



# Swansea

## CITY OF SANCTUARY

### NEWS

Issue 1 December 2009

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*Silent Vigil -in protest against the Welsh Defence League p 6*

## What is Swansea City of Sanctuary?

A vision of Swansea as a place where we celebrate the contribution of people seeking sanctuary and welcome, support and include them wherever they go.

Organisations and individuals all over Swansea are working to make this vision a reality.

*Find out more inside.*

## The City of Sanctuary Vision

For Swansea to be a place where we celebrate the contribution of people seeking sanctuary and welcome, support and include them wherever they go. To be part of a movement spreading across cities in the UK.



### How does it work?

- ⇒ Organisations all over Swansea pledge their support.
- ⇒ We work as a city to gain “City of Sanctuary” status – everyone doing what they can where they can.  
It’s a bit like becoming a “fair trade town”.
- ⇒ When we have gained “City of Sanctuary” Status we make a plan each year to make the movement grow and make it more effective.

### Swansea is well on the way

Some organisations in Swansea have for years been working alongside asylum seekers and refugees. City of Sanctuary aims to publicise this work and encourage others to join in

We are working for “City of Sanctuary” status by mid April 2010.

### *What can you do to be part of this?*

#### Help us get to 100 pledges

- ⇒ Make sure that your organisation(s) has signed the City of Sanctuary pledge.
- ⇒ Check the list of organisations signed up on our website. Get in touch with us if there are others that you could approach on behalf of City of Sanctuary. Employers? Faith Groups? Unions? Community Groups?

#### Plan action where you are and tell us about it!

See ideas on page 4.

Email [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org) if you need to talk through your ideas.

#### Offer to get together with people with similar interests

We are looking for people to meet with people seeking sanctuary to discuss: education at all levels, training, employment opportunities, community safety, action on destitution and deportation, arts events, housing, action by faith groups. etc

***Please get in touch.***

## **What do we need to do to gain “City of Sanctuary” status – and how are we doing so far.**

We need to show the national City of Sanctuary Movement that we have achieved the following targets. We have set many of them ourselves.

**100 pledges of support** for asylum seekers and refugees from organisations all over Swansea.

*We have 60 so far – including faith and community groups, small businesses, South Wales Police and City and County of Swansea*

**Pledges backed up by action.**

We need at least 25% of those signed up.

*People all over Swansea are working on this. For ideas contact swansea@cityofsanctuary.org*

**Solid support from City and County of Swansea.**

*The Chief Executive of Swansea Council has already met us and is organising meetings with senior managers to plan action. The Mayor of Swansea is planning a Welcome event.*

**Cultural events** in the city which bring locals and people seeking sanctuary together.

*Welsh Refugee Week Launch, the African Community Centre’s amazing “Swansea’s got Talent” competition, Capel y Nant Clydach’s multi-cultural evening, a festival planned by a local community partnership etc*

**Active involvement by Asylum Seekers and Refugees.**

*Displaced People in Action Speakers Team give talks to local organisations; the speakers team facilitated “round table” discussions at the City of Sanctuary Launch in February; asylum seekers and refugees invited to steering group meetings.*

**Practical projects** to support those seeking sanctuary.

*Voluntary hosting project will encourage local people to share their homes for short periods with refused asylum seekers who have been made destitute. Asylum Justice gives legal support etc.*

**Regular meeting opportunities for local people asylum seekers and refugees.**

*Drop-ins twice a week run by Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group; social and creative evenings at Castle St Oxfam Shop; a target of 2-3 “FAN groups” encouraging conversation and friendship. (see page 10)*

**Volunteer and work placements.**

*British Red Cross, Oxfam, Unison, African Community Centre, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group, Asylum Justice all involved.*

**Raising awareness.**

*Speakers team. City of Sanctuary exhibition, website, newsletter. Positive stories in the press.*

**Cross sector working on specific problems.**

*Workshop planned to discuss community safety.*

# How you can help where you are - Useful Contacts

## Let people know what is available – activities, services, voluntary and work opportunities etc

- Email [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org). We can insert links to your organisation on our website and circulate activities, voluntary and work opportunities through email lists.
- To chat to people personally about activities, opportunities etc that you would like to welcome them to, or simply to meet asylum seekers and refugees come to weekly drop-ins run by **Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group**. Email [marilyn-thomas@lineone.net](mailto:marilyn-thomas@lineone.net)

## Raise awareness:

- Invite the asylum seekers and refugees speakers team to speak to your organisation about their experience and explain more about City of Sanctuary – Contact Ginger Wiegand. **Displaced People in Action** [gingerdpiawales@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gingerdpiawales@yahoo.co.uk)
- Challenge unhelpful myths. (for leaflet on this contact Ginger, above)

## Volunteer or raise money for local asylum charities

- **Asylum Justice** offers free - and often life-saving - legal help. It makes sure that people seeking asylum have their case properly represented when they cannot get access to paid legal services. Legally qualified and lay volunteers, and funds desperately needed. Contact Rosemary Jones on [havard-jonesr@btinternet.com](mailto:havard-jonesr@btinternet.com)
- **Welsh Refugee Council** needs money for its hardship fund for people left destitute when they are refused asylum. Contact [www.welshrefugeecouncil.org](http://www.welshrefugeecouncil.org)
- **Voluntary Hosting Project**. Pilot project to find emergency accommodation in people's spare rooms. Volunteer hosts, fund-raisers,

admin volunteers needed. (see opposite)  
Contact [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org)

- **Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group**. Runs informal drop-ins on Fridays and Saturdays. Volunteers to help with informal English Classes, to help with refreshments, suggest activities and simply to chat and be part of a vibrant international community needed. Contact [marilyn-thomas@lineone.net](mailto:marilyn-thomas@lineone.net)

