

# Some Stories...

**Two young girls**, brought together by their mothers at a local playgroup, were playing together. At 15 months, when one of them jumped, the other did the same. They shared toys and had great fun together. The toddlers didn't seem to have any problem that their mums spoke different languages.

**Maral** is five years old and has recently come from Indonesia with her parents. She is very creative and enjoys playing with other children of her age; however, she has found it difficult to make friends. Her mum recognises that it seems to take longer for her to make friends than it did in Indonesia, where children quickly made bonds with their neighbours. Since starting school she often asks her mum if her classmates can come over to play, but other children are often busy or unable to come to her house.

**Ali** is 11, tall, dark and handsome. He has a large group of friends and has lived in Northern Ireland all his life. He lives across the park from his local primary school and dreams of the day when he can cycle to school, but it is only a dream. The reality is that being black-skinned makes him a target for the groups of boys who hang out around the park. His difference is only skin deep, but taunts, exclusion and physical harm reach deep inside leaving scars of fear and pain.

"My name is Christopher and I am in P3. Let me introduce some of my friends to you."

Benito speaks Italian. He loves to play football.

Tristin is my friend from South Africa. We like to play games outside together.

Orlinn is from Bulgaria. My class learned how to count to 10 in Bulgarian.

Hanna can speak Spanish. Her Mum is from Argentina and brought us food from there on New Year's Eve.

Travis is my best friend. He gets to go to Uganda because his Mum is from there.

## On Being Black

by Sangeetha Sathyaraj@

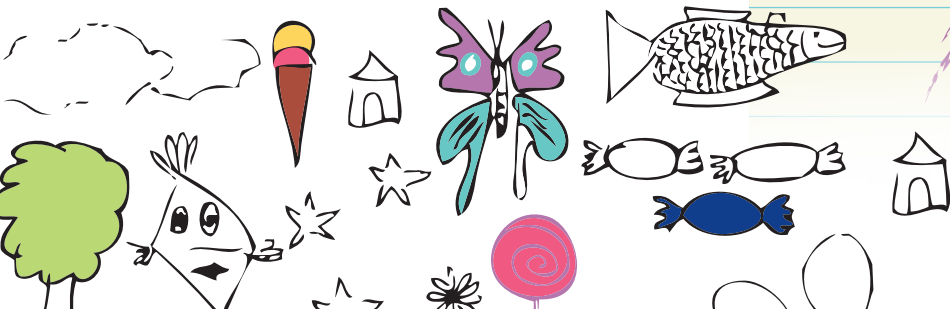
A little boy sitting all alone, no one to play with  
Children running around him, few stop to call him names  
Others just ignore him  
Bewildered, this little boy looks at his hands  
They are as dark as the earth around him  
He looks at the children who are playing  
It is then that it dawns, he is a different colour  
He goes home and says  
No one to play with, no one cares for me at school  
People call me black and a fool  
Why is it Mummy? Have I done something wrong?  
Or is it because I am black?

A little girl smiled at me yesterday  
I gave her a pretty flower  
She said 'Thank you' as she looked up  
Her mother dragged her away and told her not  
to talk to me  
Mummy, is it because I am black?

I went walking home the other day  
And there a group of boys punched me  
Beat me and called me names  
Then they stabbed me, I remembered no more  
God, is it because I am black?

I walked through the pearly gates  
Angry with God for making me black  
Black as the soil of the earth  
Curious to see this God who made people black and white  
I looked into his eyes filled with pain, anger and grief  
God, why did you make me black?

He looked into my eyes  
Tears rolling down his cheeks as he hugged me  
Knowing now He felt the pain that I felt  
He looked at me again  
Holding my shoulders he said  
"Son, I too was black".



Although it might be easier for a child to learn a new language, make new friends or adapt to new surroundings, children who have migrated experience difficulties and challenges.

**EMBRACE** hopes that these stories illustrate some of the challenges children face as newcomers as well as provide inspiration and wisdom that adults can take from them.

## Suggestions for action:

- Set an example for young children by greeting and welcoming newcomers.
- Listen and learn from the wisdom of children.
- Talk about what you've just read with your family, friends or church group.
- Expose young children to the rich diversity of cultures present in Northern Ireland.
- Tell stories from other cultures and traditions.
- Encourage children to think about what makes their culture unique and special.
- Teach Children to play games that transcend barriers.



## EMBRACE NI

### *Building a Welcoming Community*

**EMBRACE** is a group of Christians drawn from different denominations, working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in N Ireland.

**EMBRACE** seeks to reflect gospel values, and equip the Church to fulfil its call to welcome the stranger, by providing information, training, and resource materials, and acting as a channel to assist those in need.

### Thinking of Joining Us?

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 email or write to us at the address below.

### Making a Donation?

If you would like to make a donation towards our work please send a cheque, payable to EMBRACE. Your support is greatly appreciated.

For more information contact us:

#### **EMBRACE NI**

48 Elmwood Avenue

Belfast BT9 6AZ

Tel: 9066 3145 (Tuesday to Thursday 10am to 3pm)

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

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



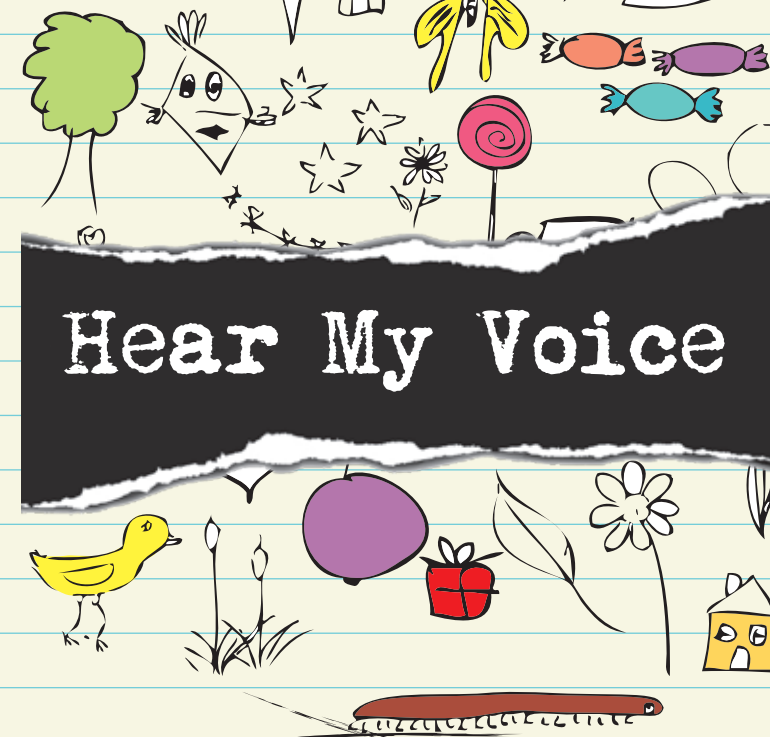
Office of the

**First Minister and  
Deputy First Minister**

[www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk)



Embrace NI | Hear MyVoice Series | April 2012



## Hear My Voice

## Children's Stories

Whoever welcomes one of these little children  
in my name welcomes me...

Mark 9:37