath and we went to live in Balsall Heath and I moved her school and she went to St John and Monica's in Moseley. She did well at St John and Monica's, cause she had a very good teacher coming up to the end and err I always remember wanting to sit her for the eleven plus and this teacher who was actually an examiner on the eleven plus board, she called me to the school one day and goes "*it would be good to put Natasha in for the eleven plus, but I'm going to tell you this and I'm going to be open and honest.*" She goes "*most Afro-Caribbean kids won't get in cause they vet them and therefore to subject your child through all that and for her not to get in would be probably have a profound effect on her.*" So she said "*I'm not telling you not to put her forward, but I'm just telling you what the obstacles may be.*"
- 32:48 R I didn't put her forward for the eleven plus which I wish I did now, I should have gone against what the teacher said because she was quite a bright child, erm but she went on to be quite level headed and whatever. She went through junior school, then she went to senior school, the senior school she went to was Archbishop Ilsley in Acocks Green. Archbishop Ilsley was a very how can I say without being too militant, it was a racist school at the time. Most of the Afro-Caribbean kids and Asian kids that did get into that school because they were quite particular, most of them had got kicked out by their first year. Erm they found all kinds of reasons to get rid of them. Fortunately

my daughter wasn't one of them but they did try as the years went on, in which to discredit her in so many different ways to get her out of the school. They'd ring me up about silly things like I can always remember one day I was off work and I got a phone call from the teacher and the teacher said to me "*Natasha, she's come to school with all these rings on her hands*", well when it was her birthdays, we always bought her a gold ring for her birthday, so by the time she was like in senior school, mid senior school, she had quite a few gold rings. So the teacher said "*and I don't know where she's got them from.*" I said "*What are you trying to imply?*" She said "*Well you know, why has she got all these rings on?*" and I said "*because I can justify them because she's had each one for her birthday or for Christmas, so I can justify that.*" "*Well we don't want her wearing these rings to school.*" That was one thing. Then it would be silly things like she wasn't wearing the right socks, she's got graffiti on her bag. I remember buying her this beautiful coat for winter and it had this motif on the back of the coat and they said she couldn't wear the coat to school because it had graffiti on the back of the coat. They'd find anything to try and make her life difficult in school. Erm she stuck it out, she made some good friends going to that school as well, a couple them she's still close friends with today.

35:10 R Once she left Archbishop Ilsey, she went on to go to Mathew Bolton College and also Joseph Chamberlain College where she did leisure and tourism. From there she got a place, she applied for university, she wanted to be a sports physiotherapist. She got a place at Northampton University, then she just fell ill. Didn't know what was wrong with her. She would be doubling up in pain, didn't know what was wrong with her. Anyway to cut a long story short erm the university said for her to defer for a year and just to you know make sure she gets you know well, but she didn't get well, she just got worse, she was quite a bubbly and vey strapping young lady. She went down to six stones, we thought she may have cancer or something like that. Anyway they diagnosed her in the end, which took them six years to diagnose her with endometriosis. At the time we didn't know what endometriosis was, but I can't really go into it now because it's quite a long medical thing, but what we did find out was erm stars like Marilyn Monroe and other women had experienced the same condition as well. After going through that, she was a fighter so she fought her way though and she did jobs, she worked for the Royal Mail, she worked for Birmingham University, she worked in the canteen. She didn't give up, she didn't just say oh that's it my life's finished, she carried on and whatever. Anyway erm when she did realise, she goes erm "*I wanna do something more.*" So she started to do care work and she started to work with people that had brain injuries and from there she then trained in tracheotomy you know and those kind of health conditions and erm from there now I can say now she's now a mental health practitioner but for people that have had brain injuries and that, so she now works in Preston, she lives in Blackpool, she's married, she's been married now for eight years and she's done quite well for herself. But I have to say, she's still had a very difficult journey along that way. Her illness has been, she had a brain

aneurysm five years ago, she nearly died. She has recently had a blockage of her bowels and she was quite ill, so she had to have an operation for that. So she's been through a whirlwind of stuff and I admire her for her strength cause she's kept on going and she's now back at work and erm she's been promoted, she's actually now a trainer as well within her work role and she's going from strength to strength and she's actually planning to go to university to actually develop her career a bit further now.

38:45 I Thank you Marianne. I wonder now if you can tell me about your work history and your other children.

