

# Lives Lost: Pakistani immigrant helped others in Jersey City

By **Deepti Hajela**  
The Associated Press

**J**ERSEY CITY, N.J. — When a friend of the Khan family got a job working for a New Jersey politician, family patriarch Shafqat Khan was a regular sight at the politician's office, frequently dropping by to seek help for people in need.

It was natural for Khan, a longtime Jersey City resident grateful that he managed to immigrate with his family to the U.S. in the 1980s from Pakistan via Libya. Family members say he spent much of the last two decades finding ways to help other Pakistani immigrants who joined his community just across the Hudson River from New York City.

Khan, who assisted recent immigrants with how to apply for driver's licenses and hosted events for people of different faiths and cultures to understand each other better after the September 11 attacks, died of COVID-19 on April 14 at age 76. He left behind his wife, three children, seven grandchildren, and a legacy of connections.

"He had a very clear sense of what was right and wrong and he could not sit aside if he saw someone struggling, if he could help them he would," said his daughter, Sabila Khan.

It's something Sabila Khan said she is trying to emulate by starting a social-media group for those mourning loved ones lost to the coronavirus so they can connect with each other.

"I really want to believe that I'm carrying on his legacy as best as I can," she said, choking back tears. "I'm trying to be constructive in how I'm grieving and I think my father would be proud."

Khan and his wife always wanted to leave Pakistan for a better life in the U.S. but had relatives in Libya so they headed there first in 1974, where he worked in an administrative job for a pharmaceutical



**LIFE OF SERVICE.** This undated family photo provided by Fizza Khan shows her uncle Shafqat Khan, fourth from left, who died from COVID-19 complications at the age of 76, leaving behind his wife Saida Khanum, shown with their grandson Gabriel Cheng, fourth from right, his daughter Sabila Khan standing next to her husband Brian Cheng, his son Sabahat Khan, third from left, with his wife Gail Mooney holding their son Dublin, far left, his son Shafaat Khan seated next to his wife Nusrat Khusroo Khan, far right, while holding their son Ayaan, second from right. (Fizza Khan via AP)

Khan was eventually diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, the illness that leads to people having problems with walking and balance.

He spent the last year or so at a Jersey City rehabilitation facility and hoped to return home soon, but the rehab center closed its doors to visitors on March 11 as the coronavirus spread.

That was the last time Khan saw any of his direct family — his wife and one of his sons.

Family members called him regularly over the next several weeks but started hearing from him less after being told he had fever.

In early April, a nurse said Khan was suffering from congestion and by April 6 he had been taken to a hospital emergency room, where Sabila Khan said he had to wait three days to get a regular bed.

Family members using FaceTime told him he was loved but saw him with his eyes closed. A nurse told Sabila Khan that he later opened his eyes after that last call.

Since Khan's death, family members have been gratified to hear from people telling them how he helped them adapt to U.S. life.

"This was his life's work and he made it his mission and he helped people every step of the way," Sabila Khan said.

*Editor's note: Hajela reported from Essex County, New Jersey. This story is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from coronavirus around the world.*

company.

That stay ended up lasting longer than the couple had planned and Sabila Khan, the couple's youngest child, was born in Libya before the family of five moved to the U.S. in 1982 and settled in Jersey City.

Khan enrolled in a computer course that was supposed to lead to a job that would allow the family to gain legal U.S. residency. The job never materialized, said Sabila Khan, leading to a difficult period of several years when the family lived illegally and precariously in the country.

"It was hard, my parents tried to shield us a lot from the troubles they had to deal with, we didn't have health insurance ... money was always an issue for them, they struggled a lot," she said.

But Sabila Khan said her father was convinced that the best opportunities for his children were in the U.S. and not in Libya or Pakistan. He landed a job as the general manager of a convenience store with a pharmacy in Brooklyn owned by a person he had tutored years earlier in Pakistan.

That job led to Khan getting sponsorship for himself and his family for legal U.S. residency in the early 1990s and they

became U.S. citizens later that decade.

Khan's daughter said she remembered him constantly working six days a week, leaving home in the morning and returning home at night. Khan eventually eased off his heavy work schedule but was always an avid follower of politics and decided to get more involved with Jersey City's large Pakistani immigrant community.

