Congratulations! ZA “10 year anniversary”!

Let’s Network!

October 2011 marks ten years from when concerned Zimbabweans got together and decided to do something about the situation facing asylum seekers in the UK.

ZA began its active life as a group of volunteers working from their homes (linked by email and mobile phones) responding to calls for help from newly arrived detained Zimbabweans.

In 2006 the ZA became a registered charity. It has tackled the welfare needs of members by running regional drop in centres.

ZA has gathered information and evidence for use in the courts in the ongoing battle against the removal of ‘failed’ asylum seekers to Zimbabwe.

It has also done joint research programmes with Refugee Council, UCL and others on issues affecting asylum seekers.

In 2011, around 85% of asylum claims by Zims over the last decade are now resolved!

Join Zimbabwe Association to celebrate 10 years

This year’s annual general meeting will be special as the Zimbabwe Association will be commemorating ten years of hard work and ten years of achievement.

All members and supporters are invited to this event. We are going to have a choir and other surprises.

Lunch will be provided on the day. Watch the ZA website www.zimbabweassociation.org.uk for more information about the annual event.

2011 ZA Annual General Meeting
Sunday 30 October
At St James Church Hall, Islington, London
**BOOK CAFÉ—Well done!**

Zimbabwe’s Book Cafe has won a 2011 Prince Claus Award for its role in "culture and development".

It is "a momentous achievement for Zimbabwean performing arts, and for Book Cafe", which becomes one of the first live performing arts venues of this kind in the world, built on a platform of freedom of expression and focusing across music, poetry and theatre with public discussion, film and multidisciplinary arts, to win the acclaimed global award.

**New COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION 19 August 2011**

The UKBA recently published a new report on Zimbabwe. This is the report that UKBA case workers use to decide asylum claims.

For the report see www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/Sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/coi/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-coi-report.pdf?view=Binary

Let us know if you disagree with anything in this report.

by Mauleen Mashiri

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**Why join the ZA? - see below for what members can get**

**ZA new membership package**

- Welcome letter
- Quarterly newsletters
- Invites to ZA Events
- Letters of Support and References
- Case reviews
- FRIENDS:
  - Work & leisure
  - Information
  - Opportunity:
  - Work & Leisure

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**Life in a strange land**

Life is hard in a strange land especially when awaiting a decision.

The decision is the one, which will determine my future life.

My future in a strange land is in the hands of the decision maker.

Waking up everyday knowing that my life and my future is uncertain.

I have burden of what is going to happen next positive or negative.

Every morning I wait for the mail to be delivered hoping for a positive decision.

At times I ask myself what is the purpose of life or is it worth it?

I find myself locked in a mental prison with bars made of steel and my cutting tool is rubber.

I am no longer proud of who I am or where I came from because all that I did when I was there is static.

Although I have skills, talents in abundance I am a statistic a number waiting to be dealt with.

I fled the place, which I call home, I abandoned my family to be safe.

Until I am accepted in a strange land I still remain a dependant.

Over the last ten years, many, many people have joined the ZA for a lot of different reasons. Some have joined for a short time—others are still members nine or ten years later.

Hundreds (if not thousands) of ZA members now have status in the UK.

Is there any point in being a ZA member?

**YES!!** - The future is bright, but only for those who are willing to put energy and effort into the ZA. The old saying, “You get back what you put in” has never been truer.

Those who are committed to ZA find friendship, opportunities, challenges and fun.
Legal aid cuts to immigration could mean 'injustice, hardship and even loss of life'

Shocking and now familiar story of the closure of the Immigration Advisory Service demonstrates precariousness of the legal advice sector

Here we go again. Barely one year after Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) was forced to close its doors on some 10,000 asylum seekers, the largest remaining charity Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) has called in the administrators, threatening the jobs of some 250 case workers in 14 branches and leaving more vulnerable clients in the lurch.

