

Name: MIKE KASIBO
Date of Birth: 1978
Interviewed by: VICKY HOLTON and ROGER KITCHEN
Duration: 00:24:05

(00:00:00) My name is Mike, Mike Kasibo. Today is the 9th December 2017 and I was born 1978.

And so basically, what were your first impressions when you came to Milton Keynes ... of the place?

So I moved from London to come to Milton Keynes and my first impression coming to Milton Keynes ... before coming to Milton Keynes I'd moved ... I tried to look at other places; I went to Aylesbury, I went to Northampton, I went to Bedford, to Luton. I looked around, living in London, obviously London is a very busy place so I wanted some quiet place but also, nice place to live in. And so I looked at these other places and I wasn't very impressed and then I came to Milton Keynes and I was straight away just felt at home. I liked the trees, the space in Milton Keynes. I not go hate roundabouts; but I love roundabouts in Milton Keynes and the streets in Milton Keynes are very clear.

All the future is in Milton Keynes and I just felt at home and so since coming to Milton Keynes 2004 I just settled here and I can't look at any other place.

That is fabulous! That's a great opening, thank you. So, your reasons for coming here, did you come here ... let's go straight through to your setting up of the Foundation. Did you set that up before you came here? Or did you set it up when you got here?

No, ...

I'll ask you that in a second ... so, did you set it up here, the Foundation?

The Foundation, no. I set up ... yes, ... I set up here.

So, just tell us about setting up your Ugandan Outreach Project Foundation.

So my organisation is called Global Outreach Foundation MK and Global Outreach Foundation MK was set up after my experience. I took time to volunteer in Calais and the refugee crisis and I was speaking to the (.....?.....) (00:01:59) team, October 2016 and having worked with young people in a community, with the local authority, so many young people coming in from different parts of the world and struggling to integrate in a community field. Actually, the community they are coming into is part of their ... it is now their home.

And so, Global Outreach was to reach out to these young people, through different activities, we'd got football, which we are still running now, we bring in young groups from different parts of the world, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Africa, here. They come in and integrate. We're looking at the cultural aspect, young people, you know, getting to know each other's culture and creating the real community cohesion. So, we do different activities but the most important one is football with the young people.

And so Global Outreach Foundation works forming for the purpose of associating patriot integration in MK and with that we do different activities. So we've got football for the young people, we've got a Breakfast Club which is aimed at, you know, one to one conversations with people, creating that, you know, understanding of relationships, different appearance.

We do, like, in the morning, 9 am to 12, after parents have dropped children at school, they come in and have the morning breakfast, a free morning breakfast and through that breakfast we have, like, Syrian communities do their breakfast; it's just their culture how they do their breakfast. Sometimes they have Grape seeds, sometimes it is the African ... different African communities, like the Somali communities, sometimes it's the English breakfast. The thing really, is the cultural awareness in a community because we believe that, you know, when people are learning about each other's culture it will be that, you know, really, integration will be easy for people to get to know each other.

Besides the Breakfast Club we look at the African 'Verse for a Day', which was launched in August of this year and this one we had about 3,600 people attended and again the aim was to bring people together and to showcase African communities, the showcase of their culture, to the wider community and some people are mad about Africa, what is it about Africa?

But also to teach young Africans who are born here and who are struggling with identity issues, heritage, their roots. There was a

lot they planned on the day we had the Showcase in different African dressing, for example, the music, the different clothing, different aspects really.

We also formed recently an African Forum. Again, this is to bridge the gap between the wider community and the police. Now, if there is any problem in the community the police will approach this by calling the Forum and we will be able to resolve the issues ...

(00:05:00)

Cough, cough, cough, cough ... I am so sorry... have you got to the end of your sentence? I was trying to hold a terribly tickly throat down. So you got to the end of that? Were you happy there, when you said about the police and liaison with the police, or would you like to continue with that?

Yes, so besides that we had a Black History Month, a Black History Month again. We are looking at the identity aspect and our theme was African Contribution to the British Society. So, African Contribution, we've got so many young people who are falling into what we would call NEET, (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and these are young people like (.....in this estate?.....) I live in up to last year. We've lost so far three young people who have been gunned down in Milton Keynes and so many young people who are into knife crimes and all that kind of unsocial behaviour. So, what we are trying to do really is to be friends with young people and you know, we've got so many Africans here, like Professor Lynch is one of the Africans who settled in Milton Keynes Hospital, who can befriend these young people and what we've been doing since October to December is to go to different schools and talk about Black History Month; we look at identity, we look at heritage, we look at their roots; we look at real values as a young person and this is across the board, not only just African young people. We look at what inspires them, their motivation, even at schools you hear about young people talking about being bullied and because of that it knocks their confidence down and they end up underperforming in the classes, or some others actually leaving school.

