

REAL BRITAIN

Ros Wynne-Jones standing up for you and your family



Nursing a debt

It is great news that Jeremy Hunt has finally sat down with the junior doctors to work out a deal.

But he still needs to reverse cuts made to student bursaries that allow nurses, midwives, physiotherapists and others to train.

A few months ago I told the story of Danielle Tiplady in this column, a 29-year-old student nurse from Cornwall. "I would not be qualifying as a nurse without the bursary," she said.

Danielle is organising a demonstration in central London that starts at 1pm on June 4.

Her 'Bursary or Bust' petition is now tantalisingly close to the 100,000 signatures needed to trigger a Commons debate. Sign it here: <http://tinyurl.com/jyy851c>



DEMO Danielle Tiplady

Young adults who are exiles in their own land

DAJAY, Dami and Chrisann pause when I ask the question. How does it feel when you hear politicians talk about floods of migrants? When the immigration rhetoric is ratcheted up to the level of a scream?

Dajay eventually smiles. "I don't think of myself as a migrant," he says. "I have lived here since I was three. Maybe I didn't have a passport or papers, but I am British. What else am I? Jamaican? I left there when I was tiny child."

On Tuesday, at the Daily Mirror EU debate, Nigel Farage once again fanned the flames on immigration. A day later – in comments condemned by Doreen Lawrence – he suggested there could be violence on the streets if Britain remained in the EU. Yesterday, Labour's Chuka Ummuna said the UKIP leader was "showing shades of Enoch Powell".

Dami, 22, and Chrisann, 21, say they feel distressed every time they see the headlines. "And sometimes angry," Dami adds. "I think, 'You don't know anything about our lives.'" Dajay, 19, now has British citizenship, but says he spent the years fighting for his papers feeling "shameful and sad".

For most of their lives, these three young people were undocumented – three of the 120,000 migrant children believed to live in the UK who don't have all the right paperwork. For years, after coming to live here with parents who overstayed tourist or work visas in search of safety or a better life, they lived with uncertainty.

Apart from going to school, they had few more rights than the children in Calais or hidden on boats crossing between continents. Yet they couldn't be more 'British' in every other sense.

The first time I met Dajay was on the steps of a West London Town Hall, about to step out of the shadows. Less than an hour later, he had sung God Save The Queen, sworn an oath and become a citizen of the United Kingdom.

"I love Britain," he told me. "To me it's



STRUGGLE Dami, 22, Dajay, 19, and Chrisann, 21, have fought for state recognition

the best country in the world. I have spent so many years just wishing I could have the same opportunities as my friends. I don't see myself as any different."

With around 450,000 undocumented adults in the UK, over half of Britain's undocumented children are believed to have been born here – to parents with irregular or no status. Many others come as young children and only find out they have no papers later in life.

Dajay met Dami and Chrisann through the youth justice charity Just For Kids

Law. Dami had arrived in the UK with her family from Nigeria at the age of eight. She dreamed of studying criminology and psychology at university.

Dajay won a place at a top drama school but had to give it up due to his status

"But then I found out I couldn't," she says. "The school kept asking me for my UCAS form. I kept making excuses, saying I'd forgotten it. In the end they stopped asking me. I was heartbroken."

She eventually managed to get a 'limited' status. "I can't go to university as I won't be eligible for a student loan for another three years – but I am allowed to work," she says. "But if I get sick and can't work, I can't

get benefits and have to pay a surcharge to qualify for NHS treatment, even though I'm paying tax here."

Chrisann, came to Britain aged eight, from Jamaica with her parents. "When I was 16, I won an oratory competition to go on a trip to the US to participate in the US presidential election," she says. "That's when I found out I had no papers."

With Just for Kids Law's help, Chrisann also won limited leave to remain and a scholarship which meant she could take up a place to study law at LSE. A former head girl, her limited status means she is counted as a "foreign" student.

Dajay came to the UK from Jamaica at the age of three. "At school, I could never invite anyone home," Dajay says. "They would say 'Why are you sharing one room with your dad?' I couldn't explain my situation to my teachers. I couldn't go on school trips abroad or have free school meals. It was so isolating and disheartening."

When he turned 18, life suddenly got even more difficult. He had no ID and couldn't work or go to university. A talented actor, that summer, he was offered a place at one of the best drama schools in the country. But when he explained about his immigration situation, he lost the place.

A social worker referred him to the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens at Ealing Law Centre. "It's a very wonderful place," Dajay says quietly. Solicitors there raised the money for his citizenship application.

Now, while Dami and Chrisann still have limited status, Dajay is finally a British citizen. "I'm not looking over my shoulder any more," he says. But as the EU vote gets closer, these three young people remain human collateral in a brutal public debate.

■ www.justforkidslaw.org/let-us-learn

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IRONY OF THE WEEK

The stated aim of the new Government legislation brought in by Wednesday's Queen's Speech was to "increase the life chances for the most disadvantaged". Yet there was not one single mention of disabled people or disability in the entire speech.

Another week, another high profile resignation in the teaching profession. This week, assistant head teacher Zoe Brown said she believes current educational policy means she can no longer do her job.

Brown, who writes the Girl On The Piccadilly Line blog, sent a powerful letter to Education Secretary Nicky Morgan saying "Sorry Nicky, I'm out."

You can read it at piclinegirl.com

Living wage 10

Every week in this column we celebrate 10 companies willing to pay the real Living Wage. The voluntary rate – set by the Living Wage Foundation – is £8.25 an hour outside London and £9.40 an hour in the capital.

Today, we particularly welcome the **Scalloway Hotel** in Shetland, **St Paul's Way Medical Centre** in East London, **Fulham Osteopaths** in West London, **EFG European Furniture Group** in Warrington, Cheshire, **Photon Energy Ltd** in Dartford, Kent, **Community Action: MK** in Milton Keynes, Bucks, **Stirling Carers Centre** in Stirling, **Screenmedia** digital design in Glasgow, **Deveron Dental Centre** in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, and **Unite Students** accommodation nationwide.

ASK ALYS...

Alys Cunningham, our workplace legal expert, is away – but do send problems in for her to answer on her return.

LETTER SHAMES TWO-FACED TORY

The bland Queen's Speech on Wednesday still contained some of the Tories' usual cruelties – including a proposal to end the £9,000 cap on students' tuition fees.

This will mean universities can charge even more extortionate fees, pushing students even further into debt and putting many more off university altogether.

Labour immediately launched a petition against the plans, with Jeremy Corbyn telling the Government his party would offer them no support.

Labour is in favour of abolishing tuition fees altogether, by raising £10bn of taxes

from businesses and high-earners. This week, a Tory letter from 2003 emerged on tuition fees – written to music student Rosy Williams 13 years ago.

It said Labour's plan to triple fees to £3,000 a year were "very unfair". It pledged to scrap fees totally and said: "To my mind, this is a tax on learning and is very unfair. There is lots of evidence that it is this fear of going into debt that most puts people from poorer backgrounds off going to university."

The writer? George Osborne, then a lowly Tory whip.



HYPOCRITE Osborne said fees rise was unfair

Have you or your family been affected by the cuts? Or have you been shocked by how your area has been hit? I want to reveal what's really happening around the country every week.

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