38:58 R Yes I've got two sons, I've got my eldest one Nathaniel, he's now twenty eight, nearly twenty nine, or is he twenty nine, nearly thirty...he's twenty nine sorry. He lives in Essex in London, he went to junior school, he went to St Anne's in Camp Hill. He did quite well and from St Annes he went on to go to Holy Trinity School in Small Heath where he did drama a lot at the school, he did quite a few performances. He was sporty but not as sporty as my daughter. I'm very proud of him, he's done quite well for himself, he's now a manager in Essex as well. He's now got two boys which he's just had recently, he had one last year and he's had another one this year. And he's done quite well for himself.

40:08 R My youngest Niko, he's now twenty one, he was just twenty one last week, the second of December. He's now at Worcester University, but he also went to St Annes Junior School and then he went on to Holy Trinity like my big son. He was very sporty. As you can see my cabinet, I've got all his trophies for football that he did. He's played for different teams or whatever along the way and he actually got scouted for a football team. But from a very early age, he always said he wanted to do accountancy. I never understood why, I think they did this thing at school where they said what would you like to be and he said an accountant and I remember picking him up from school and I said *"so how was your day?"* *"We did this thing about what we wanna be when we're bigger."* He said to me and I said *"what do you wanna do?"* He said *"I wanna be an accountant."* I looked at him and I thought what do you know about accountancy? Anyway as the times gone on, he's very very good at maths, very very very good at maths. Again I would have to say that teachers have always tried to downgrade Afro-Caribbean and Asian kids and one of the things was what they did with my son was they didn't want to put him forward for certain exams because they said they didn't think he would achieve, but my son is very head strong and I remember he used to come home and say *"I know I can do it, I know I can do it."* Well when parents were getting like tutors and things like that, my son didn't want no tutors, cause I was prepared to pay for a tutor, he didn't want any tutors, he was very confident in himself and he ended up being the highest scorer in class all through his junior school years. When he left junior school he went on to go to Solihull College, sorry after senior school he went to Solihull College, where he passed most of his exams there and he's now at Worcester

University studying accounts and business and economics and he's now in his second year and he's actually landed a placement, a paid placement and he's loving it and he's actually left home, so he's actually looking after himself and caring for himself, I'm very very proud of him. Very very proud of him.

42:41 I Well done, well done. Marianne, can you tell us about your own jobs that you have had.

42:50 R Ok erm my earliest job, as I said I had my daughter so rearing my daughter at a young age, it was trying to find my way in life as to, because I told you I came from a very turbulent home life, so therefore I was never really settled in what I wanted to do apart from the fact that I wanted to erm work with people, I was a people person, I didn't want to work in a factory, wanted to do nursing, didn't know how to go about it. Anyway I used to go to Small Heath School which had a youth club at Small Heath School and there was a lady there called Sarah and Sarah used to be very much in contact with us young people, especially because I had my daughter as well, she would advise me and guide me and things like that and erm she said "*Well first thing is, go to college and you know get some qualifications behind you.*" Although I did do my exams at school, so even though I was sixteen I did do my exams at school, although I could have dropped out, I didn't, so I did my exams at school. I went on to go to Garretts Green College, I put my daughter into a nursery when she was two years old. I used to go to Garretts Green, go and pick up my daughter from school, cook her dinner, try and do my studying, you know it was very very difficult because I didn't have much money, I was struggling at the time, still am a bit but never mind. And went to Garretts Green, did computers then I also did a course in Health & Social Care.

44:37 R I was placed at East Birmingham Hospital where I did my training, so I'd do like blood pressures, taking temperatures, changing dressing, bed panning, all those kinds of areas when nurses did those kinds of tasks. But I found it difficult because you would have to deal with deaths. I went on the ward one day and a lady had died so that was traumatic for me. Also certain dressings that, because I've not got a really strong stomach, so certain dressings like I had to change a dressing one time and it was like the lady had gangrene and so I found that difficult to sort of stomach so I thought in the end is nursing really for me, you know. Anyway I went on afterwards to do voluntary work and erm by this time I'd moved to Balsall Heath and I started to think what do I want to do with my career and landed a placement at Rathbone in Kings Heath and that started me off I think. Rathbone, I worked with young people with learning difficulties, so I was, my base place was at Lindsworth School in Northfield and I had a case load of young people that I had to work with, work with their families to access services within their local area, so once they'd finished their educational side of things, how could they could access for leisure, for education, for all those kinds of things that would can of support them during their last journey. I liked that. Unfortunately that was just, that was a training that only lasts for a certain period of time, so then I

