

PAFRAS NEWSLETTER



Positive
Action
For
Refugees &
Asylum
Seekers

Newsletter 10

PAFRAS Premises Appeal

PAFRAS recently sent out an appeal for premises regarding our office space. We have been informed that we have to vacate our offices in November. If we do not find a suitable office much of the work that we conduct will have to be curtailed. The response that we have had so far has been overwhelming, and we would like to thank all of those who have given their support.

PAFRAS

PAFRAS 'Peace Blanket'



On 18 October PAFRAS hosted a fundraising event featuring live Latin and jazz music.

At this event, PAFRAS was presented with a 'peace blanket' by Serdar Aydinli (see page 3), a Turkish peace activist, and we would publicly like to express our thanks.

September - October 2008

Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Company No. 5751987

Registered Charity No. 1120950

Registered Address: PAFRAS C/O CHART, 269 Roundhay Road, Leeds, LS8 4HS

www.pafRAS.org.uk 0113 2484147

An interview with Magiarí Díaz Díaz

Magiarí Díaz Díaz (Magi) is a member of Servas, a worldwide peace movement. Over the summer she undertook a volunteering placement at PAFRAS; providing support and assistance in a variety of ways. Magi left Leeds to go to London on 19 October, and will return home to Venezuela in 2008. Before she left, she took the time to speak to PAFRAS about her experiences in the UK:

PAFRAS: Tell us about Servas.

Servas is an international travelling network for making contact with people from all over the world. The idea is for people to meet and talk to each other, which can be a good way to peace and international understanding.

As a Servas traveller you have the chance to stay with people in over a hundred countries, and to share ideas with them. Servas travellers stay with hosts for two nights –sometimes longer if hosts suggest it. Hospitality is freely offered, so money doesn't change hands between hosts and travellers. Servas – the name means “we serve” in Esperanto – started in 1949, after the Second World War. A group of friends from different countries who were meeting in Denmark came up with the idea of an open-door network. Their aim was to work for peace, creating a framework for like-minded people who could enjoy hospitality in members' homes and promote international understanding.

What is your role in the organisation?

I'm the local youth contact for Venezuela. My role is to support people who are interested in visiting, volunteering, studying or working in Venezuela, or who just want to learn more about the country. On an international level, I see myself as a “peace ambassador” for my country. I try and promote the aims of peace and understanding through music, involvement in community projects, presentations at conferences, and travelling and meeting people from all over the world.

What is your background in the peace movement?

Since sources of conflict are so diverse (political, economical, cultural, racial, religious, etc); I believe peace can be promoted at many levels. To me, poverty is the main trigger of conflict. In my effort to understand why poverty exists – and with it exclusion, injustice, discrimination, inequality, corruption, etc – I've done a combined studies degree in Politics,



History, Philosophy and Translation. I've also engaged in different kinds of development work with indigenous communities in the Amazon, the most marginalised population in Venezuela. My experience in the peace movement has been mainly through music. I've been involved with the Venezuelan musical movement of orchestras and choirs, renowned worldwide both for its work with children and young people from deprived backgrounds, and its artistic excellence. Over the past year, I've been invited to lecture about the latter at conferences in France, Austria, Czech Republic and UK. I have also been a member of the World Youth Choir, which is recognised as an “Artist for Peace” by the UNESCO. This striking artistic project enables nearly a 100 young people to share a month of music making and touring the world together. The World Youth Choir creates lifelong friendships for those involved which makes an enormous impact on the quality of performances. Finally, I've participated at the Harvard Model of United Nations, a conference where nearly 3000 college and university delegates from the US and over 30 countries around the world discuss a multitude of issues relevant in today's global community. In 2004 I was very proud to be named the “Best NGO Delegate” of the conference, representing the humanitarian NGO Care International.

What made you want to work with asylum seekers in the UK?

Ann Greenhough, Servas Youth Project Development Coordinator, mentioned the possibility of doing voluntary work for PAFRAS while using Servas hospitality in Leeds. I was more than happy to get involved, since I had always wanted to learn more about asylum destitution. My family comes from Colombia and some relatives have gone through the experience of... *(continued on page 3)*

Interview with Magiarí Díaz Díaz (continued)

...seeking political asylum. Working with PAFRAS has helped me to make sense of my own family history.

How has your time in the UK been?

Absolutely wonderful! Working at PAFRAS has been an incredibly meaningful experience. Project Manager, Christine Majid, has been like a mother to me, her support and loving-care has made my stay extraordinary. Her passion and commitment to fight for social justice has made a profound impact on me. Also, befriending people at the drop-in has been a pleasure and a privilege. I have learned so much about countries and cultures I knew nothing of. Most importantly, I have made wonderful friends. We have shared unforgettable times of music, joy and laughter. Meeting staff and volunteers has also been incredibly inspirational. On my first day at the drop-in I met Bob Schiffrin, a guitar teacher, who invited me to sing and play my traditional Venezuelan instrument at a Latin gig with some friends. I never suspected that from that *one-off* gig we would become a proper band – the delightful *Capullos Internacionales* – that later I'd be organising a fundraising gig for PAFRAS, playing with the band and having such a wonderful time with PAFRAS and Servas friends.

It also was bliss to meet Shorsh Saleh, Kurdish artist, and Kasia Baczkowski, PAFRAS art facilitator, who made the *Servas 50th Anniversary Banner* with the input of many of us at the drop-in. This banner means a lot to us at Servas. It means that our peace work has grown stronger and more inclusive over the past 50 years. The friendship Servas-PAFRAS is a symbol of how individuals and organisations can unite in the fight for peace and social justice.

