

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

Voices

‘I guess this means it is okay for me to be violated’ – migrant women have been forgotten in the domestic abuse bill

If the government is not challenged on the domestic abuse bill, we will end up leaving behind some of the most vulnerable women in our society, write **Simon Woolley** and **Pragna Patel**

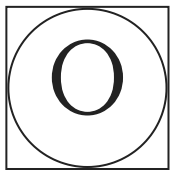


3 hours ago | 9 comments



[Contribute](#)[Subscribe](#)[LOGIN](#)

*The Independent employs over 100 journalists around the world to bring you news you can trust. To support truly independent journalism, please consider making a **contribution** or taking a **subscription**.*



Our two organisations, **Southall Black Sisters (SBS)** and **Operation Black Vote (OBV)**, emerged from the same internationalist **history** of racial justice campaigning – bringing activists from non-white commonwealth countries and their descendants together under the political umbrella of “Black”. We have been guided by the notion of “your struggle is my struggle, and my struggle is your struggle”.

OBV celebrates its 25th anniversary this year of demanding a political voice to tackle persistent race inequality. SBS has just completed 40 years of advocating for the rights of migrant and Black and minority ethnic (**Bame**) women, who are at a disproportionate risk of gender-based discrimination and violence, exacerbated by race and class inequality.

Our organisations have come together to form an alliance to advocate for the rights of migrant and Bame women in the domestic abuse bill, which is **currently being debated in the House of Lords**. Through our amendment and amendments by other organisations, we want to close the glaring protection and justice gaps that exist and create a more compassionate and fairer society.



The **domestic abuse bill** is an important piece of legislation. However, it is also a test for the government. Has it learnt the lessons from Windrush? And will it turn its back on some of the most vulnerable women in our society today? If the government is not challenged on the domestic abuse bill, we will end up leaving behind some of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of women in our society.

[Read more](#)

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN



Domestic Abuse Bill: Glaring holes mean women will still have no escape route from violence, campaigners say

The domestic abuse bill has been hailed as a “once in a generation” opportunity to transform the response to domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence in the UK. While its contents have expanded to incorporate some significant changes, such as recognising children as survivors of abuse and placing a statutory duty on local authorities to accommodate domestic abuse survivors, the government has refused to shift its position in one key area: legislative protection for migrant women.

Migrant women who are subject to domestic abuse and the **No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)** rule – applied to those subject to immigration control in the UK – will continue to have no access to the welfare safety net. This includes most forms of welfare benefits and refuge and local authority accommodation, which are so vital for women’s protection. Precisely because of the NRPF rule, many migrant women are made economically dependent on their abusive partners who use this lack of status as a weapon of coercive control and as a means by which to maintain absolute power.

The government effectively operates a two-tier discriminatory system of support for those fleeing violence. One in which migrant women and children, in the

[Contribute](#)[Subscribe](#)[LOGIN](#) DAILY NEWSLETTER

JOHN RENTOU'S

VIEW FROM WESTMINSTER

[SIGN UP](#)

The Independent would like to keep you informed about offers, events and updates by email, please tick the box if you would like to be contacted

Read our full mailing list consent terms [here](#)

Promoted stories

If You Like to Play, this Fantasy Game is a Must-Have. No Install.

ELVENAR - FREE ONLINE GAME

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Without significant changes to the domestic abuse bill, migrant women will continue to be routinely turned away at a time when they most need help and worse still, regarded as **potential immigration offenders, rather than as victims of domestic abuse.**

This is why SBS and other Bame women's groups have put forward amendments to the bill that have support from peers across the political spectrum. Full and equal protection for migrant women is crucial to ensure they can access the measures included in the bill, including the statutory duty on local authorities to fund support in safe accommodation.



Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

Who said it?

It is shocking that currently fewer than four per cent of refuge vacancies in England in 2019-20 accepted a woman with no NRPF. SBS' amendment gives migrant women access to shelters and basic welfare support and a route to settlement as victims of domestic abuse.

Moreover, amendments led by the Latin American Women's Rights Service as coordinators of the **Step Up Migrant Women** coalition, focus on ending data-sharing between the police and the Home Office, and Imkaan and Women's Aid amendments aim to secure guaranteed funding for specialist refuges and centres of excellence led by and for BAME women so that they can provide holistic support to meet the needs of survivors in a safe and secure environment. All of these measures would represent a momentous step in delivering safety for all women.

Read more



Domestic abuse victims stalked as family courts share refuge addresses with ex-partners, commissioner warns



'Home became a prison': Calls to national domestic abuse helpline soar by more than third in pandemic

As the bill has made its way through parliament, we have also borne witness to

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

their background or immigration status.



10 best baby mobiles that help soothe your little one to sleep

This of course would demonstrate a commitment to the promises made by Home Secretary Priti Patel following the [Windrush Lessons Learned review](#), to address

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

truly provides protection for all. It is our duty to make that happen.

Simon Woolley is founder and director of Operation Black Vote and a crossbench member of the House of Lords

Pragna Patel is a founding member of the Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Women Against Fundamentalism



Please support truly independent journalism

Every penny you give will fund public-interest reporting

Contribute

MORE ABOUT: BAME | HISTORY

Show 9 comments ▾

Promoted stories

Taboola Feed

On 9th April 2021, you could become the owner of this fully furnished luxury London townhouse.

This stunning house worth three million pounds to a guaranteed winner. There's no mortgage, no stamp duty or conveyancing to pay and we're throwing in £10,000 cash to help you settle in.

Remember To Do This Before Turning off Your PC (Do This Now)

Most Windows PC Users Didn't Know This.

BRIGHT LIFESTYLE | Sponsored

People Born 1941 - 1971 Get This Benefit In February

BRITISH SENIORS | Sponsored

There's an easy way to outsmart Euro Car Parts and ensure you pay the lowest price.

JOINPOUCH | Sponsored

Why Over 60s Should Release Equity From Their Home

YOUR CHOICE EQUITY RELEASE | Sponsored

You Could Save £100s On Your Bills By Trying This Simple Method

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

Jenny Eclair: The new ‘perineum sunning’ fad sounds ridiculous – but don’t knock it just yet

NEWS

OANN parent company ordered to pay Rachel Maddow and MSNBC \$250k

Revealed: Why Over 60s Should Release Equity From Their Homes In 2021

TELEGRAPH EQUITY RELEASE | Sponsored

Experience the joys of self-love with Lelo with V-Day offers up to 80% off

PROMOTED BY THE INDEPENDENT | Sponsored

People Born 1951 - 1979 Claim This Benefit In February

REASSURED | Sponsored

Michelle From 'Eastenders' Is 53 & This Is How She Looks Now

PENSANDPATRON | Sponsored

VOICES

Opinion: We need an equal number of women in politics to achieve real equality

Contribute

Subscribe

LOGIN

UK Residents Can Now Invest In Amazon Shares With Only £250. Create A Second Income Online

BOLTRADERS.COM | Sponsored

NEWS

Paris Hilton gives testimony about ‘traumatising’ abuse at boarding school



GET IN TOUCH

Contact us

Jobs



LEGAL

Code of conduct and complaints

Contributors

Cookie policy

Donations Terms & Conditions

Privacy notice

User policies

OUR PRODUCTS

Subscriptions

Donations

Install our apps

Archive

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

International editions

Independent en Español

Independent Arabia

Independent Turkish

Independent Persian

Independent Urdu

Evening Standard

Novaya Gazeta

EXTRAS

All topics

Voucher codes

Advertising guide

Syndication

[Contribute](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[LOGIN](#)