decided well where do I want to go from here, I then went on to continue doing my health and social care studies at erm, I can't remember the name of the.... it was based at Bournville College, but we also had to do residential at, not Newman, I cannot remember the name, but anyway erm as I told you before I had difficulty with my learning so I struggled a bit where that was concerned, but I didn't give up. While I was at Rathbone, I always remember they had a notice board with job vacancies and I remember going into work one day and one of the staff said to me "*Marianne, have you looked on the notice board?*" I said "*no.*" They said "*there's a job here that's just perfect for you.*" And I went "*What is it?*" and she goes "*It's a care officer's job working for runaway teenagers in residential care.*" And I went "*Ooh I can't do that.*" And they was going "*Yes you can, we think that you would be perfect for it.*" So anyway I applied for the job, I went for the interview, I got a letter back saying unfortunately I wasn't successful, bit down hearted but then the following week, I got a phone call. *Is this Marianne?*" "*Yes*" "*The interview that you came to, we'd like to offer you the job*" and I went "*oh ok I thought I didn't get it?*" They said "*Erm we think you're more suited to the ones that actually came for the interview.*" I went "*ok.*"

48:27 R So I worked in Trafalgar Road, Moseley for eleven and a half years working with runaway teenage girls that also were involved in prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism and various different issues that they were experiencing. It was residential so I had to do a lot of night shifts, weekends, and jobs like that, so actually having to ask my mum and people to look after my kids, it was very challenging and I worked there for many years until the home closed down. I then went on to do some because I didn't know what direction I was going to take after the home closed down cause at that time I still always doubted myself and still didn't have enough confidence education or academic wise, so erm I went on, after leaving there I then moved home and moved to Sparkbrook.

49:37 R Moving to Sparkbrook was different from Balsall Heath, totally different. Balsall Heath was very vibrant, very busy, very active. Sparkbrook was more calmer at the time, but there was an organisation that was near to me and it was called Sparkbrook Association and that was on Grantham Road and I used to go there for advice if I needed advice for like accessing services and things like that and as the time went on, there'd be these group of women that we used to go to get advice from or I'd say to somebody if they come and said to me "*I need some help with something,*" I'd go "*Oh go to the organisation, they're help you,*" and things like that and there was a guy called Mike that was running it at the time and a woman called Judith. Now if anybody knows about the history of that place as well, it also was a farm back in the days, so they'd have chickens and goats and all sorts of stuff, imagine in Sparkbrook (**Laughing**) and it wasn't even like a farm, farm, it was just a massive back garden where they'd do all these kind, so kids could come and learn about you know the environment of horticultural and those kind of issues, so they'd grow tomatoes and things like that.

Anyway one day Mike came to us and he said to us this group of women, "You know, why don't you set up a women's group?" We'd look at him and go "what do we know about women's group and all that?" and he'd go "don't worry, we'll help you." Anyway we sat down for weeks on end, we ended up setting up the women's group, I ended up being the Chair of the women's group. We then developed what we wanted to do, strategies, so we'd go round asking the women what were the things that they felt that was needed and things like that, nurseries, training programmes for women who had children, but they wanted a nursery where they could leave their child as well as learn and things like that.

51:54 R So erm we then went for a lottery fund and we got a quarter of a million pounds and set up our own nursery and training programme and eleven years on, the women's group is still running. I'm not so much hands on now because of the jobs that I've had to do paper work that I've had to do and I'm now a trustee and a company director for the organisation and I must admit I don't get paid for it, it's all voluntary, but my career path, it's took me to now working with Birmingham Youth Service, so I'm now a youth worker. I went on to train as a youth worker, went to Birmingham University to train as a youth worker, it was very challenging, very hard because I said before, learning isn't one of my strong points. I'm now qualified as a youth worker and also I've just went back to college in 2012 and I've now got my qualifications also in Health & Social Care Diploma. I've also got a Counselling & Mentoring qualification as well. It has been very challenging for me but I've tried my best to stick it out.

53:24 R I'm still working for Birmingham Youth Service, but I've also done other jobs in between as well, so working providing care, home care for the elderly, so I've learnt various skills in that field of work. I've also worked with enterprising communities. Enterprising communities was a government initiative that was set up to support local people, to access services as particularly where it comes to jobs and employment, so I would actually do Outreach work, going to people's homes, finding out what kind of support they needed and then guiding them through the process and I would actually be sitting down for hours on end, finding jobs that may be suited to them, going to their homes, going through these jobs, you know inviting them to workshops to help them with doing their CV's and interview techniques and things like that. But the government then pulled the plug on that which is a shame really because I think it was a very very worthwhile thing to do. It was supported by the European Commission as well, so it was funded by that, but when that money all sort of dried up or it was withdrawn, then that service was then taken away.

