

Context Theatre - Back and Forth Education Pack (PDF)

BACKANDFORTH

Resources for Teachers
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Note to teachers

This pack provides a teacher's guide as a means of following up some of the themes raised in Context Theatre's production of Back and Forth.

The outlined activities are intended to prompt discussion and may be adapted as necessary in order to fit into programmes of work. It is intended that the teacher takes what he or she needs in relation to their students.

Context theatre's Back and Forth aims to open up issues of asylum and immigration, dispelling myths rather than imposing views. We hope when using the material contained in this pack that you will share the same ethic, and encourage students to research, to examine a wealth of perspectives, and then to form their own opinions.

Many of the activities have no dramatic basis, other than that they relate to the ideas raised in the play so if you are new to drama, hold no fear! The pack forms three main sections:

Seeking asylum.

von Horváth.

Forum Theatre.

The first section will work particularly well with PSHE classes and social/ political studies. The second with Drama, English, German and Theatre Studies, and the third with any range of subject interests.

It should be noted that some elements of the pack have been taken from other sources, as documented.

We welcome feedback and would like to hear your views on the production and supporting work, please contact Context Theatre with your thoughts or fill out the review sheet at the end of this pack.

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Seeking Asylum

1. The Facts or the fiction?

Does the media always tell the truth?

Choose an activity from a, b or c, or do all three, this is best followed by the larger framing discussion (2: discussion on asylum in the UK).

a. Mediation

Distribute identical pictures to students in pairs, so that students have the same pictures as their partner (you could use photos, drawings or paintings). Students should not show each other their pictures! Ask students to write a brief description of their own picture, explaining what their picture is about. Then, either in pairs, or as a whole class, ask students to read their descriptions out loud without showing their pictures. When each pair has described the picture, show the image. To what extent do the descriptions differ?

b. Storytelling

Ask the class to think of a story that is important to them. In partners, they should each in turn tell their stories. As a whole group, then, the 'listeners' tell the class their partner's story. After each turn, the original storyteller should be asked what in the story changed when the partner told it.

c. Spot the difference

In partners, or small groups, the students should be given the following articles and asked to consider how they differ from each other. Discuss as a class.

2m migrants for Britain in next decade By Philip Johnston, Home Affairs Editor: The Daily Telegraph 05/08/2002

Britain can expect to receive more than two million immigrants every 10 years for the foreseeable future unless curbs are introduced, a report says today.

Image see: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/graphics/2002/08/05/nimm05.jpeg>.

Romanian refugees in Glasgow

Estimates from the campaign group Migration Watch UK suggest net non-EU immigration levels have doubled in less than a decade, swelled by record numbers of asylum seekers and illegal entrants.

In 2000, the last year for which figures are available, 183,000 more people arrived in Britain intending to settle than left the country as emigrants. In total, more than 400,000 arrived but this figure included British citizens returning from overseas.

Similar numbers were recorded in the previous two years - double the average for most of the 1990s. The net loss of British citizens is accelerating, with a net gain last year of 230,000 non-British citizens compared with 92,000 in the mid-1990s.

In the 10 years between 1985 and 1995, net immigration was averaging 50,000 a year, a quarter of the figures envisaged by Migration Watch UK in the absence of

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tighter controls.

Sir Andrew Green, a former diplomat and chairman of Migration Watch, said: "The scale of inward migration is now so great as to be contrary to the best interests of every section of our community.

"The continued refusal of the main political parties to address these issues can only lead to the rise of the extreme Right, to which we are strongly opposed.

"The system has been allowed to fall into a shambles, in part because no one was willing to discuss the issues for fear of being labelled racist. The time has now come for a frank and open debate."

A swamp of muddled thinking

Migration Watch UK's claim that Britain can expect 2 million extra migrants in 10 years is a wild guess based on flawed analysis - Heather Stewart and Richard Adams Wednesday August 7, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>, The Guardian.

August in Britain is not called the silly season for nothing. Just how silly was illustrated by the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph covering their front pages on Monday with the blood-curdling warning to their readers that 2 million immigrants would crowd into Britain in the next decade.

The figures come from a report by a previously unheard of organisation, variously called a thinktank (Daily Mail) or campaign group (Telegraph), named Migration Watch UK. The problem is that its eye-catching figure of 2 million extra migrants is flawed, both in its composition and its assumptions.

A close examination of Migration Watch UK's document shows it puts together a string of unrelated and at times incompatible figures, adding in a series of dubious assumptions, to arrive at a figure for an annual net inward increase in migration of about 200,000 people a year. That figure is then taken as the basis for an extrapolation over 10 years, and produces the "2 million migrants" headlines.

The main basis for Migration Watch UK's estimate is the official International Passenger Survey, which asks those arriving at British ports whether they intend to stay for 12 months or more. Once those leaving are subtracted, that gives a net inward figure of about 180,000.

But the group's argument is deeply flawed, according to the Home Office. The number on which it relies for the bulk of its migrants - the International Passenger Survey - includes British citizens returning to the country from abroad as well as foreign migrants.

Migration Watch UK's final figure, of 2 million over 10 years, is not broken down by category, making it hard to see where all the people will come from. But the group does helpfully suggest it is rather like "a population the size of Cambridge being added every six months".

It is not hard to find reputable researchers to question Migration Watch UK's calculations. "The numbers are not unreasonable, but there is no basis for them. They're just guesstimates," said Professor John Salt, a migration expert from University College London. "What's needed is a sensible debate about what the figures actually mean."

The Home Office also disputed Migration Watch UK's claims. "The figures

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exaggerate the true position and should therefore be treated with caution," said a spokesman.

The Home Office's own projections - for annual net migration of approximately 135,000 - include an assumption that asylum applications will be processed more quickly.

The biggest weakness in the Migration Watch UK's figures is the assumption that net migration will continue at its current rate for the foreseeable future. Migration statistics are volatile and depend on a wide range of circumstances, from economic growth to social upheaval. Drawing conclusions from unreliable data is extremely dangerous, given the politically controversial nature of the issue.

The danger is even greater when Migration Watch UK explicitly believes migration is a bad thing. "We start from the belief that the scale of net inward migration is now so great as to be contrary to the interests of all sections of our community," it states.

2. Discussion: asylum in the UK

Over the last months issues of asylum seeking have had a heavy bearing in the media. Why? Is the issue being exaggerated? Are more people entering England? An examination of some statistics.

Definitions: Asylum seeker or refugee?

An asylum seeker is someone who has crossed an international border and is looking for a country that can offer protection. In the UK, an asylum seeker is officially a person who has lodged an asylum claim with the Home Office and is waiting for a decision on their claim.

While they are awaiting the outcome the asylum seeker has the right not to be returned to a country where they would be in danger. The asylum seeker becomes a refugee only when their application for asylum has been accepted by the Home Office.

A refugee on the other hand is defined as 'any person who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.' (United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Geneva, 2-25 July 1951).

Facts: New asylum applications (source: www.unhcr.ch) In 2001, the UK received 11% fewer asylum applications than in 2000. The monthly average for the first quarter of 2002 is slightly higher at 6,506 (2001: 5,975). The majority of asylum applicants lodge their asylum claim once they are already in the UK rather than at port on arrival.

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1st Quarter	2002	2001	2000	1999
In-country	13,075	46,200	51,235	41,700
Port	6,445	25,500	24,805	29,455
Total	19,520	71,700	76,040	71,160

Questions / Discussion:

a. On average, these annual numbers represent about the capacity of Old Trafford Stadium. The total percentage of the population estimated to be asylum seekers and refugees is 0.29 %. Do you think these figures are high?

b. Do you think England is the most popular place to come to, if so, why?

