



# Speaking Out

Kashmire's Story



## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals for their support in the making of this book:

Nabeela Mowlana and Matthew Hurley at Sheffield Hallam University, Lucy Gosling at the West Midlands Combined Authority, my parents Daljit and William Hawker for their continued support, and David Lammy for hosting me at Westminster as part of the Rights for All leadership programme.

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# Foreword

Kashmire is quite simply one of the most extraordinary young men I have come across. He is bright, articulate, hard-working, funny and ridiculously savvy, seldom missing an opportunity to invest in himself.

What makes him extraordinary, is his passion and unwavering focus to become a politician, whatever the odds and whatever adversities he has and will have to face along this journey. He is fearless and unapologetic in his drive and strives to make society a fairer, kinder and more equal place to be born into. Kashmire's life epitomises what we at Changing Our Lives term an 'ordinary life!'

He began his involvement with Changing Our Lives at the age of 16 as a young leader working in coproduction with decision makers in his home city to improve the lives of young people with the label of 'special educational needs and disability' (SEND). Kashmire was later selected by the organisation to take part in Rights for All, a bespoke leadership programme developed for young disabled people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Rights for All took Kashmire on a unique leadership journey enriched with historical content, cultural significance and self-determination.

After years of working with the organisation it was a very proud moment for all of us when he secured a place at university and since then it has been a pleasure to watch him flourish and further develop the skills and attributes that he now owns.

His passion and commitment to anything he chooses to engage in is unequivocal and he's a young man to be admired. I very much look forward to continuing to work alongside Kashmire as an Associate of Changing Our Lives and have no doubt that he will accomplish his career ambition in becoming an outstanding politician, eventually infiltrating the Westminster bubble!

**Lucy Dunstan**  
**Deputy Chief Executive Officer**  
**Changing Our Lives**



# Chapter 1

## My journey through education



A new chapter in my life began when I went to university. This was an important goal for me as I wanted to have an experience which shaped my thinking and be able to put myself out there in a very different environment.

It was not always something I imagined I would be able to do. Although I had a good education in my Special Educational Needs primary school, on reflection the curriculum was more limited than I wanted and I was only offered the chance to sit one SAT exam.

I was fortunate to go to a mainstream secondary school because although there were many challenges, I felt much freer. Having the opportunities to join school councils and be a Youth MP enabled me to prove myself and it was at that point that my teachers saw my capabilities and started encouraging me to go to university.

“Kashmire is by far one of the most phenomenal people I have had the honour of working with. He is passionate and empathetic and will always do his best for those around him. He has the ability to network, connect with people from all walks of life, and effectively articulate his thoughts. His commitment to creating change through entering political spheres is a skill that he will undoubtedly use in years to come. To know him and work closely with him has been a joy and a privilege.”

- Nabeela Mowlana, Students' Union Welfare and  
Community Officer at Sheffield Hallam University 2018-19

I struggled to get the grades I needed in my GCSE mock exams, but the school had a fantastic SEN support team who had a brilliant understanding of autism. Accessing this support and putting in a lot of hard work led to me passing nearly all my GCSEs and then being offered a place at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU)!

I continued to access this kind of support at university through my study skills tutor and my mentor. My mentor in particular was amazing. I was able to express my fears as well as share my excitement and her guidance was phenomenal in giving me confidence and keeping me focused.

Going to university enabled me to be free and stretch my legs. It taught me independence and gave me opportunities I never thought I would have.



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*Kashmire was one of the most enthusiastic students I have ever taught, and I thoroughly enjoyed our discussions about the rollercoaster of British politics over the past few years.*

*He engaged wholeheartedly in the academic and extra-curricular activities that Sheffield Hallam had to offer including acting as Speaker of the House of Commons in an induction event for new Politics students! Kashmire was a real credit to himself and the degree programme throughout his time at SHU.*

”

- Matthew Hurley, Politics and International Relations Lecturer at SHU





One of the opportunities I had during my time at university was a trip to Brussels for my European Union module.

