This programme was first broadcast in 1999.

This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript of the programme.

**Muriel:** My biggest achievement, which I think to myself 'I’m a star'… I was in *The Full Monty*.

**Dick:** The biggest achievement, I think, is when I joined a housing co-op as a member and we do a lot for other nationalities.

**Presenter:** Voices of immigrants talking about their proudest achievements as immigrants living in Britain. Our first speaker, Ana Silvia Rodriguez, is from Mexico in Latin America. She came to live in Leeds in the North of England in 1979. At that time, women in Britain were becoming more and more involved in social and political issues. For example, they organised protests and support for Britain’s coal miners at a time when the government was trying to close some coal mines. This is what Ana calls ‘strong feminist activity’ and she got involved. Is that Ana’s proudest achievement or is there more?
My proudest achievement since I’ve been in England. I suppose it’s a variety of things. One is realising that women are very powerful beings. So, there was a very strong feminist activity in the 70s in England and that really shaped me up. When women fought for disarmament I went and supported rallies and demonstrations. I recently, when there was a war in Yugoslavia. I met lots of other women and demonstrated in the streets of Leeds. So, to me that’s a big achievement, and my independence as a woman allowed me to do that.

**Presenter:** Ana says that British women helped her realise that women were ‘powerful beings’ – that they have enough power to do great things. She says that the strong feminist activity of the 1970s ‘shaped her up’ – helped her to become the independent woman she is today. Ana has supported rallies and demonstrations, for example, going on marches for ‘disarmament’ - to protest against nuclear weapons. In the past, she’s taken part in anti-war demonstrations and still attends rallies and other similar events. Even though Ana now lives in England, she still tries to help people living in her own area of the world – Latin America.

In Leeds, we have a Latin American Women's Support Group and this group has existed for the past 14 years. And the reason we founded this group was because we wanted to share our experiences of being Latin American in Leeds. But also, we wanted to support movements or activities by women in Latin America - women who were working for social change. We have had several projects, for example, we have supported indigenous people sort of fighting
for their freedom and their lives.

**Presenter:** Ana is proud of her voluntary – unpaid work to help improve people’s lives, both in Britain and abroad. However, she’s also proud of the work she did when she was employed as a co-ordinator – a type of organiser at a college for adults. The college was set up and run by adults who didn’t finish their schooling.

The other thing I will always be very proud of is that I became a co-ordinator in an adult basic education college. Which is run by people who missed out on their education, and who wanted to improve on their reading, their writing, their spelling. That was a great achievement.

**Presenter:** Like Ana, our next speaker has also done a lot of voluntary work that he’s very proud of. Dick Goan moved to England in 1954 from Northern Ireland, one of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom. Up until about 1981, he lived in what he calls ‘rooms’ - usually a rented bedroom but sharing a bathroom, kitchen and living room with other tenants. Eventually, Dick wanted his own self-contained flat – where he didn’t have to share any spaces, but the council couldn’t help. They didn’t even have enough flats for people with
children, so single people, like Dick, couldn’t be re-housed. However, in 1980, he finally got some help and at the same time, was able to help others like him, particularly immigrants.

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The biggest achievement, I think, is when I joined a housing coop as a member to get re-housed because the local council couldn’t re-house me. And eventually, after about 6 months as being a member and being asked to get on one of the committees, I finally was offered a flat. A self-contained flat: bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and sitting-room, which I couldn’t believe, (be)cause I was living in rooms. And we do a lot for other nationalities – European…..We have a high percentage of African people and Caribbean….West Indians and Pakistanis and Irish. I nearly forgot that! Irish. And a few Scots thrown in….Welsh, I think. But, these people…it was the only way for them to get re-housed, and we got, I’m not saying perfect re-housing. But, some of them were coming up to scratch with new ideas to modify their houses and all that. And I think we’re doing a good job.

Presenter: He’s also a member of other committees in the co-op where each tenant votes on important decisions. Dick proudly says that the co-op is ‘coming up to scratch’ – its members are thinking up ideas on how to improve and make the housing more modern. Today, we’re hearing about some of the proudest achievements of people who’ve moved to England, despite all the difficulties of living in a new country.
Our next speaker is Mojtaba Amini, who’s a refugee from Iran. He came to London in 1998 and of course, had many problems when he arrived. These included being homeless and not being able to speak English. However, Mojtaba has been learning English for seven months now, and this is his proudest achievement so far.

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My best achievement in England was studying English because when I arrived in this country I have a lot of problems and really I couldn’t do nothing. And now, I still have problems but a little bit I can speak this language. And I want (to) go in university and if I can’t speak this language…never can go in university.

**Presenter:** For Mojtaba, learning a little bit of English has helped to make his life as a refugee a little easier. And improving his English also means that Mojtaba can work on another ambition. He wants to attend University in Britain.

Like Mojtaba, Mariann Berces came to England as a refugee, arriving from Hungary in 1986. She’s particularly proud of two ambitions, which are connected. And Mariann thinks that being an immigrant helped her to achieve them.
Oh! Well! I think the biggest achievement is that I learnt a language to such an extent that I would never have been able to at home. Also, I’ve got my own business, which I’m very proud of and I might not have been able to (have) done it at home.

I feel I achieved more, maybe, than other people who were born here. Maybe because I was constantly struggling. I was constantly trying to prove myself. Maybe that gave me so much courage. But, yes. I’m very proud of myself, and I’m very proud of what I achieved in the last 13 years.

**Presenter:** Learning English to such an extent – so well, that she could set up her own business, makes Mariann very proud of herself. And she thinks she’s achieved more as an immigrant, than many people who were born in Britain because she believes she always had to work harder. She says she constantly struggled – she worked hard all the time, trying to prove that she was good at whatever she was doing.

Our last speaker today is Muriel Hunte, from Guyana, who arrived in England in 1953. Over the years, Muriel has achieved many ambitions, including getting her teacher’s certificate and going to craft classes – where she learnt how to make all kinds of things. But more recently, like Mariann, she’s started a new career that has made her particularly proud of herself!
Well, I’ve achieved many things since I’ve come to England. I’ve done different courses, teacher’s certificate, craft classes etc. But, within the last few years I’ve been doing a lot of television and film work. And my biggest achievement which I think to myself I’m a star…I was in “The Full Monty.” The Full Monty now….it’s a big film that was made by some unemployed people, and it was such a big film because the theme of the film was all men, of all sizes and shapes, that were trying to be strippers in a nightclub, to put on a show for women. So, you can imagine the joke it was to see bald-head men, old-men, big-belly men, you know.

**Presenter:** And it’s true that “The Full Monty” was a very successful film at the cinema and it’s even now on video. The film is based on a true story about a group of men who couldn’t find any work. They were so desperate to earn money to look after themselves and their families, that they decided to become male strippers – they took their clothes off to entertain ladies. And Muriel thought this was funny because some of them were what she calls ‘bald-headed’ - men without hair… And others were ‘big-belly men’ - they had large stomachs! As Muriel explained, she appears as a granny, a grandmother, watching the strippers in a night-club whilst doing her knitting – making clothes with wool. So look out for her if you watch the film!

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