Facts: Comparison with other countries

Between 1992 to 2001, the ranking order for the approximate percentages of asylum seeker applications (per 1,1000 inhabitants) in industrialised countries was as follows:

1. Switzerland
2. Sweden
3. Netherlands
4. Belgium
5. Germany
6. Denmark
7. Luxemburg
8. Norway
9. Austria
10. Ireland
11. United Kingdom
12. Canada
13. Slovenia
14. France
15. Australia
16. Czech Republic
17. United States
18. Hungary
19. Finland
20. New Zealand
21. Slovakia
22. Greece
23. Spain
24. South Africa
25. Italy
26. Bulgaria
27. Poland
28. Portugal
29. Romania
30. Japan

Activity

Some people think that lots of people come to Britain because there are lots of benefits. In groups, list the benefits of coming to the UK. How good are these benefits? Would they be enough to make you leave your home, family and friends?

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3. Debating benefits.

Should we help asylum seekers by letting them stay in this country? Should they be able to work? Should they be given benefits?

Debate activity

The class should be divided into 4 groups and each group given a different article, as below. The students should read their two articles and brainstorm reasons, to be used in debate, purporting a stance posed in the article (even if the students don't necessarily abide by that view).

The debate starts when all groups are ready (10 minutes preparation should be sufficient). Each group should initially elect one person as a speaker in the debate forum, this person will contend their views with the other speakers. Remind students prior to this that the essence of a good debate consists of listening to peers, taking their points and twisting them to your own team's advantage! When a member of any team feels that their speaker is flagging, and they could do better for their team then they should clap and exchange places. This should continue until all points have had a good airing (approximately 20 minutes).

Round off with discussion and summary of the main points, and ask the students what they think may be a good solution to the arguments.

Articles

1. Majority backs ending asylum seekers benefit By Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor, Guardian

Tuesday February 9, 1999

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, has popular backing for his proposal to be announced today to strip asylum seekers of their remaining rights to claim welfare benefits, according to a Guardian/ICM opinion poll published today.

The survey also shows majority backing among the electorate, including Labour voters, for further tightening Britain's asylum and immigration laws.

This is in spite of the fact that an overwhelming majority of those polled agree that immigration has enriched Britain by making it open to ideas and cultures.

The concept of asylum has taken a severe populist battering. Now 49 per cent agree that genuine victims of political persecution should be allowed to stay in Britain - an increase over other recent opinion polls but far below the popular acceptance in other European countries.

The poll findings come as Mr Straw is to put forward legislation to disperse asylum

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seekers outside London and the South-east, and to replace their benefit rights with an asylum seeker's allowance.

2. Government removes asylum seekers' right to work

From www.refugeecouncil.org.uk, 22 July 2002

In response to the news that the Government is about to remove the concession that allows asylum seekers to work after six months, Nick Hardwick, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, said:

"This is extremely shortsighted move by the Government, and a punishment on asylum seekers for the Government's failure to meet its own targets. Let's not forget that the reason asylum seekers are allowed to work after six months is because successive Governments, including the present one, have failed repeatedly to make asylum decisions within their own targets of six months. The current average time for an initial asylum decision is 13 months, and a further 26 weeks for an appeal decision."

"Let no one be fooled: this measure is guided by political expediency and will have no impact of the numbers claiming asylum in Britain, as has been proved by the failure of similar restrictive policies over the last decade. And worse, it will condemn asylum seekers to a life of dependency and poverty.

"We have always maintained that asylum seekers should be allowed to work from the moment they arrive, to contribute to our country's economic success. And the public agrees, as the results of a recent MORI survey commissioned for Refugee Week (June 17-23) asked the public what would be most important to them if forced to seek refuge themselves, and the top answer by far, selected by 44%, was to be able to work to provide for themselves and their families."

3. Safe. But is asylum in Britain sound? Alexander Garrett explodes the myth of economic immigrants flocking across the Channel for a share of the princely benefits on offer here Sunday May 12, 2002, The Observer Is the financial support offered to asylum seekers really generous? Or are they - as some campaigners argue - the most deprived group in society, living below the poverty line?

Since April 8, asylum seekers have at least been able to meet their immediate needs in the same currency as the rest of society - cash. Until that date, they were living in a kind of parallel economy using 'goods' vouchers, which were introduced by the government in April 2000 as a measure to discourage 'economic migration'. The vouchers were seen by many as unfair and humiliating. Only £10 of an asylum seeker's support could be turned into cash, and the remainder had to be exchanged for goods at specified outlets, which meant asylum seekers weren't able to shop in the cheapest places such as street markets; no change could be given, which made it impractical to make small purchases such as a carton of milk; and worst of all, the vouchers attracted attention to their bearer at the checkout, and highlighted their second-class status.

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Pressure from campaigners eventually paid off, and now asylum seekers can exchange their vouchers immediately for cash, when they receive them at a Post Office. So far the system appears to be working well, and the only people likely to be disgruntled are the black-market dealers who were reported to be buying vouchers at below their face value.

The amount is based upon income support, and is set at about 70% of the state benefit. A couple without children receive £59.26 a week; a lone parent or single person over 25 receives £37.77 a week; a child under 16 gets £33.50 a week and a single person aged between 18 and 25 gets £29.89 a week.

In addition, a £50 supplementary grant can be applied for every six months, which is designed to provide for less immediate needs such as clothing. And there is also a one-off maternity grant of £350, which again has to be applied for. It is a moot point whether these sums are fair or sufficient. Candler says: 'We think it is clearly inadequate. Income support is supposed to be set at the poverty line - the amount needed in order to survive. But asylum seekers are expected to live on 70% of that.'

The reason support was set at less than three quarters of income support is that, in theory at least, asylum seekers are provided with accommodation where bills such as electricity, gas, water and council tax are met. Of course, paying these bills is undoubtedly a huge burden on poor British citizens who might well feel they should be first in line for whatever government help is available.

What is certain is that living on these sums, whether it is income support or the asylum seekers' slice of it, does not leave any room for luxuries, let alone the sorts of financial provisions like insurance, pensions and savings that most people consider essential.

The system has definitely been designed with the intention of ensuring that asylum seekers are not better off than those holding full citizenship. A Reader's Digest Mori poll carried out in 2000 revealed that the public tend to greatly overestimate the amount of money that asylum seekers are given, believing it to be on average £113 a week. A common myth is that asylum seekers are paid more than pensioners. Yet the basic state pension for a single pensioner has just risen to £75.50 a week, and the Government's minimum income guarantee for pensioners is £98.15 - compared with the £37.77 paid to most single asylum seekers.

Richard Dunstan at the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, says: 'I've just been looking at the case of a Somali woman in Manchester whose support was interrupted for almost six months. Her support has been restored but she gave birth in January, and she is still getting no additional support for the child.'

So are we too generous? The question is a politically loaded one. The answer depends upon such profound questions as whether you believe that we have some responsibility for less advantaged people from other countries; or whether those who have fled tyranny should be made to expect hardship as a price for their

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escape.

One thing is certain. Whether an individual's claim is bogus or legitimate, economically motivated or not, asylum seekers have to cope with financial circumstances that nobody else in the country could have reason to envy.

At best, they are receiving little more than the minimum support that a civilised society could be expected to provide, and it seems unlikely that offering less would discourage many from coming in the future.

