

“CONEY ISLAND EXODUS”

FOR LESSON

*Belonging
in Brooklyn*

NARRATOR **Mohammad Razvi**



RAZVI Prior to 9/11, every person, even the yellow cab driver, the car service persons, were doing great. This little neighborhood expanded. And every other person you will see, they were trying to open up a new business. But after 9/11, people got scared. Community members got scared. They actually fled. Because there were so many roundups were happening, just because of a person’s name. People were afraid. And it actually, there was an exodus that happened.

RUN TIME 2:50

When we surveyed during that time, we found out that over 20,000 Pakistanis and other Muslims left Brooklyn. And they migrated to where? Canada, and other countries. And under the reason – the reason that was given was, “We’re fleeing America.” The freedom of the world and we’re being persecuted. And it was just unbelievable. I know – even until today if you go to Canada and Toronto, you will see a bustling Little Pakistan in Toronto. And I remember when I went to visit there, the hairstylist who was next to the grocery store in my neighborhood, he migrated there, and he actually has his own store, his own hairstylist store, his own house, and he said, “I’m living the American dream in Canada.” And I was like, oh my God. He’s like, “Yes, I’m living the American dream in Canada. I was so afraid after 9/11, what was happening in the neighborhood, that I just left.”

SPECIAL REGISTRATION
another name for the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS. This Bush administration program, which launched in 2002, required non-citizen men from predominantly Muslim countries to be registered by the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (Immigration and Customs Enforcement has assumed INS’s functions). Registration involved fingerprinting, photographs, and in-person interviews. Over 80,000 men and boys were registered and around 13,000 residents were deported. The program ended in 2011 and did not result in any terrorist convictions.

All right, so during the time of **special registration**, this is what was happening. This was one of our clients. Any person who was Pakistani, they were in a catch-22 if they were a visitor into the United States. They were damned if they didn’t register, and they were damned if they did. This particular student registered, he had a visa, he was going to school, when he registered, he was

detained for almost, I think, 24 hours. He wasn't allowed to get anything to eat, and then he was informed that he has to leave the country. He's like, "But my visa says I'm allowed to stay, and I'm allowed to go to school here." But yet, they were being put into deportation proceedings. And this is what happened to so many at that time. This is what scared the community. This is what scared everyone and anyone who was here. Twenty-five countries were put onto that, and Pakistan was one of those countries.

BIO Mohammad Razvi was born in 1971 in Pakistan. He and his family immigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, where they settled in Sheepshead Bay. He started several businesses in Midwood, and founded the Council of Peoples Organization (COPO) after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Through COPO, engagement with law enforcement agencies, and participation in research regarding hate crimes, Razvi worked to provide support to Muslim and immigrant communities.

CITATION Razvi, Mohammad, Excerpt from oral history interview conducted by Liz H. Strong, March 21, 2018, Muslims in Brooklyn oral histories, 2018.006.10; Brooklyn Historical Society.