

We Move

A manifesto for migrant justice



Foreword

JCWI LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

JCWI is an independent charity fighting for justice in immigration, nationality and asylum law since 1967. We are proud to introduce this manifesto as JCWI's advisory board.

We come from all over the world, from countries the UK colonised and elsewhere. We have lived through the pain inflicted by the UK's immigration system, and shown extraordinary resilience in the face of injustice.

We believe movement is a positive and necessary force for good, and that people who move enrich our society.

We are not resigned to the 'hostile environment' that denies our rights and exposes us to fear, uncertainty and violence.

We are appalled by the government's approach to asylum and refugee rights. We are alarmed at policies that deny people their rights. We are worried about people who are and will be displaced by climate change. We are frustrated by the lack of access to justice for people who move.

That's why we have come together with this bold vision for migrant justice.

This manifesto is based on research, experience and consultation with people who move. It is for everyone who cares about migration and justice.

We invite you to read it and to join us in fighting for rights and justice for all.

This manifesto calls for:

1

Rights - Everyone should be able to thrive, no matter where we're from

2

Safety - We must welcome people who seek sanctuary on our shores

3

Dignity - We all deserve to live with dignity and feel safe in our homes and workplaces

4

Justice - We should all be able to defend our rights and hold the government accountable

5

Community - We all deserve to find care and belonging



Rights

Everyone should be able to thrive,
no matter where we're from

Rights

We all deserve to be treated fairly and equally. To build a home, to earn a living, to find support when we need it. Yet our immigration system makes this impossible for so many. Policies that discriminate and complex rules mean people and families struggle just to live their lives.

The Government's Hostile Environment was implemented to make the UK unwelcoming to people who choose to make this country home.



Our public services – schools, hospitals and more - are forced to take on the role of border control when they should be focused on caring.

These policies push families into poverty and make people undocumented, without the most basic rights. This must change.

We can create an immigration system that supports everyone, regardless of where we come from, how much money we have, or the colour of our skin. We can make sure our communities and public services are open and welcoming to all.

What is the Hostile Environment?

It's a set of racist policies introduced in 2012 that forces doctors, landlords, teachers and other public sector workers to act as immigration police, creating a culture of fear. There is no evidence that the Hostile Environment achieves its aim. But there is extraordinary evidence of its damage.



Rights

We should

- Ensure access to healthcare, housing, education, and care regardless of immigration status, including by abolishing the 'No Recourse to Public Funds' visa condition for people living in the UK.
- Ensure everyone who is living, working or studying in the UK can settle in the UK after 5 years of living here.
- Simplify and shorten the pathway to secure immigration status for those who don't already have one, based on 5 years of living in the UK.
- Ensure everyone living in the UK has the right to work regardless of immigration status, including people seeking asylum.
- Have strong human rights safeguards in the digitisation of the immigration system, e.g. through ensuring people have access to physical documentation and stopping surveillance like GPS tagging and mobile phone seizures.
- Dismantle the Hostile Environment so we can live without fear of discrimination or criminalisation.



Safety

We must welcome people who seek
sanctuary on our shores

Safety

Not everyone moves by choice – some are forced to, just to stay alive. The UK has historically welcomed people fleeing war and persecution, and was instrumental in creating international law protections for refugees.

But recent laws have eroded our commitment to providing sanctuary for people who need it. Those who are already here are suffering in limbo and poverty due to the backlog in the asylum system that the government created, and even those granted refugee status are at risk of homelessness and destitution from lack of government support.

Politicians use cruelty towards refugees and immigrants as a way to distract from their own failings.

We are better than this. We can build an asylum system rooted in compassion, where people's claims are heard fairly and efficiently, and they are supported to rebuild their lives as part of our communities.



Safety



“I had to flee the country where I was born, dreams were destroyed, there’s nothing more painful than that.”

