

## Introduction

Since our last AGM in June 2001, we have continued to uphold our mission to bring families together and fight along side them the threat of deportation. It is the tradition of the National Coalition to provide moral and physical support to individuals and families facing the threat of deportation. We do this by providing them with information on how to campaign and to highlight their plight in the media and to expose the Home Office's appalling way of dealing with people fleeing their country of origin in search of protection under the 1951 Geneva Convention. The UK was one of the first signatories to the Convention and ratified it in 1967. We stand in solidarity with those families and individuals and support their fight for the freedom that should be accorded to every citizen of the world.

## Dispersal and vouchers, its impact on human dignity

The current forced dispersal system under the 1999 Immigration & Asylum Act has left asylum seekers isolated and vulnerable and made them a prime target for racist attacks as we have seen over the past year in the northern part of England and in Scotland. Through tireless campaigning, alongside Oxfam, Save The Children, CCRJ, trade unions and others, we have played a key role in forcing the government to review the voucher system and replace vouchers with cash. We will continue to campaign along with other sympathetic organisations to expose the racist immigration and asylum laws and their effects on deportees and asylum seekers in Britain. We continue to work in campaigns around the country to put pressure on the government to scrap the forced dispersal system that dehumanises asylum seekers.

## Scapegoating of asylum seekers

Media Myths have played a big part in turning the British government against its international duties to protect individuals and families fleeing for protection under the 1951 Convention. A cross section of the British press has scapegoated asylum seekers and refugees and claimed that the British population share these views. These myths have encouraged governments to undermine the Geneva Convention - a vital international agreement offering protection to those fleeing persecution.

What the media fails to present to the public are the



positive things that refugees contribute to our communities. Cities like Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Bristol, London, Cardiff and others have played host to vibrant music and cultural festivals that indicate the wealth of talent brought to the UK by the refugee community. NCADC has been in the forefront and will continue its role to communicate and work with other organisations around the UK to campaign for social justice and against immigration injustice and deportation.

## Community awareness and education

Our co-ordinators and officers have worked hard to provide information and educate groups and local communities and individuals about the negative effects of immigration injustice not only to those who are struggling against it but also for the fabric of our society. This is done through the production of our quarterly newsletters and through the constant updating of our web site. This year has seen more people visiting our web site than ever before. The web site provides up to date immigration statistics and news on changes in immigration legislation and information on how to run campaigns. This is all due to the hard work of our co-ordinators, with the support of the officers and members of the different campaigns. Our contact lists of individuals and organisations supporting anti-deportation campaigns grows ever longer.

## David Blunkett's new Asylum Policy

The government has announced its intention to set up reception / induction centres and four accommodation centres holding 750 asylum seekers each. We are asked to accept that these will not be lock ups - but they leave asylum seekers no choice because if they fail to accept the accommodation, they will not be offered any support and it may even impact on their asylum claim. This means that we will be seeing more asylum seekers held in reception and accommodation centres far removed from local

community support, solicitors with experience in immigration law, their own communities and will leave them isolated and vulnerable to racist attacks as we have seen in mainland Europe over the years.

We have also seen the introduction of the Application Registration Card (smart cards) for asylum seekers. This card will identify and confirm the fingerprints of asylum seekers.

During the passage of the 1999 Immigration & Asylum Act, ministers emphasised the



