

## **File 7 p. 74 • Conflict between cultures can be positive**

Two years ago I started writing a two-part serial called *Second Generation* for Channel Four. I set it in east London around the Bengali community where I grew up. Inevitably, it has flashes of autobiography, but perhaps more importantly, it has stories – stories that I have seen, stories that I have heard, stories that I know and stories that I have made up knowing they could happen. All of these stories start with the journey that brought our parents to this country. In my mind these families were pioneers, coming to an unknown and often hostile land with suitcases full of hopes and dreams and very little else.

With *Second Generation* I wanted to write something truthful – not something representative. My reason for making this distinction is that as second-generation Asians we have gone past representation. Asians have changed British culture in the 35-40 years we have been here. Our parents brought not only a culture but a system of values – hard work, respect for elders, strength of the family unit, irrevocable belief in education, acute business acumen<sup>1</sup> – that enabled them to flourish in a foreign environment and eventually change that environment from within.

Neil Biswas, *theguardian.com*, 2003

**1.** *un grand sens des affaires*

## File 7 p. 75 • From Somalia with Love

In some ways I felt a lot older than I was. I always considered myself mature for my age, especially compared with the other kids in my class. My theory was that it was because I had quite a lot of responsibility at home and had to be “sensible”<sup>1</sup> most of the time. I didn’t get the space to behave like a spoilt<sup>2</sup> baby at home – I had to do my bit, especially as the only girl! I remember complaining to Hoyo<sup>3</sup> once about how all my friends go to do absolutely nothing at home and never had to worry about cleaning or looking after younger nephews and nieces. She gave me a funny look then.

“Safia, do you know how easy you have it here compared to back home in Somalia?”

I had heard this speech before.

“By the age of 11, I was cooking meals for the family and, as you know, your auntie was married by the time she was your age!”

Married? At my age? No way! Hoyo took one look at my horrified face and laughed:

“Don’t worry, Safia,” she giggled, “I’m not planning to marry you off just yet... You still need to learn to make *anjero!*”<sup>4</sup>

At that we both laughed. There was one thing that Hoyo wanted me to have almost more than anything else: a good education.

Na’ima B. Robert, *From Somalia with Love*, 2009

1. reasonable    2. *gâté*    3. mother, in Somali

4. a Somalian type of pancake

**File 7 p. 76 • Grapes in My Father's Yard<sup>1</sup>**

I love English,  
I love my language too  
And I love to see my children speak my language,  
I thank my mum for my mother tongue [...]  
I used to watch blooming<sup>2</sup> grapes  
in my father's yard,  
I used to listen to my father's song [...]  
I want to say I am lost between grammars  
I pretend to laugh at the jokes that I don't understand  
I feel at home when I hear my great grand-father's tongue  
Strange voices in Gujurati give comfort.  
Strange voices in Kurdish give comfort.  
Strange Polish voices give comfort. [...]  
I want to belong

Astrid, Mihaela, Anokhee, Rangin, Anwar, Dilo, and Shirin,  
“Grapes in My Father's Yard”, [wwwstoryingsheffield.com](http://wwwstoryingsheffield.com)

**1.** garden    **2.** en fleurs

**File 7 p. 76 • After my Polish grandmother died, I did not speak her native language for years**

As a child I spoke Polish beautifully, thanks to my grandmother. While my mother went out to work, my grandmother, who spoke no English, looked after me, teaching me to speak her native tongue.

When I was five, Babcia died. In shock, I refused to speak Polish until I saw Babcia again. I never spoke Polish, never ate Polish food nor visited Poland. My childhood was gone and almost forgotten.

Then in 2004, more than 30 years later, things changed again. A new wave of Polish immigrants had arrived and I began to hear the language of my childhood all around me – every time I got on a bus. The language sounded so familiar yet somehow distant. I began to write a novel about a fictional Polish family and, at the same time, decided to enroll at a Polish language school.

And strangely, in my language classes, I still had my accent and I found words and phrases would sometimes come unbidden<sup>1</sup>, long lost speech patterns<sup>2</sup> making a sudden reappearance. I had found my childhood again.

Adapted from Joanna Czechowska, *theguardian.com*, 2009

**1.** unexpectedly    **2.** sentence constructions

## **File 7 p. 77 • Children breaking down the language barrier**

When families migrate to Britain, parents often find it hard to engage with many aspects of society. Children who attend school or have been learning English in their home country often master the new language before their parents or other family members. Also, it is easier for younger people to integrate with a new community. As a result, the role of interpreter or mediator often falls to the children. They have to deal with a variety of situations: they have to translate medical information when their parents go to the doctor, they have to translate their teachers' messages, they also have to do the shopping in local shops, and even communicate with the social services.

This role as interpreter can make the children feel frustrated or embarrassed. Also, they sometimes have to miss school in order to attend appointments with their parents. Their situation of responsibility sometimes gives them authority over the parent.

It is not good practice to expect young carers to interpret for other family members, particularly when it involves someone with an illness. Parents should be aware that children should not have to interpret medical information or be involved in social or legal procedures.

## File 7 p. 78 • The day I made it

**Roubeena Shamtalee** had just graduated from the university of Edinburgh. She asked to be photographed outside the School of Literature and Cultures with her mother Shamima, her father Zyad, her little sister Zeenat and her teacher Marjorie (in blue). I asked Shamima whether she was proud of her daughter. You can guess her answer. Roubeena and Zeenat were born in London and their parents in Bangladesh. Shamima thinks her daughters had more opportunities than she did and that they will change the world.

**Kingston Macabetu** was laughed at by his teachers when he said he was going to be a top City lawyer<sup>1</sup>. Now he has a law degree<sup>2</sup> from London University and is a trainee<sup>3</sup> at a large City law firm. His mother Maryam is a nurse; she is Kingston's great supporter even if she was taken aback<sup>4</sup> at her son's career choice. Kingston's father Joss is Anglo-Nigerian. Maryam is very proud of her son but does not want to claim too much credit for his hard work and achievements. "He was born under a lucky star."

Inspired by photographer Bill Knight's exhibition, *Where I Come From*, 2017

1. avocat(e)    2. diploma    3. stagiaire    4. surprised

**Rita, your parents moved from Kosovo to London in order to give you and your siblings<sup>1</sup> a better life. What does your home country mean to you today?**

I feel very close to it, even though I left Kosovo so early in my life. I don’t want people to think that I’ve abandoned where I’m from. I am actually working with UNICEF in order to give back for all the love and support I have received from the people there. But I also really admire my mom and dad’s brave decision to move.

**As a child, were you able to understand what your parents had done for you?**

They didn’t even speak English and it was a big adjustment, but at the time I just didn’t realise how bad it was. The older I got the more I saw what they sacrificed most – their families. It was a pretty dark moment, but my mom and dad always made the best out of a bad situation so they figured it out.

**Since your parents gave up their lives to give their kids a better one, how did they react when you told them that you were going to quit school and pursue an uncertain career in music?**

I think they were pretty scared when I told them I was going to leave school and see if I can do this. Because honestly – I knew it in my gut<sup>2</sup> – I couldn’t do anything else.