Sharaan, JCWI client



Safety

We need to

- Restore the universal right to seek asylum, starting by repealing laws that undermine the right to seek asylum, and by strengthening support for the UN Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Give legal entry for anyone seeking to claim asylum in the UK.
- Process asylum claims in the UK without discriminating based on country or method of travel, and in a fair, efficient, and trauma-informed way, instead of sending people away or outsourcing our asylum responsibilities to other countries
- Make it easier for family members to join refugees who resettle in the UK.
- Provide housing in communities and the right to work for people who are waiting for their asylum decisions.
- Support refugees' access to education, work, and social inclusion and provide adequate financial and material assistance.
- Conduct a review of the UK's asylum system and explore recommendations including creating an asylum processing body independent of the Home Office.
- Invest in a compassionate and generous global resettlement scheme for refugees that does not discriminate based on nationality, including for people displaced by the climate crisis.

Dignity

We all deserve to live with dignity and feel safe in our homes and workplaces



Dignity

Everyone should feel safe in our homes, in our communities and at work. But anti-migrant policies force many people into abusive or exploitative conditions, without being able to safely ask for help.

Exploitation comes in many forms. The government extorts people through expensive visa and citizenship fees, pushing families into destitution. Cruel employers exploit workers' immigration status or threaten to report people to the Home Office or the police. Traffickers take advantage of people needing support.

Abuse also happens behind closed doors – in families where people are forced to stay with abusive partners or family members for their ability to remain in the country, or where renters feel helpless against greedy landlords – because the immigration system enables this abuse.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can end exploitative systems and practices once and for all.



Dignity



“No worker should lose their job, or be pushed into poverty, unsustainable debt, homelessness or unsafe housing, simply because of the colour of their skin or where they were born.”

Migrant Workers' Pledge by UK trade unions



Dignity

We need to

- Ensure all workers have decent pay, safe conditions, and rights protections, including by abolishing the 'Illegal Working Offence' and 'right to work' checks.
- Prioritise everyone's safety and wellbeing over immigration enforcement, by ending cooperation and data sharing between the Home Office and police, local authorities, and public services.
- Abolish visa conditions that force dependence on an employer, a spouse, or a family member, and instead enable people to independently remain in the UK if they have experienced abuse.
- Make sure that survivors of trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour can safely live in the UK and access support and protection from prosecution.
- Stop financial exploitation and profiteering by the Home Office which forces people into destitution, by cutting application fees to the administrative cost of processing.
- End abuses of power by the Home Office and where necessary transfer functions to other government departments or independent bodies that are more equipped to make decisions competently and compassionately.



**MIGRANTS
WELCOME**

**PEOPLE
MOVE**

**JUSTICE
FOR
ALL**

Justice

We should all be able to defend our rights
and hold the government accountable

Justice


The UK claims a proud tradition in the rule of law, fairness, and justice. Yet over the last few years, migrants and refugees have been excluded from basic human rights protections.

This is fundamentally unfair and unjust.

Recent laws like the 'Illegal Migration Act' strip rights from people who most need our support. At the same time, cuts to legal aid mean access to justice is only available to those who can afford it.

We know that due to systemic racism, our justice system isn't always fair. To make matters worse, the government is ramping up policing and surveillance of migrant, Black and brown communities, and evading accountability by making it harder to exercise our right to protest and challenge unjust laws in court.

Justice



“The immigration legal aid sector at present simply cannot support all those who need, and are entitled to, help. It is no longer accurate to say that the immigration legal aid market is failing: it has failed.”

*‘Access to immigration legal aid in 2023: An ocean of unmet need’
report by Public Law Project and Haringey Migrant Support
Centre*



Justice

We must restore equal access to justice for all as a foundational pillar of our society

- Uphold the rule of law, where everyone has the same access to justice.
- Tackle systemic racism in our law and justice system.
- Provide free and high-quality legal advice and representation through investing in and expanding legal aid.
- Provide clear, accessible information in community languages for people in the immigration system so they can know their rights and access legal advice.
- Simplify immigration rules and applications so more people are able and empowered to navigate the system.
- Until we end all detention and deportations, ensure there is due process, judicial oversight, and appeal rights for all detention and deportation decisions.
- Ensure mechanisms for strong, independent scrutiny of immigration policies and practices, and strengthen government transparency and accountability.
- Repeal all oppressive anti-democratic and anti-protest laws and ensure everyone is able to stand up for their rights.

