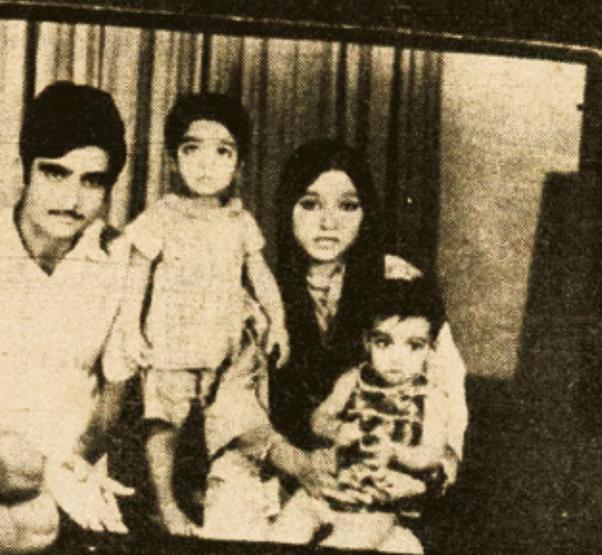


Anwar Ditta Campaign

The extraordinary tale
of a mother's courage.



British born Anwar Ditta returned home from Pakistan in 1975, but her three children were denied entry. Anwar's story is that of a woman in her twenties with little formal education who took on the Home Office and succeeded in reuniting her family.

Anwar Ditta, born in Birmingham in 1953, was sent to live with relatives in Pakistan aged nine. There she married and had three children. Anwar's husband came to England in 1974. She joined him a year later. The couple's children were refused entry on the grounds of disputed parentage.



HOME OFFICE
Lunar House Wellesley Road Croydon CR9 2BY
Telephone (Immigration) 01-686 0688
(Nationality) 01-681 3411
Telegram IMMUNAT CROYDON

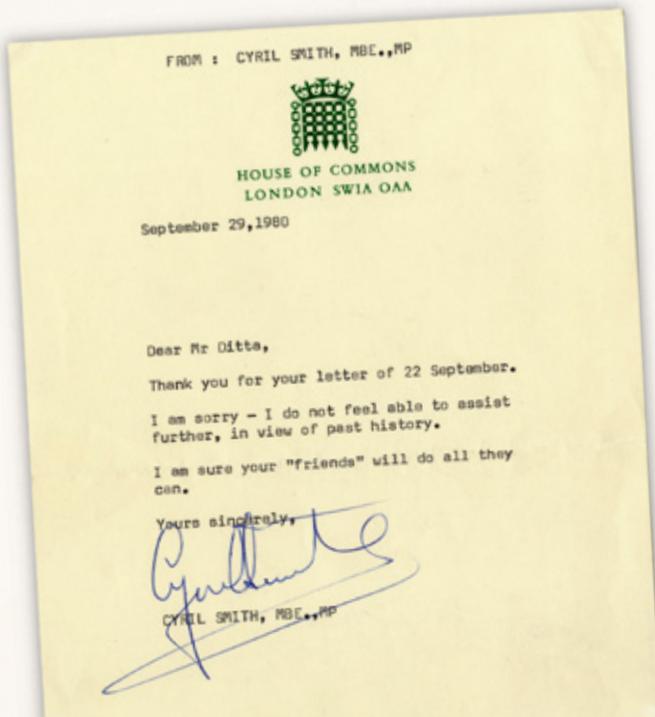
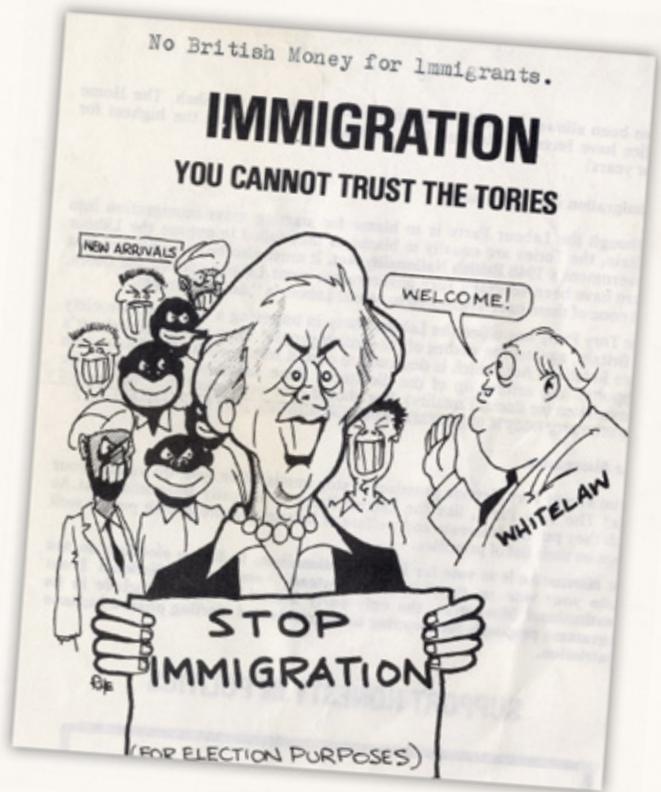
Thank you for your letter of 1st August 1980 about the case of Anwar Ditta who is trying to bring three children to this country from Pakistan.

