

PERSPECTIVES: A CAPITAL OF CULTURES

Immigration helps make the world as rich and diverse as we know it today. Not all migrants can be as famous and talented as Albert Einstein and Freddie Mercury but they all left their countries seeking the same goal – a better future, both for themselves and for their children. Over the next four pages, you

will see a selection of news features that were mainly written by migrants who have come to live in the UK. Together, these highly personal articles speak to this universal goal of a better future for all as they express their views on matters such as integration and participation in every aspect of London life.



'Brixton Belles': Photo by Emma Mapp, winner of the 'Cultural Mosaic' competition, who said: 'I took this light-hearted photo while waiting for the bus in Brixton.'

CREDITS

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LUOL DENG: A MAN TO LOOK UP TO

At 6ft 9in, Team GB's basketball star Luol Deng towers above most people but it's his story of escaping the Sudanese Civil War to become an NBA All-Star that offers inspiration to migrants, says Carlos Villegas

THIS summer, Luol Deng revisited London, the town he grew up in, with Team GB's basketball squad. The 27-year-old is now a star player for the Chicago Bulls and winner of three major sportsmanship awards for ethical behaviour, fair play and integrity on the court, but the Sudanese refugee has never forgotten his roots.

Deng was only five when he fled Sudan during the Second Sudanese Civil War to go to Egypt with his siblings and was separated from his father for several years. They were reunited when Deng moved to the UK when he was ten, following the decision to grant his father asylum in 1993.

His first impressions of the UK were that the country was 'very clean with a lot of glass buildings'. He lived in Brixton

at the time, which he felt was special – it felt like a family where everyone had similar problems. Young migrant men were focused on getting better at sport, particularly basketball.

'We needed to stick closer, work as a team and try harder to improve ourselves,' Deng recalls. It was tough, though, not speaking the language. Nowadays, Deng continues to speak his native Dinka with his family but also speaks Arabic and English and is learning Masai.

Deng believes it is very important that kids do not forget their roots, their mother tongue and their culture. He feels his Dinka language and culture gave him and his family a unique identity, strong values and the desire to work hard in a different education system. He became a British citizen in 2006 and says that he didn't have problems integrating into British society: 'I

came young and it was easy to learn the language.'

His respect for his parents meant he was always focused on having the right attitudes, not causing trouble and being disciplined. He says the family always thought they would be successful. His father remains one of the biggest inspirations of his life. He came from a humble background, from a small village, and rose to become the minister of education and transportation in Sudan. All of his family are doing well in the UK despite their struggles in his early life.

Deng was drafted into the NBA when he was 19. Away from the court, he has set up the Luol Deng Foundation to help children in South Sudan, the US and the UK who have not been as fortunate as himself.

He believes it's important not to be self-centred and says: 'Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile.'

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Did London 2012 leave a lasting legacy for British migrants, asks **Gary Buswell**

HAVE the London Olympics altered the negative perception of migrants in the media? 'Too early to say,' says Parvati Nair, Professor of cultural and migration studies at Queen Mary University, 'but what a legacy that would be.'

The London Olympics gave valuable space to those of us who want to celebrate a concept of Britishness that goes beyond idolising monarchy or monocultural identity.

Much has already been written about Mo Farah, the Somali-born 5,000m and 10,000m gold medallist and practising Muslim who is now one of Britain's most memorable and well-loved Olympians. Even tabloids more associated with immigration control have

delighted in his contribution to the success of London 2012, while the Evening Standard concluded that his victories highlight the benefits of immigration.

Altogether, 18 of Britain's Olympic medallists are first- or second-generation migrants. These include athlete Jessica Ennis, whose father is Jamaican, and cyclist Bradley Wiggins, born in Belgium to an Australian father.

Beyond the medallists, there were the 70,000 volunteers and more than 100,000 paid workers who reflected the vast diversity of the capital and were universally championed for making these games such a memorable experience.

From Danny Boyle's majestic opening ceremony to the

closing speech of Lord Coe, the London Olympics has shown that by celebrating our cultural richness, we can emerge with a meaningful national identity and pride. A legacy of the Games could be that this is now understood by a far wider number of people.

The question now is whether the sections of the media that are often negative in their portrayal of migrants who heralded the positive impact of London 2012 will emerge more balanced in their reporting on immigration issues in the long-term.

Mo diversity: The Olympic triumphs of Somali-born Mo Farah represent the benefits of immigration in the UK



PHOTO: PA

BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT MIGRANTS

Compiled by **Tania Farias, Tunde Akinfolajimi, Nicola Chelotti and Tala Sweiss**

Myth: Migrants are a drain on the economy

Fact: Migrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs. Migrants are more likely to start new businesses in the UK than non-migrants, meaning that rather than being a burden, they make a valuable contribution to the economy.