"We know from our daily contact with asylum seekers how important this support is for them as they make their case for protection," commented Donna Covey, chief executive of the Refugee Council. "After the sad loss of RMJ last year, this news from the IAS is hugely significant and very worrying. Our clients already struggle to find good quality legal representation; this development will only add to their difficulties."

You can read Steve Medley's account of how the service's closure might impact upon some of the most vulnerable members of society. I have written about RMJ’s closure and the anger felt by ex-RMJ staff that clients were abandoned to uncertain fates. Not surprisingly IAS staff are deeply anxious about their own but also their clients’ futures. "These files are people's lives and they are sitting there on desks and shelves," a caseworker in Manchester tells me. She reports that staff wanted to work on urgent cases on a pro bono basis after the weekend, explaining, "We do asylum work. Sometimes this is life and death." She claims she was told to stop working immediately by the administrators and was not allowed to refer clients elsewhere. "I just told them to fuck off."

Full story (by Jon Robins) at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2011/jul/15/immigration-advisory-service-legal-aid-cuts

New Immigration Family Proposals – 13 July 2011

On 13 July 2011 UKBA issued a consultation on reforming routes for family migration. It closes on 6 October 2011.

A summary of the key proposals is on the ZA website home page.

IF YOU WERE GIVEN 5 YEARS LEAVE, AND HAVE NOW APPLIED FOR ILR:
Have you had a reply?
If so, how long did it take?
Please tell the office

Refugees with 5 year leave to remain route to settlement

If you are a refugee who has been granted a five year limited leave to remain and it is due to expire, you will need to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) before your leave expires.

You should submit your application form in the month before your limited leave expires. For example, if it ends on 30 August 2011, your application should reach UKBA between 30 July and 30 August 2011. It is important that you apply in time before your leave expires. This will ensure that: your case is considered easily, and your leave continues.

If you do not apply in time, you will no longer have leave and the UKBA will carry out an in depth review of your case. This may lead to your removal from the UK.

You should include all your dependants living in the UK on your application form, including those born in the UK since you were granted leave to remain. For information on how to apply for indefinite leave to remain before your leave expires, you should see the webpage www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

£12 m paid in asylum seeker claims

More than £12 million was paid out in legal costs and compensation to asylum seekers and other immigrants last year, figures have showed.

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) paid a total of £14.2 million last year in compensation, legal costs and ex gratia payments, up almost £2 million on the previous year, the agency’s annual report for 2010/11 showed.

This included payments to families who were unlawfully detained and removed, as well as £175,000 in compensation to an asylum seeker who was unlawfully detained and injured while in custody.

Legal costs alone topped £7.7 million in just over 1,000 cases, compared with £3.8 million for 691 cases in 2009/10.

More than £4 million was also paid out in 152 cases where each individual compensation payment was less than £250,000.

This compared with 837 such cases in 2009/10 which led to £4.4 million in compensation being paid.

The UKBA report also said the agency had "various legal claims which are currently outstanding" and had set aside £4 million, "based on past experience", for "a number of cases of unlawful detention".

A UKBA spokeswoman said: "Detention is a necessary part of the process to remove some individuals with no right to be here"

Source http://www.independent.co.uk

60 years of UN Convention

2011 marks 60 years of celebrating the UN Convention of Refugees. The convention was approved at a special United Nations conference on 28 July 1951. It entered into force on 22 April 1954. It was initially limited to protecting European refugees after World War II but a 1967 Protocol removed the geographical and time limits, expanding the Convention’s scope. Because the convention was approved in Geneva, it is often referred to as "the Geneva Convention".

There are more than 147 signatories as of today. The Zimbabwe Association also celebrates the 60th anniversary for the protection of Refugees and asylum seekers.
The Art of Campaigning (Blog: Lyndall Stein)

I heard the wonderful pianist Daniel Barenboim playing Chopin in the Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern last night. As I looked down onto the great hall I saw a door open at the far end and Barenboim - a small, compact, determined figure - emerged and walked besides millions of sunflower seeds, the art installation of, Ai WeiWei, now in prison in China for shining a bold light on the injustices perpetrated on his people. His project in Shanghai was to document the deaths of 58 migrant workers who died because of shoddy and corrupt building practices which led to the collapse of a tower block. He suffered a brain haemorrhage from a beating last year in Sichuan and now is in prison; no one knows the sentence or the 'crime'.