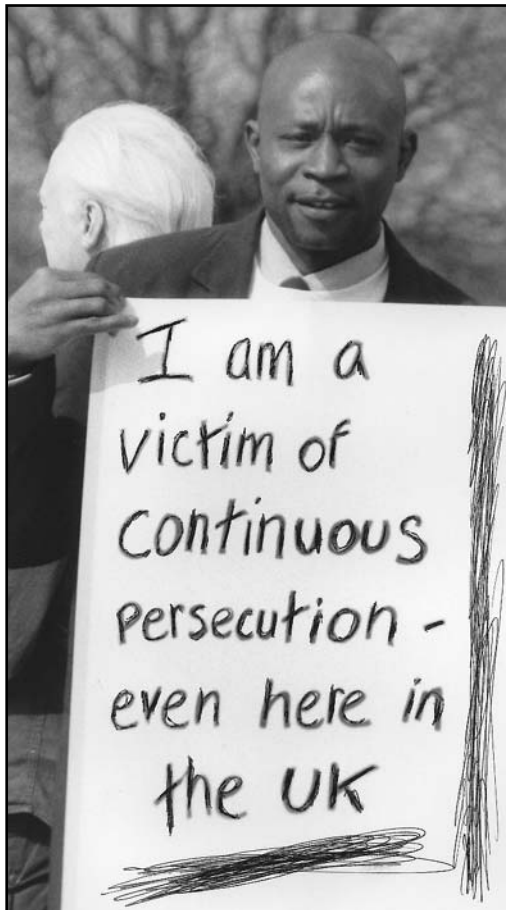
procedural and legal safeguards to ensure that detention would be minimised and in appropriate conditions. Unfortunately, the commitment to reduce the number of asylum seekers in prison seems to have been neglected since many asylum seekers currently are detained in prisons and are subjected to prison regime - perhaps the only crime committed is seeking protection in the UK.

Many of the asylum seekers who reach Britain's shores have already endured oppression and stress in their own countries. In fleeing to the UK many have survived an often unpredictable and perilous journey. Many do not make it as far as Britain, and those who do have shown enormous resilience and strength. Some of these people who make it to these shores go on to be incarcerated, not knowing what will happen to them from one day to the next. Will they be released or will they be deported? For many this has some psychological impact on their well being such as depression, inability to eat and sleep, boredom and frustration which leads to the shameful situation where some detainees commit suicide.

The latest Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Bill, currently before the House of Commons for debate, will see more asylum seekers incarcerated in the so-called induction and accommodation centres. This includes families with young children.

The British Medical Association and Amnesty International have both criticised the British government for holding asylum seekers in detention centres and in prisons. In partnership with Barbed Wire Britain, Close Campsfield Campaign and other local campaigns against detention centres, NCADC are campaigning against this inhuman and unjust practise of holding asylum seekers in detention centres and prisons.

Over the last two decades there has been increasing opposition to immigration controls especially within the migrant communities. This resistance has taken the form of individual campaigns against deportation and for the right of



family reunion. Over the years, campaigns have drawn in wide layers of support, not least from within sections of the trade union movement. Individual campaigns supported by NCADC have begun to challenge the whole racist ideology of immigration control, which depicts asylum seekers and migrants as scroungers, inferior, immoral and as criminals coming into the UK to sponge off the state. But it is also worthwhile to remind the authorities about the positive contributions made by refugees and migrants to the socio-economic development of this nation, that has made Britain so proud of her vibrant multi-cultural diversity.

NCADC has worked to educate members of the public about draconian immigration policies and their effect on migrant communities and to encourage the public to support individual and family campaigns. NCADC's aim has always been to bring those campaigns together to share ideas and support each other in their struggle for freedom. We also create a space where successful campaigners can share their stories and

ideas about running a successful campaign and give current and new campaigns moral support and the notion that campaigns do work.

Some of successful campaigns who have recently won their right to stay:

**Bayo Omoiyola – victory after 9 years**

I must say a special word about the recent victory of the former NCADC chairman, Bayo Omoiyola. Nine long years of campaigning have finally ended in victory for Bayo. In a Human Rights Appeal hearing in Salford on 22nd March 2002, the Independent Appellate Authority Adjudicator, in the presence of Bayo's supporters and NCADC Officers and co-ordinators, ruled in favour of Bayo. The Adjudicator stated that the Home Office decision to deport Bayo would interfere with his family and private life in Liverpool. He further expressed that the extent of Bayo's roots and his family commitments outweigh the technical breach of Home Office rules. It is a major victory for Bayo and all



his supporters and fellow campaigners. Bayo's long struggle and victory serves as an inspiration to other campaigns that victory will be achieved - though it can be a long battle.

**Lata and Devesha - here to stay.**

The Home Office has finally reviewed Lata and Devesha's case and decided to grant them leave to remain indefinitely in the UK. After initially refusing to accept the ruling of the Adjudicator that there were compelling reasons for Lata and Devesha to remain in the UK the Home Office relented. A campaign that was high profile in Manchester and fully supported by NCADC has resulted in another victory. Bravo to Lata and Devesha and the entire campaign. We wish you all well.