## Bring people together

- Take part in or start a **FAN Group** – listening circles designed to help people of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities meet in friendship. Groups meet for one hour a week. Contact Amy Cuff [amy\\_fdo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:amy_fdo@yahoo.co.uk) (A number of people are hoping to start FAN groups in Swansea in the near future – the more people interested the better.) (see p10)
- Organise an event – music, dancing, games, singing, exhibitions, discussions etc etc. Contact: [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org) for possible entertainers, ideas etc
- Join in with what's going on – join the SWARM email list – Swansea Asylum and Refugee Matters – to find out about events, activities, ideas etc. Contact [t.cheesman@swan.ac.uk](mailto:t.cheesman@swan.ac.uk) to join the list

## Join with others in your field of work to share ideas and offer better services

We are looking for people working in faith groups, education, local communities, the arts, training and employment etc who would like to work with others to make their services more welcoming and inclusive for people seeking sanctuary. Contact [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org) to link with others and meet asylum seekers and refugees who can discuss issues with you.

## 4If you have people seeking sanctuary in your own organisation...

- Do people need letters of support for their asylum case?
- Are there people living on supermarket vouchers? Can you help them?
- Do people need voluntary opportunities – refer them to **Swansea Council of Voluntary Service**
- Are they lonely? Include them in social invitations and activities and tell them about what is going on.
- Find out their talents and ambitions – include them in the voluntary work within your organisation.

## Campaign

- Join the **National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns** email list. Contact [ncadc@ncadc.org.uk](mailto:ncadc@ncadc.org.uk) Information on forcible detention and deportations – often of people in real danger. Model letters for people who want to help. Useful website if you meet people threatened with deportation. For local contacts on deportation email [swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org)
- Sign up to the campaign to end the detention of children, organised by the Children's Society, [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk), look for the Outcry campaign.

## Keep in touch!

Contact City of Sanctuary with other ideas – and with activities which have helped to make people seeking sanctuary feel welcomed, included and involved. **Thank you!!**



## Voluntary Hosting Scheme for failed asylum seekers Co-ordinated Action for the Reduction of Destitution in Swansea (CARDS)

*The voluntary hosting project is modelled on a number of successful schemes elsewhere in the UK.*

*Through these schemes local people support destitute asylum seekers by:*

*Offering temporary accommodation in their homes - e.g. for few weeks or a few months, or even just a weekend. Offering support to "hosts" and "guests" by offering money for the bus fares, food or offering meals to "guests". Helping to run the scheme itself.*

**Update:** The Co-ordinator of the Project, d. Murphy, visited two Voluntary Hosting Projects in October – The ASSIST Project in Sheffield and the BEACON Project in Bradford. She left armed with a long list of questions of the pros and cons, the pit-falls and the rewards, of such projects and returned with invaluable information and advice on everything from Insurance and CRB checks to Training and Information packs.

Following on from this an informal workshop was held on the 10th of November at the Civic Centre (thanks to City & Co. of Swansea for the space). The aim of the workshop was to explore issues, concerns and hopes that might arise for both hosts and guests.

Thanks to the presence of the 8 asylum seekers who worked in small groups with the 16 local residents the discussions brought to light a number of issues that could easily have remained undiscovered. What was most positive about the evening was that for almost every concern raised a potential solution was found. The whole atmosphere of the evening and the feedback from it was very encouraging, and it was obvious that Swansea is indeed well on its way to becoming a City of Sanctuary.

d. will not be working on the Project in December as she will be on her way to Gaza as part of a humanitarian aid convoy. But when she returns to Swansea in January her focus will be on working closely with asylum seekers and potential hosts to put in place the best possible support and information that will ensure the Project's success.

Please feel free to contact d. on [d@undercurrents.org](mailto:d@undercurrents.org) if you would like to know more.

# Silent Vigil

## Saturday 17th October 2009 Quaker Meeting House Lawn

The silent vigil was organised by the City of Sanctuary Steering Group and Swansea Quakers in response to plans by the anti-Islamic *Welsh Defence League* to hold a meeting in Castle Square and Parade through the city.

Various organisations co-operated to arrange a gathering in Castle Square to show that a large number of the people in Swansea were anti-racist.

The vigil was held in an area of Swansea that has a large population of Asian businesses and a Mosque, so it was in a good position to demonstrate solidarity and support. It was also along one of the main roads into Swansea so many cars and pedestrians took notice of the banner and signs.

The banner and some of the placards were made with the help of members of the community, mostly friends who attend the Quaker Meeting. Some were made in Welsh, and one or two in Arabic. People also brought their own placards. The whole event brought together people of different nationalities and religions.

The placards and banner demonstrated that everyone was welcome in Swansea, whatever

their religion or none. There were a wide range of messages, such as , peace, understanding, recognition of differences, and support. The banner read Respect, Equality and Goodwill.

**The banner  
read *Respect,  
Equality and  
Goodwill.***

As we prepared for the vigil, pastors of different denominations came along to lend a hand and show their support. They were clear that they would defend the right of people to live here without fear and worship as they wished.

The police too made sure that the area was well protected and made safe for the vigil participants, supporters, residents and workers.

During the vigil people joined in, either on the lawn or on the road and path alongside the Quaker Meeting House. People greeted each other, shook hands, those on the roadside chatted. There was a respect for tenor of the vigil and those on the lawn stood in silence.

Throughout the morning and during the vigil there were reports from Castle square, Truths and rumours spread about the behaviour and intentions of the racist demonstrators. Some local people were a bit nervous. It seemed that they were pleased to have the vigil in the area.

