

# ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

## FACTSHEET - STORY

Name	Sonya Hundal
Details, area of experience	Sonya's parents were members of the Indian Workers Association, known for its campaigns to protect the rights of early immigrant workers in the 1950s and 1960s. It also worked against discrimination and injustice and acted as a training nursery for this generation of Asian and Black community leaders.
Interview date	November 2020
Issues addressed	Woolf Rubber Factory Asian workers' strike, hardship to find work as an Asian man in the UK in the 50/60s, reaction of the media, society, and community to a factory strike in Southall, not finding work as a result of striking, impact of collective bargaining on privacy and mental health, legacy of joining a union carries on in the family.
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	<b>1965:</b> Walk-out from the factory as a result of a whistle-blower worker being sacked.  <b>Early 1966:</b> Strike progresses, and people realised that more hardship was ahead for them. Landlords asked to lower rent prices.  <b>1966:</b> Sonya was expected by her pregnant mother. This was during a time when the factory strike was well-documented by the media (her mother felt threaten and was scared by GP's comments on the factory workers' strike).

Locations referenced	Southall, Southampton, Bristol, India and Pakistan.
Campaigns, movements, protests	<b>Woolf Rubber Factory workers in Southall</b> organising and going on strike.
Historical context	Asian migrants coming to the UK looking for work. They were a group of highly entrepreneurial, motivated, and success-oriented community, but they were faced with no work and opportunities. They also couldn't go back home to India as they would be judged for not having tried hard enough and not having been successful.
Tactics	Going to every worker to <b>organise collectively</b> and be part of the <b>Transport &amp; General Workers' Union (TGWU)</b> ; <b>Sharing stories</b> with your children to inspire them to join a union and do more research to understand the traumas their parents went through.
Key words	Migration Unions Collectively bargaining Job opportunities Intergenerational stories Factory workers Community Solidarity
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Irrespective of whether you were well-educated or not, as an Asian worker you had little if not no job opportunities.</li> <li>● The traumas of a family having no money and not being able to afford shoes for their daughter.</li> <li>● The strength of the community to stand up for each other when one of their workers was sacked and not let cultural differences (Indian and Pakistani) divide them.</li> <li>● Even after all of the hardships, the importance of joining a union was embedded and passed on to the next generation (Sonya and her sister through stories).</li> <li>● The consequences of having a workers' strike documented on TV and newspapers e.g. how it was received by close ones and employers across a country.</li> <li>● The strike has changed her mum's personality and strength: she had to go and find work. Unusual for an Asian woman who just gave birth to work.</li> </ul>

Story summary	Sonya Hundal tells the story of her parents who were members of the Indian Workers Association, known for its campaigns to protect the rights of early immigrant workers in the 1950s and 1960s. Sonya talks about how many migrants overcame
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	<p>tremendous hardships and how strong the trade union movement made them.</p> <hr/> <p>Sonya is the daughter of a well-educated family who was involved in a factory strike in Southall, London. Her father always told stories in the family about him being on the news and in newspapers documenting the workers' strike. The Asian workers' strike was very unusual, because it was so rare for Asian workers to unionise and organise collectively. Through her father's stories, Sonya understood how hard it was for migrants who settled in the UK in the 1950s/1960s. Her parents had strong aspirations to succeed and do well in life, but they were faced with no opportunities. Her father was told that the only way he could get a job is by <i>'putting money in his passport'</i> and during his interview, employers checked his teeth and squeezed his muscles to check whether he was fit for work.</p> <p>The impact of the TGWU union organising was intrusive to her mother's privacy and space, because workers were coming in and out of her house constantly. After the sacking of a whistle-blower factory worker, all of the workers decided to go on another strike in solidarity and the passing of seven weeks led many to conclude that the strike would go on for longer than expected. In early 1966, Sonya was expected by her pregnant mother and when her mother went to her GP, she was told by him to get her husband off the TV and tell him to go back to work. It was a threatening and scary comment due to the racial violence at the time, but as a result of the strength of the community the workers' strike was eventually successful.</p> <p>Thereafter, it was hard for Sonya's family as they had no money when they left Southall for Southampton. Her father couldn't get work for three years, because of his well-documented strike actions at the Southall factory. Sonya's mother, who ended up working for the civil service, knows how it feels like to not have money, this is why to this day she finds it hard to give up work.</p> <p>The legacy of the factory strike is that the passion and motivation to join a trade union still remains strong within Sonya's family and her entourage.</p>
Stand-out quotations	<p>"My parents had aspiration when they came into the UK and what they found, what they were faced with was that there was no opportunity for them, for those aspirations. I supposed I get quite emotional about this talking to my mother about these events."</p> <p>"There were attempts to break the strike by the managers of the factory who brought in groups of workers from Pakistan and the idea was that the kind of differences in cultural would cause a break down in solidarity and actually all of the communities</p>

	<p>worked really hard for that not to be an issue and they maintained the strike.”</p> <p>“The thing that happened is because my parents moved from Southall to Southampton, when they moved my father couldn’t find any work. He was blacklisted, because of his reputation, it was on his references. He was unemployed for three years after the strike.”</p>
Main themes for learners	<p><b>Hardship following action for change:</b> Strength to stand-up for what is right knowing that one risks earning no money, having no jobs, and carrying psychological traumas.</p> <p><b>Intergenerational legacy:</b> the passing on of the baton through stories to your children for them to understand history and the societal context in which their parents grew up in.</p> <p><b>Divide and Rule:</b> the ways that the factory employers tried to divide the Asian community along cultural lines e.g., Indians and Pakistanis.</p>

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