

Name: Lawrence Morgan
Date of Birth: 1986
Place of Birth: Peterborough
Date of Interview: 30th November, 2017
Duration: 00:10:47

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Can you give us your name, your date of birth and today's date please?

My name's Lawrence Nathan Morgan and I was born in 1986 and today's date is the 30th November, 2017.

Thank you. So, when did you first move to Milton Keynes?

I came to Milton Keynes...to *live*, I came to Milton Keynes in April...no, May, May, 2016 but I'd been visiting Milton Keynes a lot longer than that because I have family here, so... I'm from Peterborough in Cambridgeshire. My parents moved there I should imagine it would have been somewhere in the eighties because I probably wasn't born too long after that. From...Dad was from South London, Mum was from Kent and then, much like people were coming to Milton Keynes, Peterborough was one of those towns where we're not too far from London and people moved there. So they moved there, got a house, kids: all that stuff. I left Peterborough when I was twenty-seven and I went travelling in Australia/New Zealand and, after three years of being there, I then found myself here in 2016 and been liking it ever since.

So what was the deciding factor for moving to Milton Keynes?

Coming back from New Zealand, having no money, and I started off in Kent with my mum's sister and then overstayed my welcome and then it was like, 'Well, we're going to have to take you back to somewhere, so it was like: "Oh Grandma, I need some help," and so Grandma, being a lovely eighty-one year old, very religious Christian, Jamaican lady, it was like: "Okay, come..." And then I just came, was just dropped off, and lived on my grandmother's conservatory floor for about eight months. *[Laughs]*. So that was good, so I was just like: "Yeah, pretty good." I could have gone back to Peterborough but I didn't want to; I didn't want to live in my hometown. I'd been there for twenty-

seven years, moved away, and living in Milton Keynes, compared to the visits – ‘cause my grandma’s lived here for as long as I can remember and I’ve got cousins here – but we’d just come to her house in Oldbrook, maybe see the shopping centre – I can remember actually, like, vivid memories of the shopping centre just being like: “How long is this thing? This is like...” It always just seemed...not so much remembering the outside but it was always the inside I can remember and just like never-ending corridors. And then the Xscape, sort of, maybe a bit more as a teenager, you’d go to like the cinema and I do actually have a vague memory of The Point when it was a cinema. I think we saw some film there but I can’t remember what it was. But I remember arcade machines, I think, in the bottom of it as well. So yeah, where was I going with this? *[Laughs]*

So what was it like, living in Grandma’s conservatory, I mean, while you were working and things like that? What was it like?

Well, you say ‘working’, so I... ‘cause of how long I’d been away for and I hadn’t been in the country that long, I couldn’t claim any Jobseeker’s or anything so I was kind of like, well yeah, just basically living off my grandma pretty much, in a sense. I did get a bit of work but it was unreliable work in terms of agencies. Be out in Fenny Stratford so it was working at the Tesco Distribution Centre. You’d get a call saying like: “Don’t come in today,” and all that kind of stuff, so...you know, they tell you it’s five days of work but then you end up working like three days. And so that was...I’m very thankful to her ‘cause she helped me actually before I went to Australia as well and then helped me since so, yeah, a very nice lady. I haven’t done much to repay her back actually, to be honest.

So what do you think of the rest of Milton Keynes, once you’d got to explore it?

Yeah, that was the real cool part, so literally those things I mentioned earlier, the shopping centre, the Xscape and the Snowzone, were... – and my grandma’s house – were the only memories I had of Milton Keynes but then, once I lived here and...I always, like, sing praises to people about Milton Keynes and I think getting on your bicycle is the best way of like seeing it, ‘cause I... So, I managed to pick up some work at...I was doing delivery for a bit so that really, like...exploring it and it was a bit of an adventure. You don’t have to listen to anyone ‘cause you’re just picking up food and dropping off food in your own...sort of your own boss and just ending up in really random places. Like, I went...I realise what it is now but I ended up in one place in Shenley Church End and these really strange houses: like, one house that was round, another house that was...it was just very weird architecture and it was... ‘Cause, in Oldbrook, everything is

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just like bricks and very straight lines and a little bit like Fishermead and Conniburrow but this place was really weird. And then, later on, I've learned that it's, like, it was called Energy World or something like that; it was the first sort of eco, energy-efficient housing, which was really cool.

