

‘Not white enough for the British, not black enough for Mugabe’

by Nellie de jongh/NCADC

It's two years since I Nellie de jongh wrote *Britian's youngest Prisoners – Lack of “Duty of Care”* (posted 28/07/06) one of a series of news article for NCADC on children in Yarl's Wood IRC and has the detention of children by the state stopped? No it has not. I am having difficulty making contact with parents in Yarl's Wood; if anyone can pass some contacts to me I will be very grateful. There are 136 detainees of those 55 are children in Yarl's Wood today.

I am working away from home three weeks in the month and as I have some free time during work I do hope to continue working for a cause that I am passionate about and strongly believe in 'Ending the Detention of Children'.

Whilst waiting to make contact with parents in Yarl's Wood, maybe this is a good time to share with everyone my own personal story of some of the causes of displacement in this unjust world where human rights depends on one's nationality or the part of the world you come from, like the children I write about I too have been punished all my life for my parentage, it would be fair to describe myself as someone who was born Displaced.

In the face of all this many will be wondering what took Nellie so long to get back to campaigning for the worthy cause of 'Britain's Youngest Prisoners', like I was telling a friend who asked me the same question, "Refugee Status is what happened to me" and that folks is not for the feint hearted, being left in limbo from January 2000 and only getting Refugee Status September 2006, *Refugee Status comes with so many heartbreaking challenges of its own*, it would be true to say I had a kind of break down, but I am back now still fighting, somehow life does not feel quite right if I am not fighting about one thing or another and throwing a few spanners in the Home Office works I have become very much addicted to the drama.

Born in the then segregated Police State Rhodesia now Zimbabwe to a black mother and a white British father at a time when black and white were at war was a very traumatic experience, having to live in hiding in my grandparents village and being told to runaway if I ever saw white people, I was the only mixed race child in my family, in the whole school, and entire village, at this time it was widely believed that mixed race children were rounded up and put into Foster care, orphanages run by missionaries the same as Australia's Stolen Generation or the film Rabbit Proof Fence.

When the war of liberation intensified in the late 70s I was ten years old, the Freedom Fighters told my grandparents "if you don't get rid of this Whiteman's child we will come back, kill her and the whole family. I remember asking my

grandmother why I had to be the only child leaving our village and she said it was because I was half white, bearing in mind that I had never actually seen a white person except in very old tattered newspapers and magazines that found their way to our remote village before the war. I wanted to know which half of me was white and which was black. In my childish mind I wondered what would happen if somehow I were caught in the middle of the two warring factions, would each side shoot the half they felt was not theirs? All I knew about white people was that they were bad and the first ones I saw had guns and they were beating up the villagers for supporting the Freedom fighters.

My half brother who is about six years older than me joined the liberation struggle at age fifteen and I was whisked to the nearest town to seek protection from the whites, had I been older I would have been forced to fight on the whites side, meaning my brother and I could have killed each other. At age ten being taken to the whites for protection was the worst betrayal by my grandparents, I am still close to my brother that will never change we have never discussed the issue of my father, him supporting Zanu PF and me MDC, I can understand where he is coming from and at the end of the day we have to try to make our relationship work. Going back to my mother by the time I was two years old she had married to try and restore the family name/honor, because back then a black woman with a Whiteman's child was regarded as a loose woman or prostitute, even if she was raped no white man was ever prosecuted, he was the law. To her family she somehow asked for it and to the whites it was not his fault he blamed it all on the black woman's sexual looseness and also black people were regarded as personal property of the whites, to do with as they pleased.

Given that I was my mother's badge of shame for her to marry I had to disappear and I was sent to my grandmothers. She was lucky to have found a man that was willing to marry her and mostly back then and in some cases even now, there appears to be an unwritten law that says, that a woman is not to go into the new marriage with any access baggage, in my mother's case that was my brother and I. Another fact is that our mothers mostly worked as domestic maids, nannies for white families and of course the man of the home usually turned out to be the father of us the unwanted half breeds, if that woman wanted to keep her job, she went to her village to give birth not before being severely threatened by our happily married fathers, if her family accepted the half breed bastard she gave birth to, she went back to work to be a second mother to our half white brothers and sisters, her own child in her village was lucky if he or she got to see the mother once or twice a year for short periods.

