

## A New Resource Provides Insight into the Experiences of Newcomers



**Detail of Hear My Voice Cover Image**

The EMBRACE DVD, *Hear My Voice*, complements previous resources and training sessions which have sought to share the experience of newcomers in their own words. In this DVD migrant people and people seeking asylum recount some of the things which stood out to them when they arrived, including their struggles and challenges, as well as the ways in which they feel at home. This resource allows you to hear the stories while the real faces of those speaking are represented by animated characters.

The DVD was the work of animator Jasbeer Singh and EMBRACE project team: Jenna Leichty Martin, Peter Martin, Aneta Dabek, Ashleigh Hunter, and Scott Boldt. The music accompanying the film is played on the mandolin and guitar by Zachary Schmidt, EMBRACE's latest volunteer from the USA. (See page 4.) EMBRACE is very grateful to all involved in this project and especially those who shared their views and stories. The *Hear My Voice*, *Voices of Migrants and People Seeking Asylum* DVD runs for six minutes and is a useful starting point for church and community group discussions on migration and welcome. The resource is free and will be available from the EMBRACE office in January 2014.

### Some Extracts from *Hear My Voice* DVD

'... when I came in Northern Ireland ... I thought I can understand everything but in Northern Ireland everybody was speaking English but it was so difficult to understand. ...

'When I first landed in Belfast the first shock was to see so many people who are not of my colour and as I was looking around I just got so frightened because I could not see any African. That was quite a shock for me to see so many white people and nobody was saying 'hello'. ...

'When I was going for holidays people were saying "Oh, you are going home" and then I had this question, "Where is my home?" and it still is like that, I think that now I have just two homes, two different homes.' ...

'When you come in such a culture like this it becomes very difficult for you to integrate so quickly. You need the help of the people living here to disciple you more or less on that journey of integration. And if there are no people are willing to help you to go on that journey of being cultured in this life here in Northern Ireland it becomes a very big threat and an unwelcoming place.' ...

(See page 3 for further extracts.)

## A New Voice on EMBRACE Committee

**John Mbayo**, Methodist minister of Glenburn congregation in South-East Belfast has joined the EMBRACE committee recently. He is from Zambia and trained for the Methodist ministry at Edgehill Theological College, Belfast. His experience of coming to this country, integrating here and contributing to society locally will be a powerful asset to the work of the group.

To see John and get to know him a little, view a short video in which he and his wife, Karen, describe a charity they have set up to improve life for people in Zambia. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rqss9KRQug](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rqss9KRQug)

The photograph below shows John sharing a joke with the minister of Belvoir and Cairnshill Methodist congregations, Revd Colin Duncan, who was also born in Zambia.



**John Mbayo (Right) at an All Nations Ministries Fundraising Event in Belvoir Church of Ireland Halls, July 2013**

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15: 5-6

### Contact us:

EMBRACE  
48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ  
Tel: 028 9066 3145  
Web: [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)  
Email: [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@embraceni.org)

EMBRACE is a group of Christians from different denominations working together to promote a positive response to people who are seeking asylum, refugees, migrant workers and people from minority-ethnic backgrounds living in Northern Ireland.

## REFUGEE & IMMIGRATION ISSUES

### UK City of Sanctuary Co-ordinator Visits Belfast

**Tiffany Allen** heard progress reports from City of Sanctuary groups in Belfast, Dublin, Derry~Londonderry and the Causeway Borough of Sanctuary Group which covers the areas of Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney and Moyle when she visited Belfast on 10 October. She spoke about the enthusiasm for Cities of Sanctuary in GB and how Sanctuary Awards are being given to bodies to reward good practice. A number of local authorities are deciding not to condone destitution where asylum support has been withdrawn by the Home Office and have signed the **Still Human Still Here** petition: <http://stillhumanstillhere.wordpress.com/> Some GB cities are thinking of volunteering to resettle refugees, influenced by the **Save Me: A City Says Yes** campaign, which started in Munich, Germany. [www.resettlement.eu/news/cities-say-yes-celebrating-save-me](http://www.resettlement.eu/news/cities-say-yes-celebrating-save-me)