4. Daily Mail, 24 July 2002.

4. Why leave home?

Why do asylum seekers leave their countries for refuge in other countries?

Brainstorm.

Ask the students to brainstorm:

- Ideas that come to mind when they think of the word home.
- why someone may leave their home and go to another country.
- what would make them leave the UK?

Discussion: Top 10 countries of asylum seekers' origins

The vast majority of asylum applicants come from countries with well-documented instances of serious forms of persecution. Although this is not always the case, people may seek asylum for financial reasons. The nationalities listed below directly reflect the turbulent situations across the world today. In 2001, the highest percentage rise in asylum applications came from Zimbabwe and Afghanistan - both countries having experienced high profile persecution and conflict. The greatest number of applications in each year is underlined. The figures for 2002 are for the first quarter, ie January to March inclusive.

Q1	2002	2001	2000	1999
Iraq	2,840	6,805	7,475	1,800
Afghanistan	2,350	9,190	5,555	3,980
Zimbabwe	1,495	2,085	1,010	230
Somalia	1,295	6,500	6,020	7,495
Sri Lanka	1,240	5,545	6,395	5,130
China	915	2,415	4,000	2,625
Turkey	650	3,740	3,990	2,850
Pakistan	645	2,810	3,165	2,615
Iran	600	3,450	5,610	1,320
Fed. Rep. of Yugoslavia	580	3,190	6,070	11,465

Research

Ask the students to find out what was happening in the countries with the highest number of asylum seekers for each year.

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Useful Resources

CIA	www.cia.gov
Human Rights Watch	www.hrw.org
Amnesty	www.web.amnesty.org
Refugee Council	www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
General search by country	www.google.co.uk
Guardian	www.guardian.co.uk

Discussion

Feed findings into a more general discussion to why people have left their homes for refuge in another country.

5. Human rights

Why should we open our borders to asylum seekers?

Declaration of human rights: handout

The United Nations created the universal declaration of human rights in 1946 to protect the individual's rights:

1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.
3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.
5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

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8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

11. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

13. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

14. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

15. Everyone has the right to a nationality.

No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

16. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

17. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

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18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

20. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

21. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

23. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

25. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

26. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the

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elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

27. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

29. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

Question:

Do you agree with all of these points? Do you enjoy all of these freedoms? Which of these freedoms are limited in certain societies?

Activity: Role play

The following is an appeal statement given by a Kurdish asylum seeker who had been refused asylum but was making appeal through a legal representative, against this decision. In what way (if any) has the human rights bill been broken in this individual's statement? Do you think that this person should be let into Britain?

In partners, using this appeal case, one should play out the role of asylum seeker and the other, the immigration officer.

Setting: legal office in immigration centre.

Problem: should the asylum seeker be granted residency in the UK. Why? Why not?

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At the end of the exercise the student playing the immigration officer should present the case, and the decision to the class.

APPEAL STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S REFUSAL LETTER

I, NAME will say as follows in response to the Secretary of State's "Reasons for Refusal" letter:-

Firstly, for the court's convenience, I wish to repeat and add more detail to the statement I first made in connection with my claim for asylum. I would like to make it clear that the events I describe are a representative selection. It would not be possible to describe all the discrimination and persecution I have experienced without using an excessive number of pages.

I am a Kurd and have therefore experienced discrimination for most of my life. My first experience of this was when I started attending school in about 1982. The teachers didn't want to teach Kurdish students and so I we were neglected and forced to do cleaning and other menial tasks.

Kurdish students were about 20% of the population in my area. The school was 3km from my house and I had to walk to and from it daily. Due to all the problems and discrimination in school I only attended for three years and was effectively prevented from gaining an education.

After leaving school, I would help my family in farming. In the summer of 1990, my whole family were working in a cotton field in Altineveler. Suddenly, ten soldiers appeared and began shouting at us. They accused us of supporting the PKK. They then began to hit us with the butts of their rifles and took me, my brother and father away.

5. We were taken to an army base and interrogated for two days. We were not given any food, only water. We were accused of having a connection with some PKK forces based in the mountains. The soldiers arrested us because we were Kurdish and therefore they automatically assumed we were members or supporters of the PKK. During the interrogation, the soldiers continued to beat us but after two days we were released. Despite getting no information, we were still branded as suspects who were connected to the PKK.

In the autumn of 1995, a friend and I were driving herds of sheep in the mountains when some soldiers arrived. The soldiers searched us for weapons and discovered an air rifle. We often carry these in order to scare wolves away. When the soldiers found the rifle, they began to beat us and told us we were not allowed to carry air rifles. They took all our food and one of our sheep. They were very violent and

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abusive and again accused us of terrorism. I explained that I was joining the army next year and so how could I be a terrorist? They again started to hit me and my dog tried to defend me. One of the soldiers shot it.

Between February 1996 and August 1997, I performed my military service. I again experienced discrimination and persecution based on my ethnic origin. Often, other Kurds and I were not given rifles. When we were, we were given fewer bullets than Turkish soldiers. We would only receive 10 while Turkish soldiers got 100. We were also given all the dirty cleaning jobs. In operations, Kurds would be put in the front line so that if there was any fighting, we would be killed first. We only received a couple of days leave: Turkish soldiers got more. We also were beaten up frequently by Turkish soldiers, but eventually we got used to this.

Whilst in the military service, myself and other Kurds were ordered to go to the houses of Kurds and destroy their supplies of food. We were told that Kurds were suspected of giving food to the terrorists. I believe that we were forced to do this duty to humiliate us and force us to hurt our own people. Kurdish soldiers were forced to do a longer military service than Turks.

After leaving the army, I applied for a passport because I thought that having just performed my military service, the authorities may be more willing to grant me a passport. I went to the local village police station to enquire about my application about once a week for about 3 months, but I was always told that it hadn't arrived and that I should come back later. I know of lots of Kurds who have applied for passports, but none who have been given one. For this reason, I gave up after 3 months.

In winter 1998, in January or February, 15-20 soldiers came to our house at night and took my whole family to the army station. Soldiers do not have to give you a reason, but simply take you away. While they were trying to get us out of the house, they beat us with the butts of their rifles and dragged my mother and sister by their hair. We were again accused of assisting the PKK and kept in separate rooms for the night. During the interrogation, we were sprayed with freezing cold water under high pressure. Because it was winter, this was unbearable and made us freeze. When we returned home, we realised that some soldiers must have stayed behind because our home had been completely wrecked.

Soldiers would come to our house very frequently and arrest us, so, in the summer of 1999, my brother managed to escape the country with his wife. At this time, my brother was living with his wife separately from our family and he was able to arrange his escape more quickly. My brother was not a member of the PKK, but would sometimes distribute leaflets on their behalf. After my brother left, soldiers came to our home very often to ask about my brother and I was often arrested. For example, my father and I were once arrested and taken to the army station. We were interrogated about the whereabouts of my brother. We were beaten and tortured. The soldiers held a strong light to our faces which made our skin flake away. After three days imprisonment with water only, we were released. This kind

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of treatment was common for Kurds and it became a normality to be detained for no reason.

It was this incident in summer 1999 that was the 'straw that broke the camel's back' and I decided that I had to escape from Turkey. From that day onwards, I tried to think about how to escape. This was difficult however because soldiers would prevent Kurds from leaving their village unless they had a very good reason. To travel out of one area, it was necessary to obtain a travel pass from the soldiers. In February 2000, I went to another village within the jurisdiction of the local police station. I joined my uncle and travelled in his van to Istanbul. My uncle was able to travel because he was a trader and had a special pass to allow him to drive his van between cities.