This folks is the situation of the in-betweens, Mixed Race or coloureds as we are known in southern countries of Africa, is mine a unique case? Not at all there were/are many people in my situation, who feel that *during British rule we were not white enough and now under Mugabe's rule we are not black enough*, some Government ministers have been quoted as saying "they the mixed race/coloureds must go to their fathers in Britain", in Britain I do not

believe that as a Zimbabwean you can get Refugee Status on the grounds of race. And who might I ask introduced this very system? Britain should be in the Guinness book of records for the country with the shortest memory ever. I always joke and say I have to wait and see in 2011 at the end of my stay if I will be kicked out. Sometimes I can't wait to see what will happen, will I have completed the full circle of not being white enough, black enough and if British enough have to take a test to prove it. In 2000 Immigration Law clearly stated that: "An Illegitimate Child born by the father can not claim citizenship but however, a child born by the mother can". It is not easy to prove that our fathers are/were British, firstly I was not there holding the candle at the time of my conception and as Britain is still very much stuck in the Victorian times when its convenient I will always remain that dirty little secret, one of Britain's many foreign bastard children she chooses to shut out, sorry if I am an embarrassment but this Bastard child was not going to take no for an answer, after all which bastard child ever came through the front door, one's got to do what one's got to do to survive in an unequal and unjust world.

For all those who might accuse me of being an Economic Refugee (Phil Woolas et al) all I can say is that this leaf sure did not fall far from the tree, I am a product of British economic Exploitation/migration or if you like the result of Britain's Rape and Plunder of Africa, so don't fret if Britain's Foreign Bastard Children are sometimes daring enough to break or hack their way back into the UK from time to time. Some friends ask if I am not afraid to say all these things, like the saying goes, courage is never the absence of fear, what can they do to me that they haven't already done.

When I came to Britain I got a double whammy my British father and Britain both denied me, meaning that they have both bastardized me. After my father denied me I got picked up for questioning (never charged) by West Midlands Major Fraud Unit for falsely claiming British ancestry. It is this sort of injustice I must stand up to, I am far from finished with Britain, this is one bastard with an attitude. Even if I don't get anywhere I want to know that I went down fighting. My history as a mixed race person of Africa only begun in the late 1900s upon the arrival of the British and yet we are constantly told we need evidence; the full evidence is in the Bloody History of Britain.

Remember the three Cs Mr. Woolas, Commerce, Christianity and Civilization, the reason for colonizing us. I wouldn't say locking up children indefinitely for immigration purposes is very Christian nor is it civilized but certainly of commercial benefit to the private contractors that profit from the detention of children.

In relating part of my life story, I am not looking for sympathy because I am no one's victim. I am just one of millions upon millions of people victimized by uncaring governments who claim to be the champions of Human Rights but in reality uncaring bastards.

I am a citizen of the world fighting for my human dignity and pride, If anything I hope to encourage other people and hopefully they can say if Nellie can stand

up to this oppressive and racist system, so can I. Together we can stand and divided we are sure to fall we need to understand that we are all in the same boat and if we don't try to work together we will sink. Let us not be ashamed of the many labels/titles that they give us, Asylum seeker, economic migrants, Refugee etc, we know who we are lets hold our heads high and wear those titles with pride and dignity, seeking economic/political asylum is not a crime, Being Britain's Foreign Bastard Child is no crime either, I think it was Gandhi who said, they can only take your pride and dignity from you if you let them have it.

Telling my story is not meant to offend British people as my fight is with the state/system but dare I hope it mortally offends Phil Woolas just one of a number of people the world would be better off with out.

I work with some of the most amazing British people, who give so much of their time to so many worthy causes. Especially all the people on NCADC's mailing list, who at the drop of an email, take up the cause of those the UK don't want, these people give so much of their time and solidarity and on behalf of all migrants, I thank each and everyone of you for your tireless work in fighting for the human rights and human dignity of foreign nationals trying to a make a life in the UK.

Forward with the struggle, where there is injustice we must fight,

I remain yours Truly

Britain's Foreign Bastard Child
Nellie de jongh