

Trade unions fighting racism and the far-right

**Building solidarity
in workplaces
and communities**

Introduction

The Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TUCG) brings together an alliance of UK trade unions and co-ordinates campaigning activities in parliament and beyond.

TUCG unions are motivated by a collective desire to ensure the labour movement represents the working class in all its rich diversity; and fights to defend it. This means we are committed to campaigning against racism and challenging the proliferation of far-right ideas and activists, wherever they occur, including in our own ranks.

This booklet is just one small part of the ongoing, global struggle to combat racism and the rise of the far-right. Our

intention is to highlight aspects of this work and bring attention to diverse perspectives, personal experiences, inspiring campaigns and initiatives that have been organised.

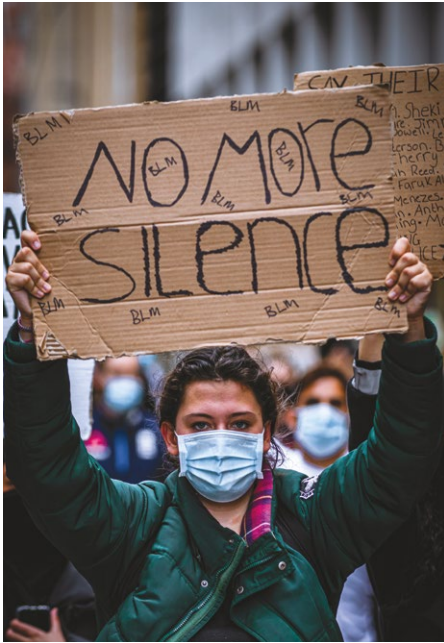
As the UK descends into an economic crisis that threatens the well-being and livelihoods of millions of working people, our opponents will attempt to use this moment as an opportunity to exploit fear, prejudice and division - and we must stop them.

Trade unions at their very core have a fundamental belief in the benefits of collective action to improve the conditions of working people - so it is vital that workers are united in a common cause against employers who



Protesters in Manchester, June 2020

Zac Hancock / Shutterstock.com



**BLM protest in Manchester,
June 2020**

may be cutting jobs, worsening terms and conditions or squeezing our pay.

As a movement we gain our strength through working together and that's why we oppose anything that threatens and undermines our collectivism or tries to exploit false divisions.

That is why trade unions are opposed to racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination that targets any group of workers. This prejudice can be based on a multiplicity of factors including nationality, skin colour, religion, class background, gender, sexuality, disability, or even where you live - and this is not an exhaustive list.

When racism and support for the far-

right grows, it impacts on trade union members, especially people of colour and religious groups including Muslims and Jews.

As trade unionists we know that racist discrimination and prejudice still influences decisions made about who gets hired, trained, promoted, retained, demoted or dismissed. It also impacts on people's experiences at work.

TUC research has shown the most prevalent form of racial harassment at work is racist remarks, including verbal abuse and racist jokes, and when employees report a racist incident they are often either ignored or identified as a "trouble-maker".

This is despite existing legislation including the 1968 Race Relations Amendment Act which outlaws racial discrimination in employment.

The 1999 Macpherson Report defined institutional racism as: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

People of colour are discriminated against at work and in society. Contemporary racism and this unfair treatment is deeply rooted in history and linked to notions of white supremacy. These same ideas have been used to justify colonialism, imperialism and slavery.

There can be no doubt that racism

and xenophobia are still a problem today. One of the latest examples includes the sharp rise in attacks directed at south and east Asian communities in the UK. The far-right and racists have targeted this community and are blaming innocent people for the coronavirus. Prior to the lockdown, Muslims, migrants and refugees have often been targeted in recent years.

Historically when the far-right have taken power they have targeted many different communities. Alongside fascism's record of anti-semitism and concentration camps, it is also worth remembering that some of the first victims of Nazi Germany were their political opponents including trade unionists, socialists, communists and social democrats.

Far-right racial myths vilify Jewish people and other religious groups; they persecute those they consider to be racially inferior, including black people and Roma, gypsy and traveller communities.

The far-right also has a track record of targeting disabled and LGBT people and they have promoted and enforced women's confinement to the home with complete subservience to men.

As the TUCG we want to be clear about where we stand. Since its formation the working class has always been multi-racial and multi-ethnic and we view racism as an oppressive regime that seeks to divide us - and it must be challenged.

With the election of Boris Johnson in Britain to Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, things



heardinlondon / Shutterstock.com

London solidarity protest in response to the killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, July 2016


look bleak, and we know we have some big challenges ahead.

The death of George Floyd has galvanised people across the world to fight against racism and injustice. Let us not forget the older generation of our trade union colleagues committed to the fight to defeat apartheid in South Africa, and our political ancestors before that fought off the fascists in London's Cable Street.












European history indicates that the appeasement of racists and the far-right will only help to embolden them, and our side is most effective when we work together.

The TUCG is committed to this critical work and we hope that you will join us.

Contents



**Click on the
links to jump
to the pages**

	TUC	8
	Winning workplace unity and standing up against racism	
	PCS	12
	The coronavirus, black communities and Black Lives Matter	
	FBU	16
	The firefighting family is international, our class is international and our struggle is international	
	POA	20
	The march of the far-right in the penal system	
	BAFWU	24
	There is no place in our organisations or society for the far-right	
	RMT	28
	Unity is strength	
	NEU	32
	The murder of Blair Peach, a teacher who died fighting racism	
	Equity	36
	Normalising racism: fighting the culture of racist reviews	
	Napo	40
	Racism in sport: why we need to stand together	
	UR TU	44
	The refugee crisis of Europe	
	UCU	46
	Fighting the far-right – campaigning and modelling best practice	
	NUJ	50
	50 years of NUJ activity against racism	

Winning workplace unity and standing up against racism



Changing the world
of work for good

The Trades Union Congress is a federation of trade unions in England and Wales (TUC)

WILF SULLIVAN is the TUC's Race Equality Officer

The defeat of the Labour Party by Derek Beackon in a local by-election in Tower Hamlets in September 1993 sent shockwaves through the labour movement. Beackon, an unemployed lorry driver, managed to secure the seat in Millwall by seven votes and his victory signalled the first time that the British National Party (BNP) had managed to win a council seat.

For the first time since the 1930s, when the National Council of Labour was formed in response to the rise in fascism at home and abroad, the trade union movement felt it needed to act. The TUC organised a 40,000-strong demonstration against the BNP in Tower Hamlets. This was followed by a march and concert attended by 150,000 and organised by the Anti-Nazi League in May 1994. Beackon subsequently lost his seat to Labour in the local council elections, although he still managed to secure 28% of the vote.

Beackon's victory was, in part, not only due to the BNP's divide-and-rule tactics but also because of the strategic use of racism by the local Liberal Democrat candidate, who distributed pamphlets intimating that the Labour council had done favours for the local Asian community.

Whilst the TUC's response played an important role in ensuring that Beackon was voted out, it established a problematic approach to the way that trade unions came to view anti-fascism.

Campaigning against racism and fascism

The threat of far-right populist politics had traditionally been perceived as

coming from fascist fringe groups. In the 1930s until the 1960s this had been personified by the British Union of Fascists led by Oswald Mosley. Its demise led to a plethora of other groups, such as the National Front, British Movement and the British National Party (BNP). Beacon's 1993 Millwall by-election success heavily associated racism with far-right fascist groups.

White supremacy came to be identified with fascism by the trade union movement – so much so that to be anti-racist became synonymous with being anti-fascist and, in many ways, both became depoliticised. The association led to three main problems. First, anti-fascism became a black people's problem and fighting the fascists became reduced to a battle against racism for many trade unionists. This depoliticised the anti-fascist struggle and depicted it as a fight against the extreme right-wing fringe. The growth of authoritarian, populist and libertarian politics advanced by neo-liberalism and the threat it posed to the organised working class were largely ignored. This brand of politics, especially in relation to the issues of asylum and migration, was accommodated by mainstream politics. It advanced a new kind of nationalism, especially in the wake of 9/11, that became the bridgehead for populist far-right politics to gain ground in Europe in the early 2000s and subsequently in other parts of the world.

Second, the fight against racism was reduced to a fight against far-right groups, and racism became reduced to a battle against white supremacists

rather than a fight against exploitation and systemic discrimination. This meant the wider set of reactionary, authoritarian, economic and nationalist ideas being directed at workers by the far-right movement was not addressed or it was ignored. It also resulted in trade unions failing to address the many problems that black workers faced in the workplace.

Third, much of the trade union movement's anti-fascist activity was externalised to anti-racism and anti-fascism campaign groups, resulting in the politics of fascism not being discussed in the workplace. This lack of discussion has been exacerbated by the fact that a lot of trade union activity in workplaces has become reactive rather than proactive. This has made it harder to engage trade union members in anti-fascist campaigning, because many believe that it has nothing to do with them.