In Istanbul, my uncle arranged my travel with an agent he knew there and I escaped. I travelled through Europe in a lorry. We had all food and necessary provisions in the lorry and never left it. I placed myself in the hands of the agent and trusted him to take me to a place of safety.

6. With or without borders?

The UK process of dealing with asylum applications. Does it work?

How it all works?

Entry into the UK

The 1999 Act makes it a criminal offence for an asylum seeker to try to enter or remain

in the UK using 'deception'. However, refugees are often forced by their circumstances

to escape using false documents. If the authorities in their home country are persecuting their citizens, they are unlikely to also grant them a passport. As well as a passport,

many refugees come from countries where they have to obtain a visa before travelling to the UK. Airline liaison officers (UK immigration officers) are placed in many airports

abroad to prevent people travelling without correct documents. To complete the cordon, Britain penalises air companies, shipping agents, road hauliers, buses, trains, etc. who

are found to have brought undocumented 'aliens', including asylum seekers, into the country. The penalty is currently £2,000 per 'illegal entrant'.

'Safe' Third Countries

European Union (EU) states, Canada, the USA, Switzerland and Norway are all deemed by the Home Office to be countries where a person is safe from persecution. People who travelled to the UK via any of these countries may have their asylum

application refused on the grounds that they could have applied for asylum there,

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before coming to the UK. This principle was formalised under the Dublin Convention in 1990, which the UK is party to. In August 1999, the High Court ruled that an asylum seeker

cannot be returned to a third country where different policies on asylum mean that there

is a risk that he/she would be returned to his/her home country.

Current Asylum Procedure

Under the 1951 UN Convention, a refugee must be outside his/her own country. If a person has already left their own country, and wishes to apply for asylum in the UK while staying temporarily in a third country, the UK authorities assume that they should claim asylum in that third country, providing it is safe. Occasionally, groups of people will be recognised as needing protection before they come to the UK. This usually involves

large-scale humanitarian evacuations, such as from Kosovo in 1999 or Vietnam in the 1970s and 1980s (which brought lots of Vietnamese to Cambridgeshire). In the mid-1990s about 2,500 Bosnians were allowed to enter the UK for six months under the new classification of 'temporary refuge'. Some Bosnians who wished to stay in the UK after their leave expired, also made individual asylum claims. Asylum claims are initially considered by the Home Office. Rejected applicants may appeal against this decision.

Detention

Under the Immigration Act 1971, asylum seekers may be held in immigration detention centres or even prisons while their claim is considered by the Home Office. There is no time limit on their period of detention and they do not usually receive written reasons for their detention. Oakington Immigration Centre (near Huntingdon outside Cambridge) is one of such centres, here asylum seekers are looked after for a maximum of 10 days, given accommodation, food and medical care while in detention, while their claim for asylum is questioned. There are many centres similar to Oakington.

Housing Centres

New types of accommodation centres for asylum seekers are in the Government's new proposals. People will stay there whilst waiting for a decision on their asylum application and they are intended to be quick processing centres, dealing with people's claims quickly from start to finish, whereas the detention centres only deal with the beginning of the claim and then disperse individuals to other centres. Those whose claims are rejected will be transferred straight to a removal centre.

On a trial basis, four new accommodation centres with 750 bed spaces each will be opened as soon 'as possible'. The centres will offer full-board accommodation with on-site access to "basic health care, education for children and purposeful activity for adults" (explanatory notes, Statement to the Commons 29/10/01).

As far as we know, asylum seekers will not be forced to stay in these centres (unlike the detention centres), but if someone turns down a place and chooses to stay elsewhere, they will not be entitled to any form of financial support. A small cash allowance will be available, there will be access to legal advice and interpreting

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and the network of accommodation centres may take over from the current system of dispersal in the long term, subject to the outcome of pilot schemes in the UK and evidence from other countries.

Legal Aid

In principle, Legal Aid for asylum seekers is available throughout the application process from the Refugee Legal Centre, the Immigration Advisory Service, from other NGOs (non governmental organisations) and from a limited number of solicitors. However, the right of asylum seekers to free legal advice is severely limited by the shortage of competent legal advice in the regions, and of funding for such advice elsewhere.

Rights and Entitlements

- Asylum Seekers

While waiting for a decision on their application, asylum seekers may only receive accommodation and benefits (mostly in the form of vouchers) if the National Asylum Support Services (NASS) confirm them to be destitute. Accommodation and benefits can only be granted in the specific location assigned to the asylum seeker by NASS.

All asylum seekers are entitled to free health care, and primary and secondary education for their children. The Refugee Council offers state-funded English language training. Asylum seekers who have been waiting for a decision for six months will normally be given permission to work, as at present - although this is under government review.

- Refugees

Recognised refugees are generally accorded the same social, economic and cultural rights as citizens, including access to employment, welfare, social housing and education.

Recognised refugees are granted immediate permanent residence. In most cases, they may apply for British citizenship five years after their arrival in the UK. They are entitled to a UN Convention Travel Document and to apply for their family to be with them.

- Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)

Persons who are granted ELR are entitled to most of the rights of refugees. They are, however, not eligible for Convention Travel Documents; nor can they apply for family reunification until they have completed four years' residence in Britain.

Local Integration

Many NGOs and cultural organisations help refugees to integrate into British society. Nonetheless, social exclusion is a problem among refugee communities. There is a worrying trend of increased numbers of racially motivated attacks in the UK. 1999 saw a rise in verbal and physical attacks on asylum-seekers, particularly with the high profile violence in Dover (see article below).

Activity

Present the whole article, or extracts to the class and ask them to form a barometer-

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to the left if they share Mrs Dodd's view- that asylum seekers should not be allowed entry, or would they take the line of the refugee council, pro asylum seekers. Discuss- Why? What needs to change to make the situation better?

Dover, no port in a storm for refugees

Refugees in Britain: special report

http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/Refugees_in_Britain

Vikram Dodd

Tuesday March 28, The Guardian, 2000

In a special series Guardian reporters look at the experience of asylum seekers in Britain and the bitter politics that lie behind a question that stirs the deepest of emotions. Today: the arrival Impact on the south coast has led to claims of lives of luxury

In the garden of England, a hatred is kindling. Dover is being torn apart by the presence of 700 asylum seekers and 1,400 of the port's 30,000 residents have signed a petition protesting at Kent county council's decision to add £3 to the council tax to pay for the upkeep of the refugees.

Sitting in her garden, petition organiser Sheila Farrell rails against the asylum seekers. She is joined by Chris Ryan, a former fisherman, who is appalled by the impact of the newcomers on Dover. "We're trying to do something for the residents and we get called racist," says Mrs Farrell.

It is not hard to see why. Mrs Farrell, together with a teacher, was behind a leaflet called Dover the Land of Plenty and subtitled "refugees, 33 reasons why we should send them back and close the door".

Reason number nine claims that the local hospital has advised that should anyone have "any blood contact with these people, then medical help is of the utmost importance".

Reason number 13 reads: "Pregnant refugee mothers only want brand new equipment for their new offspring. Are these infants now entitled to hold a British passport to success now that they have been born in our local hospitals?"

Reason number 21 reads: "No medical checks on refugees, with the knowledge of their promiscuity and selling sex for money, who is to answer for the epidemic of venereal disease that will undoubtedly become rife."

It would be wrong to dismiss Mrs Farrell as heartless. In that contradiction of Englishness, Mrs Farrell is kind to animals, and keeps a bird pool in her neat garden while disliking some human beings.

