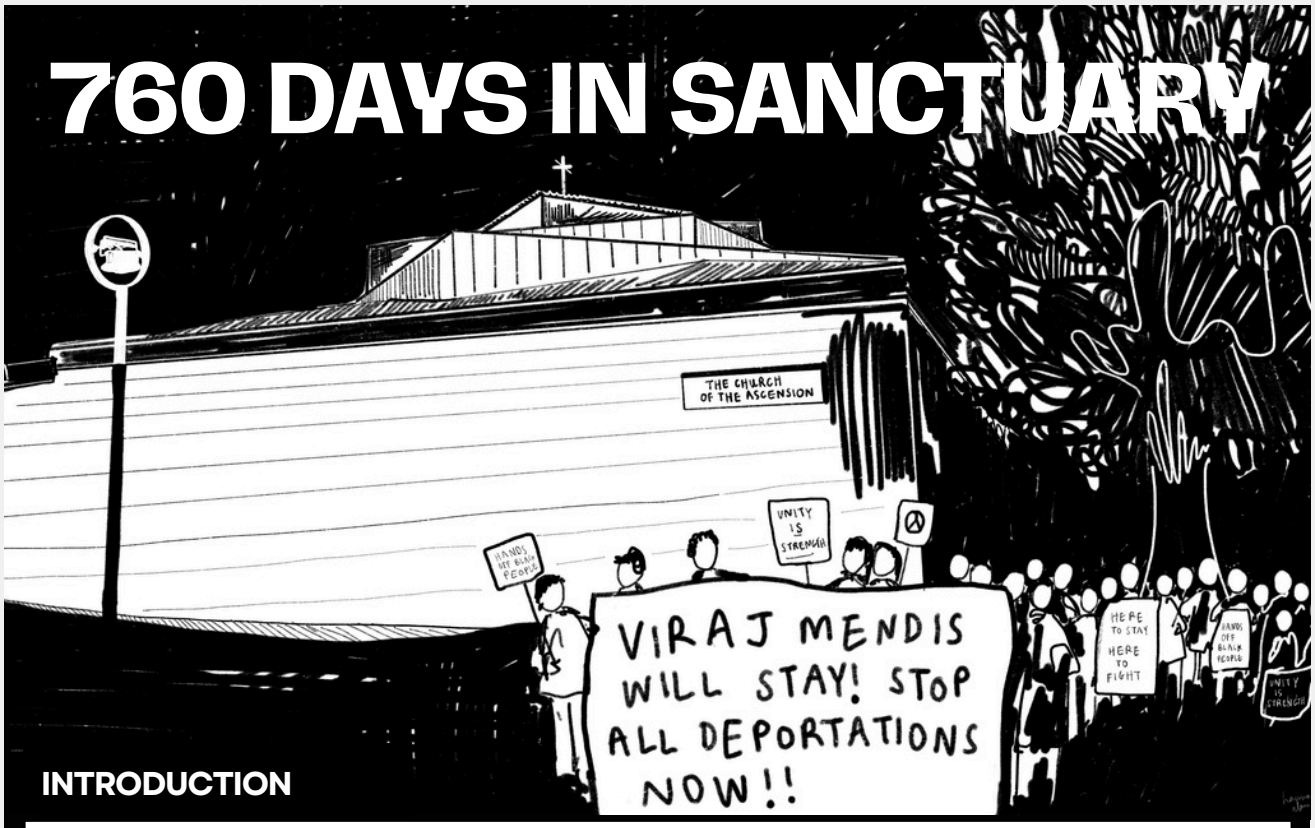
760 DAYS IN SANCTUARY



INTRODUCTION

On December 20, 1986, Sri Lankan communist Viraj Mendis entered the Church of the Ascension in Hulme and took up sanctuary. Over the next 760 days, the Church would serve as Mendis' refuge against the imminent threat of deportation as well as a model of the potential power of sanctuary as a tactic for other anti-deportation battles in Thatcher's Britain. Mendis's campaign drew together a broad coalition inclusive of priests and congregants, Black Power and anti-racist activists, Labour Party MPs, trade unionists, student demonstrators, feminists, and lesbian and gay campaigners. Working together to fight Mendis' deportation, the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) forged an expansive politics of solidarity with roots deep in the local community and connections that spanned the globe.