So, we are looking at empowering these kids and this is why we have been going around different schools, reaching out to these young people, spending time with them in their own schools or during assemblies and speaking to them and simple questions like, "How many young people can speak different languages, other than English?" and they will put their hands up and when you ask them, "How many of you are confident to speak English before your parents or friends outside school or within school?" and they put their hands down. "I am not confident enough to speak my language or tell my friends about my language." ...

“And why is that?” ... it is, “They will judge me!” So you see, a young person has no understanding of their identity, they are ashamed of sharing it with other friends. So, these are the key things that we are going out and speaking to young people about and to be proud of whom they are. They do not have to be like so-and-so, you know! What they have to do is really to try and understand who they are and be confident to share their values with others, you know? So that is what we are doing around schools.

Besides that we are doing football; during Black History again, we had, for example, the last one we had arranged football with the police and the community, yes and people as well and when the young people came and saw the police they just laughed and said, “No, we can’t! We can’t play football with the police!” and so that shows the gap that is there between the young people and the older community and the police and what we are trying to do is football or arranging tournaments between young people and the police and their parents as well, so they come together and the aim is to bridge that gap that is widening because we realise that actually, it’s not just the young people but their parents as well. Their view and perception of the police is very negative and so we are trying to bridge that gap through football and other activities that I mentioned.

Do you think they have brought some of that perception of the police with them from their other home countries, or do you think it is things mostly that they have picked up since they have been here?

I think most of them they have been picked up since they came here. So, also they came from other countries but because of when they come here and what they’ve been told from people who have had a bad experience with the police is what these youngsters are taking on board and so, I will give you an example of when I started doing football, at 16 or 15, I used to contact a few community police officers and “Can you come around and you know, just pass by and try to breach this gap with these kids?” and obviously, the police are being stretched at the moment and so I didn’t have the police to come around and try to, you know, create that relationship. And I remember one evening when young people were going back at 9 o’clock, 10 o’clock they had to be in and when they were passing through the railways and the residential areas, they were quite loud and so it was people started phoning about this “These kids are very loud, or they’re fighting, or they’re like this?” and within the next second you see four or five police officers they stop them. And when they stop them these kids will say, “I’ve done nothing!” ... “No, you’ve done something! You’re doing

things!" ... "We've done nothing!" so that just ends up it's creating...

(00:10:00)

So the cultural understanding and the differences that we have sometimes end up, you know, moving things from a positive to a negative. And so, the gap between the kids keeps on widening and when the parents hear that as well, you know, straight away, they don't want to know anything about the police.

And so, yes, what we are trying to do really is to bridge that. So we've got now in our remit we have ... where the police is going to be talking to the community about stop and search ... when do we stop and search young people? About communication, if our communities raise an issue what period do they expect to hear from us and then the African community will be talking to the police educating them about the cultural differences that we have, simple things like when a police officer stops a young person and he will be asking them questions and they are not looking you straight in the eyes, that doesn't mean they're guilty, it means that, actually, they are respecting you. So, police officers mistake it and think that when the young person is looking down, they are not looking them in the eyes, straight away they are guilty! From there they just take it that "Boy! Come on! You're guilty, you know!" They end up being handcuffed and all that stuff!

So, these are the areas that we are touching on now ... educating the police and the police educating the community as well.

So, you're helping with perceptions on both sides ...

Yes!

I think, yes, that's very important. I've heard you talk about football, I've heard you talk about ... the guy ... young men being shot! It sounds terrible! What do you do for girls? Are the girls doing the football or what do the girls do?

So the girls, most girls are interested in netball and swimming, so mothers and the girls are into swimming. So, we go swimming, actually there is only one swimming place in Milton Keynes which takes on mothers and girls (.....mostly?.....)
(00:11:44) from the Muslim culture. They need a swimming pool that is private because they don't go into the public swimming pool, so it's only one area and that's ... I think swimming is Saturday in September and it's ongoing for mothers and girls. So that's what they're interested in. So, boys are interested in football, basketball and girls are interested in netball and swimming.

