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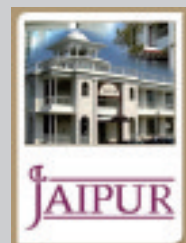
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■ Citizen Fast works on all major networks
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Film director
and screenwriter
Segun Oguntola
arrived in Milton
Keynes in 2007
after growing up in
south east London
and spending five
years developing a
film industry in the
Gambia, west Africa.
He was
immediately
struck by how so
many cultures and
backgrounds were
represented in the
city's new population
- and set out to find
why so many people
come here to make
a new start, and
become part of the
MK Mix.



The MK Mix is
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**Mousa Baraka is Community
Organiser for Citizens MK.**
Born in London of Iraqi
descent, he explains how he
turned the negatives of war in
his parent's country in to him
being able to make a positive
contribution in Milton Keynes.

**Who are you and what is your
background?**

My family, originally from Iraq,
came to the UK in the mid 1980's. My
father was an Imam and he set up a
mosque in North West London. I was
born in London and grew up in that
community.

But everything changed for my
family and I when the 2003 Iraq war
happened. My father decided to move
back to Iraq and I visited it for the first
time. I was shocked and angered by
all the destruction I saw, and wanted
to change things. I came back to
the UK and decided to move into
politics, studying Philosophy Politics
and Economics at the University of
Oxford.

But during my studies I decided
that Iraq wasn't for me, and that there
were many issues in this country,
evident through my community work,
that also needed changing. While
trying to raise money for my Masters
at SOAS I found a community alliance
that was just what I was looking for,
London Citizens. I was a community
organiser for over a year in East
London before coming to Milton
Keynes.

**What attracted to you come to
MK in the first place?**

While I was working at London
Citizens, a community alliance that
works to achieve change based on
the common good, I heard that Milton
Keynes wanted to set up a similar
alliance.

I came up to Milton Keynes for a
month to test the water and fell in love
with the place.

I applied for the post and have been
working to set up citizens:mk ever
since.

**What's the most striking
difference you've found between
MK and the place where you've
lived the longest?**

When I first moved to Milton
Keynes from London the first thing I
noticed was the lack of traffic. Then
the greenery and the lack of sky
scrapers.

But these are not the most striking
differences between Milton Keynes
and everywhere else I've lived. After
meeting people from all over Milton
Keynes I became acutely aware of
the sense of identity and ownership
that people have over Milton Keynes.
There is a conscious awareness that
Milton Keynes is a developing city,
and that its development is not yet
complete.

It's created a pioneering spirit
among everyone, and it makes Milton
Keynes a very exciting place to live in.

**Please tell us about all the ways
in which you are involved in MK
Life?**



I am the Senior Organiser for
citizens:mk. It's a developing alliance
of community groups - religious
institutions, schools, unions, charities
and community associations
- working together for a better Milton
Keynes.

I meet people from these
communities, train them in leadership
and organising, and help them work
to work together to achieve change
on the issues they identify.

**How easy have you found it to
settle here?**

The nature of my work means
that I meet many people and I have
met over 200 people in the last five
months in Milton Keynes.

They have all been very welcoming
and I have found it very easy to settle
here.

This has especially been helped by
my joining a mosque in Granby as well
as joining the Durbar football team.

Living in one of the old towns,
Wolverton, has also made it easier to
feel at home.

**We're interested in highlighting
ways in which MK's diversity is
working in practice, how far have
you spread your net?**

I meet and work with people
representing all the different
strands of diversity in Milton Keynes
(ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age etc.)
Many of those groups have been
willing to join citizens:mk and work
together with other groups to launch
this alliance.

Christ the Cornerstone Church,
the Bangladeshi Association, the
MK Academy and Q-Alliance are but

examples of some of the diverse
groups I have got to know and work
with in the last few months.

**Are you planning to stay in MK
for a fixed period of time?**

I am definitely planning to stay here
until I build and launch citizens:mk.
What happens next depends solely
on that.

**What's the best piece of advice
you could give to someone
considering moving to MK?**

Come here and get to know the
different areas of Milton Keynes
before deciding where to move.

Milton Keynes is diverse not only
through its people but its geography
and physical communities. There is
something for everyone, you just need
to find the right place.

**Tell us something about the
city/country of your origins which
only a local would know.**

People should know that there is a
lot more to Iraq than what you hear
on the news.

Most of Iraq is safe and there are
wonderful places to live, and people
really are beginning to build new and
better lives for themselves.

I am only hopeful for the future.

**What would you say to people
who can't find anything good to
say about the city?**

Behind the roundabouts and the
grid roads live a large number of
fantastic people in this city who really
want to change the world.

It's the people who make a place,
not its buildings.

Would you like to put yourself in the MK Mix hotseat?

**All you have to do is ask - email your request to first@mkcitizen.co.uk and
we'll take it from there. You can read previous MK Mix interviews and find out
more about the project at www.themkmix.co.uk**