Chris Ryan claims that only one in 10 of asylum seekers has a case. "At the start about 90% were genuine and 10% bogus, it's the other way round now. "People are resisting because of what they've got. They're on benefits, they're walking around with mobile phones, the latest clothes and cars. They're having the life of luxury on it. Some are sending back £500 in cash a week to Romania." Mrs Farrell joins in: "They're going into travel agents and booking flights for their families. In the post office there was uproar as one man was getting £700 in cash."

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Requests for names and proof are unheeded.

Last summer the tension led to clashes between gangs of local youths and asylum seekers at a funfair. Local councils managed to get a dispersal system enacted and have halved the numbers of refugees in the Dover area. While the government's strategy struggles to get off the ground, Kent's reduction in refugee numbers is credited with taking some of the heat out of the situation locally.

New asylum seekers are still arriving. One is Pavel, 32, a Roma from the Czech Republic. He came to Britain in January with his wife, Natasha, 31, and four children. He says that twice in his homeland a skinhead gang broke into his flat and the first time, using baseball bats, chains and sticks, attacked him, his wife and their children.

After the first attack he was in hospital for three weeks. His children were so traumatised that they required psychiatric counselling. "They were scared of loud shouting and had nightmares," says Pavel.

Reprisal fear

He and his wife were attacked and humiliated in the street by skinheads, in a town he does not want to name for fear of reprisals if he is sent back. "The main feeling we experienced was a lack of basic dignity," says Natasha.

Pavel's family of six are now living in one room of a house on £188.09 a week. They flew to Britain separately and applied for asylum at Heathrow, but came to Dover where there were already family members.

The furore over asylum seekers in sections of the press, mirroring the mood among some in Dover, has produced more than just anti-refugee rhetoric.

Some like Farid Kohistani, 26, from Afghanistan, have been physically attacked and he says that every day he is verbally abused. "The white tribes don't like us, we don't like them. Especially the Dover people." Now when he is sworn at, he swears back.

The spikiness of this young man melts away when Farid talks about why he fled Afghanistan. He and his family were opposed to the Taliban regime. Farid himself fought against them. Within three months of the Taliban taking control of Kabul, Farid's father was murdered. His brother was killed in front of his mother and then she herself was killed. He does not know how they were killed, and he never even got to bury them.

Farid arrived in Dover in July 1999. An uncle paid \$9,000 (£5,600) to an agent who got him a false Pakistani passport. From Afghanistan he flew to Moscow, from where he came to Britain in the back of a lorry. The overland journey took 33 days.

"I never knew what country we were in. There were 12 people in the truck. You could never feel good, you're frightened of being caught."

Farid, who fears being murdered if returned to Afghanistan, was caught at Dover docks after police checked the truck. Within weeks of arriving he was attacked. Farid said: "I was on the Folkestone road. There were three of us, and four of them. They used bad language, at this time I didn't know what they said. They attacked us. They punched me in my body. It lasted three to four minutes. Nobody helped us."

Now Farid makes sure that he goes out with four or five other people at night to

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minimise the chances of being attacked, or losing the fight.

Voucher humiliation

He has £37 worth of vouchers a week to live on and £10 cash. "When I use the vouchers in shops, it is horrible, horrible. The other shoppers stare, they look very bad. I feel humiliated. When you go to the shopping centre you are made to feel you're an animal, you're a dog."

If the voucher system and the media attacks were designed to put pressure on asylum seekers to leave, then they are working. Farid said: "When the war in Afghanistan finishes, I go back the first day. Before I was very relaxed. Now if the English use bad language, I'm ready to fight back. All asylum seekers are."

Farid stays in a hostel, owned by a woman who does not want to be named. Her windows have been broken, and she was assaulted after trying to help a refugee who was being attacked.

The hostel she runs tries to provide a family atmosphere for the mainly young asylum seekers it houses. At dinner the victims of failed geo-politics - Afghans, Iraqis and Kosovans - gather in the dining room for a vegetable curry and rice. Afghani music is playing in the background, the different nationalities take it in turns to listen to their different sounds.

Rahim, not his real name, is one of 800 unaccompanied minors in Kent. Aged 15, he came to Britain from north Afghanistan in June last year. He soon regrets telling his story, and as we leave he follows, pleading that his real name is not used. He fears that his classmates will turn hostile if they realise he is an asylum seeker. "I'm at college, no one knows I'm a refugee there. If my name is in your paper, I can't go to college. It's hard, someone will swear."

Rahim has a one year visa to stay. "I've seen hundreds of killings. My house was near a mosque where they were killing people. They washed the blood off afterwards." He last saw his parents a year ago and does not know if they are alive or dead. He arrived in the back of a lorry, and does not realise that he arrived in Dover from France.

There is little infrastructure in place to help the refugees. Every Wednesday in a drafty hall belonging to the United Reform Church asylum seekers gather for a drop in session.

Teenagers play table tennis and pool, children paint, adults sit and chat while volunteers help others to fill out forms for benefits.

On Tuesdays the church hall is used for English classes, run by the Reverend Norman Setchell. "I don't want to look back in five years time and hang our heads in shame because we haven't done enough," he says. "After two-and-a-half years this is still the only daytime place asylum seekers can come to in Dover.

"There seems to be a feeling that the vast majority, if not all, are here on an economic bandwagon. It doesn't seem to matter that you can show statistics about 50m nomads and refugees in the world.

"What bothers me is the fundamental lack of compassion coupled with the lack of knowledge and awareness of where these people come from."

In the church hall is community officer PC Norman Liggins. "Everytime the press

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attacks asylum seekers, it doesn't help the situation on the ground. As soon as it appears in the press, feelings begin to rise, you can sense it."

PC Liggins says much of the violence asylum seekers face is not reported.

A dossier prepared by Dover against racism lists over 20 attacks in the past year. Some victims are too scared to speak even with anonymity, while others, under the dispersal system, have left the area.

Despite the reduction in the numbers of asylum seekers, the attacks go on. Marcel Malik, 25, a Czech Roma who fled after repeated attacks by skinhead gangs, has been assaulted twice.

"This situation is much better than the Czech Republic, but I'm not safe here. We can go out, but we are scared."

His girlfriend's mother, a Roma, was also attacked in another incident where she was kicked by a male neighbour while on the ground.

Other incidents have seen refugees driven out of their homes and reports of numerous attacks on refugee children in the school system.

It is a sign of the strength of feeling the issue arouses in the town. Paul Watkins, leader of the Tory group on the Labour controlled Dover district council, says that tension is still "simmering under the surface".

He blames the government for not meeting the full cost leaving the council with a £400,000 shortfall.

Election issue

Conservative canvass returns for a council byelection in Castle ward show immigration as the first or second most important issue. At the next general election Mr Watkins will be the Tory candidate for the Dover and Deal constituency, which Labour's Gwyn Prosser holds with an 11,739 majority.

Mr Watkins says: "This will be the main local issue in parts of the constituency. It shouldn't be down to local people to fund a national problem, that in itself is one of the reasons for local tension and the government has caused that tension by not meeting the cost."

Back in Mrs Farrell's garden Chris Ryan predicts that the asylum seeker issue will cost Labour the seat. He voted for them in 1997: "I can see them losing the election on this. Mr Prosser hasn't come out and made a statement about what they are going to do. He talked about dispersal, but it's not happening."

On the Folkestone road, a white resident who did not want to be named, cannot believe the hatred the asylum seekers encounter. "The problems are overblown. A lot of those creating trouble are like sheep and listen to people who have nothing to say.

