

1971

In 1971 there were only 2 students at the University of Houston (UH) from former East Pakistan. With the help of local people, this small Bangali community collected \$5,000 in cash and 500lb of emergency medication, and ship load of old clothes to provide relief for the suffering people in their home country after the worst cyclone in living memory struck Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) on November 12, 1970. Medications were air lifted, the fumigated clothes were shipped by the sea, and the money was donated to an international agency.

In April of 1971, Bangladesh Student Association was formed at UH, despite the strong opposition from Pakistani students. S. S. Newaz was ousted as the President of Pakistan Student Association and became the first president of Bangladesh Student Association. During 1971, there were the following individuals of Bangladeshi origin lived in Houston as students or professionals. They were: Mr. Dewan Aftab Ahmed, Dr. S. S. Newaz, Mr. Habibul Kabir, Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, Mr. Kamalendu Das, Dr. A. Satter, and a young faculty Member Dr. Fazle Hussain (Fall 1971). It is important to note that 21st February was observed at the UH international students' fair, despite a rowdy objections from the majority of the Pakistan Student Association.

The UH student community interacted closely with the larger student body at Texas A&M for the independence movement. The students at UH and A&M collected funds from their meager stipends and supplemented their income with a lot of menial jobs to clandestinely send money to Mukti Jodhha relatives in Bangladesh and India. Their activities to get the public support in the USA was mainly focused through writing in newspapers, radio and TV talk shows, meeting with union groups and communication with US congressmen and senators. Pakistan Embassy categorically declared the leaders of this small group as renegade and undesirable, their passports were cancelled, and they became "stateless persons".

Some other prominent personalities that took an active role in interactions and communications were : Dr. F.R. Khan, the architect from Chicago; Nobel Laureate Mohammed Yunus, then a graduate student at Vanderbilt; Dr. Zahurul Haq (his grave is in Houston); English faculty at Alcorn A&M (Mississippi), Voice of Bangla Radio News from Radio Pakistan, Karachi. And let's not forget the support of the Indian community in general and West

Bengal community in particular, for their continued financial and logistic support during the time of need.

In the summer of 1971, Pakistan Student Association invited one Member of Parliament from East Pakistan (after the earlier election was declared void by Yahya Khan) to show everything was normal in East Pakistan. Bangladesh Student Association protested during the meeting, participated in question and answer sessions, where the pathetic lies were exposed to the local media so clearly.

Handmade bumper stickers were made at the garage of Ed Lewis with slogans like "Joi Bangla", "Stop genocide in Bangladesh", "Yahia Khan, the modern Genghis Khan".

### 1973-1978

In 1973 The first Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh to USA, honorable Hossain Ali, graced us by his visit to Houston and categorically mentioned about the contribution of Bangladeshis living abroad and that of Houston in particular in the independence movement. Mr. Hossain Ali, the first Pakistani diplomat to defect, recognized the support and contribution from the local community. The Student Association was also proud to recognize them through the ambassador. Some of the individuals mentioned were: Mr. Ed Lewis, an engineer with life-long love affair with Bangladesh; Dr. Burke, the International Students' director for supporting the "stateless" students; Dr. James R. Cox, who bought the air ticket for Kamalendu Das to escape the refugee camp in Assam, Dr. Walker and Dr. Tucker, for their continuous support during 1971.

Graduates from Texas A&M began to migrate to Houston as professionals, and there started the first wave of students coming to Houston! Some of them along with already in Houston are: Dr. Khandaker Rahman (now in Houston), Dr. Hafiz Ahmed (now in Atlanta), Dr. Sayeed Hassan (now in Houston), Dr. Quamruzzaman (now in Ohio), Dr. Zakiuddin Husain (now in Houston), Dr. Selina Ahmed (now in Houston), Dr. Zakir Hasan (Now in Florida), Dr. Sabbir Hossain (Now in Houston), Mrs. Rehana Hussain, Mrs. Saeeda Newaz, Mr. Mozammel Hossain, Mr. Ashraf Islam (now in Houston), Mr. Mafuzul Haque (now in Bangladesh), to name a few.

During this period several people served as chairman of the Bangladesh Student Association of UH. They were: Mr. Mustafa Jamal, Dr. Sabbir Hossain, Mr. Hasan Rahman, Mr. Nurul Ahkter, Mr. K. M. Rahman (all in Houston), Mr. Kamalendu Das, and others.

All the representative functions of Bangladesh were done by the Student Association



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