So I think you've said quite a lot about the Foundation, is there anything about the Foundation that you'd like to add?

Yes! So, I think I can add on about the Foundation: the Foundation is quite a new Foundation and for example, at the moment we have been working on reaching out to schools and next year we've got our African Diaspora Day, which is coming up in June. It is going to be at Willen Lake and we're looking at ... we're looking forward to it, people are looking forward to it, people love it; it brings people together, the music and the food and everything.

Besides that, we got what we've called 'The African Camp'. So, this is a time ... in our culture we don't know the camp so much, you know, we enjoy sleeping in our houses and so in July we are going to have ... we are going to camp. African communities are going to come together and we a big fire, we have time for a Story Time, the Elders come and tell stories to young people about how things are done and were done in Africa and also ... because we will be working with Discovery MK, they will be telling us their stories, how things were done here and the history of MK and the Elders will be sharing the history of Africa and different parts of Africa.

We will have drums on two nights ... drums, a big fire, food, music, entertainment, children singing and really having that, you know, people coming together. So, yes, it is our upcoming events. We've got the Breakfast Club which is continuing to come and so it will happen to bring people together. Those are the key things about Global Outreach that we're working on.

*Fantastic! So, this project is about the last 50 years of Milt ... well, ... **the** 50 Years of Milton Keynes, so I will ask you some general questions about Milton Keynes: What do you think, would you see, as a major success of Milton Keynes. If you would like to answer in a sentence?*

The major success of Milton Keynes, first of all, the design of Milton Keynes ... Milton Keynes is very spacious; it is so different from the rest of the other cities and I think that placed a lot of attention in a positive way. Everyone, whenever people come to Milton Keynes ... the first time, straight away ... you'll love it, you know! We've got our culture, the concrete cows, you know, we've got the 'roundabouts', we've got the big ... you know you look at the design of the city, the buildings, how tall they – it is everything; the trees, you know. When you look up our Escape, you look up Campbell Park, they're different features that when you come to MK they straight away attract you, even to think of any other place but just to stay in MK.

(00:15:00)

So, I daren't ask you but what ... do you think there are any failures in Milton Keynes?

Yes, I mean, the other feature which I forgot to mention was the diversity of MK. Milton Keynes is very diverse and Milton Keynes is very accommodating, in a way. You look at how many people, for example, had refugees coming in (.....through?.....) (00:15:26) have been in and have settled in very, very well. We do different activities to support the integration. MK Dons working together, each year we do marching at the MK Stadium Showing Racism the Red Card and all these people come together and we march (you know that picture over there), you'll see people marching holding posters Show Racism the Red Card.

(.....Regarding failure?.....)(00:15:55) speaking to a few people who have just come in as well that integration is still a struggle to a few families. I will give you an example of a family that came here and the mother has been here for five years, but she is still struggling with English and one of the key things ... that actually prompted me to start that Breakfast club ... and so she went to the market, the mini-market, on Saturday morning and her son had gone to football and when she when to buy some stuff she couldn't speak English properly but a gentleman who was standing couldn't understand her and so because of the language the gentleman started shouting at her, "I don't understand you, you know! You should leave!" and it broke her heart! She had been here for quite a while and but unfortunately, she didn't get a chance to learn English and because of that, her integration in the community and not only her but you, when you reach out you find isolation is one of the key things and not only the people coming in as refugees, but the elderly people as well. So you find that isolation is one of the issues that we have to deal with in Milton Keynes.

The transport system is not very, very good unless you drive; you struggle to reach out to different places and may not go. Young people from different parts, because they getting to go from West Bletchley, from Conniburrow, all around MK, but they struggle to get to the football club because of the transport. The buses have got their own times that they run and when it gets to a certain time they stop. So when it comes to half nine, ten o'clock going back is a problem. These kids have to walk going back and I end up sometimes not getting enough young people because of their parents are scared and there isn't enough good transport system and so the safety of these kids is a big worry to the parents.

And so, those are some of the issues. The other issue is that people are moving like they're refugees and migrants. They come in with loads of skills and what they're struggling with is that their skills are not being realised. Someone who came out from Algeria, a doctor who, you know, is a very good constructor [unclear] but he is not getting into the kind of industry the work that he studied for. And so it is a big struggle; they feel ... it knocks their confidence down, they end up in warehouses and yet they are so skilled, they're so experienced and so, I think, realising that in terms of culture, you know, welcoming these people and taking time to understand their skills it will really benefit MK.

