

STAR News

THE QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM STUDENT ACTION FOR REFUGEES

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REFUGEES WELCOME HERE! STAR National Conference 2007

120 delegates, 12 workshops, 8 action sessions, 6 panellists, 3 keynote speakers, 1 short movie, and 1 truly AWESOME party.

The tenth STAR National Conference was held at the Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre in London on the 10th-11th November. The conference brought together students and young people from across the country and STAR network to listen to speakers, attend workshops and action sessions and discuss the issues that lie at the crux of the asylum debate. Most importantly, it was a chance to meet each other and share ideas and enthusiasm.

It was a jam-packed weekend, but there were lots of fair-trade goodies to keep people fuelled and ready to go. The natural enthusiasm of all the attendees also meant they threw themselves in to every activity with gusto. Many delegates were impressed in particular by the keynote speakers. These included Marie Lyse Numuhoza, a refugee from Rwanda who is now project manager at the Scarman Trust; Melanie McFadyean, journalist and winner of an Amnesty International Media Award, and Jon Cruddas, a Labour MP who took part in Refugee week earlier this year. The STAR Question Time Panel tackled questions on detention, deportation of HIV sufferers to countries with no access to medicine, and legal aid.

The Saturday afternoon workshops were an opportunity for delegates to get expert information and insight on issues as diverse as Still Human Still Here, Understanding the Impact of Torture, Refugee Women, and Climate Change and Migration. The Sunday action sessions also sent delegates away with ideas on "Dealing with Difficult Questions", "Effective Volunteering" and "e-campaigning" amongst others.



We came, We saw, We mexican waved...

To celebrate National Conference's tenth birthday a brilliant party took place on Saturday night at the Euston Flyer. Delegates tucked in to birthday cupcakes and danced the night away to music from Columbian drummers, DJs Ruby and Sol, Family Atlantica and Radio Revolucion. The Euston Flyer regulars looked, frankly, bemused but we feel were ultimately impressed by our funky dance moves, and at one point a full blown moshpit!

After a night spent in the crashpad some delegates looked distinctly worse for wear on Sunday. But that didn't stop them coming up with brilliant ideas in the action sessions and asking some searching questions at the AGM. Finally, delegates created a "Starry Night", writing down resolutions and hopes for the year to come.

It was a delight to celebrate the tenth National Conference with so many people who brought their passion, commitment, ideas and enthusiasm to make the this year's conference such a wonderful event.

STAR Question Time.

Columbian drummers get the party started.

Brainstorming ideas in one of the many workshops.



AGM ACTION

The lowdown on the 2007 STAR AGM

What is an AGM?

AGM stands for Annual General Meeting. STAR's Memorandum of Association (also called the Constitution) requires that STAR hold an AGM each year. All members of STAR, funders, supporters and others with an interest in the organisation are invited to the meeting, and it provides attendees with an opportunity to listen and vote on key issues that STAR is facing.

What happened in this year's AGM?

The Management Committee presented the activities and financial situation of the organisation over the last year, and the strategic plans proposed for the next few years. In the strategy section key issues such as volunteer support, outreach activities, STAR's key values and individual membership were discussed. STAR volunteers voted to approve STAR's four new values; **inspiring, youth-led, effective and inclusive**. STAR members also voted to agree to individual membership and to focus our efforts on volunteer support and training.

The AGM also gave the attendees the chance to quiz and elect the new members of the Management Committee. All five proposed new members were elected. They were Sarah Davies, Jemma Samuels, Anna Collins, Onyenka Igwe, and Forward Maisokwadzo. We all look forward to working with and getting to know STAR volunteers and the National Office.

So what does this all mean?

STAR is now ready to take on this newly focused strategy for the future. Whilst STAR faces difficulties financially, it will draw on the strength and commitment of its staff, members and Management Committee to ensure that it continues to be a successful charity. STAR has and will continue to make a huge positive difference to the lives of students and refugees.

See you next year.

Anna Collins (Newly elected Management Committee member)



Democracy in action, STAR volunteers vote.

STAR VOLUNTEERS INSPIRED BY "PEOPLE'S POET"

On the Sunday afternoon David Neita, "People's Poet and People's Lawyer", led a poetry workshop encouraging participants to express their thoughts and ideas on the themes of this year's national conference. David, who was a member of the legal team which brought the largest group action claim in the UK on behalf of thousands of South African asbestos miners, orated some of his own poetry before encouraging volunteers to write their own poems or prose. After an intense weekend of seminars and speakers the chance to chill out, get creative, and reflect on the ideas that the weekend had generated was much appreciated! Below is one of the results of STAR volunteers' creative impulses.