The great Barenboim played as one would expect from the ‘Maestro’ – brilliantly. He also spoke with such charm, humour and modesty. He explained he had accepted the invitation to play at the Tate Modern because it had ‘tickled him’ to be in this unlikely venue, but he also said how important it was for artists to leave their ivory towers, to take music out to different audiences.

He is a living exponent of this, a former child prodigy who has been performing to rapturous audiences since he was seven, a Jew living in Israel who has shown extraordinary moral courage, by speaking out on behalf of the Palestinian people. Working with the late Palestinian intellectual, his friend Edward Said, he set up a wonderful project, the West - Eastern Divan orchestra, which brings Arabic and Israeli young people together, to make music and to build understanding: http://www.west-eastern-divan.org/.

He is also one of the only Israelis who has been honoured with a Palestinian citizenship. This great artist has taken risks, defied the conventions, and left his ivory tower to experience the pain and trauma of his neighbours, determined on breaching the walls between them and to share the experiences of those who, as Edward Said explained, are ‘the victims of victims’.

The responsibility to make art and music is a very special one. We must encourage and applaud those who enrich our deepest human experience, but artists and musicians have another part to play - as campaigners. So let’s applaud them for that as well, and campaign for them when they suffer the consequences of standing up for what’s right.

Next week the Tate Modern will launch a show of the Catalan/Spanish artist Juan Miro. I have on my wall one of his prints. It’s very small and on cheap paper. In red yellow and blue it has a raised fist with the words ‘Aidez Espagne’. It cost one franc when it was printed in the 30’s to raise money for the struggle against Franco and his Fascists. The Fascists won. Spain was plunged into 40 years of misery, and for Miro many, long years of exile from his beloved Barcelona. His fellow exiles and friends included Picasso, who in his masterwork, Guernica, produced one of the most powerful and enduring campaigning artworks of our time: a cry of outrage, it showed the brutal bombing of innocent civilians in the Basque country, but today it could be Iraq? Afghanistan? Libya?

The ‘Maestro’ left to tumultuous applause, he passed right by me, I had a chance to thank him - for his music and his bravery.

CHOICES ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN SERVICE run by Refugee Action .

Call 0808 800 0007 for free confidential advice and information.

Please Note
If you know of any one who has been detained in a removal centre please do let the office know about the detainee.

Call 020 7739 8226 or email to info@zimbabweassociation.org.uk.

New book on Zimbabwe:

Catastrophe: What Went Wrong in Zimbabwe?

By Richard Bourne (August 2011)

No one in 1980 could have guessed that Zimbabwe would become a failed state on such a monumental and tragic scale. In this incisive and revealing book, Richard Bourne shows how a country which had every prospect of success when it achieved a delayed independence in 1980 became a brutal police state with hyperinflation, collapsing life expectancy and abandonment by a third of its citizens less than thirty years later.

Beginning with the British conquest of Zimbabwe and covering events up to the present precarious political situation, Catastrophe is the most comprehensive, up-to-date and readable account of the ongoing crisis. Bourne shows that Zimbabwe’s tragedy is not just about Mugabe’s ‘evil’ but about history, Africa today and the world’s attitudes towards them.

Reviewing the book, Professor Stephen Chan, says:

“In the plethora of one-sided and ill-informed works on Zimbabwe, Richard Bourne’s new book stands out as deeply thought, highly detailed, judicious and balanced. Bourne’s capacity to weigh evidence and to arrive at sober and sobering judgements is superb. There will not be a better account of Zimbabwe for some time to come.”

