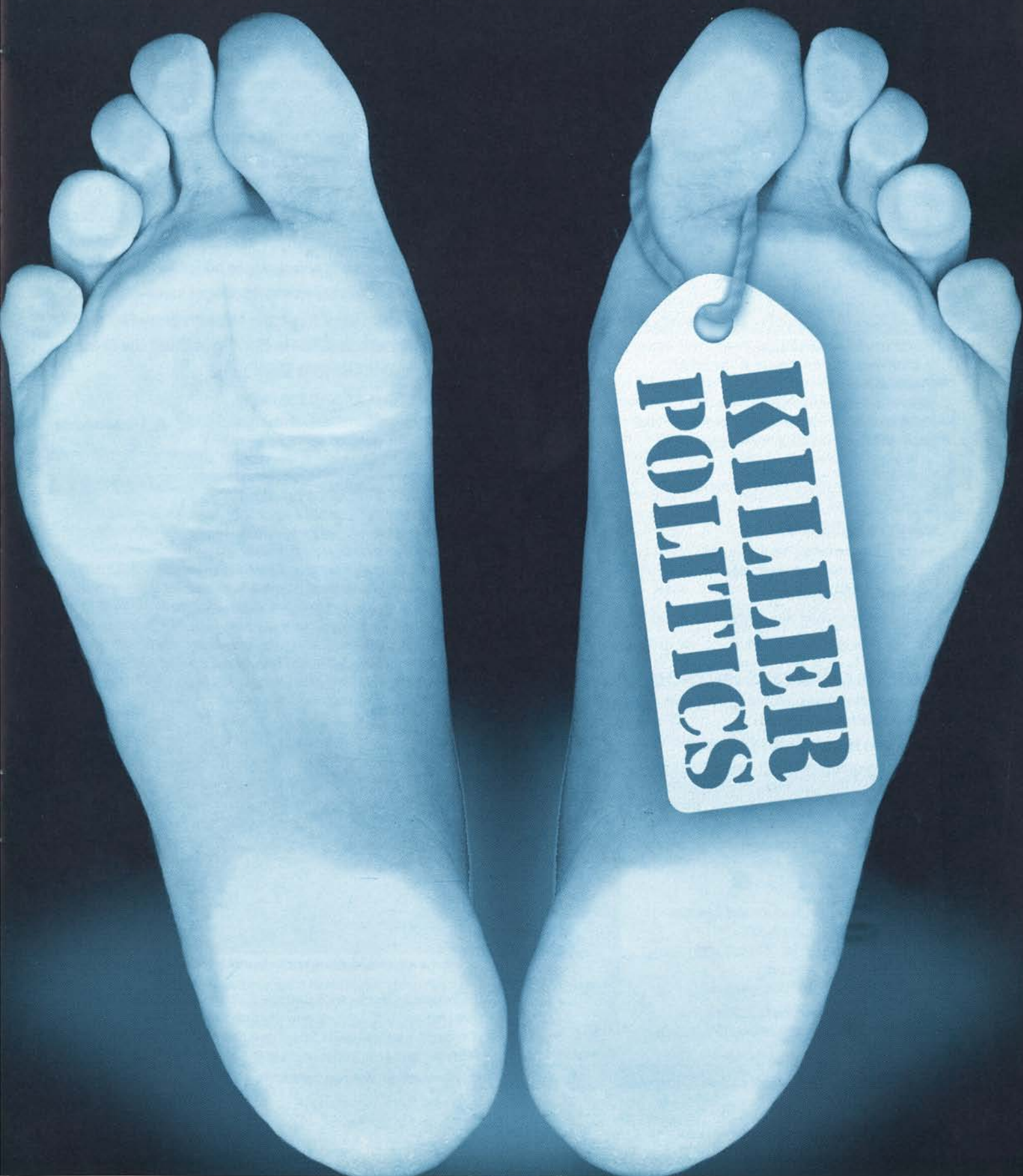


CARF60

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Campaign Against Racism and Fascism

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keynote



THERE is a politics abroad that is killing asylum seekers.

Already the government's policy of dispersal, segregation and voucher-branding had, on the one hand, marked asylum seekers out as targets for fascist violence and, on the other, driven them to the final act of despair. And in the hinterland of those policies has grown up a political discourse at the heart of which are the twin preoccupations of national identity and economic prosperity – or, in Hague-speak, 'giving back our nation to our people' and keeping all our goodies to ourselves. In the process, racism, disguised now as the legitimate fear of strangers and now as its reasonable corollary that they are taking our homes and benefits – our space! – has become woven into a common culture of acceptance. So that the pronouncements of politicians are no longer measured on the touchstone of reason or principle or values. On the contrary, racism itself has come to be measured by the politician's truth. And it is in this climate that the deaths of asylum seekers find their legitimacy.

One death is a death too many.

A. Sivanandan

Protests at Angel Heights and Liverpool

Protests against the living conditions at Angel Heights in Newcastle have once again been silenced by the law. On 18 January, fifteen Afghani residents at the privately run hostel for asylum seekers were arrested after complaining about their accommodation. The arrests came on the day immigration minister Barbara Roche was in town to meet local agencies involved in housing asylum seekers. A picket organised by the North East Campaign for Asylum Rights demanded that Roche meet local asylum seekers. Eventually two asylum seekers were allowed into the meeting.

The seven men arrested in May last year and charged with violent disorder after protests at Angel Heights, are still awaiting trial.



Protesters at Angel Heights asylum hostel in Newcastle during May last year

Meanwhile 27 refugees at a notorious dispersal hostel in Princes Park, Liverpool (see CARF 52) have gone on hunger strike to protest at their living conditions. A spokesman for the refugees said 'We came to England to seek safety but have been treated worse than animals'.

North East Campaign for Asylum Rights, PO Box 787, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE99 1DJ.

ramin khaleghi

Asylum policy kills



Ramin Khaleghi

ON 18 January, 2001, the body of Ramin Khaleghi, a 27-year-old Iranian, was discovered in the so-called International Hotel, a hostel housing asylum seekers in Leicester. Ramin had been a political prisoner in Iran for a number of years, before managing to flee to Britain. Yet the Home Office rejected his claim for asylum, although according to his family, he had medical evidence of the torture inflicted by the Iranian police. One week after learning of his rejection, Ramin took his own life.

Ramin's sense of hopelessness must also have been fuelled by the living conditions in the International Hotel. Residents have for several months been complaining of the conditions in the hostel, a run-down former hotel in the city centre currently housing around 400 asylum seekers (see *CARF* 58). They complain of severe problems of hygiene, inadequate heating, poor food. Residents also face hostility from some sections of the local population. Most of the residents have been forced, like Ramin, to leave behind family and friends in London and live in Leicester, as a result of the government's misconceived dispersal policy.

Ramin's death comes at a time when claims for asylum from Iranian refugees are getting less and less of a hearing from the UK authorities, despite widespread awareness of the oppressive nature of the Iranian regime. As leading immigration barrister Frances Webber pointed out: 'Ramin's tragic death appears to be a direct result of the Home Office practice of wilful and callous rejection of asylum claims from Iranians, no matter how clear, strong and compelling they are.'

As asylum seekers at the International Hotel heard the news of Ramin's death, many decided to camp out in the hostel's lobby area in protest at the death of their friend. On 19 January an emergency meeting was held at the



Asylum seekers meet at the International Hotel following Ramin Khaleghi's death

hostel to commemorate Ramin's death and to try to organise a campaign for justice. Two of Ramin's uncles travelled up from London for the meeting, which was attended by 200 hostel residents. The management of the hostel first tried to prevent the meeting from taking place and then sought to prevent journalists and a cameraman from entering.

