

INTERVIEW OF ANTOINETTE DUDA

INTERVIEWER: JESS HUFFMAN
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0:00:02.4 Jess Huffman: Okay, so we're recording. I'll just say that we are with Antoinette Duda, who we're interviewing today. I'm Jess Huffman, I'm the project coordinator and the interviewer. The date today is Monday, the 2nd September 2024. We're in Lilac Haven in Honiton. We're here to interview you Antoinette about your Polish heritage and wherever else that will take us!

Antoinette, tell me something about where you grew up in Poland, and what was life growing up like?

0:00:39.2 Antoinette: I grew up in a small town. Majority of Polish towns are small and medium. Kwidzyn. I've got two brothers, mum, dad, dog, and I was born in 1980, so touching on communisms, and empty shelves, and queueing, and switching things like, 'I've got lemons, you've got potatoes; let's swap.' Paper collection, like a newspapers collection points, bottle collection points. Magnificent childhood. Two channels on a TV which, if you had a TV, you were someone. Colours TV, no such thing. I would spend day and night outside, the moment you get up to the moment it gets dark. Your mum would shout, 'Come for dinner,' or 'Mum, drop me a slice of bread with butter and sugar,' and you go off and play still again with all sorts of things. Groups of kids would be running around, whipping around. Where we live, or majority of Poland there, that everyone lived in a block of flats. Block of flats, four levels. Some of them were ten levels, ten floors. Everybody would know each other. My God, candyfloss, juice from the plastic bag with a straw, milk straight from the cow, if someone had a cow nearby. Potatoes in the fire, like burnt potatoes in the fire. You put in the coal, and you eat that. Amazing childhood, absolutely fantastic.

0:02:29.2 Then 1989, when the Berlin Wall went down, then the capitalism came in. Oh, my God. I've got two brothers. Younger brother doesn't remember that because he was brought into the wealth of the shops. We would travel as a family when we had the first supermarket open after communism collapsed, called [?Real 0:02:56.3], and families would just go, literally, to just shelf browse. Not buying anything, but just look at the shelves with the colourful stuff. We had this supermarket, Polish national supermarkets which they would be called Społem. I've got, actually, a tote bag, Społem. There will be no self-service such thing. There will be lady with hysterical makeup, '80s, with her huge hair, with a ribbon in the hair and the apron, and there'll be nothing on the shelves anyway. They will be extremely rude, with such an attitude. You could not argue with them. Absolutely nothing. Like sweets, there will be newspaper wrapped in a little cone, and they will put some glass sweets, candy. My God, the best. Honestly, the best.

0:03:57.2 Jess: It sounds idyllic.

0:03:59.2 Antoinette: Yes. Very innocent. Healthy. I don't know. We would go and, obviously, steal plums and apples from the neighbours. Everybody would eat raw, green gooseberries, and then you, 'I don't feel well.' We'll be playing all sorts of games. We'll play with knives. My God, we had the knives, and we would play mother-father, elbow, throw the knife into the sand, and we take turns. Nobody got stabbed or cut, ever. We would play with the bottle lid, races, flip them in the ground, and then we paint them with nail varnish and colour them with all sorts of paper. Dip them in a nail varnish, and we'll have exhibition of bottle tops. Collect, because you were someone as a kid. My dad, he worked abroad when we were kids. He worked them in Czechoslovakia, so he's fluent in Czech. He loves Czech Republic, honestly. He's got Czech TV. He doesn't watch Polish TV, he watches Czech TV because he loves Czech so much, so he worked there. At some point, he was planning to move us there, but it never worked. My God, we had everything as a family. I had the beautiful dolls,

prams. I had the most beautiful clothes. We had chocolate. No one had chocolate, or sweets, or chewing gums. My God, chewing gums, the bowls, in the tape.

0:05:52.9 I was someone in the neighbourhood. I was quite a naughty child. I was very lively, and I would be climbing trees all the time, going to construction sites, breaking into broken cars and we would make a little club there. Every block in Poland's got a cellar system, so every flat's got their own cellar that you can keep your preserves and jars and chutneys and jams. So we've been running around there underground, and we had clubs. My God. So chocolate, not such a thing you can get chocolate. So I had this Czech chocolate called Studentska, and they still produce it to this day. My mum had a whole bag of it, so I took a whole bag, and I gave it away to the whole neighbourhood. My mother was like, 'What have you done? This is the chocolate for Christmas Day.' People would not have such - like lemons, someone shouted, 'They dropped the lemons at Społem,' so everybody would run and queue. Sugar, we didn't have sugar. We would travel to a different town to get sugar. We had rationing cards for meat, and they were cut off. I've got them. I still have those rationing cards. There'll be milk, butter, sugar. Everybody, of course, would do moonshine. You know what the moonshine is, like alcohol. So lots of sugar was needed, potatoes, Slivovica.

0:07:36.5 There will be vodka, of course, [?'wódka 0:07:38.0] on the shelves. So you could buy lots of stuff for swap. People had gold, people had money, but there was nothing to buy, basically. Now, it's the other way. People have no money, but you can buy everything! There will be nothing in a butcher's. People will be queueing. Toilet paper, my God, there was no toilet paper. People queue for toilet paper. I remember queueing; someone was saying, 'Oh, we've got the...' There will be washing machines drop off, so people will queue. On the notebook, there will be names, and you'll be queueing, and this swapping system. They didn't brought the washing machines; they brought kitchen tiles. So they said, 'I take them anyway because you never know. They may be needed at some point in my life.' So people end up with all this stuff that they managed to grab here and there, and they will be swapping. 'Oh, I need that washing machine.' Someone said, 'Well, [?'Kowalska], number three of the washing machines.

You go to there, and she will give you washing machine if you swap with her...' I don't know, whatever. 'I've got these leather Italian shoes.'

0:08:52.2 Jess: So to function on a bartering system was completely normal?

0:08:56.2 Antoinette: Absolutely. That's why every Pole now, they are very clever in twisting things to - 'I swap with you.' So I brought that here. When we were doing farmer's market, we would swap bread for all the other necessities we needed on farmer's market; greens, fruit, veg, milk, butter, [unclear native word 0:09:19.6]. 'I give you this; you give me that.' This whole black market, and this façade that... Everyone wore the same clothes, of course. Same shoes, same trousers. If you had the jeans, that must be that you have family abroad, and they would send you parcels. My mum had a friend. She lived somewhere in South America. I don't know how she got it, but she would send us once a year oranges and bananas. My God. Once a year, because we haven't seen oranges, bananas. My God, it was like a Christmas.

0:09:58.1 Honestly, it was like a celebration. It was all chewing gums. There were these shops that you could pay with dollars called Pewex and Baltona. It was like cargo shops sort of thing, and you could buy Barbie dolls, Mars bars, LEGO. Oh, my God, you had kids - squeezed noses like that, just looking, because we didn't have those. The basic doll would be just ugly doll with a plastic everything. Just really scary. My dolls had real hair and eyelashes. My mum would sew the clothes, and I had 30 of them. I had the best dolls because my dad worked in - and the best prams, the best shoes.

0:10:41.6 Jess: So tell us something a bit more about your dad's heritage, because your dad was French, is that right?

0:10:46.1 Antoinette: My dad's dad - great grandfather was French. They were living in France, or whatever, French, always live in France, and they moved. They escaped because the two sons they had, and the daughter, they were supposed to go and be

taken to the military to fight with Algeria, the war. So they escaped to Poland, and they went to work underground. They went to work in coal mines to disappear for time being! My grandfather worked - I don't know. He said he worked in the coal mines, but I think he ended up in some sort of administration. His brother, [?Mietek], he was working in the coal mines, and then he worked as a rescue service, whatever, for coal miners to rescue them from whatever situations.

0:11:41.4 Jess: So your dad ended up being born in Poland?