These problems have resulted in the failure of the trade union and anti-fascist movements to mobilise workers in response to the right-wing international networks' incursions into mainstream politics, typified by the election of Donald Trump, Viktor Oban, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Boris Johnson.

Winning workplace unity

The lack of a political narrative in the trade union movement has left many workers susceptible to this modern brand of nationalist and far-right politics. The ideology of "us and them" claimed by the far-right rejects class politics and replaces it with a horizontal division. Claiming to be the voice of workers, they rail against the ruling class – not because

of its exploitation of workers but because of its supposed liberal favouritism towards a vaguely defined other, such as migrants or asylum seekers.

To counter this the TUC realised it would have to change its strategy in combating the far-right. The previous approach had been built on challenging the National Front and British National Party incursions into electoral politics on the basis that they were fascist parties. The weakness of this was evident with the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Many trade unions were initially reluctant to campaign against UKIP on the basis that it was a legitimate party and because it did not make race a central part of its campaigning – there was a failure to identify the nationalist and libertarian aspects of its politics as a threat. It was only when UKIP deployed anti-migrant rhetoric as a major part of its propaganda that some unions realised the risks. However, by then it was too late. UKIP had managed to insert the dog-whistle of race in the form of anti-migrant sentiment firmly into the heart of the debate about Brexit.

The now revised TUC strategy is based firmly on the need for workplace organising, political education and international solidarity. To achieve this, the TUC has identified three important objectives. First, to build regional networks of workplace activists with the confidence to challenge far-right politics in workplaces and in the community. Second, to develop and deliver political and organising educational materials for those in the regional networks, but which can also be used in workplaces. Finally, to develop international links



UN anti-racism day protest in London, July 2016

and create a framework in which workplace activists engage with their colleagues and employers on this agenda across international borders.

To date the TUC has developed a trade union education course called “Winning Workplace Unity” that has been delivered in four regions. Plans are in place to build regional activist networks that will be brought together in a series of online events to discuss ways to successfully organise against right-wing politics. The TUC is also developing a project with our German colleagues at the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) to bring union reps together, initially from one or two companies that operate in the UK and Germany.

The objective will be to work with union reps to develop an action plan that can politically educate the workers and counter right-wing workplace narratives at company sites.

There are no quick fixes to turn back the tide. The far-right has been organising for decades and has built a highly sophisticated international network using online strategies, think tanks and entryism into mainstream political parties. They can be defeated, but only if we are prepared to engage in the battle of ideas – to show that by building solidarity and fighting exploitation, not just nationally but internationally, we can build a better world.

The coronavirus, black communities and Black Lives Matter



The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

ZITA HOLBOURNE is the National Vice President of PCS
MOHAMMED SHAFIQ is the Chair of the PCS National
Black Members Committee

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) is extremely proud of its diverse membership and we have been at the forefront of campaigns against racism and fascism.

The coronavirus health pandemic and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests have exposed grotesque levels of racism and inequality.

Before all the government reports and statistics were released, those of us who are black knew we were disproportionately dying from and contracting coronavirus. All around us members of our community were dying. For some, it was the painful experience of losing someone close, and most of us have experienced someone we know who has died.

There have now been reports published by the Office for National Statistics and Public Health England that reveal black people are more than four times more likely than white people of the same age to die from coronavirus. We are most at risk due to socio-economic issues, including discrimination, injustice and poverty. We are more likely to be employed in precarious jobs and be on the front line as key workers without adequate protection or safety, including personal protective equipment (PPE).

This is a problem that everyone at PCS has been acutely aware of when it comes to the impact on cleaners, security guards and catering staff, who are, again, disproportionately black, women and migrants. Outsourced workers have played a pivotal role in keeping the country going during the



Zita Holbourne



Mohammed Shafiq

pandemic but their pay and terms and conditions do not fairly reflect this.

There has been much said about black workers dying because of health conditions – this is a negative narrative which seeks to blame black people for dying and which stereotypes black people as being the problem. Many of the health conditions black people may experience are linked to historical discrimination and injustice over decades and can be further compounded by barriers to accessing health services.

We have just gone through a decade

PCS

PCS



PCS members at the People's Assembly demonstration in London, July 2016

of austerity and cuts that have impacted disproportionately on black workers, service users and communities. In 2010 we founded Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC) UK and never imagined that, after a decade of fighting relentless cuts, discrimination and injustice, we would be marking its 10th anniversary.

During the coronavirus pandemic, we saw yet another black man murdered by the police in the USA, played out on screens around the world. For many of our community watching, this was triggering and not everyone was able to watch the hugely traumatising video. The death of George Floyd saw black and white communities take to the streets to express their anger, in the USA initially, and then globally.

The BLM protests have also meant

that the legacies of colonialism and enslavements are being debated again. This includes the symbols of those legacies in the form of statues, place names and more, which glorify the abuse, torture and murder of our ancestors.

Here in the UK, we have heard some ask why people here are demonstrating after the death of George Floyd. Those who ask this question fail to recognise the many deaths at the hands of the state and other racist murders here in the UK that have angered the black community.

PCS has a proud history of supporting family justice campaigns by offering practical and moral support. These include Stephen Lawrence, Jay Abatan, Mark Duggan, Sean Rigg and Sarah Reed, among others.

The backdrop to all of this is decades of institutional and systemic racism. Black communities are now living in an environment that is seeing the rise of the far-right, as well as continued everyday racism, micro-aggressions, discrimination in the labour market including recruitment, appraisal, promotion and progression and also in education and public service provision.

We cannot forget the unjust, inhumane and horrendous treatment of the Windrush generation and their descendants. Disgracefully, that injustice continues; the vast majority of those affected have not been compensated for having their lives torn apart, with some made destitute or homeless and others who have died with no compensation and no justice.

This is why black people, especially the young, are angry and have taken to the streets. The truth is our children's generation should not have to go out and fight racism when we have spent a lifetime doing this already – as did our parents before us, many of whom arrived on British shores from the Caribbean, Asian and African continents and were greeted by disgusting racist chants and signs.

Institutions and businesses are now declaring in mission statements and messages to customers that black lives matter, but words are empty if they are not followed up by actions that eradicate racism.

We have called on our employers to overhaul discriminatory HR policies and to acknowledge and address the legacies of slavery and colonialism that allow institutional racism to thrive.

Some believe the time we are in is a turning point for race relations, but it can only be one if we are all accountable and we all take action. This involves supporting young people who are campaigning for change. Trade unions and the labour movement must also address barriers, discrimination and under-representation in our own movement, and ensure that we put the pressure needed on employers, institutions and the government.

White people are needed as allies to support and bring solidarity to the struggle, but they must not control or lead the discourse on what happens and how it happens. Our movement must recognise that black people are going through pain and trauma right now and their voices must be heard first and foremost.

While black people must be allowed to lead our movements against racism, there is much our white comrades can do to support us. When racism is witnessed it needs to be called out – the person on the receiving end should not have that battle alone. White comrades can and should speak out. Silence in the face of racism and fascism empowers and emboldens those with abhorrent views.

Black lives matter not just when one of us dies because of a racist attack – black lives matter every day. Declaring that you are anti-racist is not enough; you must support race equality and give practical, not just symbolic, solidarity.

We use the term black in the political sense to encompass those who are from the African and Asian diasporas.

**The firefighting
family is
international,
our class is
international
and our struggle
is international**



The Fire Brigades Union (FBU)

RICCARDO LA TORRE is the Eastern
Regional Secretary of the FBU

It is said by firefighters across the world that the “firefighting family” is international and it is this sentiment that we in the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) strive to carry with us in our internationalist work. As workers and as trade unionists we have an understanding that our class, and therefore our struggle, crosses all borders. This is the foundation on which we organise our activity and purpose in opposing the divisive message of the far-right in our workplaces and beyond.

The day job of FBU members, firefighters and control staff, is a humanitarian one. When we consider this humanitarian role alongside the internationalist values of the FBU and our role as rescuers, it has naturally put the migrant crisis and the lives being lost in the Mediterranean Sea into sharp focus – in particular, the need to combat attempts by the far-right to use the crisis to build their activity and propaganda.

The far-right in Italy and across Europe scapegoat the women, men and children who are dying at sea and try to block their rescue. They use the same divisive arguments we have seen throughout history – racist arguments focusing on unemployment, failing services and culture; arguments that trade unionists already know to be false.



Jess Hurd

FBU members solidarity protest outside the Italian Embassy in London, May 2019

We are all too familiar with the true causes and culprits in our struggles in our unions and workplaces – neo-liberal economic policies and the bosses and politicians who deliver them.

