

RAM BULLETIN

Refugees, Asylum-seekers and the Mass media Project

advice
information
research
& training
on media ethics



Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

No 19, Jul 2002

RAM REVIVED

The RAM Project - which had gone into the doldrums through lack of funding, is to be revived - thanks to a grant from the Home Office!

The project has been short of funds since April, but now looks set to receive fresh funding by September.

The next phase of the project will include efforts to revive local networks and build stronger links between journalists and activists, working closely with the NUJ. Plans include organising local meetings with media representatives around the UK, media training sessions, and the possibility of a rerun of last year's RAM Forum, concentrating on local media.

If you would like RAM to organise meetings/training events in your area please let us know.

Contact ram@presswise.org.uk

RMA – down but not out

The Refugee Media Agency has run out of money and had to close its Acton office.

However, following a meeting with PressWise Director Mike Jempson and NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear, the RMA may get a new lease of life.

Exiled journalists may now become associate members of the NUJ, and obtain free training on NUJ courses, and it is hoped that RMA members will work more directly within the revived RAM Project.

New poll on asylum in the media

A new poll conducted by MORI on the eve of Refugee Week (17 – 23 June), shows that 85% of respondents believe the media

uses negative terms about asylum seekers and refugees.

Two-thirds (64%) said that the media most use the term “illegal immigrant” when referring to refugees and asylum seekers, yet refugees and asylum seekers are not in the UK illegally. Other words commonly associated with media coverage were “desperate”, “foreigners”, “bogus” and “scroungers”.

In sixth place, 20% identified the word “persecuted”. At the other end of the scale, words not readily associated with media coverage and chosen by just 1-2% of respondents were: “skilled”, “talented”, “intelligent”, “hard working” and “welcome”.

The survey also tried to ascertain the British public's attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers and their knowledge about refugees, following on from the Reader's Digest survey of October 2000 which asked ‘Is Britain an Intolerant Nation?’

More details on the current survey can be found at

<http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/refugee.shtml>

Details of the Readers Digest survey are at

<http://www.mori.com/polls/2000/rd-july.shtml>

Oxfam Welsh Media Monitoring

Convened by Oxfam two years ago, the multi-agency Asylum Seekers and Media Monitoring Working Group (MWG) was set up to ensure the Welsh media covered asylum and refugee issues accurately.

The group's aim is to facilitate and co-ordinate both reactive and proactive responses by its members to media coverage of asylum seekers in Wales, to share and exchange information, and to

strengthen the capacity of the Welsh Refugee Council to lead responses to the Welsh media. Over the past two years the group has worked together on a number of projects including publishing the report *Welcome or Overreaction: Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the Welsh Media*; organising a conference for Council Public Relations Officers; helping to organise Refugee Week activities; and working directly with Welsh journalists. The project has now received two years funding from Comic Relief, with additional support committed by Oxfam.

NCADC needs your help...

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) has been bringing together families and individuals fighting deportation since 1995. Ninety per cent of their campaigns have been successful. There are a voluntary organisation providing advice and practical help about campaigning, and run an information network and a well-used website

www.ncadc.org.uk

On account of their opposition to immigration controls, much of their work is seen as “unpopular”. They are not able to register as a charity and access funds through charitable trusts. They have received their main funding for the last three years from the National Lottery Charities Board (now the Community Fund) which expires at the end of May 2002. As their new application to the Community Fund will not be considered until the end of July NCADC is now in financial crisis. They are appealing to their supporters for help. If 750 people donate £10 each month, NCADC can continue its work without

relying on outside funders. They ask that if you cannot donate on a regular basis, then please send a one-off donation.

Contact NCADC, 400 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester M8 9LE

... and contributions to their newsletter

NCADC are looking for contributions to their next newsletter on the subjects of asylum, migration or both. If you have stories that are specific to your local area or want to provide an opinion on new legislation, e-mail ncadc@ncadc.org.uk NCADC are also looking for photos of demonstrations, pickets and families or individuals facing deportation. These can also be e-mailed but must be high resolution.

Articles should not be longer than 500 words, though longer articles will be accepted for the web site. *The deadline for submission is Friday 5 July.*

More contributors wanted

New Internationalist Magazine is looking for writing on the subject "Journey to Britain". Any genre is welcome, poetry or prose, and from any country. Maximum length 2000 words. Payment on publication of £180 per 1000 words, with a higher rate for poetry.

Send completed work to Jennifer Langer

jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk
or at Exiled Writers Ink!, 31 Hallswelle Road
London NW11 0DH

Refugee Week 2002

Another great success for Refugee Week 2002 (17 – 23 June) with more events and celebrations in more places than ever before. Over the next few weeks there are exhibitions going on in Ramsgate, Edinburgh, Sheffield, Swansea, Coventry, Rotherham, Cardiff and Leicester. There are also great music events happening in Southampton, Liverpool, Canterbury and Bexley. In London make sure you see the

Artists in Exile exhibition at the Riverside Studios before it closes on 5 July, and there's a whole range of other exhibitions and performances around the capital. *For more information about events near you, search the event database at*

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/>
If you have something to say about Refugee Week, send your comments to
info@refugeeweek.org.uk

'Big Brother' deportations

David Blunkett has overcome internal Home Office opposition to push ahead with plans to tip off broadcasting crews so that they can record the often harrowing scenes of failed asylum seekers boarding planes. He hopes that the move will deter illegal immigrants who believe they can enter the country with impunity because few people are deported. The filming plan, which was rejected on human rights grounds by Jack Straw, is likely to cause a civil liberties furore. Alan Simpson, the Labour MP for Nottingham South, branded the scheme a "gameshow of deportation". "This is turning everything into a TV spectacular, rather than a serious strategy" he said. "This is a Big Brother gimmick, which plays to the notion of siege mentality and also runs the risk of detracting from the humanity of those who have fled from persecution."