0:11:43.8 Antoinette: Yes, my dad was born in Poland. He was born in Kwidzyn, and he lives in Kwidzyn. My grandfather and grandmother lived, literally, two minutes' walk from us, so we spent lots of time with my grandparents, do they like it or not. Oh, my God, we had - again, childhood, they had a garden. I would always dig up some sort of German - either bullets, or brooches, like pins. I always had this thing that I found something - war things in the garden. So there were lots of treasures in there. We spent most of the time outside again, playing - I don't know if you have a skipping rope, jumping - like an elasticated rope. Oh, my God, everything. Just not at home. We've never been at home. We never spent time at home. Just eat, go outside, go dark. You watch ten minutes of the children's programme, that's what you had at 7:00 pm, and that was it, ten minutes' children's programme. Half-an-hour on Saturday. It's called 5-10-15. Sunday was called *Teleranek*. That started at 9:00, and that was for a couple of hours, and there was nothing else.

0:13:03.0 Jess: So your dad spoke Czech at home?

0:13:05.5 Antoinette: Yes. No, he learned there, and he spoke Polish. This is the terrible thing, which I'm doing this to my children now. We don't speak French. My kids now barely speak Polish.

0:13:21.4 Jess: Did your dad speak French?

0:13:22.6 Antoinette: Some. My dad's dad spoke French. His brother was even better. I don't know if they forgot. They could read fluently, but I think it just escapes. I don't know. If you have no connection, which they never... We've got, still, some family in France, but no one keeps in touch, I think. Then my mum's family, they would speak Russian very good, and my grandmother still remembers prayers in German because it was so embedded in her, because she was caned constantly!

0:13:56.3 Jess: You mentioned a little bit about your parents' and grandparents' heritage, and their experience of growing up in a completely different time to what you did. Tell us a little bit about that.

0:14:11.1 Antoinette: Who, grandparents, or parents, or both?

0:14:13.1 Jess: Just setting the scene. What was your parents' experience of growing up in...?

0:14:18.8 Antoinette: It's different. My mum was born on the countryside, and she'd grown up in a proper countryside. My dad was born in a small town, grew up as a town person. Completely different personalities. My mum, till this day, shouts that I was brought up in the countryside. She's got green fingers, always very nature orientated, always very holistic, and the things my mum would make for us as a kid, 'This is the cure.' Everything would cure. Propolis. Propolis soaked with alcohol, but surgical alcohol. It just stank as hell. My God, my mother would rub our feet or chests in it, put the cotton pads like a... Then under the feather duvet, and that cures all. We were never ill, like majorly ill. We had chickenpox and things like that, but propolis constantly. My grandmother would wash my mum's hair in a water from a pond, but there was this... I don't know, what was it called? This green...

0:15:33.5 Jess: Algae, like a plant?

0:15:34.9 Antoinette: Plant. Tatarak, it's called. The green bit smelled amazing, my God. I remember, we will go there, and I would pick up Tatarak just to sniff it. Till this day, when we go see my great-grandmother, she would go grab a duck with her - chop her head off, and make a duck blood soup, my God, which is horrendous. My mum loves it because she grew up in the countryside eating all sorts of things.

0:16:10.5 Jess: Were you religious? Was your family religious at all?

0:16:13.3 Antoinette: No, never. My parents would say, 'Have a go if you fancy,' so I did because everybody else did. Poland is very Catholic, so every Sunday, everybody goes to church. We never were forced to go to church. I've got all my friends forced to go to church. I wouldn't go. Then I would go, and I want to find out why is it out there that everybody seemed to click, and I didn't understand, so I started going and going. I even went for the Catholic - some sort of festivals, and I tried so hard. I said, 'I don't understand. That doesn't bring me any joy, or calm, or nothing.' So I decided it's not for me. Sod it. I can't do it!

0:16:57.7 Jess: Did you celebrate any other cultural festivals or things?

0:17:02.4 Antoinette: Oh, tonnes. There were tonnes.

0:17:03.7 Jess: Tell me about them.

0:17:05.8 Antoinette: Obviously, there is Christmas, which is traditional 12 dishes. First star, you sat down to the table, and then you need to put hay under the... You put hay under the tablecloth, and then you leave 13... You're leaving extra plate for a stranger to come. No one ever comes, like strangers, but that's the tradition. Then you break the waffle, thin waffle. That's supposed to break all the... If you don't talk to your family member that day, you're supposed to make everything good, and then you eat 12

different dishes. There's no meat; there's only fish, and Father Christmas comes after. There you go. There's the first day of Christmas, and second day of Christmas. It's all family orientated. You eat this salad, and you still eat all the 12 dishes because everybody's eating, and everybody's visiting each other. There is no shopping, there are no sales. Everything is closed. People are off, and it's family time. It's very special. Everybody needs to be dressed up. It's very formal. So that's that.

0:18:26.2 Easter, of course, you go with the eggs to the church, and they will bless eggs. You paint them, you go to the church, you put a bit of bread, salt, a bit of sausage, and you go, and it's blessed, and you eat that. What else? Then we've got a summer solace [sic] festivals. Oh, my God, there are plenty, because it's Slavian. It's to do with the Slavian celebrations of, I don't know, first day of summer. My English is not good enough now. What's it called? Dożynki, which is - it's got to do with agriculture. All sorts of stuff. Very spiritual, I would say, and more and more now modern days, it's being celebrated. So that's that. The main one is Christmas and then Easter. We didn't do Valentine's. Oh, no, I'm lying. It's not Valentine's. It's [unclear native word 0:19:46.5]. It's a Slavian celebration as well. Of course, first day of spring, which you go and you drown Marzanna.

0:19:55.7 Jess: What's that?

0:19:56.7 Antoinette: My God! So you make a fake doll of rag doll - like a rag doll on a cross. Not the cross like Jesus, but like a scarecrow sort of thing, but it's a Marzanna. It's the first days of spring, and you go, and you throw it in the river, and it goes and flows, and that's supposed to be...! So we did that at school.

0:20:26.6 Jess: So as someone who'd grown up in this town, and that's all you'd known as a child, and your father had grown up there, tell us a little bit about what point you decided you were going to leave your hometown and head to England? How did that come about?

0:20:44.9 Antoinette: That's a personality, because I've got two brothers, as I said. My older brother, he was a bookworm, stay at home, very introverted, and I was all the trouble. I would go, I would run away, I would spend days on trees. I would beat older boys as well. They'll be scared of me. I would literally fight every boy. I would fight any scary dog. I will go and bite them. Like, oh, that dog, there was this huge dog, homeless dog, and the kids were scared of him. I don't know. I will go and bite the dog. There was no fear. I would always want to go to music festivals. As a teenager, I broke all the rules. My brother's supposed to break them for me, as an older brother. I broke them all. Then I had a boyfriend, and his cousin said, 'Oh, I went to UK to work for summer, and I've earned so much money.' Oh, my God. One złoty was £9, which now is £4. By then was nine złoty, which was like, my God, it's like...

0:22:01.3 Jess: Huge amounts of money.

0:22:02.9 Antoinette: Massive, but that was, of course, before European Union. I don't know how she got there, but the word got out. Because my then boyfriend had this student loan, we were chatting, chatting, and there was a connection because my dad's half-sister, her husband is Nigerian. She got married with a Nigerian guy. I don't know, he was studying in Gdansk. She migrated to Nigeria. Whatever happened culturally, different nations, that didn't work out. They went back to Poland. We didn't know that the sister existed because my grandfather had a little bit of a side situation! Anyway, they reconnected, and my dad, when they reconnected, they said, 'Oh, [unclear name 0:23:07.0], my cousin, she lives in London. So maybe we can work things out. Maybe you can go and work in McDonald's for summer to earn some money.' That was it. That was this idea. Then all of a sudden, we said, 'Okay, we're going. We're going to live with [unclear name 0:23:25.3].' [Unclear name 0:23:26.3] lived in Victoria, next to Victoria - was it cathedral? Westminster Cathedral. Like a mansion with a butler, multi-million, obviously. There is...

0:23:43.7 Jess: So a wealthy family.