So who do we have more in common with? The bosses and their right-wing nationalist servants trying to deflect from the real cause of our exploitation as workers, or the working people dying in the Med and those persecuted for



FBU solidarity trip to refugee camps in northern France, December 2019

trying to help them? The answer to this question was made much clearer to FBU members by the stories of two fellow firefighters – Brendan Woodhouse and Miguel Roldan – and it is the experiences of these two rescuers that have helped us to continue our anti-racist, anti-far-right and anti-fascist activity in the FBU.

Brendan is a firefighter and FBU member from Nottinghamshire who regularly uses his holiday leave to help with migrant rescue operations in the Mediterranean, in often dangerous conditions, with a group called Sea Watch. On 19 January 2019 the group rescued 47 people but were held

off the coast because they had their request to land in an Italian port denied. The Italian government at the time indicated it would take legal action against the charity workers for “aiding illegal immigration”. After 10 days the authorities allowed the crew to dock following widespread condemnation, including an intervention from the FBU’s general secretary, Matt Wrack.

Miguel, a firefighter from Seville, wasn’t so lucky. His crew on the rescue boat Luventa are still under investigation at the time of this article and face up to 20 years in prison for the crime of saving

lives. FBU members related to these situations immediately. A rescue worker, like them, is being persecuted for saving other working people, like them, and it was clear throughout with whom the far-right groups were aligning.

The union organised several responses. First, we arranged a protest in support of Miguel, which saw hundreds of firefighters gather outside the Italian embassy in London. Banners, placards and speeches sent a clear message to the then Italian minister and far-right politician, Matteo Salvini: “Saving lives isn’t a crime. Saving lives has no borders.” The demonstration succeeded in raising awareness of the cause, not just for the plight of Miguel but also that of the migrants he rescues. FBU members were pleased to see the protest covered in both local and Italian press.

Building on this, as more members heard Miguel’s story and engaged with the campaign, we invited Miguel to the FBU national conference in Blackpool, where he addressed hundreds of firefighters and control staff. He used the opportunity to focus on the stories of the people he rescued and the cause of those trying to reach Europe. Miguel received several standing ovations from conference and his speech was followed by a fringe meeting where both Miguel and Brendan spoke of their experiences, as did a speaker from Care4Calais, a charity working with refugees in northern France.

It was these events that perhaps led to the biggest advance in our anti-racist and internationalist activities. Inspired by all three speakers and

understanding that solidarity, class-consciousness and education are central to tackling the hatred promoted by the far-right, the FBU launched its first solidarity and education trip to refugee camps in Calais and Dunkirk. Eleven firefighters from across the UK drove a fire engine full of supplies to the Care4Calais warehouse in northern France. FBU members took the much-needed supplies directly to the camps and socialised, ate, danced and played sports with the women, men and children there. Most importantly, we heard their stories about their struggles.

Assisted by education sessions and briefings before, during and after the trip focused on the stories of working people in these camps, the truth about the causes underpinning the migrant crisis and who is really responsible for our struggle, FBU members will now carry this knowledge back to workplaces and begin the grass-roots discussions needed to pull apart the divisive messages of the far-right that are attempting to distract workers from fighting the true causes of low pay, cuts and austerity.

Our aim is to arm FBU members with the facts, experiences and tools at every fire station and control room in the UK. Following the success of that first trip, the FBU executive council has agreed to continue and expand the project and further spread the message throughout our movement – and more widely – that no human is illegal and solidarity should never have borders.

The firefighting family is international. Our class is international. Our struggle is international.

The march of the far-right in the penal system



The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional
and Secure Psychiatric Workers (POA)

COLIN MOSES is the former National Chair and an
Honorary Life Member of the POA

The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional and Secure Psychiatric Workers (POA) is the largest UK union in penal establishments, representing uniformed prison staff and those working in secure psychiatric care. However, it has not always been viewed by many in the labour movement as a “proper” trade union, more as a staff association.

The POA is a union that has come under attack and been undermined by far-right groups that have infiltrated its membership.

I joined the Prison Service in 1986, at a time when the right-wing views of many staff went unchallenged by management. There were those who openly flaunted National Front badges and voiced support for racist views.

As a man of colour entering this world, I was welcomed by the majority of staff but there was a hardcore element who viewed me with suspicion and



Colin Moses

racist bigotry. In the 1980s there were not many BAME staff and in the majority of prisons there was none. Senior management was a sea of white faces.

At the same time the prison population was growing and this was highlighted by more and more black and Asian men and women receiving custodial sentences. In the 1980s through to the 1990s the POA had no BAME members on its national executive.

Prisons have always been able to foster extreme views among inmates, whether it be the National Front, British National Party or other neo-nazi groups. These groups can flourish inside prisons if they are not strongly challenged by senior management.

Prison officers should be the guardians of both the security and safety of those put in their charge. For them to hold extreme right-wing views is a massive danger to the stability of our prisons.



Steve Gillan



Prison officers should be the guardians of security and safety

The POA in the early 1990s challenged racist views and behaviour in the Prison Service. In 1993 the union expelled from its membership a leading neo-nazi who had been allowed by senior management to promote his extreme views. In response the POA leadership came under attack by certain elements of the membership and the union's executive determined it would set up a race relations advisory committee consisting of BAME members of staff.

In 1996 I was elected to the national executive committee of the union – the first BAME member to be elected to such a post.

Through the late 1990s we saw a series of deaths in custody of black inmates while they were restrained by staff and this led to a total overhaul of restraining hazards. The next ground-breaking moment came with

the publication of the Macpherson Report, published in 1999 following the public inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. The report found there was institutional racism in the Metropolitan Police Service and this sent shock waves through the Prison Service's senior management. Many of the professional issues and competencies in the report on the Met could be mirrored in the Prison Service.

In 2006 there was another momentous public inquiry, this time focused on prisons. The focus of the inquiry was the racist murder of Zahid Mubarek, an Asian teenage inmate at Feltham Young Offenders Institution in west London who was killed by his racist cellmate Robert Stewart. The published report highlighted the danger posed by far-right extremists such as Stewart.



POA members protest in London, March 2019

Today our prisons are breeding grounds for extremists, and while the media will often highlight Muslim extremists, the spotlight should also be turned towards far-right recruitment.

The Lammy Review, chaired by David Lammy MP, focused on the criminal justice system and called for a series of reforms after finding overt discrimination and bias against BAME people in the system. The report highlighted the disproportionate numbers by stating: “Despite making up just 14% of the population, BAME men and women make up 25% of prisoners.”

As of January 2020, employment statistics for the Prison Service show that 93.1% of prison officers in England and Wales are white, 6.9% are Asian, black and mixed race, and from 2015 to 2019 BAME staff in the service increased from 2.3% to 3.1%.

No one can accurately say how many prison staff belong to far-right groups. What can be identified, with the arrival and growth of social media, is that more and more are expressing hard-right views on different platforms.

I was elected as national chair of the POA in August 2002 and served in that position until May 2011. I am to date the only BAME member ever to be elected to lead the POA.

The current POA general secretary, Steve Gillan, and the present national chair, Mark Fairhurst, have given their support to Black Lives Matter, but their statements have been greeted by personal attacks on social media by those who claim to be members or former members of the POA.

The battle against the far-right in our penal system goes on and must be won.

There is no place in our organisations or society for the far-right



The Bakers and Allied Food Workers Union (BFAWU)

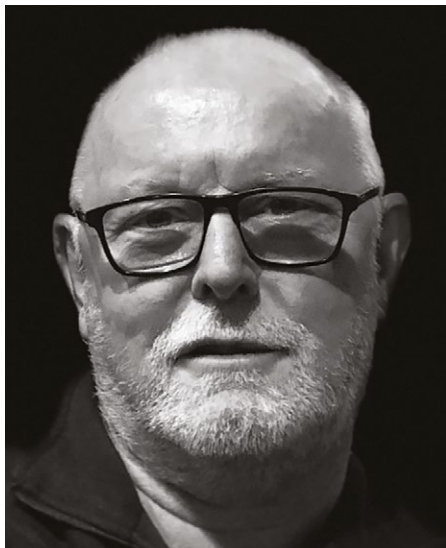
RONNIE DRAPER is the former General Secretary of BFAWU

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) has a proud tradition of fighting the rise of the far-right; whether that's speaking at public events, mobilising demonstrators or financially supporting campaigns to prevent this dangerous tide from taking hold within society. When the far-right became an internal issue for our union, the problem was magnified.

More than a decade ago we were faced with such a problem on the eve of our annual conference in Bridlington. Like many trade unions, the BFAWU use part of the annual conference to present awards to individuals who have achieved over and above what would normally be expected of an activist. That particular year was no different – we were to present an organising award to a young woman who had done a fantastic job of recruiting many members in the East Midlands. Our executive and national officers were going to make a big thing of this brilliant success – until the bomb dropped.

The then general secretary and myself were approached by two of our full-time officials, one Asian and the other from the West Indies, who complained that they had been having a drink with the award recipient when she had confessed that she was a member of the British National Party (BNP). The atmosphere became toxic and anger threatened to boil over if we did not act quickly.