Seeing the number of trade unions and visiting the business organisations opened my eyes to how complex the European Union is! This was particularly relevant for me as the EU Referendum was one of the first votes I was able to take part in as it was the year I turned 18.

My visit to Brussels took place a year and a half after the referendum which meant the negotiations had started and there was a buzz of excitement in the air.

We even saw President Macron's motorcade drive past us as he headed to the chamber!

My studies at university helped prepare me for my future in politics. I learnt about how each government and Prime Minister throughout history has shaped Britain, and this helped me become more informed in my own political knowledge.

I chose to focus my dissertation on what influenced the young voters. Through this I gained more awareness of the influence of policy platforms, and this helped me as I became more involved in campaigning.

My hard work at university paid off and last year I graduated with a BA in Politics!

“*Kashmire has grown massively, not just in character but in independence since he went to University. I am hugely proud at how well he has done and I feel really confident for his future!*”

- Daljit Hawker, Kashmire's mum





# Chapter 2

## My involvement in politics

I knew before arriving at university that I wanted to get stuck in. I did not imagine that I would be elected as the Student Union Disabled Students Representative within a month of arriving!

My role was to be a champion for disabled students by putting their views forward on panels and campaigning for them across campus.

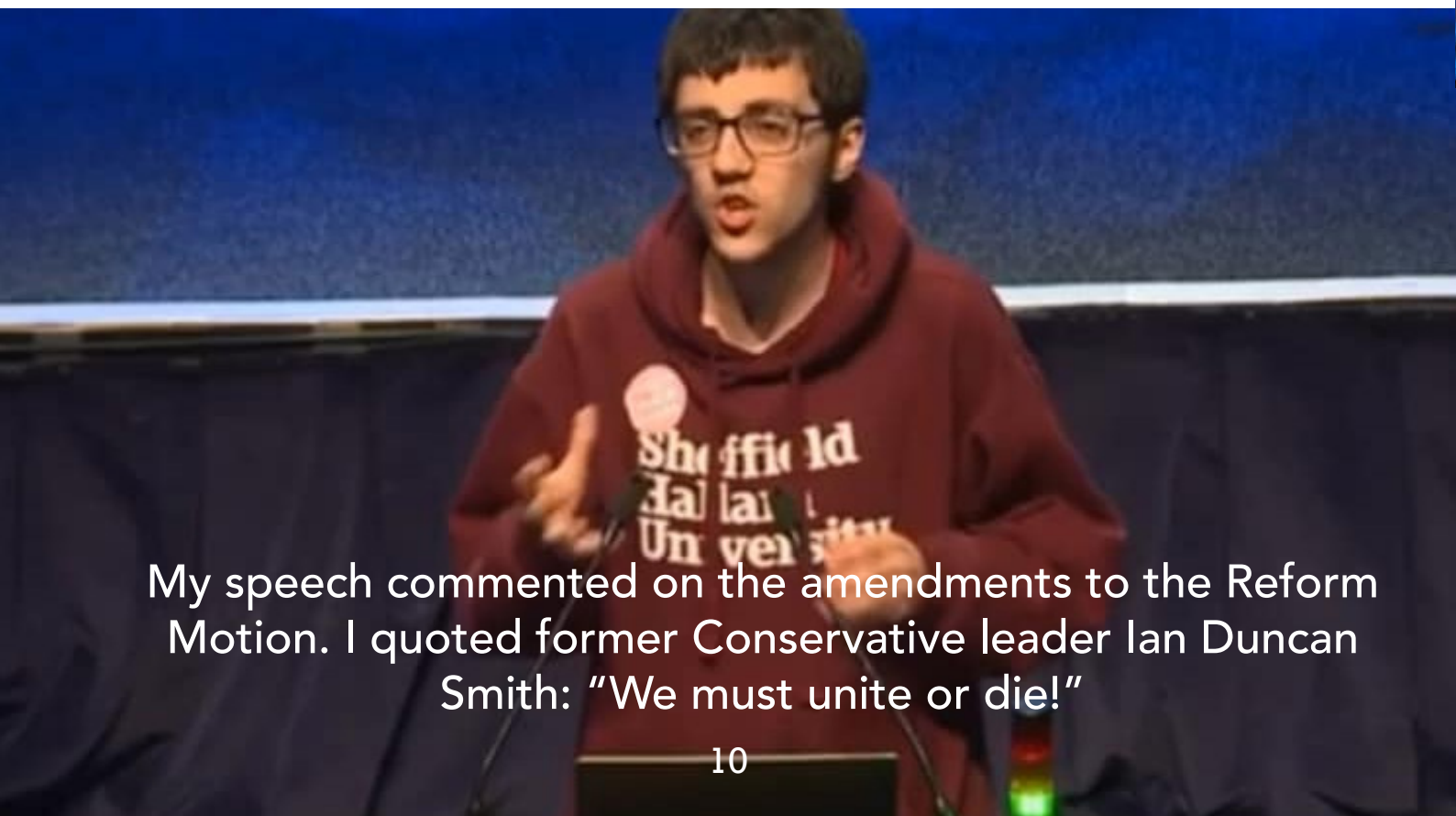
I held this position for two years and many exciting opportunities arose from this including a visit to Parliament for the launch of Disability History Month.