0:23:44.5 Antoinette: Absolutely wealthy family. So she was mixed race. I haven't seen her... I don't remember if I have ever seen her alive. Always pictures of her. She's supposed to pick us up from the station. Of course, back in the day, before European Union, which is 2002 we arrived, was only buses, long-distance buses, which takes 26, 28 hours, 30 hours. Everybody was really stressed because the stories that you hear, the, 'Oh, on the border, oh, my God, they've gone and just talk to you and search your luggage, and they're going to ask you questions, and you need to tell them because otherwise they turn you back.' We were all just really freaked out, whole bus. When we came to Calais, everybody came out of the bus, and everybody, you could tell, was really pale, stressed, because every Pole, we didn't speak English. Our generation, we were just speaking Russians, that's what they...! I've learned German. I can't speak any German. So English was less than basic.

0:24:54.7 Jess: You were in your early 20s?

0:24:55.9 Antoinette: I was 21 when I arrived. Then I turned 22. I was the most naïve, happy - I don't know, just nothing's going to stop me attitude.

0:25:09.7 Jess: Were other people on the bus travelling for similar reasons, looking for work?

0:25:12.7 Antoinette: All of them. They would say, 'I travelled to see my friend.' They all had the one thing in mind: money. That would not just be young people; there will be younger people, and there will be older people, like my parents. Everybody would have sandwiches, and Russian salads, and croquettes, because we don't eat lunches. Now, it's different. We all have packed sandwiches. Nobody would eat because everybody was stressed. So there you go. You go into this. My God, I thought were going to all collapse from stress. You go in, you've been cold. 'Where do you stay?' I had an address written. It was Ashley Gardens, I believe. I don't remember what

number it was. Ashley Gardens, and the postcode was SW, I think, 1PA, which is the centre of the centre. I had seven minutes' walk to Buckingham Palace. So we stand there; we had matching suitcases; we've been told what to pack, what not to pack, in case they go through our luggage. It was quite innocent because we were not really economically...

0:26:33.2 We were, economically, money motivated, but we just want to have a try for a few months in the summertime. 'So where do you stay?' I gave the address. He looked at it, said, 'Off you go.' I had a French passport already, and my boyfriend then had Polish, and I said, 'This is where we're staying. This is my cousin.' I gave him the number, and I gave him the address, and he just looked and, 'Off you go.' I was like, '[Yelling] Oh, my God.' Those people were absolutely questioned. 'Where are you going? Where are you staying? How much money you've got? What have you got in your bag? What's the reason?' Literally. Some of them just turned back.

0:27:18.4 Jess: So people on the bus with you, some of those people were turned back?

0:27:21.1 Antoinette: Yes.

0:27:21.4 Jess: After travelling for 30-odd hours by bus?

0:27:24.4 Antoinette: Yes. So there was a huge unknown. It depends, also, who you had as an interviewer, sort of thing. I remember a few years back, when I was travelling, because there were still no flights, I had a woman and, oh, my God, she was just... Wouldn't let me go, because I had a French passport, because I was turned... There's a story behind it as well. I've made a French passport. You know how it is when you're young, and you can't be told you know best. I've travelled a lot before with my boyfriend then, and my dad would always say, 'Go and do your French passport. You'll have an easier life.' I said, 'What do you know about life? What do you know? No.' Because of Polish nationality, I've been turned back in Denmark. They

talked to me in Russian, and I got so offended that, from Denmark, we took a hitchhike to Warsaw. Went to French embassy. I said, 'I need my passport.' Back in the day, it took two hours, and I had a passport done. Since then, I've never used a Polish passport.

0:28:43.9 Jess: The power of the passport.

0:28:45.3 Antoinette: The frost on the border, when you saw Polish passport, amazing. I got locked up once in Slovakia with a French passport, actually! So French passport opened the door everywhere. Nobody questioned you; nobody asked you how much money you've got; nobody asked you what's in your bag; 'Why are you coming here? What's the reason? Where are you staying? How long are you staying for?' What you're going to see when you - because everybody... 'I'm going to see Buckingham Palace. I want to see the Queen. I want to see Abbey Studio,' or whatever. 'I'm a student from Poland. I want to learn,' whatever, rubbish. Nobody asked those questions. We came in. A few people stayed back. We sat on the bus, we got... 'Oh, they may be checking out the luggages.' Everybody was like, 'Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Have I got stuff that would actually question...?' No. There was singing, dancing bus. There were jars of salads open, beers open, food, swapping sandwiches. Everybody's laughing. It's like one huge festival on the wheels. So we got to Victoria Station, and we're sitting.

0:30:00.1 My cousin is not there. I don't know. I called the number; nobody answers. We sat there for hours on end. I said, 'My God.' Eventually, she passed a few times, and I'd be looking at her. 'Maybe, is that her?' I've never seen her life [sic]. She said, 'Antoinette?' 'Yes, oh, my God. My bag got stolen and my phone was there.' Listen, even if the immigration officer would call that number that you need to provide, she wouldn't be able to answer because her bag got stolen in the internet café, because there was used to... That was luck. So we went to this - my God, we went to this mansion with the butler and jacuzzi. The house was huge. It was empty. There was this huge portrait of my African uncle, Raymond Dokpesi. He is the owner of Africa

Independent Television in Africa, and radio station. So he was a multi-millionaire. Funnily enough, now next door is African family from Nigeria. They were neighbours! I tell you, small world, yes.

0:31:10.9 Jess: Your neighbours here in Honiton?

0:31:12.5 Antoinette: Yes, Nigerian family next door, they were neighbours in Africa with my multi-million uncle who died last year from stroke.

0:31:25.0 Jess: What are the chances of that?

0:31:28.0 Antoinette: Yes! I share too because it was odd because the girl, she was very shy. The girl never worked in her life. She only shopped in Sainsbury's. I think we had £100 altogether. It was ridiculous, with no money.

0:31:52.5 Jess: So you were living this very different parallel life to what you'd known at home, with this new life in Victoria?!

0:32:01.0 Antoinette: Well, the shock of coming in, I remember staring at the window on the bus, the vast - the land, the city never-ending. The coloured people. We didn't have coloured - apart from my cousin, who was too black for Poland, too white for Nigeria, because she was mixed race. There are no Indian people, there are no Pakistani people, there are no Black people at all. Maybe one in the next town far, far away. So I was just staring, which was like, wow, the smells, I was absolutely fascinated. I was, 'Oh, my God, I've arrived, whatever that means.' Oh, my God, arriving here is such a shock culture because you come from small town, and you're friendly, you smile, and you just want to talk to everybody. It doesn't matter you don't speak any English, you're just like, 'What?' Whatever. 'Yes, yes. Okay, okay.' We start looking for a job. My God, that was humiliating for me, because I've been told... You don't need CV as such. In Poland, it's extremely formal. You need to have a picture

and a suit. Everything is very formal. Here, you walk in a pub, it's like, 'Have you got any work?' 'Oh, yes, come on Tuesday.' 'Okay.' I could not break the ice, basically, because the barrier of English.

0:33:25.2 I could understand a lot, but I couldn't speak anything. I bought this tiny book with the phrases in English. Oh, my God, that was a lifesaver. That was a lifesaver because I was all over, like, 'How do you go there? How do you buy tickets? What is the time? I need dentist.' You know! So I had that booklet. I think I may have it somewhere in the attic. We didn't know. My boyfriend, as I left my boyfriend, my boyfriend then, he could not - nothing. English would not stick to him, so he finds it even more difficult. However, we worked out that, in England, in London lives [?Sebastian], who was an absolute punk rock guy. Everybody would be scared of him. He had a hair-dyed...

0:34:20.4 Jess: Mohican?