**Victory to the Eboka Family.**

After seven years of struggle with the Home Office, the Eboka Family, from Rotherhithe, South London, finally won their campaign to allow their father to stay. Bravo to Sandra and Emmanuel and all supporters of the campaign.

**Ongoing campaigns:**

Although we have successes over the years, we still have more high profile and current campaigns at hand. The struggle continues for our members and we hope and pray that they are victorious. They need all the support they can get from us by turning up to their appeal hearings, meeting with their MPs, writing letters to our MPs on their behalf, signing petitions, getting your trade union involved and providing both moral and physical support to those campaigns. There are campaigns all over the country and our co-ordinators are working tirelessly to provide information and support to them and with nationwide support from our members. Below are some of the current campaigns:

- George & Evelyn Ekontang Campaign
- Mary & Patrick Campaign
- Eduar Beron Campaign
- Illir & Dritan Dauti Campaign
- Smakaj Family Campaign



- John Seegobin Campaign
- Amjad Akhtar Campaign
- Choudhury Family Campaign
- Irina and Nadia Must Stay
- Garzova Family Must Stay

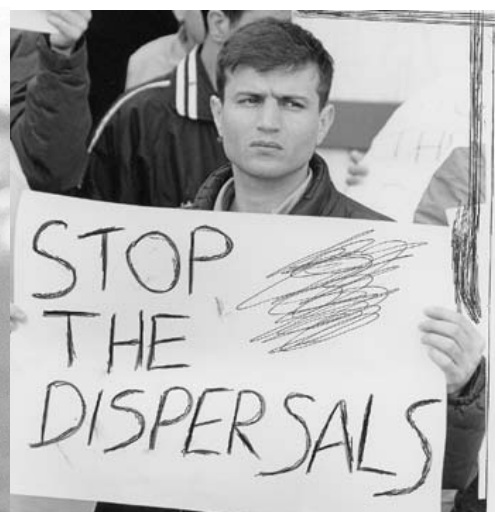
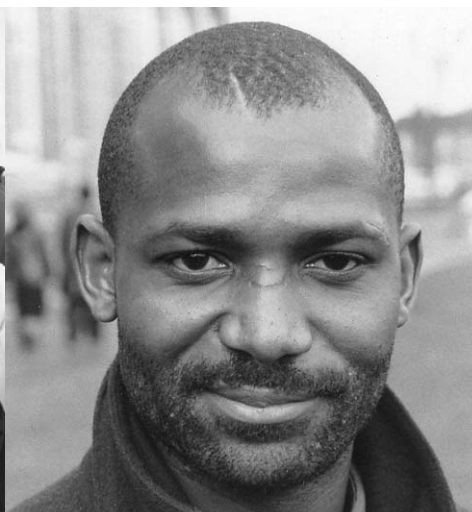
**Immigration 'Snatch Squads' out on the street**

Under pressure to meet removal targets of 30,000 people, Immigration Officers are out on the streets in towns and cities to arrest and detain asylum seekers whose claims have been refused and are still going through appeal proceedings. This move to meet their targets is causing misery to the lives of asylum seekers and their families. It can also lead to the death or injury of those trying to avoid arrest. Joseph Crentsil, a 40 year old Ghanaian fell from his third floor flat in an attempt to escape when his home was raided by police officers and immigration officers on Sunday 25th November 2001. This is not an isolated case. Kwanele Eldah Siziba, 27, fell 150 feet to her death in an attempt to flee from what she believed

to be immigration officers coming to deport her on 27th April 1994. That same year Joseph Nnalue, 31, lost his life on the 23rd October after falling from his second floor flat in Stockwell, South London, when police officers and immigration officers came to his flat to question him about his immigration status. In March 1996 Noorjahan Begum, 35, lost her life after falling 30 feet from the balcony of a flat in Stepney, East London. Two immigration officers called at the flat early on the morning of her death. UK immigration regulation and determination to deport, deter and meet removal targets have cost the lives of the people mentioned above who fled their country of origin to seek protection. Little did they know that such a tragic fate awaited them at the hands of the immigration authorities of the UK.