And just things like that. I'm, like, every day really nicely surprised by things I can find when I just, like, go to stuff. Like, being here today in this building, I've seen the front of it but the back of it is obviously a sort of old barn – like MK11 – some old barn, [unclear 00:05:32], some old like country manor house. Just like weird things like that. It's really cool. So there is, like, that history hidden amongst all this new stuff and it's really cool.

Excellent, so what do you do now in Milton Keynes? What's your job, etc.?

Now, I'm a student. I'm here at the University of Bedfordshire in Milton Keynes, so...on my second year of doing a BA in events marketing management. And I work part-time, just a bit of retail, and then, on top of all that, I'm currently working on my own community projects and stuff.

So could you describe some of your involvement in community projects then?

Yeah, so I am attempting, with some colleagues, to start up a social enterprise to facilitate and enable community-led housing, in the form of co-operatives, co-housing and stuff like that. There's a bit of a movement happening around the UK and there's, like, programmes happening and funding coming, actually, from central government to allow that and we want to see if we can tap into that and make much more affordable living possible in Milton Keynes 'cause it's not really that possible, maybe, for some people.

So how do you think Milton Keynes is for providing social housing at the moment?

I don't know much about social housing – and I have this conversation with a lot of people – I don't know when social housing became a term because I remember when council housing was a word. So maybe while I was out of the country but, I mean, I personally have not experienced it. I mean, I did go...actually, when I was in my grandmother's conservatory I did go to the council and sort of ask but I hadn't been here that long, plus I'm a single male and there was like eight hundred families on the register, so...and I chose to be in Milton Keynes, I mean like, I could have gone back to Peterborough and lived with my parents and stuff but I...so. But yeah, but luckily enough I

managed to find a place. But I could easily have not been in that situation as well.

So you say you are interested in co-operatives. What do you think co-operatives can offer as an alternative to housing in Milton Keynes?

Just...well, just to England in general, the whole country, it's...at the moment it's quite a complicated process. What it can offer is just a bit more long-term security. This whole sense of ownership is something that we've had since the eighties and property, homes, have now become like an investment. A house is not a home for a lot of people now. With co-operative housing, it's a bit of a different model because you're collectively owning the properties and you live there much more long-term; and a sense of community as well. And Milton Keynes, kind of, was designed...what I find really fascinating about Milton Keynes is the actual...the vision that the Corporation had and a lot of, you know, the big names: Fred Roche, Campbell and all that sort of stuff. I think all the estates were, like, kind of designed with that kind of principle because the garden cities idea is very interesting but I guess, because the estates are so large, that kind of didn't happen. And then with a, like, a community co-op or a community land trust or something like that, it's a bit more of a smaller scale, so like the nucleus is, like, around a couple of houses with a shared community garden and you're integrating in more with your neighbours. I think Milton Keynes had that sort of...that idea but because of the scale it maybe didn't fully succeed in that, maybe. I'm not too sure.

Is there anything else you'd like to see happen in the future Milton Keynes?

Yeah, I think Milton Keynes has a lot of culture in it. I...the two years of being here, the history of the place is very interesting. Retention of people would be a good thing 'cause the youth culture, I suppose much like myself, I mean, I left...in my home town of Peterborough people would, like, probably leave, go to university and maybe never come back. Or if they stayed they were just like going to be there forever. And, you know, it's only fifty years old, lots of stuff happens here all the time, lots of events, and it would be nice to see sort of...like, maybe hopefully when there is a proper university – 'cause my university is not really a...it's just a office building really – but that people in that sort of twenty to early thirties kind of stay around. Not just families but a bit more of a youth culture happening and just make it a good place...I look at places like Bristol and I think, 'Oh, that's cool but Milton Keynes could just be as cool.'

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So do you think you'll stay here?

Probably yes. I'm becoming quite invested in Milton Keynes at the moment so... I was very nomadic, I moved around constantly for four years while I was travelling and...but it's good to settle down and I'm really glad it was Milton Keynes 'cause I think, the places I've been to and stuff, I think I was...it was...yeah, I think there was a reason why I came to Milton Keynes.

Great, well I'm happy with that.

That's a nice little end to that, very nice.

Yeah, brilliant, thanks for that. I suppose there's like a hundred things I could have asked you but I just sort of went along...

No, I was kind of...

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END OF INTERVIEW