VIRAJ MENDIS

In October 1973, seventeen-year-old Viraj Mendis arrived in Britain from Sri Lanka as a student to undertake an engineering degree at the University of Manchester Institute for Science and Technology (UMIST). Viraj arrived with high aspirations, an aptitude for electronics and the support of his Sinhalese family. However, by 1975 he had run out of money and started looking for employment to support his studies. Viraj found work in a bakery, first in London and later Manchester, an experience he would later describe as transformative...

> ***"I worked 72 hours a week, 12 hours a night, 6 nights a week. I was labouring. Life was extremely hard. Most of the foremen were white. Most of the workers were Asian. It taught me the reality of life for the oppressed even in one of the richest imperialist nations in the world." - Viraj Mendis [1]***

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VIRAJ MENDIS

In one particularly traumatic incident Viraj witnessed his white supervisors mocking an Asian worker who collapsed and ultimately died while unloading an oven next to him. Eventually Viraj failed his examinations, dropped out of university and moved into a flat in the Hulme Crescents. ***"My drive to get the degree at all costs began to disappear,"*** he recalled. ***"I became more interested in reading Marx than in reading electronics."*** [2]

Radicalised by his experiences Viraj joined the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) in 1980 and began devoting his time to political organising and selling the organisation's newspaper, Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism. In early 1981, Viraj was prominent in Manchester-based solidarity campaigns for Irish Republican hunger strikers imprisoned in the H-Block of the HM Prison Maze in Northern Ireland. Following the deaths of Bobby Sands and nine other hunger strikers that summer, Viraj recalled being ***"completely destroyed emotionally because you put so much effort into it, you know and took so much risk"***. [3] Subsequently, he got involved with the Moss Side Defence Committee which formed to support young people arrested during the 1981 uprisings. By 1983, Viraj was also participating in solidarity campaigns with the Tamil people following the outbreak of the Sri Lankan Civil War and anti-Tamil riots.

IMMIGRATION LAWS AND DEPORTATION BATTLES

Viraj's politicisation coincided with the rise of the New Right in British politics, culminating in the 1979 election of a Conservative Government that promulgated fears of a nation 'swamped' (in Margaret Thatcher's words) by migrants. [4] Since the 1960s, Government's led by both major political parties passed a series of restrictive immigration laws and rule changes designed to halt the migration of racialised colony and Commonwealth citizens to the UK. The Thatcher Government championed draconian immigration restrictions along with a narrower vision of post-imperial British national identity that resulted in the passage of a new British Nationality Act in 1981. [5]

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Manchester emerged as a beacon of resistance to this tightening border regime. Black Power groups – including the **Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP)** and later the **Asian Youth Movement (AYM)** – were key forerunners, and in 1976 the **Manchester Law Centre** (later known as 'South Manchester Law Centre') opened providing free legal services to the growing number of people fighting immigration battles.

Increasingly, those affected by deportation orders began to move beyond legal strategies, building community-based defence campaigns designed to publicly challenge the State using tactics such as leafleting, petitioning, picketing, and mass demonstrations. These approaches – used to great effect by early campaigns for **Nasira Begum** and **Anwar Ditta** – were designed to generate wider public support and exert pressure on the Home Secretary to use their significant discretionary power in immigration cases. [6] By the early 1980s, Viraj – like many other grassroots activists – was dedicating much of his time to anti-deportation campaigns across the city.

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IMMIGRATION LAWS AND DEPORTATION BATTLES

However, as a political radical on an expired student visa, Viraj became a target for deportation. On May 23, 1984, the Home Office sent the police to Viraj's home who took him in for questioning and later confiscated his passport. As an outspoken Sinhalese opponent of the Jayewardene regime and supporter of Tamil self-determination, Viraj feared for his safety if forced to return to Sri Lanka. Accordingly, he and a British friend decided to marry and filed an official immigration application later that summer. At the same time, his supporters (including members of the RCG) established the VMDC to fight his deportation.