What I was going to say to you next was what would you change if you could change something with a magic wand and it sounds like that would be one of the things that you ...?

Definitely, definitely, that would be one I would focus on, to spend time and understand these people and realise their skills because they would be a great, great contribution to MK. I mean, as I said before, we are looking at the African contribution to the British society and you know, you look at ... these people are not just coming in but they're coming in with certain skills, which if we realise those skills, they can benefit us all, you know, quite a lot and they can also motivate young people because you look at the younger generation who are lacking ... most of them lacking role models. And so, realising the contribution of these people, the skills from the adults will benefit a lot ... young people will benefit a lot from that.

So, moving forward, how do you see the next fifty years of Milton Keynes?

I see that Milton Keynes has got, you know, a definite air and high potential and the next fifty years I see Milton Keynes as a city ... I see Milton Keynes as, you know, obviously, as a bigger city. Milton Keynes will be ... I see, you know, positive stuff in Milton Keynes because, you know, the last ten years I've seen a big, massive change in Milton Keynes, the developments in Milton Keynes the ... what the Council is doing is good stuff.

(00:20:00)

So, I see Milton Keynes as, you know, in the next fifty years you know, our vision here we see, you know, a few things have changed and new buildings are being put up. would change and newer things have been observed. So, yes, I believe that there is going to be quite a lot of stuff in the next fifty years.

Lovely! Is there anything anybody would like to ask?

Unidentified: Only, there seems to be a lot of sport thing, is there anything about the arts or ...? I mean, if we had a bit more music too ...

Yes? They're doing their 'Diaspora Day' which seems there's a lot of stuff going on there, isn't there? Would you like to talk about anything to do with arts or is it mostly about sports, etc., to do with your Foundation?

.... Em, ... not much.

No, I see you've got your drumming and you've got the daily ... you do everything, all your cultures

Unidentified: The music stuff was there, yes.

Yes, the culture was all there ... your Showcase, which is in June, which we'll have to go along to, won't we?

Unidentified: Yes. Definitely.

So, do you feel that there is anything you'd like to add?

Em, ...

I think we've got lots of lovely footage there. Some great stuff there. Thank you very much for coming along.

Unidentified: Thank you.

(00:21:08) *Would you like to tell us your story?*

Yes, so my story, I moved to the UK from Uganda, East Africa and I came here to do my studies, a CCA and when I landed at Heathrow Airport, it was everything which became totally different. I came here in November and in November it is very cold, as we all know. I remember coming here and I felt I don't think I would be here for a week! I called my mother and said I'm coming back because I don't know its daytime or night time. So, I came here to do my studies in London and when I got to London I did my first year and I couldn't settle in London and I moved to MK.

But my coming here from Uganda, from a Christian Hamburg middle-class family and so coming to the UK doing my CCA was my dream that I thought I was doing but actually, when I got here I changed my mind into social services and so I ended up in social services and working with the police as well, Thames Valley Police and from there is where I get that inspiration and

my parents used to help a lot in the community and to me, that's my inspiration, you know, for the work that I do.

And so that kind of background, when I came here ... from the question that you asked me, why did Global Outreach ... so, Global Outreach to me is a kind of an extension from what my father has always done, supporting the communities and so when I moved from Uganda to the UK and I saw the gap, you know ... there is that belief that you must be there ... the change that you want to see in the world and hence, I started the Global Outreach.

But that's my story moving from Uganda to the UK and so, from Uganda, landing from London to Milton Keynes.

So, as a Christian do you ... em, ... obviously you were saying that they were Moslem, a lot of the groups that you were working with, so as a Christian, do you look at the segregation of the women and the men in the Moslem communities and think you would like to have more cohesive ... or do you just see them as that is how they do their ...?

As a Christian I look at their segregation, yes. The segregation is still there and what I am trying to do ... sometimes you'll be working with men and men tell you, "Why do you bring women in?" and OK, why not bring them in because they're women who should have been working with them and actually, I say we are all equal. So, in my ... for example, (and in Global Outreach) ... my next person is a lady ... is a Muslim lady and you know, she ... when I'm not there, she looks after everything. So, what I am trying to show everyone is actually, regardless of where we're from, you know, the region, the colour, we're all the same so we should treat each one, every person equally.

Thank you. I'm so glad you said that after the swimming thing, because it was on my mind. Yes, thank you. That's lovely, thank you.

END OF TAPE (00:24:05).