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presents

Untold

Stories

What is
your story?



Bradford College



Untold Stories

→ Introduction
to Untold Stories.

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—→Welcome to Bradford College Library's very first Untold Stories Anthology. This collection of autobiographical stories and vignettes is a product of The Untold Stories Project, 2024–25. Part Creative Writing initiative; part Equity, Diversity and Inclusion drive, the project was fuelled by a collective desire to celebrate our differences, promote empathy, and strengthen Bradford College's sense of community.

Untold Stories began life on the 15th April 2024 as an enrichment activity for E.D.I. Day. Most contributors submitted handwritten pieces on paper, though they were also invited to word-process their stories, record them as podcasts, or express themselves through visual art. From that day up until June 2025, all students and staff at the college were encouraged to take part.

We want to know more about the people who make up our college community. Untold Stories offers a platform for creative expression to **everyone** at Bradford College, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, belief, sexuality, gender, ability, age, neurotype or socio-economic background. We seek to empower each individual to feel proud of their history, heritage, life journey and achievements, whilst nurturing compassion and respect for those whose lives have taken different paths. By providing a chance for all to share their experiences, we hope to learn how to support each other even more effectively.

Untold Stories

—→ The diversity of our college is reflected in the richness of the submissions. This year, some contributors shared the journeys that brought them to Bradford; others explored family histories, described places of emotional significance, or reflected on aspects of their cultural heritage. Many recounted pivotal life moments – often revealing extraordinary resilience, selflessness, and strength.

Yet, the common thread running through this collection is our shared humanity. Regardless of where we come from, what we believe, how we look, how our minds and bodies work, or who we love, we are united by the same fundamental desires: to feel safe, to be valued, to succeed (in our own way), and to spend time with those we care about.

The anthology that you are now reading comprises the work of all Untold Stories collaborators who gave their consent for us to share their words. Each piece is anonymous; names have been removed to protect individuals' identity. With permission from the writers, stories have been transcribed, proofread, and lightly edited by Bradford College Library staff. A small number of stories have been translated into English by ESOL Lecturers.

The stories contained within these pages are autobiographical in nature and, as such, include content that may be distressing or triggering to some readers. The narratives explore personal and sometimes harrowing experiences, including – but not limited to – war, physical and psychological violence, human trafficking, mental illness, physical illness, abuse, death and grief.

—→ These stories are shared with the intent to bear witness, foster understanding, and honour resilience. Reader discretion is strongly advised. Please take care while reading, and prioritize your well-being.

Each contributor to this anthology will receive their own copy of the book, and we will archive the printed publication in Bradford College Library's collection. An e-Book version of the anthology is available on Bradford College's Library Online website. Untold Stories is also hosted on the People Library page of the Bradford for Everyone website.

Special thanks go to the Adult Skills Department, and the 16-18 English Department who worked closely with Library staff to ensure the success of this initiative.

→I have South Asian heritage.

My paternal grandparents were from the same region; if I talk about my maternal grandparents, they also came from South Asia. My family lived there for many hundreds of years. They took part in the construction of the country.

They also played a part in the creation of traditions, heritage, rules and different kinds of events.

“ Now I try to continue that heritage and transfer it to the next generation. In this way, we can keep our heritage alive. ”

→My maternal grandfather was born in India in 1936, whilst my paternal grandfather was born in 1924.

Bradford is one of my favourite cities in Yorkshire because of its rich history and nostalgic buildings.

Some difficulties that me and my family have overcome are financial issues due to slow business.

I have a passion and an interest in supporting and working with children in a primary school. I am also interested in teaching others and marking children's work.

My hopes and plans for the future are to get a job working in a Primary School.

→ One of the things I like most about Bradford College is the vibrant and diverse community.

The college attracts students from all walks of life. Another thing that stands out to me is the college's commitment to providing quality education and opportunities for growth.

The staff are dedicated to helping students succeed, offering support, guidance and resources to ensure a fulfilling learning experience. The range of courses and programs available is impressive, catering for various interests and career paths.

One difficulty I've overcome is the fear of public speaking. I used to get extremely nervous when speaking in front of people. Through practice, preparation and gradually exposing myself to more speaking, I improved myself after a lot of struggling. I was able to build my confidence and improve my speaking skills.

I am interested in keeping up with times: in this fast-paced world, staying updated with the latest knowledge and trends is crucial. Learning allows us to stay relevant and adapt to the ever-changing landscape.

I am interested opening doors to new opportunities. The more knowledge and skills we acquire, the more opportunities become available to us

→ I like Bradford because it seems to me like my country, Pakistan.

I can buy all types of food and there are lots of different Asian clothes shops. Bradford is one of my favourite cities. I never miss my country because, in Bradford, I can find whatever I need.

Bradford College is one of my favourite places. I can do different types of course in the college. They do higher levels to help people get jobs as well. That's why I like Bradford College.

In the future, I am looking to take some courses to learn different skills. My hopes and dreams are big.

Right now, I am doing GCSE English and Maths. If I get good grades, I'll look for a good job, so that I can be independent.

Before I find a job, I need to do hard work in my GCSE classes to get good grades.

→I come from a large family. I live here at Bradford with my parents. My grandparents stayed in the Congo.

I like the atmosphere that reigns at Bradford College.
I like the teachers and their ways of teaching.

I like to make videos on TikTok. I also like to do makeup.

“My passion is cooking.
I am going to become
a great cook.”

→ My grandmother and grandfather lived in Syria. They had one child. This is my dad.

I have a brother who lives in Syria. He is 15.

We had sheep and we were shepherds.

In Syria there was a war. This was difficult and dangerous for me and my family.

I like college. I like my friends at Bradford College.

I like football, I like the gym, and I like boxing.

“ I want to
be a barber. ”

→My great grandmother is from Palestine.

We left Syria in 2012 because of the war. Then we moved to Lebanon.

In 2022, we came from Lebanon to the UK.

Bradford College is an excellent college and everyone loves it from all over the UK.

I used to love football, but now I don't like it because of my weak body.

“ I love reading books
and I love coming to
college every day. ”

→ I was born in England (Bradford).

When I was 9 months old, I went to live in Pakistan. I used to come to England in the summer holidays. Then, in 2022, my family decided to settle here in England.

I am British Pakistani.

I really like Bradford. I like the parks here, and the old buildings. I am studying in Bradford College. The teachers are amazing – they understand your feelings.

When I was born, I was a premature baby. I had difficulty eating. I used to take food through tubes. I stayed in hospital for 7 months. I had thyroid disease, and I still have to take my thyroid medicine.

I am interested in studying Nursing in the future. I even want to buy a BMW with my own money.

I love my family a lot – especially my siblings because they are my support system.

I want to do GCSE English this year and a Nursing course, so that, in the future, I can become a nurse. It is my dream to become a nurse.

→I am from Afghanistan.
I was born in Baghlan,
which is a city in
Afghanistan.

I have one brother and six sisters.

I left my country when I was nearly 15 years old.

Right now, I live in the UK – in Bradford – which I really like!

Bradford has the most beautiful mosque and good communities.

Bradford has a diverse culinary scene with lots of amazing restaurants to try.

I had lots of difficulties in my life when I left my home.

I have been to prison in a foreign country, and I was hit by the police. I still have problems with my body.

→ I come from
Afghanistan, from Kabul,
which is the capital of
Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a very nice country, but there is no security, which makes people leave the country – like me. Me and my family are from Afghanistan and have lived there for ten generations.

Bradford is an amazing place. It's a historical city. Bradford has some old buildings that make the city interesting.

My family don't have difficulties all, but I do. I have some problems with some people in my country and security was really bad. That made me leave the country.

What I love most is playing games with my friends. I love to spend time with my friends.

My hopes and dreams are to make a lot of money. In that way, I could help others.

→ I am from Sri Lanka.
My family are from
Sri Lanka.

Bradford is a nice city. Bradford has a lot of cultured people. They are doing lots of cultural things.

Bradford College is one of the best colleges in England. I like to study at Bradford. I learn lots of things and improve my knowledge.

I had a lot of difficulties in my life when I left my home. I faced lots of problems.

I like to play cricket, I like to do voluntary work, and I love travelling.

I would like to get an IT job.

→My family used to live in the east part of Afghanistan.

They were busy training animals and they had a hard, but great life.

When the Russians attacked Afghanistan, then people were moving to Pakistan, but my family had animals and they stayed in Afghanistan.

They made a cave to live in, but still they suffered attacks from the Russian army. They were very affected and they lost everything in that time.

When we defeated the Russian army, then my family started working hard and they made their lives better. Our last achievement was when we got our own business.

What I like most about Bradford are the restaurants. There is also respect for every religion. It is a wonderful town and Bradford College is a great college.

About twenty years ago, we had a very hard life in our village, but my family worked very hard and I am proud of them. I have a great life because of their hard work.

I am interested in having my own international business, and being with my family again. I want to be a rich man, have an international business, be reunited with my family, and have a wonderful life.

→My grandfather came to the UK from Italy after the 2nd World War,

and my grandmother came to the UK from Germany after the 2nd World War. They met and had six children. One of those children was my dad.

My grandmother and grandfather had to learn English and bring their children up in a new country. They had low-paid jobs and often struggled financially. My mother and father did too. I was the first person in my family to go to university and learn to drive.

I love the diversity of Bradford and Bradford College. I enjoy meeting people and talking to people who are from different cultures. I love the sense of belonging and community within our ESOL department – for both staff and students.

I love the countryside and visiting new places. Walking soothes my mind. I love animals, and visiting farms. My favourite animals are goats. Goat walking is one of my favourite pastimes.

I want my children to be happy and have a good life. I would love to travel more with my husband and children. I want to make a difference, and help my students achieve their dreams and be happy.

→Hi. I'm 17 years old.
I grew up in Bradford,
however my parents
did not.

You see, both my parents were born and raised in Poland. They moved to the UK three years before I was born.

I grew up as an only child, which means that I have no older siblings or younger siblings. Some people say that being an only child is a good thing. Well, let me tell you something...it's not. Not in the slightest way possible. You want to be an only child, but then you realise that you are all by yourself and feel lonely because you can't play with anyone.

I have always been a person with a creative mind, which is why, from the age of 5 to the age of 10, my main hobby was photography.

I remember when I would take my parents' phones (with permission) and just start taking photos of anything that – to me – looked pretty. The normal pictures that I would take were of trees, animals, flowers, and sometimes sunsets (because I could never wake up on time to take a picture of a sunrise).

However, when Covid hit, and we were stuck inside for quarantine, I quickly became a fan of 5D diamond art and I still do it to this day.

I am currently in college and I am studying Health and Social Care. I don't really know what I want to do moving forward, but I do have a few choices. .

→School in BD3 was fun and it prepared me for all aspects of life and any scenario that could happen.

My greatest challenge and achievement during the course of my life – I would say – is balancing an education, a job, going to visit my mum and dad, and spending time with my siblings, cousins and friends.

My interests and hobbies are working, spending time with my family and friends, and gaming.

I am studying a Motor Vehicle course and re-doing my GCSE English in Bradford College.

In the future, I want to own my own garage, fix people's cars, and kit them up myself with the skills I gained in my life.

I like the freedom Bradford College gives me, and how I can spend time with my friends whilst getting an education.

This is my story.

→ I was born in England (Bradford) and I grew up in Girdlington (G Town).

My childhood was great and was really enjoyable. I did many activities growing up and it was splendid.

My grandparents were born in Pakistan, but moved to this country about fifty years ago.

My favourite experience of education was my English teacher.

My greatest achievement was passing most of my GCSEs, even though I thought I was going to pass not even one!

My hobbies are boxing and going out with my buddies.

At college, I study Mechanics and I want to carry on working as a mechanic until the very end.

→I had an amazing childhood! I grew up in the second largest city in Sudan.

I was raised by my grandparents who were lovely. They always made sure I got what I wanted. Granddad would drop me off at school every day and he would tell me jokes before we would get there.