One of the conferences I attended every year as part of this role was the National Union of Students (NUS) Disabled Students Conference in Manchester. This was with other universities and we were involved in national campaigns.

I got elected onto the NUS Disabled Students Committee and in April 2019 I was even chosen to speak at the organisation's national conference in front of 600 people!

The conference was discussing the 3.6 million pound deficit and the way to bridge this. If an agreement had not been reached and passed there would have been catastrophic consequences including the NUS going into administration and bankruptcy.



My speech commented on the amendments to the Reform Motion. I quoted former Conservative leader Ian Duncan Smith: "We must unite or die!"





A personal highlight for me during this time was to represent the National Citizen Service at the march for the 100th anniversary of the Armistice. We gathered on the Mall to hold the two minute silence and then marched past Trafalgar Square and ended at St James Park where there were 10,000 people. We laid wreaths at the Cenotaph.

My biggest highlight, and my most exciting political experience so far, was meeting the current Shadow Secretary of State for Justice, David Lammy. What particularly inspires me about David, is that he always has and always will fight for equality and justice. I felt empowered by the reasons for him being in politics, the representation he has being a member of parliament and the MP for Tottenham, and the way in which he engages with people, particularly those from Black and Ethnic Minority communities and the young.

In 2015 I became a member of the Labour Party. Later that year I started getting involved in campaigning, and a few weeks before the 2015 election I took part in door knocking for the first time.

We spoke to people about supporting the Labour Party and the importance of voting. It was interesting to hear people's different perspectives on politics. People were happy to engage in conversation about it and I learnt a lot!

I had the buzz now more than ever, so I continued to take part in campaigns and joined 6,000 people in a rally in Birmingham two days before the 2017 election.

I had the opportunity to meet our current Labour Leader, Sir Keir Starmer, twice. He was invited to address the Wolverhampton Christmas Do in 2016, and then I joined him in door knocking for the West Midlands Mayoral election in 2017.





