

Telling our Stories, Finding our Roots, Exeter's Multi-Coloured History Interview Transcript

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So, Kemberly, how old are you?

I'm 16

And where are you originally from?

I am from the Philippines.

How long have you been here?

In Exeter, like 2 ½ years

But in England?

England, 3 years, no, 3 ½ years.

Where did you live before?

I used to live in Derby for about a year, in Year 8 and then we moved here in year 9.

What was different about Derby and Exeter?

When I first came to the UK that was the first city that I went to and I couldn't understand English at all. But we moved here, the next year I found English a bit easier to understand here.

Because of the accent. Do you have any family here in Exeter, except your immediate family?

No not in Exeter, but in Newcastle is my dad's Aunt. She lives there.

So do you visit each other?

She comes here like once a year.

So everyone else in your family is in the Philippines, and where in the Philippines were you originally?

It's in General Santo City like the south of the Philippines.

Tell us more about what it is like there.

It's OK, I think it's safest place, it's surrounded by mountains that why there's not much like disaster happening, and we have this festival, it's called Tuna festival, in the whole Philippines there's like festivals in each city. We have Tuna festival because whenever someone catch tuna it is massive, I don't know how big it is.

Get loads of tuna, that means you are in the seaside, the city? I've heard that within Gensan General Santo City there are loads of famous people there?

Yes, this guy, he is called Manny Pacquiao and he is like a famous boxer and he won loads of awards after beating other boxers. He is quite popular and Filipinos call him like someone who makes Filipinos known, that's the reason why Filipinos know each other in other countries.

What are the pros and cons of living in GenSan and in Exeter, like compare them?

You have them because in GenSan I don't have any relatives either, it's only me and my parents and my brother and the same thing in Exeter as well, but it's a bit better because I was born there and lived there for 12 years so I got used to it more, longer than compared to Exeter. That's why I feel more comfortable there than Exeter.

You said that you don't have any family in GenSan. So that means that your parents came from a different place in the Philippines, where exactly?

My Mum is from Roxas City and my dad is from Iloilo city and they moved to GenSan because my dad needed to move there because of his job and I was just born there.

Is there like a different language where your parents came from?

It's not a language, it's a dialect like, for each city.

Do you know both?

Yes I understand the dialects, but I don't speak it fluently.

Which one?

Because my parents both had the same dialect, I can't speak it but I understand it.

So why did you come here in the first place?

At first because my Mum wants to work in other countries because in Philippines the payment in job is not that big, so she wants to move to another country, and she applied to Canada but she wasn't accepted. And this person

told her to go to UK and she went here, and then after like 4 years, because my brother is nearly 18, they want him to move right away so he can be independent. Because if he is over 18 and he moves to the UK it will be hard

He will have to get a student visa

Yes that's why both my brother and my dad moved here and I stayed in Philippines by myself with my aunt and uncle for three months and then my Mum told me to come here.

So how long before you said that your Mum came here first, how long was the gap, how long was she abroad for?

Can't remember.. I think 7 years.

So you were away from your Mum for 7 years?

Yes, it's not exactly 7 years.

Did you miss her during that time?

Yes.

So when you finally came to Exeter, you were very happy because you got to be with your Mum?

Yes.

Do you remember the first day in Exeter?

My first day in Exeter was not because we moved here, it was my brother's birthday because me and my parents lived in Derby and my brother lived here by himself, so after we went here to celebrate his birthday, and we came here but it was bank holiday and in all the shops, there were no people and I thought this was a city and expected loads of people, but the next day there were a lot, and the weather is a bit wild compared to Derby.

What do you like and dislike about living in Exeter?

Because it doesn't snow a lot, it's safer I think [laughs].

You don't like the snow?

Yes, because it's slippery and I'm scared if I slip I might die.

So you prefer like hot weather?

Yes because that's what we have in Philippines, but at first, because I'm from a hot country, I want to see the snow. I thought the snow is like fluffy but when I touch it that's fine but when I see it again.... [inaudible]

Did you experience any time when you fell in the snow?

No, I walk very slowly because I'm scared.

Have you been ice-skating? In the Philippines or here?

Yes, because when I was Philippines I was 12 years old and my parents are really strict, they don't let me go, but when I came here I think they find that this country is a bit safer that's why they let me like go with my friends.

Do you think British parents are more lenient, less strict than Filipino parents?