At the meeting, Ramin's uncle said he believed his nephew had been killed by the Home Office, and demanded an inquiry into his death. 'We want to stop these tragic deaths from happening again,' he said. Bongie Mpofu, a Zimbabwean refugee, demanded an immediate end to deportations:

'We have lost a young man. He told his friends that he would not go back to Iran alive. Is it a crime to ask for the right to live? A deportation order has become as good as a death sentence. We demand to be treated as human beings.' She also pointed out the dangers of putting 400 people in a single hostel, where asylum seekers are subjected to 'mental torture' and become easy targets for racists. Many residents of the hostel identified with Ramin's situation, and some even showed to the meeting the scars of their own self-inflicted wounds.

A demonstration took place in Leicester city centre on 3 February. ■

Campaign demands

■ An opportunity for the Khaleghi family to meet Barbara Roche, Immigration Minister, to make their concerns known.

■ An immediate improvement in the living conditions of asylum seekers in the Leicester International Hotel.

■ A public inquiry into the circumstances which led to the death of Ramin, including an investigation into the effect of the Home Office dispersal policy and the impact of rejecting well-founded asylum claims.

Leicester Civil Rights Movement: call Priya on 0116 253 1053.

International Federation of Iranian Refugees, PO Box 27236, London N11. Tel: 07730 107 337 Fax: 0870 129 4167 E-mail: ifir@ukonline.co.uk Web: www.hambastegi.org



Mike Thompson

Mike Thompson

killer politics

The season of goodwill? The month around Christmas 2000 revealed a level of racism hitherto practically unknown in the UK: politicians playing the race card, papers headlining the asylum threat, decomposing bodies found in fields below flight paths, stabbings and assaults. But the most frightening thing about it all was the way in which this whole panoply of racism went unremarked and uncontested as though it were part of everyday life in the new millennium.

Blink and you would have missed the report on BBC Network Southeast that an Asian male had been found dead in a suspected racial attack near Hornchurch; bang the oven door on those mince pies and you wouldn't have heard the single news announcement about a murder in Middlesbrough. Worse, no connection was being made between the surge in racial violence (principally against asylum seekers but spilling over into the whole black community) and the highly charged racial atmosphere created by Hague, Widdecombe and Heseltine and shadowed by the media.

Working on two fears

There were essentially two themes being played out nationally: fear of asylum seekers and fear of crime. The first intimated that asylum seekers were flooding the country, the second that crime was rife in black areas (or black crime rates were high) because of Macpherson's recommendations. As one theme reached a crescendo and died away, the second theme took over. And no politician attempted to restore any rational perspective to the debate, save Simon Hughes (who was partly forced into action by the proximity of his constituency to the site of both the killing of Damilola Taylor in Peckham and the stabbing of a Turkish asylum seeker).

In fact, one could say that it was the government which opened the Christmas affray, having decided that it had done its bit on institutional racism and eager not to cede any ground to the Tories where toughness on asylum seekers was concerned. In the second week of December, paper after paper reported how the government was tightening up procedures to prevent the hordes of would-be asylum seekers making their

way across the channel from Europe. P&O Stena ferries began to search cars as well as lorries leaving Calais. Immigration officers were stationed in Calais, Lille and Paris to stop 'illegals' from attempting to enter Britain through the Channel Tunnel rail link.

Broadcasting racism: chronology

- 9.12.00** Mail: 'Cars to be searched for illegal immigrants'
- 10.12.00** Sunday Telegraph: 'Migrant squad to operate in France'
- 10.12.00** Independent on Sunday: 'Immigrants find a secret back door'
- 14.12.00** Hague attacks Macpherson report for contributing to lack of police and increase in crime
- 16.12.00** **Daniel Herbert stabbed in west Sussex**
- 17.12.00** Sunday Mirror: 'Find the seekers'
- 23.12.00** Times: 'Record surge in asylum seekers'
- 23.12.00** **Safraz Khan killed in Rotherham**
- 23.12.00** **Cumali Sinangili, Turkish asylum seeker, attacked in Southwark**
- 27.12.00** Widdecombe 'would lock up all asylum seekers'
- 29.12.00** **Man dies after arson attack on Cypriot shop in Stoke on Trent**
- 31.12.00** Observer reports dispersed asylum seekers come back to London because of racist violence
- 31.12.00** Heseltine declares bogus asylum seekers are cheating British people
- 2.1.01** **Djamale Daikha dies after attack in Soho**
- 7.1.01** Mail on Sunday: 'Ban new asylum seekers now, say 44 percent of Britons'
- 7.1.01** **Gian Singh murdered in suspected racist attack**

1976

'Race hate and race violence does not rise and fall according to the number of immigrants coming into Britain. It rises and falls to the extent to which people's prejudices are inflamed and made respectable by politicians and newspapers.' Paul Foot

2000

'When politicians like William Hague and Ann Widdecombe pillory individuals and groups such as asylum seekers, the greater the chance that other people will think they can join in, not just with words but with violent actions.' Simon Hughes MP

Hague gets in on the act

But then on 14 December, William Hague, in a speech to the Centre for Policy Studies, enunciated the second anxiety. The Macpherson report's recommendations had contributed to a collapse in police morale and recruitment. There was a crisis on the streets, evidenced in a rise in robberies and more violent crime, because police no longer dared to stop and search black people. In fact, Hague continued the next day, Damilola Taylor's death on 30 November could be attributed to the fall in police numbers caused by the fall in morale and therefore fall in recruitment – all caused by Macpherson. (To see where Hague's line actually came from see CARF 59.)

Even as Hague was being rebuked by everyone from Damilola's parents and Neville Lawrence to CRE head Gurbux Singh, another young black boy was fighting for his life. On 16 December, 13-year-old Daniel Herbert was attacked by a white group and left for dead in a pool of blood on his street in Littlehampton, west Sussex. His family had recently moved to the south-east because of the racial harassment they had faced in Scotland.

The next week the media were back on the asylum seeker theme. 'Find the seekers: £15 billion bill for asylum families...and where they live' came from the *Sunday Mirror*, which kindly provided figures by local authority area with the proviso that not every authority filed its figures, so that the total was actually much higher. And on 23 December, as the Home Office published its monthly figures, many other papers joined in the refrain that a record number of asylum seekers had come to Britain.

The very next day 41-year-old Cumali Sinangili, a Turkish asylum seeker, was set upon by three white racists leaving a local pub as he left work at a Southwark restaurant and made his way home. He is still seriously ill in hospital after suffering severe head injuries. The night before, Sarfraz Khan, a 30-year-old taxi driver, was stabbed repeatedly and then burnt to death in his cab by white passengers he had picked up in Rotherham.

No connections made

Still, no-one made a connection between the heightened racial climate and the spate of racial killings. In Rotherham, too, there was a particular local dimension. For months a battle had been raging as to whether Safe Haven should be allowed to open a hostel for 30 asylum seekers at Wath-upon-Dearne, outside Rotherham. Local residents had protested about the potential crime, social disorder, child abuse

DANIEL HERBERT



Two white women were charged on 17 December 2000 with the attempted murder of 13-year-old Daniel Herbert. This black schoolboy was found lying in a foetal position, unconscious, with multiple wounds and covered in blood, in a Sussex street on 15 December. He was taken to the intensive care unit of Guy's hospital where he remained critically ill.

DJAMALE DAIKHA

In the early hours of New Year's day, 38-year-old Algerian businessman Djamaile Daikha had his throat slit in a racial attack. He died two days later at St Thomas' hospital. Out with his African wife for a celebratory meal, he was knifed twice by a black man who started an argument, involving racist abuse, about Daikha's 'mixed marriage'. The police, who are treating this as a racially motivated murder, were looking for a man, thought to be African, seen running from the area just after the attack in London's Soho.

CUMALI SINANGILI



A 41-year-old Turkish asylum seeker who had lived in Britain for two years was left fighting for his life after an unprovoked attack in Bermondsey, south London on Christmas Eve night. He had been beaten round the head and stabbed in the eye in what police described as a 'gut-wrenching attack'. Police, who had been looking for three white men who had been thrown out of a local pub earlier that night, have arrested and bailed five people in connection with the attack.