When I turned 10, it was time for me to move back with my parents, so I could go to the big people school; I didn't like the idea of moving, and I wanted to be with my grandparents forever.

Grandma was packing a suitcase with rivers running down her bright face, but my grandpa seemed to be ok with it.

As I approached him to give him a warm hug, his phone started ringing. He looked at me, saying, "It's time, my dear. They are here." My heart dropped 60 meters under the ground. My tears were gathering, blurring my vision, and all I wanted to do was to stay with them for a little bit longer.

Grandmother entered the room carrying the same pink suitcase that I had arrived with five years earlier – when I'd thought I would stay until I graduated.

"Are you ready?" said Grandma with her voice trembling.

I closed my eyes and wished that this was a dream.

→I was born in Sudan, but raised in the Asante region of Ghana, West Africa.

Growing up, I looked up to a prominent Queen Mother in our community as a source of inspiration. Her determination, resilience, wisdom, and ability to solve problems made a lasting impact on me. She constantly inspired me to be strong and to persevere.

Another person who influenced me deeply was the American gospel artist, Don Moen. His incredible talent and classic gospel songs touched my heart and uplifted me, providing inspiration during challenging times.

When it came to education, my journey had its ups and downs due to my circumstances. In the early years, I was fortunate that my father financed my education in an international school. However, during my secondary school years, my father passed away, and my world turned upside down.

In Africa, education often requires paying school fees, and, without my father's support, continuing my studies became very difficult. Despite these setbacks, I remained hopeful and determined to achieve my goals.

I especially love listening to gospel music, which lifts my spirits, and I'm focused on studying Maths and English in college to qualify for a Nursing course. Becoming a nurse has always been my dream.

Finally, one thing I appreciate about Bradford College is its location – it's right in the centre of the city, so, for those of us who live nearby, it's easy to reach. Another thing I love about this city is the summer time. The breeze and the sunshine remind me of my home in Africa.

→I was born and raised in Poland where I also did my education.

I was born and raised in Poland where I also did my education. I became a mum when I was twenty-two years old. I had a beautiful baby boy, and, two years later, I had my second child – a beautiful daughter. She was born at 26 weeks and was in a very critical, life-threatening condition. Even now, we battle to manage her health conditions.

In 2011, I decided to move to England because my daughter needed good healthcare, which, in Poland, was very expensive, and I couldn't afford it. My husband was already working in England, so I took the risk and moved over here with two young children.

My life wasn't always easy. Everything that I have achieved in life, I owe to myself. I have a strong personality and I always achieve my goals. I went through a painful divorce. I had to sell our family home and start my life from the beginning. Thanks to help from my mum and my best friend, I got my Social Care diploma; I even got an award for my hard work and progress in education.

Looking back at my start in England – when I couldn't even speak English – to see how far I've come is very nice. Now I am studying to pass my GCSE English and I study Community Interpreting. I want to become an interpreter because I would love to help people who struggle with English – as I did when I first came to the country.

—→ I like Bradford College because I have been getting a lot of support from my teachers and Disability Services. Staff communication with students is really good and helpful.

My inspiration was my mum. She always believed in me, pushed me to believe in myself, and helped me to achieve my goals.

Two years ago, I finished working as a Social Care Assistant due to my health. I decided to start college to gain new qualifications, so that I could find a job that wouldn't affect my health.

Even though my health is not letting me do much exercise, I have discovered a passion for e-bike riding. I love riding my bike on beautiful countryside roads where I can see beautiful views.

My biggest achievement is raising my two amazing children all by myself. Being a single mum is challenging, but I can honestly say that I did a great job and I'm very proud of myself.

“ Now I can
concentrate on
following my dreams
and becoming an
interpreter. ”

→Even though I was born in Baghdad and grew up there, it is not my country; my family have been refugees in Iraq since 1948. I am originally Palestinian.

My family consists of my dad, mum and three brothers. I was the only girl in my family, so I grew up lonely. I always wished I had a sister to spend my time with, tell my stories and secrets to, and rely on – like other girls who have sisters.

I never got that sister.

My childhood was lonely and hard; there were no girls to be friends with where I lived. Over time, I learned how to play “boys’ games”, like football and cars etc.

The good thing about having three brothers was that I felt protected. They were my source of strength. They defended me from others. All of this made me strong, clever and daring.

During my years in education, I started to explore my interests in Maths and Science. I decided to study Maths.

After completing my high school education, I got a place at university studying Computer Science. I felt happy and motivated to do this course, but, because of the country’s situation, our curriculum was not as good as the curriculum in other countries.

—→ Therefore, we didn't get a very good education to get good jobs.

After four years of hard work, I got my bachelor's degree in 1999.

Later on, I got married and began a new stage of my life. I have my own family now. I was busy with my kids and my job, as I worked for 13 years at the same company. I started from scratch then became a professional in Human Resources Management. My last position was as a Human Resources Manager.

My idol was my manager; I worked for ten years under her supervision. She was a very strong, independent woman. She was my age and came from my country. I learned a lot from her about being confident, thinking smartly and focusing on achievements rather than failures.

My children are the greatest achievements in my life. I have four lovely girls. This makes me very happy; I will grow older with them and they fill my life with happiness, love and joy.

In December 2018, I moved to the UK. It was a real challenge for me to be in a new country and to start a new life.

One of the reasons to feel encouraged by my new life is that I am studying English to prepare myself for the future. I have started studying GCSE English at Bradford College. This will give me the opportunity to do an Interpreting course.

At Bradford College, there are a wide range of courses with great resources to support students to achieve their goals.

Bradford is a big city. It has a variety of places and cultures reflected in its festivals, food and community events.

→I haven't had a good experience in education. Even in my early years of school, I had to have a couple of days a week off, so I could look after my mum, who is blind. All throughout my school years, I don't think I made a full month of attendance.

None of my teachers seemed to care and, unfortunately, I didn't have any friends to bring school work to me, or to offer me help. I could never catch up on the lessons, so I really struggled to understand. I liked school, but hated P.E. and swimming (I still can't swim).

I loved English and Maths when I could understand and take part in questions aimed at me. I have done a couple of courses, but none helped me gain any qualifications.

Being a carer was, and still is, very isolating for me, and I find it difficult to reach out when I need help, support and advice. It's sometimes hard being a carer, but I've been doing it for so long that it feels normal for me.

—→ So, fast forward to a decade or two later and, after years and years of debating, I finally built up the courage to enrol at Bradford College to get an actual qualification and do something that I could be proud of myself for.

On sign up day, I was petrified, but I knew it'd be worth it to get my first actual qualification.

I got a Functional Skills Level 1 English qualification and now I'm studying for a GCSE in English.

Hopefully I'll be brave enough to enrol on more courses and to build my confidence. Science is one of my favourite subjects and I'd love to do a science course once I've got my GCSE Maths.

Being in my early 40s with caring responsibilities, I think my future options are limited. Getting the essential GCSEs is on my agenda for as long as it takes to get them.

“ One day, however, I'd like to have a decent job, a nice home and a pet to come home to. ”

→A journey between two worlds.

In the small village of Faisalabad, Pakistan, a young boy (that's me) discovered his love for horses. There was something about their power and grace that fascinated me, and it was not long before I began helping my father with the farming.

Life, however, was not always easy. Like many in my village, my family faced challenges, but my father always talked about the importance of hard work and dedication. From an early age, I understood that he had to strive for something greater – not just for himself, but for his family too.

At the age of 23, I made the life-changing decision to move to the UK, where my wife had already settled. The thought of leaving my beloved family was a heavy burden on my heart, but I knew that the sacrifices I made now would open doors for a better future.

My goal was simple: to work hard, support my family, and eventually return to Pakistan with the means to live the life I had always dreamed of.

The transition to the UK was not easy. I faced the language barrier, cultural differences, and the overwhelming feeling of being far from home. Yet, I was determined. Each day I worked hard, tirelessly taking on jobs in various sectors, often starting from the very bottom. The long hours and the physical exhaustion were challenging, but I didn't lose hope.

—→ The thought of my family, waiting back home, kept me going. Over time, my efforts began to bear fruit. I built a stable foundation for my family. I admit that through the hustle and bustle of city life in the UK, I never forgot my roots.

I stayed in touch with my family back home and sent money whenever I could. I regularly spoke with my parents.

The years passed; my vision grew clearer. Every success in the UK brought me closer to my dream.

The untold story of a journey between two worlds is not just one of hard work and sacrifice, but of hope – a hope that the love I once had for horses would not be confined to the memories of my childhood.

In the end, my story is not about crossing borders, working hard, and providing for my family, it is about my dream to provide a quality life for my family.

“ The hard work I do is definitely paying off and also fulfilling all of my dreams. ”

→I was born in a town in Uganda, bordering Kenya.

My mother brought me and my four siblings up on her own, having to work multiple jobs to keep the family afloat. Money was always short. Our family rarely ate more than once a day and there weren't funds to allow me to continue with my education past secondary school.

I wanted to help support my family, so I told my mother I would go to Kampala, which is the capital city of Uganda, to find work as I had heard of people going abroad and earning a lot of money.

A friend then recommended me to someone he knew who was rumoured to have lots of work available in Qatar in the run-up to the football World Cup in 2022.

I went to meet the man in his busy office where I was promised that I would get well-paid employment in Qatar, in Sales or Customer Services, working five days a week with accommodation and food provided. However, I needed a passport and some medical tests that I couldn't afford to pay for. The agency offered to arrange everything, assuring me that I could soon pay them back with my earnings once I started work.

In no time, my documents were ready and my travel was booked for the next day. Then some things made me suspicious, but it was all moving so fast.

—→ I noticed that my documents contained a negative Covid test, which I hadn't taken, and I was given the names of people to report to at immigration. They were to escort me and 20 other Ugandans when we arrived at the airport in Qatar.

When we arrived at our accommodation, I became seriously concerned. It was a dirty and overcrowded camp where hundreds of men were living, sharing just one bathroom and sleeping 25 to a room with just a blanket and no bed.

Homesick and anxious, I called home and my mother begged me to return, but I had neither ticket nor money to do so.

The next day, they took my documents away, supposedly for safe-keeping, and a bus came to take me to work, not in Sales, but on a construction site.

I realised then that I was stranded because, as a construction worker, I couldn't hope to earn the money needed to pay off my debts, help my family or even get back to Uganda.

Things went from bad to worse. We were to work from very early in the morning to late at night, with no food or drink provided. We weren't allowed breaks; we were watched every minute of the long shifts, sometimes 16-18 hours, and could only drink by sneaking water from the toilets. If the supervisors noticed, our pay was docked as this was considered to be 'taking a break'.

Sometimes we worked on building sites; sometimes in factories and, by the time I got back to my accommodation at night, I was too tired to eat. I soon became ill with skin infections and chest pains.

For months, all my salary, apart from a small allowance to buy food, went straight to pay off my 'loans'.

But I wasn't going to give up.

#23 Untold Stories

—→ I went every day to the office, where I could see cupboards full of passports, to demand back my documents.

Finally, they gave in.

With my passport in my hands, I found an opportunity to apply for a position as an international volunteer with the scouting movement. Shortly after this, I was offered a place.

Although I had been too frightened and emotionally drained to report what was happening to me on my application form, when I was safely in the UK on a volunteering visa, I found the courage to talk about what had happened to me and was referred for help as a victim of modern slavery.

I now live in a safe house run by The Salvation Army, where my support worker is helping me to rebuild my life and repair my mental and physical health. I still worry about providing for my family in Uganda and can find it hard to trust people, but I haven't given up. I try to remain positive and resilient.

I recently learned that I have been granted asylum in the UK, having navigated the complicated process myself because there were no legal aid solicitors available. I am feeling more confident about my future.

My hope and aspiration for the future is to become an example for the community I live in and to be helpful to those that need help. I have a passion for working with young people and children generally and helping people in the community.

I hope my dreams come true.

→Travel to the UK.

