

LYDIA AND BERNARD MUST STAY CAMPAIGN

Press Release

NEW BURY MAYOR IS GUEST AT SOCIAL EVENING IN SUPPORT OF PLAYWRIGHT LYDIA BESONG

The Mayor of Bury, Councillor Yvonne Creswell, and her husband Alan will be guests at a social evening in support of playwright Lydia Besong and her husband Bernard Batey, who are still waiting to hear if they will be given leave to appeal against the decision to deport them.

The Evening in Solidarity with Lydia and Bernard will be hosted by Eagles Wing - a mutual support group of local people in Bury and people who are seeking asylum. The event will be held at the Mosses Centre, Cecil Street, Bury, from 6.30pm - 9pm on Friday, June 10th.

Lydia is a member of WAST (Women Asylum Seekers Together) and the WAST choir will perform alongside the Bury AcaPeelers Choir and other live musicians. As well as international food and a slide show, there will also be a DVD showing of Lydia's play "How I Became An Asylum Seeker" followed by a question and answer session.

The play has now been performed by members of WAST in London, Manchester, Salford and Liverpool, and has helped raise awareness of asylum issues throughout the UK. Lydia and Bernard's supporters include the Bishop of Manchester who met the couple at the church they attend in Rochdale, actor Juliet Stevenson who took part in a discussion following a performance of the play in London, and English PEN, the organisation which campaigns for writers who suffer imprisonment and persecution.

Lydia and Bernard's campaign is backed by WAST, the trade union UNITE Greater Manchester Social Action Branch, human rights organisation RAPAR, the North West Arts organisation CAN and the GAP Unit.

A spokesperson for the campaign said: "We are delighted that the Mayor of Bury has agreed to be a guest at this event and we would like to thank Eagles Wing for hosting it as well as Lydia and Bernard's union Unite which has provided financial support."

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BACKGROUND DETAILS: - Lydia is a former English teacher from Cameroon who came to the UK in 2006 with her husband Bernard. They were forced to leave their home country after being persecuted, imprisoned and tortured for their political activities with the SCNC, a peaceful organisation which campaigns for the rights of the English speaking minority in southern Cameroon. The persecution of the SCNC has been condemned by Amnesty International and other organisations.

- In 2009, Lydia was detained in Yarl's Wood detention centre and only a last minute High Court injunction prevented Lydia and Bernard's deportation. But the UK Border Agency has now turned down their fresh claim for asylum and they are waiting to hear if their leave to appeal to the High Court will be granted.