Participants at the Castle square told me that there were around fifty WDL protestors, and that some of them were making Nazi salutes, other offensive gestures and swearing about foreigners. One eye witness said she was worried that the young children who were following the racist group repeated their language and threats, probably because it sounded grown up and fun.

The police held the WDL in one place and after a couple of hours escorted them to the railway station.

According to some accounts there were around three hundred people supporting the anti racist campaign in Castle Square. By the time I reached it they were beginning to disperse but there was still a feeling of elation, good will and satisfaction. There was a small column in the Independent on Sunday about the event.



## I don't understand racists

I've been finding it really hard to write anything about the "Welsh Defence League" demo. People say that middle class white liberals don't understand the concerns of BNP supporters. I grew up in a middle class white liberal family, so I should know! My mum was a nurse and my dad was a railwayman and they met on a Rambling holiday and they had four kids and we lived in the suburbs and went to scouts and guides and church. And, no, I don't understand why people want to stand in Castle Street burning anti-nazi flags and shouting anti-muslim slogans and giving "Sieg Heil" salutes. I don't understand why those people don't just chill out in Castle Street, and enjoy the famous cappuccinos of the Café Continental, or the delights of the Polish deli, or the joy that is our OXFAM shop staffed by lovely and interesting people from all around the world.

I understand the anti-fascists, dancing to samba beats, singing along with reggae karaoke, and making a million different speeches all saying the same kind of thing about love and unity.

I also understand the anger of the anti-fascists who enjoy the benefits of living in a multiracial society and don't want that to be threatened by a few ignorant racists who can't decide whether they want to be football hooligans or politicians on Question Time.



*Oxfam's castle street shop recently held an exhibition of artworks created by people who work in the shop. pictured : "Reality" by Niran Toma from Iraq*

I'll never understand how anyone can hate anyone just because of their religion or their skin colour. I'll never understand why people want to waste their time hating people who they've never met.

And I don't understand how anyone can ever think there's a way of creating a white master race in Britain. It never existed, and it never will.

You can try to understand "reasons" why people turn to the BNP... You can talk about social housing, unemployment, changing neighbourhoods... But if people don't get that spirit of welcome and interest and fun into their hearts, then what's the point?!

I understand and feel blessed that my life has been enriched by not being stuck in a blinkered white racist community. From wild nights at The Caribbean Club to sweet days with Monisha, from playing cricket with Sohale at school to watching it with Moorad at Lords. And my job... my wonderful job!

I'm the manager of the OXFAM Shop in Castle Street. The shop is an official supporter of Swansea's City Of Sanctuary campaign. That suggests that somehow we are "giving" – Giving sanctuary, giving support, giving help to people. But I, and I think all of the British people who work in the shop, don't think we're giving – We're getting! We're gaining a wonderful group of friends from different countries, different continents, different cultures.

One of the nicest things we do in the shop is when we have our "Common Language" evenings, where we all learn each others' languages. And, for once, English is just another language; not the language that everyone has to know. And every other language, and every other culture, is just as important as English language and British culture... and often much more interesting! >>>

# Refugee Week Launch

National Waterfront Museum, Swansea 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

## World Music Festival



This year's theme, *different pasts, shared futures* aimed to raise awareness of the issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers and celebrate their contribution to life in Wales.

With support from many different grass root community groups and organisations including; Refugee Week Wales, Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group, City of Sanctuary Swansea, Displaced People in Action and Swansea Museum we began to develop a family friendly day that would challenge traditional perceptions of Asylum Seekers plus attract the wider community. For this reason we developed a world music festival which would take place inside and outside the museum.

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I don't understand why people don't want to learn. I don't understand why people don't want to have fun. I don't understand why anyone wouldn't want to go to a SBASSG party where they can eat food made by 20 cooks from 20 countries! I don't understand why anyone wouldn't want their children to go to tea with the children of those cooks!

I don't understand racists. I just understand that they're missing out on a whole world of possibilities.

Phil Broadhurst - Oxfam

Within the grounds of the Museum, visitors were able to listen and dance to various performances which included hip hop dance from the African Centre Youth Forum, a drumming parade by Samba Tawe and other musical interludes by Swansea-based Kurdistan Folk group, Cougar Band, an African Caribbean Band from Cardiff and 2 RUDE, a seven piece ska band from Newport. Plus Swansea favourites such as Alice Solomon, Andy Jones and Dillay. During the intervals Gbubemi Amas Amanoritsewor also provided the audience with various facts about Asylum Seekers and Refugees.

On the museum lawn the City of Sanctuary Swansea marquee housed 25 community organisations that work with Asylum seekers and refugees, a City of Sanctuary Awareness Exhibition, a Photographic Exhibition and a Sculpture Workshop.

Within the Museum, there were lots of activities for young people and children including a DJ workshop, number of play activities and Circus Eruption. For adults there were a 'Dispelling the Myths Workshop' and a hard hitting exhibition 'Life after Iraq'.

During the day we had over 3500 visitors to the museum, this does not include the amount of people that took

part in the out doors activities.

The City of Sanctuary volunteers and stall holders estimate that up to 300 people visited the awareness marquee, many signing up to petitions and leaving comments on the City of Sanctuary comment board.



'We Welcome Asylum Seekers and Refugees' - signature boards at Refugee Week 2009

150 Asylum Seekers and Refugees from Newport, Cardiff and Wrexham, came on three coaches organised by Refugee Week Wales.



Overall all the original aims of the day were met with many new people attending the event. Asylum Seekers and Refugees who may have not come to a Refugee Wales event or a museum before, plus the wider community; who may have not met Asylum Seekers or Refugees before.