Despite the time of night, we called our national executive members together to consider the options. The initial decision was to withdraw the award and



Ronnie Draper

confiscate her delegate pass to prevent her from attending the rest of the conference. She was told of the decision and after a heated tirade of expletives she left the town, taking another two of her branch members with her.

After further consideration, the executive decided to revoke her membership because it was in direct breach of our rules, but before this action was taken, she told us she was resigning. Job done, we thought, but that was just the start of the problem.

A few weeks later we were told she had lodged a complaint at an employment tribunal, citing the union as having unfairly expelled her and that we were preventing her from supporting members of the branch. At the time this was standard practice for the BNP, as they would infiltrate a trade union, get expelled and then try to win a few

pounds for their fighting fund.

The question of whether to defend the claim was never in doubt and we instructed Thompsons Solicitors to engage a barrister to take this BNP member on to the best of our abilities.

Meanwhile, this young woman tried to lead all the members of the branch out of the BFAWU and into another union and, by doing so, she again breached our rules. However, she totally underestimated the strong links between the GMB, Unite the union and us. Both unions contacted our head office to tell us what she was trying to do.

On the day of the tribunal we expected it was going to be a difficult case to win, although the principle of

defending our union's policy of fighting the far-right was worth the cost. The day started off badly when we discovered our own branch secretary was to give evidence on behalf of the BNP member, despite being a member of the Pakistani community. As it turned out, he was the best witness we could have called, giving what turned out to be disastrous answers to the most skilful barrister I have ever entered court with.

We were daring to dream that we could, against all the odds, defeat the BNP in a courtroom. We wanted to lay down a marker for other trade unions to use as an example and we also wanted to send out a very strong message to our own branches that we would not tolerate

istockphoto.com



Justice was delivered in the BFAWU case



The far-right are a problem for all of us

any BNP infiltration into our ranks.

The final and mortal wound to the BNP case was when a colleague, now a very senior officer in the GMB, gave invaluable evidence that he had been approached by our ex-member attempting to transfer an entire workforce into the GMB after already being refused by Unite. This meant that we could demonstrate, irrespective of the reasons for expulsion argued by the BNP member's legal representative, that this individual had flagrantly breached a number of BFAWU rules and threatened the very constitution of our union.

After much deliberation and nervous waiting, the unanimous decision of the tribunal panel was that our union had acted reasonably, and the tribunal found in our favour – to the utter dismay of our ex-member and those supporting the

discredited and racist BNP.

I have witnessed many great victories for both my own union and the wider trade union and labour movement, but this success will always have a special place in my memory. The insults, the intimidation, the sleepless nights had all been worth it just to see the look on the faces of the vanquished – and, if I remember correctly, the beer tasted better that night.

Whatever guise the far-right adopt, whether it be the BNP, National Front or Britain First or the English Defence League or others, the BFAWU is committed to standing shoulder to shoulder with our comrades in the rest of the trade union movement in shouting loud and clear that there is no place in our organisations or society for the far-right.

Unity is strength



The National Union of Rail, Maritime and
Transport Workers (RMT)

The RMT pamphlet “Unity in Diversity” highlights the struggles waged by BAME workers, both against the bosses and in the union and trade union movement. Written by SI Martin, who specialises in black history and literature, it observes that: “The earliest connections between British organised labour and workers of colour were forged during the 18th century during the movement for the abolition of the slave trade” and goes on to give an insight into those struggles, including how the working class elements of the Chartist movement were maligned by government and the press for having black and Irish workers as leaders, and how, as well as fighting side by side against injustices, there were instances of trade unions supporting discrimination and even being complicit in injustices.

These experiences were not unique to RMT and led to the establishment of BAME structures within unions. “Unity in Diversity” was published to commemorate the establishment of the RMT’s black and ethnic minority members’ advisory committee more than 25 years ago.

There is not enough space to do justice to the work of that committee, but it has gone from strength to strength and continues to grow. From the outset, it campaigned against the progression of far-right politics. At the first conference in 1994, against the backdrop of Tower Hamlets electing a BNP councillor, members urged the union to campaign against the BNP and to change the rules of the union to prevent proponents of racist views from joining.

The committee has led the way in the struggle against institutional racism, including public campaigns highlighting deaths in police custody (supporting INQUEST and the United Friends and Family Campaign) and the disproportionate conviction rates of black youths (supporting Joint Enterprise: Not Guilty by Association – JENGBA). More than 700 prisoners have been convicted using the joint enterprise law that has been determined by the Supreme Court as wrongly interpreted for 30 years.

Solidarity has also been offered to grass-roots groups, including Stop Our Kids Being Killed On Our Streets and the 4Front Project. Joint meetings with representatives from all these groups and the RMT’s black and ethnic minority members’ advisory committee have discussed the ways we can work together to provide support. The committee has led the way in pushing for reparations for atrocities committed during trans-Atlantic enslavement, which includes yearly conferences and events at the TUC.

The Windrush scandal and the propelling of the Black Lives Matter campaign to a mass global movement for change in response to the brutal murder of George Floyd has resulted in an increased awareness of arguments for reparations and the need to rectify historical injustices. However, the many injustices of today, including continuing police brutality and the failure to take meaningful action to address the disproportionate rate of covid-19 deaths among BAME frontline workers, including transport key workers and communities,



must also be addressed. Along with many trade unions, RMT has issued a statement in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Mick Cash, RMT general secretary, and RMT president, Michelle Rodgers, said: “George Floyd’s death is an indictment of entrenched racism within state forces. Racism has always and continues to inflict injustices on the black communities, not only in the US but also globally and in the UK. Now is not the time for silence – we must shout our anger in the call for justice. The state must not be a tool for the expression of racism and hatred. As trade unionists we stand united against state racism. No to silence, no to police brutality. Justice for all. Unity is strength.”

Glen Hart, chair of the RMT’s black and ethnic minority advisory committee, said: “RMT union sends solidarity to all people fighting for justice at home

and abroad. The brutal police murder by asphyxiation of unarmed black man George Floyd has rightly sent shock waves of revulsion around the world – with rallying cries of ‘I Can’t Breathe’ and ‘Black Lives Matter’ showing there needs to be a complete overhaul in tackling endemic racism and oppression in society.

“An injustice here has seen transport worker Belly Mujinga’s family failed when the police authorities decided to close the criminal investigation into her case after a spitting offence may have led to her coronavirus-related death.

“All of us in RMT send our deepest condolences to both sets of families and everyone who has suffered a consequential loss through either the inaction or injustices meted out by police authorities.

“The politicians have failed us all. While we continue to resist a global

pandemic, right-wing governments and their leaders continue their hostilities towards workers and their families.

“The fight for social justice is central to our demands. RMT union has a proud history of standing up against systemic racism and prejudices when protecting all workers.

“We will not allow racial injustice to segregate our battle. We say ‘Black Lives Matter’ because, while it should be stating the obvious, it patently isn’t. Without justice, there can be no peace.”

The far-right response

On the streets of London recently we saw the far-right mobilising, rioting and seeking to confront the Black Lives Matter movement. This is the same far-right which, under different guises, has in recent years stepped up its activity, from outright terrorism to street violence and political activity, including involvement in UKIP and the Tory party. That renewed brutality was all too evident in 2018 when RMT activists and officials were attacked by fascists after attending a counter-protest against the far-right and the founder of the English Defence League (EDL), Tommy Robinson. RMT members and supporters were injured when they were forced to defend themselves and vulnerable anti-fascist protestors.

Despite this attack, RMT, as part of the wider trade union movement, has a renewed determination to support anti-fascist mobilisations and defend our communities from the fascist threat.

Again, in January 2019, far-right protesters abused an RMT picket line in Manchester and shouted vile racist

abuse. They wore yellow vests in an attempt to hijack the French “gilets jaunes” movement and some were wearing EDL, Tommy Robinson and Democratic Football Lads merchandise. There was a magnificent response from the trade union and anti-fascist movement, with solidarity protests the following weekends in support of RMT members.

RMT has continued to support anti-fascist organisations such as Trade Union Friends of Searchlight and Stand up to Racism and we believe there needs to be maximum possible unity between all the anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations.

RMT has also been seeking to assist the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TUCG) in developing a trade union response to the far-right. Key to this is education, and the union has already developed anti-fascism training, with the TUC’s Wilf Sullivan and former MP Laura Pidcock making fantastic contributions.

As part of developing the trade union response, Glen Hart at the 2019 TUC Congress called for a trade union conference to help shape our collective strategy, and this pamphlet is an important contribution to current and future trade union activity.

Fascists and racists are the opposite of everything we stand for.

As organised labour we have a responsibility – and are in a unique position in our workplaces and communities – to be part of and amplify the fight for equality and justice for all, regardless of race, gender, faith or sexuality.