0:34:21.3 Antoinette: Mohican, and he was just really fighting and just bad boy, and he lived in the same town that I come from, from Kwidzyn. You know everybody in Kwidzyn, really. So he lived five minutes' walk from me, but everybody was petrified. It was a huge family. I think there were 12 of them, and he was the first one to come to England. [?Thomas] was a punk as well, my boyfriend, so we said, 'Oh, Seba is here, so let's reconnect.' I don't remember how we did it. Someone in Poland, new contact, so we got his number. There were no mobile phones, so we didn't have mobile phones, so I couldn't find any job because I didn't have a contact number. So I gave his wife contact number for people to call me if I want to have an interview! It was ridiculous. So we made the contact with Seba. He lived in Stockwell, so of course, we didn't want to spend money on buses or train. My God, we walked from Victoria to Stockwell every day. Half a day, it took us.

0:35:30.2 Jess: He was, hopefully, going to find you work, was that the idea?

0:35:34.1 Antoinette: Yes, he was the guy who would explain it, how the things work, because he already walked that path, what don'ts and dos while looking for a job, where do you look job, which newspapers do you look through, and what sort of job to get. He didn't speak any English. Being whatever he is, he didn't learn English. That's the problem with Poles; they don't speak English, they don't want to learn English, they don't want to mingle. They're stuck with the Polishness, and that's how the majority of Poles - I'm not saying everybody, but that's how the majority of Polish people live in the UK. They not even stick together. We're very complicated nations; we do like to fight with each other. Stab you in the back, unfortunately. 'You've got better than I do, so I will cut your wings,' sort of thing. That attitude. So I always avoid working with Polish people, actually. So Seba was quite white. He had a small child, and they were living, my God, in Clapham North. What's the route? I don't remember. Maybe it'll come back to me. There was a Greek owner, [Dennis], and he had these bedsheets, and they were infested. Carpets were infested with nits. It was just horrendous.

0:37:07.5 My God, they helped us a lot. I would walk to Stockwell every day for his wife to find me... Do you know *TNT Magazine*? You've never heard of *TNT Magazine*? In London, there's this *TNT Magazine* with all the ads, so you can advertise for jobs. So you get the *TNT*, look for the jobs and, 'Oh, that could be good.' So you contact number, but I would not speak on the phone because a) I can't speak English; b) I was petrified to talk on the phone. I didn't have a phone, so she would call from the phone booth, ask for a job that was gone, because it's London, so no jobs available from the magazine. It was horrendous because, of course, I wouldn't go and ask for a job because I'm not going and asking, because I would feel humiliated. So I spent all this time travelling on the buses in southwest London, so I know southwest London like [snaps fingers] that. Honestly, spent hours just staring at the windows. I remember the first time ever walking in a shop in Oxford Street. So timid, because we don't have anything like that. I was like, oh, my God, Topshop, [gasps]. Oh, my God, Gap. Of course, I found Argos catalogue with the clothes. I would spend hours on the bed looking. 'Oh, I want that. I want that. We don't have that in Poland. I want that, I want that.'

0:38:41.5 Then I would count. Oh, there's this ad about a job. It was like £4.50, so of course, you sit, you can't... 'Oh, my God, that'll be £140. That means it's, I don't know, 10,000 zlotys. Oh, my God, I could buy this and this.' Then you don't take to account the tax, the whatever. It was fantasising. Instead of looking for a job, I would be spending days on looking at Argos catalogue. Then eventually, I found a job, first job ever in a pizza shop in Wandsworth, which is still there. I was distributing leaflets. It was - my God, what did I earn? - £100, £120 a week, one pizza a day, and I distribute leaflets, so I didn't need to speak any English. There were other Polish people working there, so I made a few friends, and that was my very first job. Then my boyfriend found a job in Clapham in Café Sol, which still exists, which was run by no one than Polish head chef [?Jozef], and he was the master operator of cheap labour in... My God, he would enrol all the Poles who were desperate for jobs, paying them £3 an hour, working 14 hours a day, and you will need to pay deposit so you don't escape, because everybody would escape from that job because they were so terrible.

0:40:17.0 They were Italians, I think. My God, what a family. So they were running business on illegal immigrants, basically, because you have no... I'm skipping, I'm sorry. Before that, we couldn't find any jobs, we would go to Hammersmith. Oh, my God, Hammersmith and Victoria. That's miles and miles and miles of walking. We would live on cheap pasta hoops, or whatever, £0.19 bread, Tesco own brand, and jam and margarine. Then we get a huge bag of oats from Holland & Barrett, and that's what we would live on for three months. Horrendous. This is very interesting. It doesn't exist anymore. In Hammersmith, there's a huge Polish community, and there is Posk, Polish... I don't know what's the short Posk for, but there's a Polish veterans... The Polish community in Hammersmith, so you've got all sorts of things there. Then in the one corner of the off license, there was this wall full of ads for jobs. From top to bottom, there would be job offers. Three-quarters of them will be false, and there will just - non-existent jobs. We would walk there, and we would call from the booth, the phone booth. 'There's a job? No job? Okay, thank you.' That will be it.

0:41:55.0 Then Polish people would say, 'Job available. Have you got this card? Have you got that? Have you got permission? 'No permission, I don't know.' 'Have you

got National Insurance number?' 'I don't know.' 'Have you got CSI card?' 'No.' People would be - it's like Mexican in America; they would have the helmet and bag, and they would go to construction site for a day, cash in hand. So that was the same with Poles. Like farm picking, or construction, or kitchen porter, or cleaner, that would be the most... So I'm there, no jobs, standing in desperation with 15 other people, just reading, going through the ads, and, 'That sounds good, that sounds good.' There was this chicken factory in Sheffield, job with accommodation and food, idyllic. We were living in Victoria mansion, eating £0.19 bread with butter and margarine. My cousin back then said, 'I'm going back to Poland,' so she just took off and left us in this mansion on her own, whatever. We thought, okay, let's go to Sheffield. So we bought bus tickets to Sheffield, which took us... My God, it was a whole day, National Express, job, chicken factory, my God, and we were vegetarians.

0:43:27.3 It doesn't matter, just for a few months. I can wash chickens, whatever. It was just desperation because we couldn't find any job. Then we arrived at midnight. Someone was supposed to pick us up. There is this huge, massive, six-foot-something, huge guy, dark skin with a posh car. 'Come, come.' Sat in his car and said, 'Have you got insurance number?' 'No.' 'You can buy one.' We say, 'How much?' '£100.' I'm talking 22 years ago, £100 for insurance number. I said, 'Okay.' We gave him cash, and he gave us A4 paper with a written fountain pen, 'This is your temporary National Insurance number.' Some numbers. 'Sign. You can do it on your knee.' Okay, we can look for jobs now, okay. So we go in this house in the middle of the night. The door opens, and there is this guy with the tattooed eyes, inside of his eyes, tattooed, like lids and...

0:44:39.9 Jess: On his eyelids?

0:44:40.7 Antoinette: Inside, like eyeliner, and dots. We said, 'Oh, my God, he's ex-prisoners.' My God. There are these two kids and wife, and I'm thinking, okay, there are children: we're not going to die. So they moved his son's bedroom - they were living all together in one room, and we were living in this bedroom. That was the

accommodation. I'm like, fucking hell, where did we end up? Let's not panic. 'Tomorrow, we find you this work.' Of course, don't be sorry, they're Polish. Then I'm like, my God, we're going to die. So we kept our passports in our pants for all the time, because they went through our stuff when we left. He wanted our passports, and we said no. Later, we found out that there are people living with this guy who he took passports, and he kept them as slave workers, modern slave workers. They couldn't escape. What happened then, I don't know how we were living there for two weeks. I don't know, and then I went with his wife to this huge community of - is it Roma, or Gypsy? I was like, oh, my God. I remember this kid living with them. He had rotten teeth, black teeth, and he would cry every night. Every night, he would cry. I had my little blue booklet, and there was a whole chapter on doctors, dentists, GPs.