Just before the September 11 attacks, he started a group called Pakistanis for America, aiming to educate Pakistani immigrants about the U.S. political process while helping register them to vote.

But after the attacks, the group shifted its focus to holding events where leaders "from various religious and cultural backgrounds engaged in honest, open dialogue about the state of things post 9/11, including the stigma that Muslims faced," Sabila Khan said.

Paraphrasing her father, she said he often said that "at the end of the day, we're all working towards the same goals. We want to keep food on the table for our families and we want opportunities for our kids."

## Charged Minnesota cop used "overkill" tactics as nightclub guard

By **Bernard Condon**  
The Associated Press

**N**EW YORK — A white Minneapolis police officer and the black man he's charged with killing both worked as security guards at the same Latin nightclub as recently as last year, but its former owner says she's not sure if they knew each other.

What she is certain of is how aggressive officer Derek Chauvin became when the club hosted events that drew a mainly black clientele, responding to fights by taking out his mace and spraying the

crowd, a tactic she told him was unjustified "overkill."

"He would mace everyone instead of apprehending the people who were fighting," said Maya Santamaria, former owner of El Nuevo Rodeo club in Minneapolis. "He would call backup. The next thing you would know, there would [be] five or six squad cars."

Chauvin became the focus of outrage and many days of street protests across the nation last week after he was seen on cellphone video kneeling on the neck of George Floyd for more than eight minutes during his arrest on suspicion of passing a



counterfeit bill. Floyd died in custody. Chauvin was fired May 26 and arrested May 29 on charges of third-degree murder and manslaughter. The three other officers who took part in the arrest were also fired, and they remain under investigation.

While Chauvin's off-duty job at the El Nuevo Rodeo club stretched over 17 years until a few months ago, Floyd only started working there recently as a bouncer and only worked about a dozen events put on by "African-American promoters."

Santamaria, who sold the venue within the past two months, said she doesn't believe the two men knew each other prior to their fateful encounter the evening of May 25. If Chauvin had recognized Floyd, she said, "he might have given him a little more mercy."

She said Chauvin got along well with the club's Latino regulars, but his tactics toward unruly customers on what she referred to as "African-American" nights led her to speak to him about it.

"I told him I thought this is unnecessary to be pepper-sprayed. The knee-jerk reaction of being afraid, it seemed overkill," Santamaria said. "It was a concern and I did voice my opinion, but

**TRAGIC DEATH.** This February 22, 2019 photo provided by Henry Giron shows George Floyd at Conga Latin Bistro in Minneapolis, where he worked in security. Floyd died in police custody on Monday, May 25, 2020, after an officer knelt on his neck in Minneapolis. (HenrySocialPhotos via AP)

police officers have a way of justifying what they do."

She said she was shocked to see the video of Chauvin pinning Floyd to the ground with his knee, even as Floyd complained that he couldn't breathe.

"I thought he would have more of a conscience," she said. "Even if he is a bit of racist, he's a human being. ... At what point does your humanity overpower your racial bias?"

Thomas Kelly, a lawyer for Chauvin, didn't immediately reply to messages left May 29 seeking comment.

Outside Chauvin's home in Minnesota last Thursday, a message of anger aimed at the former officer was painted in red on his driveway: "murderer."

On Friday, protesters gathered in front of another Chauvin home in Windermere, Florida, which he has owned since 2011 with his wife, Kellie, a Lao refugee, realtor, and former Mrs. Minnesota pageant winner.

Both Chauvin and his wife have registered to vote there, rather than in Minnesota, records show. Chauvin last cast a ballot in Florida in November 2018. His wife's registration is listed as inactive. Both are Republicans.

"I don't mind peaceful protests at all," said Oscar Reyes, who lives across the street in the quiet neighborhood near Orlando. "I hope everything stays safe."

*AP writers Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin, Michael R. Sisak in New York, and Tamara Lush in Windermere, Florida, contributed to this report.*

### DO:

- Go outside
- Stay at least 6 feet from others
- Stay near home

### DON'T:

- Crowd parks or paths
- Drive if you don't have to

# Stay Home Save Lives