Unity is strength.

The murder of Blair Peach, a teacher who died fighting racism



The National Education Union (NEU)

KIRI TUNKS is a National Officer for the NEU

In 1979, special needs teacher Blair Peach was killed by six members of the Metropolitan Police as he attended an anti-racist march against the National Front.

Blair was a Tower Hamlets National Union of Teachers (NUT) officer and an activist whose commitment to equality and justice had brought him across London to march in solidarity with the community of Southall against the rising racism and fascism of the times.

His murder still casts a shadow 40 years later. His killers have never been brought to justice. Tragically, almost 14 years to the day of Blair Peach's death, Stephen Lawrence was murdered by racist thugs at a bus stop. There has, eventually, been some justice there. Sadly, these killings are just two of many caused by the cancer of racism.

Blair Peach is a role model and inspiration for members of the National Education Union (NEU). We take pride in the fact that our union, and our predecessor unions the NUT and the ATL, have long taken up the cause of anti-racism in a proactive and public way.

We understand racism is an evil which must be challenged at every turn; we know it blights the lives of many of our members and the young people we teach. We want to live in a society that values and respects all its members.

Racism is growing, with an increase in anti-migrant, anti-semitic and Islamophobic attacks. We have seen the rise of racism in the politics of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and fringe political movements. We have also seen it in the mainstream, in Labour's mugs branded with an anti-immigrant

slogan a few years ago, in the conscious decision of Theresa May, both as home secretary and prime minister, to create a hostile environment for migrants and refugees and in Boris Johnson's comments about letter boxes and bank robbers.

Many of our political leaders have normalised and legitimised racism, so it falls to us to put things straight. This is important work that must be done in a holistic way and it is work the NEU takes very seriously.

We have an annual award in Blair Peach's name which recognises work done by our members in promoting equalities work in schools and colleges. This award can be won for any equalities work, recognising that, although Blair died fighting racism, he was a committed equalities campaigner.

As a union, we believe our members have a vital role to play in developing a broad, rich, global curriculum. As a union, we are campaigning for a school system that centres on the needs of our young people. We know the current system is too narrow and too constrained, top-heavy with tests and under-resourced in people, funding and time. The introduction of zero-tolerance behaviour systems often fails to take into account different cultural practices or enforces a set of Eurocentric values relating to appearance and language.

Despite that, our members are striving to make space for teaching and learning that celebrates the glorious diversity of our communities and our collective history. We support the celebration of black history month, but it must be more than a one-off assembly

about Nelson Mandela or Rosa Parks, heroes though they are. Black history is everyone's history and we sell ourselves and our children short if we don't make it part of our core curriculum.

NEU activists are working on initiatives to "decolonise" the curriculum and workshops on black history and culture are a regular feature of union conferences around the country. We have guidance and member-created teaching resources about refugees and migrants on the NEU website.

But it's not just the curriculum that must be challenged. Like society in general, the school system too often discriminates against children from black or minority ethnic communities, who are disproportionately disciplined, marginalised and excluded. The NEU

is working with No More Exclusions, a lay-led initiative set up to challenge the growing number of children who are excluded or "off-rolled" – a recent report puts the figure as high as one in 10 pupils.

It's not just students who face discrimination. Research shows that education staff from black and minority ethnic communities are generally lower paid, less likely to be hired or promoted, and more likely to be singled out for capability procedures or redundancy. On top of that, they report routine micro-aggressions that alienate and discriminate against them. The percentage of BME students in the UK is 28%; the percentage of BME teachers is 16%. These are serious questions for any trade union to address and we are working to identify these trends where

NEU



Stand up to racism demonstration in London, March 2019



Let's wipe out racism in schools

they happen and to tackle them as a collective.

This is why the NEU is developing an anti-racist workplace charter which models good practices and behaviours for schools relating to the curriculum, pastoral systems and employment practices. Schools that are serious about challenging the rising racism in our society must be prepared to tackle it in their own institutions.

A union that is making demands of employers must be prepared to ask the same hard questions of its own organisation. The NEU has taken some steps but we know that there is further to go. We have a reserved seat on our executive which represents members registered as BME. We organise an annual residential black educators conference, which was started 26 years ago by the NUT. We have a black educators organising forum, made up of regional reps whose purpose

is to increase the engagement and involvement of our black members.

Because we understand we are one small pond in a bigger sea, we absolutely prioritise the work of fighting racism in wider society. Our members are actively involved in every region in events and initiatives that challenge bigotry and hate. This may be part of an organised Stand up to Racism event, it may be canvassing against racist parties in elections, it may be supporting campaigns by Hope Not Hate. We have also taken the decision to establish a political fund which enables us to spend money campaigning against racism and fascism during elections.

Like our brother Blair Peach, we understand educators have a vital role in standing up against what is wrong and in putting things right. Racism and fascism must be fought in society, but it must be fought in our workplaces and our unions too.

Normalising racism: fighting the culture of racist reviews



Equity is the UK trade union for creative practitioners

IAN MANBORDE is Equity's Equality
and Diversity Organiser

At the time of writing this article it is with great sadness that Equity has learnt of the passing away of long-standing member Earl Cameron. In recognition of his pioneering role as the UK's first black film star, Earl was awarded life membership of Equity.

In an interview with The Guardian in 2017, Earl acknowledged a key struggle in building his career: "Unless it was specified that this was a part for a black actor, they would never consider a black actor for the part. And they would never consider changing a white part to a black part. So that was my problem. I got mostly small parts, and that was extremely frustrating – not just for me but for other black actors. We had a very hard time getting worthwhile roles."

Tragically, this situation remains across the UK entertainment industry as a key barrier to black and minority ethnic



Maureen Beattie

(BME) members having the opportunity to build and maintain viable careers. The prevailing, chronic bias is reflected in recent research conducted by Equity that showed the shockingly low levels of diverse representation and portrayal across mainstream TV.

The UK's entertainment industry reflects one where historic struggles remain, and this is reflected in the union's agenda of fighting systemic racism and oppression.

The discrimination experienced by the union's BME membership manifests itself in a myriad of ways. As evidenced by Equity's own research, and reflected in Earl's quote, it can be that BME members are only considered for casting in a limited number of stereotypical roles – for example, as criminals, cleaners, bus drivers or dancers.

Along this wide, complex spectrum sits another form of racism, and one which is just as damaging and virulent



Emmanuel Kojo



Equity launches new campaign against racist critics

– the racist review. While the body of theatre, film and TV critics include many who are able to comment constructively and thoughtfully on the cultural and artistic integrity of a production, there are those who are openly hostile to the appearance of BME members in roles they are deemed not to fit.

As Equity embarks on a national campaign against racist reviews, it is valuable to quote the union’s president, Maureen Beattie, to underline how grave a matter we face and how seriously the union takes this work: “You can argue all you like about a simple lack of imagination. It’s true that watching and listening to drama in theatre, or on film, or television or radio, requires a leap of faith: the famous ‘suspension of disbelief’. But this is much more serious than a lack of imagination. In my view this is racism –

pure and simple. Sometimes unconscious, but sometimes not.”

In a wide political sense, the entertainment industry, at its best, can challenge the prevailing consensus and at the very least establish fairness in the way that contemporary and historical society is portrayed across its various mediums.

Equity applauds the bold decisions often made in the industry to push the boundaries of tradition and provide BME actors and performers with access to non-traditional roles. What the union cannot and will not accept is the racist, belligerent cohort of critics who seek to fight this incremental transition towards fair, creative casting practices.

Our campaign will confront those who, quite literally, seek to push BME workers into what they consider their rightful, stereotypical place on stage and



Putting the spotlight on racism

screen. At stake is not just the ability of Equity members to have equal access to successful, sustainable careers but the opportunity also for young BME people to see their lives and ambitions reflected accurately in what they view or listen to.

Our campaign will seek to establish a set of ethical standards for use by critics and reviewers which will allow for free reign in commenting on all measures of a production's artistic merit and establish clear red lines on what constitutes racism and racist commentary.

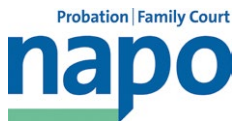
The Equity campaign is led by Emmanuel Kojo, an actor who has experienced racist reviews of his work and he has said: "I have yet to come across a review that mentions the colour of a white actor's skin, so is that to say white is the default and everything else is a cause for constant mention and

discussion and most times without interrogating the racism?"

"If an actor of colour plays a role that's traditionally played by a white actor, the colour of their skin most of the time becomes the centre of the review, rather than their portrayal of a character. That is exhausting. We have to remember we create make-believe, we create art and that art should reflect the world we're living in."

The momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement coupled with the challenges facing the entertainment industry as it moves out of the period of lockdown both substantiate the acute need for this campaign and its role as a means to modernise a part of the UK economy which has a tradition of normalising racism, bias and discrimination.