Over the coming months, the pressure of the campaign combined with efforts by the State to cut-off Viraj's benefits led to the dissolution of his marriage. In August 1985, Viraj was arrested by Greater Manchester Police and subjected to racial abuse and a strip search. Police charged Viraj with conduct likely to cause breach of the peace and issued him with a notice stating that if convicted he would be subject to immediate deportation. The VMDC mobilised and following emergency demonstrations the charges were dropped. [7]

Viraj's first appeal began on December 2, 1986, and was heard by Immigration Appeals Chief Adjudicator, M. Patey. Patey rejected the appeal on the grounds that Viraj lacked substantial ties to the community and that no threat was posed should he be deported as Sri Lanka was *"inherently a democracy where the rule of law applies"*.[8] Viraj's legal team filed a second appeal and the VMDC initiated plans for a People's March from Manchester to London to coincide with the hearing scheduled for July 1986.

JULY '86 - THE PEOPLE'S MARCH TO LONDON

Inspired by historic workers marches, including the Jarrow March of unemployed workers on the British Parliament in 1936, the People's March took three weeks with members stopping overnight in various towns enroute. These stops enabled the campaign to hold public meetings and build a wider national coalition both for Viraj's case and the broader fight against the immigration laws. Throughout July, hundreds of people from communities across England participated, culminating in a mass demonstration at the Home Office in London. [9]



Figure 1: VMDC flyer for the People's March from Manchester to London, July 1986. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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JULY '86 - THE PEOPLE'S MARCH TO LONDON

On July 17, 1986, Viraj's appeal was rejected by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal which upheld Patey's decision on grounds that no threat was posed to Viraj in Sri Lanka. The Tribunal cited a letter from the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London who asserted *"Viraj Mendis is not wanted in Sri Lanka for any offence criminal or otherwise"* and *"is free to go to Sri Lanka without impediment."* [10]

On December 18, Viraj's deportation order was signed and the police were given instructions to arrest and deport him. Two days later, Viraj participated in a mass demonstration held outside the Church of the Ascension in Hulme where he announced he was entering sanctuary. ***"I will not voluntarily return to my death in Sri Lanka,"*** he declared. [11]



Figure 2: Viraj Mendis (centre) and VMDC chairman Chris Procter (holding aloft the banner on right) on the People's March from Manchester to London, July 1986. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

SANCTUARY

Over the next two years Viraj's sanctuary served as a symbol of mass resistance to the Conservative Government's immigration policies. As a strategy, sanctuary was deployed most visibly during the early 1980s by churches in the United States primarily in defence of Central American refugees. Inspired by these developments, the VMDC and eventually other defence campaigns would come to view sanctuary as a tool of last resort for individuals and families facing deportation orders.

While people facing deportation had long sought sanctuary 'underground' in the homes of friends and family members, the VMDC offered a different model of **'public sanctuary'** that directly challenged the State and called upon religious institutions and wider communities for solidarity. [12]

The idea for sanctuary emerged out of conversations between Viraj, his campaign chair Chris Procter, and Reverend Paul Weller, a Methodist minister who served as Community Relations Officer of the Greater Manchester County Ecumenical Council. Inspired by the growing transnational and ecumenical sanctuary movement, Weller had already led a weekend long **'sanctuary fast'** in defence of **Vinod Chauhan** at the Welbeck Street Baptist Church in Ashton-under-Lyne in 1983.

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SANCTUARY

Early in 1986, as Viraj awaited his appeal, the trio approached **Father John Methuen**, priest of the Church of the Ascension in Hulme, for his support. According to Viraj, Father John agreed:

> ***"He was confident that the danger I would face if forcibly deported to Sri Lanka would be accepted by the Church hierarchy as [a] legitimate reason for giving Sanctuary. His confidence was based on information about the situation in Sri Lanka received from church contacts there."***
>
> ***- Viraj Mendis [13]***



Figure 3: Father John Methuen (left) and Viraj Mendis (right). The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

Sanctuary had no legal basis in Britain. Its power rested on the assumption that the State would not break into a religious institution and certainly not one that was part of the Established Church. However, religious supporters of sanctuary asserted the historical and moral basis of their actions. Speaking at a rally to mark the one-year anniversary of Viraj's entrance into sanctuary, Father John explained the Church's decision:

> ***'As Martin Luther said 450 years ago "Here I stand, I can do no other." What I have done is directly derived from what I am and what I believe. In Old Testament times, cities of refuge were built so that those fleeing from vengeance, blood feuds, oppression, violence and lynching parties could escape and stay in security until the rights and wrongs of their cases could be heard and settled. In the book of Numbers we read: "Those places will be a refuge not only for the Israelites but for the stranger and the settler among you, where they may find sanctuary". So the sanctuary movement was born and has remained deeply embedded in the Christian tradition ever since. The idea of sanctuary was codified and systematized into the law in this country during the Middle Ages and it was not finally abolished as a legal right until 1623. However, as far as the Christian Church is concerned, sanctuary does not rest upon law but upon conscience, and derives not from statute but from compassion. In some countries, in some ages, that conscience and that compassion has been reinforced, or at least respected by, the State; in other countries and in other ages it brings Christians into conflict with the State and the laws of the land.'***
>
> ***- Fr. John Methuen [15]***

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SPREADING THE SANCTUARY

Taking inspiration from Viraj's campaign, several other religious communities extended sanctuary to people threatened with deportation during this period. Among them was **Rajwinder Singh,** who took up sanctuary at the Guru Nanak Sikh temple in Bradford on February 6, 1987, after being threatened with deportation to India. Singh was followed by **Renukaben Lakhani** who entered sanctuary in the Shreen Sanatan Mandir in Leicester in August 1987; thirteen-year-old **Salema Begum** at Chorlton Central Church in October 1987; and **Amir Kabul Khan** who entered Birmingham Central Mosque with his family in January 1989. [16]

In each of these cases, sanctuary was taken as a last resort providing defence campaigns with time to build public pressure in support of the right to stay. The secretary of the Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign asserted:

> ***"Like all black people we are proud that Viraj has shown us the way out. He has given us a weapon to fight back against the racist immigration controls. Sanctuary is a weapon in the hands of the people and we must use it." [17]***

Ultimately, the four sanctuaries inspired by Viraj's campaign were successful, demonstrating the power of the tactic in the hands of migrants and their supporters.



Figure 4: Salema Begum and her family at Chorlton Central Church in October 1987. Photograph taken by Charlie Baker. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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BUILDING SOLIDARITY AND THE VMDC COALITION

Once Viraj had entered sanctuary, the Church of the Ascension became the VMDC's headquarters; its entrance guarded by campaign members twenty-four hours a day. On Sunday evenings, after Sabbath services had been observed, the church served as the venue for weekly campaign meetings attended by people from across the VMDC's growing and heterogeneous coalition. [18] Participants from different backgrounds, contexts and identities came together in response to Viraj and the VMDC's call for ***"all those opposed to Thatcher's reactionary policies to make common cause with us."*** [19]

Viraj, like the leaders of the Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign, employed an understanding of Black as 'a political colour' that forged solidarity between migrants from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean in a common struggle against racism and imperialism. [20]

The VMDC included a variety of different support groups including a **Religious Support Group**, which championed the sanctuary strategy by building support within ecumenical and inter-faith networks as well as disseminating knowledge through conferences and political pamphlets.

On December 12, 1987, the VMDC's Religious Support Group hosted a national conference at the Church of the Ascension focused on the developing sanctuary movement that was attended by 180 people of different denominations and faiths.

This was followed in September 1988 by an international conference and nationwide speaking tour featuring leading members of the US sanctuary movement – including, **Sister Jean Hughes**, a Dominican nun associated with the Chicago Catholic Sanctuary Coalition, and **Sidney Hollander**, Chair of the Social Action Committee and the Sanctuary Taskforce of the KAM Synagogues in Chicago. [21]