Let’s network 2011 Autumn
Challenges faced by women asylum seekers in UK

Due to my personal experience I have noticed that in many occasions or events women asylum seekers always exceed man’s numbers. Is it because we have more women who claim asylum or the system does not favour women. You will notice this if you visit one vigil attendance. Women asylum seekers face more challenges during the time of their claim than men.

The basic health needs of women asylum seekers and refugees are broadly similar to those of the host population, although previous poor access to health care may mean that many conditions have been untreated. Symptoms of psychological distress are common but do not necessarily signify mental illness. Many women refugees experience difficulties in expressing health needs and in accessing health care. Poverty and social exclusion have a negative impact on health. Initially refugees will need help to make contact with health and social support agencies. Professional interpreters are essential.

Time, patience, and a welcoming approach will break down many barriers, but some women refugees have problems that need specialist help and support for which there are few resources, especially outside London. It is crucial that these resources are developed before large numbers of asylum seekers are dispersed. (by Luka Phiri)

BICYCLE AS A TOOL OF LIBERATION FOR ZIMBABWE’S WOMEN!

Cycling can free women from the daily ordeal of Harare’s public transport, and avoid predatory men

In an article for the Guardian’s Bike Blog, Jane Madembo relived her experience as a public transit and bicycle commuter in Zimbabwe. Madembo explains that public transport was scarce in the low-density, suburban areas where she had to travel for work, leaving her and other commuters to rely on inadequate and overcapacity transport methods.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/bike-blog/2011/aug/09/zimbabwe-women-bicycle-tool-liberation

CRY WOMAN CRY, CRY BELOVED ZIMBABWE

When Zimbabwe’s political temperature rises, women and children are the most vulnerable, writes Grace Kwinjeh.

‘Another weekend in for my child, is that it?? Cynthia was picked up from her town residence, not in Glen View, and she was never in Glen View, why, why is this happening to my child and why to her little boy?? How do I tell a little boy that he can’t see his mother because she was arrested for no crime at all?? ’ - Anna Manjoro.

The above are the cries posted on the social networking site, Facebook, by Mrs Anna Manjoro, Cynthia Manjoro’s mother. Cynthia is one of 24 Glenview residents accused of killing a police officer, Petros Mutedza. Above is the shrill cry of anguish coming from a mother and grandmother for her daughter, Cynthia, who has left behind a son to whom she has to explain the criminal enormity of his mother’s arrest.

For full story go to http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/74717

Bureaucracy is turning Britain into a cultural backwater

Idrissa Soumaoro should have been rehearsing with the celebrated Malian musicians Amadou & Mariam for a show at the Manchester international festival when I called him. Instead, he was stuck in a hotel in Senegal, whiling away the hours watching television and chatting to the staff with whom he is fast becoming friendly.

Soumaoro, one of the most respected musicians in west Africa, flew from his home in Mali to Dakar three weeks ago to obtain a visa for Britain. He expected to stay four days at most while he was fingerprinted, questioned and cleared for entry. Instead, his passport was sent to Ghana for processing and he was left stranded in the Senegalese capital, his manager having to scramble out emergency funds for food and lodging.

Now it is touch and go whether he will make the opening night. And it is not just any old show, but a project so close to the band’s hearts that they have spent more than five years working on it. It is called Eclipse and will be performed entirely in the dark so the audience experience music in the same way as Amadou & Mariam, who are both blind.

"I couldn't believe it," said Soumaoro, a multi-instrumentalist who spent three years studying in Britain, learning braille so he could teach music at Amadou and Mariam’s school for blind children in Bamako. "I consider England my second home, but this is amazing."

He is right: it is amazing Britain treats world-class artists in this demeaning manner. Sadly, his story is not unusual. For it does not matter how famous or talented they are. Non-Europeans wanting to entertain British audiences must endure a bureaucratic nightmare which, combined with rising costs, increasing delays and occasional consular rudeness, is deterring more and more of them from coming here. Britain is taking itself off the cultural map.
ZA Office
Contact Details
Oxford House
Derbyshire St
London E2 6HG
tel: 0207 739 8226
email: info@zimbabweassociation.org.uk

Nearest tube: Bethnal Green (central line)
Please contact us to make an appointment before coming to the office.