Community

We all deserve to find care and belonging



Community

We know a fairer, just world is possible. A world where we treat each other with respect and compassion. A world where we care for each other.

Up and down the UK, our communities have shown that we are welcoming and compassionate. We need immigration policies that are rooted in the same care and respect for human rights.

Our communities flourish when we can be with loved ones, eat well, are safely housed, and live without the fear of our lives being torn apart by immigration raids or deportation.

Our immigration system continues to rely on a carceral approach that polices and criminalises our friends and families, particularly those who are Black and brown. Dividing us, instead of connecting us.

We want to see holistic investment in community-based solutions which we know work, and which make life better for all.

Community



“Being involved with my local community since I came here from Brazil has shown me the incredible power of collective organising. My migration experience allows me to engage with residents who don't often get heard in local politics. I love that migrants from different nationalities feel empowered to approach me and together we can identify common issues that can be tackled at the local level. When we come together we can do so much more.”

Lara Parizotto, community activist



Community

Together we can create change

- Challenge how the immigration system harms different groups, including children, men, women and other marginalised genders, disabled, queer, racialised, and working-class people.
- Ensure immigration policies are led and informed by people with lived experience.
- Abolish all forms of immigration detention and deportations, and instead support people to resolve their cases in the community.
- End immigration raids that rip apart our communities and abolish mandatory reporting for people on immigration bail.
- Promote family reunion that is inclusive of kinship ties beyond the western heteronormative concept of family, and respects the best interests of children and families.
- Fund local authorities to provide holistic support and housing for migrants and refugees in our neighbourhoods.
- Stop criminalising people based on their immigration status and invest instead in programmes that promote community-building and are centred in care.

Join the movement

We will keep fighting for the rights of people who move.

We demand that people who move are treated with respect and dignity, and have access to the same opportunities and protections as everyone else.

We call for people who move to have a voice and a choice in our lives.

We demand migrant justice now.

We want to think beyond short-term reforms to a failing system, and instead imagine broader transformative change needed to build the society we want to be.

We must come together, build solidarity beyond our communities and fight oppression at all levels.

Together, we can build stronger and thriving communities rooted in care, compassion, and justice. Together, we can make migrant justice a reality.



“The nature of people moving is like a plant – you’re rooted somewhere, and then you pick yourself up to root yourself somewhere else. It requires extraordinary work to become a living plant again, to survive and to flourish. In this toxic environment it takes a lot for you to survive.”

Hong, member of JCWI’s lived experience advisory board



Take action

- Speak to your family and friends about migrant justice (share this manifesto!)
- Write to your MP and local candidates calling on them to adopt our recommendations
- Join your local anti-raids group - <https://antiraid.net/local-groups>
- Visit and support people in immigration detention - <https://aviddetention.org.uk/visiting/visitors-groups>
- Ask your local councillor to join the Migrant Champions Network - <https://migrantchampionsnetwork.org>
- Join a union and ask them to adopt our Migrant Workers' Pledge and support undocumented workers' rights
- Join JCWI as a member and support our work - <https://jcwi.org.uk/join-us>



THE JOINT COUNCIL
for **THE WELFARE**
OF IMMIGRANTS

JCWI is an independent charity campaigning for justice and fairness in immigration, nationality and asylum policy since 1967

441 Caledonian Road, London, N7 9BG | www.jcwi.org.uk

Registered Charity No.1117513



Illustrated and designed by
[@Blkmoodyboi](https://twitter.com/Blkmoodyboi)