



Representing Refugees



Forward by Rabinder Singh QC

There can be few people who have become more demonised in this country than asylum claimants. Indeed the term "asylum seeker" has become almost a term of abuse, so that judges are now advised to use "asylum claimant" instead. Yet only a generation ago people who sought what was then called "political asylum" were welcomed as they were usually from the Soviet bloc during the Cold War - every defection from the communist east was regarded as a success for the capitalist west. Now they come from many other parts of the world which are usually torn apart by war or repression. We would do well to learn the lessons of the 1930s, when Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany were not always welcome. As Auden put it his poem Refugee Blues:

'Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place
for us.

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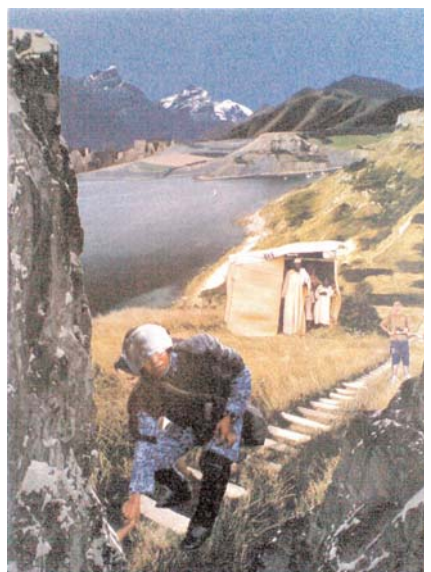
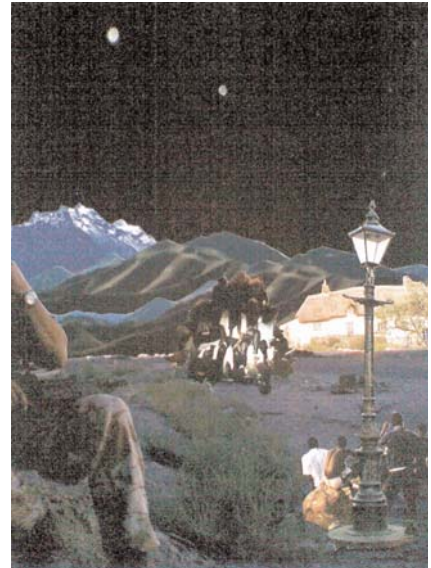
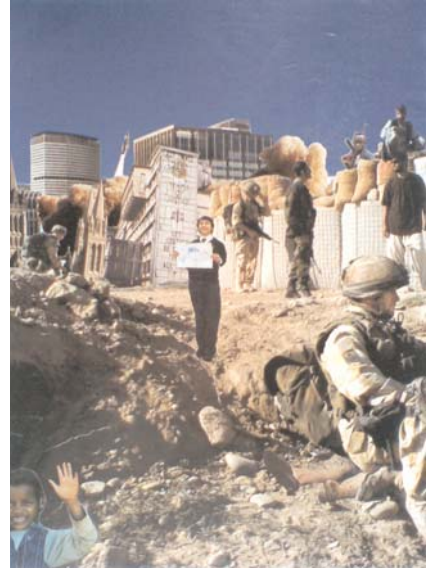
Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
"If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread";
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of
you and me.'

Few people choose to leave their home voluntarily unless there are compelling reasons to do so. Quite apart from the difficulty of making the journey, we human beings are reluctant to lose contact with our culture, our history, our roots: these things indeed form our identity. On any view, a large percentage of asylum claimants will turn out to be "genuine" refugees. But even those who do not qualify within the strict definition of "refugee" in the 1951 Convention may well have real reason to fear human rights abuses, as the government itself recognises, and it will not be possible to expel them.

Booan Temple is unique as an artist and a lawyer. It is refreshing to see a barrister express her ideas and feelings through the works of art you will see in this exhibition. We are very proud of her at Matrix, which has tried from its inception in 2000 to encourage innovative ways of being a barrister, and a sense of social responsibility among lawyers.