Myth: Migrants take jobs from young Britons

Fact: Immigration has no effect on unemployment. A report published recently by the National Institute for

Economic and Social Research (NIESR) – which uses data from National Insurance numbers – finds no link between the number of people migrating to the UK and the number of people claiming jobless benefits. The research suggests migration has no significant impact on unemployment during periods of low growth or the recent recession.

Myth: Migrants come to the UK and take our social housing

Fact: Migrants need to obtain a permanent residency or be a European Economic Area worker in order to be allocated social housing. This means that most new migrants, including asylum-seekers, students and work visa holders, are not eligible for social housing. A report from the Equality Human Rights Commission published in 2009 also showed that 90 per cent of people living in council homes are UK-born and fewer than two per cent are new migrants.

THE LONG ROAD TO TEACHING

Iranian teacher **Ashraf Javdani's** struggle to find a permanent position despite extensive experience highlights the fact that schools are missing out on valuable talent, argues **Beatrice Ngalula Kabutakapua**

ASHRAF Javdani left Iran for London in 2005, right before her country was hit by anti-governmental demonstrations. With 15 years' experience working as a teaching assistant, she was hoping to find a job as a teacher. She didn't expect it would be so hard.

'I've always loved teaching,' says Javdani (pictured right). 'I came here as a refugee, thinking I would learn English and get work. But it was really challenging.'

In her first year, Javdani improved her English and began her path towards working as a special educa-

tional needs teacher but a lack of information proved a problem. Overseas teachers wishing to work in the UK have to meet specific requirements. As well as a recognised UK degree equivalent, it is necessary to have GCSE English and maths (and sometimes a science subject), plus experience in a mainstream school classroom.

Unaware of the rules, Javdani instead decided to study biomedical science at university in 2007. 'I went to an information centre and was told I needed a degree,' she says. 'Nobody said to me I needed GCSE English.'

After Javdani got her honours

degree, she spent a frustrating year as a jobseeker. She recalls: 'Even the Job Centre adviser said to me: "I'm sorry, I don't know how to advise you. I don't know where I can send you."'

Luckily, Javdani decided to do some research of her own. She found the Refugees Into Teaching project at the Refugee Council, which recommended she contact Empowering Learning, a teacher training and recruitment agency. Through this, Javdani obtained a position as a special educational needs teaching assistant at Rokeby Secondary School in Canning Town.

Sarah Lawson, assistant head teacher at Rokeby, is full of praise for Javdani: 'No one else in the school has her range of expertise. She worked for many years with disabled students so had unique insights. Not only does Ashraf speak languages that no other member of staff speaks, she shares many experiences with some of our students that give her added insight.'

Lawson goes on to say Rokeby has had much success hiring foreign teachers such as Javdani and yet many

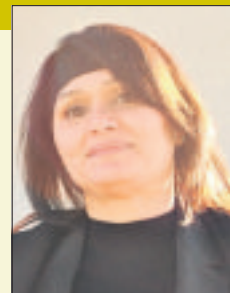


PHOTO: BEATRICE NGALULA KABUTAKAPUA

schools are missing out on the unique skills that highly qualified migrants have to offer. More work is needed to improve the information available to migrants, which should help bring more skilled workers into UK schools.

As for Javdani, she was offered a permanent position in January 2011 and now describes Rokeby as 'the most wonderful place' she has ever worked in. While she is now satisfied, Javdani plans to keep studying to improve her teaching skills.

A TASTE OF THE WORLD IN CAMDEN



PHOTO: GEORGIE KNAGGS

Georgie Knaggs samples the food on offer in Camden Lock as the multicultural market celebrates its 40th birthday

CAMDEN Lock Market, one of London's most popular craft markets, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The job of feeding its 15million annual visitors falls in large part to the chefs in the market's West Yard. Here, the cooking is personal – recipes are learned at home and flavoured with tastes from Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Take, for example, Sonita's Kitchen, run by Joe and Sonita Timur. Joe (pictured above) is half Turkish and half English, while his wife is from the Punjab state in north-west India. They sell fragrant, delicately spiced curries cooked without butter or ghee.

'It's a really good market because it's known as a food market,' says Joe. 'People come here specifically to eat.'

A little further along, Danish Mirza, the chef from Food In The Middle, is a chartered accountant from Pakistan. He worked in the City for eight years but now he sells paratha wraps, a popular street food in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city.