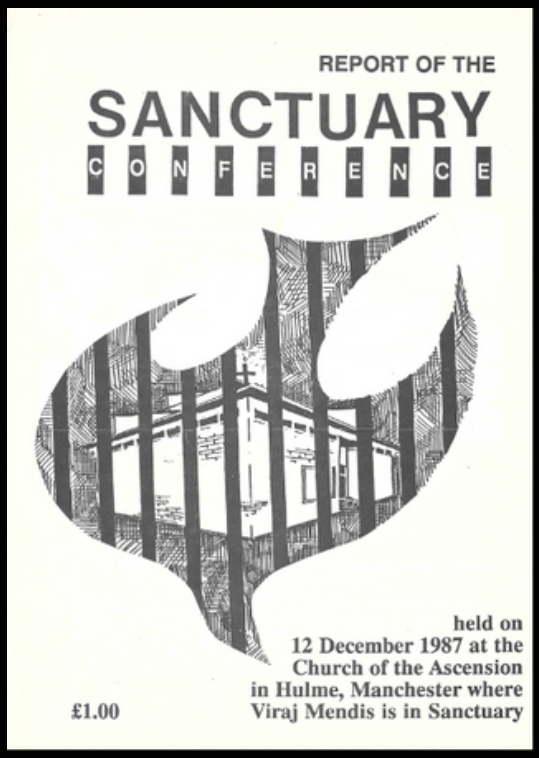


Figure 5: Report of the VMDC Sanctuary Conference held at the Church of the Ascension on December 12th, 1987. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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BUILDING SOLIDARITY AND THE VMDC COALITION

The campaign also maintained a **Women's Support Group** and a **Lesbian and Gay Support Group** which built solidarity around shared experiences of state violence and oppression. In addition to campaigning against discriminatory legislation such as Section 28, the VMDC's Lesbian and Gay Support Group raised awareness about the interlocking impact of the nation's racist and heterosexist immigration laws on those seeking to enter the country. [22]

At the local level, support was mobilised in Manchester's wider African Caribbean and Asian communities by the **Black People's Action Group** which met at the Abasindi Co-op in Moss Side. [23] Members of **Abasindi**, an autonomous Black women's organisation, also expressed their support through co-organising marches with local youth clubs, and tenants' groups. [24]

Nationally, the VMDC organised several official regional support groups including one in London which published its own newsletter and mobilised members for protests in the Capitol. In addition, the campaign secured solidarity from a wider network consisting of hundreds of individuals and organisations across Britain including the National Executive of the Labour Party, local councillors and MPs, anti-racist organisations, and trade unions.

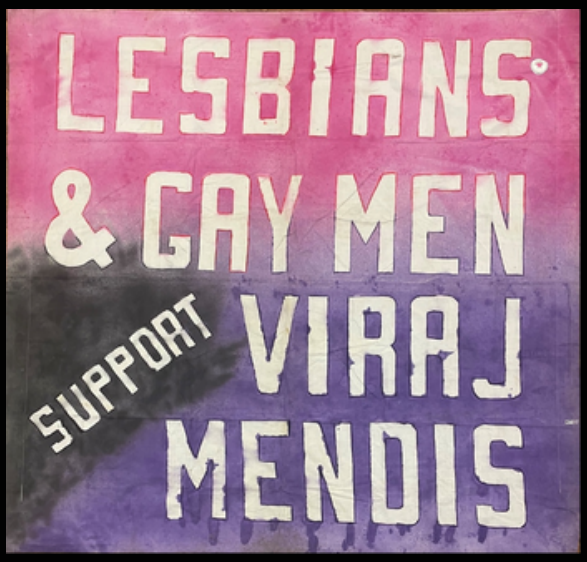


Figure 6: VMDC Lesbian and Gay Support Group banner. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.



Figure 7: Labour Party MP's including Jeremy Corbyn (centre) and Tony Benn (fourth from left at back) support Viraj Mendis in Downing Street. Photograph taken by Charlie Baker. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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COSTS AND OPPOSITION TO THE VMDC AND SANCTUARY

Despite its apparent efficacy, sanctuary was a high stakes tactic that relied upon the very public confinement of those threatened with deportation, depriving them of their freedom at the same time as it placed them under the intense glare of the national media. Not everyone supported Viraj's right to stay in Britain and the campaign was the target of significant negative media coverage, police harassment, and sporadic outbreaks of extra-legal violence.

Opposition peaked during the spring of 1987 when news broke that the Labour controlled Manchester City Council had offered Viraj a job as the Immigration and Nationality Officer. Viraj had applied for the position prior to entering sanctuary and was considered to be the most qualified candidate by members of the interview panel. However, once he entered sanctuary the decision to appoint Viraj drew increased attention from the national media. [25]

Home Office Minister, David Waddington, was accused by campaign members of fanning the flames of animosity after he took to the airwaves to decry Viraj's appointment as *"an insult to the people of Manchester, when you think of all the people who live in Manchester today who could do that job."* [26]

In the days that followed several major newspapers, including the *Manchester Evening News*, *The Sun* and the *Daily Express*, amplified the story describing it as *"outrageous"* and insisting that *"Mendis must go."* Subsequently, the VMDC reported receiving hate mail from far-right groups and racist phone calls including death threats.