Racism in sport – why we need to stand together



NAPo is the trade union for probation and family court staff

IAN LAWRENCE is the General Secretary of NAPo



The goal is to eradicate racism

History, past and contemporary, is littered with examples of racist comments and actions at sporting events. In the past few years we have seen footballers Raheem Sterling and Romelu Lukaku suffer abuse during matches in England and Italy, and the targeting of other sportspeople such as tennis star Serena Williams, who was subjected to a disgraceful misogynist and racially motivated character slur after a major tournament. Some of these incidents are blatant, some less so – with the latter often being waved away as nothing more than “humorous” banter following moments of controversy in which the victim has been involved. Neither example is ever acceptable.

In 2019 we saw the appalling and highly sinister pro-fascist demonstrations at the Bulgaria v England fixture in the European men’s football championship. This, accompanied by a cacophony of racist chanting and abusive comments towards BAME players, led to England manager Gareth Southgate and the

whole playing and management squad forcing the Union of European Football Associations officials to belatedly enact the anti-racist protocols.

On the night, it was great to witness a mob of fascists being ejected from the stadium and (from my personal perspective) an England victory by a country mile! Yet, despite the intervention, the problem did not totally vanish and the impotence of the security and police to root out the other individuals responsible told a sorry story.

Racism becomes fashionable again

As a child of the 1960s growing up in South London, it did not take long for me to recognise that my dual British/Asian heritage was going to be the first thing to be thrown against me when it suited my tormentors. Whether that racism took place on the impoverished council estate where I was brought up or the supposedly “colour is no object” Catholic schools I attended, it was a regular and highly debilitating experience.



We can tackle racism together

It was the same picture on the football terraces I frequented during much of the 1970s and the early 1980s, with whole stadiums regularly showering racist abuse (and fruit) on the relatively few black footballers who had overcome their own massive hurdles to make it to that level.

Fast-forward four decades and, while levels of racism in British football and across wider UK society are not of the magnitude of yesteryear, the problem is still lurking and is increasingly rearing its ugly head.

The platform of social media

The exponential rise in the use of social media has been a powerful force for good, often exposing the perpetrators of hate crimes and assisting in bringing them to justice. Yet, as we depressingly see on a daily basis, it has also become a

conduit through which the forces of evil can freely peddle their warped ideology, especially in relation to sport.

The inertia of social media companies in tackling this insidious trend beggars belief and it is small wonder that we are seeing the return of behaviour that BAME people of my generation thought was consigned to history. One shocking example at a recent Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) fringe meeting at Napo's annual conference was a film of pre-school-aged children singing and clapping to a racist chant as if it were some innocent nursery rhyme.

Of course, our children are not born racist. It is the impressions bestowed on them by their parents, who were often themselves raised in such circumstances and who believe the daily diet of scaremongering and the deeds and

words of right-wing politicians here and across the Atlantic. All of this gives a pretty big clue as to why racism and hate crime are burgeoning.

How trade unionists can do something

The questions surrounding how the governing authorities in football, both here and in the rest of Europe, should act against the type of racism plaguing that particular sport need meaningful answers and actions. The events in Bulgaria last October may mark a significant turning point, but perhaps some nations who cannot comply with the rules should simply be banned outright from competing.

It's at grass-roots level that trade unionists can help bring about an immediate change in attitudes among impressionable young people.

Last year I was privileged to speak

at a SRTRC event at my beloved Millwall Football Club. This is an institution which is still stigmatised by the undoubtedly racist history that once blighted its past, but which is now an award-winning recipient for its ground-breaking work with, and on behalf of, its community.

Here I was able to join in an event that saw nearly 100 young students from local schools take part in workshops and tutorial sessions and engage with players and community activists to examine the root causes and effects of racism and all forms of hate crime.

It was an inspirational event, showing how our involvement with initiatives such as these can demonstrate ways for adults to set the right example, and how we can bring our values and life experiences to future generations in calling out the disease known as racism, and the underlying behaviours that cause it to thrive.



Matimix

Let's kick racism out of football

The refugee crisis of Europe



The United Road Transport Union (URTU)

JAMES BOWER is the URTU's
Communications Manager

The refugee crisis of Europe, which reached a peak in 2015, is the continent's greatest humanitarian issue of our generation. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, the largest movement of people Europeans have seen since the end of the second world war. Most were attempting to flee war, poverty, persecution, violence, drought and destitution in Africa and the Middle East.

Our union's involvement in the crisis developed from the plight of refugees trapped in Calais, unable to reach the UK through any safe or legal route. The French and British policies of discouraging irregular migrants from attempting to cross the channel led to a growing spectacle of mass destitution.

Many of our members, as professional lorry drivers, were confronted by the desperation of the refugees and economic migrants in Calais and there were a number of serious incidents. They experienced first-hand the terrifying tactics of desperate people seeking to utilise trucks in an effort to break free from the "Calais Jungle", a makeshift encampment where up to an estimated 6,000 migrants were living.

As well as supporting our members travelling through Calais, we were fully aware of the importance of challenging any anti-migrant rhetoric developing as a result of the refugee crisis in northern France and across the EU.

Uniting people and collectively assisting those in urgent need are part of the founding principles of the trade

union movement. All people have the right to safety, economic security, religious and political freedom, and access to health and education facilities in a society which protects those freedoms.

It is as important today as ever that we challenge anti-migrant rhetoric. We have seen far-right and nationalist movements make electoral gains in many countries in the EU. They have done this partly by promising to crack down on migration – to punish refugees for daring to ask for shelter from disasters that are partly caused by European border policies.

The refugee crisis hasn't gone away. There are still currently more than 1,200 refugees and migrants camping in northern France, roughly 700 of whom are in Calais, and we need to continue to challenge the way the plight of these refugees is portrayed. We need to challenge those who stoke hostility and misunderstanding. Refugees are not a threat to our way of living.

Nobody chooses to become a refugee and we should be setting an example by providing a safe haven for people fleeing from war and conflict. We need to show compassion and humanity – we need to give vulnerable people a chance to live in safety and rebuild their lives.

Refugees are an asset to our society and economy. The trade union movement must continue to play an instrumental role by delivering significant assistance and support to refugees, and promoting their integration into society and the labour market.

Fighting the far-right – campaigning and modelling best practice



The University and College Union (UCU)

CHRISTOPHER NICHOLAS is an Equality Support Official at UCU

The University and College Union (UCU) is delighted to contribute to this trade union booklet about fighting the far-right. Here we look at how UCU challenges the far-right in terms of union membership, campaigning initiatives and the work of our black members' standing committee (BMSC).

As a membership organisation, we have a zero-tolerance policy towards racism and views which are antithetical to our core values. UCU rules state that the union "will refuse membership to, or expel from existing membership, any person who is a known member or activist of any extreme right-wing political organisation ... where the organisation's aims, objectives and principles are contrary to those of UCU".

Also: "An individual may be refused membership on conduct grounds, including for the avoidance of doubt, any activity within a political party whose objects encourage, or are perceived to encourage, discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic or national origin or colour."

As a campaigning political force, we have been, and continue to be, active in challenging the far-right wherever and whenever it appears. In 2007 UCU successfully worked with the public



Christopher Nicholas

service union, UNISON, the then private sector union, Amicus, the National Union of Students, Bath University Students' Union and the national anti-fascist campaign Unite Against Fascism to mount a campaign to prevent Nick Griffin, then leader of the fascist British National Party, from being allowed to speak at the university on the grounds that fascist politics pose a danger to the diversity of students and staff alike.

Last year we supported protests at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)



Nita Sanghera

Islamophobic, misogynistic and anti-semitic comments.

In March 2019, as part of our response to these events, UCU embarked on a speaking tour of campuses organised jointly with Stand Up To Racism with the union being represented by our vice president Nita Sanghera. Nita sadly passed away on 16 January 2020 and is remembered for the energy and commitment she brought to fighting racism and fascism in our colleges and universities and in the wider community. Nita Sanghera was a driving force behind much of the union's work in this area and she is greatly missed by staff and members and her sisters and brothers on UCU's black members' standing committee.

regarding an academic with affiliations to the Alternative for Germany (AfD). UCU took the view that AfD was an extreme right-wing, racist, anti-immigration party that had no place on UK campuses.

We have found that it is important when combating far-right activists on campus to organise joint staff/students campaigns. Similar and successful campaigns have taken place at Exeter, Newcastle, Dundee, Bristol and many others.