'I always wanted to do my own thing,' he explains. 'Karachi is a cos-

mopolitan city and people are always on the run. They are getting your traditional tikka and selling it in wraps. I went one step further and took my food, which is much healthier than street food, and put that into wraps.'

The West Yard has an ever changing selection of food. On some days, within the space of a couple of hundred yards, there will be the saffron colours of Spanish paella across from bright piles of French macarons. Barbecued Turkish kebabs might be found next to a pitch selling cauldrons of fresh English soup. The macaroni and cheese stall advertising a dessert of deep-fried Oreos might rub shoulders with the wide front of the Chinese stall selling dumplings and noodles. There might also be Italian pizza, Jamaican jerk wraps, Japanese sushi, sweet French crepes – and to finish it all, there will almost always be the warmth of Ethiopian coffee.

Indeed, at the weekend, when the West Yard is crammed with tourists and stalls of every flavour, it can be said that the whole world comes to lunch.

A SAFE HARBOUR FROM PREJUDICE

London is a political haven for the LGBT community but the refusal rate of LGBT asylum seekers claims is too high argue Paula Freitas, Rita Neme and Charlotte Mathysee

WHEN Eddie Mubiru left his home country last April and landed in the UK, he felt an overwhelming sense of relief. In January last year, a mob invaded his boyfriend's house in Kampala, Uganda, and he and his partner were arrested and taken to the police station, where they were violently attacked.

Uganda is one of 78 countries where gays and lesbians are persecuted, through physical harm, life imprisonment or even the death penalty. It's no surprise that people seek refuge in safer countries.

The UK presents itself as a country which celebrates equality and diversity. In October, Clare B Dimyon, an educator, archivist and exhibitor at PRIDE Solidarity, was presented with

an MBE medal for 'services to promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people in central and eastern Europe'.

Yet despite Home Office Detention Centres Rule 35, which states that torture victims must not be locked up except in exceptional circumstances, Mubiru was arrested and put in an immigration detention centre shortly after claiming asylum.

A report by Medical Justice earlier this year shows that torture victims are routinely held in immigration detention centres.

According to a study by the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group, the refusal rate for LGBT asylum claims is also much higher at 98 to 99 per cent compared with 73 per cent for all asylum claims.

PROSE IN PLIGHT

Hasani Hasani spends an evening at the Exiled Lit event at Covent Garden's Poetry Café

'A PARTHEID is the period I grew up in and it is the reason I came to the UK,' announced Shereen Pandit, an exiled writer from South Africa, as she took to the mic at a recent Exiled Lit event in London.

Held at the Poetry Café in London's Covent Garden each month, Exiled Lit is organised by Exiled Writers Ink. For the past 12 years it has offered a platform to writers such as Pandit to share their experiences through readings.

Founded by Jennifer Langer, the daughter of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, Exiled Writers Ink has become the destination of choice for international writers who face persecution in their home countries. Every first Monday of the month, the Poetry Café hosts writers from around the world. At the most recent event, Pandit (South Africa), Navid Hamzavi and Rouhi Sharifian (both from Iran) and Mogib Hassan (Yemen) shared the stage.

Pandit read from her novel *Burnt Child*, which chronicles the life of a South African exile in London. A lawyer by profession, she came to the UK with her husband in 1987 and has won the Booktrust London Award. During apartheid-era



PHOTO: AVARCO MOULNER

South Africa she was a political activist. 'I wanted to struggle for our freedom like other young people were doing,' she says.

Iransians Hamzavi and Sharifian both read short stories. Censorship by the notorious Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran meant half of Hamzavi's work could not even be published. 'In Iran, a best-seller can only hope to sell between 3,000 to 5,000 copies despite a population of 70million' explains Navid.

Hassan was attacked and detained last year in Yemen at the height of the Arab Spring. Now a citizen of the Netherlands, he came face to face with state brutality when he went back to Yemen. 'You cannot help to be an activist when you go back, because everything is possible,' he says.

To find out more about Exiled Writers Ink see www.exiledwriters.co.uk or email Jennifer@exiledwriters.fsnet.co.uk



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'IMMIGRATION IS GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY'



Cecilia Malmström, EU Home Affairs Commissioner, shares her views

What would you say to the following statement: 'Foreigners are taking our jobs'? This notion is often quoted but has no truth in it. As soon as there's a shortage of jobs, foreigners are the first to suffer. There are many immigrants from third world countries who are unemployed or overqualified for the jobs they have, such as bus and taxi drivers. We need to identify their skills and find them work in the sector they are qualified in. It's important to give foreigners the chance to fully partake in community life.

