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Jillian Haslam: A Story From Slums To Being A Millionaire

"I came from a world of no hope and created a world of unbelievable success. If I can, you can!" These inspiring words of Jillian Haslam truly echo her rare inspirational story of sheer determination and grit. The 43 year-old celebrity author, philanthropist and motivational speaker, Jillian Haslam beat all odds to rise from the dingy slums of Kolkata where she had a nightmarish childhood and adolescence to become a corporate banker in London and later a world famous motivational speaker.

Childhood

Born in India to British parents, Jillian considers herself an Indian and believes that she owes a lot to India. An Anglo-Indian, Jillian was born in 1970 to a British Army Officer stationed at Dum Dum, Calcutta. Expecting a comfortable stay in India just as in the colonial days, her parents chose not to return to England and stay in India.

However, in a sudden turn of fate, the Haslam family was forced to flee in the cover of night to escape the kidnap of their eldest daughter, Donna by a rebel group. Even as the Haslam family escaped from DumDum with little of whatever they could grab, during the train journey, Jillian's father Roland Terrence Haslam suffered a heart stroke and lost his eyesight.

Suddenly, the Haslam family was struck with a tragic calamity, but this was just the beginning of tougher times ahead. While her father recovered from heart attack at the hospital, their financial condition worsened and they could not afford to buy food or shelter. Jillian, along with her mother and sister Vanessa were initially homeless and by time Jillian was six, they took shelter under some shanty stairs from where they later moved to the slums in Kidderpore. Her father once out of hospital did the few odd jobs that he could afford to sustain his family, but it was not sufficient.

Jillian was the fifth of her twelve siblings, four of whom tragically died due to poverty and malnutrition due to abject poverty. The family had to face extreme hardships and endure poverty, starvation and insecurity. Jillian together with her siblings always lived off on charity, often, they had to beg, pick food from garbage.

In an India, which was gradually emerging out of the shadow of colonism, there was resentment among people and therefore, the Jillian's family, being fair-skinned was constantly subjected to severe racism, discrimination and humiliation.

As Jillian recalls in one of her interviews, "As we stood out for our fair-skin, spoke English and wore dresses differently, we were mostly hated by people in the streets we lived." As a young child and through her adolescent, just because she was white-skinned and a girl, Jillian had to experience traumatic sexual abuse and assault at several occasions. As the sisters stood out because of their color and were poor, Jillian recalls that walking from one point to another without being molested was impossible. These experiences and hardships only made her resolute to emerge from the tragic phase in life, even stronger.

Amidst all these hardships and struggles that have befallen on the family, they were a constant support system to each other. While Jillian's father was the rock that supported the family mentally and morally, her mother constantly protected her children. The family stood by one another and together overcame all the tragic times.

The city of Joy, Kolkata too was not completely ruthless too, though; Jillian fondly recalls how their family received considerable support from many people, even strangers. For every hardships and atrocity that the family was subjected to, there were various acts of kindness from the many strangers and well wisher, they came across. This not only restored her faith in humanity for Jillian, but also has been a major influence in her returning to India for her several far-reaching philanthropic efforts.

Jillian always firmly believed that she would rescue herself and the family from the clutches of poverty, despair and insecurity. Therefore after completing her studies at the St. Thomas Girls High School, Kidderpore, while at the young age of 17, Jillian shifted to Delhi to work with a private company and reclaim her life.

Success Journey

Initially, she worked with a German export firm and later grabbed the prized position as the executive assistant to CEO of the Bank of America. Jillian had to compete with more than 250 candidates to land the job. With her dedication and hard work, she gradually rose up to become the President of the Bank of America charity and diversity network.

While at the Bank of America, Jillian received various laurels and award for her commendable work and dedication. She received the International "Bank of America Star Award" for demonstrating overall leadership skills. Jillian also won the International "Service Excellence Award" for her exceptional contribution to the company. Jillian also received the "International Volunteer Award" for her contribution to the community from Bank of America.

After her stint with Bank of America, Jillian then shifted her base to the UK and worked for Morgan Stanley, ABN Amro and the RBS at London.

While at ABN AMRO, Jillian received the "Individual Achievement Award 2006" from ABN AMRO, UK in recognition of her exceptional contribution to the business.

It was also at RBS, that Jillian won her first runner up social and humanitarian award for 2012 Asian Woman of the Year award.

Presently, Jillian is a world famous motivational speaker and trainer, she presides on the board of several charities and heads her corporate training company, called Help You Associates Ltd. Jillian's transformational journey of raising herself and her family, from the clutches of the life of an abject poverty, shadowed with extreme hardships, racism, sexual abuse and humiliation to becoming a world business leader is the stuff legends are made of. It is the result of her strong conviction, courage and determination that Jillian Haslam has overcome extraordinary challenges and now is an incredible inspiration for women across the world.

Her powerful rag to riches life journey has inspired many a Hollywood directors and very soon we shall see a Hollywood movie based on her life on the silver screen. Jillian continues to be actively involved in philanthropic initiatives in India and across the world to help the poor overcome the challenges that face them.

Jillian, thus stands as a powerful living inspiration to the countless women and girls, presently facing poverty or hardships, offering her firm belief, that 'If I can, you can'!

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