On March 9, 1987, men armed with crow bars and carving knives broke into the church, stabbing one campaign member in the back of the head. Shortly after, another campaign member was attacked at her home, her assailants daubing swastikas in paint on the apartment wall. Later in the month, two men attempted to enter the church to attack Viraj but were stopped by campaign supporters.[27]



Figure 8: Assorted press headlines on Viraj Mendis' sanctuary. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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COSTS AND OPPOSITION TO THE VMDC AND SANCTUARY

With the 1987 General Election looming, the job offer was in jeopardy with the Labour leader of the City Council, Graham Stringer, citing Viraj's confinement as an obstacle to effective performance of duties. Behind the scenes, NALGO, the trade union responsible for representing governmental workers, was reportedly facing a wave of opposition in their ranks. NALGO members wrote letters to the union leadership complaining that a job was been given to *"an Illegal Immigrant"* at a time when other members had been *"made redundant"*. [28] However, supportive union members pushed back staging regular branch meetings in the Church of the Ascension in solidarity. [29]

For their part, Greater Manchester Police seemed more focused on the surveillance of Viraj and the VMDC's supporters than protecting them from racist attacks. According to VMDC member Eddie Abrahams, ***"Over the [first] 671 days of sanctuary 60 activists were arrested, with leading black activists targeted for attention."*** [30] Following an escalation in police harassment during the summer of 1988, VMDC members staged repeated pickets of Platt Lane Police Station in protest. [31]

THE IMMIGRATION RAID, DEPORTATION, AND LEGACY OF SANCTUARY

On 21 December 1988, the House of Lords rejected Viraj's appeal and the Home Office announced its intention to enforce the deportation order. The Bishop of Manchester pushed back on the Home Office to see if they would accept Viraj leaving for a third country. However, on the morning of January 18, 1989, more than one hundred officers from Greater Manchester Police raided the Church of the Ascension and forcibly removed Viraj transporting him to Stretford Police Station and then on to Pentonville Prison in London.

Back in Manchester, nearly 300 hundred VMDC supporters amassed outside of the Church of the Ascension staging a sit-down protest. Later in the day, two thousand people gathered outside Greenheys Police Station to protest officers' participation in Viraj's removal. In London, a smaller group of supporters gained entry to the House of Commons' public gallery and were arrested after interrupting the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd's speech.



Figure 9: Protests in Manchester following Viraj Mendis forcible removal on January 18th, 1989. Photographs taken by Charlie Baker. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

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THE IMMIGRATION RAID, DEPORTATION, AND LEGACY OF SANCTUARY

Two days later, Viraj was taken to Gatwick Airport where he was put on a plane destined for Sri Lanka. Over three hundred VMDC supporters staged a protest on the roof of Gatwick Airport while a small group of five managed to find their way onto the runway and were arrested trying to board the aeroplane. [33]

Viraj's arrival in Sri Lanka coincided with the ongoing Civil War, Indian intervention, and an armed uprising led by the Marxist-Leninist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) ("People's Liberation Front").



Figure 10: Protests in Manchester following Viraj Mendis forcible removal on January 18th, 1989. Photographs taken by Charlie Baker. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.

Over the next year, Viraj worked closely with JVP members and other Sinhalese activists affiliated with the organisation Students for Human Rights to expose the violence and terror taking place in the south of the country. Viraj undertook the dangerous task of collecting *"photos and lists of people who were getting killed every day"* and sending them on to contacts he had cultivated during the sanctuary at *"Amnesty International and other organisations, human rights organisations, to church organisations."* Viraj also challenged Sinhalese activists ***"to make common cause with the Tamil struggle"*** a position he described as *"very easy for me"* having *"done this with Ireland for a long time."* [34]

Back in Manchester, former campaign members continued their search for a third country that would grant Viraj asylum. Several also undertook trips to Sri Lanka to extend Viraj immediate protection and support. Their exposure to the violence in Sri Lanka fuelled the formation of a new organisation, the **Campaign Against State Terrorism in Sri Lanka (CASTIS)**, which also operated out of the Church of the Ascension.