### Refugee Week in Belfast

The latest edition of the Law Centre NI's social welfare law journal, *Frontline 89*, includes a feature on NI Refugee Week events, June 2013. [www.lawcentreni.org/news/recent-news/38-featured-slideshow/1044-frontline-89-online.html](http://www.lawcentreni.org/news/recent-news/38-featured-slideshow/1044-frontline-89-online.html) (*Frontline 89* also includes a review of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns *Campaigning Toolkit* which is available free from [www.ncadc.org.uk/toolkit](http://www.ncadc.org.uk/toolkit))

### Asylum Accommodation in the Irish Republic

The *Irish Times* has revealed unpublished inspection reports on state funded asylum accommodation centres housing around 4,600 people. Some conditions were so bad that private contractors had been warned that they would lose their contracts because of overcrowding, fire safety breaches, inadequate food, damp and faulty heating. [www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/inspections-reveal-poor-standards-in-asylum-centres-1.1553372](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/inspections-reveal-poor-standards-in-asylum-centres-1.1553372) These revelations come just after a Belfast High Court ruling in August that a Sudanese family who are seeking asylum should not be returned to Dublin because there was a risk of return to Sudan which the UK regards as unsafe for non-Arab Darfuris. The family also cited the deficiencies in the asylum system in the Republic of Ireland. Law Centre NI director, Les Allamby said 'The sooner the Irish government signs up to and meets the European Council directive on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers the better'. [www.lawcentreni.org/news/recent-news.html](http://www.lawcentreni.org/news/recent-news.html)

### The End of the UK Border Agency (UKBA)

As a result of reorganisation the UKBA has been split into two separate units within the Home Office: a visa and immigration service and an immigration law enforcement division. [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2013/may/11-transition](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2013/may/11-transition)

### EMBRACE Resources Used by Others

The NI Housing Executive has republished the *Word of Welcome* booklet which was developed by EMBRACE. [www.nihe.gov.uk/a\\_word\\_of\\_welcome.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/a_word_of_welcome.pdf) Other bodies are using the EMBRACE list of language classes. (The group would be very grateful to hear about additional classes.) [www.embraceni.org/?s=Language+classes#search=Language+classes](http://www.embraceni.org/?s=Language+classes#search=Language+classes)

### Change in Support Service for Hate Crime Victims

Until spring 2013, the Polish Association and then the Chinese Welfare Association hosted a bi-lingual advocacy service for victims of race hate crime and harassment. The Belfast Migrant Centre (Tel: 028 90438962) now runs the regional support project for victims of racist hate crime. This includes encouragement through the process of reporting to the police or taking a complaint to other agencies, liaison with the PSNI, assistance with housing and other problems and referrals to other support groups and public agencies. The posts are funded by the PSNI and the project supplements the services available from Victim Support NI and other organisations.

#### Bi-lingual advocate - Belfast and Mid-Ulster

Joanna Kuberczyk  
[lingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk](mailto:lingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 9043 8962 Mobile: 07827299347

#### Bi-lingual advocate - Northwest

(excluding PSNI H district)  
Agnieszka Luczak  
[lingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk](mailto:lingualsupportworker@nicem.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 71 372 235 Mobile: 07827297119

#### Bi-lingual advocate - H District

(Coleraine, Moyle, Ballymoney, Ballemena and Larne)  
Ivy Ridge  
[ivy.ridge@bief.org.uk](mailto:ivy.ridge@bief.org.uk)  
Tel: 028 2564 3605 Mobile: 07525142205

### Report on the Deployment of Migrant Labour

The NI Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP) has published *Mapping the Deployment of Migrant Labour in Northern Ireland*. The authors state that

In Northern Ireland the agriculture, food processing, hospitality and private healthcare sectors rely disproportionately on a migrant labour workforce. Non-skills related reasons such as low pay, unattractive work and shift work may go some way towards explaining why there are large numbers of A8 [central and eastern-European] migrants rather than indigenous workers employed in these sectors.

