

I Feel Like Nobody Here

Maxson Sahr Kpakio

Dedicated to asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

I feel like nobody here, ashamed, like everybody
Hates me,
But they don't know me, they really
Don't know who I am either,
Only they know what they read in the
Newspapers about me
And that is not me.

I feel like nobody here,
Despite the torture and persecution I managed
To escape from home, in search
Of a land of peace and respect for
Human rights – as soon as I got in,
I was put into detention centre,
And the newspapers did the rest.

I feel like nobody here,
People are being beat up and killed
Sometimes just because they are
Asylum seekers,
But please, could you find out better.

We didn't come here for this, we try to leave
Behind this, we try to find peace here, but it's
Far from being possible, not with this media.

They refer to me as bogus asylum seeker,
And they even told others that I am
Just a parasite, and a disease carrier,
But that is not me.

If it was good at home where respect for human
Rights and relative peace was like before,
I would go home tomorrow.
I didn't want to come here, I didn't want
To be a refugee either.
But I am here and I want to contribute
And fit in.
But how can I?
How can people really accept me when
All they read about me is rubbish,
Nothing but rubbish.

But I don't blame them for fear of me,
They believe

What
They read.

I feel like nobody here,
I want to meet them
And speak to them and tell them it's
Not true.
Let me tell them that I am
Not what they read in
The newspapers.

< **Maxson Sahr Kpakio** was born in Liberia. He was forced to flee political instability and civil war after witnessing the war for ten years. When he reached the UK he was 'dispersed' to Swansea by the Home Office. Soon after arriving he wrote a short drama, "It Could Happen To You Too", which was performed twice in 2002 by members of Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group. He has since volunteered and worked for many organizations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Victim Support, British Red Cross, and Swansea Council for Voluntary Service. He also gained a BA in International Relations from Swansea University. Max is committed to helping others, here and back in Liberia too. He founded a voluntary organization, Wales-Liberia Connect, to combat HIV/AIDS in both countries. He recently got a job at the DVLA.

His poem "I Feel Like Nobody Here" is based on a record of discussions in the Refugee Link Group of the Wales Refugee Media Forum, convened by Displaced People in Action, in 2002-3. This 'found poem' had great impact after it appeared in *Between a Mountain and a Sea*. Max was often invited to perform it, a group at the Sherman Theatre (Cardiff) dramatised it, and it has been reprinted many times.