**Yarl's Wood Detention Centre - Burnt to the ground.**

On 14th February 2002, we witnessed the newly built Yarl's Wood Detention Centre go up in flames. Detainees protested at the mistreatment of an elderly sick detainee being taken to hos-





pital in handcuffs. During the protest, a fire broke out but it is still unknown how the fire started. The detainees believe that it started in the reception area which they do not have access to. The fact remains that detainees' lives were put at risk by the Home Office or Group 4 who failed to abide by Health and Safety Regulations as there were no sprinklers installed in the building. It also emerged that the Home Office ignored advice from Bedfordshire Fire Service that sprinklers should be fitted at Yarl's Wood. NCADC has added its voice to those calling for a full transparent enquiry into the Yarl's Wood fire.

#### Our Funders and Keepers

We wish to extend our profound thanks to all our funders whose support has enabled us to fulfil our aims and objectives. Special thanks to our regular funders – the Community Fund, the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Leigh Trust, Comic Relief and the Allen Lane Trust for funding NCADC's Manchester office. Our core funding from the Community Fund is about to finish and we are calling on charitable trusts for support that will enable us to continue our most needed service to the most vulnerable members of our community. A fresh application for funding has been submitted to the Community Fund and we are awaiting their decision.

We are also most grateful to the many individuals who have supported our work over the years. Your support is vital to our organisation to enable us to deliver this unique service to asylum seekers and other migrants under the threat of deportation.

#### Staff and Management Committee

I want to take this opportunity on behalf of NCADC Officers to thank our three dedicated co-ordinators in Manchester, Birmingham and London for their tireless effort in working with both members and other organisations to meet the needs of individuals and families who are under threat of deportation. There is a steady increase in their case load but they have remained focused in supporting and providing information to those individuals and families experiencing such a threat. My thanks also go to colleagues on the Management Committee for their sacrifice in time and resources in supporting the work of NCADC during 2001/2002. As an organisation we have successfully presented a united front in the fight for justice.

#### The Campaigns

The campaigns are central to NCADC. My thanks and gratitude go to all those who have attended our meetings and shared their life experiences with us, experiences we greatly value. Stories that are told in great pain of their past uprooting and traumatic experiences in their home countries, during flight, and the continuing traumatic experiences faced in the UK. NCADC is privileged to stand by individual campaigns sharing the joys of positive decisions and the sorrows of negative decisions from the Home Office.

My sincere thanks to the North-West Co-ordinator, Officers and members in Manchester and Liverpool for the successful conference to defend asylum seekers in Manchester on 23rd March 2002. The conference was called in partnership with Barbed Wire Britain, Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, and the National Civil Right Movement. NCADC will continue to work with sister organisations to defend the rights of asylum seekers and other migrants.

#### Conclusion

I shall conclude by thanking every member of NCADC for their great support in attending conferences, meetings, and demonstrations and giving solidarity to individual campaigns against deportation. As members of individual campaigns and as asylum seekers, now is the time for us to be out there, standing shoulder to shoulder with our supporters, telling our experiences in order to educate the community on refugee experiences. Quietly you sit, quietly you will be deported.

This AGM will, perhaps, be my last, as I intend to relinquish the post of chair of the organisation for personal family reasons. In September 2001, I was reunited with my long lost family for the first time in eight years. I have missed out on eight years of growing up of my children; now that I have found them, they need me and I need them to start putting the pieces of our experiences together in the healing process of our family. It cannot be done from a distance; therefore I have decided to join them in Canada as they have no intention of relocating to UK.

I intend moving finally in September but will continue to hold onto the good and sad memories we shared together in celebrating the victories of our members and sharing the sorrows of those that lost and were removed. May I also seize this opportunity to thank our co-ordinators and Officers for the support given

to me while chair of NCADC. I hope you will endorse this in good spirit and I wish NCADC the very best of luck in the future. I will continue to cherish the times we shared together.

*Bravo Comrades, keep the fire burning, our organisation is unique and we must keep it that way.*

Alfred Koineh  
NCADC Chair 2001/02