As European economies expand, it may be hard to continue to fill job vacancies. The authors suggest that employers and government departments should develop strategies to address factors such as low pay and difficult working conditions, while continuing to counter skills shortages through education and training. Read the report at [www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new\\_6420381\\_\\_mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf](http://www.migrationni.org/DatabaseDocs/new_6420381__mapping-the-deployment-of-migrant-labour-in-ni.pdf)

### Human Trafficking

Lord Morrow's private member's **Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill** passed its second stage at the Stormont Assembly on 24 September. The two-day debate and the controversy around making payment for sex illegal, can be followed at [www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/23-September-2013/#6](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/23-September-2013/#6) and [www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/24-September-2013/#11](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/24-September-2013/#11)

**Newry and Mourne Policing and Community Safety Partnership** have produced a hard hitting anti-trafficking video **TRAFFIC** which was filmed locally. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXJSRNfobEQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXJSRNfobEQ)



## CHURCHES NEWS

### EMBRACE Summer Workshops Event at Edgehill

On 20 August a group of enthusiastic participants gathered at Edgehill College, Belfast, for workshops on the topic of Beyond the Myths. Many of the people who attended were already volunteering in projects such as Food Banks or the NI Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers which brings them into contact with people who had come here to work and experienced difficulties or who seek refuge here.

They learned something about the reality of migration and seeking asylum here, including an introduction to some of the processes and the limitations on rights and entitlements. EMBRACE is grateful to Norma Nyamambi and Justin Kouame of NICRAS and Matias Vallve for sharing their personal experiences so freely.

### A Message from Revd Richard Kerr, EMBRACE Chairperson: 'People are Precious'

The Italian Island of Lampedusa was catapulted to our attention on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October with the death of around 300 migrants off its coast. They were not the first to lose their lives while trying to reach Europe. An estimated 20,000 have died in 15 years. Nor will they be the last; as illustrated by a further disaster, just days later, when over 30 lives were lost.

It is sobering that none of these figures are exact. We don't know the full extent of the loss of life. The fact that we're talking figures masks the very human tragedy; the deaths of fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.

What is clear is that people are prepared to take desperate measures to escape lives of political oppression and grinding poverty for something else; something they believe Europe holds. What is also clear is that immigration policies cannot simply be about statistics. Neither can the value of a person be weighed in economic terms. People are precious. Created by God in His image, each person is bestowed with inherent value.

EMBRACE respects government's responsibility to manage immigration but we cannot ignore our own responsibility. In resourcing the Christian Community in Northern Ireland to welcome in Christ's name we are highlighting the worth of every human being; whoever they are and wherever they're from. EMBRACE is about enabling people to express the message that people are precious to God.

### Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP)

In September Irish Church leaders launched a major project funded through the EU Peace III Programme. It is a partnership between the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Methodist Churches and the Irish Council of Churches, with the vision statement 'A peaceful and stable society, ... a shared and better future'. The project will map existing good relations work, including that led by churches. They will also develop a directory of good relations and reconciliation resources for use by churches. It is also hoped to publish case histories of effective good relations, reconciliation and peace work practice involving churches. The major focus is on addressing our local community conflict but the project should help to produce a better integrated society for everyone. Read more at [www.icpp.info](http://www.icpp.info). Find the project worker in your area at [www.icpp.info/contact](http://www.icpp.info/contact).



**EMBRACE Resources at the Edgehill Workshop  
(Col. I)**

### EMBRACE Resources Happy Christmas Poster

EMBRACE has created a multilingual A3 sized Happy Christmas poster with Christmas greetings in over 50 languages. If you would like a free poster to display in your church, school or community centre please contact our office.

### Hear My Voice

As well as the DVD, EMBRACE has a number of fliers which share information about aspects of migration, based on the experiences of newcomers. The series consists of: 'As simple as hello: stories of welcome', 'Overcoming language barriers', 'Finding direction: Migrant difficulties & signposts to help', 'Far from home: A teenager's story' and 'Children's stories'.

**EMBRACE information sheets** now include the following topics: *The Polish Community* and *Roma People*.

If you know someone who is looking for an English language class, we list some at [www.embraceni.org/category/migrant-support/english-classes](http://www.embraceni.org/category/migrant-support/english-classes) (see also page 2).

**Add Your Voice** We want to hear your opinion on our resources. Which do you use and how helpful are they? We will be conducting a number of surveys over the winter and would appreciate your input. For the current survey, please visit our website homepage [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)

### Some Extracts From *Hear My Voice* DVD

(See also p. 1)

'I know most of my friends who have been depressed, they have been down and once they go to church they feel better. Most of my friends, whom maybe they just came and were keeping to themselves, once they start going to a certain church they just quickly change and then you could see the improvement even in themselves. They become happy. They get to know people and trust them more.'...

'After going to three different churches, now I can say that the churches are very different here. Some places you go, OK you are here, welcome, just attend the church, a mass and whatever and come back home. But some places, they are very nice and they are more welcoming. I go to English class in other churches.'