0:46:12.4 So I pick up phrases and I said, 'Let's go to the dentist.' So I went as a translator to this GP... Dentist, and I chose dentist, but it was petrifying because the guy with the tattooed lids, obviously, they were living in social housing, and if they would find out that they were renting... There was a whole mafia, basically, we entered. So I took this child with his father to the dentist. The kid was screaming all abdabs. The dad sat on the chair with his tattooed eye, forced holding his son's head, and I said, 'He's got a hole in a tooth. He is in pain. Help.' I don't know those people. I just translated because I didn't want to be associated with them. 'I have nothing to do with them.' 'Oh, your English is very good,' he said! So they said his teeth need to be all pulled out and would be a general anaesthetic. I was like, okay, that's done. I thought, you know, we need to get out of here, to my boyfriend. 'We need to...' So of course, there was no job. They were saying no. Then, sorry, in between, he said, 'You need your temporary National Insurance number. Go to Jobcentre.' We went to Jobcentre, and I said, 'I need,' with my blue book...

0:47:41.4 'I need National Insurance number.' She said, 'Okay, sit down.' Ten minutes, and I had National Insurance number! We then, 'Oh, my God, we just got scammed. It's for free.' So we said, 'Give us some money back.' He didn't want to give us money back.' I said, 'Let's not ask for that money because they will not let us out of here.' So we said, 'Take us to the bus station and buy us tickets home, and we're not

going to do anything.' So he did, and we came back home to Victoria. My cousin, actually, she was packing her bags. She was about to leave next day to Poland for good. I remember, we were kissing the floor of that mansion. We said, 'I'll never, ever, ever... I'm going to never, ever leave London again on some sort of stupid job.' We never did leave London. For 12 years, I have lived in London now.

0:48:42.8 Jess: So tell me how it is that you've ended up here in Honiton.

0:48:47.3 Antoinette: Well, because we lived in London for 12 years, obviously, I split up with my boyfriend, because I was always a very independent woman, very stubborn. There were no things that I could not do. I would be like, 'I can't do it? I'll do it.' Just to quickly say that I picked up English within, I would say, two years, that I could communicate, and I was like a fish in the water. I found that job in Café Sol, I was collecting glasses. Then I found a job 100 metres further in the sun, Clapham Old Town, as a glass collector. It was a Tuesday, 17th April. I remember because it was really hot. 17th April, everybody had shorts, it was hot, it was really busy in there. I said, 'I'm looking for a job.' They said, 'Okay, can you come on Tuesday?' I said, 'Yes.' I still got a note from my boyfriend on a brown paper saying, 'I found a job. I'm going to this pub. I don't know what time I'll be back.' I spent at that job six years collecting glasses, not talking in English. My open line was, 'Are you tired?' That was my entry level of starting conversation, and I was stopped there. 'How are you?' 'I'm okay.' 'Are you tired?' That'll be it. That was my conversation, but that didn't stop, absolutely didn't stop me of going...

0:50:20.1 Jess: So within two years, you were a confident English speaker.

0:50:23.7 Antoinette: Yes, so I had different jobs. I worked behind the bar, then I was a bar supervisor, then I was assistant manager.

0:50:33.0 Jess: What difference does that make to your life, being able to speak...?

0:50:38.0 Antoinette: Massive. The confidence boost that I can pour a pint of beer, if I think about it. I remember sitting on that sofa on that mansion saying, 'Oh, bartender, £625. That's an absolute fortune. That's what I want to do here,' but that was unachievable for a very long time. Then me pouring beer and, 'Yes, thank you.' You learn. I remember my head would be buzzing. I had the absolute - almost dizzy from concentration, trying to understand people, and looking at them. God forbid I talk to a Scottish person. My God. To this day, sometimes...! I remember listening to - this is fascinating. We only had radio in that mansion. There was no TV. I would listen to radio stations. That's how I learned English. These two kids that get murdered, two ten-year-old girls were murdered in Soham, so I remember following that, and I remembered, 'I understand everything.' So the confidence boost from working behind the bar, and being actually in charge of people's drinks, I was like, my God, nothing's going to stop me; I can do anything. Then you go out for the parties, you make friends. I was living the high life, and I lived that high life for four years, non-stop. My God.

0:52:05.7 Of course, we broke up with my boyfriend because he got left behind with English, and just didn't work out. I ended up being on my own, and I was like, [makes a noise] for four years, literally. Then it was a succession of friends and parties, and I thought, I can't do it anymore. I thought, I'm going to work in a bar... I want to work in a health food store, or something, for a change of aura. So I worked in a wholefoods store for a bit, but that was in Camden, which is north London, and I lived in south London. My God, to get there, it's like a different town. Then the pub that I spent six years working, the other sister pub said they're looking for assistant manager. I thought, I can work for assistant... I worked there for another two years, and I thought, I can't work in hospitality any more. I can't do it. So I said, 'I want to work in a bakery or something.' There was a recession. 2008 recession. Couldn't find a job again. I'm like, shite. I never had a problem finding a job because job was lying on a pavement,

basically. If you want to work, there are 30 jobs. I can do whatever. I always did the jobs that I wanted to, apart from the chicken factory.

0:53:28.9 That didn't happen, you know what I mean?! So I went to work in a bakery as a shop assistant, and then I - because every Pole likes to cook, or they've got a strong heritage of baking at home, because you only bake at home. You don't buy cakes. Now, it's different, but back then, everybody. So I started baking, and baking, and baking, and I got better and better and better, and I was a self-taught baker. I met my husband at this bakery, and we got together. We had [?Hannah*] in London. I think it was just too expensive. [?Gary] said, 'Oh, I've got this job offer in Lewes...' [?Glen 0:54:07.7], which is near Lewes, as a head baker. 'Let's go.' We want to move out of London because it's too expensive. So we did live in Seaford next to Seven Sisters. So I was at home with Hannah*. Gary was working a stupid amount of hours. We spent three years, and I don't know, he just didn't want to do it anymore. Then he worked with other bakeries. Not in Lewes anymore. He worked somewhere else. Then he was - constant look for something for us, like head baker, café, or something. There was this opportunity.

0:54:44.7 He found a job in Lyme Regis, in a town mill bakery. He's supposed to be a head baker, I was supposed to be in charge of café, I was supposed to be baking as well, so it'd be like husband-wife ran café. He would commute from Seaford to Lyme Regis every weekend, and they would pay for B&B opposite. They found a house in here, which was barely built because this was an unoccupied... These buildings are new, or not that new anymore, so we were the first people to move in. I moved in here; Gary went and worked in Lyme Regis. I was with [?Anthony*]. We had a second child. He was barely three months' old. I need to say, we moved in October, 17th October. I tell you, because I haven't been here before, I just trusted my husband. So we went out. 'Okay, is this the high street? That's it. One high street.' Seafood was - sea town, so we had sea, we had Seven Sisters, we had lots of forests, woods, playgrounds, and satellite from London. It was very well. Great libraries. Here, all of a sudden, I'm like, oh, my God, this is just so far behind the rest of UK. It is eye opening, shocking. Like, 'Let's go to library.' I said, 'Oh, my God, is this library?'

0:56:16.0 Oh, my God. I was like, oh. I had a newborn baby who was premature, who was - not full of issues, but it was challenging. Full of hormones. Little Hannah*, three years old. I hated it. I hated it for two years straight. I hate living in here. I would be crying. I said, 'If you tell me to go back, I will be back.' The job we had both, because I had...! This is the life of a new mother. You breastfeed, you've got toddler. The child is colic, the child is sick, the child is this, the child - the other. I'm here on my own. Gary worked 17 hours a day. I barely saw him. I didn't have any friends. I'm feeling so lonely. Oh, my God, so lonely. No one. Oh, my God, I was so desperate. I remember crying. I went for some groups. I didn't like it. No one talked to me. Oh, God. I had an appointment in hospital. The letter didn't come through because there was new build, so they got lost. With Anthony's* issues, with his tongue tight and colic. I remember crying my eyes out.