**It was a fantastic launch, said to be one of the best by Refugee Week Wales. The mu-**

**seum would like to thank everyone who supported, advised and facilitated on the day. WELL DONE and looking forward to next years celebrations.**

*Susan James  
Co-ordinator of the Refugee Week Launch 2009  
and Outreach Learning Officer  
National Waterfront Museum, Swansea.*

## Shelter

Part of the funding for Refugee Week 2009 was allocated to commissioning a community artist to run a project with young people in order to raise awareness about refugees and the City of Sanctuary.

This project engaged secondary pupils from Pentrehafod School and junior pupils from Plasmarl School. It took place in Pentrehafod School over two days in May and June. The participants used recycled and environmentally friendly materials to work on a framework for a shelter which was to be displayed during the week in the marquee and the museum.



and coloured tissue. These were assembled to form larger triangles which joined into a five sided shelter.

The older participants led groups of the younger children when they came along to the school the next week; sharing their skills and ideas. On both days the atmosphere was relaxed and productive. The art teacher and the Community Education Development Officer had been working with pupils on peace and tolerance so they were aware of signs and symbols that they could use in their designs.

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The panels were held to-

gether with string that had been found on the beach. This was knotted and sewn into the panels and around the supporting cane. When it was displayed visitors were encouraged to add messages of welcome and support onto acetate and add them into the structure. On the day of the launch two of the pupils came along to help out.

One of the first people to write a message of welcome was the Mayor of Swansea. We tied it over the entrance. Throughout the day many people added words and images, also, children and adults sat inside it.

**One of the first people to write a message of welcome was the Mayor of Swansea**

The young people who took part were of different nationalities, they contributed images and words from their own cultures and language. Working in pairs or small groups they made the triangular panels from newspaper

# FAN Groups

*A simple way of bringing people together*



***How often do people really listen to us? Do we ever get the chance to talk about “ordinary things” with an extraordinary group of people from all over the world?***

On November 4th a group of enthusiastic FAN Group members from Cardiff came to talk to a big group of Swansea people - many signed up supporters of City Sanctuary. Zahra a refugee from Iran told us how being invited to a FAN group saved her from a life where she felt

isolated and alone in this country. She now attends several and is one of the FAN Charity's trustees.

FAN groups started in Cardiff a few years ago and there are now 15 with more opening, in Cardiff. Occasionally they all get together - once for a memorable lunch in IKEA where each person found someone they didn't know and talked with them about a whole range of topics. FAN stands for Friends And Neighbours.

The idea is simple. Each group is advertised widely and often attracts a good mixture of people of all ages, classes and nationalities. After offering a tea or coffee the group starts by reading out a written statement which welcomes everyone who comes in a spirit of friendship. The leader for the week chooses a topic relevant to everyone's daily lives - e.g. food, rubbish, money, exercise, and everyone in the group can say something while every-

one listens. Often people say something about themselves, and their week as well as their thoughts on the topic. While someone is talking everyone listens. There is no discussion during the FAN Meeting itself. Some groups then have refreshments and chat together and in some cases people offer informal English language help. Some just meet for the hour and leave.

Amy Cuff, the development officer showed us a short video film of a FAN group in action. She is available to support people who would like to start groups and there are already firm plans for a group somewhere in the city centre and perhaps for one in an area further out from the city centre.

***FAN groups could be a really great idea for City of Sanctuary supporters who would like to bring people together in friendship in their area.***

FAN groups could be a really great idea for City of Sanctuary supporters who would like to bring people together in friendship in their area. The groups are easy to run. To start off they need some publicity - which Amy could help with - a small group of people willing to ensure that they happen each week and a place to meet. Some meet in community centres or places of worship, others meet in supermarket cafes! Each group is self running, but uses the opening and closing statements provided by FAN.

To get FAN Meetings off the ground in Swansea we are looking for people willing to attend the first FAN groups, which are likely to start in the New Year. We are also looking for people willing to start a group in their own neighbourhood. Coming along to one of the first groups will be a great way of learning to do this.

For more information, look on the FAN website [www.thefancharity.org](http://www.thefancharity.org) or contact Amy Cuff, FAN development officer on 10 [amy\\_fdo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:amy_fdo@yahoo.co.uk) or call 07880630553. The website has a copy of the film Amy showed us which is a great introduction.

# Oyster Bay

## An interview with TAN dance

What have asylum-seekers got to do with oysters? If Swansea still had oyster-beds, it might be a job, like cockle-picking. But overfishing and pollution killed the oysters, so no jobs for anyone, unless oysters can be helped to grow again. For the moment, oysters are Heritage, and Heritage is nothing if not Art.

Including Dance. Last summer **TAN Dance** – a local powerhouse I only heard about this month - did a show called Oyster Bay. All sorts of people were involved, from primary schools to colleges and several local, and not so local, dance groups. TAN Dance is funded, to promote 'education, integration, community engagement and social change.' A tall order! But with research into once-and-future oystercatching went a widening net of involvement, along the coast to Port Talbot and up the Swansea and Neath valleys.

One of the dance groups involved is Dynion, all male, another is Arabic, and behind the scenes, making boats and sails for props, asylum-seekers from several continents came and went. How many of them had their own experiences of setting sail? And getting washed up... And why dance, why art at all, for people who are just surviving?

Maybe it's when you're worst off that you most need some positive distraction to get you out of the rut. Unlike most other

social activities, visual arts, music and dance don't depend on language. In the Oyster show, the artforms worked together. If asylum-seekers focussed mainly on the artwork, that's because the rehearsal to performance process, needs regular attendance. This depends on a stability that most asylum-seekers can only pray for.

Does it work, that little bit of distraction? Or does it just feel worse when you turn back to painful past and uncertain future? Feedback was positive from the few asylum-seekers who were able to see the show and report back. And anyone who's had hard times may remember some moment of warmth and light. A glimmer of hope: sometime, somehow, somewhere, something better is possible!