"People will tell you the refugees are all thieves, it's unbelievable what you hear. It makes me ashamed to be British. I think Dover has something to be ashamed of. I don't know what kind of noose we're making for ourselves."

An effective system? Britain takes in less than 2% of the world's refugees. Out of 19,520 asylum applications so far this year, 8,145 have been granted refugee status

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or exceptional leave to remain.

Discuss

Do you think this is an effective system? What is good about it, what is bad? Do you think we should let more or less people in? What are the problems?

Exercise

Ask the students to draft their own policies for asylum seekers using a flow chart system, as on p.21.

Wind up discussion

Asking some of the students to describe their models question whether they would make it easier or more difficult to gain entry into the country and why?

NB. More resources are listed at the back of the pack.

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von Horváth

ODON von Horváth was born in Fiume (now Rijeka) near Trieste on 9 December 1901. His father being a diplomat meant that the family moved from country to country. "I am a melange of Old Austria; Hungarian, Croat, Czech, German; alas, nothing Semitic". German became his main language. In 1924 he moved to Berlin where the stimulating artistic and political atmosphere suited him admirably. His *Italienische Nacht* (Italian Night), premiered on March 1931 and caused considerable excitement, if only for the Nazi fury that it aroused. The greatest success of his life came in November of the same year (1931) when *Gesichichten aus dem Wiener Wald* (Tales from the Vienna Woods) with a star cast, including Peter Lorre and Carola Neher, appeared at the leading Deutsches Theater. Also in 1931 he was co-recipient of the highly regarded Kleist-Prize.

His interests were social rather than overtly political although in much of his work he displays strong political vision, foreseeing even as early as 1926 the rise of fascism and the danger and hypocrisy of those in power.

On the day of the 'Anschluss' (13 March 1938) Horváth fled from Vienna to Budapest (he had retained Hungarian nationality). Then came brief stays, in helpless flight, in many major cities. In Amsterdam a clairvoyant - Horváth was very superstitious - urged him to go to Paris where "the most decisive event of his life" would happen. She was right. While sheltering under a tree there, during a thunderstorm, Horváth was killed instantly by a falling branch. He was 36 years old. Read Christopher Hampton's play *Tales From Hollywood*, which offers a humorous account of what would have happened if Horváth would have made it in Hollywood.

His output in that short lifetime totalled twenty-one plays and four prose works. A selection of some of his translated into English are listed at the back of the pack. For a more comprehensive biography and reading list see von Horváth: *Plays One*, London: Oberon, 2000.

Research exercise

Research the rise of German Nazism and read Brecht's *Mother Courage and* compare with *Back and Forth*. This could form the basis of an essay in political theatre, taking a comparative approach between the two writers.

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Forum Theatre

Forum theatre was developed over twenty years ago by the Brazilian theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal, in response to repressive regimes in Latin America. It is an interactive technique, which allows the audience the chance to get physically involved with the issues presented in the play, and allows them to try out their own solutions to the problems faced by the characters.

Forum often offers a safe space where individuals can experiment with ideas. However, intervention is not compulsory and much can be learnt from the sidelines. It is the process of debate, rather than the arrival of a solution that invigorates the audience so that participants truly enter into a dialogue in seeing many different viewpoints and exploring an issue. Participants should have fun with forum but take it seriously.

The forum model is flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of the participants. The basic model is as follows:

A number of scenes are played out in front of an audience without interruption.

The themes of the play should reflect, in some way, the concerns of the people watching.

Characters within the play are shown to face a series of obstacles, or challenges (this may be the main protagonist only, or several characters)

The play is performed a second time/ or the audience choose which scenes they want played again.

This time, the audience, (spect-actors), are invited to stop the action and intervene wherever they feel they would have handled the situation differently (it works best to choose a small number of characters).

The actors improvise with the spect-actors' interventions.

The process is facilitated by a 'joker', a neutral figure, who is neither an actor nor an audience member who encourages spect-actors to intervene without favouring any response over another.

Some practical suggestions for use in the classroom:

1. Using scenes 8 and 9 (following page), three students act out the parts of Konstantin, Havlicek and Mrs Hanusch, with their scripts in hand. (Perhaps after a very short rehearsal period)

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The scenes are played out to the rest of the class without interruption.

The scenes are played out again but this time whenever anyone thinks they can change the action and make life for Havlicek easier, or harder as the case may be, then they should shout 'STOP' and take the place of their class-mate.

After a number of interventions follow up with a discussion of what the best scenario would be.

Devise around the article on the following page

Divide the class into groups of 4: one person in each group should take the role of a British consulate, one, an Australian immigration officer and the others, the two little boys.

After each group has read the article they should imagine themselves on an imaginary bridge, like the one in Back and Forth. One side represents the Australian authorities, the other, the British. The boys are in between the two authorities.

The groups should be left to explore different scenarios in their respective characters (max. 15 minutes) and come up with the most favoured.

Present the final outcome to the class.

After the first group have presented their work, class members (spect-actors) should be encouraged to step in and exchange parts with the actors so that they show the solutions they explored in their individual groups. NB. Only one actor is replaced each time at the shout of 'STOP'.

Scenes 8 and 9 for use with forum

8. (Right Bank)

Havlicek goes on his way again, on tip toe, and comes thus to the further bank of the river. The border guard, Konstantin, is already standing there on the bridge, next to his half falling down robber baron's tower. This border official is a smart man with a dashing uniform, and he gives the impression of being friendly. Havlicek gives him a slight bow, and the music stops again.

KONSTANTIN Your border pass, please.

HAVLICEK Unfortunately I can only offer you this - he gives him his expulsion card.

KONSTANTIN Looking him up and down. Aha. A deportation.

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HAVLICEK Within forty-eight hours.

KONSTANTIN Expelled.

HAVLICEK Because I wouldn't cooperate.

Silence.

KONSTANTIN And now you want to come over here to us.

HAVLICEK Want? I have to.

KONSTANTIN But you won't be able to.

HAVLICEK Why?

KONSTANTIN You don't belong to our state.

HAVLICEK Why not, I'd like to know?

KONSTANTIN Because you're a foreigner.

HAVLICEK Interesting - the border post over there insists that officially I belong over here due to the fact of my birth being over here at the time.

KONSTANTIN That alone doesn't fulfill the requirement. We adopted a law twenty years ago that any citizens living abroad must, without exception, register at the appropriate Consulate within five years, otherwise they'll automatically lose their citizenship.

HAVLICEK Why?

KONSTANTIN Just because.

HAVLICEK It's new to me.

KONSTANTIN A notice regarding the law was placed in all daily newspapers.

HAVLICEK But I never read the notices - at most the obituaries section.

KONSTANTIN That's your fault. Due to the fact that you only read the obituaries, you have, as a matter of course, failed to observe the registration period and therefore automatically no longer belong here.

HAVLICEK Very interesting. But: where do I belong then, I'd like to know?

KONSTANTIN Nowhere.

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Silence.

HAVLICEK Smiles. 'Nowhere' - nonsense. I do still exist after all.

KONSTANTIN The law's the law.

HAVLICEK But such laws are inhuman.

KONSTANTIN Many a personal fate has been crushed by the day-to-day workings of the state.

HAVLICEK Pity.

Silence.