SAFRAZ KHAN



Rotherham taxi-drivers have raised a £1,000 reward to catch the killer of their colleague Sarfraz Khan, who was stabbed six times with a hunting knife by one or more passengers. His body was found in his Ford Mondeo, which had been set alight at an isolated nature reserve in Rotherham in the early hours of 23 December. A woman told police she had witnessed an argument that night between an Asian driver and two white males – one of whom had blood on his shirt. Local taxi drivers are very worried for their safety as, earlier in December, another Asian driver was robbed and stabbed in the area.

and drug addiction they believed would come from such a hostel. After public meetings, petitions and campaigns, the planners kow-towed to 'the level of perceived fear' and refused permission. Did the poison linger in the air? Sarfraz was the second Asian man to be attacked in the area in the course of one month.

Meanwhile, Christmas goodwill sat ill with Christian Ann Widdecombe. With festivities out of the way, she was back on the asylum theme on 27 December, this time to declare that, after all, the Tories would lock up every asylum seeker – as a deterrent. (Perhaps she upped the ante because the prison service had already reported that Labour was preparing to detain asylum seekers at eight more prisons.) And as for taking responsibility for creating the climate in which violence flourished, taking a leaf out of her master's book, the problem, she explained, was caused by a lack of policemen on the beat.

Racism: the voice of reason

Then on New Year's Eve came a new dimension. The intervention came this time, not from hard-liners Widdecombe and Hague, but from One Nation Tory Michael Heseltine – presumably to deflect criticism of the Tories for playing the race card. Citing all his liberal and multicultural credentials, this former deputy prime minister told the BBC's 'World This Weekend' programme that bogus asylum seekers were cheating British people out of access to housing and health services. 'Let us not mince our language here... a large number of those seeking asylum are cheats...'

Heseltine was not coming out as an overt racist, but just as Hague had done on the issue of crime, he was posing as an eminently reasonable, even righteous man concerned to speak out about people's genuine fears. It was his duty to point out that our economy was being raided.

Heseltine's comments, reported in full in all the papers next day, were full of untruths. Asylum seekers are not living in homes that would have gone to local people. Asylum seekers have no access to welfare benefits. But on the face of it his remarks appeared plausible and, because the government has already managed, through a mixture of policy and rhetoric, to brand asylum seekers as bogus, no-one bothered to establish the truth.

But this seemingly acceptable, speaking-up-for-our-own brand of racism soon had its own fall-out. On the second day of the year Djamale Daikha, a 38-year-old Algerian, died after being stabbed in Soho by an African who had made racist remarks about his mixed marriage. And five days later London detectives were mounting yet another murder hunt after 36-year-old Gian Singh was found dead from head injuries outside Elm Park Tube station.

What is new

'Race hate and race violence does not rise and fall according to the number of immigrants coming into Britain. It rises and falls to the extent to which people's prejudices are inflamed and made respectable by politicians and newspapers.' Veteran anti-racist reporter

HULL COUNTS THE COST

One place where the link between the presence of asylum seekers and a spate of racist attacks is most clear is Hull. It is only in the past year that Hull has taken in asylum seekers – around 1,000, mostly Kurds from Iraq. In that time racist attacks – ranging from graffiti to assaults – have risen from a handful in 1999 to 90 in just a five-month period last year. One racially motivated attack per day is now being reported to the police. Most of the victims are asylum seekers but attacks are taking place on members of Hull's settled black community too. Victim Support, Hull Community Safety Unit and local councillors are all concerned about the racist violence.

'Almost every Kurd I have spoken to in Hull,' said a member of Hull Asylum Seekers' Support Group, 'has experienced an assault.'

The *Hull Daily Mail* has taken a strong stand against the 'bigotry which shames our city'. In December its editorial expressed 'disgust that these visitors... should be abused in their adopted city.' And, instead of echoing the protectionist fears of local residents or presenting alarmist figures of asylum incomers, as other papers are doing, it solemnly rebuked the 'ugly, bigoted attitude' which 'brings disgrace upon the city of Hull', calling on right-thinking citizens to counter the intimidation with warm hospitality and to report violence to the police. ■



An alliance of black organisations take to the streets in the 1960s to protest to Commonwealth leaders about British racism and imperialism

Paul Foot explained this a quarter of a century ago when, on a 'What the Papers Say' programme, he revealed the relationship between press scare-mongering over the entry of a few Asians from Malawi and a rise in violence. So what we are experiencing now is not new. What is new is the reaction – or lack of it.

In 1968 Enoch Powell was sacked from Edward Heath's Tory government for his inflammatory remarks. Today it is the leader of the Tory party and his henchmen who are doing the inflaming. But because the discourse has changed and their remarks masquerade as concerned fears – of crime or of scroungers – it has somehow made racism part of a culture of acceptance.

In the mid-1970s, when Foot was writing, there were mass protests at any killing or serious attack. Almost every week there would be a local demonstration outside a police station demanding better protection or a mobilisation against state racism. There was then a whole infrastructure of local anti-racist anti-fascist committees and national mass organisations (from Indian Workers' Associations to trades union branches) which could, at a week's notice, mobilise thousands of people to move into an area over one case. And local communities such as Southall, Brick Lane and Newham began to organise their own protection till their areas became impregnable.

Today, as CARF has reported before, the government's policies of dispersal have broadcast racism, and so attacks are taking place in new areas, on members of new communities or where black people are isolated and visible. And, worst of all, people are being trained not to see their contempt for asylum seekers as racism at all. ■

a tale of two countries

Two reports, telling completely different stories, have recently been published on the UK's asylum system.

The first, on the health and well-being of asylum seekers and refugees, and produced by David Woodhead for the King's Fund, shows how damaging dispersal and the non-cash benefits voucher system are. It gives evidence for things we already suspected: that substandard accommodation and vouchers at 70 per cent of income support, which leave refugees hungry and in need, create health problems. Dispersal, isolation and the voucher system contribute to the marginalisation and harassment of asylum seekers. Worse, those refugees who arrive in Britain with physical or mental health problems are being ignored. And those who arrive here in good health and with high expectations are soon made ill – often suffering from anxiety and depression – because of restrictions imposed on them and the racism meted out to them. 'From the moment that asylum seekers and refugees can legitimately demand support and care when fleeing their homes to escape war, conflict and torture, they are subjected to a system that leaves them unsure, impoverished and unhealthy.' Young asylum seekers are particularly at risk.

The report shows how the government has neglected to ensure that the NHS can tackle the health needs of asylum seekers, who often fall between two stools: their needs cannot be met by GPs and yet they do not receive psychiatric intervention. The King's Fund demands the end of the voucher system and a dispersal 'in tune with the ability of communities to support new arrivals', and makes a strong case for the urgent need for more research in this field. And why, it concludes, does the government's social inclusion agenda exclude this group of people?

Why indeed? Can the second report tell us? It is, after all, called 'Full and Equal Citizens', and subtitled, 'a strategy for the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom', and it is produced by the Home Office. There is not a whiff in this publication (report is too complimentary a word) of the world the King's

Fund is exposing. No, this is a vacuous PR document, not addressing the position of the thousands of insecure asylum seekers awaiting the decision of the Home Office, but only of the minority who are lucky enough to have obtained refugee status or exceptional leave to remain. And there is, despite the subtitle, no strategy enunciated here. There are platitudes: being 'proud of this country's tradition of providing a safe haven' (Barbara Roche) and there are clichés about how 'to help refugees develop their potential'. All else is just a statement about existing arrangements for housing, education, employment etc.

Presumably, because the government has come under criticism from the non-governmental sector for its harsh record on asylum, this document is a way of repairing its image. Image it is: full colour, snazzy design, minimal text, lots of white space. The pictures of refugees, all by Howard Davies whose excellent photos have graced this magazine and that of the Refugee Council, have been oh so carefully chosen. They depict happy, usually smiling faces: a woman with beautiful intricate jewellery, a man with an intensely intelligent gaze. Would that all the money wasted on this document could have gone to prevent just one desperate asylum seeker's suicide attempt. ■

**Integrated?
Images of refugees
in the Home Office
report are an
unwitting reflection
of policy**



The health and well being of asylum seekers and refugees is available from the King's Fund. http://www.Kingsfund.org.uk/health_and_well-being.html

Full and equal citizens: a strategy in the integration of refugees into the United Kingdom is published by the Home Office and available from NASS, 30 Wellesley Road, Croydon.

punitive targets

The Home Office is aiming almost to double the number of immigrants and asylum seekers it detains and more than double the numbers it removes from the country. According to plans published in January, more than 2,000 detention places will be used this year. The Home Office currently has places for 1,350 detainees and last year, about 1,100 people were detained at any one time.