And for us, relatively secure in our 'host community', what's in it for us? Walking along Swansea beach, I've often wondered about those oyster shells, and bits of coal that get washed up. Did somebody eat those oysters? Who dug the coal, did it fall in the sea, or was it pushed? Or sunk.

In town, or on the bus, I sometimes wonder what's behind people's faces, especially the most different ones. You can't tell what's going on in anybody's head, but the more sorts of people you get to know, the better you can guess, and the more comfortable you feel in

your own skin.

Carol Brown, the Artistic Director of TAN Dance, recalls some little turning points over the past



ten years or so. A white person saying, 'That's the first time I've touched a black skin.' Like finding you can float! And a woman in a mixed yoga class who asked a Muslim woman, who'd somehow managed the session without taking off her cloak, 'What's it like in there?'

Of course we're different, maybe the highest education of all comes with reaching out, exploring our differences together. Finding how much the same we are. Nothing human is foreign to me! or as Carol put it when we talked at her Baglan office the other day, 'We are one whole...you can't be safe by closing your borders.'

*Greg Wilkinson*

## Some Definitions

ASYLUM SEEKER
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flees their homeland</li> <li>• Arrives in another country</li> <li>• Makes themselves known to the authorities</li> <li>• Exercises their legal right to apply for sanctuary</li> </ul>
REFUGEE
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has proved that they would face persecution back home</li> <li>• Has had a successful asylum application</li> <li>• Is allowed to stay in that country after the Authorities say 'yes, you can stay here'</li> </ul>
REFUSED ASYLUM SEEKER
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasn't been able to prove that they would face persecution back home</li> <li>• Has had their application turned down</li> <li>• Is told to leave the country after the Authorities say 'no, you can't stay here'</li> <li>• May still be in danger if they return to their home country</li> </ul>

EUROPEAN MIGRANT
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is a member of a country that belongs to the European Economic Area (EEA)</li> <li>• Has the right to live in the UK so long as they are studying, working or have enough money to support themselves</li> <li>• Usually has the automatic right to work in the UK</li> </ul>
ECONOMIC MIGRANT
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has moved to another country to work</li> <li>• Could be anyone from an Albanian builder to an African nurse</li> <li>• Strengthens the workforce</li> <li>• Could be illegal or legally resident, depending on how they entered the country</li> <li>• Might have a legal work permit or may be working illegally</li> </ul>
ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT
<p>A person who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has arrived in a new country</li> <li>• Has either not made themselves known to the authorities OR has stayed in the country longer than they were authorised to</li> <li>• Has no legal permission to be there</li> <li>• Is going to get in real big trouble when they're found out</li> </ul>

from *'Mobiles, Money & Mayhem. The facts and fibs about Asylum'*,  
 Refugee Awareness Project, 2009  
<http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/RAP/>

### Legal Advice

Asylum Justice is a charity that gives free legal advice to asylum seekers if they do not have legal representation. It runs drop-in advice sessions in Cardiff, Newport and Swansea. In Swansea, Asylum Justice meets at the Quaker Meeting House, opposite the YMCA, 12 on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 3.00 -5pm. Contact 078 76636673 for more details.

*Asylum Justice is a registered charity (Reg No 1112026) and an exempt body (No 20080025) approved by the OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner)*



# Statistics!

My friend who we call Auntie A called round on Monday. Auntie A is one of those talented people who can do anything. She's an actress, dress designer, childcare worker, volunteer, student, amazing cook and above all mother to an equally talented child. Have you ever been clothes shopping with a dress designer? Well, let me tell you it is nothing short of educational!

Anyway, we were sitting on the sofa chatting about Auntie A's studies when she told me a story of what happened in her class last week (A is studying part-time). Seemingly, her class spent about 40 minutes discussing immigration. One person said that her husband lost his job because of immigrants. Another

said that all the housing in the city has gone to immigrants. And that asylum seekers, refugees and so forth get grants and loans simply because they aren't British.

**How can people blame all their problems on immigrants?**

Auntie A sat there a bit stunned. She tried to explain that this wasn't true. "But I didn't know what to say". "How can people blame all their problems on immigrants? If they knew the truth they won't say such things." So Auntie A has decided to do some research so that she can show her class real information about immigration.

Proper information is important and statistics can help to change people's perceptions. However, I think it is getting to know the people behind the statistics that can really change attitudes. And this is why I support the City of Sanctuary movement. The people in City of Sanctuary are not anonymous figures in a report. And it's when people become your neighbours and your friends, become part of your life that you change perceptions. I wish Auntie A the best of luck with her research but I also want her classmates to get to know her more. She's more than just a statistic and I hope they see it that way too.

*Sadhbh O'Dwyer*

## Dragon Arts and Learning Centre

is a thriving part of Cyrenians Cymru and is based in the Hafod area about 10 minutes walk from the centre of town. We run a timetable of activities including ESOL classes, IT, pottery, art, photography and music. Clients study at their own pace and work towards Agored Cymru qualifications. Anyone over 16, who is not in full time work or education is welcome to attend and we have a wide range of members including many refugees and asylum seekers who are always made to feel welcome. All classes are free. Please have a look at our website [www.dragonarts.co.uk](http://www.dragonarts.co.uk) or contact us for more information on 01792 467940. Hope to see you soon.



## Humberto and Gabriela

Humberto and Gabriela were among many thousands of refugees who left Chile after the 1973 military coup against the government of Salvador Allende. After the death of the socialist President, armed forces under General Pinochet began rounding up Allende supporters. Humberto was arrested and taken to Police HQ for interrogation. Gabriela went into hiding. For seven weeks, Humberto shared a cell with about 200 other political prisoners. There was not room for everyone to lie down at once. One after another the men were taken out for questions, handcuffed and blindfold, threatened and beaten. They lived in suspense, supporting each other as best they could. 'It was almost a relief when your name was called,' Humberto said.