53:42 I Marianne, what are your plans and hopes for the future?

54:50 R My plans and hopes for the future? Well for the age that I'm at now, I've got

another five years or so working years before I retire at sixty five. Erm it's a very difficult one because I have so many different things, my mind's one of those minds that race a lot, so I have so much things that I would like to do, erm one of the things I would like to do is erm I have a friend that now is immigrated to Gambia who is setting up a school and a library over in Gambia. I would like to get involved in that. I'd like to still do some kind of community work, I'd still like to continue doing community work over here, but I think eventually I'd like to leave the country and go and live somewhere nice and hot where I can put my feet up and enjoy the remaining days of my life, yea.

55:58 I Thank you very much Marianne. Is there anything else Marianne that you would like to tell me about?

56:07 R Yea there's certain areas that I think I missed out as well, you know I'm sort of going back now to like the sixties and the early seventies and the area of Small Heath that I lived in which was quite residential as I mentioned earlier on, but also there was things like the newly arrived, I remember being in junior school and the headmaster had this assembly one morning and he turned round and he said to us *"right we're gonna get some new children coming into the school and these children are from Uganda"*. We didn't know where Uganda was but he said from Africa and he said *"we want you to greet them warmly, they are coming from a country where there's war."* They came anyway, a lot of the kids came to our junior school which was Marlborough as I mentioned earlier and you know some of them became good friends of ours as the years went on and that's where you know multi-culturally we started mixing more together.

57:05 R Also living on Mansell Road in Small Heath, we had a family that moved in on Mansell Road called the Singh's and that was the first time I was able to sort of go into a sort of Asian household and actually be part of an Asian family and the mum use to cook chapatti on the, I can't remember what that griddle thing was and she had two children Michael and Rani and erm we used to eat the chapatti, we used to stand there waiting for their mum to finish doing the chapatti and she'd rub the butter on the chapatti and these chapattis, I can still taste it to this day, so fresh, so nice and erm Michael and Ranni, the family I should say without racing too fast forward with this, the family, then went on to buy a shop on Green Lane, expanded the shop and many people will know that shop now or these people as Michael's Supermarket. They have different supermarkets all over the country now. I heard even in Canada. Rani went on to be a doctor and she actually lives in Canada. Michael I don't really know what happened to him. But they went on to be a very very successful family.

58:25 R Also another recollection for me when my beliefs were as a teenager was which I didn't mention earlier on when you asked about education and school life. In senior school I went through a phase in my life where I wanted

to know more about my blackness, my culture and things that started to surface was things like black power, Angela Davies, Malcom X, and I started to get into you know that kind of side of things that I found, well we're not learning anything about our culture in school. Then a lot of the black kids were saying no we're not learning anything, so we decided to boycott history and also erm RE, Religious Education, cause we found that these two subjects weren't giving us any substance relating to our culture. Our history, we boycotted it and we made a stance to the fact that the material that they were giving us was all related to the English history and whatever and not to our black history.

59:50 R What they did do which we found insulting in the end, was because of us boycotting, we went to school, none of us never stopped going to school, we just wouldn't do the work. So what they decided to do was bring these books in and I will never ever forget, we walked into class, these books were laid on the table, we opened these books and it was the first caption I will always recall was "And they were packed in the slave ships like a tin of sardines." Well that to us was a negative way of educating us about our black history cause they brought slavery into explaining our history. Nothing to do with anybody famous, anybody that was you know fought for the beliefs, you know nothing like that, it was about a suppressive or an oppressive way that we were treated. We wanted a balanced argument but they only gave us a one sided argument. RE was the same, we learnt about god, which I knew from church and all that, but we didn't learn about how religion and our culture worked hand in hand together. So we then boycotted RE, once again we went into lessons, but we refused to do the subject. So RE was never a very favourite subject of mine at school, although I believed in god and had my beliefs, it wasn't a subject that I liked because of how they taught it. Erm in the 1970's they brought out this movie that came on TV called Roots, which influenced a lot of us young black kids at the time. When we watched Roots, it became, it was like it was a stab in the heart to know what our ancestors had gone through, what they experienced through barbaric behaviour and how little certain people in society thought of us as black people. Then it sort of made us realise when it comes to like careers as I mentioned earlier on about the careers advisors that we had, you know go and work in a factory, they didn't want us to aspire to do positive things with our lives. It was about keeping us still suppressed in a negative form, but because of the strength that we had as young people, and because we were quite knowledgeable in wanting to learn and understand about the environment around us and about our cultural background, we then sort of fought for doing more positive things with our lives. I'm not saying that people that work in a factory don't do positive things and isn't a positive contribution, but we had to look at the fact that when many of our parents came to this county, they did work in a factory, we wanted to step away from that and go on to another part of academia you know doing something that was more how can I say, academic where it comes to nursing, where it comes to teaching, so to this day some of my friends are now teachers, run their