After living in Sri Lanka for over a year, Viraj secured asylum from the Bremen regional government in Germany. On March 6, 1990, Viraj arrived in Bremen where he lived with his wife and former VMDC member, Karen Mendis (nee Roberts), for over thirty years. On August 16, 2024, Viraj passed away peacefully in a hospital in Bremen after dedicating the rest of his life to building solidarity for the Tamil cause as chairperson of the **International Human Rights Association (IMRV-Bremen)**.

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CONCLUSION: MOVEMENT AFTERLIVES

On March 1, 2025, a special memorial meeting was hosted at the Church of the Ascension (now Ascension Church Hulme) to honour the life of Viraj Mendis. This historic gathering - attended by over a hundred people, including Viraj's family and former comrades – exemplified the global dimensions and legacies of his activism.



Figure 11: Former Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign chairman, Chris Procter, addressing the Viraj Mendis Memorial Meeting at Ascension Church Hulme, March 1, 2025.
Photo courtesy of Rachel Bywater Photography.

Viraj's campaign reached outwards, forging potent networks of regional, national and international solidarity. In the short term, it advanced a new tactic in the form of public sanctuary that challenged religious institutions to consider their role in the struggle and resulted in akin campaigns in churches, mosques, and temples across the country.

As Viraj explained in a speech delivered at a commemorative event held at Ascension Church in May 2023, it was this growing threat of local religious communities extending support to migrants that provoked fear in the Thatcher government resulting in his forcible removal...

"I think this is also the reason why they smashed our sanctuary because they knew the longer this went on ... just imagine hundreds and hundreds of sanctuaries all over the UK. And the religious communities all coming together because all the migrant refugee groups have religions and they have organised in a religious way also the communities. If all these came together, right, it would be horrifying for the British State to implement their deportations because as soon as somebody is about to be deported they just go into a church and everybody supports them."

- Viraj Mendis [35]

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CONCLUSION: MOVEMENT AFTERLIVES

Only by breaking the sanctuary, Viraj contended, could the State strip the strategy of its power and halt its inevitable spread.

Notwithstanding, Viraj's sanctuary forged deep roots in Manchester strengthening a vast movement ecology of grassroots resistance to the border regime that would outlast the campaign itself. Former VMDC members went on to play pivotal roles in other anti-deportation and sanctuary campaigns helping hundreds of people fight and win the right to stay in Britain.

Some helped to establish and lead civil society organisations, including the **National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns** (now **Right to Remain**) and the **Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit**, which continue to provide invaluable legal and campaign support.

Out of this soil also grew a language and politics of **border abolition** expressed powerfully by the Manchester-based **'No One Is Illegal'** campaign of the early 2000s as well as a growing number of contemporary grassroots formations. [36]