0:57:29.2 I said, 'I don't want to be here. This is horrendous.' We lost both - not lost; we resigned from those jobs because they tend not to be true. We got lured on a promise of running a business with five per cent ownership, whatever. It might be so great, and then it turns out that, actually, no, it's not that great. Gary couldn't do anything. Gary was at home, I was working, making cakes, making all sorts of things, pumping milk. Gary would arrive with a newborn, and I would sit and breastfeed him. Then it just started getting dodgy. We didn't get paid. People started complaining that it turns out the whole place was covered in debt. So they lured us, but actually, the reality was that it was never going to happen. So we both resigned. It was the hardest time ever for us as a family, because we ended up having no job, both of us. One newborn, one toddler, not knowing anybody.

0:58:34.4 Jess: How does it feel in those moments in time, to be so far from your family?

0:58:41.1 Antoinette: Because I was always so independent... 22 years, there's only once I wanted to come back home. When I was in London, I was single, of course, unhappy. Because London's such a huge place, you've got tonnes of friends. You

could have an amazing nightlife, and it's a very lonely place. So I remember crying my eyes out. 'I want to go back.' My dad said, 'You have nothing to come back to. Don't even think about it.' That was it. I've never looked back. My mum, because back then, she had a traumatic brain injury, so I had undiagnosed PTSD, stressed as hell with a newborn, it was horrendous. Then we get into this hardship for two years. I don't know. Gary couldn't find a job, or found a job, was really unhappy with the job. We were on Universal Credit.

0:59:43.5 We went to food banks; we didn't have things to eat. We were behind the rent. It was horrendous. I absolutely hated it. I could not clique in with anyone. I could not make friendships. I could not connect to anything. If you would tell me, 'You can leave tomorrow,' I'll be packed and ready. That was this reason. I said, 'I never want to feel that way ever again,' in terms of destitution, let's say, almost. It's scary. It's absolutely scary. We, somehow, paddled through it. Then Gary said, 'I'm going to make bread from home. So that's how it all started.

1:00:26.9 Jess: Now...

1:00:28.0 Antoinette: Now, we've got business in Honiton. I would say successful, but it's tough time to run any catering business, so we'll watch and see.

1:00:37.5 Jess: So how is life in Honiton for you now?

1:00:42.1 Antoinette: Honiton as a town, it's okay. I'm connected to it more because we've got business, and I know more and more people. If I come out of the house and I walk in the high street and I say, 'Hello, hello. Hi, how are you?' I really know loads of people. There are lots of wonderful people in Honiton, honestly, but it's an older generation that is really keen, and there are lots of Polish people. I go out for a beer with Polish girls maybe once every three months. The trouble is that I can't connect.

1:01:19.1 Jess: Even with the people that you've met that have Polish heritage?

1:01:24.8 Antoinette: Polish, I could never connect. I was always different in Poland. Antoinette, there was no Antoinette, ever, in my town.

1:01:33.1 Jess: It's a French name, isn't it?

1:01:33.8 Antoinette: Yes. It was only Kasja, Magda, Anja, Agnieszka, which is the most common name, and I want to be called that. I've got Afro hair. My God, I got bullied. I got bullied, I got pushed, I got pulled till my late teenage years, by peers. I was much darker than average Anja, or Kasja, Slavian blue eyes, blonde hair. My Hannah* look at Hannah*, she's blonde. Nothing like us. So bullied, struggled. I always had more liberal views. I didn't meat eat very early, which was unprecedented, because Poland's very conservative. I couldn't find myself. So when I arrived in UK, I need to say it was like a breath of fresh air because you're not judged. Nobody even looks at you. I had a huge afro. In Poland, probably, I could be stoned as a kid, basically. I would be pushed, pulled, called names, n****r, Afro, [unclear word 1:02:42.7], Heidi, [unclear word 1:02:44.4], all sorts of funny names, and the name Dosha. 'Dosha, [laughs].' Terrible.

1:02:54.0 In terms of peers, kids, childhood as it is, is beautiful, but oh, my God, I could not find myself ever. So coming here, my God, nobody cares. Brilliant. I can grow and be myself, or even create myself from start and nobody would judge me. Perfect. Honiton, I like it now. We've got this business, so I put my guard down, and it's okay. Oh, my God. My God! I took 22 years, actually. 22 years on this - 18th July, that's exactly half of my life. I'm 44 on the 11th September.

1:03:39.7 Jess: So you've now spent half your life away from Poland?

1:03:41.6 Antoinette: Yes. Do I want to go? Maybe, because now I think... My God, I don't know, because the times are so tough now in the UK, and we haven't grown in any way, shape, or form, and Poland is flourishing, and it's clean, and it's safe. I got

my second thoughts in terms - just now, thinking maybe we should - maybe one day. Although, the mentality, unfortunately, is not the same. Every time I go back home, which is less and less now, the mentality just completely changed. My mentality changed. It was always a different mentality, always. Since I remember, I was always different.

1:04:31.7 Jess: So it's still conservative there, do you think?

1:04:33.4 Antoinette: Yes, small towns, yes. Like here, I guess. I've got this idyllic vision of Poland in my head. I long home [sic]. I feel this longing to go home every summer. Christmas. First Christmas, I cried my eyes out. Oh, my God, I cried my eyes out. I've never been away from family. Christmas is such an important Christmas for Poles. It's more than sales. It's not about church, but it's the fact that the tradition is so strong, and because Polish people are family-orientated, it's all about family. Everything's about family and kitchen table, food. 'Have you eaten? Do you want some food? Have you eaten? Eat more.' Vodka, babcia, grandmother, grandfather, it's all family. We don't have retirement homes. Grandmother, grandfathers live with you. It's like in China, you're not allowed to get rid of your parents!

1:05:35.9 Now, it's different. I don't think I could find myself out in Poland. My God, I could not. I went to Poland for two days to see family reunion, because both of my brothers live in London, and we haven't seen each other all together as one family, my brothers, my mum and dad, for 15 years. So I went for two days and, oh, my God, I was just like... Everything is different. I always run around town, go everywhere, farmer's market, this market. I want to see what's changed and reflect. Do I want to live in Kwidzyn? Absolutely not. Maybe countryside. I do fantasise about only the Poland I've got in my head that doesn't exist anymore. You go for holiday, it's great, but living there is...

1:06:24.8 Jess: So where is home for you, if it's not Poland?

1:06:28.4 Antoinette: That would be Poland. My husband, we always have this conversation, because he travelled as a child. He was in Canada, Africa, he lived in New Zealand, so he never had this place called home. I always said, 'If things will go tits up,' sorry for language, 'I'll go back home,' which is Poland, to my parents that lived in the same flat of blocks all their lives together! Never moved. I got neighbours who I grew up with from five or six. Those neighbours, some of them are still alive, some not, but we know each other. I said, 'If anything ever goes wrong, I go back home,' so home is Poland, always will be, but the sentiment and this nostalgia. Every summer, I want to go back because it's the best summer ever. This summer here, the weather's not here, the food is not here. Nothing is the vibe of summer holidays. The farmer's market. Have you ever seen Polish farmer's market? My God, you will chain yourself to the farmer's market. I swear to God. It's just like honey. The cream from the pot, the lady with eggs, the lady with bread. Of course, there's China stuff. Everybody's got the same clothes from one warehouse you made in China.

1:07:55.4 Jess: In terms of the homemade produce that still fills those markets?

1:07:59.5 Antoinette: My God. You know, I tell you this... This is my thing, 'I tell you this.' My husband always laughs at me. 'I tell you this!' In Poland, because we're very strong with food, I've never, ever had a shop-bought jam till I came to UK, till I ate that cheap shitty jam for £0.15 from Tesco Value, whatever, because we've got a cellar in our block. Jams, cordials, preserves, gherkins, sauerkraut, fermented gherkins, pickled gherkins, pickled prunes, everything. Peppers, mushrooms. Foraging mushrooms, that's how I'd spend my childhood, foraging mushrooms, foraging this, or eating raw... You go to Polish shop in Exeter, and they had sunflower, the seeds, fresh seeds. As a kid, you would sit and pick and eat, and this is what I did. That's as a childhood kid, that's what we would do. Sunflower. You sit, you pick, and you put fresh seeds in your mouth, and you stuff your mouth so much with the fresh seeds that you can't hold it, and then you crunch it, and that's what I did this summer. 43, about myself.