I had a normal life like any other boy. I had work, college and friends. My family and I decided to leave Syria because of the war.

I remember that day very well. It was early in the morning. My family were so busy organising their clothes. People inside our house were saying good bye to us, and other people were just getting to buy our house stuff.

"Be fast, Ali!" my mum said to me again and again. I couldn't be any faster. I felt like I couldn't move. It was really hard for me just to leave everything behind and go!

The mini bus came to pick us up. We were all ready to go. My whole family were enthusiastic, but me? Not really.

We got into the mini bus. We were on our way to the airport. I felt a lot of feelings on this journey. I was glad that I was going to start a new life in a safe country, but, at the same time, I felt scared and lost. I was asking myself a lot of questions on the way. What if I couldn't fit in there. What if I couldn't find myself anymore? A few minutes would go by then I'd ask myself again, what about the people? Would they treat me like a stranger? Oh no! What about the language – said the voice inside my head. The language is totally different; how am I going to learn it?

I closed my eyes. I looked completely calm, but my head never stopped thinking.

The way to the airport was too long. I felt like it took ages, but we finally arrived.

#24 Untold Stories

—→ The airport was crowded. Everyone was standing. There were no chairs to sit on and we had to wait around five hours; I can't even describe how boring it was.

After the five hours, we got onto the plane and it was a nice safe trip.

Finally, we arrived in the UK. We got a big house and I picked the largest room, which was perfect for me.

The next day, we went outside to explore the area – even though it was a rainy day. I liked it. It was a nice area. I saw schools, a pharmacy, a hospital and a few shops.

“ On our way back home, we met our neighbours. They were lovely people who welcomed us very much. ”

→My father came to England from Pakistan in the 1960s through serving in The British Navy, as he was a resident of the British colonies.

My father came to England from Pakistan in the 1960s He joined at a young age – he was 12 years old, pretending to be 16 years old. He served in The Navy for a good number of years.

When the colonies in Asia broke off from England, many officers were given a choice. They could either go to the UK, the USA, or any European country to settle down. Most put their roots in the UK – in England.

My father came over and brought over his oldest brother. Both worked hard and saved up to buy a house together. They both got married and had one son each. A few years later, they called their families over to the UK from Pakistan. In 1978, my mum and brother joined my dad in England.

All of us lived in a big house. It had four bedrooms, two reception rooms, a large kitchen and two bathrooms. Each family had two bedrooms. My oldest uncle's daughter and I were born in 1979, followed by my brother, and youngest uncle's daughter in 1981.

My father worked in a circuit soldering factory and my uncle worked in a nuts-and-bolts factory. When they were both made redundant in 1983, both decided that they should move to Bradford.

#25 Untold Stories

—→ We had a lot of friends and family in Bradford. They were either relatives, or from the same village or area in Bradford.

We all moved to a rental property in the Marshfield area of Bradford, then went our separate ways. We moved to West Bowling – BD5 – and my uncle's family moved to BD2.

I attended a nursery that was situated at the newly-built Centre Point Foyer. I then attended Newby Primary School when it was newly-built on Ryan Street. I stayed there until I was nine years old, then I attended Woodroyd Middle, which has now become Woodroyd Surgery. Lastly, I attended a Muslim all-girls school, which has now moved and been renamed Feversham Academy.

Two years before my GCSEs, my father passed away. He was told by a doctor that he had a shadow on his lungs and it looked like cancer, but Dad died of a heart attack brought on by glucose being inserted on his left side. His GP had told him never to have glucose in his left side. Dad died in 1995.

I was fifteen years old – three months short of my sixteenth birthday. I helped my mother with paperwork as she could not speak English or understand, and my brother was at university in Stoke-on-Trent.

Dad had taken me out, pointed out buildings where everything was, and told me what jobs they did. So, when he passed, I knew where to apply for benefits and appeals for school for my brother and sister, but my education had been stopped by my mother.

I stayed home for a year and then my mother took me to get married in Pakistan.

—→ The second part of my life started at the age of seventeen.

I was married and pregnant. I arrived in England 5 months pregnant and had my child at seventeen, being the youngest that month to give birth – I was told by the nurses! I had given birth to a boy, but this happiness was clouded by the death of a beloved aunt on the same day.

After the birth of my son, along came three girls. My husband and I – along with our children – moved to Scunthorpe for better job prospects. We stayed there for ten years then moved back to Bradford.

I started studying for a Childcare course in my daughters' school. I progressed on to a Level 3 Diploma and went to college to complete my Maths GCSE in 2020.

This gave me the confidence that I needed to work; I got a job in Sanctuary Housing as a Concierge worker and then as a Support Assistant. I lost this job due to the council pulling the funding.

Since then, I have started working at St Anne's Community Service, providing support and care to people with learning disabilities. I am also attending Bradford College to complete my GCSE English.

I like going to the movies, attending the theatre and travelling anywhere – even if it's just a simple train journey. I have travelled to Pakistan and Dubai; I am hoping to travel to Turkey and Saudi Arabia to perform the pilgrimage of Hajj.

I would like to travel the world, but that's another story...

→The untold story of two cousins.

When I was a child, summer was the best time of the year because it meant my cousin would come to visit. Her arrival was always a joyful event, like sunshine breaking through the clouds. I can still remember how excited I would feel when I heard her voice calling my name as she stepped through the door with her suitcase in hand. "Let's go play!" she would say, and we would run outside into our own little world.

Those summer days felt endless. We spent hours playing games in the yard. I remember how we would sneak into the kitchen to bake cookies, stealing bits of dough and giggling at our little mischief.

In the evenings, we would play and put on shows for our grandparents, singing silly songs and dancing around the living room. They would clap and cheer, making us feel like stars.

Every moment felt special, filled with laughter and fun. We shared our secrets, dreams and fears, promising each other that we would stay close. Lying on the grass, we would look up at the clouds and imagine all sorts of adventures. It seemed like nothing could ever come between us. We believed we would always be together, but, as the years went by, things began to change.

—→ My cousin went off to college and I got busy with school. I made new friends. We still talked on the phone now and then, sharing little updates about our lives, but those calls became less frequent. The visits that had once filled our summers slowly faded away. As life got busier, I could feel the distance between us growing.

Now that we are adults, I often think back on those summers with a mixture of happiness and sadness. My cousin is living her own life; we don't speak much anymore. I miss how we used to share everything without thinking twice – how we knew each other so well that we could finish each other's thoughts.

Sometimes I wonder what she is doing and if she remembers those summer days too. I wish we could reconnect, share our stories again, and laugh over the silly songs we used to make up, but I also understand that life can take us in different directions. The untold story of our relationship hangs between us, reminding us of what we had, but no longer share.

It is a strange feeling to know that we had something beautiful that faded away. I hold onto those memories tightly, cherishing them as part of my childhood. They remind me of the bond we once had and the love that is still in my heart – even if our lives have taken different paths.

→I am from Iraq. I am married and I have three children; two girls and a boy.

I was born and grew up in a southern Iraqi city, where the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers meet. It is a very beautiful place – famous for palm cultivation. In summer, the temperature can reach 50 degrees, while the winters are mild and somewhat cold.

I completed my primary and secondary education there and received my GCSEs. I had childhood friends who were also my neighbours. We spent many happy days playing tennis at school and in our neighbourhood. Those were beautiful times that I often wish would return.

Later, I got married and moved to another city. Since it did not have a university, I couldn't continue my studies. I was in charge of computer typing; I was very happy with this job.

Due to the war on terrorism, we were eventually forced to travel to Syria, where we lived for nine years. After that, we moved to the UK and settled in Bradford.

Bradford is a beautiful city with people of many nationalities, and the residents are very friendly. However, the weather is much colder compared to my home town.

—→ I began studying at Bradford College where I took courses in English and Maths. Last year I earned my GCSE in Maths and I am currently studying GCSE English with the hopes of continuing to become a businesswoman, which is my dream.

I enjoy studying at Bradford College, especially because of the supportive teachers and the friends I've met, including a friend who has the same name as me – a lovely coincidence. We've spent wonderful times together and hope to finish our studies side by side.

These are some of the stages of my life.

→ I have many interests and hobbies that I enjoy. One of my favourite hobbies is reading as I can venture into different worlds and learn new things.

I also love to travel and explore new cultures, trying new foods and experiencing different ways of life. I am a big fan of helping people discover recipes, learn about international cuisines, and find ways to make cooking enjoyable and relaxing.

In my free time, I enjoy walking and spending time outdoors, appreciating the beauty of nature.

I am also interested in photography – capturing moments and memories through the camera lens.

Art and Design has always been a passion of mine.

Pursuing these hobbies brings me joy and helps me to continually learn and grow as a person.

→ I am studying at Bradford College. I was born in India. I grew up in India. This was my birthplace where I spent my childhood.

I have a favourite person in my country. He is a singer. His name is Sidhu Moose Wala. He was an Indian singer and rapper. I like his personality. I like all his songs.

I enjoyed school and did really well. I performed at school on many occasions. I was working with others and playing team sports. I gained knowledge from school. It was really helpful for me. Nowadays we need it. I studied in a group area. I gained knowledge from other students.

When I was in school, I played badminton with my friends. I was good at badminton. I really like this game.

My hobbies are listening to music, and badminton as well as learning new things. These are my favourite hobbies. Mostly, I like badminton because it is good for my health. It keeps my body fit. It is good for the muscles.

I am studying GCSEs at Bradford College. In the future, I want to become a nurse. I want to help people. I want to go to university for further study. I like Bradford College. There are mostly friendly people. The teachers are very friendly. I like the teacher's behaviour. Her nature is very good.

There is a library. I like the library staff members. They are friendly. Bradford College is neat and clean. I like mostly the staff members and my teacher

→Hi. I'm seventeen years old. I'm a student from Vietnam.

I arrived in this new country in April and it has been more than six months now. This is a completely new journey for me.

Everything around me was strange – from the language to everything – but, luckily, I had my family by my side and they helped me overcome the barriers I encountered.

I lived in Vietnam from the age of one until the age of sixteen with my grandparents. Even though I have lived away from my parents for sixteen years, I never feel deprived of family affection. Even though I'm sometimes sad, I can get over it.

My grandparents are like my second parents. They raised me and they didn't let me feel inferior to anyone. My grandparents are over sixty this year and I realise that time will keep passing very quickly; it will not wait for anyone. I want to grow up quickly and make a lot of money to compensate the people I love.

I see that there is no challenge that we cannot overcome – it's just a matter of whether we try or not. We only live once, so let's do our best with all our effort.

In Vietnam, I had my own friends. There were peaceful places I could go to whenever I was sad. The people there – the scenes there – contained and protected me like that, since I heard the news that I would be reunited with my family after sixteen years apart. It also meant that I had to start a new journey.

I burst into tears at that moment. I didn't know if they were tears of happiness –because I would be close to my family – or tears of regret because I had to leave the place where I grew up and the people who accompanied me. At that moment, I knew that I had to accept everything and start my new life.

When I set foot in this country, besides my family, everything around me was strange to me. At first, I cried a lot because I missed my grandparents and my friends. Now I've gotten over that nostalgia, but sometimes I still miss them.

I realise that the things that come to us are not random. Sometimes they are challenges; sometimes they are happy or sad, but, nonetheless, we have to overcome everything by positively accepting it all.

I still keep in touch with everyone in Vietnam and I'm very happy with my current life.

The last message that I want to pass on to everyone is that I hope you can overcome everything and move on because better life is waiting for us ahead.

This story was written by me and translated because my English is not very good. I hope that you can understand the meaning I want to convey.

Thanks for reading.



→My childhood in the village.

I grew up in a small village called Hangu in Pakistan. It was a quiet place surrounded by green hills and a beautiful river. The village was not too big, but it was full of life. People knew each other, and everyone helped one another.

Our house was very big. Some rooms were made of mud with a thatched roof. Our house was not the same as UK houses. My village house had an open courtyard. Every evening, the villagers would gather to take water out of the well and to talk, laugh and share stories. I loved sitting there, listening to the elders tell tales of the past.

