

Memories of the 1970s

Abdul Subhan (Gadu)

Abdul Subhan (Gada) was an youth activist in the 1970s. He was the Founder member of the Bangladesh Youth Association. During the 1970s, he played a vital role in the vigilant group which combated the National Front thugs when they carried out racist attacks in Brick Lane and in the surrounding areas.

Until recently, I lived in the corner of Hanbury Street and Brick Lane. I have been a constant witness to frequent racial violence on the Asian community in East London. From 1975/76 the racist attacks intensified. We started to show our opposition to racist attacks. There were regular demonstrations and meetings all over East London. However the authorities gave a blind eye to our problem. Some of us strongly felt that demonstrations and meetings were not enough to stop racist attacks. We felt that we had to defend our community ourselves. With the assistance of Terry Fitzpatrick some of us formed vigilant groups and confronted the racist thugs whenever they came to attack us.

After the murder of Altab Ali on 4th May 1978, the whole community became united and organised a national demonstration. The most important change was that the community decided to take direct action against the racist thugs which ultimately stopped racial violence in East London.