

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

15 April 2009

Actors shine a light on 'illegal' immigrants

WHAT: Performance of *The Illegals*,
WHERE: Venezuelan Consulate, Bolivar Hall, London, W1T 5DL
WHEN: April 25, 5pm

The Venezuelan Consulate in London has invited Actors for Human Rights, **iceandfire** theatre's national outreach project, to perform their show *The Illegals* at the Consulate's headquarters in Central London, in collaboration with the Ecuadorian Movement in the UK. The play, performed as a rehearsed reading, comprises first-hand accounts of undocumented migrants living and working in London, many of whom are Latin American.

The subject of immigration has always been a political hot-potato, and in the lead up to the general election the issue of undocumented migrants will be high on both parties' agendas. *The Illegals* offers a rare insight into the lives of these people who, being outside any formal system, are forced to be silent.

Christine Bacon, Director of Actors for Human Rights, interviewed seven such individuals to create *The Illegals*. According to Ms Bacon:

"As actors we can give faces and voices to the unseen and the unheard. We try to redress some of the misconceptions about undocumented migrants with accurate information and personal stories.

"The stories told in *The Illegals* reveal that undocumented migrants have many and varied reasons for coming to the UK. They also reveal the hardships and exploitation many of them face while living here and the crucial contribution they make to London."

Dominga works as a cleaner in a London office building and is using a false passport. She fled from Ecuador to the UK after her political activities made her a target for the police. She applied for asylum, but was rejected.

"My hope for the future is to get my papers. Papers, papers, papers. Sincerely, my life would change. We, the illegals, are always living with fear that we will be caught. The old papers I have I will just put in the rubbish. Although they have helped me, I would love to have my own. The life of my child would be different – I could relax and work without fear."

Dominga's story is told alongside an ambitious Guatemalan actress, domestic workers from Sri Lanka and Morocco, an Ethiopian asylum seeker and a Chinese man who has worked in factories and takeaway shops across the UK. Most of the people interviewed have tried their best to comply with immigration law but have been left confused or intimidated by the Home Office process.

Groups and individuals can host a rehearsed reading of *The Illegals*, or other Actors for Human Rights shows. More info: www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr.

Notes to the editor:

iceandfire creates compelling theatre that makes real and relevant the impact of human rights issues on our everyday lives. The company was founded in 2003 by playwright Sonja Linden inspired by her seven years as writer in residence at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Over the last six years they have become a theatre company with a distinct, contemporary voice creating work of excellence across our four work strands: production, outreach, education and participation.

www.iceandfire.co.uk.

Actors for Human Rights is iceandfire's national outreach network, made up of over 300 professional actors who are dedicated to drawing public attention to a range of contemporary human rights concerns. The performers involved donate their time and their profile to encourage public acceptance of human rights and to give voice to people whose basic human rights have been violated.

www.iceandfire.co.uk/afhr