Its plans for getting rid of people are even more ambitious. Last year 12,000 people were removed as overstayers, illegal entrants or failed asylum seekers. This year, the plan is to remove

30,000. Under the factory system of dealing with asylum claims, there is a fair chance that a few thousand of these will be asylum seekers whose claims have never been examined. Over one-third of asylum seekers are currently refused asylum for 'non-compliance' – in other words because they did not complete in English and return a 19-page SEF (Statement of Evidence Form) in the ten working days allowed. A fair proportion of those will not have an appeal, because through the vagaries of dispersal they haven't received their refusal notices, can't get legal representation or can't get to the appeal hearing. ■

asylum deaths no cover up

Deportation, detention and dispersal are claiming the lives of more asylum seekers across Europe. But instead of reviewing asylum policy, governments are intent on covering up the truth.

Delaying tactics

After **Xhevdet Ferri**, a 25-year-old Albanian asylum seeker, died on 12 October at the Steenokkerzeel detention centre 127 bis, near Brussels, Belgian interior minister Antoine Duquesne said that, although he would not prejudge an investigation by the Brussels public prosecutor's office, he had complete faith in the system at the detention centre. His arrogance and complacency are not surprising. Already the Belgian government has been criticised by Amnesty International for the inordinate length of time it has taken to conclude the investigation into the deportation death of Nigerian asylum seeker **Semira Adamu** in September 1998. The investigating magistrate completed a judicial inquiry in February 2000. But a year later, the public prosecutor is still sitting on the report, refusing to confirm whether manslaughter charges will be brought against the three gendarmes involved. Meanwhile, the Belgian League of Human Rights has asked the examining magistrate to investigate two former interior ministers in connection with possible manslaughter charges, since they were responsible for the introduction and implementation of the 'cushion technique' as an authorised method of restraint during forced

deportations such as that of Semira Adamu.

A similar picture of deliberate procrastination emerges in Switzerland, where a West African asylum seeker awaiting deportation hanged himself at the beginning of the year in a detention centre in Schaffhausen. The authorities have so far



**Stop the
criminalisation
of refugee
support**

In the late 1990s, German anti-racists launched a campaign to stop the criminalisation of German taxi-drivers under aiding illegal entry laws. The cabbies were being arrested simply for picking up foreigners in areas of Germany close to the border. Some served terms of imprisonment of 18 months or more. Then, fourteen months ago, in December 1999, a leading German anti-racist, Harald G, who was active in the taxi-drivers' campaign, was arrested as anti-terrorist police raided the headquarters and homes of asylum campaigners (see *CARF* 48 and 54). Harald G's trial under Germany's notorious anti-terrorist laws is



imminent. Under proposals now being discussed by ministers from the fifteen EU countries, asylum campaigners could face similar treatment all over Europe.

Meeting in Nice at the end of November 2000, EU ministers approved French plans to draft tough laws which would criminalise anyone who 'assists or tries to assist' non-EU citizens to 'enter or move in breach of national laws'. Penalties of ten years' imprisonment or more are suggested for serious cases. The plans are said to be part of ministers' campaign against 'trafficking', a word usually associated with the importation of women and children for sexual exploitation. But the proposed law is not restricted to such traffickers. Neither is it restricted to commercial smugglers and criminal gangs. Ministers of some countries argued against penalising those who assist illegal entry for



shown little concern, despite the fact that a judicial investigation into the deportation death of Palestinian **Khaled Abu Zarifeh** at Zurich-Kloten airport in March 1999 was completed only in January 2001. A year earlier, a forensic report had confirmed that the Palestinian suffocated because his mouth was taped with sticky tape to prevent him from shouting. The news that three Bern police officers and a doctor have been charged with homicide by negligence would be heartening were it not for the authorities' indication that, even if the accused are found guilty, the maximum penalty will be a five-month suspended sentence.

The Hungarian authorities have still not announced what action they propose to take following the death of Cameroonian asylum seeker **Ebune Christian Ecole** at Budapest airport in December. Ecole collapsed shortly after an airline pilot stopped his forced deportation by refusing to take him on board. Official reports claim that Ecole's death was due to a combination of heart failure, panic and stress, but the International Helsinki Federation claims that he was beaten after being taken to the airport handcuffed and chained.

Flawed investigations

At least in the Netherlands, an angry parliamentary debate resulted when the Dutch embassy in Ankara tried to mislead parliament about the death of Kurdish conscientious objector Suleyman Aksoy, after his deportation to Turkey. After justice minister Job Cohen repeated an inquiry's conclusion that Aksoy had committed suicide after his arrest and forcible conscription, Turkish human rights organisations exposed the inquiry as flawed at a press conference in the Hague. They reasserted the belief that Aksoy was one of 40 Kurds known to have died after violence at the hands of the Turkish army in which they refused to serve.

Establishing medical neglect

CARF and the National Civil Rights Movement believe that the only fair inquest verdict possible on the death of the Iranian **Ramin Khaleghi** would be that his suicide was brought about by the institutionalised negligence of the Home Office. In Europe too, the state's denial of medical care for asylum seekers is

central, emerging in questions such as: Why is there no proper screening of torture victims on their arrival to the west? Why do states refuse to acknowledge the psychological cost of dispersal, as asylum seekers, cut off from their communities and uncertain about their future, become depressed and suicidal? And why are state-employed doctors passing traumatised asylum seekers as fit for deportation and certifying as safe life-threatening restraint measures such as taping the mouth? After **Naimah S**, an Algerian asylum seeker, committed suicide in May 2000 in the transit holding centre at Frankfurt am Main airport in Germany, AI raised with the authorities important questions (as yet unanswered) about her medical treatment. The holding centre had previously been criticised by the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture for its lack of medical screening for torture victims. This vulnerable

List of deaths

May 2000 United Kingdom	Glynis Cowley, South African mother of three, commits suicide after her asylum claim is rejected
May 2000 Germany	Naimah S, Algerian asylum seeker, commits suicide in the transit holding facility at Frankfurt am Main airport
August 2000 Belgium	Xhevdit Ferri, 25-year-old Albanian asylum seeker dies after attempting to break out of refugee detention centre near Zaventem airport, Brussels.
September 2000 Germany	Mongolian man, fearing deportation, dies in escape attempt from custody in Köpenick
October 2000 Germany	Russian man, fearing police detection and deportation, dies after leaping from a train in Schwarzenbeck district, Duchy of Lauenburg
December 2000 Germany	Tamil asylum seeker Arumugasamy Subramaniam awaiting deportation commits suicide in Hannover-Lagenhagen detention centre
December 2000 Hungary	Ebune Christian Ecole, Cameroonian asylum seeker, 30, dies following failed deportation attempt at Budapest airport
January 2001 Switzerland	West African asylum seeker hangs himself in deportation custody in Shaffhausen
January 2001 United Kingdom	Ramin Khaleghi, Iranian asylum seeker, commits suicide...

humanitarian rather than commercial motives, but there is no exemption for humanitarian motives in the proposed legislation. Even the exemption for those smuggling in their own husbands and wives, included in an early draft, was excised from the draft ministers saw in Nice. And while some ministers said it was vital to respect the activities of humanitarian organisations who give voluntary assistance to illegal immigrants, their objections appear to have gone unheeded.

The wording of the proposed laws is extremely vague. This would give national governments and courts the power to decide who should and should not be penalised. But it evokes the possibility of punitive police raids against organisations of sans-papiers, refugee groups such as the Iranian, Iraqi and Kurdish refugee organisations in the UK, and solidarity groups critical of government policies on

asylum and on illegal entry, such as the Civil Rights Caravan, which provide legal, social and political support.