The village had many fields where farmers worked. They grew rice, wheat and vegetables. I remember watching my uncle and other men in the village work hard in the fields. They would wake up early, and, by sunrise, they were already busy planting seeds, or harvesting crops. Sometimes I would join them. I loved the smell of the earth and the sounds of the birds singing in the morning.

In the summer, the days were hot, and the sun was bright. We would play outside, running through the fields and climbing trees. I had many friends in the village. We played games like hide and seek. Sometimes we would go to the river to swim. The water was so dirty, but still we swam because in my village, Hangu, there was not a lot of water. There was no gas, no electricity and no school. When we reached school age, we would have to go to the mountain with grandma to get wood for the fire.

—→ When the monsoon came, the village changed. The rain would fall heavily and fill the fields with water. The sound of raindrops was like music, and I loved watching the rain from our courtyard. The villagers were busy during this time, making sure their crops were safe and taking care of their animals. The rain brought life to the village, making everything green and beautiful.

In the winter, the air became cool, and mornings were foggy. I loved waking up to the smell of fresh paratha – cooked by my mother. She would make the best roti and serve it with fresh vegetables. We would sit together as a family, sharing meals and stories because in Hangu you could spend your whole day without any social media.

My favourite festivals were Eid ul Fitar and Eid ul Adah. The village would come alive with light. Everyone decorated their houses. We would share sweets and meats. It is a time of joy and togetherness. I look forward to this festival every year.

Growing up in Hangu taught me the value of community and hard work. I learned to appreciate nature and the simple joys of life. Even though I have moved to a city now, my heart always returns to the village. The memories of my childhood there fill me with happiness.

In conclusion, Hangu is not just a place; it is a part of who I am. The lessons I learned, the friendships I made, and the love of family are treasures I will carry with me forever. I hope to visit the village again someday to walk in the massive fields of the mountain, feel the warm sun, and remember the beautiful moments of my childhood.

→I was born in Pakistan. My parents grew up in Pakistan as well. In my childhood, I was very naughty and talkative.

In school I was the best student. At first, from 1st grade to 3rd grade, I got only passing marks. Then I sat an exam in 4th grade and I got the top position in my class.

My teacher inspired me to do better. Then I started to work hard and I was a brilliant student. I got a lot of certificates for good behaviour and I made my parents proud.

My interests are going on adventures, cooking, and learning new knowledge. My inspirational relative is my uncle. He is a doctor. He made a lot of sacrifices in his life and now he is a doctor. He is very hardworking.

Me and my family moved to the UK in 2024. Now I am doing a GCSE Science pathway in Bradford College. I want to become a doctor because of my parents' wish to see me as a doctor.

When I was born, my mother gave me the name 'M' because there was a famous doctor called M. She decided on that day to make a doctor. I also like doctors.

Now I am trying my best to pass this GCSE with good grades, so I can travel further towards my destination. I want to fulfil my parents' dream because my father worked very hard to give us everything we need in life. It's my duty to take care of my parents and fulfil their dreams.

→ A dark secret.

Everybody gets one life; nobody cares about the end. Fair is foul and foul is fair.

My mother got married at a very young age. She wanted to socialise with everyone. She cared about her relatives. We have very nice relatives. She enjoyed talking with everyone – with friends, relatives etc. She has been a teacher for a long time.

My father was a government employee and he was a very hard worker. He was even more sociable than my mother. He used to do work for relatives as well – to help them.

My father had two more brothers and he was the oldest. One of my uncles left Pakistan around 2010; he moved to New Zealand. At that time, my grandparents were alive. My father and my uncle tried to go to New Zealand, but we didn't get the chance to go.

After a few years, my uncle visited Pakistan. My grandmother passed away and he went back. A few years later, he came back from New Zealand. My grandfather passed away; it was Covid.

My uncle didn't want to go back to New Zealand. He tried to get a job in England. He got a job, so my cousin told us that we should also move to the UK because he didn't like New Zealand at all.

Again, my mother and aunt took an English test to move to England. They were both successful in their exams. Hooray, hooray! I was happy; my uncle and cousin were even happier.

My uncle moved to England before us and it was time for us to move.

#33 Untold Stories

—→ At that time, my father and my mother had built a new house and she didn't want to sell it, but my father said, to go to England, we would have to sell it. My mother said, "No, we are not going to England."

The plan changed.

Me, my father, my uncle and aunt tried to convince my mother to come to the UK. After a while, my mother said yes because the house looked like a dream. Each and every thing fulfilled our requirements; each and every thing was new and looked good.

To convince my mother, I cried many times and she still said, "No".

At my house, where we were living, all the time we discussed moving to a new country – to England.

When she said yes, it was time to sell our new house, but, when we handed our new house documents to the new owner, at that time, I felt that it was a huge mistake!

Suddenly, pain started in my stomach. It was a new thing. Our new life was going to start.

Afterwards, my family did a lot of shopping and bought new gifts for my cousins.

Finally, after a struggle, on the 8th October 2024, I reached England. Our learning stage started.

Since then, we have been learning and making mistakes.

Sometimes what you feel, or what you think doesn't happen, but sometimes it does.

Do hard work and one day you will be successful.

→I used to live in Afghanistan. My province is Daykundi, which is a small, but lovely, peaceful place.

I graduated from university. I had taken a degree in Literature. I had a job and taught government civil servants.

Due to my busy schedule, I could not continue to learn the English Language in Afghanistan. I never took an English class in my country.

In my family, I have seven siblings and we all got along really well. My father passed away. I supported my family. My mother lives in Afghanistan with one of my sisters. I got my inspiration from my mother. She was supportive and now she is older. She did everything alone, so that we could continue our lessons.

I also have a close friend who shares similar interests to me – he is my husband, and we enjoy spending time together.

In my free time, I enjoy watching TV, reading, listening to music, walking, shopping, cleaning and cooking Afghani traditional food. I am going to go to university if life goes normally and if I get the chance to live. My favourite degree is Nursing in this country because my husband can financially support me.

I came to the UK in 2019 and I started learning English from Entry 3 in Bradford College. It is the best place for students, and we feel safe. It has good facilities – like the library – different courses, and worthy tutors. I love all my tutors. They motivated me and I found I am interested in my studies. I wish them the best.

→I am going to tell
you about my lifetime
achievements and goals.
Here the story begins...

I was born in Rawalpindi – a city of Pakistan. I am the oldest sister. I used to play with other kids when I was small. Sometimes I laugh when I remember my childhood.

I got my primary education from the school nearby our home. I was a brilliant and bright student. I participated in sports, games and other functions of the school. Later on, when I grew up, I went to college for my higher education.

College life was very vibrant and remarkable. We had different subjects and the teachers were cooperative, supportive and guided us in better ways. I did my graduation there.

After graduation, I applied for a job. For the job, I needed to take an MCQs [multiple choice question] test. Fortunately, I passed the test. I qualified as a primary school teacher. I did my teacher training and joined a school.

I like the teaching profession because it's our people's profession. When I flash-back to my past, the first day of teaching the kids is unforgettable. I was overwhelmed by teaching them.

My interests are reading books and watching dramas. Sometimes I like going shopping.

—→ By the grace of God, I got married to a foreigner. Married life was splendid. We went to visit historical buildings and amusement parks. After a couple of months, my husband went back to the UK. After my husband went abroad, I was lonely, recalling the amazing moments that we had spent together.

After waiting for two months, I got a Visa and started preparing myself to go to the UK. I resigned from my job and did some paperwork in preparation.

Fortunately, on the 26th July, I landed in the UK.

Here, everything is different – the weather, the people, the language...It took time for me to adjust to the new environment and climate. In Pakistan, the weather is hot in comparison to the UK. Learning the language is difficult, but not impossible. I try my best to learn it.

After one year, I was blessed with a gorgeous daughter. Becoming a mother was challenging. It was a difficult time for me because when you become a new mum, it takes time to learn how to nurture your baby.

Later on, I decided to study for a job. For that purpose, I joined Bradford College. Bradford College is so vast. Its building is superb. It provides opportunities for people from different cultures and civilisations to explore their skills.

In the meantime, I'm studying at college, doing my best to achieve a GCSE in English.

→I was born in Algeria, North Africa – situated between Tunisia and Morocco – on the 23rd May 1985.

The city I was born in is Annaba, in the North East of Algeria – about two hours from the Tunisian border. I grew up in Annaba and lived there from my birth until I turned 31 years old.

Since I was a child, I have liked watching the series of 'MacGyver'. That became my nickname at home. He gave me inspiration that we can find solutions using the basic things around us – we just have to make connections between the information available to us.

For example, one day, I was eating in the university restaurant. I had an orange. When I stood up, my friend told me that I had chewing gum stuck on my black jeans. We usually used fly killer spray to remove it, but I was far away from the shops.

I looked around me, I saw the orange, and I remembered that when we had a power cut at night in winter, we played with orange skin and candle flame. Every member of the family squeezed the skin of an orange towards the flame, and it made an 'etincelle' – a spark. Using fly killer or orange acid, the result was the same. I realised that these things must have similar properties, so I could get rid of the chewing gum using my orange!

—→ I took many courses – for academic development as well as personal interest. I mainly studied Literature in secondary school. Philosophy, Arabic Language and French Language were my highest rated modules. After that, I studied Law at university.

I got my certificate, but I didn't work as a lawyer. I have a discrete personality. I don't like to speak in front of many people – to have many eyes looking at me. Standing in front of a Judge and talking? I would surely lose the plot!

After seven years, I got my certificate. Now I could apply to be a lawyer. It was my greatest achievement and challenge. I mainly wanted to study Psychology, but I studied Law – just for the sake of my father. In the end, I said: learning is never a waste of time. I used this certificate to help me get other jobs.

Coming on to my interests and hobbies – they are as a branch of flower buds in Spring. I like renewing old and broken things, such as chairs or sofas. I like sewing, and painting on walls using beach sand and brick powder for colouring. I use small sea stones. I collect anything that I can "recycle": glass pudding dishes, peanut butter jars, satin ribbons, and cable ties. I use the cable ties to make headbands for kids and halo headband crowns. I spray them gold and cover them in sequins. I sell these on Vinted. I also write poems in Arabic, sometimes in French, but rarely in English.

I learned some building and house maintenance skills. Today, I can do plastering, painting and wallpapering.

I am also interested in Dental Science. I was a Dental Nurse in Algeria. I liked that job – especially making dentures. I took a course to become a Dental Technician. It is a combination between Science and Art. I want to do another Dental Science course in England, but first I need to get my GCSE English.

#36 Untold Stories

—→ I studied English and Maths previously and achieved a pass in GCSE Maths. Today, I continue to study English to achieve my GCSE. This will open many doors for me.

In the future, I want to study Construction, Art and Design, and Dental Science. I like making things by hand; creativity makes me feel as though I am giving part of my soul to abandoned objects. I believe – as we have ten fingers – we can have ten skills.

This is what I like about Bradford College – they always mention this sentence: ‘Turn your hobby into a career’. This means that Bradford College gives you wings to fly; it helps you build a bridge between the earth and the sky – whatever your age or your ethnicity. At Bradford College, they follow what Adam Smith said: “Let him work; let him pass.”

What I like most in Bradford is West Park, which is next to my house. I go there to enjoy the park with my kids, or to improve my mood in my low moments. The gathering of crows, pigeons and gulls reminds me that England gives opportunities and possibilities to many different types of people from across the world. They live together in peace.

→My hobbies.

In my free time, I find joy in a variety of hobbies that allow me to express my creativity, learn new skills and contribute to the environment. One of my greatest passions is sewing. I love making my own clothes and accessories. There's something incredibly satisfying about creating something from scratch – whether it's stitching a simple skirt, or designing a unique tote bag for my daughters. Sewing allows me to combine my passion for fashion with creating beautiful designs for those I really love.