I said, '[Yelling] Sunflowers.' So I bought myself a huge sunflower. I sat on a train, I stuffed my face with the raw sunflower seed.

1:09:25.7 Of course, you open them. How much can I fit? [Chomping noise] I ate as a ten-year-old, and that's what I did. Watermelon, 'Never eat watermelon.' We never had watermelon, but when we had watermelon, 'If you eat watermelon with seeds, the seeds will grow in your tummy,' or the black Volga car. 'If you see black Volga, there is a death in it.' Kids would frighten you. 'The black Volga, there is a dead body in that car, and if you get in that car, you never come out,' or there will be ghosts in the cellar, so we would lock one unfortunate child in the cellar, and the cellar corridor would be a whole block length, which is huge. The kids will just scream and whatever.

1:10:13.6 Jess: So are there things that you maintain here, living in Honiton with your family now, that relate to your Polish heritage?

1:10:22.3 Antoinette: I should do more, because this is how it is when you've got most of Polish families in Honiton, they're Polish mother and father. I've got English husband, and me talking in Polish to my children, it's like I'm talking to myself. My husband speaks more Polish, and he understands more than my children, so I need to try harder, actually. Yes, Christmas, we've got Polish Christmas. So because you celebrate on the 24th, so we do Polish, so I do pierogi, I do bigos. I don't do 12 dishes because no one's going to eat it.

1:11:00.0 Jess: Tell me about pierogi.

1:11:00.8 Antoinette: So it's a dumpling, and there are different parts of Poland who make them different. My God. You do pierogi, which is dumpling with sauerkraut and foraged mushrooms, chopped, cooked, and you can fry them. Then you've got uszka, which is dumpling as well, with the same thing, but with barszcz, which is beetroot soup with mushrooms, foraged mushrooms, because it gives you the smokiness, and it's a specific taste only for Christmas Eve. Of course, the biggest childhood trauma is

a compote made from dried fruit, because we didn't have sweets. We would have dried apples in the oven, and in a paper bag, and you sit, and you eat dried pears, or dried apples. Smoked prunes, smoked prunes that were smoky. So you soak them, and you make compote, and the taste of smoked prunes, oh, my God, I remember everybody needs to drink that. I don't want to drink that. There was a trauma, absolute trauma. I love it now. I will have that. I said, 'Oh, my God. Oh, compote, oh.' You can buy the packages of dried fruit and smoked prunes in the Polish shop. Absolute trauma. We don't celebrate, what do you call, Easter.

1:12:33.1 We don't do it right. I think I've done it a few times with Hannah*, that we've painted eggs, but I've got a real problem going to church. I do, because even though - because I was different. The first communion, the church is so fixated with the first communion. I had this dress, and I needed to pee in a church. This huge Catholic church, they're massive. We've got one in Kwidzyn, huge, and I was like, [struggling noise]. This priest came out of his thing and started shouting me down. I'm a devil, and I'm going to burn in hell, and I said, 'Okay, I see, I see,' and I was nine, eight. First confession, you're supposed to confess your sins. What eight-year-old child, or a nine-year-old child have sins? So I said, 'You're never going to hear them.' So I've lied. I said, 'Ba-ba-ba-ba, ba-ba-ba-ba. I talk back to my mum. I didn't do the lessons, I ate too much sweets. Thank you very much. God forbid. Whatever. Amen.' I said, 'You're never going to hear.' I never went back to the confession. So I truly don't like church because it's forced upon you. Also, peers would force you. Then you've got - what's it called in English?

1:13:46.0 Jess: Peer pressure?

1:13:47.5 Antoinette: Yes. 'You don't know Ten Commandments?' I said, 'I don't. I don't need to.' Like that. So I've always been really terrible.

1:13:56.9 Jess: You said that you loved going to festivals. Is music Polish, or traditional music in Poland something that you...?

1:14:03.7 Antoinette: My God, I grew up on... I was 16 when I went to the festival. It's called Woodstock. You used to call Woodstock, the rock festival, 300,000 people. It happens to this day. It's called Poland Rock now, and there's more - I don't know how many.

1:14:20.6 Jess: What type of music is it?

1:14:21.8 Antoinette: Everything. You've got Trebunie-Tutki, which is Polish folk from mountains. [Imitates music]. You've got Hare Krishna, you've got Indian, you've got national... I don't know, the Beyoncé, or whatever, The Prodigy. Now, there's a worldwide stage for people. It's still free, and it's better than Glastonbury, and it's well organised. So I went to that. I went to a blues night. The blues, every year. I went to reggae, everywhere you could go.

1:14:57.2 Jess: So it was really mixed in that time?

1:14:59.6 Antoinette: Anything that would play live, I would be there. There would be this pub called...

1:15:05.3 Jess: Did your parents play music when you were a child?

1:15:06.5 Antoinette: No.

1:15:08.0 Jess: So it's not something you grew up with, you just...?

1:15:09.5 Antoinette: I'll tell you; my dad is a couch potato! My mum is a nature woman. She's got three allotments. She likes to grow stuff, plants, foods, and she's got green fingers. You give her poo on a stick; she will make it flourish. I swear to God. My dad, no interest. TV, legs up, that's his life. So lots of music, lots of travelling. I've hitchhiked

a lot, all from the age of 17 till I arrived here, lots of hitchhiking, lots of festivals, lots of anything, really.

1:15:43.7 Jess: Are there any Polish sayings that your family might recognise you saying, or Polish words that you naturally still use at home?

1:15:52.8 Antoinette: Depends. My mum is from - there are different parts of Poland has a different dialect. Particularly my mum, because my dad was born in town, so not really, but my mum and my grandmother, and her mother, they would say certain things. It's funny how we see each other. I've got pictures of four generations of us. There's my great-grandmother, who's dead already, but there's my daughter, me, my mum, and her mum. Immediately, they switch the way they speak and the words they use. I don't have that, I don't think. We say [?yor 1:16:39.4] in my area where I live, yor instead of yes. Tak. Tak is in Polish; I would say yor, where yor...? Everybody would say, 'Where are you from?' I said, 'From around the...' 'Oh, yes, yor, yor.' So there is different people. They say [?tay 1:16:55.1] instead of tak. So tonnes of different people in here that they've used it. I said, 'Where are you from in Poland?' I go, 'Yor.' 'What's that, yor mean?' I said, 'Yor.' I say, 'If you yor, you're from Kwidzyn, so you can tell!'

1:17:08.3 Jess: You said that you meet up with a group of people that you've met here in Honiton, who are Polish. Does that nourish something for you?

1:17:17.6 Antoinette: As I said, I avoided Polish people for a very, very long time because I don't have a good experience with Polish people living abroad. They just want to steal money.

1:17:28.0 Jess: So what draws you to meet up with this group that you've met?

1:17:30.6 Antoinette: Because I've matured. I'm a mother. Also, I've mellowed down a little bit, because I was lonely here, particularly, and I could not make any friends. Believe it or not, I still don't have a bestie here. 22 years, I still don't have my English bestie.

1:17:50.6 Jess: Apart from your husband!

1:17:52.4 Antoinette: That's him, but that doesn't count! A girl, girlfriend. I still got my besties from the high school, from the place I live, from Kwidzyn. There's [?Tamara*] and [?Marta], which is - nickname was Spider, because he was hardcore punk. [?Angela]. All of them lived in UK. I forgot to say. When I arrived to UK before European Union, I brought tonnes of men from my uni as my fiancés. That includes my uncle! So on the border, you would say, 'Who is this?' 'He's my fiancé. I've got a French passport. He comes and stays with me.' So half of student house came like that. My uncle, my mum's brother came as my fiancé. He's dead now, sadly. He died three years ago. So yes, the tricks, and dos and don'ts that Poles do. That was before European Union. When European Union became available, there was like - whoosh, lots of us.

1:18:53.1 Jess: More regulation?