KONSTANTIN Short and sweet: There is absolutely no question of you being allowed through here, I've got my strict instructions. But you know what you can do? Write a detailed application to our home office minister, and better still also to the foreign minister, that you failed to observe the required period for registration, and that you would like to now reapply for your automatically disabled citizenship. Write to the finance minister at the same time, since the issue relates to him as well, and if you were ever a soldier, then preferably to the minister for war as well. And of course, first and foremost to the minister for Welfare, but the best course would of course be to hand an extra application directly to President himself in person -

HAVLICEK Stop! Holds his head. Dear Sir, how does one actually write such applications?

KONSTANTIN Yes... you'd better ask an attorney about that.

HAVLICEK Where? Here on the bridge?

9. (Right Bank)

Mrs Hanusch, the lady post officer, appears with a flask.

KONSTANTIN That is kind of you, Mrs Hanusch. Fancy that, the lady post officer herself bringing me my night-time coffee today, rather than Klara. My thanks!

HANUSCH I've chased Klara to the devil - I can't pay her wages any more, my business is going down the pan! The proud post office guest house - a hundred and thirty-two years in the family. You know how it is, the husband dies and...

KONSTANTIN Come on, you'll find yourself another man, I'm sure of it.

HANUSCH Glad about you are. But until then I'm on my last legs. A hotel can't survive without a man. True, I was the one who did all the work: cooked, cleaned

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and did the books. He never actually did anything, my other half - he just sat there with the regulars and drank and played cards - it's just that someone has to be there to represent the place.

HAVLICEK [Aside. That sounds like my kind of career.]

KONSTANTIN Console yourself, Mrs Hanusch!

HANUSCH How, I'd like to know. You of course've got it easy, Mr Konstantin. You stand around there, check people, and make a living from it - but me! If I haven't drummed up ten thousand by tomorrow midday, then I'll do for myself.

KONSTANTIN Please!

HANUSCH Well do you think I'll find ten thousand by tomorrow morning?

KONSTANTIN Hardly.

HANUSCH Never!

HAVLICEK It would be a miracle.

KONSTANTIN has momentarily forgotten Havlicek, is now annoyed with himself and is therefore somewhat sharp. What did you say?

Silence.

HANUSCH Who is this gentleman then?

KONSTANTIN No one. Official case.

HAVLICEK Please forgive my interfering with my miracle.

KONSTANTIN Interrupts him. Right, back you go then! You've got no business here!

HAVLICEK Interesting! I'll tell them that over there. He gives Konstantin a light bow once more, and turns to leave, but stops again suddenly. I'm off, but one more thing, I nearly forgot: greetings of the most familiar sort from Mr Thomas Szamek -

KONSTANTIN Perplexed. Szamek?

HAVLICEK The very same. The border guard over there - and he asked me to tell you that his daughter is unable to come over here this evening.

Silence.

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KONSTANTIN To Mrs Hanusch. Did you hear that?

HANUSCH High and mighty!

KONSTANTIN An cruel father. 'Snot enough that he's tyrannising his delicate daughter - he has to make make fun of me too. To Havlicek. Right, tell this Szamek that Mr Konstantin returns his greetings in the most familiar manner, and that he is looking forward to seeing his daughter tonight.

HAVLICEK I'll let him know. Exits.

Government accused of breaching rights Runaways seeking asylum turned away
Ewen MacAskill, diplomatic editor Friday July 19, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>,
The Guardian.

Human rights organisations accused the British government of being heartless yesterday after it rejected a plea for help from two children seeking asylum at its consulate in Melbourne.

The organisations also challenged the legality of the move, claiming it was in breach of an international convention on the rights of children.

The two boys, aged 12 and 13, were being held last night at a detention centre in Melbourne. They had turned up at the consulate at 10am accompanied by a woman, who left them there.

The boys, who are Afghans or Pakistanis, escaped last month during a mass break-out from the Woomera detention centre, scene of hunger strikes, riots and suicide attempts, and travelled more than 600 miles to Melbourne.

The consulate staff gave them food and drink and informed London. Outside the consulate, 15 Australian federal and state police waited for the boys.

After eight hours, the consulate staff handed them over and the boys were taken away in tears to Maribyrnong detention centre. According to Australian officials, they are likely to be returned to Woomera in the next few days.

The Australian government, whose prime minister, John Howard, has won popularity with his tough approach to asylum seekers, claims the two are Pakistanis and, therefore, economic refugees, rather than Afghans.

Michael O'Brien, the Foreign Office minister, defending the consulate decision, expressed sympathy for the boys but insisted: "Our international obligations were to hand the applicants back to the Australian authorities who under international law have the responsibility to consider applications for asylum. It is not our responsibility to take applications for asylum to Australia or, indeed, in other countries."

A Foreign Office spokesman said consulates have no leeway to act otherwise: they operate under the 1951 UN convention on refugees, which states that asylum is a matter for the country in which they arrive.

Neil Durkin, a spokesman for the human rights organisation Amnesty, claimed that consulates did have discretion and that the decision had been made too hastily: "This flies in the face of a normal humanitarian response."

Disputing that the Foreign Office was bound by the 1951 law, he said this was

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superseded by an 1989 UN convention that placed an obligation on signatories to safeguard the primary rights of children.

The London-based Refugee Council joined the criticism: "Australia has been widely condemned internationally for not adhering to the UN convention in terms of standards of keeping asylum seekers."

The boys' lawyer, Eric Vadarlis, said he had retained a legal team in Britain to represent them.

"The British government...is endorsing this [Australian] government's view that children can be locked up by refusing to deal with their applications. That, in my view, is inhumane and barbaric."

Another of the boys' lawyers, Peter Birt, said that while in the consulate they had been "in the custody and care of the British government because they had made a claim for asylum". He claimed that the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, made the decision to reject their applications.

Mr Vadarlis said the elder brother had twice attempted suicide since the boys began their detention at Woomera in January 2001. Their mother and two sisters are also detained there.

Australia's immigration department said the boys' father, Ali Bakhtiyari, was living in Sydney on a temporary visa. He had arrived in Australia separately before the rest of his family.

The Australian immigration minister, Philip Ruddock, said his department had investigated their case four times and believed that the family was from Pakistan. He said granting the father a visa had been inappropriate and his visa was likely to be revoked.

Mr Bakhtiyari insisted he and his family were genuine Afghan refugees, and he had taken a language test to prove it. "My culture, my language, my face and my pronunciation show I'm Afghani," he said.

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Legislative Theatre

Augusto Boal developed a form of forum theatre for use in local government to create legislation. By dramatizing issues of immediate concern, local politicians foregrounded a dialogue and tested ideas in order to formulate creative and effective legislation to meet the needs of the people.

As in forum theatre the starting point are the people's concerns. Here concerns are played out through discussion and devising.

Interventions are made, attempting to find solutions to some of the problems raised.

Appropriate legislation is then drafted from the forum exercise, following the interventions and discussion, making laws in direct response to the debate and problems brought up.

The intention is that the forum theatre is played out to politicians, allowing them to intervene, and further gauge people's problems.

Theatre Royal, Stratford East devised a play illustrative of their problems, placed it in a forum environment to try and find solutions and then invited over 600 Ministers of Parliament to present what they would like to see changed: only 3 showed up! It is, however, only the beginning, and it will take a lot of time and convincing that such work should bear serious intent.

Activity

1. Either take issues that the students come up with and carry out legislative theatre, following the model outlined above.

Or

2. Use the case study on the following page to draft a policy for the needs of refugee children.

In groups, discuss Nikola's experiences, and then act them out through improvisation.

Choose one incident, which clearly shows that she is being oppressed, and create a frozen image of this.

Develop the image into a short scene which clearly shows Nikola's experience.