Equally troubling is the growing number of incidents across colleges and campuses with increasingly bold displays of allegiance to far-right politics, often under the umbrella of Generation Identity (GI). Abusive "stunts" have taken place at "white T-shirt socials" where students write messages containing

UCU black members' standing committee

The UCU's BMSC is engaged in ensuring that the voice of the union's black members is both heard and reflected in terms of visibility and reach. The committee has developed a week of action against workplace racism, which is now in its fifth year. In 2015 UCU surveyed its black members to chronicle their experiences of working in post-school education. Respondents were asked to consider a list of scenarios at work and rate a set of associated statements based on their own professional experiences, including progression and promotion. They were asked if they had been bullied or felt they were included or excluded from decision-making processes, and whether

they had been subject to cultural insensitivity. Finally, they were asked what they thought would be the most effective measures to combat racism in the workplace.

One of the key resources produced for UCU branches to take forward this work is the UCU film, Witness. Branches are encouraged to screen the film to members and colleagues.

The resources accompanying the film include audience questions for branch/ members, such as:

- Contributors spoke of feeling their ethnicity plays a part in how they are treated at work. Is this something that you recognise or understand?

- Some contributors said that naming racism as an experience often ends up with them being described as having a chip on their shoulder. What are your feelings on this?

- Micro-aggressions are described in the film as “death by a thousand cuts”. Is this an idea with which you are familiar?

- Has the film helped you, your branch and colleagues reframe or revisit workplace race discrimination?

- What will you and the branch do now?

- What are the experiences of black educators in your workplace?

- Do you feel able to raise issues of racism at work, be it from students, colleagues or management?

- Have you experienced racism at your workplace? If so, in what form?

- What steps have you taken to challenge racist behaviours and attitudes?

- Have you raised an issue of racism at work? How was it addressed?

- To what extent have you involved your branch in helping to address racism at work?

How does this work fit into our fight against the far-right?

UCU is committed to ensuring that it is on the front foot when it comes to challenging all manifestations of racism and the far-right. The work, driven by our black members, is intended to prompt a form of political engagement that helps branches and members to recognise unacceptable behaviours.

The union’s week of action against workplace racism and its accompanying resources form part of UCU’s wider picture when it comes to fighting the far-right and is more accurately viewed as a start to our work, rather than an end.

UCU uses the term “black” in a political sense to refer to people who are descended, through one or both parents, from Africa, the Caribbean, Asia (the Middle East to China) and Latin America. It refers to those from a visible minority who have a shared experience of oppression. The word is used to foster a sense of solidarity and empowerment.

50 years of NUJ activity against racism



National Union of Journalists (NUJ)

JIM BOUMELHA is a member of the NUJ's
National Executive Council

Nearly half a century before today's Black Lives Matter movement, the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) was the first union to create a race relations working party in 1974 at their congress in 1974. It was the first time that a British union tipped a toe in the politics of race.

The new clause in the union's rule book defined the new advisory as tasked with "monitoring the progress of relevant legislation and campaigning for improvement where necessary; opposing and publicising where possible cases of racial discrimination within the union and promoting equality within the union; campaigning against racism in the media."

The new body consisted of five members elected by the union's annual conference and two appointed by its national executive council.

One of the first activities of the working party was to launch an education programme for journalists reminding them of the union's ethical code of conduct, such as clause 10 which states:

"A journalist shall only mention a person's age, race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, marital status (or lack of it), gender or sexual orientation if this information is strictly relevant. A journalist shall neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred on any of the above-mentioned grounds."

The working party continued for many years fighting a rearguard action against the most blatant cases of race

reporting where members of the union showed no regard for the code.

Much later, work was commissioned to develop some of the formulations on discrimination contained in the code of conduct into much more detailed guidelines concerning race reporting, reporting of fascist organisations and guidelines on travellers. This allowed the union to shift its emphasis from a rigid disciplinary approach to a more educative role.

For the next 15 years the working party was instrumental in ensuring that the union recognised the challenge of racism and adopted, at least on paper, a programme dealing with race reporting and the grievances of black and ethnic minority journalists.

In the early nineties, NUJ black members started questioning the union's track record and its ability to create a space for black journalists despite the mountains of policies adopted over many years. There was a widespread belief that the race relations working party had outlived its usefulness, and that the time was ripe for replacing the ad-hoc advisory status of the working party with a more permanent constitutional body.

These aspirations were further reinforced by important shifts taking place in other trade unions and looked upon favourably by the TUC. This quest for change created conditions for the establishment of black workers groups - caucusing American-style - which mushroomed in several trade unions.

A similar message, emerging from several trade union race surveys, pointed to the need for trade unions to create

autonomous structures within the overall constitutional arrangements to guarantee that issues concerning race equality were top of the agenda of the decision-making structures of unions. This was a turning point and in many of these debates, 'black sections' were the BLM of the day.

This debate lasted for several years and, as a result, the NUJ changed its rules at its annual conference in 1989 to replace the race relations working party with the current black members council (BMC). By then the advances made by the working party had created an anti-racism constituency which not only devised wide-ranging strategies during two decades to remove obstacles to black journalists having access to jobs in the media but also challenged the media's reporting of ethnic diversity, racism and xenophobia issues.

The new structure for self-organisation gave the impetus to union activities in fighting racism. Since it was launched, the BMC contributed some 200 resolutions to the union's conference which shaped up the NUJ policies on a myriad of issues ranging from race legislation, immigration, refugees, asylum seekers, rise of fascism, racist murders to equal opportunities and training, cultural diversity, media portrayal, and islamophobia.

It led the monitoring of the discrimination that is still rampant in the employment practices of many media organisations and scrutinises and comments on the ethnic monitoring of NUJ members undertaken by the union.

On the issue of portrayal, it engaged media institutions and watchdogs

including the former Press Complaints Commission which very rarely adjudicated in favour of the scores of complaints of racism in newspapers it received, and made representations to editors on issues of portrayal and employment.

One of its most crucial functions has been to continuously issue an open call to journalists to adopt and follow the NUJ's guidelines on race reporting issued by the union which include sections not only on reporting racism but also on racist and fascist organisations, reporting on immigration and asylum, and travellers.

Long before many media and race relation institutions set up initiatives, prizes and awards to boost a black presence in the media, the NUJ has for the last thirty years funded over 100 black students into journalism through its charity the George Viner Memorial Fund, supported by contributions from NUJ members. Many beneficiaries have moved on to successful careers.

Another major initiative has been the participation by the union in black history month through an annual lecture first launched with the Guardian, nearly 20 years ago. This continues to make a national impact by featuring prominent speakers on issues of race and media in particular.

By far the most important achievement has been winning the battle at the TUC to set up a black workers conference. Not many people know that it was the small NUJ that took the founding motion to the TUC and was instrumental in achieving one of the most significant victories of



The NUJ's Guidelines on Reporting Race

black workers within the British labour movement. It had to lobby and confront the trade union barons of the day, many of whom would never come to terms with their unconscious bias.

This resistance to give priority to creating tools and policies to fight racism was also encountered in international structures such as the International Federation of Journalists where the NUJ played a central role in the work of the international media working group against unions in these countries to start paying attention and set new ways to dialogue about race. It did not however accomplish much, even in countries like Poland, Austria and Hungary, where fascists are getting much stronger, beyond activists in a handful of European countries setting up networks of journalists to campaign against

racism and xenophobia. More recently, events in the United States have however created new conditions for sister unions of journalists, in Europe in particular, to start paying attention to and set in motion new dialogues about race, now that good intentions proved not to be enough.

Fifty years of anti-racism activities by the NUJ demonstrates that racism will continue to be an issue even when discussions morph into a myriad of other topics such as privilege, identity and social justice.

Over the years the concept of black sections and

organisation was at the heart our union's politics on race. This is still valid and black union members should continue to lead the fight against racism, but today Black Lives Matter is a new inflection point for us, as we see more of our members talking about race in places where they never did before.

Now that this debate is taking several forms – whether it is about “trumpism,” “populism,” “right-wing populism,” “alt-right,” “white nationalism” or it is about introspection concerning bias, colour blindness, white privilege, diversity, identity, TUCG unions must use their experience of many decades of struggle against racism and join forces to take the lead and mobilise their members against structural and systemic racism on this new historical stage.

Afterword

SARAH KAVANAGH, Editor

I didn't watch the footage of the killing of George Floyd because I just couldn't stomach it. I already knew about the sorts of things that happen to black people at the hands of racist police, and I didn't want to watch him die.

I bumped into the first George Floyd demonstration in London by accident while out on my bicycle. I hadn't seen it advertised online, and I hadn't realised the US Embassy in London had been relocated.

After that first march, I felt like I had no choice but to go out again. I wanted the demonstrations to be massive and I wanted to be in the street with the people who shared my upset and anger about racism.

At the first few protests I noticed an absence of older people, and almost all of the placards were homemade. It seemed like a lot of the slogans written on brown cardboard were quotes from Audre Lorde and Angela Davis.

When the government said the Black Lives Matter demonstrations were illegal and after the police on horseback charged the crowd next to Downing Street, thousands of protestors were not deterred.