We hope you enjoy this work too.







Representing Refugees

Booan is a self-taught artist. Throughout her eclectic career she has always tried to express ideas and thoughts through art.

Called to the Bar in 2001, she joined **Matrix** in 2002, specialising in asylum and immigration law.

This is her first solo show.

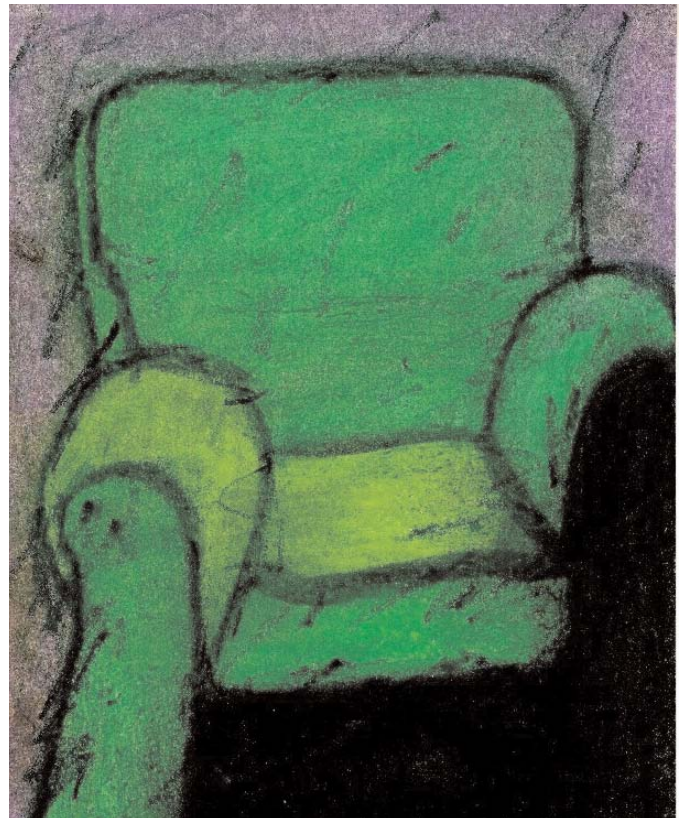
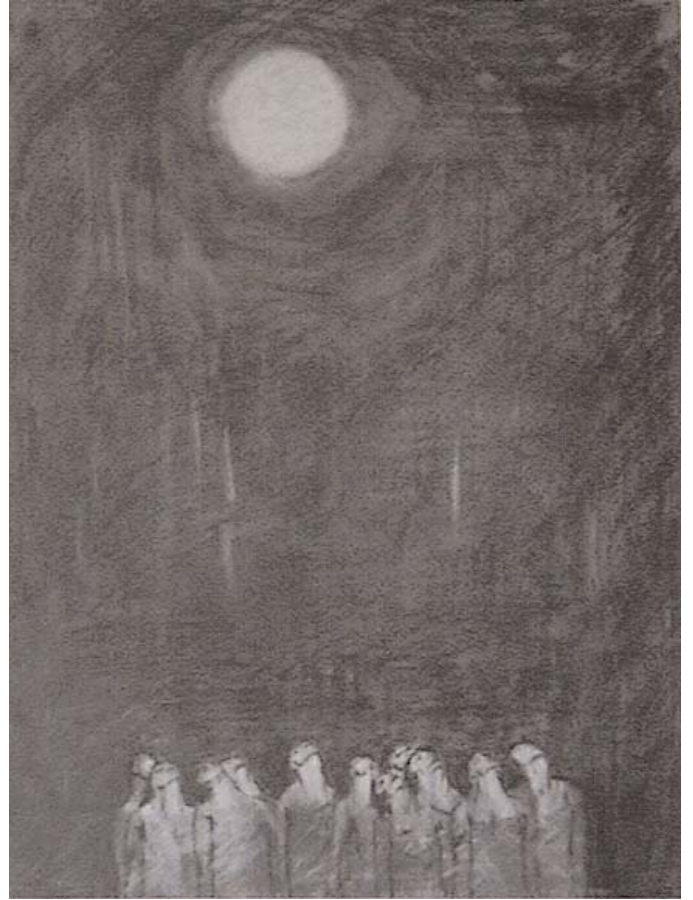
Through this synthesis of 'art' and 'law' Booan's work invites us to share something of the asylum-seeking process by suggesting associated events and emotions. However, the work adeptly avoids the traps of stereotyping, sensationalism or polemic.