Over time, I've also learnt to alter and repair clothes, which helps me reduce waste and give new life to old items.

Knitting is another hobby. I learned it during the Covid-19 lockdown. It brings me peace and relaxation. The rhythmic motion of the needles as I create scarves, hats and blankets has a meditative quality that helps me unwind. I particularly enjoy experimenting with different patterns and textures.

I'm always excited to give my hand-made creations as gifts to friends and family. It's a hobby that not only nurtures my creativity, but also allows me to contribute to those around me.

In addition to crafting, I have recently developed an interest in learning to cook new dishes. I enjoy experimenting with flavours and discovering new recipes from various cultures. Cooking has become a way for me to express my creativity in the kitchen, and I'm always excited to try making something I've never attempted before – whether it's a homemade pasta dish, or a healthy, plant-based recipe.

#37 Untold Stories

—→ Each new dish I master brings a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction – especially when I share it with my neighbours and my family. Now I can cook Turkish, Syrian, Palestinian, Jordanian, Iraqi and Saudi dishes. I wish to learn more from other cultures.

I am also passionate about recycling and helping the environment. I believe that small, everyday actions can make a big difference. Also, I try to incorporate sustainability into all of my hobbies. Whether it's using fabric scraps from sewing projects to create new items, reusing materials in my crafts, or simply recycling paper and plastic, I am always looking for ways to minimise waste.

This passion for sustainability also influences my cooking as I try to reduce food waste by using leftovers creatively and choosing locally-sourced ingredients.

All of these hobbies have not only allowed me to develop new skills, but they have also taught me the importance of creativity, resourcefulness and being mindful of fulfilment and purpose, as they connect me both to my passions and the community.

→ It all started in 2017 – when I got diagnosed with depression – a mental health issue. I didn't know how to cope with the diagnosis.

The doctor advised me that, if I wanted to, I could go to counselling or see a therapist. I didn't want to do this as I have family and friends to talk to if I need to talk to them. They support me if I need it.

Mental health issues, like depression, don't stop me doing what I want to do – like studying and looking after my three beautiful kids and my partner. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't met my partner and my three kids hadn't been born. They have kept me alive.

I am so grateful that I have my family and friends for support.

Mental health issues affect people in so many ways. Just talk to someone about it – even if it's a doctor, a therapist or a counsellor.

→ I grew up in Pakistan
– a place full of colours,
sound and stories.

My roots are a mix of Pakistani and British Pakistani; a unique blend of cultures.

My dad, who was born in England, had to leave us when I was just a baby, and I never got to know him – not even through a photograph.

It was just me, my twin, and my mom against the world. My mom is my hero. She poured all her love, dreams and energy into raising us – never once looking back at her own desires.

My mom's family, especially my grandparents, were like angels watching over us – guiding us with their love and wisdom.

When I turned 19, I felt this pull towards England – a place where dreams take flight. With the help of my aunts, we reached out to my dad. Soon we found ourselves in England with a whole new world to explore.

The moment I met my dad for the first time, I experienced a mix of emotions. It was like meeting a stranger, yet feeling a connecting that ran deep.

Seeing my dad struggle with addiction was tough, but I refused to give up on him. I hope for a new beginning. Despite the challenges, I hold onto hope, believing in a future where our family finds peace and understanding.

It's a story of love, resilience and the power of family – a journey where every twist and turn leads to a brighter tomorrow.

→Hi. I'm 18 years old. I'm from Gambia. I'm a student from Bradford College. I came to Bradford in July 2024. I have been here for just six months.

I was born in 2006. I grew up in Gambia.

My favourite people are my family, my friends and my teachers because they are important in my life. For example, if something bad happens, I can go to them and tell them. I can look up difficult words for my teachers and they teach me what they mean.

My hobbies. I really like to learn because it is important in my life. If you don't learn, you will have regrets. When you are sitting alone, you might say to yourself, I wish I had studied. Before you think about this matter, you must study.

I dislike dancing and music because these are forbidden by our religion and I don't want to commit a sin.

I want to be rich, so that I can help some people because they are not able to do anything. I want to be rich and build a mosque in my country and a school. I want to help children, so that they can learn their religion.

→Hi. I'm 18-years-old. I come from Thailand and I was born in Thailand. I'm a student from Thailand. I graduated from high school in Bangkok.

The person who inspires me is myself; without myself, I would not be able to accomplish anything in this life. My studies of the English language feel significantly improved after coming to the country of its origin.

The greatest challenge in my life right now is applying for a visa to stay in the UK. I want to remain here. I love it here.

My hobbies include listening to music, playing musical instruments, and engaging in activities that challenge me; I enjoy challenges and I am currently studying at Bradford College.

I would like to work in various professions, such as a firefighter, a businessman, a truck driver, a soldier, and a police officer.

The city I want to live in is Bath. I appreciate the nature and the culture there. The place I currently reside in is Bradford. I don't like Bradford because nature is not very beautiful and peaceful. I like being here because I have family here.

→I was born in Iran.

My biggest achievement has been getting here.

My passion is to become a barber.

I'm studying English in college.

I want to become a barber in future.

College food is a lot of fun.

#43 Untold Stories

→ I'm from Sudan.
I am 17-years-old.
I live in the UK.

I learn English and study in Bradford College.

I like football.

I would like to be a computer accountant in the future.

“ Thank you, my
beautiful teacher,
because of your
beautiful voice,
I understood
the lesson. ”

→Hello friend.
I want to tell you
about my story.

I have problems sometimes when I remember something.

In my family, we had fights.

I am thinking too much about how to find my family
to see them because I don't see them anywhere.

I have a big brother, and me – a twin with my sister
– and little brothers.

My father liked going to the farm.

→Hello! I was born in Bangladesh. In 2019, I came to the UK.

My favourite place is Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a very big country. There are many different types of transport. Bangladesh is a very clean country. I love Bangladesh.

I love Bangladeshi food. There are many different types of food. Some famous foods are fuchka, chotpoti, biriyani, chatni; the most famous is fish. Bangladeshi fish is served in many countries, and people from different countries like Bangladeshi food – especially the big fish. Rohu and ilish are the famous big fish; everyone likes this fish.

Bangladesh has many nice cities. There is Sada Pathor, Cha Bagan, and Sajek. Cox's Bazar is a famous city. Every holiday, I go to my country and I visit these famous cities.

My home is very small, but it's in a famous city. The city's name is Sylhet. Sylheti people say Sylhet is a second London, because many Sylhet people live in the UK. We love the UK. Every year, many people come to the UK. We marry our cousins, we get visas, and then we come. Sylhet is a most popular city. There are many nice places and many delicious foods.

—→ I especially miss my mom's cooking. My mom is in Bangladesh. My mom makes very yummy food. I always talk to my mom on video call and I learn how she makes the tasty food. My mom's special dish is fish, sada pulao and dopiaza. This is our famous deshi food. I love this food.

In my country, I studied just five classes, but there are many types of books. I love Islamic books.

My country is a very nice and beautiful country. I would like all the people to visit my country. It is very clean and nice.

“ I love my country
and I am proud
of my country. ”

→Hi! I was born in Bangladesh. My special place is Bangladesh, Moulvibasar. I arrived in the UK in 2017, but I miss my country.

When I was a child, I had friends and I always played with them. In my country, I have lots of things, for example, I have a swimming pool and a garden.

My favourite thing is food. I've got lots of tasty, favourite foods, for example: biriyani, rice, fish, chicken, pasta, roti, masala, meat, etc.

I would like to stay in my country. I have my mom, my relatives, brother and sisters. They are all in Bangladesh.

I really miss my mom. I love her so much. When I came to the UK, I was only 14. My mom cares for me very much. I want her to come to the UK as soon as possible.

My favourite places are Sreemangal, White Stone, Cox's Bazar, the beach, and Resort Mela Belun. We have lots of cities. There are really nice places. If you go there one time, hopefully you will want to go again. If it is possible for you to visit my country, I hope you love it so much.

I forgot to mention Sylhet City. Sylhet is the most famous city in Bangladesh. It has the most popular food and the best places. Sylhet's most popular food is called biriyani. I love this biriyani very much.

I would like to say to everyone: come to Sylhet and visit those places that I've mentioned.

→ A place that is special to me.

The very special place in my life is India. India is the country where I was born, I grew up, I studied, I got my job, and I became a mother. Whenever I get a chance to talk about my country, I can speak to my heart's content.

I remember every moment in my life spent in the place I grew up: my school, college friends and my family.

Since I moved to the United Kingdom, I visit my country once a year and go to where my parents live. For the whole year, I wait for the moment that I can visit my motherland. My parents wait whole-heartedly for this time of the year.

Because I have a whole lot of responsibilities, I get only four weeks to visit my motherland.

I try my best to share each and every minute detail of the country (up to my knowledge) with my daughter. Each year we visit, my top priority is to visit different places – like my school, my college, various places of art, science and culture with my daughter.

Whatever I mention about my country it will be just a drop from the ocean.

→The place that is special to me is my home country.

My home country is a place that means a lot to me. When I have chance and a bit of financial support, I like to travel there so I can share some quality times with my family left there.

On a daily basis, my children like me to tell them about my childhood – what I was doing when I was young, my friends, and my favourite places. Faced with such interest, I never miss the opportunity to tell my kids how beautiful my village is. It was built in the middle of the forest.

Every year, people travel from around the globe to celebrate Christmas in a traditional way, using traditional materials and traditional foods. There are no decorations, but people are very happy and enjoy the moment. They gather together, chat and dance from the morning until the evening.

The joy and celebrations don't only happen in my village, but everywhere in the country.

I love my home country as it is a peaceful place for me to live and have a lot of support from my family.

I love to live in the UK as this country brought me a lot in my life, but home will always be home. My country will always remain special in my heart. I hope that, in a near future, I will be able to visit it again and get chance to see my mum and dad, also my brothers and sisters.

→I am choosing topic 3 which is “write about a difficult thing that you have done.”

Well, it might not be a difficult thing for many people, but it was a difficult thing, or step, which totally changed my life. It was leaving behind my beloved country and loved ones to move to the UK to start living with my husband and my three-year-old daughter.

It was difficult to leave a well-settled life back home with a great career and a lot of help (physical as well as emotional). I never felt alone or helpless there the way I have felt many times since I moved here.

I moved in November 2019 and the very first thing that hit me was, “Where is the sunshine?” There were many shocks for me when I moved here and the weather was just one of them.

The second was loneliness. My husband used to go to work early in the morning and he would come home late just to have dinner. Then we used to sleep early as I had to wake up early to do jobs.

Unemployment and financial dependency were the next shocks I faced here. I was financially independent back home, but here I had to look to my husband for each and every thing.

#49 Untold Stories

—→ I will include “food shock” as well because food doesn’t taste as good as it did back home.

The cherry on the top was Covid 19.

The pandemic hit as I was already struggling in a new environment. I cried. I felt hopeless and helpless many times. It used to feel like life was over, but I never gave up and I tried my best to stay positive.

Now, when I look back, I still feel a bit of pain about that time, but I am much happier and I am proud of myself. .

“ Today I am happy and satisfied, living with my beautiful little family. I feel a sense of achievement. I had started life from zero. ”

→Today is a special day
– like every day – and I
want to share with you
one of the most difficult
things that I have done.
I am going to call it
“The Biggest Adventure
of My Life.”

It all began in my own original country, which is El Salvador. It is a place where the sky is blue and it is sunny almost every day; there are colourful houses and amazing food.

One day, in the year 2020, when I turned 30 years old, I received a call from my wife. Her voice sounded very excited over the phone and she asked me to think of something that would make us happy.

In that moment, I felt that the entire world had stopped for a couple of seconds. There was complete silence whilst my mind was thinking and thinking. Then, she cried out with a nervous voice, “We are waiting for a baby!”

That moment was the Big Bang in my life. I started jumping around the house feeling that life could not be more perfect.

After nine amazing months, finally, our son, J.F., was born.