ZA T-SHIRTS FOR SALE!

ZA t-shirts (pale blue) are now for sale for £10, please contact the office.

G4S - Dumb and unbelievably dumber
Private security firm G4S are responsible to the Ministry of Justice for Electronic tagging of criminal offenders/immigration detainees. Managers at G4S became suspicious that the tag on a Mr. L was not as it should be and went to Mr. L’s home to check.

They entered the premises and found the tag underneath a bed attached to a wooden leg. Asking the occupants did they know the whereabouts of Mr. L, they were told he was back in prison.

G4S have sacked the two employees who were responsible for originally attaching the Electronic tag for not realizing Mr. L was disabled and had only one real leg the other a prosthetic, to which they had attached the tag!

DROP IN CENTRES (DIC) Contact Details

Birmingham DIC
1 Piers Road
Handsworth
Birmingham B21 0UY

Leicester DIC
Fortnightly On Fridays From 2pm to 4pm
10a Bishops Street
Town Hall Square
Leicester LE1 6AF

Please Note: for information on London Friendship Group and Manchester DIC Call OR email the office
Meeting times, dates and venues are subject to change so to avoid disappointment check first before travelling to a DIC.

ZA T-SHIRTS FOR SALE!

ZA t-shirts (pale blue) are now for sale for £10, please contact the office.

NEW PHONE SCAM ALERT: “I received a call from a ‘representative’ of BT, informing me that he was dis-connecting me because of an unpaid bill. He demanded payment immediately of £31.00 or it would be £118.00 to re-connect at a later date.

The guy wasn’t even fazed when I told him I was with Virgin Media, allegedly VM have to pay BT a percentage for line rental! I asked the guy’s name - he gave me the very ‘English’ John Peacock with a very ‘African’ accent - & phone number - 0800 0800 152. Obviously the fellow realized I didn’t believe his story, so offered to demonstrate that he was from BT. I asked how & he told me to hang up & try phoning someone - he would disconnect my phone to prevent this. AND HE DID !

My phone was dead - no engaged tone, nothing - until he phoned me again. Very pleased with himself, he asked if that was enough proof that he was with BT. I asked how the payment was to be made and he said credit card, there and then.

I said that I didn’t know how he’d done it, but I had absolutely no intention of paying him, I didn’t believe his name or that he worked for BT. He hung up. I dialed 1471 - number withheld
I phoned his fictitious 0800 number - not recognized., so I phoned the police to let them know.. I wasn’t the first! It’s only just started apparently, but it is escalating.” THIS SCAM WAS TO TRY AND GET CREDIT CARD DETAILS NOT CASH!

END NOTES:
Upcoming events:
1—24 Sept: Truth and Reconciliation at Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, Central London
29 Sept—8 Oct: The Rain That Washes— An epic journey through Zimbabwe’s turbulent history (Chickenshed Theatre, North London)
1 October: King Mzilikazi Day Celebration from 1pm to 10 pm: Ndebele music, dance, poetry (Pimlico, Central London)
10 October: World Mental Health Day from 11 am to 9 pm— East London: music, health check, food, stalls, raffle
30 October: Zimbabwe Association AGM and 10th anniversary party, 1pm—5pm, North London

Detention and Removals Update: There is a new page on the ZA website giving information about detention and removals. Look under ‘Detention’ on the menu bar, to find it. Call the office if you have any problems. Help us to keep this information accurate by letting us know about anyone being detained or given removal directions.

Disclaimer
This Newsletter only provides general information and guidance. It is not intended to replace the advice or services of a solicitor. The specific facts that apply to your matter may make the outcome different than would be anticipated by you. The Zimbabwe Association and the Editor will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of this information. Editor