

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Lancaster District's Public Dialogue on Terrorism**

At a time when daily news reports of terrorist incidents are causing increasing fear in the public at large, a packed house listened as a panel of local people shared their views and experiences in a public dialogue, hosted jointly by NCBI (Lancashire) and The Sultan Art Gallery and Food Court on an unusually sultry September evening.

Funded by the Commission for Racial Equality the Dialogues are an opportunity to hear different perspectives and to create a safe space to debate and dialogue about contentious issues.

Perspectives were heard from Dr. Gerd Nonnemann, from the Richardson Institute at Lancaster University who gave an overview on terrorism defining it not as a concept but a "technique"; a spokesperson from Lancashire Constabulary, who spoke about the successes and challenges of community policing with regard to terrorism and a student at Lancaster University, whose Arab heritage and Dublin upbringing offered an unusual insight into some of the complexities of this topic.

A Catholic man spoke of his first-hand experience of politicisation as a young man in Northern Ireland, a Muslim man entertainingly recounted incidents that occurred during a 4 month peace walk with a group of Muslims throughout Cumbria, in response to the London bombings in July 2005 and a Muslim woman who came to Britain from Kenya over 20 years

ago to escape the violent fight for independence there, told the audience what it feels like to be a Muslim in England and her fears for her adult sons in the midst of growing racial intolerance.

Members of the audience from a diverse range of social, religious and ethnic groups were then invited to share their own views and perspectives in an open session, with many people choosing to stay on to continue discussing the issues in small, animated groups.

Through the CRE funding other District wide Dialogues will be hosted between now and March 2007 and there is an informal Diversity Drop In session open to everyone at the Sultan Gallery the first Friday of every month. NCBI also wants to take the Dialogues to community centres and schools.