

Tarik Accord

June 6, 2019 Interviewer Merryn Edwards; Camera Don Bouzek

TA: I'm originally from Somalia, I born in Somalia and I grow up. I came in Canada November 5, 2004. I really like here.

Q: What made you decide to come to Canada?

TA: I love back home mostly, but the situation there, we cannot live there. So we move outside the country; so we end up here, and my family.

Q: Where were you born?

TA: In Somalia.

Q: What was the town like?

TA: My home town they call Galkayo; it's in central Somalia.

Q: Were your family farmers?

TA: We had a camel and goats. We both live in the city and outside of the city.

Q: You brought the animals back and forth?

TA: Ya.

Q: Were you the first in your family to go to Canada?

TA: My brother was since 1986 in Canada. My husband sponsored me here; so I come here. He came ahead. So I have idea for Canada before I come here.

Q: What did he tell you about Canada?

TA: Snow and cold. First time I came here Canada was snow outside, and cold and short night-- I mean shorter day.

Q: Was your husband working when you arrived?

TA: Yah, he was working here.

Q: So you had a place?

TA: Yes, I have a place and I go to school after like two months.

Q: Did you decide together that you would move to Canada, or did he decide first? Was that your plan when you got married?

TA: Yah, he was here and I was back home when we got married. It was an arranged marriage. There's not that much work there in Somalia at that time because it's like war in the country, and there's no central government. That's why makes me to come here, but still my family, half of them is back home.

Q: What were some of the impacts of the war on your family?

TA: There's not that much. Of course, killing people and a lot of stuff. Especially our town is safe really, but anything can happen. Because if there is no powerful government, everybody don't feel that much safe. That's only what we miss most back home.

Q: What do you miss as well?

TA: Food and weather.

Q: So you knew it was going to be cold here. What else did you expect to find here?

TA: Language barrier, because I was speaking English not that much. I didn't get the chance back home to learn much English there. I was scared to go outside and do a lot of stuff, find a job too. It was very hard when you don't speak English, although you have experience and passion to do something. But when you don't know the language of the country, it's really hard, and that's what I faced most.

Q: What did you imagine your work would be like in Canada?

TA: For me, when I was back home, I was just in business. We have a shop; so, since I was ten years old, I was involved in sale and stuff sometimes, family business. I can do a lot of stuff and also we have a restaurant back home. So I can cook and do a lot of stuff. But here there's no opportunity to get that job here.

Q: What kinds of work were you looking for?

TA: I have my place; so it was better for me work close to, because I don't want to move my stuff. A lot of place when I go to, they said, "we don't accept your clothes." I end up to find a cleaning job, which wasn't in my mind when I was coming Canada to work. But I remember my first job. It was very low rate, \$6.50.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

TA: I was cleaning the offices and vacuum the floor and stuff.

Q: Was that your very first job?

TA: It was my first job. I don't remember the name, but it was a cleaning company.

Q: What was your work like there? Were you cleaning offices mostly at night?

TA: I started evening when people leave the office space, so you have a chance to take the garbage and vacuum the office and do some dust. It was overload, and I was running most of the time to finish the job. I was scared because I don't speak that much language; so maybe you could get fired. So you have to fast and do some stuff. Then after that I try to change and find full-time; I was part-time at that time. I have a back home family, although I have my husband here, because you have to send money back home and it wasn't enough for me to support my family back home and here.

Q: Did you have other cleaning jobs then?

TA: Still I was working, and at that time in 2005, Alberta was really high unemployment rate at that time. I was looking around but I couldn't find a job that I was happy to. I applied different places but don't want to lose my school; I was attending school in the morning. I decided to pay my tuition because I was sponsored and they don't allow you. If you have sponsor, you have to pay the tuition after the ESL. I decided to work my shift and even in part-time classes. So I end up Bee Cleaning at University of Alberta, which was more night shift. I started July 2005 as Bee Cleaner at University of Alberta and I was working nightshift. It changes sometimes but most of the time I work 12-hour shift. I start evening until the morning.

Q: What was your start time?

TA: Start time was 6 o'clock and stop was 6:30 in the morning.

Q: Did you work alone or with a group of people?

TA: For the first time I started it was really busy and you're always alone and overworked. I was a very fast person and doing a lot of work so they can give it to you for four or five hours by yourself. You have to do it on your own on nightshift; so they left you there and you have to

finish in the morning. I was doing take the garbage, ? classes, do the board, and finish the routine they give to you. You're in trouble if you don't finish.

Q: What would happen if you didn't finish?

TA: Most of them yelling and I don't want to lose my job. I get afraid because I don't speak that much English at that time. Also, if you don't finish, you go home. I don't want to lose my job. So it gives me like to do more. There's a lot of people was more than what I do, and I see because I was strong at that time. Then there's people doing same job I was doing and they couldn't finish sometimes.

Q: So you saw other people get yelled at?

TA: Yah. When I was working four to six months, they promote me, because I was very hard worker and quick learn. So they told me to do some lead time, so you can check the people, and they give you very heavy job. When I come and said, this person cannot do the job, they said, either he has to do it or have to go home. It wasn't to make me happy at all. So mostly I have to help with them. Sometimes if you finish your routine, they going to send you to do more. I knew some English, but some people they don't know English and they face a lot of challenge really. It makes me sick.