own businesses, they are educators, and they've not gone into a factory, they've gone onto aspire to bigger and greater things, so these are the things I thought was important to also mention that I find now in this modern day society groups of people that came together with a common cause or a common reason like the Afro-Caribbean and Asian community came as a one, have now become divided, there's now become a distance between our communities.

01:04:07 R I don't know what's evolved that, why that has happened, I think also, I can sort of say in one sense why I think it has happened, because when you sort of evaluate some of the Asian communities which I now understand you have the Chhachi, the Mirpuri, you have different sections of the Asian community, some of them were in this country probably in the 1960's/1970's. Some of them came with more, I wouldn't use it as an extremist kind of view, they came here with more closed off views that they didn't mix with certain people in the community, whereas back then Asian people came here and mixed, they had a common cause with us, they came from Asia, our parents came from the Caribbean. They came here to make a better life and also I also have it in my heart that our parents came here to make our lives better. They were invited, now it's this argument we shouldn't be in this country da da da , this is not our country bla bla, but we were invited, we were part of the Commonwealth, we were invited after the war to help build back up this country, to make it a greater country, so therefore they then invited, bring your families and help us to build this country back up because you're part of the United Kingdom, you're part of the Sovereignty, you know, but that has now eroded, that has now changed so much.

01:05:54 R Our children, they mix together, but then I tend to find that adults try to keep them apart nowadays, the children don't see colour. When they're growing up they don't see cultural colour, they just see a playmate, a friend, but then it's adults that instil in them, no no no you don't mix with those people because they're not like us. But what we have to remember culturally that in the 50's and the 40's and the 60's, that's how it was where certain communities like probably the white community treated us in them times that we were different from them, now we've found that we're adapting that same kind of behaviour towards each other, we're different from them so we don't mix with them and I think I find that so sad nowadays. You know, I'm glad that my children have grown up to accept people for who they are, they work to strive, to respect others regardless of where they come from, whatever background they come from and also I myself in the work that I do, the majority of young people that I work with in my paid work, are from the Somalian community, are from the Asian community, are from you know the African community, are from different communities and I love that diversity of where I work. Where I work at Concord Youth Centre, you know hats off to them in Sparkbrook, that is a youth centre that I went to when I was a teenager, in the 70's. This is now 2014 and I am actually working in a building

that I used to go to as a young person. You know the dynamics may have changed a bit with the group of young people, but young people, nothing changed in the way of needs and wants and hopes and aspirations and I find myself very privileged to be able to work in an environment that I once accessed for those same reasons as well and also in my voluntary work capacity, I work with people from **ALL** different communities, but I work with adults in that area. I work with the women that are going through challenges, you know from various different communities. I have women from the Mirpuri, from the Chhachi, from various Pakistan, India, you know that come to me, they see me on the road *“sister I need help”* cause that’s sometimes how they call me, *“sister I need help, my son, my daughter, me, my husband”*, they’ve got issues that they may need support with. I never ever turn round and say *“oh you’re not from my community so I will not engage with you.”* I believe that we’re all human beings, we all need support regardless of what cultural background we come from and I have to say this, sometimes women trust women from other communities to confide in when it comes to sensitive issues within their community. So I find that Asian women tend to come to me and confide in me with sensitive issues because they know it’s not going to go back into their community and cause them problems and issues, so you know it’s about understanding and working together and I had to put those things into this documentary that I’m doing with you Napheas because it’s important to understand, I’ve seen the changes and the differences over the years, over the generations and it’s a balance of understanding, I’m not biased to anybody, I’m not taking a side from another, I just believe in being equal, I believe in being sensitive to other people’s religion and their culture and I believe that you know all these divisions in society today can be overcome if people just see a bigger picture and that is what all human beings, if you cut me I bleed and my blood is red, if I cut you, you bleed, your blood is red. You have a heart, I have a heart. You have lungs, I have lungs. What is the difference apart from the colour of our skin? There’s no difference. Thank you.

01:10:54 I Thank you very much Marianne.