That was the first of several detentions over most of two years. Gabriela lay low, often not knowing where he was, unable to work and unwilling to involve her family. For Humberto, between detentions, work was also impossible: no up-to-date references and no way of getting the requisite Certificate of Good Character from the authorities. Army, Police and Airforce ran their own security operations, and release from one could open the way to arrest by another. The fear was not just for yourself, but family and friends who might be picked up for 'illegal association'.

Some churches stood by the fugitives. When Humberto was released from a jail for political prisoners, only to be briefly arrested again, he and Gabriela were advised by a sympathetic lawyer to leave, rather than face more detention or 'disappearance.' They made their way across the border to Argentina.

There they were housed in a UN refugee camp, supplementing rations with whatever work they could find. The two of them were full of praise for the many people in Argentina who welcomed and helped them, turning a deaf ear to strange accents and a blind eye to their illegal status. But at the same time there was an international security operation, called Condor, hunting down opposition groups and refugees. The UN refugee agency encouraged them to move on...

But to where? What they really wanted was to go back to Chile, but after a year away, the news from home only got worse. Through the World Council of Churches they found an opening to study in Britain. From the British consulate in Buenos Aires they got what sounded like a personal invitation from Her Majesty the Queen. Their air fares were paid and from the University of Swansea they got places and grants to continue their studies.

The landing at Heathrow was a let-down. They were held for several hours and questioned. They were also X-rayed, although Gabriela tried to tell them she was pregnant. They settled in Swansea, took up their studies and joined other Chilean refugees in campaigning for other victims of the Pinochet regime. 'We depended on each other for support, we felt we had a job to do, telling people what was happening, raising funds for the resistance.' They also found support from trade unions and socialists who had been outraged by the Pinochet coup, the death of Allende and killings in the National Stadium. Their baby girl was born, but when she was six months she was found to have cancer. Now it was hospitals not prisons, from Swansea to Cardiff to London, but despite radiology and chemo-therapy the baby died. Could it have been the X-ray at Heathrow? No way of knowing.



## THE CITY WHERE I LIVE

*The wind  
strikes*

*The rough  
sea  
storms  
the bay*

*The sky  
covers itself  
in greys*

*Far away  
from beyond  
the dawn  
a lighthouse  
flickers*

*Between  
shadows  
and darkness  
lies  
the city  
I live in*

*Defeated  
Invincible*

Humberto Gatica

Back in Swansea, they worked on their studies, to earn money and learn English. At first their residence conditions meant signing in monthly, then after three years they got 'indefinite leave to remain'. They had two more children, and took a break...

In Mozambique. There they worked with the left-wing FRELIMO government until forced out by another civil war.

Back in Swansea again, they found longer-term jobs, and a house, brought up their children and became UK citizens.

Their advice to refugees and asylum seekers now is to work, at whatever you can, if not paid, then voluntary. Be thankful for surviving, and help others who can't take survival for granted. Learn English, even if that means, as it did with Gabriela, long conversations with Mormon or Jehovah's Witness missionaries.

But, as Humberto and Gabriela recognise, it's more difficult for asylum seekers now. Refugees from Chile came in on a wave of public support and understanding which isn't there for other conflict zones. There are more asylum seekers now and less support, a weaker labour movement and progressive left. Government restrictions are harsher now and the public mood more hostile. New arrivals now are less likely to get student grants, more likely to face the humiliation of food vouchers in place of money or work.

*Interview by Greg Wilkinson*

## **A new life in Swansea**

My name is Shahsawar Rahmani. I'm Kurdish and I've lived in Swansea for two years. I'm a refugee.

When the authorities sent me to Swansea I was very unsure about it. Now that I have made friends here and seen how kind and friendly and polite Welsh people are, I want to stay. Although I have several friends in different towns in the UK, Swansea is where I'd rather be. I think there are a lot of similarities between our cultures and I feel at home here.

I think that if you arrive here from another country you should be prepared to be reborn - to give up your old culture and ways and accept and adapt to a new set of rules and customs.

In my country I held a responsible job, advising and helping people and was a respected citizen – here I am doing my best to recreate my life again from the bottom up.

build your self-esteem, meet people, make friends and begin to understand British culture. I volunteer with the British Red Cross and I would recommend it to anyone. At first I found it extremely stressful. I was uncomfortable and wanted to leave because I was worried about my poor level of English. I am very glad that I made myself go back and keep volunteering. The Red Cross are very supportive, they encourage you and help you realise that even without brilliant English you can still play a valuable role and help other people. We support the ill and the elderly, often with simple acts like doing their shopping or giving them lifts.

I have also volunteered regularly with the MOre Green Project. Mo and John are wonderful people. Their community shop, 81 Western Street, is a good place to find recycled furniture and clothes at a reasonable price. They are very welcoming to asylum seekers and refugees and also pleased for them to volunteer.

## Waiting...

I came to Swansea nearly 3 years ago, in February 2007. I am an asylum seeker. I had some problems with my government and I had to leave my country.

When I left Iran I didn't know where I was going. I put my life in someone else's hands and got in the back of a lorry with no idea of the final destination.

In the dark in the back of the lorry I kept thinking "Am I still alive?" "Where am I going?" "Maybe I'm going to die". Even when I eventually arrived in the UK, I didn't know where I was.