#50 Untold Stories

—→ I continued my normal days – now as a father – working in my own motorbike workshop. My missus was a Languages Teacher.

On a special Monday in the same year, we received the opportunity to work abroad. The country's name was 'England'. This was when our real adventure started.

Our world stopped again. I was feeling happy, worried and nervous – not just about leaving that very wonderful place that we called home, but because we would have to travel so far away with a three-month-old baby.

A week after we took the decision, there we were flying in a big machine called an aeroplane, looking out at the blue sky.

The hours passed when, finally, the pilot's voice said, "Welcome to England".

“ The people are very friendly and make us feel that this is our new home: a place where we are happy. ”

→I am 21 years of age.

My native tongue is Slovakian.

I moved to the UK on the 19th December 2013 with my family.

A time when I felt happy and excited was when I sat in a 737 plane for the first time in my life. I was so shocked to see an airplane for the first time in my life.

As we were getting ready to set off from Bratislava's runway, I was patiently waiting for the engine to lift up the plane because it was my first time on an airplane.

→The most special and notable place for me is Bradford. It is a city in the north of England. It is situated in the county of Yorkshire. It is a very important place in my life as I came to this city to pursue my higher educational studies.

I started my undergraduate programme at Bradford College. I came from India. I was very new to the city. However, I quickly adapted to the city, due to the staff members at the college who were very helpful and very considerate.

Also, I met many new friends through the course; they were my classmates. Due to this, I was very happy staying in a new place, and I felt very safe and very motivated to study hard. I also volunteer at the Students' Union.

It left a permanent mark on my life and I successfully completed my undergraduate degree programme with a good grade.

→ A place that is special to me.

Barcelona is a city commonly known for its tourist attractions.

Tibidabo, also known as 'The Mountain', is arguably the most famous tourist attraction of Barcelona and is jam-packed with tourists all year around. It is located so high up, in a spot where all of the city is visible along with its blue sea.

Although it is a famous tourist spot, it is also my least personal favourite place in the city – not because it is not good enough to make it on to the top tier of my list, but due to the ill-mannered tourists who make the experience for other people that much worse.

My favourite aspects of Barcelona are its lively streets and the friendly locals. The locals are outgoing and easy-to-approach people who are usually more than happy to spare time for foreigners.

In recent years, with an increase in tourism, the city's crime rate has seen a surge, which has negatively impacted the locals' opinion of tourists. This has led to some locals going on protests to reduce the number of tourist visas given, and to protect the city and its culture.

Nevertheless, Barcelona is still a place which is special to me and will always be. The city I grew up in and the city I someday hope to return to.

→The most difficult thing I have ever done.

In 2017, I was in Libya. I was working in a small bakery in Arada centre in the capital city, Tripoli. It was a really tough time I spent in that place. The area around the bakery was very dangerous. Criminal people were everywhere. There were a group of gangsters who came to the bakery every day to buy a bread. They threatened me, taking the money and free bread.

They told me, "If we come tomorrow and find you here, you will be killed."

I decided to leave the place the same day, but I didn't know where exactly to go because I didn't know anybody in Libya.

I just carried my bag and left at night. I met an Egyptian guy on the street. I talked to him nicely and asked him to take me with him to the place where he lived. I told him everything about my issues. He told me about his story. Then we walked to his place.

On the second day, he told me that he was going to find a smuggler to travel to Italy. He tried and tried to persuade me to travel with him. It was a really difficult decision to be made, but, because I wasn't safe there, I chose to travel with him.

On the day of the journey, we jumped on a plastic boat and left. It was a very dark night. Fear was everywhere. I thought about my life, my family and my friends. It was a tough time that I went through.

This decision I made was the most difficult thing that I've ever done in my whole life.

→ I can't believe my son turns 18 years old in March! I remember when H- was born, like it was yesterday. I was only one year older than he is now at the time.

I was nineteen, nervous and nauseous. My mother and H-'s dad were in attendance. The ward was busy with midwives going in and out to check 'how far along' I was.

At the very beginning of my pregnancy, I had opted for a water birth at the hospital, but, after spending an hour in the hospital bath, I quickly realised this wasn't for me.

Back in my room with the lights turned down, I was 10cm dilated. It was time for me to meet my life-long, best friend!

"Push," the midwife told me. I only recall her saying it the once and there he was – this tiny, perfect, wrinkly human. My H-.

It was 'love at first sight'. In actual fact, it's 'love at every sight'. That tiny human is now nearly a fully grown man, but he will always be my tiny, perfect, wrinkly baby.

This was indeed the happiest day of my life.

→ A special place in my life.

It was on the 25th of August 2022 when I had my first boys' trip to London to see Big Ben!

Although we were busy, working hard to try and balance our lives, we needed a break to meet up with each other and spend time together as we lived far away from each other. We were so excited to visit our special, favourite and beautiful place. We couldn't wait any longer to step in to the city already! I mean who wouldn't want to?

My friends and I decided to drive in one car together. We enjoyed the trip, listening to our old-school music. We arrived in the evening as the lights were popping out on the streets. We saw taller buildings than we'd ever seen before as we live in small towns.

As we were checking into the hotel rooms we had booked, we discovered that our reservation included a hot tub, gym and bar to cool off in before bed. This made our day! We loved it because we had never experienced such a lovely place.

Big Ben was lovely. There were a lot of tourists taking pictures and some art activities going on in front of it, which made it fun for everyone who was there. This was the biggest clock I've ever seen. There was a nice, big light inside which made it visible from a distance.

It was the best experience. I had a good time with amazing people too!

When you have time, why don't you try to visit London?

→A place that is special to me.

I have been to many different places and I have been familiar with different cultures and lifestyles, but one place that is very special and close to my heart is Tenerife – one of the Canary Islands in Spain.

I was born in Pakistan and I was brought up there. I got my education there; I got my Nursing degree and worked for about ten years. Then I got married and my husband brought me with him to Tenerife.

That was the first time that I had travelled abroad. When I arrived, I found that Tenerife is the most amazing and beautiful land on Earth. I used to call it a “part of Heaven”.

You can enjoy sunshine throughout the year. The beaches are beautiful. For me, the sunshine and beaches are the best combination.

Tenerife is always crowded with tourists. People from all over the world come and visit Tenerife throughout the year. It is a peaceful, immaculately clean and safe place to live or to visit. I had the chance to meet different people from different parts of the world.

It's a small island, but you can find different climates there. In the south, it's a bit hotter and has the coastline. In the north, there are mountains and greenery. Also, there is Spain's highest point – Mount Teide. Teide is a volcano. The mountains are covered with volcanic stones and ash from an eruption that took place many years ago.

I used to sit on the beach with my husband and enjoy sunrises and sunsets there. These are the best memories of my life.

→ A hobby is an activity done in our free time.

Hobbies play an important role in our lives. They give us happiness and satisfaction. They help us to forget our worries for a while. There are many hobbies, like drawing, painting, collecting coins, collecting stamps, gardening, reading or singing. My favourite hobbies are gardening and reading.

I prefer to do gardening in summer. On weekends, I work in my garden. Seeing the seeds – sown by me – grown into beautiful flowers and plants gives me a feeling of fulfilment.

My daughter also helps me with the gardening. She always waters the plants and loves to eat fresh salads from our kitchen garden.

Gardening teaches us the lesson of patience; working hard gives a beautiful end result. I love gardening because it connects me to nature. I feel happy and proud when I get appreciation from my friends and family regarding my gardening skills.

I have also loved to read since childhood. I read more books in winter. I have a small library in my room. Most of the books that I have read are on Sufism.

My favourite authors are Khalid Hussaini and Elif Shaffaq. Reading is a good brain exercise. It helps a person to relax from worries. I prefer to read on cold winter days.

In fact, these two activities help me to spend some quality time with my own self. They help me to grow into a positive person.

→My favourite place is
my birthplace – my
country: Pakistan.

I have beautiful childhood memories there with my parents, my brothers, my sister, and my school friends. I loved everything about my childhood.

The time when I was really happy was when my family and I went to America to live with my dad. Our family reunited with Dad, which was the happiest time of our lives. It was a new country, new culture, basically everything was new and different from my own country, Pakistan. It was the most beautiful time of my life.

A difficult thing in my life was when I got married and I had to leave my family in America. I had to come here to live with my husband and his family. It was a tough time to adjust myself to. With time, I managed to settle into my life with my new family.

My favourite people who inspired me are my mother and father. These two people are my heroes. They are always going to be the best role models of my life.

My hobbies: I love to do different things, such as cooking, eating, spending time with my kids and family, and going out for walks with my friends.

Now I want to join college to get an education.

→I was happy on my wedding day.

In my country, we celebrate with three days of wedding functions. The first day's function is called Mendhi.

My parents, relations and cousins made Mendhi designs on my hands and arms. Family members enjoyed dancing to different dhol beats.

The second day of the wedding is called Barat Day. On this day, the bride gets ready to go to the groom's house.

The third day is called Walima day, where both families come together and celebrate the function. They eat different meals and enjoy a party.

After marriage, I applied for a job with the London Ambulance Service, but I didn't have a car licence, so they refused my application. It was a little upsetting for me, but, after a few weeks, I passed my driving theory test and my practical test. I was so happy that day. I felt like I was flying in the Alps.

I applied again to the London Ambulance Service, but this time they rejected my application because I didn't have a C1 licence. I applied for my C1, did my theory and completed the practical tests. I passed and I was so excited.

Finally, I applied again. This time, I passed my interview and all the assessments. My dream had come true; finally, I got an offer letter. That day was one of the best days in my life. I was so excited! I can't explain how happy I was.

→My favourite person is my childhood friend, E.

We have been friends for as long as I can remember. Growing up together, we had such a lovely childhood.

I remember going on adventures together. There were no phones back then, so we called for each other and always knew – by the time it got dark – we would have to be home.

When we left school, we got separate jobs, but we could still meet up and have days out.

Then, E- had her first baby. I was so happy for her. A year later, I had my son. We would take them to the park together and still to this day our kids are also friends.

The reason E- has inspired me the most is because she's currently doing her Social Work degree. She has given me so much inspiration and I have now decided to do a Social Work degree at college.

The reason I am here today is to complete my English GCSE, so I can start my Social Work degree. I have been accepted on the course, providing I get this GCSE.

E- is currently on placement, and I am so proud of her. She is thriving in her work and enjoys it so much. We talk most days and I'm always excited to hear how her day went

→I love to travel a lot in my life.

I always try to find online different places to visit. It was wonderful when I was visited The Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. Actually, it was my first-time visiting Manchester.

I went with my wife and daughter. We booked a train from Bradford Interchange early in the morning at 6:30 a.m. We got the train on time and our journey began.

That train took one hour to reach Manchester Victoria train station and then we got a tram to Media City. We went to the reception of the War Museum. They checked our bags and allowed us to enter.

At that moment, I was excited, but I felt a little bit of sadness when thinking about the casualties. As we entered, a guide advised us to keep to the right-hand-side – then we could see everything in order.

The first thing was a war tank that was a huge tank used by the U.K. army. I took a picture. Then we saw the uniform of a British soldier that was not in good condition because he had worn it in a war situation.

Next was a jet engine that was huge in size. I am from a mechanical background and loved to find out about that. There were some guns, rifles and hand grenades as well.

At last, they showed us a short documentary film about those who had sacrificed their lives to spread peace in this beautiful world.

It was great experience for me.

→Football is my favourite hobby.

.I love playing football because it is exciting and challenging, and it's a great way to stay healthy.

I started playing football when I was a child and, since then, it has become a big part of my life.

One of the things about football is that it brings people together. I enjoy playing with my friends, making teamwork an important part of my game. We practice different strategies to improve our skills and have fun competing against each other.

“Winning a match feels amazing, but, even when we lose, I learn something new.”

→ Write about a place that is special to you. Oh, it's a good topic...