Q: So you quit the lead hand position?

TA: Yes. Most people is from outside the country and they don't know English at all. They going to send you somebody which even you don't speak their language, and even so you have to train this person. I don't want to push that person like that. I help them and then after that, only that person I would step between is \$1. So I was a lead hand--if this person had \$10, I have \$11. I have overwork, because if this person doesn't show up, I have to do my routine and his routine. I was seeing emotion of people, and some people they mad at me. So I quit my position and said, I cannot do this job. They was really mad and said, why you don't want to lead hand? I said, yah, I cannot do anymore; it's too much for me to do.

Q: Can you talk about how we first met?

TA: In 2008, they pick me out, as well as a lot of foreign workers, because they could not find fit employees there. Most of them were working 12 hour shift and they don't pay overtime. Also we was talking about they sometimes send their homes and they do something.

Q: Send to the managers' homes?

TA: Managers' homes to do some job. It was talk about one of them told me there's a union; so we said, maybe the union. I was at that time part time and my shift was evening. But still I wasn't lead hand. But most of the people working that, they know me. They was comfortable for me, because I was helping them to do some stuff. They said, did you know there's union here? I said no; I didn't know that. That's where one of our worker told me there is, and we got information. I don't remember exactly the time.

Q: There was such a coincidence that one of the organizers knew lana's family.

TA: Yah, first time we met, lana, who was speaking Somali and translating for Somali workers in there, she told me that she's from Somalia. She recognized my name, because my father has a unique name, Accord. She said, I know that name. I said, how do you know that name? She said, I heard it, because her mom and me are second cousins from my mom's side, my dad's side. Her and me are second cousins; we are relative for her. So yah, I remember that day. I was crying say, are you Arthur daughter? She said, yah. It was really, really good. I went Somalia last year, 2017, and I saw her father too.

Q: Somehow we got your address and knocked on your door.

TA: Yah, I think she said, this is what we're doing, can we come to your home? I said, yah you can come my home. But I think her mom passed away, but her dad at that time we saw. One year ago her mom passed away. So yah, you came to my home and we did a lot. Then I was

talking non-stop, because I was full of anger for what I was seeing in the workplaces. My husband said, oh you're passionate. I said yah; I have to say what is supposed to be said, and I don't afraid. That's the first time.

Q: Do you remember what we talked about?

TA: Yah, we talk about where you work and how does the system work and what is your job and everything. Yah, I remember everything. I cannot forget that part.

Q: Maybe you can tell about the first meeting that we had.

TA: First meeting--before we didn't go anywhere and for that one when we signed the cards there? I think by the time you came to my home, we started to ? to Bee Clean and let them know we forming a union. Second week I got fired. When he see my picture all around ? people I know, and most I work with. I was working all the buildings and most of them I was lead hand and most people know me. So he see the picture of everybody I know. So he said, is this your picture? I said, yes. He said, are you unionizing those people? I said, no, I didn't unionize; they unionize themselves. After me shift he told me, put the key there and go home. The nightshift and evening shift, they comes in to the office, and evening shift is putting their keys and the nightshift is taking their keys from him. He showed in front of them all to scare them. They like my job really and they always give me example if they want to permit that person. They know if they fire me, they can fire everyone. So I was example of fired, and he will disappoint them.

Q: Send a message to them.

TA: Ya.

Q: So what happened next?

TA: They fire me and say, we don't have a shift for you. I said, okay. I know the reason and everything. After that I think we had a meeting together. Also, not only me, his last name was

Coyes, also send him home. We were same building, me and him. So they send him home, they send me, and they harass all the people. Then my shift, which was mostly Punjabi people, they tell them, if you need to go meeting, you will all go home. So I think we had a press conference. I don't remember what's the second, but I remember that one.

Q: Your talent was to communicate with people, even if you didn't speak their language.

TA: Yah, I communicated with them. Also they trust me, and trust is real important. You don't speak the person's same language, but they know you and they know you'll help. I was helping them before this situation. So they always come to me and say, sorry what happened to you, but what we can do it. I said, don't afraid, say whatever. This is your right, we didn't do anything wrong. This is our right and we have to be strong. I was keep calling and we have that connection. That part was really good. They know they have a lot of harassment too.

Q: What was it like talking to the media?

TA: For the employee?

Q: At the press conference. You did a lot of media interviews and the press conference.

TA: We get like more motivation. For me it was really good point that they fire me. I get a lot of time to go everywhere and every meeting. If you're at work, they make sure you don't have a chance to talk to people, but now I'm free, I'm outside. I can go and do whatever I like. So the press conference, they said, oh Tarik you did very good, we saw you. So I said, yah, we have to keep going until we get our rights and respect that we deserve.

Q: What ended up happening?