'It was hard but it was really good to be at church and feel security and know that people are friendly and they will help me when I need it, but I am not a new person at church, a new member anymore but I should take responsibility to build the church as well and welcome new people.' ...

## EMBRACE NEWS

### New EMBRACE Volunteer

EMBRACE has a new volunteer from the USA. **Zachary Schmidt** (see also page 1) is from Colorado. He has the experience of having lived in a number of different countries, is a gifted musician and has used the arts as a way of promoting peace. His time here is shared between the Edgehill Reconciliation Programme and EMBRACE.



**Zachary Schmidt Singing at the Edgehill Workshops**  
(See page 3)

### Jenna and Peter

Former EMBRACE volunteers Jenna Liechty Martin and Peter Martin have moved on but reflect on their time over here in the Mennonite Mission Network Blog, *Connecting people, Churches in Northern Ireland*, 19 September, 2013.

Jenna saw that relationships formed through EMBRACE events created collaborations that served immigrants through English classes and addressing physical needs, like food, shelter and money.

'From the beginning, [EMBRACE] was intentional about working across traditional denominational lines,' said Jenna. 'While encouraging the churches in their call to welcome the stranger, EMBRACE also saw its role as being one of modeling reconciliation across church communities.'

Throughout their years in Northern Ireland, the Liechty Martins watched the community become more aware of the work of the organizations and more responsive to their goals. ...

'EMBRACE is doing wonderful work in Northern Ireland by responding to the needs of newcomers,' said Jenna. '[The organization] challenges and encourages churches to offer hospitality and welcome to those who are new.'

[www.mennonitemission.net/Stories/News/Pages/ConnectingpeoplechurchesinNorthernIreland.aspx](http://www.mennonitemission.net/Stories/News/Pages/ConnectingpeoplechurchesinNorthernIreland.aspx)

### EMBRACE Activities

The group's resources were on show at a number of events in June: a Delivering Social Change Conference in West Belfast, a 'Serving East Belfast' exhibition for churches and the public organised by the local Presbyterian Presbytery, an East Belfast Cultural Diversity Festival, and a concert of Andy Flannagan music organised by Contemporary Christianity at Skainos in East Belfast. Information Officer, Margaret McNulty took part in a panel session following a film about refugees, shown in Ballyhenry Presbyterian Church, Newtownabbey in June, as part of Refugee Week.

EMBRACE is assisting at seminars with the Rural Community Network at Markethill and Enniskillen and will be helping at a YMCA event in Bangor and exhibiting resources at further church gatherings in the autumn. If you would like to invite EMBRACE to your event, please contact Development Worker Aneta Dabek on 07731378037 or E-Mail: [aneta@embraceni.org](mailto:aneta@embraceni.org)

### Emergency Fund and EMBRACE On the Street

Between April and September 2013 the EMBRACE Emergency Fund assisted seven families and 32 individuals at a cost of £2,223.75. All the grants were given through other support organisations or public bodies.

Support included money for essential items such as heaters, electricity, hostel accommodation, food, glasses, local travel or accessing essential documents for legal purposes. These cost £467.30. Two cases involved contributions towards funeral costs, a total of £150.

Where children were ineligible for state support, 21 school uniforms were paid for at a cost of £500. There was payment for travel home for 11 people, one to Lithuania, one to Slovakia, and nine to Romania, at a total cost of £1,106.45.

As we approach winter Ashleigh Hunter is grateful for the continued support of churches on the EMBRACE On The Street rota. If your church or group would like to contribute warm clothing, food or toiletries to help people who are destitute, contact her at Edgehill College by phone (028) 90686933 or E-mail [rec@edgehillcollege.org](mailto:rec@edgehillcollege.org) to find out when your contribution would be needed and what goods are required.

### Thinking of Joining Us or Making a Donation?

If you are not already a member of EMBRACE please consider joining us. Subscriptions are £10.00 annually per person and £20.00 for groups. Please write to us at the address below. If you would like to make a donation towards our work please send a cheque, payable to EMBRACE.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

#### EMBRACE

48 Elmwood Ave, Belfast BT9 6AZ

Tel: 028 9066 3145

Web: [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)

Email: [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@embraceni.org)



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Supported by funding from the European Regional Development Fund under the Peace III Programme; the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Racial Justice; and the Churches.