My answer is simple: it is the beach – especially a beach with hot water (as the beaches are in my country) with the sun, a breeze, some palms and a good coconut drink. This is my passion. I like to enjoy it with my family. To see the sunshine, and also to eat fish and rice is the best thing in life. I go to the beach to reset my life and make myself happy.

Now I am living in Bradford, in the UK, and it is very complicated to go to the beach.

A few years ago, I had a big opportunity to visit one beach here in the UK. I travelled to Wales – specifically Swansea City. It is a beautiful place, but the water is very cold

The good thing in Swansea is the sea colour. It is blue and the sand is white. It is very different in my country because the sand is grey or black, and the water is grey and white. It is very different. The water is very hot and the weather is the same; it is very hot.

It was nice weather, but the culture at the beach was different. In my country, you can buy coconuts, seeds, food, juice, ice cream etc.

Here there is only the beach to enjoy.

→My mum insisted that I go to the supermarket with her. The bleak weather in Bradford made me second-guess whether or not I should go.

The streets in my neighbourhood were covered in grey slush. I didn't really want to go; I'd rather stay at home near the fire and watch the snow fall through the window, but my mother was very persuasive.

We eventually arrived at the supermarket.

My mum grabbed my arm and made me dash up and down the aisles. Every time I stopped and stared at something, she would ask, "Is it time?" I knew what she was doing. I guessed that she was expecting something exciting to happen.

It was getting late and I was feeling really fatigued, plus A- (my husband) was waiting for me and had already put the boys to bed.

On the way home, we got caught in a white-out, and we couldn't see anything. It would take hours to get home.

Moving slowly in the traffic, I suddenly got a sharp pain down my back. It felt like a lightning bolt. Mum stared at me in pity and asked again, "Is it time?"

With my lips sealed tight, I nodded, trying not to make a sound. My mum turned her attention back to the road while she smirked in triumph.

—→ The pain was getting worse, so I decided to call K- (my nurse) to tell her about this new development. She advised me to go to hospital immediately. "What? Immediately?!" I didn't understand. It had only just started.

"The third time doesn't take long!" she responded.

Mum had a big grin on her face, smiling with victory. She put her hand on mine and said, "Don't worry. I'll go with you and A- will bring your bag later."

This was like a dream come true for her. She had always wanted to come with me.

As soon as we arrived at the hospital, the nurse examined me and left – giving me a buzzer. I knew exactly what I was doing.

I pushed and pushed until I became exhausted. I pressed the buzzer and the nurse came straight away. High on gas and air, I started to feel drowsy. I stopped for a moment, opened my eyes and saw A- taking his shirt off!

At this point, I was feeling really perplexed.

"One more big push!" shouted the nurse. I gave it my all; out came my little ray of sunshine.

A- cut the cord and put her onto his chest. "Oh, now I remember!" He's put his name down to do skin-to-skin.

Then it was my turn to hold her.

I have yet to find the words to describe the beauty of her face while she slept in my arms. No simile or metaphor could describe the simplicity of the way her eyelashes rested on her cute little cheeks, nor the surge of love I felt every time I gazed at her.

This would be a day that would never be forgotten, and I got to spend it with the two people I loved the most in the world.

→It was going to be a special day out with the family.

My son and daughter, Ja- and Je-, had been excited for a few weeks now – a trip to Ullswater Lake where we would try paddleboarding for the first time.

On the morning of the trip, the kids packed everything that they needed that day by themselves. They were looking forward to floating on the water, laughing, splashing and having loads of fun.

“Can we go now?” Ja- asked, impatiently waiting for me to put all our bags in the car and to make sure everything was ready for the trip.

When we reached the lake, I called the kids closer to me to explain what to do if they fell into the water. I said, “Okay, the most important thing is to be calm. Try to stand steady on the board, and, if you do fall in the water, don’t panic! I will always be near you.”

“I won’t fall,” Ja- said proudly; he was older than Je- and a stronger swimmer.

“I think I will fall in,” Je- whispered. She was afraid that, if she fell into the water, she wouldn’t be able to get back on the board. I reassured her that she would do great.

As I pushed the first board into the water and climbed on, I said to her, “See – it’s very easy. You will like it.”

Ja- went next. He climbed on the board, and had a little wobble, but he stayed on. He was so happy that he could keep his balance straight away.

#66 Untold Stories

—→ Then it was Je-’s turn.

She took a deep breath and slowly climbed onto the board. Her little legs were shaking. She couldn’t take her eyes off the board – holding its edges with all her strength. She was really worried that, if she moved, she would fall into the water.

Finally, with reassurance from me and Ja-, she decided to try to stand up.

“I’m doing it!” She gasped, proudly.

We paddled out together, moving slowly. The water was still, and the kids were laughing as they splashed water at each other with their paddles.

After about an hour of being on the water, Ja- got a bit too confident. He wanted to show off in front of Je-, so that she could see how good he was at paddling.

Suddenly, his paddle slipped, and he fell in!

He popped up, laughing, and started splashing water on Je-.

Moments later, with all the water being splashed on her, Je- lost her balance and, with fear on her little face, she fell in.

For a second, my heart sank into my feet when I saw her little head going under the water. Then her head appeared and she looked so afraid. She gasped, “I can’t touch the bottom!”

“Hold on!” I shouted, “I’ll pull you up.” She managed to grab the side of the board before I got to her. She looked at me with confidence in her eyes, and she told me, “I’m a big girl now. I want to try to get on the board by myself.”

—→ While watching her holding onto the board with all her strength and pulling herself up, I was so proud. My little girl was growing up!

“You did amazingly!” I told her.

Later on, wrapped in warm towels, sitting on the grass in front of the fire, the kids looked so happy and peaceful.

“Best day ever,” both Ja- and Je- said with big grins on their faces.

“ I pulled both of them closer to me, hugged them tightly. It really had been the best day. ”

→My mum is from Kerala, India and came to England as a nurse in the 1960s..

She was from a poor background, but benefited from Kerala's provision of free education, which meant that both those without money and also girls were able to receive an education up to the age of 13. She couldn't afford ink, so her dad made her some from a kadukkai plant, and a teacher helped her with the cost of fees and her uniform when she wanted to continue at school after the age of 13.

She was then able to train as a nurse, and worked in Chennai, then Delhi, finally moving to England for an adventure and to improve her training. She was the first person in her family to leave India, and was the only one of her nursing friends to come to England (her best friend went to Canada) – I think she was very brave.

My mum experienced some racism in the 1960s when she worked as a nurse, more from patients than staff, I believe. She laughed it off, but I'm sure it must have hurt. None of her family had left India so she was on her own, and there were no other Indians in our area, and no Hindu temples for her to worship in. Her family didn't have a phone, so it was hard to keep in touch.

—→ They sometimes sent food parcels with curry powder and other spices which she loved to receive. She couldn't afford to go back to India for quite a few years, but my dad's family welcomed her – although they did worry about a 'mixed' marriage.

Apparently, there was some concern among my English family about whether her children would fit in, so my parents named their first daughter V- – very English! When my sister and I were born they were more confident and gave us Indian names. We were brought up to be very English which I think is a shame – I wish mum had taught me her language so I could feel more connected to India and my family living there.

My sisters and I have all experienced racism of varying degrees, but we have tried to follow mum's example and feel sorry for the person rather than taking it personally. It is their own ignorance that they are displaying.

→I am 29 years old.

I was born in Himachal Pradesh (HP).

I grew up in India.

My favourite colour is blue and my favourite fruit is a mango.

My inspirational person is my teacher because he is helping me study. He is a very good person.

My hobby is reading books.

I am studying at college. I am studying for 12 weeks at Horton Grange school. My course name is ESOL.

The thing I like most about Bradford is that people are helpful.

“ My Horton
Grange teacher is
helping me too. ”

→I was born in Bangladesh. I came to England. I live in Bradford. I have lived in this country for about 15 years. I am married. I have children.

Bradford City is a small city. I like Bradford City. I am proud of Bradford.

I was working in London and Bradford. I am now doing some work experience. I already volunteer for Bradford City of Culture 2025. I am looking for another job.

I study in the ESOL class. I want to study at a higher level – up to GCSE. I study at Bradford College. I am a Bradford College student. I was going to college and I was happy to tour all the places. I have a Bradford Student card, which I got recently.

I am a hardworking person. I look after my children and family. I am proud of myself.

My future plan is higher education, work experience and getting a job.

My favourite colours are black and blue.

My hobbies are reading books and cooking. I like shopping. I like going to the park with my children. I like going on outings to nice places and nice restaurants, and eating special dishes. I am a busy mum.

My me time is watching TV and relaxing, sitting down and talking on the telephone.

→I am 35 years old. I am married and I have three kids. I come from Pakistan. I have been here in Bradford for one year.

I was educated in Pakistan. I got married after Matric and completed my education after I married. I have a B-Ed.

In my childhood, I wanted to become a teacher but my in-laws didn't allow me to go outside for a job.

When I came to England, I found a very good environment here. I joined the ESOL classes. My teacher taught me about equality. No one can tell you that you are a woman who should sit in the house and do only housework.

My teacher encouraged me to do something for myself. My teacher helped me and made me aware of many courses. The teacher took me to Bradford College. It was the happiest day of my life.

Now I really want to become a student of the college and I want to join the English GCSE course or Level 1 class because I want to become a teacher in the future.

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→Blackpool has a very beautiful beach.

In 2022, I visited Blackpool with my husband.

It's a big beach. There are many types of shops selling things like toys and food.

There are many different kinds of rides and a rollercoaster.

There are many other interesting things to enjoy.

We enjoyed many things like ice cream and other food.

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It's such a beautiful place. We really enjoyed it there. ”

→I am a housewife. I have four children – three boys and one girl. I am very busy at home with my family.

I was born in Pakistan and came to England as a 9-year-old, because this country's education is very good and children's future is bright.

My language is Urdu. My favourite things are gardening and cooking. My favourite colour is green.

The UK is a very beautiful country. The people are very loving. My education is F.S.C. I am coming every Monday to Horton Grange school for an English Language course, because it is very important for me, and it helps me help my children to study. I wish to complete the course and I can then get a good job.

I live in Bradford. Bradford is a very good area. The college is very famous. On Horton Grange Road, there is a very famous restaurant, Mumtaz.

Bradford school ratings are very high. The teachers are very good. My children are going to school very happy every day.

My favourite hobbies are gardening and cooking. The UK is very green and very nice, but I don't like the hilly areas, because it is so up and down. It is especially difficult during the snow when it is very slippery. Walking is too hard for everyone.

My favourite teacher is my ESOL teacher. He is helping me learn English.

→ I live in the beautiful city of Bradford. I lived with my family.

I am learning to improve my English in the Speaking, Reading and Writing ESOL class at Bradford College.

My teacher took our class to tour the college.

The college is a safe, nice place for everyone to study.

I want to continue my learning in Bradford College.

I am a proud Bradford Citizen.

→I What can I say about myself?

I am a Pakistani born housewife raising my family in Bradford. I have been living in Bradford for 18 years.

I came from a hot country to a cold country. I did not like it at first, but slowly I adjusted to living here.

I like to mix with people and help them out, and slowly I learnt to speak English this way. I wanted to improve, so I joined an English class at Quaker House with the Bradford Community Alliance and Bradford College. It's a beautiful class with many students like myself. I have quickly made friends with them.

The class lessons are very good. The teacher is helpful. He gives us confidence and motivation to transform our lives.

He gave us all a good opportunity to visit the college and meet library staff and ESOL teachers. I had never been inside college before. I was very happy. Our picture was taken of this visit. I talked to my family and friends of my visit to tour Bradford College.

I was helped to fill out an online form to volunteer for the Bradford City of Culture 2025 events. I attended training. It made me so happy and so proud of myself to join this project because I met so many people from different cultures.

My Pakistani culture is very good. I will show my culture to other communities and learn lots of things about the culture of other communities in Bradford.

→I was born in Spain and I come from dual cultural heritage – from Spain and Libya.

I did part of my studies in Spain and the other part in Libya.

I have a wonderful family.

