

**Jonida Bujupi interview with Naomi Hamill (11:53)**

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

(00.00)

Well I was born in the middle of the war, in 1998, in March. My mum wasn't able to get to a hospital when she gave birth to me so we had to go to a made up doctor's surgery and that's where she gave birth to me. At four months old, my parents took me and my brother to Macedonia. To do this, my parents had to carry me and my brother across the border. We had to walk across the border, through woods and forests. It was just wasn't safe for us to stay in Kosovo anymore. We were in Macedonia, we lived with families which took us in by the kindness of their hearts, to look after us, to give us food and shelter, for us to stay. They knew what was going on in Kosovo, it wasn't nice at all.

(01:00) My parents found out that I had a problem with my hips. They knew that I had a problem, for nine months whilst we were in Macedonia as well, but we were just unable to pay the fees: it was just too expensive for us. We just wasn't able to get any help. There were many people from Kosovo moving into to Macedonia, obviously, it became a sort of refugee camp so me and my family were declared as refugees, so then we were then able to go to local hospitals and seek help for me to see what was wrong with my hips. I was unable to walk.

So when we were there, my mum heard of Doctors Without Borders. She applied to them to get us out of the country to get treatment for me. They gave her three options of countries where we could go to Switzerland, America or England. She didn't mind where we went so she asked them where was the best place for me to get treatment, for me to get better. They

suggested the UK. So, of course, me and my mum and everyone we were going to the UK, and they said that we could take our family with us<sup>1</sup>. That's how seventeen members of our family ended up in England<sup>2</sup>.

(02:30) As soon as we got here, I got taken into hospital for, to get treatment. They, the doctors and the nurses treated me really well. I slightly remember sometimes. It was good because my mum wasn't... my mum was obviously worried - she was always going to be worried about me, her kids - but it was just the money, the food and everything, they just took care of it. And it was good to know my mum didn't have that stress and that worry.

NH: Do you know where you lived when you first came to the UK?

(03:08) JB: We lived in like, it was, it was kind of a refugee house, I'm not really sure what it's called. I don't remember, obviously I was really young. But, yeah, it was in Barrow, when we first came here. All the family were in this house and it had, I think it had, three three floors. So, each family could stay there for the time. So, after I had a few more operations, for my hips, I was then able to make a complete recovery and was then obviously able to walk with some practice and some help, I was fine. And, obviously I'm really thankful for that and everything that they did. 'Cause if we were still in Kosovo, I don't think that would have been able to happen: probably years like ahead, or maybe not even then.

(04:00) After a while, my parents found out that my brother had an even more serious condition that, if we were still in Kosovo, it wouldn't have been

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<sup>1</sup> see MaK timeline in this archive: In a global humanitarian response to the conflict, the British government evacuates dispossessed Kosovars to Manchester, Leeds and Scotland. 4,346 of the most vulnerable men, women and children are selected from refugee camps. 2,400 arrive in the North West. *"People had few belongings, what they brought with them instead was bewilderment and dignity, grief and dispossession."* ('My Name Came up' Refugee Council, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> See recordings by other members of the Bujupi family included in this archive: Bled Bujupi and Blerina Ahmetaj

cured. So my brother wouldn't have been developed as the way he should be.

(4:19) After I got better I started primary school in Barrow. I had a happy childhood from what I can remember, in Barrow. With my friends, I enjoyed my life there. It was good. After a few years in Barrow, we decided to move to Manchester with all the rest of our family. One of the reasons if for better education opportunities for us - Barrow was a small place so we thought Manchester; of course, it's going to be better.

I went to a Primary School, Lime Tree Primary Academy; I made new friends. I felt really welcome there by everyone, they treated me so well. They made me feel like I had always been there. It was really good.

(05:10) I now go to South Trafford College. I do Health and Social Care and this links to my profession in which I want to be, which is nursing. And I feel like, I don't know what made me choose this but it may be because I was in hospital a lot when I was younger and so I know what it's like to be that kid, or that person, in hospital and knowing that nurses - what they did for me and how they helped - I just think it was great. And I want to give that back because I don't know what I would have done really. I want to give back to the community.

Of course - now it's been nine years since living in Manchester - of course we love it! It's great so I just want - want to give back. And I want to feel good about giving back 'cause I know they're going to feel good about it. So I want to do a good job at that. I think it's important, especially for children: they're young and they're vulnerable when they're in hospital, for whatever reason. So I think I would like to concentrate on children, because I was a child when I was in hospital.

(06:30) I don't remember coming to England. But, of course, I remember the schools that I went to, roughly, the hospital. I think if I went back there, I would know. Yeah, I do remember, kind of. I think it's great that my parents have pictures from when we were in hospital so we get them out sometimes and my mum always tells me that we were really lucky to come here and because they knew what - when we were in Kosovo - what my condition was, that's sort of what brought us here because they knew that I needed treatment. So that's how we got here, with all our family. And that's also how we found my brother's condition, which we were really lucky to find.

(07:30) We go every summer for a long time, well I would say, a month maybe or less. We go visit our family, the places there. Now that we're older as well, it's good because we all know more about it and we can go and visit places that, like, where our parents were born, where they were raised. And it's good to know like these kind of things, it's something that, it's a good, it's good feeling.

(08:00) I speak full Albanian and my mum she never wanted to lose the language. At home, I always speak in Albanian, constantly, but obviously, when we got to school, at the beginning, we didn't know much. But because we have a lot of cousins, brothers, sisters, together we went to school, nurseries. Teachers helped us so much; we learnt language quickly. And we interacted with each other then, which also helped us learn language even more. And it's great now - we know two languages. I think it great that my mum wanted to keep the Albanian language. It's good; I like the fact that she's done that.

(08:45) She... often she likes to make us Albanian food. One of the main one is called Pite. She makes that one a lot. And she wants to teach me how to make it along with other traditional foods that we have. The thing is I like the food that we eat: the traditional food that we have. I like it and it's good if I

learn 'cause then I can show others and will just make everyone get involved in, like, our tradition in Kosovo I think it's great, I love it.

(09:24)She learnt English at the beginning. I actually think she learnt it when we moved to Manchester; she did a course, so she's learnt English now. So she can communicate with others now. She has a, yeah, she just, she can speak English, it's good, she can do things like that, everyday things. It's good - she doesn't know it very well - but it's good enough to communicate but she still likes to keep talking Albanian to us. I know that we speak English more now like with my brothers and everything. So she doesn't like to, like, forget our language. She knows that could happen 'cause we could just start speaking English all the time and we could forget it like that but it's good.

I think, definitely, it is very different to what her life would have been like in Kosovo. I think she misses it, she misses, but, she misses what it could have been like - but again it's better that we moved here for us, for herself as well, though 'cause she would have always had the worry of her children not getting well, which is not good for - it's not good mentally - but you know, I think it's better now. She likes it, she enjoys it. But, there are certain things that she mentions, if we were in Kosovo, you know. Yeah.

I would say that, in my heart, I'm always with Kosovo. My heart belongs to Kosovo. But, of course, England has done so much for us and it's amazing and I'm really, really thankful for that. But of course, my home town: I was born there, my family was born there, yeah, it's Kosovo. I've not been back to that actual place. But, yeah, I've not been back to that place. Maybe it's something I should do, in the future. Yeah.

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But, of course, England has done so much.