I had arrived in Portsmouth. I had to ask people "What country is this?" I was scared and worried because I couldn't speak English very well. It was the first time I had ever been outside of Iran. I asked people where the police station was – I remember I was just saying "Please, police!". At the police station, the police realised that I didn't understand their questions and they

In my opinion there is something unfair about the way the asylum application system works. It is very difficult for the Home Office to identify which people are really in need of help and protection. Some people flee their countries with genuine problems but have their claims refused. Also many failed asylum seekers become destitute as a result of the current asylum process and this may cause a problem for their local community. They have no support but are also not allowed to work, so they cannot pay their own way. This forces them into an impossible situation – Will they starve on the streets?

I believe that Swansea is overall a welcoming city and it is really only minorities on both sides that cause concern. A very small minority of asylum seekers through their behaviour may give the rest a bad name. An equally small minority of Swansea people are reluctant to welcome people seeking sanctuary. I hope we can work together to change their minds.



found an interpreter for me.

I didn't come here for money or to improve my situation, apart from my problems with the government, I had a good life in Iran, a flat and a good job. I had to leave my family, my brother, my sister and my friends – I haven't seen them now for nearly 3 years and I miss them.

<sup>16</sup>Iran is called an Islamic Republic but it isn't a real democracy. They put people in jail if they protest against the regime.



When I was a student at University I was in a political group – against the government – we wanted Freedom and Democracy and for political prisoners to be released.

Our group was made up of students, lecturers and journalists. We invited a political speaker to come to the University. There was a demonstration against the government. I was arrested and put in prison for 3 days without any trial. They whipped me with a thick electrical cable.

Later there was another demonstration. It started as a protest about the poor standard of food at the University but changed into a political demonstration.

The 'secret police' started attacking the demonstrators. One of my friends was badly beaten with batons - his head was bleeding – when I tried to help him and carry him away out of the crowd, I saw four or five 'secret policemen' charging towards me and I had to leave him and run. I don't know what happened to him. I managed to escape.

Later a friend of my mother's, who worked at the University, rang my mother and told her that the 'secret police' had got some film of the demonstration and were identifying the people who had taken part.

I hid in my father's friend's house for a week then I travelled to Tehran, about 500 km away, where I hid in an orchard. I stayed there for about two and a half months, hiding from the authorities. The police kept coming to my parent's house and asking them where I was. Eventually I realised I either had to run away or hand myself over to the police – I couldn't carry on living like this. My father made arrangements for me to escape.

In Portsmouth I was taken to the Central Police station by police car. I was certain that I would be sent back to Iran immediately.

I was ill – still recovering from the journey (11 days of constant movement, cold, dark and fear in the back of the lorry). They put me in a police cell for 3 or 4 days. I kept asking them for a

cigarettes and tried to find out when they would let me go. They told me I couldn't smoke and each time I asked they would say that I would be released in a few hours.

After the interview with Immigration they took me by taxi from Portsmouth to Dover where I stayed for 2 weeks before being sent to Swansea.



I have been in Swansea since then. I've spent the last two and a half years studying English in the ESOL classes provided and doing voluntary work.

I have been refused asylum – the judge didn't believe me. At the moment I have to sign at the Police Station every 6 months so that the British Authorities know where I am. I am trying to make a fresh claim with evidence sent through from my country. The Iranian court has now sentenced me to 30 years in prison.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work, drive, study at university, open a bank account etc. They are not able to do any of the normal simple things that citizens of a country do. This may be fair for a short time while your asylum claim is being processed. In many cases like mine after years of restricted rights you begin to feel inhuman.

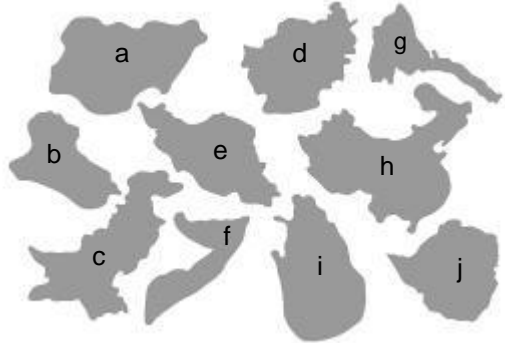
As I am not allowed to work I have no means of supporting myself. As a failed asylum seeker I have no support from the government. I am not eligible for accommodation or benefits. What am I supposed to do to survive? I sometimes think they are trying to rid themselves of us by making our lives impossible through deprivation.

To be honest, I don't want to receive benefit or be supported by the government. I would like to be allowed to work and pay tax like a British citizen. My real dream though is that the Iranian regime will change completely so I will be able to go back to my country and be with my family.

# Puzzle Page

## Match the countries

1. Afghanistan
2. China
3. Eritrea
4. Iraq
5. Iran
6. Pakistan
7. Nigeria
8. Somalia
9. Sri Lanka
10. Zimbabwe



Answers at bottom of page

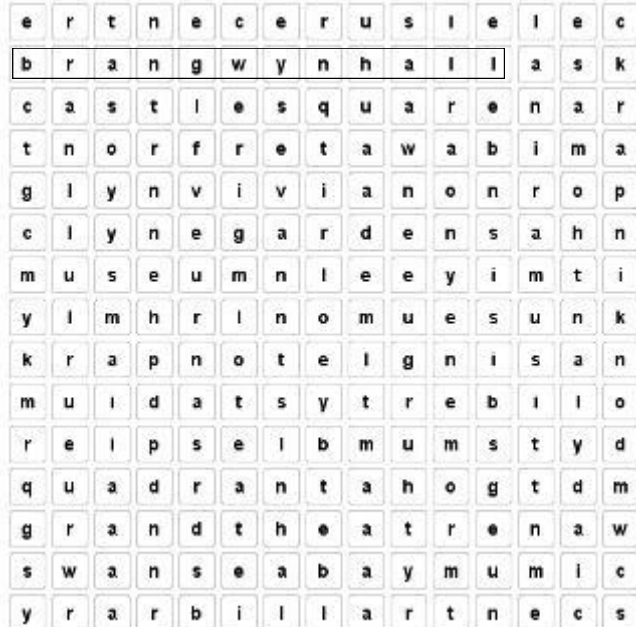
## Swansea Word Search

**£10 prize** for winning entry drawn out of a hat —  
prize provided by **Asia Market 40 St Helen's Road**

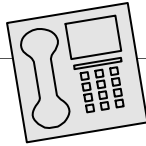


Post your entry with your name and contact details to:  
Swansea City of Sanctuary c/o SBASSG. YMCA, 1 The Kingsway, Swansea SA1 5JQ  
or give to Clare at SBASSG Friday drop-in, by **Friday December 18th**