TA: After we have the press conference, the University of Alberta, the students, and everything, they stand with us. We had a conversation and we was planning a big conversation the second time. They said we will negotiate, if I remember. Then the second press conference is cancelled

but we was getting a lot of people forward. Some people they make scared every morning. The majority of the employee was Punjabi people and they don't speak English. They had a lead inside, one supervisor, which they tell him, yah, we gonna give you some of them. He said, I bring you here, guys, and you're disappointing me. So you gonna go home or go to the meeting. So they make sure they go home and they push them more. But second press conference they was get scared. So they started to organize.

Q: How did you feel when you got the call that the second press conference was cancelled?

TA: We was there and then by the time the media come, when I started we got called: say please postpone the conference; you have a negotiation. Then we said we have to see what they offering for us.

Q: Was it thrilling to find out they were going to negotiate?

TA: Yah. I feel relieved really, because a lot of people ?? don't want to lose their job because there's no way they can find a job. That's why they take advantage, because, if you get fired, you know you're not gonna get a job. Because of your language, you're gonna be stuck there. So it's kind of slavery in a way. We feel real relief, especially me, not by myself but people I know who is going to suffer more than me. So we was glad.

Q: What was it like going through negotiations?

TA: The table we was negotiating, I remember ? was down there. He congratulate me and said, Tarik, congratulations. I said, why do you congratulate me? He said, your hard work. I don't remember that much in the sitting table really.

Q: Then after that we had a union. What was the work like then? How much longer did you stay?

TA: The union negotiation was first thing they have to bring all the employee they fired. They have to give them back their job and their lost wages, and make sure they don't lose their seniority. If you come back right now, it started this year, and I was at that time working almost eight years. So that was really hard to go back and forth, and then they accepted me to do my job back. The other person who already go home; there was another guy. I don't remember his name. There was one guy who was with the Coyes' care and they him to go home. I don't remember his name. Those were only the three people. He get scared and he said he go home, but Coyes and me, they give back our job. That's the negotiation part. Then, after that, I was union steward.

Q: Tell me about being a union steward.

TA: It's really good in a way when you are standing like worker who had a problem, and listen his story and go to the management and talk to them. But they still pushed me so hard, although there's a union and a lot of benefit. They have a voice but a lot of people still didn't get their rights, because they gonna be scared and they gonna be targeted saying, oh you're in trouble--you go to the union? But after that, first year was a little bit hard but second year everyone knows they have a right. There was more people who first time they wasn't following the rules too. If the person give, I don't remember, before the discipline there's something. They wasn't following the rules, because they're supposed to have a right to have a steward. We pushed back that one but after that everyone follow. But the management wasn't too happy at all, especially with me. They try push me why we have the union every chance they can – to push me off there.

Q: What kind of things would they do to push you?

TA: As you remember, I get insurance at the work in 2013.

Q: Workers Compensation?

TA: Yah. I get injured at the work and for cleaning job there's no light duty at all, so I get really stressful really. They told WCB they have a job for me, and WCB send me back. They give me wheelchair, which I wasn't too happy, to wipe the wall and hallways all the time. I'm strong person really and I accept it because I'm a steward and also I don't want to quit the job which I sacrificed a lot to do. I remember they pushed me so hard and I realized I shouldn't take that much. They want to isolate me from people to talk to me. When they see I'm in a wheelchair, everyone want to talk to me. I don't want to go that far; I'm going to be emotional. So they spy me all the time if I'm talking to people, and they send both of us up and I argue a lot and I go to the office with the manager. They send me different people to watch me if I'm talking to someone. That wasn't easy. I remember 2013 wasn't easy for me at all. I ended up ? recover in my leg, but say I wanted my old position. They send me all over the buildings. You have to sit the wheelchair and push yourself in the wheelchair and carry the bucket and do that stuff, which wasn't easy. I accepted it in a way because I was stressful. Why I accepted it, I don't remember. Now I say, why you accepted that job? They told me I wasn't talking to the phone; she was talking to the phone. She was texting the phone every single day to discipline and send me to the office. One day one Punjabi guy--he knows me-- he told me, Tarik, what happened to you? I gained weight and he said, what happened to you? you changed? I said, yah. He's talking to me, and they hear us and talk to the manager. The manager come all the way to here because he told me I'm in trouble talking to someone. He told me, I get you, I get you. I said, what? Somebody see me and talk to me, I talk to them. And I'm their steward, too. So they send me the office with the high management, saying she was just talking to that person. He's sweeping the floor; I'm wiping the wall--that's it. You can talk still – he's here and I'm here. They push me a lot really. When we go to the office, Jeff was here and he come with me. They told me, you did this. I said, he never about my job, although I'm in a wheelchair. I know for sure I know my job and I know what I'm doing. But he's my manager, and he has to know how to communicate with me. Not say, I get you. You can say, go to back; do your job. He's my manager. He shouldn't come all the way there to tell me I'm in trouble because you're talking to someone. I tell him, if you don't want me to talk to the people, put me in one room and close the door for me. If people will see me, they will talk to me and I will talk to them. That's my rights. So it makes me frustrated, frustrated, and frustrated. Second day he took me in the mall and told me to do the wall while people were walking around. For me, when I'm at work, I'm at

