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| **A refugee** | **Someone who speaks 5 languages** |
| **A young family** | **Someone who went to a boarding school** |
| **A farmer** | **A Celtic fan** |
| **Someone who has moved to this country** | **A University student** |

**New Neighbour Profile – Brian’s story**

Zimbabwe. April 1980. The country gained its independence from Britain. Robert Mugabe was appointed the president, replacing years of British rule. My name is Brian Siziba and I was born in 1981. I spent the large part of my formative years attending beautiful schools and grew up hoping I could one day, be a pilot. We had a lovely house and my grandparents had a farm. On that farm we had cows for dairy and meat, goats and sheep. We also farmed for crops like maize, the staple food in Zimbabwe, oranges and many others fruits and vegetables.

I always enjoyed going to the farm during the school holidays, so I could help out. I also enjoyed going to the farm because my grandfather would let me ride on the tractor whilst he was working.

Back in the city, I loved spending time with my friends, some of whom were from different ethnicities and backgrounds. I enjoyed playing sports such as football, tennis and cricket. This enabled me to meet and make other friends. I learnt a lot from them, my sports improved, and I ended up joining a sports club. The happiest day of my life was when my grandparents bought me my first cricket bat. At the cricket club, we had coaches who had come over from England and I spent a lot of time with them improving my skills.

Then in 1998, the ruling party of ZANU PF led by Robert Mugabe started evicting white farmers from their land and taking over their farms. Unfortunately, ours was one of the farms that was taken over and a lot of people that worked on our farm lost their jobs and livelihood. My grandparents lost everything they had ever built on that farm and were never compensated for their loss.

Despite many protestations, the situation had turned violent and other farmers and their employees were killed by thugs from ZANU PF. The situation escalated into the towns and cities across the country. The secret service police and army became heavily involved in intimidating innocent citizens and many lives were lost solely because some people supported and were deemed to have voted for MDC, the opposition party in elections.

At my sports club, which was largely frequented by white people, the police came and told me and the other boys who were black to stop playing with white people. This was frustrating because I had made lots of friends, but if we didn’t take their threats seriously they’d arrest us and put us into jail for befriending white people.

Then one night, the state police visited my house and I became very scared and my grandparents suggested that it was best that I left the country and go into hiding because Zimbabwe was no longer safe.

They hastily arranged for my flights out of the Zimbabwe and I didn’t even have time to say goodbye to all my friends, family and girlfriend. I couldn’t even pack all of my clothes – I left my favourite Liverpool FC shirt behind. I had to take whatever I could and get out of the country... within 24 hours I was on my way. When I arrived in the UK, I stayed with my other grandmother. I didn’t have any friends, I couldn’t work because as an asylum seeker, the UK authorities have to process your case and this is a lengthy process. I wasn’t even allowed to open a free bank account.

I was fortunate to have family in the UK, and due to my love of sport to be able to go to the local park and play football – that’s how I started making friends. Even though I knew I was safe in the UK, I kept looking behind me to see if anyone was following me from the Zimbabwe state police or the secret service. I always wanted to go back to Zimbabwe and see my friends and family that I left behind all those years ago, but the situation still isn’t safe for me.