

Jamal Hasan



Jamal Hasan was a leading anti-racist activist in East London during the 1970s. He was the General Secretary of the Action Committee Against Racial Attacks which organised the National Demonstration following the murder of Altab Ali.

My memories of the 1970s is quite mixed.

The first feelings of that period was the fear.

Fear to go out on my own, even in the day time. I was beaten up on two occasions and both times it was in broad daylight. On a Sunday afternoon, Shah, his brother and myself were going to Aldgate Tube station from the hostel I was living at 7 The Minories. Although Sundays are crowded by Petty Coat Lane, our hostel was in an office area and very quiet during the weekends. Suddenly two young men appeared in front of us from nowhere and without giving us any clue, started to punch and kick us. I was knocked down with a blow under my left eye. Shah insisted that we reported this to the police. Knowing that it would be a useless exercise, we did visit the police station. As we could guess, the police took details of our names and addresses and asked us if we could identify our attackers or if we knew their addresses! They told us that it would be impossible to take any action without knowing who the attackers were. The second time I was kicked out of the train to the platform when I was getting off at Tower Hill underground. The compartment was crowded and everyone saw this incident, but no one stopped the group of youths who attacked me. A black underground worker picked me up and advised me to go to the hospital. I had 7 stitches over my left eyebrow.

The second feeling of the period was one of excitement.

As soon as I was in the troubled Brick Lane I felt excited with the sense of community feeling. While with a group of friends, we felt we were fearless and believed that no one on earth could cause us harm. It was an exciting experience when we used to face the National Front thugs at the Bethnal Green end of Brick Lane every Sunday. We used to shout at the top of our voice and challenged them with our show of strength. What exciting moments they were!

After the murder of Altab Ali, we miraculously found enormous strength which helped us to be utterly determined to resolve that we would eradicate racial violence in East London once and for all.