



Not in the name of mothers, teachers and other carers

Accommodation Centre

NO SCHOOL APARTHEID

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (NIA Act) aims to force traumatised children and families claiming asylum into isolated "Accommodation Centres" whilst their claims are being considered. Children living there will be denied the right to go to school with other children.

Many children seeking asylum now are being held in Detention Centres, denied proper schooling, allowed little exercise, some living and sleeping with as many as five to a room. A number of articles have come out in the press recently condemning this treatment.

The Act intends for more people including women with young children, to be held in detention (like prisons) when they first arrive. Traumatized women, children and men who have been victims of the most horrendous violence, including rape and other torture, whose loved ones have been murdered in front of them, are being criminalized, denied basic human rights, independent legal advice and essential health care, and most crucially, the time they need to present their full case. If the vast amount of money spent on bombing and invading other countries (Britain spent £3.5bn on bombing Iraq alone) went into caring there would be much less devastation and many less asylum seekers displaced in the world.

Mothers, fathers and other carers formed the No Schools Apartheid Campaign (NSA) to oppose plans for segregated education. The Campaign, led by mothers, has been effective. It has brought together a diverse network of people including teachers, professionals, charities, refugee rights and church groups to oppose the legislation.

We strongly believe that all children, starting with resident children, benefit from growing up in an integrated environment where they can

make friends and be educated with children from all over the world. There is no better anti-racist education, so vital for a caring society, than to grow up in a multi-racial school ready to defend its most vulnerable pupils and would-be pupils. What better way to learn first hand than no one needs, wants or deserves less than yourself?

Every teacher we have spoken to said it's a lie that asylum seekers are "swamping" schools, and stressed that these children make a positive contribution to the communities they live in and have brought great benefits to the schools.

"This is the most disgusting bit of vote catching I've come across. I'm not swamped by refugee children I'm swamped by government initiatives and bureaucracy. Segregating children will only fuel racism and deprive English children of the chance to mix with youngsters from different backgrounds" Andy Knowles, Head of Hampstead Community School London.

My school is enriched by diversity, it's not a problem, it's an opportunity. As children, we get one chance at being a five-year-old, a six-year-old, a seven-, an eight-, a nine-year-old. As an adult we get many more opportunities. Brigid Jackson-Dooley, Cleves Primary School, Newham London.

The government has not been able to find one head teacher ready to support segregated education.

As part of NSA's campaigning we called two briefings for the Lords and MP's as the Bill passed through Parliament so they could hear from the grass-roots. In their debate the Lords referred repeatedly to people's contributions which no doubt helped to win the vote against segregated education at that stage. Although the government finally passed the legislation in November 2002, they were seen to be pushing it through at any cost and the deal the Liberal Democrats were ready to make with them was exposed and dropped.

We have always said that the government plans to educate children in accommodation centres means no education at all. This is proved right by recent publicity of conditions in detention where children receive no formal, substantial or age appropriate education, and there is no Ofsted inspection. As many as 56 children under the age of 18 are currently locked up by the Immigration service, some for as long as 270 days.

We are focusing on stopping the government's plans and have called for non-co-operation from teachers and others. Blunkett depends on to open the accommodation centres.

We would like to be in touch with teachers and other staff, trade unions and church people and anyone who would consider supporting the call for non-co-operation with apartheid education. If they can't find the staff and there is enough opposition this policy could go the way of vouchers and children would be back in school.

What you can do:

- >> Ask your school, nursery, local education authority to protest -- send them your letter and tell them the community feels strongly about it.
- >> Send your letters to local press, educational journals, education editors, and any school TV or radio programmes and ask them to cover it.
- >> Contact teachers' association/trade unions and ask them to get their branches to write and to call for non-co-operation with accommodation and other detention centres. Ask them to publish information in their journals and on their websites.

Co-ordinated by mothers with the support of Legal Action for Women
kay@crossroadswomen.net Tel: 0207 482 2496 07904 25514