Under UK law, it is not an offence to bring asylum seekers to the UK to enable them to claim asylum, so long as they are not smuggled in, and so long as it is not done for profit. But it is a criminal offence to 'facilitate' the entry of illegal entrants, regardless of motive. Individuals who hide an asylum seeker in the boot of their car, or in their van, caravan or lorry, are frequently sentenced to a year or more in prison despite having acted out of compassion. Attempts to launch a campaign to stop this use of the criminal law against humanitarian smugglers have so far failed.

Campaigners need to heed the warning of Nice, to ensure that solidarity and support for undocumented migrants and refugees is not further criminalised. ■



young woman had actually suffered a nervous breakdown when she was placed at this holding centre in February and had to be hospitalised. After her release from hospital, she asked to be taken back to Frankfurt, only to commit suicide two days later. Then, in December 2000, another asylum seeker, Tamil Arugasamy Subramaniam, committed suicide at Hannover-Langenhagen detention centre, where he was awaiting deportation.

In January 2001 in Ireland, a Moroccan asylum seeker, Mohammed Helal, was put on a plane home the day after slashing his neck with a razor and hours after a second suicide bid. He was re-stitched and taken straight back to the police station and on to Dublin airport, where three immigration officers escorted him on the flight back to Morocco.

Issues of medical neglect and cruel and degrading treatment have also been raised in the case of **Xhevdet Ferri** (above), who died after trying to break out from a Brussels detention centre by jumping from a five-metre wall surrounding the prison. The interior minister (who, you remember, did not want to prejudge any inquiry) immediately issued a press release saying that the Albanian had no outward signs of injury and had been kept under medical observation at the centre, and that an ambulance had been called when

it became clear that he was unwell. However, *De Morgen* newspaper, citing a leaked internal report, alleges that Ferri's injuries were aggravated by police who made no attempt to assess his injuries when moving him from the site of the accident, handcuffed him even though he was crying out in pain and even dragged him by the foot into an isolation cell which he shared with a fellow escapee. It was this man who gave the alarm when the Albanian's condition deteriorated.

Public scrutiny vital

What all these cases demonstrate is that governments will move heaven and earth to avoid public scrutiny of state institutions, while deploying Machiavellian delaying tactics to avoid the prosecution of state officials involved in these deaths. While throwing a spotlight on to the authorities, campaigners also need to launch their own investigations into these deaths, and exploit all the legal mechanisms at their disposal to expose the institutionalised negligence, and the outright disregard for human life, that lies at the heart of the asylum process.

'In keeping with international standards, Amnesty International believes that all complaints of torture and ill-treatment should be promptly, impartially and effectively investigated by a body independent of the alleged perpetrators. The methods and findings of such investigations should be made public. During the investigation, those officials suspected of committing torture or ill-treatment should be suspended from active duty. When there is sufficient admissible evidence, suspects should be prosecuted. Those found guilty must be punished by sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the offence. Complainants, witnesses and others at risk during such investigations and prosecutions should always be protected from intimidation and reprisals.'

Amnesty International

Visas to pre-select refugees?

A proposal by Jack Straw to pre-select abroad the refugees that Britain would be prepared to accept has very serious implications. But it has gone almost unremarked in the UK.

At a meeting in Lisbon last year he suggested that the EU should set a quota of refugees for acceptance each year. UNHCR would then sift through and decide on the applications. The world would be divided into three groups of countries: high-risk, intermediate and safe, and applications determined accordingly. Quite apart from the objectionable idea of a quota, which presupposes the rejection of all 'excess' refugees, the scheme is an attempt to re-instate and extend to the whole of Europe the discredited 'white list' system of prejudging asylum claims from certain countries as bogus instead of judging claims

on their merits. The result of exporting asylum procedures would be that unapproved asylum seekers arriving in Europe would simply be returned without any consideration of their claims.

Straw's proposals pretend to provide an answer to the problem that refugees cannot get to Europe legally and have, therefore, to be smuggled in illegally (see page 9).

But a recent UNHCR report on the trafficking of refugees pointed out that the nationalities of those individuals who are smuggled to Europe correspond exactly to those countries which are producing bona fide refugees. Straw's proposal comes at a time when 35 million people throughout the world have had to flee persecution or civil war, and when, according to Amnesty International, torture is practised in 135 countries. In his plan only a tiny fraction of people needing asylum would ever get through the pre-screening process and gain one of the visas in the quota. ■





Bush and the racist Right – the battle goes on

Nancy Murray, director of the Bill of Rights Education Project in Boston, Massachusetts analyses what Bush and his appointees will mean for people of colour

On 20 January, as thousands of 'counter-coup' demonstrators waved signs proclaiming 'Hail to the Thief' behind rows of police in riot gear, Chief Justice Rehnquist administered the oath of office to George Walker Bush. A few weeks before, Rehnquist had presided over the Supreme Court putsch which brought Bush to office. President Bush's inaugural pledge 'to build a single nation of justice and opportunity' did little to reassure civil rights groups, who denounced the election as 'unfair, illegal, immoral and undemocratic' and are bringing a voting rights lawsuit against Florida state and county officials. Only one generation removed from the 'separate but equal' disenfranchisement (first ruled constitutional by the Supreme Court just over a century ago), African Americans who fear history is about to repeat itself are in the forefront of the protests.

Mass disenfranchisement

African Americans had turned out in record numbers around the country to vote not so much for Al Gore as against the Republicans, only to be frustrated by the inadequate number of polling stations, broken polling machinery, the disappearance of their names from the registration rolls, lost ballots, and obstruction by the

police. In Florida, police set up roadblocks and halted cars on the way to Black churches which served as polling stations. Thousands of African Americans were told they could not vote because of felony convictions, when in fact they had been convicted of misdemeanours and should not have lost the vote, or had been convicted in another state and should not have lost their right to vote in Florida, or had never been accused of any crime. Across the country 14 percent of African Americans have been disenfranchised because of felony convictions, with a quarter of all voting-age Black residents of Florida being deprived of the vote for life.

Rev. Willie Whiting testified before the US Civil Rights Commission investigating election irregularities in Florida that when he was told he could not vote because he was a felon who had been purged from the system, 'I was slingshotted into slavery.' He said the only time in his life he had been in court was when he served as a federal juror. The lawsuit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the American Civil Liberties Union and several other organisations states that 'the mass disenfranchisement of African American and Haitian voters in Florida on Election Day is one of the most egregious and widespread civil rights violations in recent history.'

Worse lies ahead. For over a decade, the Supreme Court has been undermining the gains of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s that finally brought 'Jim Crow segregation' to an end and guaranteed African Americans the franchise. The Court has steadily eroded affirmative action in employment and education, the integration of housing and schools, and various provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. These backward steps are now likely to accelerate swiftly, as the Bush administration transforms the US Commission for Civil Rights with appointees like Abigail Thernstrom, a fellow of the right-wing Manhattan Institute who is a leading opponent of affirmative action, as it fills the 66 vacancies in the federal court system with fellow ideologues, and selects nominees for expected openings on the US Supreme Court. The confirmation by the all-white US Senate of former senator John Ashcroft as attorney general – whose duties include enforcing civil rights laws and recommending judicial nominees – mocks President Bush's inaugural promise to 'make our country more just and generous.'

Far Right in power

Ashcroft is the Christian Right crusader who had just been beaten at the polls by a dead man, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan. Missouri voters chose Carnahan over Ashcroft after the governor was killed in a plane crash on the campaign trail. On a range of issues – ending the constitutional separation between church and state, eliminating abortion even in cases of rape and incest, prosecuting 14-year-olds as adults and housing them in adult jails – Ashcroft is on the right of the Republican Right. As his Senate confirmation hearings began, hundreds of people held a vigil outside the courthouse in St. Louis, Missouri where the slave Dred Scott had sued for his freedom in 1847 (and the US Supreme Court subsequently ruled that a Black man has no rights a white man is obliged to respect).