Yes because here they like let other kids stay really late but in the Philippines you wouldn't see like teenagers staying to 9o'clock.

Do you think it's got to do with the culture?

Maybe.

Do you think the Philippines is like more family oriented than here?

Yes, because the parents always think about the child's future, that's why they have to be as strict as much as they can, so that the child can have like a better future.

What do you mean by a better future?

Like get something good for a job.

So is education really important?

Yes it's very important in Philippines so all of us need to go to school, but we had to pay for school, like in primary

In England?

and secondary but in Philippines you need to pay things like kindergarten something and some people, like kids they don't have money to go to school and I feel that's really sad because I want them to go to school as well, but then when I came to UK I feel really lucky because I don't have to pay for school.

Ok, do you feel, because from what I've researched, there's a lot of street children in the Philippines, so when you ever visit there do you feel sorry for them?

Yes, cos I feel lucky that in the UK I got to do what I want more and my parents gave me more opportunities to do this and do that and get what I want, and then when I see them when I go to like Philippines for a holiday, I

feel bad when we're in the car, I feel bad for the kids cos they like beg for food and stuff.

Your parents, you know, are they really strict when it comes to allowing, do they really want you to get good grades and pressure you at times?

Sometimes they do, they don't really say you have to do this and that, I just have that feeling that I have to do well for them.

Due to your background and coming from the Philippines? Do you feel that there is more freedom here in the UK than in the Philippines?

Yes, I think so because my parents will let me stay like 9 o'clock at night, but in the Philippines I need to have time when I need to go back home at that exact time and if I don't go back the exact time they will get mad at me.

Is it due to the fact that it's more dangerous in the Philippines?

Yes it is, because you might find drunk people at 6 o'clock at night sometimes.

So do you go on holiday to the Philippines?

Yes, like once.

Do you feel comfortable there still, or do you feel foreign?

I feel a bit weird when I came there, I didn't expect to be that hot, it was so hot and I was wearing like a jacket, from the UK it was quite cold and I was wearing a jacket and when I got off the plane and went outside the airport, it was hot and there was like loads of pollution and I felt this completely different than UK, so I felt weird and I didn't know how to like buy stuff there any more

A bit hard to adapt like seeing so much change over the years? So when you came here did you feel more Filipino or more British? Or a bit of both?

A bit of both, because I stayed in the UK, before I went to the Philippines, I stayed two years here and then I got like a bit of the culture and when I got there I didn't eat like Filipino food that much any more, I eat like English food here, and my aunt said that you are very different now, you don't eat this kind of stuff any more.

With your parents, they grew up in the Philippines, they are more Filipino than you, because they haven't been here all their lives, but is there any conflict between you, like certain beliefs for example?

You know in the Philippines when they were young, you had to respect your parents like 100% but here because, I don't know, sometimes I talk back to them and they would get mad at me because I do that. Because when I was

in the Philippines I don't, but when I came here I just naturally do and we have like arguments.

So you think British culture influenced you? Do you feel more independent here?

Yes, because here I can go like by myself anywhere, but in the Philippines I need someone to go with me. Before I was..

So feel more grown up here?

yeah

Is that a good or bad thing?

I think it's a good thing because it's a good thing to be independent because somewhere in the future I'll be by myself but, I don't know, at the same time it's bad because, in the Philippines family's really important because, for example, even if you are like married you need to look after your parents. Whereas if I become independent I might forget my parents and that's a bad thing.

So do you think you are going to have like more balance?

Yes I think I should.

Earlier you talked about those festivals in the Philippines, what other festivals are there?

I am not really aware of the other cities, but in my city we have Tuna festival, the celebration of like, we have this parade of something that different students from school, they do performance about tuna they do dances as well.

Have you heard of the other festivals, like Dinagyang?

I've heard of it but I don't know how they celebrate it.

Do you know it's like tribal things?

No

Have you ever been like to a festival in another place? When you come to visit your other family?

No

How did you make friends here?

In Exeter when I came here I met a Filipino girl and I just naturally became friends with her, because we were from the same like country and she speaks the same language as my parents, that's why we just got like close and she got friends as well and I just got naturally friends with her friends.

So your friendship group is like a mixture of races?

Yes it's all different cultures.

Can you name a few?

Chinese, Bulgarian, there's one English.

Is it hard for you to make, like you have a friendship group, to be acquainted with other groups?

Yes, I think so because I got used to my friends and I don't talk to other people that much

At school?