Booan's approach allows the viewer their own creative input. The work draws us into its complex narrative, deepening our engagement with the subject matter. Moving through the exhibition we are invited to wonder about the lives and memories represented here.

The work evokes solitude, reflections and aspirations shared by the refugee and the advocate, providing a rare opportunity to empathise with both.

The exhibition is curated by Heather Minchin







FORWARD

The Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development (FORWARD) was established in 1983. It is an international non-governmental organisation that works to advance the sexual and reproductive health and human rights of African girls and women globally.

FORWARD is committed to eliminating harmful gender-based discriminatory practices that violate the sexual rights and reproductive health of women and girls, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. At our 20 year review FORWARD formally incorporated into its mandate other issues allied to FGM, in particular vesicio-vagina and recto-vagina fistulae and child and forced marriage.

FORWARD'S role in the anti-FGM campaign has been catalytic and ground-breaking, moving FGM onto the international and national policy agendas: and building the capacity of groups, professionals and communities to implement necessary changes.

Our vision

FORWARD envisages a world in which all African girls and women are accorded their inalienable rights to dignity, equality and freedom from gender-based discrimination and violence – a world in which they are able to attain and enjoy the highest level of physical, mental and social well being, irrespective of their age, culture, religion or socio-economic status.

For further info go to:
www.forwarduk.org.uk

FORWARD
Safeguarding rights & dignity





nia project

the nia project has for over 30 years, been providing essential work and safe spaces for women and children to escape from and begin to understand the violence they have experienced in their lives.

the nia project has been recognised as a model of best practice. In October 2005, **the nia project** received a Mayor of London Award of Distinction in recognition of outstanding and innovative work to further the aims of the London Domestic Violence Strategy to make London a safer place.

As well as safe accommodation in one of the organisation's six refuges, **the nia project** provides specialist services for women with substance abuse issues, women who have experienced sexual violence and women involved in prostitution. The organisation also employs an in-house solicitor to provide women with free legal advice and representation, as well as specialist children's services offering therapeutic support for children and young people, including a Family Learning programme and work with young women at risk of sexual exploitation.

Our specialist work includes work with BMER (black, ethnic minority, refugee) women and children. **the nia project** also provides accommodation and support to women with no recourse to public funds. BMER Women and children living in the UK who have experienced violence are doubly marginalised through the silencing of both racism and abuse and are often unable to access main stream support. We currently provide advocacy services for Turkish, Vietnamese, Somali speaking and Eastern-European women. Our work with BMER women and children is a central part of the nia project work and an area we aim to develop further.

the nia project also offers accredited training to professionals on a wide range of issues relating to violence against women.

For further information go to:
www.niaproject.info

the nia project
Working for the safety of women and children





Matrix

Immigration and nationality law have been increasingly influenced and directed by developments in EU law, from free movement of persons to rights under association agreements. The influence of international law has been most marked in extensive litigation and legislation concerning asylum in the United Kingdom under the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Human Rights Act 1998 has added to the significance of this case work and provided additional grounds to promote respect for family and private life in immigration control.

Matrix members are recognised as leading practitioners in this field, with extensive experience in all areas of immigration law and practice. This leading position has been confirmed by appearances in the groundbreaking cases of the last couple of years.

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