Ashcroft's approach to civil rights comes straight out of the pre Movement South. As Missouri attorney general in 1984, he was accused by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* of 'exploiting and encouraging the worst racist sentiments that exist in the state'. For four years he spearheaded opposition to a voluntary desegregation plan for St. Louis public schools that had the support of the city, the courts and 23 suburban school districts that had agreed to open their doors to students bussed from St. Louis. Ashcroft declared the desegregation plan to be 'an outrage against human decency'.

In 1998 he persuaded his Senate colleagues to reject the nomination for a federal judgeship of Ronnie White, the first African American to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court. Ashcroft resorted to smears and lies, including the charge that White was 'pro criminal', to block his advance to the federal bench. In the same year he gave an interview to the Southern Partisan praising the white supremacist magazine for 'set[ting] the record straight' on the history of the South, slavery, and the Civil War. The magazine claims slavery was beneficial to and appreciated by Black people, and was not a divider of families. In 1999 he accepted an honorary degree from Bob Jones University of Greenville, South Carolina, and gave its commencement address. This fundamentalist Christian establishment, which calls Roman Catholicism a 'cult,' denies admission to applicants who advocate interracial dating or marriage.

Under Ashcroft as attorney general, the neo-Confederate strain in the Republican Party represented

by Senate majority leader Trent Lott and Rep. Bob Barr – with ties to the 'uptown Klan', the Council of Conservative Citizens – will be greatly emboldened in its efforts to turn back the clock. The prospect of Republican nominees locking down the courts for the next 20 or 30 years, and of voting rights being further compromised by the incarceration and disenfranchisement of ever-growing numbers of Black males and by 'redistricting' decisions which keep the power in white hands, has put the struggle to retain fundamental civil and social rights at the top of the political agenda. Who is prepared to fight this war?

Grassroots anger

The traditional civil rights leadership hardly seems up to the challenge, having declined to mount an all-out attack on Clinton's damaging 'welfare reform' and law and order policies. The curiously-timed revelation that while the Rev. Jesse Jackson was counselling Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky saga he was himself fathering an out-of-wedlock child has prompted Black opportunists to declare themselves willing to move into the leadership void and work with Republicans.

But at the grassroots in communities of colour there is a deep anger at the hijacking of the election, and growing determination to resist disenfranchisement. With the spotlight fixed on election practices, a large Black turnout during Congressional elections in two years' time could well bring the lower Congressional body, the House of Representatives, back into Democratic hands. Due to their seniority in the House, this would put members of the Black Caucus in key Committee leadership positions, and significantly raise the political heat.

The streets could become even more heated. As yet the young WTO-style demonstrators, whose affinity groups embrace a myriad of causes, have few ties with youth of colour. But as they learn first-hand about paramilitary-style policing, get arrested and slapped with million dollar bails for protest activities, they are opening to the Black experience. It was youth of colour who led the confrontation with 6,000 US marines who invaded the San Francisco Bay area in March 1999 as a rehearsal for urban warfare. The hip hop group dead prez is reaching both groups, with a message that resonates on streets and campuses:

**The average black male
live a third of his life in jail
'cuz the world is controlled by the white male,
and the people don't never get justice
and the women don't never get respected
and the problems don't never get solved
and the jobs don't never pay enough
and so the rent always be late.
Can you relate? We living in a police state.**

If youth of colour pay heed to the words of dead prez, the Marines might one day be called into action right here on the home front:

**This world is oh-so-cold
I think about my ancestors being sold
And it make me wanna break the mould.
Fuck the gold and the party –
Train yourself, clean your shotty.
Tell me what you gonna do to get free?
We need more than MCs,
We need Hueys and revolutionaries!**

Bush, the living prez, would do well to pay attention. ■

WALES

Race murder trial

The trial of those accused of the murder of Jan Pasalbessy began in January 2001. 21-year-old Roger Talbot, 19-year-old Emma Oates, 18-year-old Ashley Haynes and an unidentified 16-year-old all denied the murder charge. The 48-year-old Indonesian was kicked to death outside the Royal Gwent hospital in Newport on 12 June last year. He was at the hospital with his 14-year-old daughter Christina, who was receiving treatment for injuries sustained during a racist attack on her earlier that day (see *CARF* 57).

The jury heard how Jan was attacked in the grounds of the hospital by a gang who called him a 'black bastard' and kicked him as he

lay on the ground. Emma Oates is also alleged to have kicked Jan as he lay on the ground. A witness wept on the stand as she told the court of seeing Jan's blood-spattered face after the attack. She said she heard him confront Emma Oates (alleged to have orchestrated the attack on Christina), asking her if she had paid another girl £10 to hit his daughter. She heard one of the men with Emma threatening the dead man with 'a smack in the face'. A senior radiographer also testified that she had heard Roger Talbot (the father of Emma Oates' 10-month-old baby girl) say 'if he is talking about me, I'll kill him'. The trial continues. ■



Jan Pasalbessy

'Good citizen' kills

In January, 57-year-old William Morgan was found not guilty of the manslaughter of 42-year-old Peter Singh in Newport, Wales. Peter was killed by just one punch outside Port Talbot police station in March 2000 (see *CARF* 56). The jury heard that Morgan had been to a rugby match and then out drinking. Peter Singh was drinking with his friend Bob McQuaide when they met Morgan on the street outside the police station. Morgan took offence at Bob throwing litter. Morgan threw a punch at him and then at Peter, who hit the ground. Morgan

alleged he attacked Peter because he was holding him back, preventing him from defending himself. As Peter lay dying Morgan caught a cab home with his friend.

Morgan gave himself up after learning that Peter had died, but said he was acting in self-defence. The prosecution alleged Peter died of a heart attack after the punch as a result of pre-existing serious health problems including heart disease and diabetes. Morgan's defence was that he simply acted as a 'good citizen' by asking Bob McQuaide to pick up his litter. ■



Peter Singh

LONDON

Youths sentenced

In January, 20-year-old Gary Lewis and a 16-year-old girl pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of shopkeeper Kombra Divakaran in May 1999, while 21-year-old Hussein Bahremand and a 17-year-old girl pleaded guilty to affray (see *CARF* 56). The jury heard that Kombra, a 43-year-old father of three, chased the gang after they stole a football from his shop, City Bargain bookshop, in Queensway, west London. Passers-by saw Kombra catch up with the youngest in the gang, who had the ball; the gang then turned on him, beating and kicking him to the floor. He

died from a fractured skull and haemorrhage caused by his head hitting the pavement.

The defendants were all originally charged with murder and violent disorder but the Crown accepted reduced pleas after 'anxious consideration'. The 16-year-old girl, who was 15 at the time of the attack, was sentenced to five years. Gary Lewis was also sentenced to five years in a young offenders institute. The other two were found guilty of affray; the 17-year-old girl was sentenced to four months and Bahremand to 18 months' imprisonment. ■



Kombra Divakaran

campaigns & reports

BURY

Murdered in sleep

Simon Rawcliffe was jailed for life in January for the brutal murder of 30-year-old Liaquat (Bobby) Ali, in September 1999. Liaquat, of Bury, near Manchester, was beaten by a racist housemate as he lay sleeping. Rawcliffe, whose racist record was not fully disclosed in court, was often heard bullying Liaquat, a much smaller man who never fought back. Earlier in the day of the murder, Rawcliffe had punched and abused Liaquat, who was found collapsed in the garden by another housemate and helped on to a sofa. Rawcliffe later beat Liaquat with a tree branch and storage jar as he lay drunk and asleep. Liaquat's blood was found on Rawcliffe's clothes, a shoe and on a tree branch in his room. The 28-year-old was detained in Ashworth Special hospital. ■

