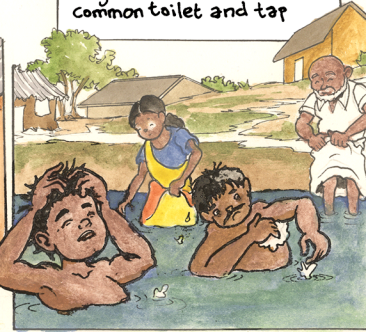


We lived together in my rented wooden house. It was one big room, with no electricity. We used oil lamps for light.



And there was no water. We bathed in the river, and the neighbourhood shared a common toilet and tap



In that house we had two daughters and a son, and ran the business together



Years went by and life was good. But in 1983, the whole country was shaken by the Black July riots...

I was on my way to work when I saw people starting fires in Tamil shops

I saw people set upon and beaten viciously. I hurried to warn my family.



Back at home I took the children and hid with them in the neighbour's toilet block. He was a burgher so I knew the rioters would leave that house alone. We all huddled for hours and listened to the fearful sounds out in the city

Shh



Next morning we sought protection at the police station. We became refugees in our own country.



For six months we were housed in a college building...



I organised the fair distribution of rations to the people there