

STATEMENT ON REPORTING IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

Reporting which panders to stereotypes can cause much hurt. By repeating stereotypes the media can encourage language and attitudes which, in other circumstances, would be seen as totally unacceptable.

The NUJ believes that immigration and asylum, which are two separate issues, have been used by some politicians and sections of the media to promote racism and xenophobia through their unquestioning acceptance of the belief that asylum seekers constitute a threat to our social fabric, social services, housing, health, security, and of course, good race relations.

The NUJ believes that it is wrong to promote prejudice and fear, over immigration and asylum because this diverts attention from the real causes of social and economic problems. We condemn attempts by politicians and policy makers to win public support and votes by blaming 'others' for their failures and shortcomings.

The NUJ believes that the attitude of our newspapers and broadcasting stations is crucial in race relations and the formation of opinion on asylum seekers. Immigration and colour prejudice can be materially affected by the media. To perpetuate racism and xenophobia through our

media is anti-social and grossly irresponsible.

These guidelines are not intended to make the media shy away from covering issues and stories about asylum seekers and immigration. We want the media to provide a coverage that is fair, balanced and accurate.

Immigration

The NUJ believes that the emigration from Britain and the immigration to the United Kingdom of other nationals is part of a global phenomenon.

Most migrants are skilled workers and professionals who contribute to the economy and diversity of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Immigrants, for instance, constitute a significant percentage of nurses, doctors and pharmacists and have been recruited to make up for shortages in the UK.

Asylum

The NUJ believes that victims of conflict and persecution have a right to seek a safe haven without further victimisation and stigmatisation as guaranteed by international law to which the United Kingdom and Ireland are signatories.

International Law obliges the UK and Irish authorities and citizens to respect the human and other rights of refugees and further obliges the authorities to treat refugee cases quickly and humanely to enable people to resettle, earn a living and contribute to the economy and society.

GUIDELINES ON REPORTING IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

"Asylum seeker" is often used as an abusive term against victims of social and political persecution, war and conflict from other countries. Many refugees and asylum seekers are educated professionals or skilled workers and do not wish to flee their homes, jobs and security for uncertainty. Reports on asylum seekers should reflect this. Journalists should steer clear of exploiting prejudice and avoid reports that portray asylum seekers as causes of problems rather than victims.

When reporting immigration and asylum, journalists should be careful not to:

- Promote negative stereotypes based on misconceptions.

- Quote politicians or public figures without cross-checking if statements are factual. Go to the experts who can help to set the context, and make sure that wherever possible you check the details with a relevant source and don't just rely on expressions of local or popular prejudice. Offensive stereotypes (for example "bogus asylum seeker", "scroungers", "dole dodgers") should not be used.
- Exaggerate or use phrases or terms that promote prejudice or fear, e.g. "floods of immigrants". Many allegations are made about asylum seekers, but can those making these allegations actually substantiate them?



GUIDELINES ON RACE REPORTING

The National Union of Journalists has ratified guidelines for all its members to follow when dealing with race relations subjects.

If you are a member, these are your guidelines

The NUJ Black Members' Council campaigns for race equality in the union and in the workplace and tackles racism in the media

STATEMENT ON RACE REPORTING

- 1 The NUJ believes that the development of racist attitudes and the growth of fascist parties pose a threat to democracy, the rights of trade union organisations, a free press and the development of social harmony and well-being.
- 2 The NUJ believes that its members cannot avoid a measure of responsibility in fighting the evil of racism as expressed through the mass media.
- 3 The NUJ reaffirms its total opposition to censorship but equally reaffirms the belief that press freedom must be conditioned by responsibility and an acknowledgement by all media workers of the need not to allow press freedom to be abused to slander a section of the community or to promote the evil of racism.
- 4 The NUJ believes that the methods and the lies of the racists should be publicly and vigorously exposed.
- 5 The NUJ believes that newspapers and magazines should not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race or colour as expressed in the NUJ's Rule Book and Code of Conduct.
- 6 The NUJ recognises the right of members to withhold their labour on grounds of conscience where employers are providing a platform for racist propaganda.
- 7 The NUJ believes that editors should ensure that coverage of race stories be placed in a balanced context.
- 8 The NUJ will continue to monitor the development of media coverage in this area and give support to members seeking to enforce the above aims.

GUIDELINES ON RACE REPORTING

- Only mention someone's race if it is strictly relevant. Check to make sure you have it right. Would you mention race if the person was white?
- Think carefully about the words you use. Words which were once in common usage are now considered offensive, e.g. half-caste and coloured. Use mixed-race and Black instead. Black can cover people of Arab, Asian, Chinese and African origin. Ask people how they define themselves.
- Do not make assumptions about a person's cultural background – whether it is their name or religious detail. Ask them, or where this is not possible check with the local Race Equality Council.
- Investigate the treatment of Black people in education, health, employment and housing. Do not forget travellers and gypsies. Cover their lives and concerns. Seek the views of their representatives.
- Remember that Black communities are culturally diverse. Get a full and correct view from representative organisations.
- Press for equal opportunities for employment of Black staff.
- Immigrant is often used as a term of abuse. Do not use it unless the person really is an immigrant. Most Black people in Britain were born here and most immigrants are white.
- Be wary of disinformation. Just because a source is traditional does not mean it is accurate.
- Do not sensationalise race relations issues. It harms Black people and it could harm you.

REPORTING RACIST ORGANISATIONS

- Do not sensationalise by reports, photographs, film or presentation the activities of racist organisations
- Seek to publish or broadcast material exposing the myths and lies of racist organisations and their anti-social behaviour
- Do not allow the letters column or 'phone-in' programmes to be used to spread racial hatred in whatever guise.
- When interviewing representatives of racist organisations or reporting meetings or statements or claims, journalists should carefully check all reports for accuracy and seek rebutting or opposing comments. The anti-social nature of such views should be exposed

GUIDELINES ON TRAVELLERS

- Resist the temptation to sensationalise issues involving travellers, especially in their relations with settled communities over issues such as housing and settlement programmes and schooling.
- Try to give wider coverage to travellers' lives and the problems they face.
- Strive to promote the realisation that the travellers' community is comprised of full citizens of Great Britain and Ireland whose civil rights are seldom adequately vindicated,
- who often suffer much hurt and damage through misuse by the media and who have a right to have their special contributions to Irish and British life, especially in music and craftwork and other cultural activities, properly acknowledged and reported.
- Only mention the word gypsy or traveller if strictly relevant or accurate.
- Give balanced reports seeking travellers' views as well as those of others, consulting the local travellers where possible.