David Neita offers advice to get the creative juices flowing

We sat
up side down
all fine rain and chewing gum
breathing in

Before?
Blandness back dropped by blander billboards
beautifying boredom

Now
Slyly cede to the brick wall process
The tired guards and a beige backdrop

"we don't believe your story"
echoes down the corridor
this is not my story
breathing out

In the place between heaven and hell

For More Poetry look at the website www.star-network.org.uk

INTERVIEW IN AN INSTANT

Etienne Bell, STAR Youth Member, gave us his impressions of the STAR National Conference.

How did you get involved in STAR?

I heard about it in 2004 through a volunteer at the Refugee Council. I got involved and decided to become a member.

What did you think of this year's National Conference?

I really liked the speakers, especially the MPs. It is good to have people from Westminster, because they are the policy makers and it is good to know what they are thinking. I also went to the Still Human Still here workshop which was fantastic. The workshop on the Impact of Torture was amazing, it was really good to understand more and I asked lots of questions.

What has National Conference inspired you to do in the future?

It was really empowering, and I would like to do something about the Still Human Still Here campaign.



10-0 cupcakes in 0.5 seconds!



Sticking resolutions on the starry night board.



Keynote speaker Marie Lyse Numuhoza

BRIGHT NEW STARS RECRUITED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Freshers' fairs all over the country were recruiting brand new shiny "STARS" this autumn.

STAR-loving students were queuing up to sign their names with Heather at LSE's packed event in London. It was equally hectic in Cardiff where the union building was crammed full of first years eager to make the most of their University life – Owen, Miriam and the crew in Wales have some exciting events planned in the coming year. In Hull Richard and Andrew manned the stall in between their shifts at the local refugee centre, whilst Annuka and Neil in Essex braved the elements at their breezy but sunny outdoor stall. In Warwick, the already active team led by Pravina and Eletra signed up plenty of newbies keen to join in the action.



Miriam in Cardiff signs up a new member.

Well done to all the STAR committees above and also to the many other STAR groups across the UK and beyond who worked hard to host fantastic freshers events this October. Finally a big welcome to all the new members, it should be a great year!

Maria Parisi

07/08 NATIONAL CAMPAIGN – STILL HUMAN STILL HERE

This year STAR, together with over 20 other leading refugee organisations including the Refugee Council, Refugee Action and Amnesty International will be supporting the Still Human Still Here campaign. The campaign is calling for the end of the threat and use of destitution as a tool of Government policy against people refused asylum. SHSH is consequently calling for continued financial support and accommodation for refused asylum seekers, as well as full access to health care and education and permission to work until such a time as they have left the UK, or been granted leave to remain. It is estimated that there are over 280 000 failed asylum seekers in the UK who are left destitute in order to try and force them to leave the country; SHSH believes that this is not morally acceptable.

The past few months of campaigning have been very busy indeed; what with taking part in fringe events at the Party Conferences, launching the new Still Human Still Here DVD, joining in with protests at the Houses of Parliament as well as all the fantastic events that our student groups have been organising on campuses and in town centres around the country!

Over the next few months there will be much more campaigning with some exciting actions to take part in! In the coming weeks we will be lobbying MPs to take action on the issue of destitution with the aid of the new Still Human Still Here DVD. We will also be setting up as many screenings as is humanly possible in universities and local communities all across the country to raise awareness about the campaign. March 5th next year will be our National Student Action Day, where we will be holding student sleepouts with Amnesty International groups in loads of universities and towns in support of the campaign.

Keep an eye on the website for further campaign updates and information.

www.star-network.org.uk
www.stillhuman.org.uk

Jack Rowley

**still human
still here**

The campaign to end destitution of
refused asylum seekers

LIVERPOOL STAR GO MADD

CSV Make a Difference Day is the UK's largest day of volunteering, involving around 120,000 participants across the country who volunteer to help their community. At Liverpool's Guild of Students, STAR, Refugee Action and around 15 local volunteers made winter boxes for destitute asylum seekers. The contents of the boxes included sanitary towels, toothbrushes, tinned foods and warm clothes. Refugee Action gave a presentation about the destitution trap and why the government needs to change their destitution policy. This offered an in-depth look at how to address a long term problem.

