

In The Hotseat: Mrs Taifur Rashid: MBE

Written by Emdad Rahman
Saturday, 14 June 2008 00:28 -

Taifur Rashid is a force to be dealt with.

With so many reports of arrogant and self-important personalities, it is a pleasure to report that Taifur Rashid is a thoroughly nice woman. During our brief encounter she was extremely hospitable, generous and full of advice.



Mrs Rashid, 46, of Beehive Lane, Redbridge, is married with two sons. She was born in Bangladesh and has lived in Redbridge for the past 16 years, after first immigrating to Britain in 1974. She also works as a full-time senior housing officer for Toynbee Housing Association in Spitalfields but started her career as a sales assistant/ section Manager in the fashion department of a South London shop. Mrs Rashid also worked at the Royal Bank of Scotland before taking a part-time post as an information team leader at the Ethnic Advice and Community Centre in Aldgate. She has also worked as a higher clerical officer for Tower Hamlets Health Authority before taking up her current job 15 years ago. She is also the first and only women chair of the Tower Hamlets Race Equality Council.

Two years ago Mrs Rashid was honoured in the Queen's Birthday honours list and was rewarded with an MBE in recognition of her sterling efforts for the community. She spoke of her joy at being recognised, after years of tireless campaigning for a better deal for people. The erstwhile campaigner of human rights informed me that she was "speechless" when she learnt about her MBE award. She said, "I was speechless and over the moon when I heard of the award. Words cannot describe the elation I felt at the time."

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"The Queen questioned me personally in relation to my work background and country of origin. I was SO proud. My chest was bursting and I felt that I was representing the whole of Bangladesh during that magical moment.

"In relation to the investiture, she said: "I was a bit nervous, mainly because you don't receive a rehearsal for these awards."

Celebrating her honour, Mrs Rashid said of the award: "I have tried so hard for my people, especially women, the young and vulnerable for such a long time and to be recognised like this, nationally and publicly, is amazing. It shows how hard we have all worked over the last few years. It's just a relief to be recognised". You feel sometimes that people don't listen or people get tired of your voice and it's so good to see that something good and worthwhile has come out of all our combined efforts"

Whether it's through her achievements, or as a committed ambassador for the Bangladeshi community, Mrs Rashid regularly takes an active role in live discussions, forums and interviews. A speaker who is both inspirational and entertaining she enlightened me with advice she has for the general benefit of people. These are:

- A desire to reach your full potential
- A need to achieve with no fear of failure
- Goal setting
- To be honest and strive to be upright
- To nurture an ability to perform under pressure

The Queens awardd is recognition of her status as an accomplished community role model and in the process recognises other individuals who have been through similar circumstances. Being made a Member of the British Empire is recognition of her status as an accomplished community role model and therefore recognises other individuals who have been through similar circumstances.

Mrs Rashid is an uncomplicated person. Perhaps that is not surprising either from a woman whose single minded drive and determination has helped make her one of the most successful and likeable personalities in this part of the world.