Share the scenes with the class and discuss.

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Choose one scene that you would like to work on as a whole group.

Forum the scene looking at the choices available to Nikola.

The interventions and discussion should after a while should be steered to finding out what needs to change?

These changes will form the basis of their legislation but keep encouraging debate and asking awkward questions so that all the people in the story's needs have been considered.

Case study

"When Nikola arrived in Britain, aged 11, she spoke no English. Within six months she was promoted from the bottom to the top stream at school.

She is now on a special register for gifted pupils."

A judge has intervened to allow a Slovakian family with a brain-injured child who are seeking asylum to remain in the UK.

The Garza family, who have attracted considerable interest and support from politicians and union leaders, were due to have been deported yesterday morning after 14 months in the UK.

Their solicitor, Azmina Hansraj, thought the family's last chance had failed when immigration officials at the Home Office refused to consider a fresh plea for asylum made on behalf of 21-month-old Vanesa over the holiday weekend. Officials said asylum applications had to contain all relevant information when they were first made. The family's original application was made more than a year ago in the name of Vanesa's father, Dusan, 32. However, the solicitor pointed out in her fresh plea that Vanesa's medical condition was not diagnosed until January this year, so all relevant information was unknown before then.

At noon yesterday, a judge issued an order of stay to prevent the deportation. Home Office officials refused to accept the order over the phone until the judge called them in person to say they had no choice and that the family must not be deported yesterday.

The ruling now gives the solicitor time to appeal against the decision to reject Vanesa's application, made on the grounds that her mixed ethnic origins would see her discriminated against in Slovakia so that she would not receive the care she needs.

Vanesa's mother, Agata, 34, is Slovakian, while Mr Garza is a member of the persecuted Roma minority. As a result, the family, which also includes Nikola, 13, and Adrian, 12, had been harassed and threatened in their home town of Kosice.

Vanesa was born two months prematurely after her mother suffered a racially motivated beating. Doctors believe the attack caused Vanesa's brain injury, which

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has delayed her development. She cannot walk or talk and is the size of a child half her age. She also has impaired sight and hearing.

The family lived in the community at Gateshead until March when they were taken to Dungavel detention centre in Ayrshire, the former prison. Last month, they were moved to Harmondsworth detention centre in Middlesex. Joan Moon, who befriended the family while they lived on Tyneside and who has campaigned on their behalf, said Mr and Mrs Garza had asked her to thank everyone for their support and prayers.

Campaigners for the family say Vanesa's sister Nikola has made great progress since she arrived in the UK and to deport her would be sentencing her to poverty.

When Nikola arrived in Britain, aged 11, she spoke no English. Within six months she was promoted from the bottom to the top stream at school. She is now on a special register for gifted pupils .

Nikola wrote a letter to the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, to appeal against his stance that asylum seekers' children should be educated separately in accommodation centres, away from local pupils.

For nearly seven months, she was educated in a mainstream school, but now shares classes with children in Harmondsworth detention centre in London. Joan Moon, Nikola's English teacher in Gateshead, said: "Schoolchildren are very quick to make friends and children like Nikola have to learn so they can communicate with them. In a detention centre, there is no motivation." On a visit to the family in Harmondsworth, Mrs Moon said she discovered that the children were receiving only a basic standard of education compared to the lessons they were receiving in school. She added that both Nikola and her brother Adrian have the ability to gain places at university.

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Additional Reading and Resources

Asylum, refuge and immigration

Novels

Naidoo, Beverly, *The Other Side of Truth*, London: Puffin, 2000

Highly recommended reading for students: two children have to flee Nigeria, at once and alone, to find safety in England, but how safe is it when they arrive?

Websites: resources and organisations

<http://www.web.amnesty.org>

Amnesty: promoting human rights around the world

<http://www.asylumsupport.info>

Asylum Support Information, for asylum seekers and about asylum seeking issues

<http://www.crsg.org.uk>

Cambridge Refugee Support Service: aiming to empower and support refugees and asylum seekers

<http://www.srcf.ucam.org>

CARD: Cambridge Against Refugee Detention

<http://www.cia.gov>

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency, USA. Briefs on variety of countries and political activity.

<http://www.ecre.org>

European Council on Refugees and Exiles

www.guardian.co.uk

Guardian/ Observer newspaper: articles on line with refugee/ asylum archive specials

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk>

Home office's online resource for immigration and nationality

<http://www.hrw.org>

Human Rights Watch: Monitoring of Human Rights around the world

<http://www.irr.org.uk>

Institute of Race Relations: Resources on refugees and asylum seekers including an online project 'Schools against deportations'

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<http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/tgwu.shtml>
MORI: National statistics on asylum seekers

<http://www.ncadc.org.uk>
National co-alition of anti-deportation campaigns

<http://oxfam.org.uk>
Oxfam's response to media reports and government proposals regarding asylum seekers

www.ramproject.co.uk
Refugees, asylum seekers and mass media
Promoting best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk Refugee Council, provides support for refugees and in-service training for teachers, advice to school, students and publications for use in class. Also publish InExile magazine.

<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk>
Refugee week organised by the arts council annually: encourage students to get involved next June

<http://www.unhcr.ch>
United Nations Refugee Agency

Horváth

A small selection of works translated into English-

A Sexual Congress (around 1928), translated by Penny Black, (London: Oberon Books, 2000)

Italian Night (1930s), translated by Meredith Oakes, (London: Oberon Books, 2000)

Sladek (around 1927), translated by Penny Black, (London: Oberon Books, 2000)

Tales from the Vienna Woods (1931), translated by Christopher Hampton, (London: Oberon, 2000)

The Belle Vue (1924), translated by Kenneth McLeish, (London: Oberon,1996).

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Augusto Boal and Forum Theatre

Augusto Boal and the Theater of the Oppressed <http://www.toplab.org/boalint.html> 1995.

Boal, Augusto Games for Actors and Non-actors, London/New York: Routledge, 1992.

Boal, Augusto The Rainbow of Desire: the Boal method of theatre and therapy, London/New York: Routledge, 1995.

Boal, Augusto The Sartrouville Experience: Theory/Practice/Three Hypotheses by Augusto Boal, Dartington: The Fifth Series, 1985.

Boal, Augusto Theater of the Oppressed, London: Pluto Press, 1979.

Cardboard Citizens <http://www.cardboardcitizens.org.uk>, 2002.

Delgado, Maria M In Contact with the Gods? Directors talk theatre, Manchester: and Heritage, Paul, eds Manchester University Press, 1996.

Hozier, Anthony, ed Documents on the Theatre of the Oppressed, London: Red Letters, 1985.

Leitch, Vincent B The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, New York/London: et al, eds Norton, 2001.

Schutzmann, Mady Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy and Activism, London/New York: and Cohen-Cruz, Routledge, 1994.
Jan, eds

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Evaluation

We would very much appreciate your feedback on Back and Forth: production and accompanying work. Please return comments to Context Theatre, 17 Wolverton Gardens, Ealing, London, W5 3LJ, or telephone 07779335997.

1. Using a scale of 1(poor) - 10 (excellent), please assess:
 - a. Quality of production. Why?

 - b. Workshop. Why?

 - c. Quality and efficiency of administration. Why?

 - d. Quality and usefulness of education pack. Why?

2. What else would you have liked explored in production/ education pack or workshop?

3. What, if any feedback did you receive from students?

4. What did you most like about Context Theatre's Back and Forth?

5. What could have been improved?

6. What future issues would you like explored by Context Theatre?