work. Bee Clean, I know this stuff, they send me someone who I don't know is watching me. This woman has a scarf walking the building. She make mistake, she go with her first. When the lead hand left for me the list what I should do, I saw a lady sitting in front of me and watching me. I stand up and go to the washroom; she follow me. I notice she's here for me to watch me. What am I doing? Am I a criminal? Then it gets me mad. But I was okay. I was going to the washroom; she's going like this. End of the story. Around 9 o'clock I said, I cannot do this. I call Basat, who was a lead hand, and I tell him, Basat, this woman is behind me. Do you know her? He said no; I don't know. She was looking at me because she want to see if I'm talking for her or something. She saw me. She was behind one wall watching me like this. I said, I will call the police, and she run away. I'm gonna call police and say there's somebody behind me all the day. They don't have a right to do that, to scare me. She run. This other Somali lady was working and she said, are you crazy? I said, I will call the police, because she don't have a right to watch me. Why I was doing all day myself, am I in jail? So it was really frustrating job. But after that I said, I'm okay, I have to go back to work, and I got my position. He pushed the lead hand to watch me. You know Lee Ann; she was hard one. She realized they pushed me very hard and she said, the job is done; it's clean. She told me, they pushed me so hard she gets firm. Everyone they make me enemy, I make them friend. She said, watch very closely what you're doing, because they are behind you, and he force me every day to check your job. I said, if he knows my job doesn't have anything, hundred percent; he know that. But she said, he always say, check with her what she's doing – is she talking on the phone? Is she doing this? So it was a horrible story and I ended up quit. I become really frustrated and stressful and depression, and they make me quit. I was in situation want to go home and they didn't approve my vacation. They said, we cannot give you more than two weeks. Two weeks to go back home and come back: it's not possible. So I have to quit.

Q: Now it's been a few years.

TA: Yah, since 2015.

Q: How do you feel about the whole experience now?

TA: It has a bad side and good side. I have a bad side, like it shouldn't be that way. The good side is like I fight for people rights; that's only what can I do. I try to even stay there to help some people, because they cannot do their rights. Now I'm out, and everywhere there's challenge. But the challenge, you cannot go to the higher level. Oh sorry, I left ? one day. Even the high manager who was take over, the general manager of Bee Clean, came when I was doing. I just tell them, you give me a wheelchair. I don't know how to use wheelchair. Give me bucket. Should I push the chair or should I carry it in this one? The manager told me, you have to do it. I said no; I can't. You have to show me how to do it please. He called her to tell her; she refused the job, and she came. It was the first day of Ramadan. I think it was in 2014; I'm not sure. I was fasting. She told me she came all the way home in Tory building, the general manager. I don't remember her name. So that's the last stage they can go, because any more they cannot handle it. So she told me, why? I said, show me; sit the chair. I don't have disability; I just have this injury. You can show me; you can sit and show me how to do it, because I'm like you. I don't know how to do it. What happened to me--first I was kicked in the leg; that broke it. What happened, it fell. So I can fall again and injure. That's what I tell them yesterday; the water fell and I cannot; I have to stay there. The janitor room is locked. I cannot do the mop. Everyone in the building is at risk. I cannot injure another person. So this is safety issue to myself and the others. So you have to tell me how to do the job. She said that's complaining. I said no, it's not complaining; it is a safety issue. I'm injured already. I don't want to get injured again. She called him and she said, how she can do it. You know the mop bucket? He bring that one and put the bucket and laid a bucket inside and said, this is so she can kick it and it's going there, and that's what she did. I tell her, I'm fasting. She said, the break time is 8:15; you cannot take other time. I tell her, I'm not going to take 15 minutes at 8:15, because I cannot eat. It's Ramadan. So I'm taking my 15 minutes at 10 o'clock. She said no. I said, this is my right. I said, I'm fasting; I'm telling you. I have a 15 minute break, and I'm going to take that time. She say no, and she left.

Q: So what did you do?

TA: I take my break in the time supposed to be taken. I don't have a choice. But there's nowhere to go for break; there's nothing. They isolate and makes it in my mind like not functioning. Everywhere is locked. And I call her again and tell her, if the water dirty, where

should I put it? Because janitor room is locked. So she send him to at least they open for me the janitor room so I can use in my break time in the janitor room. So it was horrible time. Still it was unionized. But if the person do something and they push the person, I was really victim. But I know my rights really, and that's why I'm speaking up and I don't scare to high management or low management. I don't care. But this is why I told you I shouldn't do that. I know I have a union. When I say no, mind is just you cannot kick me because I didn't do anything wrong. I came here work to get my money. I'm doing the job. I get interested since I was working Bee Clean ? times. I didn't know my workload never change. No matter what I did, I finished my job on time and they send me even more.

Q: Did you talk to Jeff about that?

TA: The problem: Jeff wasn't in the town; that's his problem. When you talk to him, he has to send them an email and tell them. I get frustrated for him too, because if he's not here he cannot do anything. The email doesn't change anything. You need support somebody with you. I'm the steward who the people, if they have a problem, come to me; but nobody standing with me. That makes me a little bit more frustrated. I said, you chose the wrong person. The problem was my injury. The injury was physically making me weak a little bit. Then I gain a lot of weight because I cannot lose it anymore. So it was emotional really. But since now, if I remember that time, it still is my mind what I did wrong. I did wrong. I could go to WCB and say, this is what's happened, and I have that opportunity. But sometimes when you have something in your mind and you have family problem and like this, you cannot strong that much.