What factors hold people from third world countries back from participating in community life? In order to be an active citizen, it's necessary to have certain rights – the right to vote, the right to work. On the other hand, language also represents a barrier. It's impossible to integrate into a society without speaking the language.

Can Europe use the existing diverse population to improve communication with other countries, maybe even to prevent war? I think it is important to use the diversity that is present in our society to create economic relationships with other countries. For example, it could be beneficial when companies are expanding into new markets to give them an understanding of the culture of the new country. In a way, immigrants are sort of ambassadors for their country, both in their home country and abroad. They play a key role in enabling intercultural dialogue.

Interview by Saouli Quddus and Sükran Bulut

RADIO REACHES FARTHER THAN EVER BEFORE

The explosion of community radio in London has made it possible for many migrants to enjoy programming in their own language, says **Tania Farias**

WITH more than 300 languages spoken across London, community radios are increasingly realising the potential of broadcasting in languages other than English.

This is the case of London-based Resonance 104.4 FM, whose shows include foreign-language programmes aimed at London's diverse communities such as Hoggmaal, a programme about Somali culture in the UK and Somalia.

Ed Baxter, Resonance FM's CEO, explains that broadcasting in a foreign language offers a great opportunity to appeal to audiences not properly covered by mainstream media.

'In London there is this gigantic concentration of people with their [different] experiences and knowledge and forms of expressivity, and you want to try to absorb and articulate that,' he says.

True to its name, Afghan Voice, a popular internet radio station broadcasting in the Afghan languages Pashto and Dari, has striven to give a voice to the Afghan community in Britain since 2010.

'Listening to a radio that broadcasts in your own language could make you feel that you are welcome and you belong to it, that you are being noticed,' says Zubair Gharghasht (pictured above), the 27-year-old CEO and founder of Afghan Voice.

Gharghasht, a political science graduate and IT professional who



PHOTO: AV RADIO

moved from Afghanistan to the UK in 2009 for political reasons, adds: 'Europeans' perception of Afghanistan comes from a negative understanding from mainstream media of the war, the Taliban and so on. We started this project to change this negative perception of Afghans and Afghanistan.'

The station's programmes include both entertainment and news. Regular show Chit Chat, on Sundays at 12pm, discusses current affairs relating to the community, while Saaz o Awaaz is devoted to interviewing Afghan artists from around

the world either in the studio or by using Skype.

About a third of the station's 20,000 daily listeners are from Britain and a fifth from the US. The station broadcasts from Brighton but Afghan Voice's programmes can be streamed from the station's website – www.afghanvoice.org.uk – and are very popular in London, where a majority of the more than 56,000 Afghans estimated to reside in Britain live. Undoubtedly, this popularity will increase next year when Afghan Voice will move to London and get an FM frequency.

CHILDREN IN NEED

Despite legislation protecting the young, more than 100,000 children of 'irregular migrants' face an uncertain future, argues **Nando Sigona**

MORE than 120,000 children living in the UK are at risk of isolation and serialisation as a result of their status as 'irregular migrants', researchers have found.

The children, 65,000 of whom were born in the UK, often struggle to access basic healthcare and education because their families fear they will be reported to the UK Border Agency. Many families also suffer at the hands of serious criminals, yet avoid turning to the police because of their immigration status.

In a study titled No Way Out, No Way In: Irregular migrant children and families in the UK, Oxford University researchers revealed that the UK Border Agency had increased its demands on public service providers and social services to report suspected irregular migrants creating a culture of fear among children and families.

The demands are potentially in conflict with both British and international laws requiring that children are given access to education and healthcare irrespective of their immigration status, and that public authorities put the interests of the child first.

The report comes in the

wake of a landmark US decision by the Obama administration to pass an executive order that effectively suspends deportation proceedings against young, undocumented migrants under 30 years old who arrived in the US before their 16th birthdays.

The passing of the executive order is in part thanks to the DREAM movement – named for the perpetually stalled Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Bill that would create a roadmap to citizenship for young undocumented migrants. The DREAMers campaigned steadily for change, even occupying Obama's campaign offices.

The Mayor of London recently withdrew his support for Strangers Into Citizens, a campaign for an earned amnesty for irregular migrants, despite support from a coalition of NGOs, churches and local authorities.

And while this campaign stalls, tens of thousands of children who call the UK home continue to live without the basic services and protections that all children deserve.

No Way Out, No Way In: Irregular Migrant Children And Families In The UK by Dr Nando Sigona and Vanessa Hughes is published by COMPAS