

Anne Frank with a Telephone

In 1982 when Nasreen Saddique was 12 years old, her dad decided to start a business.

“So he found a shop in Stratford. We moved in, all happy. A week later we get a knock on the door and as we opened the door there was, like, fifty youths outside. We shut the door, kept getting knocks at the door and got racist abuse thrown at us – ‘Pakis get out!’.

We didn’t have a phone, there was a phone box right across the road, we phoned the police, police didn’t come. Dad went to the police station to complain, asked for the police to come round.

‘We’re in trouble, we don’t know what to do, there’s 40-50 youths outside.’ The police didn’t come.

Every night it was happening again and again. This went on from six o’clock as soon as it got dark, right until past midnight so we didn’t really get any sleep.

My dad boarded up the shop and blocked the letterbox. We were frightened, we didn’t know what to do. My mum and dad didn’t speak good English so I had to speak for the family.

One day my dad was working from home and he heard a big bang and went out and saw a big bucket full of shit, and when we phoned the police they didn’t come. We were making trips to the police station and saying ‘we need help’. We had ‘National Front’ painted on our front door, my dad’s van was stolen, we were frightened to go out.

Two weeks later my mum said ‘Let’s go ask for help’. So we went to the Town Hall and they said

‘Go to Newham Rights Centre’ and they said

‘Why don’t you write down everything that happened?’

So we would keep the upstairs lights off and we’d be sitting on the bed near the window – my mum would be looking out – and I had to decide

then to keep a diary in candlelight because obviously we couldn't have the lights on."

Nasreen started writing her diary when she was 12, hoping it could be used as evidence to stop the racist attacks. Night after night they carried on. Her story was covered in a national newspaper (*The Daily Mirror*) and in magazines. She became known as 'Anne Frank with a telephone'. But that didn't stop the attacks.

The racists met every night to play games in a minicab office next door, and to abuse her family. Newham Council offered to move Nasreen's family but they refused to go, saying they wanted the racists dealt with.

The attacks went on for six years. Nasreen was still writing her diary when she was 18. It only finished when the family took the next door minicab office to court and got it closed down.

As Nasreen says now:

"I never had a childhood."