What are your plans in the UK after being with PAFRAS? What are your career plans in the future?

I'm currently doing an MA in 'Peace Studies, Development, Security and Conflict Transformation' from Innsbruck University, Austria. I'm working on a distance-learning module until December. In January I hope to travel to Austria to complete the course. I hope to continue singing, volunteering and travelling. In the longer term, I would like to work in the field of community development and international relations, particularly linked to music and languages.

For more information about Servas contact me at magiari@gmail.com or check the Servas website www.servas.org

Capullos Internacionales

On 18 October, at St. Aidan's Community Hall, PAFRAS held a night of Latin music and jazz in order to raise funds. The event was organised primarily by Magi and the line-up included a number bands. Over 200 people attended the event, which was headlined by *Capullos Internacionales*, a Latin American band fronted by Magi and David Vasquez, and also featured *Bassa Bassa*. Many thanks to all who were involved in this event.



18 October 2008 with Serdar Avdinli below



Asylum Monologues

On 30 October Student Action for Refugee (STAR) hosted a performance of *Asylum Monologues* at Leeds University.

Asylum Monologues works to provide a frank and open account of the UK asylum system by utilising testimonies of those who have sought refuge. Actors use the personal statements of asylum seekers as scripts which emphasise the realities of seeking asylum. It is a collaboration between Actors for Refugees and the Ice and Fire theatre company and was launched in the UK in 2006. Since then it has become a hugely popular and influential movement; working to campaign and raise awareness.

STAR hosted a performance of *asylum monologues*, in part, to raise funds for PAFRAS. We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to all at STAR, and all who are involved in *Asylum Monologues* for their support.

PAFRAS Briefing Paper Number 7

PAFRAS produces a series of briefing papers focusing on the asylum process. The seventh of these briefing papers, published in October 2008, is entitled Wage exploitation and undocumented labour. It is based upon interviews conducted with 15 undocumented workers, for a detailed project on the occupational risks facing those who are working without permission in the UK.

This briefing paper considers the wage exploitation of undocumented workers, and analyses this exploitation within a wider context of criminalisation. Briefing paper 7 argues that a downward pressure on wages is underpinned explicitly by a set of policies which criminalise labour according to immigration status. As such, the exploitation that undocumented workers face requires reading alongside these policy 'reforms'. For a copy of this paper contact PAFRAS on 0113 2484147, or at pafrasemail@yahoo.co.uk

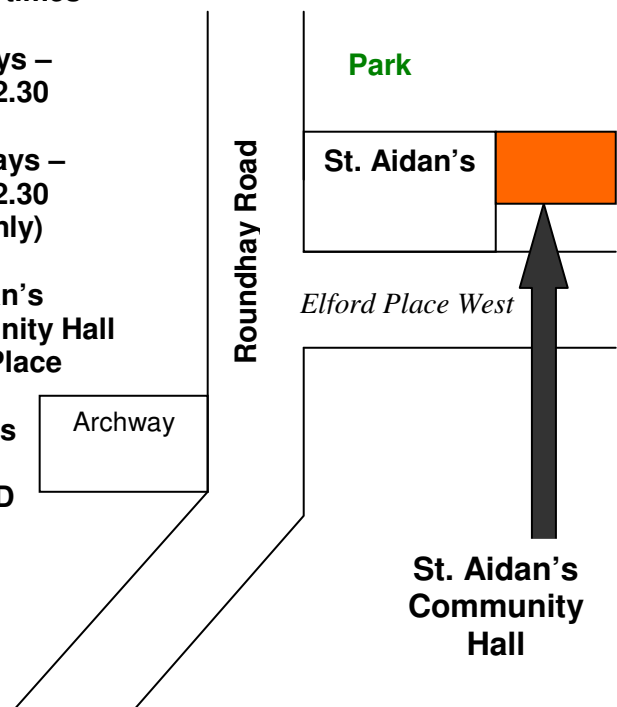
PAFRAS drop-in details

Drop-in times

**Tuesdays –
10.30-12.30**

**Thursdays –
10.30-12.30
(food only)**

**St. Aidan's
Community Hall
Elford Place
West
Harehills
Leeds
LS8 5QD**



Harvest Festival Donations

The food that Churches and Schools have given to PAFRAS through their Harvest Festivals has been vital. We received a huge amount of donations from a range of organisations and individuals.

We would like to offer our special thanks to all those who donated. The food that was given has gone, and will go directly to those seeking asylum and has been critical in the last months. These last few months have seen a comprehensive increase in the number of people with no food whatsoever. For these people, the food that PAFRAS gives can be the only form of sustenance they receive. As such, we have been making up and distributing a greater number of food parcels in order to try and meet these demands.

Thank you

PAFRAS is supported by a wide range of individuals and organisations and without this support; much of the work that we carry out would not be conducted. Thank you sincerely to all those who have, and continue, to support PAFRAS in a variety of ways. The work of our volunteers is vital for PAFRAS and we would like again to thank them for their energy and commitment.

Due to current circumstances, we are in particular need of donations of food at the moment. The amount of food parcels that we are distributing has recently increased substantially, and food donations enable us to meet these demands. You can also now make a donation by debit/credit card on our website. Your donation can go further with the online gift aid function, with the inland revenue giving us an extra 28p for every pound you donate. Please go to www.pafras.org.uk and click on 'Making a Donation'.

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