

Why is the Government profiteering from my children's British citizenship rights?



I was born and bred in the west country; and I still live here. I had always assumed I was British, and my parents did too, but to my shock only discovered I was not years after the birth of my three children – all born and bred here like me.

Worse, not only did I then discover that I did not have British citizenship. None of my children, aged 11, 14 and 17, did either. Yet, having grown up all their lives in this country – just like me – they too have been excluded from the citizenship of their home country.

As a single parent, I have struggled to raise the fees – £3,036 in total – to register my children as British. Even though this is their legal right. It breaks my heart that they continue not to be fully recognised by this, their and my country. Explaining this to them was awful. I feel sick thinking about the ongoing impact of this upon them. What else will three young black men face in this country without its citizenship?

My children's exclusion by the Home Office has caused me a great deal of anxiety and also feelings of guilt and anger. Why should my children be growing up in this country, identifying as British but not recognised as its citizens?

And as my eldest is fast approaching adulthood it has raised the question – what if my children like me have to face the prospect that their children will be born here without British citizenship and they too will have to find thousands of pounds for their children to be able to be citizens of this country?

I imagine that many people who are born with British citizenship never question where their citizenship comes from or what it might mean to be without it. Well, if that is you, I can tell you that your citizenship comes from the British Nationality Act 1981.

That same Act gives me and my children the right to British citizenship for the same reasons it gives you that citizenship – because of our connection to this country. Yet the Home Office demands that my children, who belong in this country as much as anyone, must each pay £1,012 for that to be recognised – £640 more than it costs the Government to register them.

As it happens, if my parents had been married when I was born, I would have been born British – and years later all my children would have been born British too.

If my parents had realised I was not born British, they would have registered me as a British citizen during my childhood – in my case they could have done that even before my first birthday. If that had happened my children would all have been born British.

But in recent years, the Government has made the rights of many children to the citizenship of this country dependent on a huge fee.

This is a terrible injustice to children.

That is why I support the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens (PRCBC). And why I am keeping my fingers crossed that the Supreme Court, which is hearing the appeal of PRCBC and O, a child, later this week, will finally recognise – not only that these fees are scandalously high, they deprive children of their citizenship rights and cannot be allowed to continue.

Susan, 21 June 2021