TELFORD

McGowan file closed

The West Mercia police investigation into the suspicious death of Harold (aka Errol) McGowan has found no evidence of murder. Errol and Jason, his nephew, were both found hanged in suspicious circumstances six months apart, after receiving threats and racial abuse. Errol was found hanged in July 1999 at the home of a friend after months of racial harassment. Jason began his own investigation after the police refused to do anything. He received threats warning him off and then on 1 January 2000 he too was found hanged (see *CARF* 54). In December, West Mercia police sent a file on Errol's death to the coroner – not to the CPS, which would have received it if charges were to be brought. Police say the investigation into Errol's death is no longer active, despite the new investigation launched in February 2000 by the Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force, which was called in to advise West Mercia police after criticism of the original investigation. ■

Jay Abatan: new investigation

Two years after the death of Jay Abatan, police are investigating it as racist murder. In December, Sussex police were forced to admit failings

in their investigation into the death of 42-year-old Jay. He was attacked on 24 January 1999 after a night out with his brother Michael and friend Lloyd Jeffers, celebrating his promotion at work. As they left the Ocean Rooms night club in Brighton they were attacked by a gang of white men during an argument over a mini



Jay Abatan

cab. Jay was punched to the ground and died five days later from his injuries. Within 24 hours of the attack police arrested Graham Curtis and Peter Bell, who were both charged. After legal wrangling, manslaughter charges were dropped and the men stood trial on

charges of assaulting Jay's brother, Michael. No one was brought to trial for Jay's killing. At the trial, the jury was not informed that Jay had died as a result of the injuries sustained during the attack. The men were acquitted of ABH on Michael Abatan.

The police squad investigating the murder is now to be replaced by a new team of 36 detectives after a review by Essex police revealed failings in the original investigation. Two years after police denied any race motive in the case, the murder is now to be treated as racially motivated. Sussex police and Jay's family are offering a £175,000 reward for information.

Jay's family are also calling for the Essex police investigation to be made public and for the Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force to take over the entire investigation. The inquest is due to be held in March. ■

www.justiceforjay.co.uk

Independent police complaints?

At the end of December, the Home Office announced proposals for an independent police complaints authority after research commissioned from Liberty and KPMG. The announcement followed years of anger and disquiet from human rights groups about the fact that police investigate themselves.

The changes, which are intended to increase openness and to speed up investigations, are to be instituted over a three-year period. The new body will be called the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). It will employ civilian managers to lead investigation teams on a day to day basis, although the teams will still include seconded police investigators as well as non-police members, 'to achieve the optimum in both performance and public confidence'. Further proposals include the reporting of complaints to other agencies such as citizens' advice bureaux, and disciplinary panels with non-police members. The IPCC, chief police officers and police authorities will still have the power to decide what information is disclosed to complainants.

Human rights groups have given a cautious welcome to the new proposals. Inquest, which campaigns on deaths in custody and often supports families attempting to pursue complaints against the police, commented, 'This is a welcome opportunity to restore confidence by ensuring that deaths in custody are independently and openly investigated, involve families at every stage and ensure accountability of those responsible. However we remain concerned that too many families are and will continue to be failed by the current system until these changes are implemented.' ■

Chhokar family reject inquiry

In January, the family of Surjit Chhokar withdrew their support from one of the inquiries into the mishandling of the case involving Surjit's killing. Concerns over the

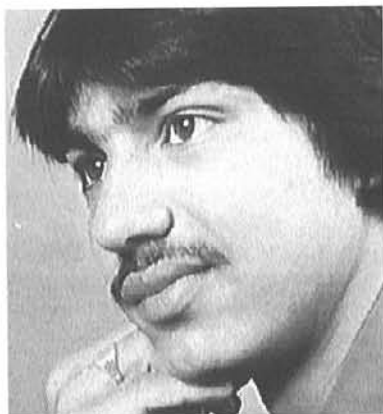
openness and impartiality of Dr Raj Jandoo's inquiry into family liaison led to their refusal to cooperate. Surjit was killed in 1998 by three men all of whom evaded jail by blaming one another for the killing (see CARF 59).

In a further development, Ronnie Coulter, who originally stood trial for the

killing, was found guilty on 23 January of contempt of court. He

was accused of giving 'evasive, inconsistent, varying and incomplete' evidence at the trial of the two men he blamed for the murder. Coulter's girlfriend Sandra Tierney pleaded guilty to the same charge. Sentencing was adjourned till 2 February and Coulter was remanded into custody. Surjit's family are unhappy that the Crown Office did not pursue charges of perjury against the two. The Chhokar Family Campaign is now considering bringing a civil action against the men accused of the murder and another against the Crown Office. The Campaign desperately needs funds. It is even being asked to pay £3000 for trial transcripts. Please help. ■

Chhokar Family Justice Campaign, c/o Fire Brigades Union, 52 Enoch Square, Glasgow G1 4AA. web: www.paih.org



Surjit Chhokar

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E-mail: info@ncrm.org.uk

Web: www.ncrm.org.uk

**Free race and policing
helpline: 0800 374618**

Call this number anywhere in the
UK for assistance with police
racism.

Demonstration

**Cambridgeshire Against
Refugee Detention
(CARD) is holding a
demonstration on
10 March to mark the
opening of Oakington
Detention Centre one
year ago.**

**Meet at 12.30pm,
Parkers' Piece to march
into city centre at
1.00pm, then on to
Oakington where there
will be a rally.**

For further information:
Cambridgeshire Against
Refugee Detention (CARD), c/o
CUSU, 11-12 Trumpington
Street, Cambridge, CB2 1QA.
Tel: 07989 453208.
Maps and directions are
available at:
www.card.freewire.co.uk

PRISONS

Prison for asylum seekers

The government has been drawing up secret plans to increase the numbers of asylum seekers held in prisons. With Ann Widdecombe proposing to lock up all refugees in what are euphemistically called 'secure reception centres', Jack Straw is responding with the promise of new immigration detention centres. But in the meantime he has ordered the creation of 500 new places in normal prisons, on top of the existing 330 places at Rochester and Haslar prisons. So far places have been allocated at Belmarsh, Bullingdon, Wandsworth, Winchester, Holme House, Highdown, Lincoln and Liverpool. The plan is that asylum seekers will generally be held in separate wings from the general prison population. However they will be subject to the same prison rules and face prison officers who are trained to contain convicted criminals.

Perhaps Jack Straw should have listened to the experiences of inmates at the notorious Delta and Echo wings of Rochester prison before ordering more asylum seekers to be held within the normal prison regime. Those who have spent time there, sometimes over a year, speak of treatment that is worse than for convicted criminals in the same prison. Cells are four by four metres, toilet included, with two inmates per cell. Echo wing houses 115 inmates while Delta houses about 65. Such is Rochester's reputation for brutality that staff in other detention centres use the threat of transfer to Rochester as a way of controlling 'difficult' inmates.

Pierre, an asylum seeker from Cameroon, spent five months inside Rochester, often being locked in his cell for days on end. He has since been transferred to Haslar. Pierre says he found date-expired food in the Haslar kitchen which should have been thrown out six months before. 'When I asked the kitchen

staff why expired foodstuffs were being cooked and given to detainees, the answer was "do I know how much the government spends on immigration detainees?" After this I was no longer asked to work in the kitchen.'

'At Rochester', Pierre told us, 'we were locked up for eighteen hours a day. When there was staff training you were banged up for twenty-four hours in a cell. It was stressful. I know of six inmates who, after months of incarceration, became mentally deranged. They were taken to mental homes. Other inmates attempted serious self-harm but nobody cared. Medication was a forgotten issue.'

Paul, an asylum seeker from Tanzania who has been detained in Haslar prison, also points to the mental effects of prison. As he put it, 'the cage is one place where sanity is a full-time job. I tried to keep going but I came very close to losing it. I saw fellow asylum seekers going clinically insane and trying to commit suicide. You think that these are scenes which should trigger a human response, but not when it is asylum seekers. We never found out what happened to those who tried to hang themselves.'

Both Paul and Pierre say they have been racially abused by prison officers, being told, for example, that 'you will all be deported back to the monkeys'. Pierre says he has also witnessed a serious assault on a Romanian asylum seeker by five Echo wing staff members at Rochester. People are scared to speak out, he says, for fear of being segregated or having their asylum claim turned down.