America used to publicise deportations, but gave up the practice because it found it backfired. The "cuffing and stuffing" of illegal immigrants into vans or planes for the trip back to their home country was once a common sight on local TV stations along the Mexican border, but the immigration service no longer permits media coverage because detainees often acted up for the cameras. The plan to televise deportations emerged as Tony Blair urged ministers to "think the unthinkable". Downing Street

admitted that proposals ranging from RAF planes carrying out bulk deportations and mobilising Royal Navy warships to intercept "people traffickers" in the Mediterranean were being considered.

Extract from "Blunkett uses TV to pillory asylum seekers" by Richard Ford and Philip Webster, in The Times 24 May 2002.

To read the full article go to
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/prin/friendly/0,,1-2-306130,00.html>

Fundraiser wanted

Exiled Writers Ink! are looking for a fundraiser to work from their Halleswell Road office in N11. The requirement is for 2 days work per month.

If you think you can help, or would like more information, contact Jennifer Langer on 020 8458 1910 or e-mail

jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk

Volunteering and Asylum Project

Tandem, the communications and research company, are launching a new project about asylum seekers as volunteers and want to hear from organisations that currently have volunteer asylum seekers, or would like to develop this area of work.

The short term project aims to learn from what is going on, share good practice, and encourage volunteering that includes asylum seekers, refugees and others. There will be a conference in October followed by the publication of a handbook of guidelines and experiences. They are looking for feedback from organisations that have asylum seeker volunteers and have a short questionnaire you can download from www.tandem-uk.com, or phone 0113 266 9123 for a printed form.

Applications to attend the conference are also available online from mid July.

Contact tandem direct at: 0113 266 9123 or
ruth.wilson@tandem-uk.com

'PEG' BOARD

Keep your ears and eyes open for events which can provide you, and the media with a 'peg' on which to hang positive stories about refugees or asylum seekers.

Help to set the media agenda by generating stories rather than having to react to theirs.

Keep your media contacts informed about what is happening and why it is relevant for them.

Tuesday 16 July
7.00pm

THE HITLER EMIGRES

Talk by Daniel Snowman, historian and author of a new book 'The Hitler Emigres', exploring the remarkable contribution of the refugees from Nazism to Britain's intellectual and cultural life. Admission £6, concessions £4, includes admission to the Museum Galleries from 6pm.

Venue: The Jewish Museum, Raymond Burton House, 129 - 131 Albert Street, London NW1 7NB
For more info, contact 020 7284 1997 or admin@jmus.org.uk

Wednesday 17 July
9.00am

PICKET THE STAR CHAMBER

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission is authorized to hear evidence in closed session and remains secret, beyond

challenge, just like the notorious 'star chamber' which was abolished in 1641.

The purpose is to hear secret evidence from the Home Office justifying why Britain should continue to intern seven anonymous people, without any criminal charge. This hearing must have public scrutiny, and be used to challenge secret evidence and illegitimate decisions. Venue: Special Immigration Appeals Commission, 15-25 Field House, Brems Building. Nearest tube Chancery Lane
For more info, contact the Campaign Against Criminalising Communities on 020 7586 5892 or knklondon@gn.apc.org

Saturday 20 July
12.00 - 8.30pm

RESPECT 2002

London's free anti-racism festival this year features De La Sou, Stereonation, Pay as U Go Cartel, Misty in Roots, Tony Allen + Ty, Black Twang and many more.

Stages include the Choice FM stage, Mela marquee, London Comedy Festival marquee, UNISON stage and a dance and culture stage. There's also poetry slams, a children's play area, funfair, food, crafts, bars and exhibitions. At last year's festival over 60,000 people celebrated London's cultural diversity and sent out a powerful anti-racist message.

With the rise of the far right in Britain and across Europe, the message of the Respect festival is more essential than ever before.

Volunteers are needed to help publicise and steward the event - contact details below.

Venue: Victoria Park, Grove Road, Tower Hamlets, London E3
For more info, contact 020 7983 6554, info@respectfestival.org.uk or www.london.gov.uk/respect/

Sunday 21 July
9.30am

BRITISH 10K OPEN ROAD RACE

The Refugee Council is looking for runners for the race which first took place last year with over 9000 ran through the heart of London. If you are interested in running, you'll need to pay a non-refundable entry fee of £30 and raise a minimum sponsorship of £150. The Refugee Council will provide a running vest, training tips and lots of advice and support.

For more info, contact Abby Rudland on 020 7820 3135 or abby.rudland@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Sunday 28 July 12.00 - 5.00pm

ISLAMIC CULTURAL FAYRE 2002

Organised with support from Bristol Muslim Cultural Society, a day of exhibitions with a bazaar, exotic foods, rodeo bull, bouncy castle, football

tournament and much more.

Venue: St George Community School, Russell Town Avenue, Bristol

For more info, contact 07973 135 965 or bmcs@bmcs.org.uk

USEFUL WEBSITES

Journalists should always check their sources – and so should you. When quoting facts and figures always indicate your source.

Authoritative information is vital if you want to be taken seriously by the media. Here are some websites you might like to check out.

Exiled Writers

www.exiledwriters.co.uk

MORI

www.mori.com

NCADC

www.ncadc.org.uk

Refugee Week

www.refugeeweek.org.uk

Tandem

www.tandem-uk.com

The Times

www.timesonline.co.uk

Visit the RAM Project website for information, contacts, news and views
www.ramproject.org.uk

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