Q: Where do you think your fight came from?

TA: For, since I was really young, no matter what, if I see something, I speak. Even my family said, if you want to witness something, if you do something wrong, don't witness it her. She will witness against you. So that's a passion and a feeling. Even my brother, my brother is advocate for our community. Although now I'm not in Bee Clean and University, still I do. I go with the people if they have a problem and I stand with them and said, this is not the right things to do.

If I can help emotionally, I still do. I do volunteer service in my community, too. So the background of our family is like that – good things though, not bad things.

Q: So people know you in the Somalian community, that they can come to you?

TA: Yah, they trust me. It's really important to think in all the workers you have to have a trust for your employees, and help each other no matter what. When I was a steward, the one that hate me a lot, I talked to them and said, this is your opportunity. They realize after that. I said, this is your opportunity, not you have to be against with me. I'm fighting with you. If today happens this person, it can happen to you tomorrow. You have to understand that. After I work there, I become friendly with the lead or the lead hands because I tell them, you get your right. I didn't get it.

Q: The lead hands got a big jump in pay.

TA: Big jump in pay. Yah, I tell them, I know your pay, I tell her. You know my pay now, because why you get it there? You have a right now; so you have to practise your right and don't be against to the other employee. So they remember, and they're my family too. Everywhere I work, they have ? I remember in my other work, she have some issue like not at the work. I tell her, I can help you where I can refer you; my brother maybe can write for you a letter or something. She said, yah. So I always open; but the safety is important really for work.

Q: What kind of work are you doing now, and what are the safety issues in your work now?

TA: For right now my work is safety issue. I don't have that much involvement; it's just a one on one person, because that is community service. It's a patient challenge, not the company and staff. But sometimes the safety side comes from where the employee is not aware of: if this happened to me, what should I do? There is one worker, like a scenario or something: if this happened to me what should I do? Some people figure out right away the problem, and some people, when they see, they freak out and maybe they can get hurt. One of my worker have a ? who was sharing with the client. The client always had a problem when she ? the family. I was

working two nights and she was working five nights. So we were seven days a week. She said, the client ?, I don't know where she ? to. The family told her to talk to me and tell her what she did when she's here, because she don't have that problem; you had it. She talked to me and I advised, listen, just to see. If you think it's not going to work, just speak up and say, I need more training. Sometimes your mistake can hurt somebody. So, it's different now, but everywhere safety is first. It's not easy. This job now I'm doing is mentally really you have to think about more, because it's person life. It's always more training. But if the workers is not telling the issue they face, it going to be stay there. Then nobody's recognize, maybe employer not going to recognize. If you didn't tell them, they don't want and some people they scare to say something; maybe they'll lose their job.

Q: How do you attain safety success?

TA: Success is first know your rights and your scope. Some people they do what shouldn't be in their scope. As long you know what you're doing, if you think this is not safe, ask more training. Ask someone, I have this issue, what should I do? It's really important for safety. But yes, know your rights and practise your rights, most important. If you don't know your right, you cannot practise really. So more educational wise, first what's my rights. So, before you even go to that employer, you know your rights. If you think there is breach of your rights, speak up.

Q: Are your fellow employees aware that it's their right to refuse dangerous work?

TA: Some of them don't know. If you don't know even the chemical labels, if you mix chemical, what is going to be happen? A lot of them they don't know workplace safety. Every day I tell them, you shouldn't do that, you're going to hurt yourself. She says, oh it's okay. I say no, it's not okay. Most of them don't know their rights and they don't know safety issues.

And they don't ask them. If the person doesn't know that language, it has to have opportunity who can translate and explain them what's the dangerous way and what's not, so the person know if they did this they can hurt themselves. But if you give it to them English writing, I don't know anything and I'm going to sign and say, oh yah I know. Because, when you're in this country and you don't know the language, the worst thing you think in your mind is losing your

job, because there's a bill you have to pay. So you going to do the job. That's it, nothing else. Some people don't wear gloves when they cleaning heavy chemical, which they supposed to have gloves. They don't think their health is important to them. I understand where they coming from, because we have same issue. When you come this country and you don't speak the language, it's not easy. Mostly that Punjabi, they older people, so there's no chance. They take advantage, because they know those people is older people and they cannot get a job anywhere else, just a cleaning job, especially night job and overwhelmed with their job. I love ? and that's why I always tell them--I tell them, sometimes they tired, they sick, and they want to show up their job. If they call sick maybe they think in their mind that they going to lose their job. But if there is opportunity that tells them their rights, after your temporary period is done, you have those rights. You have seniority or something. Nobody can fire you that way and where they can go. The problem is, let's say I get fired; where should I go? I don't know English, there's nobody have time. Even if you have a family who knows the language, they don't have the time for you to go somewhere. It's not easy system here to fight yourself. If you even complain, it takes maybe for a while. Some people don't know, if they face this challenge go and make a record. That's what I do in my community. If you know this is not right, complain, so I don't have to get same mistake. I get hurt. So don't stay there and say, I get hurt; who cares about another one? Save other person life. Or issue may be if I complain someone say, oh what's going on? There's more here. But if you quiet, nothing.