I came to the UK ten years ago. I started to study in Bradford College in the ESOL class. What I would like to do now is take another course because my challenge now is to work in this country.

I like Bradford College because it has a good atmosphere for study and that makes you want to study more. That's why I want to study at Bradford College – to involve myself and build my future.

What I like about Bradford is that there are a lot of different cultures and different people; all are living nicely together with respect. When I see that I feel really happy and proud because my kids can rise up in a community like this.

→For me, Bradford is a good place to live. It is safe. Many people from different communities live here. It is a cultural city.

My family and I are very happy in Bradford – the City of Culture. I am proud of it.

I am a busy housewife. I was born in Pakistan. I came to Bradford 15 years ago to settle with my husband. The joint family system is good because you get lots of support and help from each other. I got all this and all my family is happy.

When I came to the UK, I did not know much English. I was shy to learn, but, with my family's help, I slowly started learning English.

Now I am learning ESOL English with Bradford College at Bradford Community Alliance. My teacher has taken us on a college tour. This was the first time in my life I entered college. It made me want to take more qualifications, so I can improve my English skills and also help my children with their education. I want to see them as very good citizens of Bradford. I want them to rise and shine.

My ESOL teacher has helped me get confidence to move forward in college life. With the teacher's help, I am happy to say I have joined the volunteering programme of City of Culture 2025 events.

→I am married and I live with my family. I am a housewife and I live with my husband and lovely son.

I am learning English at Pre-Entry level at Horton Grange school.

I was born in Pakistan, then I moved to Spain. I can speak Spanish. I learnt about Spanish culture and food.

I made friends in my street. I enjoyed showing them my Pakistani heritage and culture, such as Pakistani food and Pakistani hospitality. I enjoyed mixing with people.

We moved to Bradford 11 months ago. It is a good city with a good mixed community. People are happy helping each other and enjoying festivals.

My teacher took my class on a tour of Bradford College. It made me very happy. I was crying with happiness when I entered college. This was my first time ever visiting the college. It was my dream come true.

→I was born in Pakistan. I grew up in Pakistan. I used to have a beautiful parrot in Pakistan. I had a lot of pets when I was younger.

My favourite people are my mum and dad because they take care of me, love me and have always supported me.

I only went to primary school in Pakistan because my mum got cancer and passed away. I had to quit my education and look after my dad and the house.

My greatest achievements are my three lovely kids. I have not faced any challenges as I live life as a simple housewife. I love to cook, clean and draw with my two daughters. I really like painting, sketching and making toys with clay.

I study ESOL classes at college, so I can work in the future to help support my family. Bradford College has a welcoming atmosphere and kind teachers. My favourite thing about Bradford is that there are lots of different and friendly people.

I hope you enjoyed my story.

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→I am very proud as a Bradford citizen. I enjoy my English class at Bradford College.

Bradford is a city with many people from different communities.

I, myself, am from the Bangladeshi community and I speak Bangla.

I enjoy my cultural food and help my children learn my Bangladeshi culture. I want to learn about other cultures, and I go to cultural events with my family.

I like to travel by train with my family and friends. I have been to Leeds, London and Shipley. I hope to learn and improve my English and start a sewing business.

“ I want to help my children have a good education because I want to see them rise and shine in the future. ”

→ My first flight.

I am a housewife. I come from Pakistan. I live in Bradford with my family. I came two years ago.

When I was a child, I used to look at aeroplanes in the sky. I became very happy to see aeroplanes. I dreamed of flying in an aeroplane one day. My dream came true!

When I first came to the UK, I came by aeroplane. It was a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight. I was so excited to sit in a PIA plane. It was the first time I had seen the inside of a plane. I saw a lot of seats in the aeroplane. I saw lots of screens – they were attached to the front of each seat. I saw a kitchen and a toilet in the aeroplane. I really enjoyed my journey.

When I came to the UK, I flew in two aeroplanes. First Pakistan to Turkey, and then Turkey to Manchester.

Then I came to beautiful Bradford.

I am enjoying my new life in Bradford.

→I watched as my sister carefully put her hat and coat on.

She had come to a decision that going into a snowstorm would be a good idea. Although I had tried to stop her, she didn't listen. E- had always been more daring than I, but this had to have been the worst decision she had ever made.

I stared blankly into the garden as she zipped up her little red coat. It had been snowing all morning and the temperature was freezing. Despite this, she still stepped into the snow. Sighing in defeat, I grabbed my coat and followed her footsteps. The cold air hit my face and I winced as it battered my numb body.

I stopped as I noticed her crouching down. "E-?" I mumbled as I slowly crept closer. She didn't reply, but that wasn't unusual. My sister and I have never been close, but she was my sister. I continued moving closer. In the blink of an eye, she spun around and fell to the floor. She cried in pain and held her leg.

As quickly and carefully as I could, I moved to stand beside her. "E- what happened?" I shouted over the strong winds. I could tell that she was in pain, so I grabbed her and hoisted her over my shoulder.

After what felt like hours, I finally reached our door. I delicately placed her on the leather sofa and Mum came running in. I stood, watching impatiently as she inspected E-'s leg.

—→ “What happened E-?” my mum asked. I instantly knew we would be in trouble if she had known what we had done. Still, I didn’t expect E- to do what she did next.

She raised her arm and pointed in my direction.

My heart sank as I watched her. I couldn’t believe the betrayal. The disrespect! My eyes began to fill with tears as she opened her mouth to speak, “She pushed me!” she said – a smug look on her face.

My eyes redirected to my mother. “It was not my fault.” I mumbled.

“ This was the day I realised that I could no longer trust my sister. ”

→ A school journey.

In a house, deep in the derelict, rat-infested slums of 1980s Birmingham, there lived a brother and sister set on adventure and the exploration of the wider territory. They were aged nine and ten.

It was a school day. The children set off for school and complained about their scratchy, cheap uniforms. Mum said, "Waste not; want not." The boy remembers the scratchy material against his legs. He enjoyed the journey because he could watch the trains beating by through the hole in the fence after the allotments.

They enjoyed going to school, but they were ever reminded of a warzone they had seen on the telly. House after house lay empty, or else occupied by residents who were accompanied by the local rats and mice. The rodents had no natural predators because nobody could afford to keep cats; this was a poverty-stricken community. Often children complained about stripped fingers and toenails that had been ravaged during the night by the hungry vermin.

Moving to a new school was a test of wits because the older children liked to welcome the new children with shame and embarrassment.

The best time for the brother and sister was after school, when they climbed the abandoned buildings, often stepping on burnt wood and rusty nails.

The train tracks were easily accessible through the hole in the chain link fence. Everybody talked about the accidents, but the children liked squashing big pennies. It was always an adrenaline rush.

→My Irish relatives came to West Yorkshire from Mayo, Sligo and Donegal in the 1800s and early 1900s.

Leaving Ireland to escape poverty and hunger, some found work building the railroads and many worked in mills – weaving textiles.

My mum describes her Irish grandparents' house in Keighley as a tiny, two-roomed terrace. It housed nine people at one time. They didn't have much furniture, but my mum remembers a piano and a rag rug. According to her, the house was always full of people singing, playing piano, dancing and telling stories.

I was immersed in folklore and music as a child and, perhaps due to my family heritage, I grew to be passionate about literature, art and music.

My maternal great grandad was one of thirteen children in an Irish Catholic family. Most of his brothers died in the trenches in World War 1, but, because he had rickets due to severe malnutrition, he wasn't allowed to be a soldier. He survived both world wars and died in Keighley at the age of ninety-eight.

My paternal grandfather's family lived in Haworth, West Yorkshire, for at least the last 400 years. I have marriage certificates for family members that are signed by Patrick Brontë (father of the Brontë sisters) who was the village minister.

—→ On my dad's side of the family, I'm related to Sir William Beechey who was a famous British portrait painter in the 18th Century. His paintings can be found in the National Portrait Gallery in London, and in many other galleries around the world.

As far as I know, my mum was the first person in our family to go to university. She studied Home Economics at Newcastle University and became a Food Technology teacher. She taught in schools and colleges around Bradford and Leeds for forty-three years.

When I was five, my dad – who'd been a successful textiles merchant in Manchester – died of a type of cancer called lymphoma. He was thirty-eight. After that, my mum struggled to raise me and my half-brother (who is ten years my junior) – alongside teaching, doing demonstrations for De Dietrich on evenings and weekends, as well as running a small delicatessen in Bingley.

I remember visiting restaurants in Bradford and feeling proud of Mum (and a bit embarrassed) because the staff frequently recognised her as their old Food Tech teacher. Everybody would make a fuss of us, and we were sometimes given free food! Even though she's in her mid-seventies now, and has been retired for several years, her ex-students often recognise her when we go out.

In many ways, I had a privileged childhood. As well as my mum, I had two sets of grandparents and some other close family members who cared for me very well. My grandparents read a lot of books to me, took me swimming, treated me to regular day trips, and accompanied me on long walks in the local countryside. We did craft activities together too, including painting, knitting, and embroidery. My maternal grandparents took me camping to Ripley Caravan Park in North Yorkshire every summer.

#83 Untold Stories

—→ I spent a lot of my childhood alone. I enjoyed drawing, swimming, riding my bike, walking, and fishing. I was never lonely; I always loved peace and quiet.

As a teenager, I enjoyed my lessons in school, but I had behavioural issues at home. I was anxious and depressed. I ran away several times; Mum and I fought often. I did well in my GCSEs, but I did terribly at A-Level. In sixth form, the hormonal storm alongside increased academic expectations was too much for me. I started routinely skipping classes and avoiding completing coursework – preferring instead to listen to music, write lengthy letters to friends, or play pool at a local pub! I scraped just enough UCAS points to get to university, and then, thankfully, my life took a positive turn...

I completed a BA in English Literature, an MA in Creative and Critical Writing, and an MA in Museum Studies. In 2007, I qualified as an English teacher. I discovered a love of reading and researching; I would become entirely focussed on finding out everything I could about the topics that interested me.

Since then, I've had a varied career. I spent seven years teaching English Language, Literature and Media in schools. I also worked in an award-winning art gallery and a national museum, developing and delivering educational activities for schools and families. I've been an English Lecturer at Bradford College since 2016, and I have worked in Bradford College Library since February 2024.

In 2022, at the age of 40, I was diagnosed autistic – following the diagnosis of my son. This was a revelation and a relief in some ways, but it was also destabilising. I'm still processing my diagnosis. I've learnt so much about neurodivergence since then, but I'm only at the beginning of my journey; the more I find out, the more questions I have.

—→ For me, being autistic meant that I was often confused by social interactions when I was younger. I've honed my social skills with age, but I can still be perceived as blunt (I'm told), and I sometimes unwittingly say things that others consider 'inappropriate'. It can take me ages to 'get' jokes, or to work out implied meanings in conversation (although I'm good at analysing written texts). I become easily overwhelmed, and hate crowded spaces, although I don't tend to show it (I'm skilled at masking my feelings). I process new information slowly. My sensory processing differences can be problematic in some contexts but are sometimes a source of great joy.

Despite the challenges I've faced, I feel extremely lucky; I have two roles in college – which are both fascinating and rewarding – I have a loving family and supportive friends.

“ I can't imagine ever feeling bored because there is always more to learn; there are infinite problems to solve, and new people to meet with untold stories waiting to be heard. ”

→ Everyone has
a story. These
are ours.

→ From early childhood memories to ambitious dreams of bright futures, Untold Stories is a powerful collection of autobiographical pieces written by students and staff at Bradford College. Born from a desire to celebrate diversity, promote empathy, and strengthen our community, this anthology gives voice to the lived experiences that often go unheard – stories of resilience, identity, loss, and hope.

Spanning continents and generations, these deeply personal narratives reflect the rich diversity of the college community. Each piece invites readers to step into another's world – to listen, learn, and connect.

Vivid, surprising, and profoundly human, Untold Stories is a celebration of courage, creativity, and the unbreakable threads that bind us all.