Yes, I don't talk to them that much. I think because we don't share the same interests, and the friends in my group, we share the same interests.

Do you think it's got to do with the part of the world that you come from?

I don't know.

Are you a member of a faith group?

Yes, I'm a Roman Catholic, Christian, religion.

Is it because of where you are from that you've become, or you were born...

Yes, my parents are both Roman Catholic and in Philippines if you are from a religious group [inaudible] it's all different, if you were Muslim your child would be Muslim if you're Roman Catholic your child would be Roman Catholic. And if you were born in Philippines you have, you need to have a religion because if you don't, because we believe if you are born you have a sin already and you need to have baptism in order to have get of that sin. And everyone in the Philippines has got religion 99% of them.

Do you share it with anyone, like the religion?

Yeah, most Philippines are like Christian, Catholic.

On a different topic now. In the Philippines do you find there are a lot of different racial groups as well – because there are people that are more Spanish, more Chinese and more Malay influence – do you notice that?

Not like whole Chinese or Spanish, but a lot of them are like half Spanish, half Chinese, I think it's because loads of tourists like go to the Philippines.

Do you think that's why the Philippines have like kind of trouble with identifying, identity?

Yes, sometimes you might see a Filipino person who might be half Chinese or half-Spanish.

So to you, what does it mean to be Filipino? Is it do with ethnic, or nationality or just the country in general?

To do with the ethnic, because if you moved to another country you could change your nationality. It's not about being in the country as well because you are you. You being a Philippino, even if you move somewhere, you can't really change. Because if you lived there, you would get like things that you can't get rid of and sometimes, even if a Philippino is born in another country, your parents are still Filipinos and they will teach you Philippino stuff.

Like what kind of stuff?

The way Filipinos... I don't know

Do you think, do you consider yourself British?

Legally yes [laughs], but not really 'cos I am still Philippino and I didn't really stay in British that long. And also I just like the food

You like British food. But do you like Philippino food as well? Or what do you prefer?

I prefer British food.

Do you play any sport?

No, I hate sport.

Does it have to do with your country, do you think? Because Filipinos don't do sport?

No, I think most Filipinos like sport, but me personally, I just don't like it.

How come?

I'm not good at it.

How many languages do you speak?

Like Tagalog as a language but I speak different dialects. In my city Somsaia but my parents are Ilongo.

Can you say,,, Teach me.

Which one from my city or my family. In my city...

How do you say 'good morning'?

[]

Is that from your city? GenSan

Yes, its from my parents.

[]

How do I say 'I love you'?

[]

What language is that?

Tagalog.

Is that the national language? And what other language?

I can speak English. [laughs]

Is from what I've read, English a national language as well?

In my country? It's a second language that most people can speak.

Nearly everyone can speak English

But not like very fluently

What language do you think in?

Tagalog, no my dailect

Because the Philippines have been conquered by quite a lot of countries..

Yes, Spanish and Japan and America

Do you think that has influenced the language?

Yes, in my parents' city, most of the words is like Spanish, I think because the conquers... and the way we pronounce the words, it's like Japanese.

By syllable by syllable

Yeah, and I think the fact that we have English as a second language, is because of America conquered us.

Do you think Filipinos are proud of being Philippino? Or do you think they want to be like someone else, like American for example?

Generally I don't know, but me personally I'm proud to be a Philippino, but generally I think some Filipinos want to be something else.

Why do you think that is?

Because, I don't know, I think they are unhappy what they look like..

Look like physically?

Yes

Is there a belief in Philippines about what you look like...?

I don't know, they just think that Filipinas are ugly or something [laugh]

So are they proud of their skin colour?

No, they don't like dark

They want to be white?

Yeh.

Does it have to do with being conquered by foreign countries that have white skin that they've given out that attitude that white is better?

I think it's because of the media, like all the artists have got white skin, and I think the people that watch them in shows are affected and they want to look like them, have like white skin.

Do they get like treated and stuff to get white skin? What are your opinions of that?

I don't know, because if I go to the Philippines I have quite white skin. If I am here I look dark but when I go there most people mistake me as Chinese.

OK. What TV shows do you watch, do you watch British ones or Philippino ones?

I don't watch British ones, because if I watch a drama I want to watch from start, but most of it like Friends been going forever, they start ages ago and I wouldn't be able to understand anything. But at home we have this thing called TFC – The Phillipino Channel and this shows all Philippino shows, like dramas.