The entry clearance officer refused entry clearances to the three children because he was not satisfied that they were related as claimed. The reason for his doubts was a series of discrepancies and improbabilities in the account given on Anwar Ditta's history and in the documents produced to support it. In particular, there was no firm evidence that Anwar Ditta, who was born in the United Kingdom, had ever lived in Pakistan; there was no firm evidence that she had been married there; and until some time after her stated return to this country she had consistently declared herself to be a spinster and made no mention of her husband or children on several occasions when she might have been expected or would have been required to do so. In these circumstances the entry clearance officer was not satisfied that the children were Anwar's and suspected that this was an attempt to bring someone else's - perhaps a relative's - children to the United Kingdom to enjoy the undoubted advantages of life here.

"I was devastated. There's no words to describe somebody turning around, saying something that's yours, is not yours. You carry your children nine months, you give birth to your children and they're just turning around and saying that they're not yours. It was very painful..."

The Immigration Act of 1971 was designed to control migration to the UK. Anwar's return to England came at a time when the government was using harsh methods to restrict the rights of Black and Asian immigrants.

Open hostility towards immigrants was prevalent. The Nationalist Party blamed them for social grievances and urged the Government to end immigration altogether.



Anwar approached her local, democratically elected representative but was refused support.

The Home Office restricted access to Britain and amended immigration law so that people already living in the UK could be deported.

Anwar and her husband Shuja appealed the Home Office's decision in June 1979. In November of the same year the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee was formed. It organised campaigns and lobbied for public support.

The appeal was heard on 28 Apr and 16 May 1980. During the intervening weeks, the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee organised rallies and demonstrations in which hundreds of people – including politicians and celebrities – took part.



“When it went for the judiciary review they just threw the case out. They didn't even review the case. You know the legal system was so against my name and my case. They just threw everything out... I had no choice but to campaign.”

Anwar's hopes were shattered on 30 Jul 1980 when the court announced that the appeal had been rejected. Despite all the evidence provided – birth certificates, marriage certificates, passports, photographs and testimonies – the judge dismissed the case, declaring that “the couple had not established that they were the parents of the children”.

The Anwar Ditta Defence Committee was supported by many other campaign groups, including: Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, Women Against Imperialism (Bradford), Asian Youth Movement (Bradford & Manchester), Rochdale Against Racism and the Anti-Racism Committee of Manchester City Labour Party.

ANWAR DITTA the fight goes on

The Anwar Ditta Defence Committee's campaign to force the racist Home Office to allow Anwar Ditta's three children to come to England to join their family still continues. In previous issues of FRFI we reported on the build-up of support for the campaign which eventually forced the Home Office to bring forward the date for Anwar Ditta's appeal before the immigration courts.

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Anwar's Song.



“Margaret Thatcher is a liar,
Says she believes in family life,
An Englishman must live secure,
With his children and his wife.”

“But if you're Asian, then it's different,
Your family life can go to hell,
Thank Margaret Thatcher that you're here,
Do you expect your kids as well?”

Lyrics from a song composed in support of Anwar by a well-wisher.

Following the appeal's rejection, the Home Office declared the case closed on 30 Sept 1980, but the Anwar Ditta Defence Committee continued campaigning. Their efforts paid off in Mar 1981 when Granada Television sent an investigative team to Pakistan and reported their findings in a World in Action documentary.

Anwar had offered to undergo blood tests throughout the inquiry, but the Home Office refused to engage. Blood tests carried out by Granada proved conclusively that the children were her own. On 14 Apr 1981 the Home Office relented and the Ditta family was finally reunited.