As the protests were merging into a global movement, in London it seemed there were more and more black parents coming out to march with their kids. One of the dads wore a sign saying: "my skin colour is not a crime".

I moved to London back in 1997 and at the same time Doreen and Neville Lawrence were seeking justice for the killing of their son. As I settled into the city and started to pay more attention, I

discovered that Stephen Lawrence was not the only London boy who had been murdered in a racist attack.

I watched the proceedings of the Stephen Lawrence public inquiry from the public gallery, looking up at a big screen while sat on the floor in a shopping centre. I was outraged and disgusted by the attitudes and non-answers provided by the cocky white young men accused of murder.

More than ten years later, in the first part of 2010, I spent my evenings and weekends delivering leaflets and talking to people in Barking and Dagenham. I was urging people to vote against the British National Party (BNP).

There were hundreds maybe thousands of people involved in this campaign; I'd say it was mostly trade union members and left-wing activists. We invested time and energy writing and delivering leaflets, and knocking on doors to talk with local residents. The three lines of argument that seemed to resonate at the time were –

(1) The BNP judge everyone by the colour of his or her skin, rather than any individual's actions or behaviour,

(2) It is not the poor in our society (including migrants and asylum seekers) who are responsible for other people's misery,

(3) I am a trade unionist, not a politician, I just want you to think about it and vote.

A year earlier the BNP's Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons had both been elected to the European parliament and as a follow up, their party had their sights on a London parliamentary constituency.

The party already had 12 councillors



Racism shapes everyone's experiences

elected in the area, and as a Westminster parliamentary candidate Nick Griffin already represented the North West of England as an elected politician. His first electoral victory had been announced in Manchester's town hall.

As far as I was concerned, the Barking and Dagenham campaign was my personal vendetta. I grew up in Manchester and I wanted this racist bastard to get his comeuppance. At the general election Nick Griffin was trounced, receiving 6,620 votes. The Labour Party's Jewish and incumbent candidate, Margaret Hodge, won the seat by a mile, with 24,628 votes. Job done, I thought.

The main lesson I took away from the defeat of the BNP in Barking

and Dagenham was the change we had been able to bring about during the course of the campaign. Despite starting out with many in the community being openly hostile towards us, we were able to turn things around using a strategy that sought to educate, organise and engage.

Fast forward to the coronavirus lockdown and I've had some time to reflect and delve into why I've participated in these anti-racist and anti-fascist activities. Here are a few reasons -

The first is Ahmed Iqbal Ullah. I did not know Ahmed before he died. He was stabbed to death in his school playground in Manchester in September 1986. The school he attended was close to my home.

Ahmed was trying to help a fellow Bangladeshi pupil who was being attacked by a group of white boys. The police ruled out racism as a motive for the killing but the killer, a 13-year-old called Darren Coulburn, had shouted racist abuse at Ahmed. In the run up to Ahmed's death, his family were alarmed by the frequent harassment he had received and they had urged him not to go to school on the day he was killed.

The second reason is my friend's mum Sheila. In January 1993 Sheila took my friend and me to Manchester Crown Court. Sheila was a white woman who had married an Arab man and some of her family disowned her as a result. The three of us went to court to show support and solidarity to the families of two men, Mohammed Sarwar Siddik Dada and Mohammed Sarwar Ansari, who had been killed in separate racist attacks by the same young white man called Wayne Lambert.

Mohammed Dada was attacked in his shop, at the top of Sheila's road, with a piece of scaffolding pipe, he collapsed and died two weeks later. Mohammed Ansari was a taxi driver, he had a washing line wrapped around his neck, pulled tight and was dragged out of his car. A piece of scaffolding pipe was used to shatter his skull.

Wayne Lambert was given a life sentence for both murders. The court was told that during one of the killings he had used a racist term of abuse; it was the same racist word said by Darren Coulburn.

During a break in the court hearing, I went to the toilet and bumped into another girl from my year at high school.

As I was washing my hands she told me that her brother had been involved in the killing.

After the court hearing, Julia Dada the widow of one of the victims, told the Manchester Evening News: "My only hope after all this is that the public will become aware of some of the terrible racial problems in this country today."

So that's why I have highlighted just a few of the racial problems I have encountered. Racism matters to me because I know what has been done to people of colour in my community.

The idea of "race" was a concept invented by human beings. Our species, Homo sapiens, evolved in Africa and all non-Africans today, according to our genetics, are descended from a few thousand human beings who left the African continent about 60,000 years ago.

The term "race" was first used in the English language in the late 16th century. In the 19th century, some scientists used ideas about "race" to promote notions about their own white supremacy. Using "race" as a way to categorise people has provided some groundwork to support unequal and unfair treatment.

Racism is a system consisting of ideas and actions that shape people's opportunities and experiences. Racism can be overt or covert prejudice and discrimination. It can be a life or death issue.

No one is exempt from racism; but if we are prepared to name it and shame it, if we are prepared to challenge its baseless assumptions and if we are prepared to tackle its harmful consequences – then we can help eradicate it.

Resources

4Front Project

www.4frontproject.org

BFAWU

www.bfawu.org

Black Activists Rising Against Cuts

<http://blackactivistsrisingagainstcuts.blogspot.com>

Care4Calais

<https://care4calais.org>

Equity

www.equity.org.uk

Equity report on diversity in broadcast television

www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/april/equity-publishes-study-on-poor-racial-diversity-in-uk-television/

FBU

www.fbu.org.uk

Joint Enterprise: Not Guilty by Association

<http://jengba.blogspot.com/>

Hope not Hate

www.hopenothate.org.uk

Inquest

www.inquest.org.uk

The Lammy review

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/lammy-review

Napo

www.napo.org.uk

NEU

www.neu.org.uk

No More Exclusions

<https://nomoreexclusions.com>

NUJ

www.nuj.org.uk

NUJ Race reporting guidelines

www.nuj.org.uk/documents/nuj-race-reporting-guidelines-may-2014

NUJ Code of conduct

www.nuj.org.uk/about/nuj-code

PCS

www.pcs.org.uk

POA

www.poauk.org.uk

RMT

www.rmt.org.uk

RMT Unity in diversity booklet

<https://e.issuu.com/embed.html?identifier=vmgal43vqwug&embedType=script#5545475/62872647>

Sea Watch

<https://sea-watch.org/en>

Show Racism the Red Card

www.theredcard.org

Stand up to Racism

www.standuptoracism.org.uk

The Stephen Lawrence inquiry and Macpherson report

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf

Stop Our Kids Being Killed On Our Streets

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/SOKBKOOS>

Searchlight magazine

www.searchlightmagazine.com

Thompsons Solicitors

www.thompsonstradeunion.law

TUC

www.tuc.org.uk

TUC Dying on the job report

www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/dying-job-racism-and-risk-work

TUC Let's talk about racism report

www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/lets-talk-about-racism-report

TUC Racism ruins lives report

<http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/code/research/projects/racism-at-work/tuc-full-report.pdf>

TUCG

www.tucg.org.uk

UCU

www.ucu.org.uk

UCU Witness film

www.ucu.org.uk/action-against-workplace-racism#witness

United Friends and Family Campaign

<https://uffcampaign.org>

URTU

www.urtu.com

Report of the Zahid Mubarek inquiry

www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-zahid-mubarek-inquiry

Racism Ruins Lives report recommendations

- Undertake an unflinching inventory of what individual trade unions and trade union branches are, or are not, doing to challenge workplace racism

- Ensure that all trade union members are made aware of relevant points of contact, including black and minority ethnic and broader equality and diversity points of contact above branch level

- Ensure that all complaints of racial discrimination are taken seriously and are acted on and dealt with satisfactorily, including reports against management and/or union officials

- Ensure that all trade union equality and diversity officers have a satisfactory understanding of racism, as well as being suitably experienced, trained and/or qualified

- Ensure that any help and support extended to a person(s) experiencing workplace racism enables said person(s) to respond in a manner that feels appropriate to them

- Undertake renewed effort to educate trade union members on how to record evidence of workplace racism

- Advise trade union members on the risks associated with trying to report and challenge racism as an individual worker, outlining how trade union members can guard against those risks

either by being a trade union member and/or part of black and minority ethnic employee networks

- Develop a protocol for dealing with instances and cases where both the victim and the perpetrator of racism are members of the same union

- Recognise the impact that racism and xenophobia outside the workplace can have, especially on people's ability to do their job

- Ensure that trade unionists and workers more generally either develop or are made aware of the types of support available to them from trade unions and the TUC

Trade unions fighting racism and the far-right

Building solidarity in workplaces and communities



The Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TUCG) brings together ten national unions to co-ordinate campaigning activities in parliament and beyond.

www.tucg.org.uk



Created and edited by Sarah Kavanagh, Charley Allan, Bronwen Holly and Michael Calderbank.
Designed by Tom Lynton.