# Chapter 3

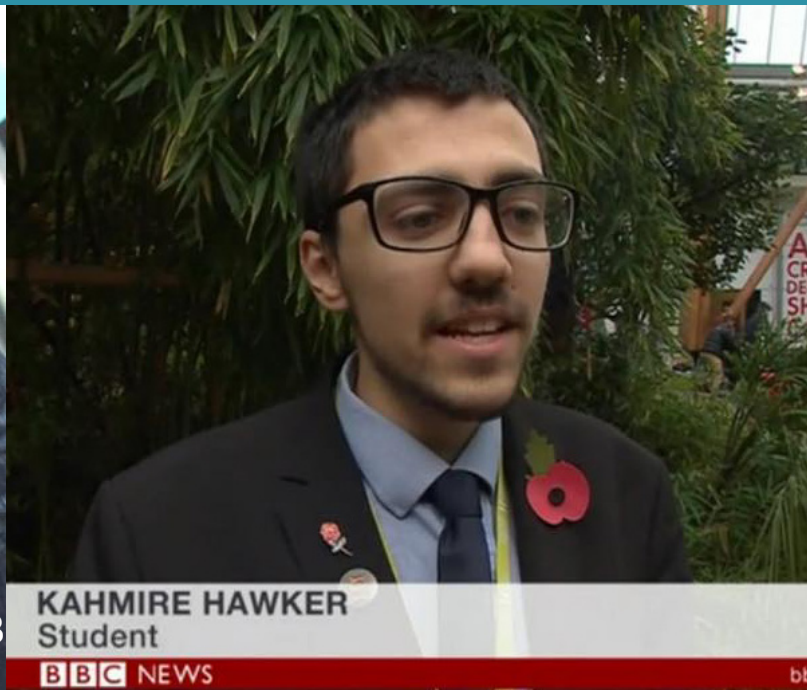
## Working towards my future

After graduating from university I began to think carefully about what I want to do as a career. My work coach has been showing me different options in the civil service and charity sectors. She has been impressed with my CV which has given me confidence to push myself.

But of course, that's not all I have been doing.



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**KAHMIRE HAWKER**  
Student

**BBC NEWS**



Since August I have been on the West Midlands Young Combined Authority Board. As part of this role I attend events, and I even got to speak at the Combined Authority Board in front of the Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, and all the other council leaders.

I updated the Combined Authority Board on the work the Youth Board had been doing such as the West Midlands 2041 paper on the environment which discusses the West Midlands being carbon neutral by 2041.





Alongside this I am also a member of the West Midlands Trains Stakeholder Equality Group where I am involved in improving accessibility on the railways. We will be viewing the new train design soon to give our feedback on its accessibility.

We are also running an accessibility conference to start a discussion around how we can collectively ensure greater accessibility to the railway.

Another of my passions is football so of course I am also a member of the Wolverhampton Wanderers Fans Parliament where I was the first person to go from being a member of the very first youth parliament to being a member of the adult parliament. This parliament ensures there are people scrutinising Wolves' leadership.

One of my favourite past times is watching the team play. So far I have seen them play 99 times! I have even been guest of the club once and I was invited onto the pitch during half time.







“*Kashmire made history as one of the first 2 Young Combined Authority reps to speak at the official West Midlands Combined Authority Board. He has been a passionate advocate for his city, inclusion, and the importance of youth voice. It is clear that Kashmire’s brand of leadership is very much centred on enthusiasm and commitment. Always ready to put himself forward, Kashmire takes a positive approach to both opportunity and challenge – a mindset needed for thriving in a political environment!*”

- Lucy Gosling, Leadership Commission Delivery Plan Coordinator,  
at the West Midlands Combined Authority

Lastly, I was recently short-listed to run for Council for the Labour Party in Wolverhampton! Having this kind of political opportunity while I am still only 22 makes me excited for the things I could do in the future. I hope it also inspires other people.

The last four years of my life have been one heck of a ride! I have become more independent through living away at university, and I have become more of an advocate and a champion for people through my involvement in politics and representative bodies. My hope now is that I can continue this work both in the West Midlands but also hopefully nationally!

I believe if you work hard and stay humble you can achieve. I have seen this has been true in my own life and I believe it is true for anybody.



**No one is too disabled,  
or too affected by  
mental health difficulties,  
to live an ordinary life**

Changing Our Lives

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