The day felt like a success: the combination of thinking and doing got the whole team active, and hopefully offered participants food for thought after the day finished. Hopefully CSV and STAR can collaborate, perhaps nationally, for next year's event.

Pat, Liverpool STAR

KCL STAR NOMINATED FOR BRITISH RED CROSS AWARD

KCL STAR have been nominated for a British Red Cross Humanitarian Citizen Award. The award is given to those who have made a real impact on an individual or in their community.

KCL STAR have developed a homework and social club for young refugees in Clapham. Set up in April 2005, the club has two weekly sessions, one for 5-9 year olds and the other for children aged 10-14. The volunteers provide one to one help with homework and organise games and activities such as sports, cooking, craft and dance.

KCL STAR will be going on a boat trip down the Thames on the 17th of November when the winners will be announced, we wish them luck!

DON'T FORGET TO LOOK AT OUR SPANGLY NEW WEBSITE!

The new site has:

- * A dedicated news section for STAR members to post stories
- * An up to date (members only) resources section
- * Up to date information on latest volunteering opportunities with STAR

And soon to be launched:

A STAR forum where STAR volunteers can discuss activities and swap ideas!

www.star-network.org.uk

Dates for your Diaries...



02 December
International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

05 December
International Volunteer Day.

10 December
Human Rights Day

18 December
International Migrants Day

27 January
Holocaust Memorial Day

27 January - 3 February
Poverty and Homelessness Action week

25 Feb - 9 March
Fairtrade Fortnight

8 March
International Women's Day

7-9 March
National Student Volunteering Conference, www.studentvol.org.uk

21 March
International Day for the elimination for Racial Discrimination

And a very BIG DATE

5 March – STAR Action Day: Supporting Still Human Still Here

VIRTUAL CASH STILL COUNTS!

WANT to help raise funds for STAR but don't want to venture out in the cold winter nights? No problem! You can now raise money for STAR without leaving the comfort of your chair.

By using everyclick.com and easyfundraising.org.uk you can raise funds for STAR. These 2 websites will give us a small donation for everyclick of your mouse and every purchase you make online once you have registered and selected STAR as your charity.

everyclick.com

everyclick.com is an internet search engine which donates half its revenues to charity. Register by using the following easy steps.

STEP 1: go to www.everyclick.com

STEP 2: Select the charity you would like to support

STEP 3: Enter STAR (Student Action for Refugees) in the text box

STEP 4: Select this charity

STEP 5: Complete the form and SIGN UP



It does not cost us, or you, a penny - so please use it.

And why not set it as your homepage to make it even easier to use?

www.easyfundraising.org.uk/studentactionforrefugees

easyfundraising is a shopping directory that features over 400 online stores, including Amazon, NEXT, Debenhams, John Lewis, and HMV. All you have to do is register (for FREE) and select STAR as the organisation you wish to support, then use the links on the [easyfundraising](http://easyfundraising.org.uk) site whenever you shop online and, at no extra cost to you, we'll receive a free donation of up to 15% from every purchase you make. It really is that simple!

Over the next few months, we will be looking at many more different ways of e-fundraising and e-volunteering, so keep an eye on your e-mail updates and you can help make a big difference without a big effort.

easyfundraising
.org.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF... THE LATEST ON ASYLUM AND REFUGEE ISSUES

Gordon Brown is calling for a unified border force that will combine immigration and customs, in a bid to boost the fight against terrorism. Refugee campaigners have criticized the proposal, as it is feared it will make it more difficult for refugees to claim safety in the UK.

Ministers have won an appeal against a court ruling that could have widened the grounds for being given asylum. The home secretary Jacqui Smith challenged the court's finding that resettling three Darfuri asylum seekers in camps in the Sudanese region of Darfur was unlawful.

The Home Office says it will change the way abuse allegations against immigration staff are handled following criticisms from a government watchdog. The Border and Immigration Agency's Complaints Audit Committee said immigrants' and asylum seekers' complaints were often not followed up. It found just 8% of complainants were interviewed and 89% of investigations were "neither balanced nor thorough". The government promised a "radical, new complaints system" would be launched.

Campaigners are calling for greater protection for refugee and asylum seeking children. The UK Government has signed up to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child but opts out when it comes to immigration. This means that refugee and asylum seeking children do not necessarily have the same rights as other young people.

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