SHE TOOK THE HOME OFFICE ON -AND WON!



I'm happy, but bitter says Anwar Ditta

Dear Mr. Ditta,
I have been reading your article in paper news journal to you and to my girl to make my children to know my mother and to know my father. I have been waiting for you to know to you and to my girl to know my father and to my girl to know my mother. I have been waiting for you to know to you and to my girl to know my father and to my girl to know my mother. I have been waiting for you to know to you and to my girl to know my father and to my girl to know my mother.

Dear Sister & Brother
We are writing to express our solidarity with your campaign to fight to have Anwar Ditta's children reunited with their mother. We shall be standing with you in Manchester.
We give our love to Anwar Ditta and our love to all recent immigrants in solidarity.
Ed. Holt
some against

Dear Anwar,
I was very happy today to hear that your children have finally been allowed out of the country. I'm still sorry we were unable to help and especially sorry it took 6 years of pain for you and your husband, and a television documentary, before the Home Office took notice. You are a great woman.

Lots of people sent donations and messages of support to the Anwar Defence Committee. A small minority sent abusive letters. When the appeal was overturned, Anwar was flooded with correspondence from well-wishers.

Anwar's children were reunited with their parents, but they had not seen each other for six years. They also had to adjust rapidly to a new life in England. Anwar's husband lost his job and the couple struggled to pay off debts accumulated during the campaign.

Anwar's case was by no means isolated. In May 1981, Anwar and her children marched in support of four women also living in Manchester who were fighting anti-deportation campaigns.



Nasira Begum, Cynthia Gordon, Nasreen Akhtar and Jaswinder Kaur seen at a press conference in Manchester yesterday

DEPORTATION THREAT

FOUR women who are all facing deportation held a press conference in Manchester yesterday.

Nasira Begum from Levenshulme, Manchester, has been fighting a deportation order for over two years since her husband deserted her. The Home Office are trying to claim that her marriage was invalid, although at the Appeals Court in June 1980 Nasira was clearly able to show that she had not married for convenience and that her husband was free to marry her. At this appeal the adjudicator, a lawyer appointed by the Home Office, accepted Nasira's right to remain in the country.

However, the Home Office have appealed against this decision and a "final appeal" will be heard on June 15. In point of fact, the appeal procedure can be almost never ending because the Home Office are almost automatically given leave to appeal right up to the House of Lords. Nasreen Akhtar, from Rochdale, and her three children are facing deportation after a particularly unpleasant experience in this country.

Nasreen originally came to England to marry a man in Rochdale through an arranged marriage. However, although the Islamic ceremony took place, the marriage broke down before an official registry office ceremony could be arranged. Nasreen said: "My children are Anglicised and there is no future for them in Pakistan. Local Liberal MP Cyril Smith is said to be supporting the case."

Jaswinder Kaur, Leeds, is now very close to deportation, although her young son Manj has her final appeal in now totally dependent on the Home Office consider her case. At the press conference she pointed out it is deported, either will lose his and the Home Office deported a British since he was born in her father's country. She also said from her father who is now in India.

Anwar's six-year battle against the Home Office garnered interest from all over the world. In 1981 she attended the Women's World Congress in Prague.

"It makes me feel a proud mother of myself. That I've achieved something good for my children... Even if I couldn't provide a lot of money or properties or anything like that, at least I got my children here, back home."

Anwar Ditta was born in Birmingham and brought up in Rochdale. In 1976 the Home Office denied her three children born in Pakistan the right to join their parents now living in the UK.

Anwar worked with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust to archive documents and photographs relating to her high profile immigration case so they can be shared with future generations. Anwar also recorded an accompanying oral history interview in which she reflects on a lifetime of challenges and achievements.

This leaflet was compiled by volunteer, Saskia Zimmel.

Visit

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre is free to visit and includes hundreds of books on the history of race, migration and ethnicity. If you would like to explore items in our archive – including oral histories and project material – please call ahead so we can be ready to help you.

Contribute

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust offers ongoing training to community groups with an interest in producing archive quality oral histories. We can also help with other aspects of project planning and delivery – from bid writing support to workshops, exhibition space and the long term preservation of your research.

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss a project idea.

Oral history:

the process of recording and preserving people's unique experiences and opinions

Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations

Resource Centre

A special collection of the University of Manchester based at

Manchester Central Library

Manchester M2 5PD

Tel : 0161 275 2920

Email : www.racearchive.org.uk