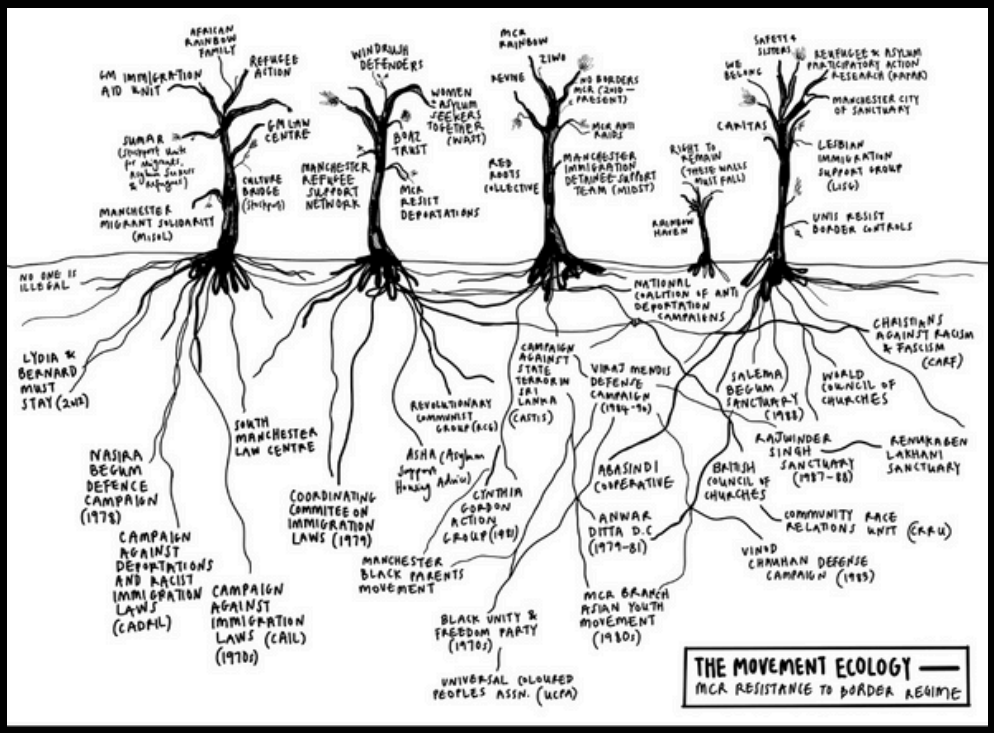


Figure 12: *The Movement Ecology – MCR Resistance to Border Regime*. Infographic created by the author and artist Hawwa Alam in dialogue with participants at events hosted by the Radical Reading Room between 2023-25. This infographic is not comprehensive, and we welcome your additions.

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CONCLUSION: MOVEMENT AFTERLIVES

Today, the Ascension Church Hulme aspires to be a place of continued safety and sanctuary. The church is now home to the **Radical Reading Room Collective** which on International Women's Day 2022 opened a radical library in the sacristy where Viraj spent more than two years. The creation of the library is part of a broader effort to preserve and transmit the history of the VMDC and other anti-deportation campaigns to the next generation.

Between 2023 and 2025, members of the Collective worked in partnership with researchers from the University of Manchester to better document and represent this history through the creation of a new archive and oral history collection - ***The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection*** - at the **Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre** as well as an arts and heritage installation at the Ascension Church Hulme. We hope that this learning resource extends that work by revealing the rich genealogy of resistance in Manchester to state violence and in solidarity with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

This educational guide was written as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project, *Grassroots Struggles, Global Visions: British Black Power, 1964-1985,* led by Dr Kerry Pimblott (Manchester) and Professor Kennetta Hammond Perry (Northwestern).

ENDNOTES

1. Viraj Mendis quoted in 'The history behind today's sanctuary movement,' n.d., Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 2, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/46.
2. Viraj Mendis quoted in Amanda Mitchison, 'The Refuge of Viraj Mendis,' Independent Magazine, 14/1/89, Steve Cohen Collection, GB3228.028/01/46, Viraj Mendis Folder 4.
3. Viraj Mendis and Karen Mendis interviewed by Kerry Pimblott and Janet Batsleer, 22 May 2024. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.
4. Margaret Thatcher quote taken from transcript of interview for World in Action, 27 January 1978, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485 (accessed 12 May 2023).
5. For an account of immigration laws in this period, see Nadine El-Enany, *Bordering Britain: Law, race and empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).
6. On anti-deportation campaigns in Greater Manchester during this period, see Steve Cohen, *No One Is Illegal: Asylum and Immigration Control Past and Present* (Trentham, 2003), esp., Chapter 11; and Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2013), esp. Chapter 5.
7. 'The history behind today's sanctuary movement,' n.d., Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 2, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/46.
8. Quote from Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, *Viraj Mendis – life or death? The evidence supporting a full review of the case* (September 1988), p.2, Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 2, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/46

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ENDNOTES

9. Chris Procter interviewed by Kerry Pimblott and Janet Batsleer, 29 February 2024. The Viraj Mendis Anti-Deportation and Sanctuary Collection, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.118.
10. Quote from Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign, *Viraj Mendis – life or death? The evidence supporting a full review of the case*, September 1988, Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 2, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/46.
11. 'The history behind today's sanctuary movement,' n.d., Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 2, AIU RACE Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/46.
12. The notion of 'public sanctuary' is developed by Paul Weller in 'Sanctuary and the. British Churches,' The Modern Churchman 30, no. 4 (1989): 12-17.
13. Viraj Mendis, Untitled manuscript, Steve Cohen Collection, Viraj Mendis Folder 4, AIU Race Centre, Manchester, GB3228.028/01/48.
14. *ibid.*
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35. Conversation with Viraj Mendis conducted via Zoom on May 17, 2023 by Kerry Pimblott and Janet Batsleer.
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