Q: In your community work, have you seen some successes of people who did speak out and complain?

TA: One guy, he had a disability. He had a job in somewhere. I don't know if it was West Management or the other recycle. I don't remember. They didn't see him his leg and maybe he didn't tell them he have a disability first time. Maybe when he was young he broke his leg and they didn't heal proper. So it has something I don't remember. I didn't see him; so one of my cousin tell me his story. When they see him, they tell him, go home. He didn't pass the three month period. But I said, they cannot fire him because his disability, no matter what. They hired him. I said, he can injure more than what he had, but he needed money, he needed job. So they can give him less than when they see him, but go home. I tell him, don't stop. Go to the Alberta

Labour something. I think I ask you and you told me the address. I think you send me the address. I send him to go here.

Q: The Human Rights Commission?

TA: Yes, I tell him go and complain. I know they going to tell you: because you didn't pass the time period. But still I said, you are disability, and you can't use that code, because nobody supposed to get fired because his leg is not proper. I tell him, complain. So he complained. You're going to give up when it doesn't go the way you want, but he went there and his wife. His wife, she better than him in the language; so they did something. I said, there's some places you can go and apply for disability or something. I even tell him, you shouldn't go that job if you have that disability, because it's like he can fall. Every time they ask me if they have a problem and where to go. A lot of immigrant people, they don't complain at all. I understand, because they don't have the time and they don't have where they can find it; it's not easy. You say, oh go there, and they don't know anything, and nobody can help them to file the complaint. You have to write down something, and if you don't know English you cannot write anything. Even myself, I can speak a little bit English, but when I write down it's not easy. There's no resource to make easy like person if you face some challenge. Maybe some people when they cannot find a job, they end up suicide. The country they come from and how they was live there--sometimes it's not easy here. I understand ?, because some community help each other. But that time only I get success for complaining. But nobody like to complain.

Q: Did Bee Clean offer you any training at all?

TA: No, they don't offer it at all. I was lead hand for three to four building. So every time when they hire, they send you to train them. You just going to show them, this is the chemical you have to use, this is the spray, and this is this. If the person doesn't understand you, that's the only training they have. There's no other training. Some people it's very hard, I have to show them, see you have to do this, you have to do this. That's just the physical training, not understanding. I was being careful to watch, and how many times I find different chemical with different bottle label. Every time I say, this is supposed to be this one, not pour in for this one.

Some people intentionally they mix it. They said, it makes shining. I said, this is ?; this is not shining. So they mix it to a chemical to make more shining for something. So they don't offer any training. Even our lead hand, they don't have skill training to train the people, because that's the people who facing more challenge than the managers, because they don't do anything. You yourself go there. If you don't understand, it's up to you. It's not easy really.

Q: Were there any impacts from the unsafe use of chemicals?

TA: Yah, some people in their harness, they have gloves in there. Even though they using chemical, they don't have gloves. It's a really big issue at Bee Clean. They give it to you maybe two months, three months, one gloves. . . . The gloves, they going to give it to you, one pair of gloves. If it's not chewed up, they not going to change it. Sometimes you lose one and you cannot find it, and to go office sometimes they going to say, we don't have gloves. Some people, they don't ask because they don't want trouble asking the management for something. So they do without no gloves. That chemical: their hand is like a lot of tears. I said, you have to use the gloves. But even I was there, they don't use the gloves, because I cannot provide them. So even the one week at the union we talk about that, gloves. They said oh, they have, everyone. Everyone is supposed to have it. Myself, when I tear, I come back and say, I need gloves. He said, I give it to you. He said, after this time one month, if you have one month you have to buy yourself. Gloves is very expensive; it's not cheap. But I said, you do everything; sometimes you not using your left one and lose the right one. Sometimes you have to use two hands, one left is ? hand. So I put like this for myself this way to make two glove. They don't provide any training for any employee. The management, they send every month or every three months, I don't remember, test for how to handle those stuff. Everybody, they going to call and say, sign. So it means you take it – sign, sign, sign – that's it. There's no training at all. For sure I know.

Q: Is it scary working alone in a building at night?

TA: Yah, it's really scare but sometimes middle of the night you going to hear something and say, oh my God, there's something. But anyway, you have to adapt it. No matter what, even sometimes you have to cross building to building because there's no building. Your routine is

three buildings sometimes. So, when you finish this one, you have to go other one alone in the nighttime. You have to accept it yourself, but it is really scary. I remember I was working School of Business, five floor. It's really dark. Sometimes, oh my goodness, you going to hear something. I remember one lady, she was working in that building. One night she went there and she hear something and she called me. I was in the basement. She told me, please can you come with me. I cannot go there. One night, and what did they do, the lead hands? They come like this one sometimes. There was one lady, I think, after we organized she came. She was working School of Business. She was in the classroom. Bassat was wanting to coach her or something; she didn't see him. She fell down on the floor because she got scare, and she screamed. He was hiding, hiding, and then when he come to the door he talk. She didn't see him. She has blood pressure and she fell down on the floor. After that, she said, don't ever come to me unless you talk to me. Talk in the hallway. When you're in the hallway, say something. I was alone here and scared. They just show up, because they want to catch the people sleeping or something. Two people I know, they was complaining those stuff. Middle of the room, big room, you doing something and you see somebody is there. It's not easy. But that for me was really scary, really that floor. But you have to adapt to work nightshift in the building. Some building have students always studying and staying on the floor. But some building is really scary, nobody there. You adapt nobody there. If you hearing something, you can die. They cannot do anything; that's our choice, I guess.