1:18:55.3 Antoinette: It was just all normalised. You come in for work. There was no problem. The funny stories, again, I forgot to say, my boyfriend then, [?Thomas], he was illegally there, just as a tourist visa as well, six months or something. So I had a French passport. I had a National Insurance number. I had every right to be here as an EU member, and I could not have a bank account. It took me two years to open a bank account. He, being illegally working without no work permit, without legal National Insurance number, without anything, he got letter of recommendation from the pub he worked, and they opened a bank account in Barclays within two hours. I couldn't, having all legal stuff, because I didn't have a proof of address. To have a proof of

address, you need to have a place to stay, and that contract... I don't know, it was like a vicious circle. You need to have a bank statement or something. So for two years, I couldn't open a bank account, being here all legal, having all the legal documents. Eventually, my landlord wrote a letter to the bank, just, 'Please, open this poor girl's bank account, honestly, because this is just ridiculous.' So they did.

1:20:16.3 Jess: Yes, just really fundamental things that we can overlook as making life functional, and the ability to apply for a job.

1:20:25.2 Antoinette: How is that, that you work illegally earning £3 an hour, cash in hand, or whatever, but you need to have a bank account to work with bigger corporations? Whatever, pubs, you need to have a bank account, have your money sent in, but you're here illegal, so you should not be able to do it technically. They opened it within two hours because he had a letter of recommendation. I've been having all the papers, all the - I could not do it for two years because I didn't have a proof of address, or proof of work, or something, but to have that, I need to have a bank account to get paid. Oh, my God.

1:20:57.4 Jess: One of the questions that I always like to ask people at the end of the interviews is why do you feel it's important that you share your story, whether that's with us today on this project or with your children?

1:21:12.4 Antoinette: It's who I am now. I wouldn't be here, and I'm quite happy who I am now. If I wouldn't come here, I wouldn't learn the language. When I came here, I always said the second time when I arrived in December, and I said, 'I'm staying.' I didn't say that. I've studied as well in Poland when I was living here. I don't know, I'm happy who I am. I've got family. I've always had this premonition that I will live here, and I need to blend in. I'm not coming here for seasons, and I only go back home and build a house because that's what the majority of people do, or they just overstayed for ten years and build a house in Poland, and they always wanted to go back. Most

of these people that I know, Polish people, they live here for years, ten years, they all want to go back! I never thought of it, to go back, but I lost the question now. You need to say it again because I waffle!

1:22:17.8 Jess: It's just about, why is it important to you to share your story, whether that's with us or your children?

1:22:23.1 Antoinette: It's quite a colourful story, it's good to know. My God, I could write a book, because we only brushed, as I've been jumping from one subject to another because there's so much that I just derail from the actual questions.

1:22:39.5 Jess: Do you share your stories and your memories of life in Poland with your children?

1:22:45.7 Antoinette: Not yet because I think they're too small. They only know that I've got parents in Poland, and they've been in Poland. It's a difficult thing because family is everything in Poland. My family is not that good together, so I don't go there that often anymore because it's too stressful for me. I don't take kids with me either because my parents, unfortunately, are not keen grandparents! They don't want to know, so it's not happening. So that sort of connection is never there anymore. My younger brother is going to Poland on Wednesday. Every time off he's got, he goes to Poland. He's got this close connection. I would go elsewhere. I don't need to go to Poland. It's good to share it. People need to know that. I think I've got the syndrome of immigrant. Doesn't matter that I've been here 22 years; the home is neither here or there because, here, I'll always be an immigrant, and back home, I would be someone who can't find itself anymore because it's been too long. So yes, I've got that syndrome of where is home. Especially after Brexit, I was very early reminded that I don't belong.

1:24:07.9 Also, when we arrived, we were looking for jobs in Pimlico in London, and we went to this hotel, and I've been told, 'Oh, where are you from?' I said, 'France.' The guy said, 'Oh, thank God for that because London is full of fucking Poles.' I said,

'Okay.' So something not to mention. Never mind the accent! So never mention. So I've had quite a lot of stories about, 'Poles, Poles, fucking Poles,' or something. I'm very aware that it is as it is. People still think, 'Oh, where are you from?' 'Oh, Poland.' 'Oh, your English is very good.' I said, 'Well, I've been here 22 years.' 'Oh, okay. Where's the origins from?' I've had people in bakery, the older people always ask, 'Where are you from?' I say, 'I'm Polish.' That's why I put the posters on the wall, like Gdańsk, just to say, 'I'm from Poland, but then don't ask me too many questions. I live here.'

1:25:08.4 Jess: So how does it make you feel when people ask you that question?

1:25:11.4 Antoinette: I cringe a little bit. I seem to stop caring much now, and I wouldn't let anyone tell me otherwise now. As a younger person, oh, my God, it was like a blemish on me that I was from Poland. Although Poles are really loyal, hardworking, friendly, love their food, but there are also a few bad apples as well. The whole immigrant thing I've heard over and over and over again that, 'You steal our jobs, and you come in and you steal jobs, and men or women,' or whatever, all sorts of things. 'You like to drink, and you like...' I remember situations on Streatham Common. There was this guy who was about to be stabbed with a screwdriver. I had a day off. I was walking and I'm like, 'Oh, my God. Oh, my God.' I start shouting and there was a police car, and I was like, 'Stop, stop, stop.'

1:26:04.3 So I ended up going to the police station on my day off, giving a statement, and I said - they were asking me, 'What did he have in his hand?' 'I think a sharp object. I think it was a screwdriver.' It was a screwdriver. Then he took me home, this policeman, saying, 'Where are you from? Are you Polish? Oh, yes, your men like to beat your own women, are you?' All that. I'm like, 'We're not all the same.' 'The Polish men like to drink, and they like to beat the women.' So I've heard quite a lot of that in that. 'You fucking poles. Oh, not another one.'

1:26:39.6 Jess: What are the things that makes someone - or you in particular - feel welcome or part of a community?

1:26:45.8 Antoinette: In Honiton?

1:26:48.0 Jess: Yes.

1:26:48.5 Antoinette: People. People are fantastic, especially the older generation. I love hearing stories. There are quite a few people who just go off and let themselves loose, and tell me all sorts of stories, which is fantastic because I want to know. I was always hungry of knowing, 'Why do you buy sandwiches? Why have you got sandwich shops? Why can't you make sandwich at home? Why do you go to the pub?'

1:27:15.5 Jess: So for you, the act of people sharing stories helps you to connect with people and feel like you're in this together.

1:27:23.0 Antoinette: I'm a chatterbox, in general. Although I calmed down since I got kids, as I said, there was nothing that I could not do. I'm stubborn, so I get what I want either way. I'm stubborn, and I like to talk, and I was always very outspoken to people. I can't sit quiet, so if something's not right, then '[Speaks gibberish],' and then there was a discussion.

1:27:58.1 Jess: I know that you're very proactive about improving things in Honiton in the high street, not just because it might help your business, but also because the experience of people living in that town might be improved, so we share that!

1:28:08.3 Antoinette: I'm a doer. If I see opportunity, things could be done, I just don't sit and wait and, [makes hesitation noises]. I go and do it. So this is the bush here from council property that grows, and I've been at it with council, and they just don't want

to... They're like, 'Oh, yes.' So I can't sit and look. I need to do things. The same with the hole in that pavement.

1:28:31.2 Jess: Well, the thing that's interesting about that is it means that you will have an impact on this town as a result of that.

1:28:36.0 Antoinette: Well, let's hope so. I just want to belong. I know that I belong in, let's say, UK, but I want to belong in Honiton. By having this shop and connect finally with people who actually - it's good not having website, it's good not having phone number. People are forced to come in and actually talk and enquire and ask questions. We don't have labels for the reason that I need to explain what's what. I may be tired, and sometimes I just talk out of my... I like that interaction because, less and less, we go checkouts and self-services, and there are lots of retired people that going out to the shop and buying a piece of cake is the part of the day where they can connect with other people, because lots of people don't have that connection with anybody.

[Thanks and close]

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