And do you feel more comfortable watching this kind of dramas?

Yes, we usually watch it more than British ones so...

And do you watch any other kind of media, not just Philippino ones?

On the internet I watch Korean drama.

Why do you like Korean dramas?

Because before I watched this show, they had dubbed this show in Tagalog in my language. It's a Korean show, they showed it in the Philippines in my language but I didn't like the voices so I searched the internet and when I watched it again I started liking it from there and I just read subtitles.

There's quite a lot of migration, like there's a lot of Korean coming to the Philippines. Do you think that is affecting the identity of the Philippines?

No, not really because the Koreans they don't really stay there for a long time, they just go there for a year and they go back to their country.

But do you think it is kind of helping Korea and the Phillipines – kind of like intermarriage and stuff and accepting each other's culture?

Yes, it does because if for example a Korean goes to the Philippines and they make friends with Philippines they share their cultures, they just become friendly.

Recently there's been a Philipino community established – how do you feel about it?

You mean Phililppinos in Exeter? We have this community group here...

How did it come about, the idea?

I don't know – my parents know but I don't know.

It's like were there like candidates?

Yes, they vote for this person to become president and secretary like that, it's all Filippinos. They did that thing like how Filippinos can actually live better. Like for example, this person can become the president of the community and made this project for the young people in Exeter, like teenage boys to have basket-ball games.

Does it organise games that like encourage unity?

Yes

Have people been rude to you about where you are from? Have you experienced any racism?

Sometimes, but I just don't mind it. They don't really do it all the time but if they do, I can't say that it's racism. I just ignore it.

What kind of things do they do?

Teasing.

Is it in your school?

Yes

Do you ever tell the teacher about it?

No

Does it make you, does it feel like a kind of hatred for them or just annoyed?

Not really.

You don't really care?

Yeah

Your opinions of them don't change because they treat you that way?

Yeah

Have you seen anyone else racist to other people? Or have you seen them isolate someone? For example, have you seen someone like sitting by themselves in your own school?

Yeh, sometimes, there are people like by themselves and I don't know them are they like year 10 or year 9, but they are by themselves, they don't have any friends and every time in lunch or break, they eat by themselves. I feel sorry for them because they don't have any friends.

Are they not British?

No, they are like Asian.

What do you think should be done about it?

I think the school should have, should have this thing where people who doesn't have friends like talk to each other so they become like, friends.

Can you tell us a story or a historical fact about the Philippines?

There's this person, he's called [Jose Rizal?] he's a Filipino person and he's very smart and he went during the time when Spain was conquering the Philippines, he went to Spain to learn to speak Spanish to with the Spanish people he could talk to them. He's like person who doesn't like violence, so he wrote a book, it's called *El Filibusterismo* it's a Spanish book I don't know what it means. He wrote a story about something, and he gave it to the Spanish government to read it. I think it just shows the way the Spanish treats Filipinos.

Was he killed because of this?

Yes, he was killed in Luneta Park, he was killed there. I think he was facing in front of the people killing him, because he doesn't want to face back because he's not a coward that's why he want to face in front of them and they can just kill him straight away.

So you mean in the military when they kill people in the olden days, they would normally look back, He would just face back to show he wasn't a coward? That's why he's recognised

Yeah, He's like called a national hero and he's been on a peso, on money, on coins, his face.

Have you ever heard of the term 'people power'?

Its about this person, it's a president yeh, she's the first woman president in the Philippines. I don't know what happened, it's something about people going against..

A martial law government?

Yes.

And you think that act, because people power, I don't know what year it was.. do you think that kind of influences other countries to do the same thing - like Egypt and Tunisia and Libya ?

I don't know.

Could you sing us a song, sing the national anthem?

A little bit?

Yes or a child's song.

No, I'm not singing a child's song.

[sings]

What does it mean?

The song was made after like, the Philippines got the freedom after the three countries conquered the Philippines, they got their freedom. That's why this person she made this song it's about the Philippines getting freedom and the first [] means this peaceful country and [] the pearl of the east, it shows that our country is an important part of the east.

Would you like more people in Exeter to know about your ethnic or do not want them to know more about Philippono culture?

I want them to know about Philippino culture, because I don't know, there's a lot to share about it, wonderful things about it. Philippino culture is not very known to countries and especially in Exeter – that's why I want them to know.

Thank you

End of interview