Q: Some places have a system where people check in with others at break time so they know you're okay.

TA: For us, no, they don't have a time that they just check you are you sleeping or not doing the job. Middle of the time you see he's there. So that employee, she said she was freaking out really. She said, don't ever, ever come to me like this. Otherwise I'm going to throw you something. So he was afraid. It's really scary; it's not easy. You adapt to you're alone. Sometimes they have something; they always put in education something. When you see it, you're going to feel this person, and there's no people there. One night I call my supervisor and tell him there's somebody there. I didn't know; it looked like a person. He came and said, it's okay. I said no. I thought there was a person. I cannot go there. So it's really scary, but I think when you work

nightshift you have to expect it. Not only Bee Clean. I used to work the home care, I was telling you. I was alone in nightshift too, but all the client is sleeping. So I was alone. I was working nightshift. There's bell on the door; somebody touch it. All night I was scary, not doing anything. The building is located between Henday and Yellowhead. It's a scary area. The building is alone. I tell the owner, last night somebody knocked the door and I'm really scared. She said, no. I said, yes, somebody was something, so what should I do? I'm alone here. You know what happened that building? There's no phone. If you lost your cell phone, you're dead there. So I said, what happens if I forget my cell phone or if my cell phone fell down? I cannot call anyone. So it's everywhere. But she said the system for communication, the land line, it's not still come that area. She said, it's not our fault. You have to have a cell phone first. But you know the smart phone: it fell down one time; it's dead. I was saying again for the safety of the clients. I was telling her, safety of the clients. If something happen, who should I call? I cannot even call 911. So nightshift always, but some employee choose it. I tell her, it's not safe here. All the client, they're older people. They cannot do anything. If something happen to you, it happen to you. So safety measures is everywhere.

Q: Some provinces have laws that you can't work alone, that there always have to be two people in the building.

TA: They don't follow some of them. That building, I was feeling unsafe. The building doesn't have a neighbourhood; it's alone. Some sick people can try to get in that building. It's basement and down, and sometimes you have to go to the basement to do some laundry. If somebody's there and you didn't know, when you come back, they can kick you. I was asking my supervisor, am I going to be safe here? She said, I can't afford to pay two people, because what the other person going to do? Everybody's sleeping. So I said, no. So I quit anyway. I chose the daytime job and I left there. But it's everywhere.

Q: How long was it between the time you were fired and the time you were rehired after the media conference?

TA: I'm not really sure, but I think almost three months or four months in between that. I think it was four months almost.

Q: When the manager wouldn't let you change your break during Ramadan, were you working alone at that time?

TA: Yes.

Q: That's crazy then, because it didn't affect anyone.

TA: No, they just want to banish me. She knows even I can do myself, but why she's telling me, because after we have a union and we have our negotiation, we have to have fixed time for the break. Before, we don't have a break time, we don't have that 15-minute break. So we have a right to break; it was our collective agreement. But she said no, you cannot have the break. You have to have 8:15. Why they chose that time--I think the lead hand can go the buildings and see if the person take the break or not, to catch them. If you take 10 o'clock break, nobody have time for you to come to the building. But for me she said, you cannot take it. I said, I'm telling you it's my right, and that 15 minute I will take my break time. It's not fixed time. Every night it's different time. I don't remember, but I know it was around 10 o'clock. So I tell her, I'm telling you the time I'm taking the break, so if they catch me that time, I'm sitting and eating something; that's my break. That's why I forewarn and tell her, I'm not taking the break at 8:15. I'm going to continue to work until my break time, and then I'm going to take my break time at that time. Everywhere they accepted that month, because they know the worker doesn't have a choice to take that break, only that time. Otherwise they don't have to take it. What they going to do? Sitting somewhere? She didn't agree, but I was taking my break really. I tell her, I'm not lying to you, because this is my religion and I'm practising my religion. I'm not telling you, oh I'm going to take 8:15, and going to take 10 o'clock. No, I'm not taking it 8:15 break. I'm going to take 10 o'clock: so 10 to 10:15. I have to have five-minute break, so together 20 minutes. I was making sure other employee had a problem too fixing time, like five minutes just to get ready and go there and pray and go right away, because it's fixed time. You cannot extend it and you cannot do less.

Q: So you're working nights and doing community organizing – how does this affect your home life?