- Brangwyn Hall ✓
- Castle Square
- Central Library
- Clyne Gardens
- Cwmdonkin Park
- Dylan Thomas
- Glyn Vivian
- Grand Theatre
- Leisure Centre
- Liberty Stadium
- Marina
- Mumbles Pier
- Museum
- Quadrant
- Singleton Park
- Swansea Bay
- Waterfront



## Useful Numbers



**POLICE** (01792) 456999

Non emergencies: 101

Emergencies only: 999

**Hate Crime Officers** (against racial abuse):

Pat Nolan: 07980 221 910

pat.nolan@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

**Police Minorities Support Unit.**

Phil Bryant: Tel: 01639 889122

phil.bryant@south-wales.pnn.police.uk

### HOSPITALS

Singleton 01792 205666

Morrison 01792 702222

**African Community Centre** 60 Walter Road,  
Swansea SA1 5PZ  
01792 470298

**BAWSO** - Black Association of Women Step Out  
Ltd - a specialist service for BME women and  
children made homeless due to domestic violence.

1st Floor, 63 Mansel Street, Swansea, SA1 5TN  
01792 642003 [www.bawso.org.uk](http://www.bawso.org.uk)  
[swansea@bawso.org.uk](mailto:swansea@bawso.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice Swansea** - Free welfare rights  
and other advice and assistance.

The Old Police station, Swansea  
01792 652902 [www.swanseacab.org.uk](http://www.swanseacab.org.uk)  
[enquiries@swanseacab.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@swanseacab.org.uk)

**Community Legal Services** - information on  
local legal and advice services  
0845 3454345 [www.clsdirect.org.uk](http://www.clsdirect.org.uk)

**Commission for Racial Equality** - (now Equality  
& Human Rights Commission) 3rd Floor, Capital  
Tower, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff, CF10 3AG  
02920 663710 [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

**Cyrenians Cymru** - Youth and homelessness  
support group  
124 Walter Road, Swansea  
01792 467926 [www.cyrenians.co.uk](http://www.cyrenians.co.uk)  
[cyrenians@cyrenians.co.uk](mailto:cyrenians@cyrenians.co.uk)

**DPIA** (Displaced People in Action) 'The relief of  
those seeking asylum and those granted refugee

status who are in conditions of need, hardship  
and distress'.

CSV House, Williams Way, Cardiff, CF10 5DY  
029 2038 8389

**Info-Nation** - Information, support and advice  
for young people aged 11-25  
47 The Kingsway, Swansea  
01792 484010  
[info-nation@swansea-edunet.gov.uk](mailto:info-nation@swansea-edunet.gov.uk)

**MEWN** - Minority Ethnic Women's Network  
24 Mansel Street, Swansea  
01792 467222 [www.mewnswansea.org.uk](http://www.mewnswansea.org.uk)  
[mewn@mewnswansea.org.uk](mailto:mewn@mewnswansea.org.uk)

**Samaritans** - Confidential, emotional support  
17 St Johns Road, Swansea  
01792 655999  
(National helpline) 08457 909090  
[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) [Jo@samaritans.org](mailto:Jo@samaritans.org)

**Swansea City and County Council**  
Main switchboard 01792 636 000  
Library (central) 01792 516750

**Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council**  
Grove House, Grove Place, Swansea  
01792 457035 [www.sbrec.org.uk](http://www.sbrec.org.uk)  
[sb.rec@virgin.net](mailto:sb.rec@virgin.net)

**Swansea College**  
Kingsway 01792 470611  
Tycoch 01792 284000

**SCVS** - Swansea Council for Voluntary Services  
7 Walter Road, Swansea  
01792 544000 [www.scvs.org.uk](http://www.scvs.org.uk)

**Victim Support** - Local support for victims of  
crime  
81 Mansel Street, Swansea 01792 543653

**Welsh Refugee Council** Third Floor, Grove  
House, Grove Place, Swansea SA1 5DF  
01792 630180  
[info@welshrefugeecouncil.org](mailto:info@welshrefugeecouncil.org)

**Women's Aid Swansea** - for women who are  
experiencing domestic violence and abuse  
01792 644683 [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)  
[web@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:web@womensaid.org.uk)

Swansea  
*is aiming for*  
**City of Sanctuary Status**



**April 2010**

Plan action where  
you are and tell us about it.

Help us get to 100 pledges by April.

*Is your organisation signed up? Could you contact others?*

**Contact Us**

[swansea@cityofsanctuary.org](mailto:swansea@cityofsanctuary.org)

[www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea](http://www.cityofsanctuary.org/swansea)

Swansea City of Sanctuary c/o SBASSG. YMCA, 1 The Kingsway, Swansea SA1 5JQ

**WANTED:**

Letters, reports, stories, recipes, photos or other ideas for our next issue. If you have time to help edit and design the newsletter please get in touch.

*Created by Swansea City of Sanctuary. December 2009. Thank you to all contributors.*