With the numbers of asylum seekers held in prisons set to double over the next few months, many more people will be subjected to these barbarous regimes. ■

Names have been changed in this article.

update

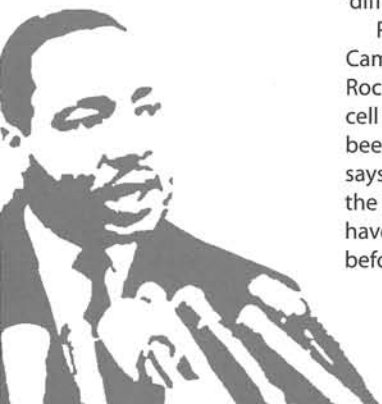
Racism at Feltham revealed

At a meeting organised by the NCRM at the House of Commons in January, the family of Zahid Mubarek, who was murdered by a racist in Feltham Young Offenders Institute (see CARF 59), called for a full judicial inquiry into the prison system. Zahid's uncle said the family believed the prison service played a part in Zahid's death and called for the government to take the initiative against prison racism with an open judicial inquiry. Imran Khan, the family's solicitor felt that the CRE inquiry would not go far enough in tackling the issues revealed in the new internal report on Feltham.



The second internal Prison Service inquiry into Feltham, where half the inmates are black, found an underlying racist culture. The report branded Feltham as institutionally racist, with black inmates and staff suffering abuse. Young black inmates are twice as likely as whites to be subject to control and restraint procedures and less likely to have access to education and fitness facilities. The investigation found that racist incidents were poorly reported and staff at all levels were not taking them seriously. ■

NCRM Human Rights Festival
at University of London Union, Malet Street,
London. 25-27 May 2001. Please contact
office for full details and booking forms.



diary of race and resistance

DEC 2000 – JAN 2001

RACISM

7 DEC Former *Daily Telegraph* journalist, Dominic Swords, jailed for 28 days for flagging down a car when drunk and racially abusing its occupant, Del Husband, for half an hour

8 DEC Chelsea Headhunters Andrew Frain and Jason Marriner, with links to C18, jailed for seven and six years for planning violence at football matches

15 DEC *13-year-old Danny Herbert found unconscious in pool of blood after suspected racial attack in Littlehampton, Sussex*

17 DEC Team of three police officers from outside London brought in to review investigation into murder of Stephen Lawrence ■ Two women charged with attempted murder of Danny Herbert

20 DEC Sussex police squad investigating murder of Jay Abatan replaced after review by Essex police reveals failings in original investigation. Murder now treated as racially motivated

21 DEC West Mercia police claim there is no evidence to suggest foul play in the suspicious death of Errol McGowan ■ Jack Straw reinstates PC Steve Hutt, sacked for calling a young man a 'black bastard' ■ 15-year-old boy admits arson attack on Southwark home owned by a black family; given 12-month supervision order involving time with fire brigade to 'learn the dangers of fire'

23 DEC *30-year-old Safraz Khan beaten, stabbed and burnt to death in his cab after picking up a fare in Rotherham*

24 DEC *42-year-old Turkish asylum seeker, Cumali Sinangili, on life support after brutal beating by three white men in Bermondsey, south east London*

28 DEC *47-year-old tenant Colin Salt suffers 60 percent burns after suspected racist attack on flat owned by Greek Cypriot family in Stoke on Trent*

29 DEC Buckingham Palace guardsman arrested in connection with attack against black doorman Mark Bernard in London ■ Government announces plan to root out racists from football's England Members Club

1 JAN 26-year-old Craig Gilbert charged with murder of Safraz Khan and remanded

2 JAN *38-year-old Algerian Djamaile Daikha dies in hospital from injuries sustained in attack in Soho, central London, in early hours of New Year's Day*

8 JAN *36-year-old Gian Singh murdered in suspected racial attack in Elm Park, east London* ■ Family of black postman, 26-year-old Jermaine Lee who committed suicide because of racial abuse, wins right to posthumous case at industrial tribunal

11 JAN Motherwell FC footballer, Steven

Hammell, charged with racially aggravated breach of the peace, after alleged abuse of St Johnstone FC's Mohammed Sylla

13 JAN 100 football thugs smash up pub in Burton, Staffs, and leave C18 calling cards

23 JAN 28-year-old Simon Rawcliffe jailed for life for murder of 30-year-old Liaquat Ali in Bury in September 1999

24 JAN 57-year-old William Morgan found not guilty of the manslaughter of 42-year-old Peter Singh in Newport, Wales

25 JAN Four men charged with attempted murder and violent disorder in relation to racist attack on Cumali Sinangili in Southwark

26 JAN Four youths jailed for four months to five years in relation to killing of Kombra Divakaran

29 JAN Trial begins of Leeds United footballers on charges of GBH against Asian student Safraz Najeib

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

11 DEC 27-year-old David Smithen awarded £5,000 after he was falsely imprisoned, assaulted and strip-searched by a Dewsbury police officer

12 DEC Police withdraw Operation Pre-empt, where details of all Irish people arrested were passed to Special Branch, after complaints

14 DEC Tory leader William Hague claims Macpherson report has created climate of political correctness in the police, undermined police morale and contributed to a rise in crime

15 DEC Family of Stephen Lawrence agree to £320,000 compensation for failed police investigation

18 DEC Home Office announces plans for independent police complaints authority

4 JAN Met police announce reduction in number of deaths in custody and launch two new initiatives to reduce deaths: nursing manager with six staff to work in custody suite of Charing Cross police station, and new training video

16 JAN Met police announce recruitment of 218 'ethnic minority' officers in seven months in 1999; 214 of them are Irish, Australian and Canadian

18 JAN Home Office figures reveal black people are still five times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites and four times more likely to be arrested

21 JAN *Family of Roger Sylvester calls for judicial inquiry into CPS decision not to prosecute the officers involved in his death*

22 JAN Prison Service inquiry into Feltham Young Offenders' Institute reveals 'overt and subtle' racism ■ Leaked ACPO report tells

police officers to deal with racist behaviour towards asylum seekers or risk public order problems

23 JAN Janine Morris, deputy governor of Feltham YOI, quits job

28 JAN Interim report on racism in Crown Prosecution Service finds 'barriers to recruitment of ethnic minority staff'

29 JAN South Wales police pay undisclosed damages without admitting liability to 50-year-old Melville Sealy, arrested and held for ten days for possession of a cordless screwdriver

30 JAN Scotland Yard finally publishes report into harassment of Delroy Lindo that finds 'unwarranted police harassment' over four years and that Haringey's black community had suffered from culture of police racism and stereotyping. But no officers will face disciplinary charges

IMMIGRATION

6 DEC P&O Stena Line launches compulsory searches for stowaways on all lorries travelling from Calais to Dover

8 DEC P&O Stena line commences the search for 'illegal immigrants' in cars as well as lorries on its Calais-Dover route

13 DEC Home Office announces posting of 12 immigration officers along main smuggling routes to UK, to combat trafficking of people

19 DEC Law Lords rule that Home Secretary Jack Straw acted unlawfully in ordering deportation of 28-year-old Somali Lul Adan to Germany and 33-year-old Algerian Hamid Aitseguer to France, since these countries would return them to their country of origin

22 DEC *Home Office announces eight more prisons will detain 500 asylum seekers*

24 DEC *Bodies of two men, thought to be Cubans, found frozen to death as plane takes off from Gatwick*

16 DEC Afghan asylum seeker receives letter from Home Office civil servant telling him that his claim is a 'pile of pants'

31 DEC Michael Heseltine claims that most asylum seekers are bogus

6 JAN P&O Stena announces discovery of 644 stowaways in one month after compulsory vehicle checks started

19 JAN *Iranian asylum seeker, Ramin Khaleghi, takes his own life in Leicester hostel after asylum claim refused*

28 JAN Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries sets up five more Operation Gangmaster Units in attempt to recover lost tax revenue from asylum seekers working illegally

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