TA: As I told you earlier, I say it's passion. I never get tired to do something if I want to do it. I remember I wasn't driving when I come Canada. If somebody told me how you go somewhere, because there was immigrant coming, I take with them the bus to show them place to do something. My husband said, you ? your time. I said, yes I ? my time. Everyone say hi; how are you? I'm open person and if they saw me today, second day they trusting me. I said, I have that. it's my inside. I cannot change anything. Even myself, sometimes I don't spend myself a time. But if somebody ask, I do so. My family say, when you come here you going to be bored. But I said, I never ever be boring, because I don't have time. Every time I'm busy. Even today I come from work, I'm here, and I was even planning to have a meeting in the community 6 o'clock. But I said, I don't want to do 6 o'clock. Tomorrow night I'm working and 2 to 4, I told you I organize women. We have some women who have cooperative stuff. So we was doing some business plan or something. So I have to still I'm working my shift and I am doing the evening to spend at least three hours. So sometimes I don't sleep. I come from work and don't sleep. They say, how do you handle it? I said, I get used to. It's something that's my inside. It's not something I'm pushing it.

Q: How do you and the community help each other?

TA: My program from Somali community, our culture is helping each other. It's the cultural nature. We share everything. If somebody, you don't know them, and they say, do you know that stuff? They never going to say, oh you're a stranger. The person is open. Today this lady, she don't have money and she's struggling something. So we can ask other one to help with her and fix her problem. So we collected the money, we give it to her the money, we support her to get success. Some communities don't have that really. Some community they said, I stay there and that's because I met some Syrian people. They come here and when they arrive here in our community, we collected something, and we go there. They don't help each other really. We was saying, this lady have children; she don't have the system for us. If the neighbour is Somali,

no matter what she can tell them, please, I want to go to the shop--can you take care of my kids? Yah, bring. In school sometimes they help each other. Back home, somebody like your relative or knows you going to call you and he need money, and we sometimes send it out. It's nature that help each other.

Q: When you were injured, there were people bringing you meals.

TA: Yes, I was injured, and my husband was away, and I was alone at home when I injure. My leg was broken. I cannot do anything by myself. Everybody's saying, how you going to survive? My brother wasn't here and all my family was worry about me. They said, what's going to happen? I never miss one day and one person; my apartment always full. Even WCB asking me if I need somebody come to help. I said, no. I don't need anything. Remember Abastar? She was there for me; she was sleeping with me all the time. One day I remember she went somewhere and I stand up and ? fell and I fell down inside. She was all day yelling to me, and all her sons come home. They brought everywhere on the carpet; they put the tape so it not going to be slide again. If I don't have that help, I'm going to end up for really in that situation. Bee Clean pressure, my physically, my family, everything: I'm going to end up for operation and go somewhere else. I know a lot of people held that situation. They told me, we are sympathy. I never feel alone. My house always full. I never pay anything – food, grocery, everybody bring something. I was ever over-feed, get very big, because everybody bring food. They said, if you don't eat food you're not going to be healed. Back home they said, you have to eat meat and something else, and then you going to get recovery very well. So everybody was making some. For me I'm lucky because I have a lot of friends. I'm in the community. I have different community, like working with those. Some of my friend, they don't have that opportunity really. They said, you're not going to be alone; you going to find someone. I said, yah. What I said, if you offer something, somebody will offer you. If I give somebody something, next day I get something for sure. So I tell them, be open everything, sacrifice sometimes for your time and money and mind. Most of my community when I fight for them now is don't keep what happened to you. Share with the people. We're supposed to be to share. It makes other person life different. They don't do that much; they don't like it. They like to talk about issue, but when it comes to file something, it's not easy. They said, we're not going to get anything. Why should

we complain? But if you don't complain, how you going to get something? You don't have to complain; you don't have to put somebody in trouble – not that complain. Not right away, but together as a right way in your mind. Don't put like you're putting someone in trouble, but putting someone very good things, changing. Don't feel like you are a victim; feel like you are a hero or something. We have a lot of things to do, and they say no. They like something happen. There's no miracle coming like something happen; you have to do something. You have to put time and money sometimes. It's not easy.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

TA: I'm talkative, and the talkative don't remember that much all the time. If I went in my friends, I don't go around that time. I don't have the time myself to spend with people most. If I went someone, I stay for five hours. They said, why? I said, I offer the time to go; I don't want to be a rush. I want to talk to them, their life, their story. They said, why do people talk to you? I said, I talk to myself first, and then they can share with you their story. Nobody like just to tell you their story. Just to tell your story. Then they said, oh you have a similar story. So they going to tell you, and they want to feel relief. It's very important that people come first to you; it's very key. They know when they tell you their story, it can be secret, not like telling everyone. As long as they know, they can tell. I don't have much friendship. I said, you don't have friends. I say, everyone is my friend. What I supposed to be say, I say everyone. I feel equal. There's nothing to have; there's no bad things to hide. If I'm going to hide that, I'm not going to tell anyone, no matter if it's my husband or my friend. If I think things I shouldn't say, I will hide in myself. Why I'm making friend just to tell like this? They said, that's not good to tell your story everyone. I said, there's nothing to hide. There's nothing bad in my story. Everything, you have a similarity towards one person. I think that's the only things I can remember today. Thank you for your time.

[ END ]