

NASIRA BEGUM'S FIGHT GOES ON

It is now almost two years since Nasira Begum first spoke openly of her case and said that she would resist Home Office attempts to deport her. In that two years the Home Office have used every opportunity to build a 'case' for her deportation. First they alleged that she had made a "marriage of convenience" to a British citizen with whom she was no longer living. When that failed to stand up in the Immigration Appeal Court, the Home Office advanced the most flimsy evidence that her husband was already married to someone else, and therefore could not possibly be legally married to Nasira. For this reason, they said, she was nobody's wife, and therefore had to be deported.

Despite this, however, Nasira did win her case last year before a Manchester Immigration Adjudicator, only to find that the Home Office, still determined to uphold their deportation order, had appealed against the decision made to let her stay.

The Home Office took another year to fix the date of that appeal which was eventually heard on June 22nd. On that day we heard no new evidence against Nasira. She had waited a year to hear the same allegations which were dismissed last June. Since Nasira first applied for permanent residence in 1976, she has faced an uncertain and insecure future which still remains undecided in the hands of the Home Office. The adjudicators who heard the appeal have said that they will consider the case in their own time and let Nasira know the outcome in writing. This is despite the fact that the Home Office will reconsider her case after the legal decision anyhow!

How much longer has Nasira to go on waiting while the authorities decide on her future?

Racial Discrimination

As in so many of these cases, Nasira's treatment has in many respects been worse than that of a criminal. Under the Immigration Laws black people are assumed guilty until they can prove themselves innocent of an alleged immigration 'offence'. Very often that 'offence' amounts to nothing more than being no longer dependent on a husband, father, or son; (in Nasira's case the Home Office representative said she would have nothing to lose by being deported since she has no husband or children to be separated from!); or being out of the country for more than two years; or failing to give information never asked for at the time of entry. For all these so-called crimes, people can be detained indefinitely without trial or charge.

Nasira's case cannot be seen in isolation here are a few of many cases in which women are fighting against deportation orders:

NASREEN AKHTAR Nasreen has three children, and the Home Office is attempting to deport her because they say that she was not legally married to her husband who has deserted her. One of her children was born in Britain, so the Home Office has given her the choice, the child has to be deported with her, or taken into care.

CYNTHIA GORDON is a Jamaican from Moss Side. The Home Office are trying to deport her because they say she forfeited her right to residence by leaving the country for more than two years. It means nothing to them that she had lived and worked in this country for more than 12 years.

JASWINDER KAUR Jaswinder has now won her right to stay in this country after a campaign was fought in her hometown, Leeds, which maintained that she and her son had the right to stay whether or not she was dependent on a man. She is settled and works in this country. She left her husband out of choice, but her and her supporters have insisted that this should not give the Home Office the right to deport her. Jaswinder won her case because of the publicity and support which the campaign had built up. This shows that campaigns can win and gives strength to other black women facing the same threats.

Who Gains?

Continued support for Nasira, Nasreen, and Cynthia is essential if their deportations are to be prevented, but such unjust practices are applied to many, many black throughout the country. The Home Office treatment of Nasira illustrates widespread discrimination of the most insidious. A clause in the Immigration Act states that black people may be deported if their residence here is considered to be "against the public good". What public good can be served by deporting Nasira, Nasreen, and Cynthia? It can only serve the interests of those who believe that black people should have no rights in this country, that they cause unemployment and bad housing, and that they are 'swamping' a white culture which should be preserved at all costs. The Home Office itself admits that the Immigration Act is designed to discriminate against black people. Here are the words of a Home Office lawyer in the High Court in October 1980:

"The whole system of Immigration control is based upon discrimination. It is the essence of the Immigration Act that people will be discriminated against on the grounds of race or nationality, and it is the function of certain officials to ensure that this discrimination is effective".

The campaigns to stop the deportations of these women are part of an anti-racist movement which maintains that black people should have the right to remain settled in this country free from the racist intimidation that the Home Office persistently sanctions under the Immigration Laws.

What you can do:

NASIRA NEEDS YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT. HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Write to the Home Secretary demanding that he make a decision to let Nasira stay immediately. (Queen Ann's Gate, Westminster, London).
2. Write to Nasira's MP, Gerald Kaufman, at the House of Commons, Westminster, London, encouraging him to pressurise the Home Office to make an immediate decision to let her stay.
3. Write to your own MP asking him to support and encourage Kaufman.
4. Send us a donation.
5. Write letters of support to Nasira and to the campaign.
6. Fill in the petition forms which we can supply.
7. Let us know if you can organise pickets/meetings in support of Nasira. We have a video film which we can provide, and we can send speakers if necessary.
8. Take up local immigration cases and let us know about them.
9. Support Nasreen and Cynthia. Their addresses are:
CYNTHIA GORDON ACTION GROUP, FRIENDS OF NASREEN AKHTAR
C/O MOSS SIDE PEOPLE'S CENTRE, 59 ASHWORTH STREET
ST. MARY'S ROAD, MOSS SIDE, ROCHDALE.
MANCHESTER.
10. All these women are potentially liable for arrest or detention. If this happens we'll need widespread protest and support (pickets etc). If you can be of assistance, please send us your contact address or telephone number.
11. COME TO THE NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION IN MANCHESTER AGAINST THE DEPORTATIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE, SEPTEMBER 5th. CONTACT ANY OF THE CAMPAIGNS FOR DETAILS.

DEMONSTRATION stop the deportations Sat. 5th Sept ~ Manchester

SUPPORTED BY:

All 4 defense campaigns, AYM - Bradford and Manchester; IWA (GB), KWA, Bradford CARL.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT ANY OF THE DEFENSE CAMPAIGNS

FRIENDS OF NASIRA BEGUM: C/O 595 STOCKPORT ROAD, LONGSIGHT, MANCHESTER. 061-225-5111

SUPPORTERS OF NASIRA INCLUDE:

National Union of Students, ASTMS, and other local union branches; National Women's Aid Federation, and local groups; North West TUC; South Glamorgan Assoc of Trades Councils; Sussex Assoc of Trades Councils; Lancashire Assoc of Trades Councils; many local Trades councils; NALGO, NUPE, National Union of Seamen; Boilermakers Union, ABEW. Many constituency Labour Parties, and local wards; ANL and anti-fascist Groups; AYM Manchester, Bradford, and Leicester, Muslim Community Centre Brighton; Pakistani Women's assoc; Pakistani Muslim Assoc Ilford, Pakistani Community Centre Longsight, IWA (GB); Approx 30 MP's, CRE's; Church Organisations.....