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### 1. **Black members' annual equality conference**

**Friday 11 December 2009 from 10.00-4.30 at Carlow Street, London NW1**  
**"RECESSION: the impact on black workers"**

The theme of this years' conference is the recession and the impact this will have on black workers on a range of issues. We intend to invite speakers and activists from across the UCU to share the perspectives of black workers whose terms and conditions are disproportionately under attack. There will also be workshops and plenary sessions for delegates to ask questions, engage in discussions, share information and concerns and networking with other black activists, new members and UCU Officials.

The deadline has passed to register as a delegate. If you would like to attend as an observer please contact Janet Pantland [jpantland@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jpantland@ucu.org.uk).

### 2. **Report on the TUC Congress 2009**

*From Dave Muritu, Member of the Black Members Standing Committee*

The UCU sent a delegation of nine people to the sixteenth annual Black Workers TUC conference in Scarborough. A total of thirty-four TUC affiliated unions had sent delegations from across the private and public sectors. As might be expected, the economic crisis was never far away from discussions at the conference, and so it was appropriate that the opening motion addressed 'Racism and the Recession'.

The mover of the motion, tabled by BECTU, called upon all unions to be vigilant that changes in the workforce, such as redundancies and redeployment, do not have a greater adverse impact on black workers. In support, other speakers highlighted the fact that the sectors most hit by the current crisis, such as hospitality, retail, finance and distribution, have a disproportionately high number of black workers. The successful motion in the ballot to be sent to the TUC Congress was also on the theme of recession.

It was acknowledged that black workers are those sectors of the population most likely to be in lower paid and more vulnerable jobs and that young black people will be amongst those most affected by the economic crisis. In support, Mehdi Hussaini from UCU outlined the effect that cuts in public spending are likely to have on the funding of colleges and universities, further extending the trend of department closures and stalled building programmes. He added, "Coming out of recession, education and training is paramount to the country for recovery."

Elsewhere, conference business articulated the threat posed by the BNP. Both PCS and NUT tabled motions concerning how the far right have exploited the economic crisis to 'increase hostility towards migrant workers'. In his keynote speech the director of Operation Black Vote, Simon Woolley, highlighted the need to galvanise black voters in those areas where the BNP are most strong. The Right has also pounced upon the prime minister's phrase 'British jobs for British workers'. A complete rejection of this rhetoric came from the PCS along with a plea for far more inclusive language in support of all workers. It was outlined that blame should not be focused on European workers with pay and conditions worse than those for which British workers have fought. In accordance with previous Black Workers conferences, the lack of black representation was discussed.

Many of the motions tabled gave vent to the disappointment at the lack of progress in attempts to 'eradicate racism in the workplace. There was report of public sector employers ignoring equality regulation and not supplying monitoring data, an essential tool for tackling institutional racism. TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber called for an extension of those regulations to the private sector. On the Saturday morning the conference was addressed by Dr Richard Stone, who had been a member of the McPherson Inquiry from which recent race relations legislation originated. He referred to the recent tenth anniversary of the inquiry set up in response to the handling of the death of Stephen Lawrence. Despite some improvements, Dr Stone believes police forces and the judicial system continue to suffer from institutional racism; a term he considers still to be appropriate regardless of Trevor Phillips of the Commission for Equality's claim that the term is unhelpful.

The fiercest debate, tabled by Community, was sparked by a motion about the Gaza conflict. The mover spoke of 'great concern and sadness' in response to the humanitarian crisis and highlighted the responsibility for civilian casualties on both sides of the conflict. The UCU had an amendment passed that strengthened the motion by calling for the condemnation of Israel's actions. The amendment, which condemned the invasion of Gaza, killing of defenceless, men, women and children, and destruction of academic institutions, UN buildings, hospitals and the use of banned chemicals & white phosphorous, was moved by Mehdi Husaini. The amendment demanded the conference to campaign for establishment of free independent Palestine, dismantling of the Gaza blockade and Israel to be investigated for human rights violation. Gargi Battacharya from the UCU's delegation felt that the call for balance in blame went some way to legitimise Israel's actions, stating: "I find it difficult to condemn the actions of an oppressed people to resist their brutal occupation"

For all of the important issues that were discussed and debated in Scarborough delegates were reminded by the chair of conference, Leslie Mannaseh in his closing comments that the important day to day work of organising our workplaces must continue on throughout the year drawing inspiration and ideas from the conference. I will take from Scarborough that it is essential in these difficult times that as trade unionists we increase our efforts to ensure that we have strong collective responses to the tough challenges we face.

### **3. Why we need workplace and regional Black Members Network**

*From Jim Thakoordin Vice Chair of the Black Members Standing Committee and NEC member*

**We need Black Members Network at the workplace and within the UCU regions because BME members are: -**

- Often isolated and marginalised in colleges and universities;
- Suffer disproportionately from racial discrimination, prejudice and stereo-typing;

- Grossly under-represented in colleges and universities and especially in permanent full-time posts and management grades;
- More likely to be in either part-time, temporary, low-paid jobs and over-represented in some areas such as ESOL, Learning Support and in Outreach, Basic Skills, IT and Business Support;
- Likely to benefit from sharing experiences and discussing ways in which they could address racial discrimination at work, problems with the unions and promoting mutual support, understanding and solidarity.

**The purpose of the BME members Network is to: -**

- Meet, network and support each other;
- Increase their involvement in UCU at branch/association, regional and national levels;
- Strengthen the voice of BME members in the workplace and within the branch;
- Promote the interests and address the concerns of BME members;
- Raise awareness of UCU structures and support facilities;
- Become involved in the promotion of race equality/equal opportunities/diversity policies, practices and strategies in the workplace and in the union branch;
- Raise awareness of discrimination in relation to race, religion and beliefs, culture, sex and disability;
- Organise training courses on the structure procedures and facilities relating to UCU;
- Monitor incidents of racial discrimination and to work in partnership with other colleagues, universities and organisations to combat racial discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping.

**How to set a UCU BME Network at your branch:**

- Contact your branch/association offices and ask them to help you set up a local BME Network. If your branch has an Equality Officer, speak to that person. If your branch is reluctant to assist you, talk to your regional official or contact UCU's equality unit at eqadmin@ucu.org.uk.
- It is a good idea to contact either black or minority ethnic staff at your workplace and across the various sites, as appropriate, and ask them whether they would be interested in setting up a UCU BME Network within the branch. You can do this by telephone, email or by letter.
- If your college or university has several sites, which are miles apart, you may consider starting a network on your own site and then encourage UCU BME members from other sites to join in or to start their own site BME Network. A person from each workplace network could then meet once in each term to address issues, concerns and suggestions to promote race equality and to combat racial discrimination, as well as monitoring and advancing race equality issues.

You may wish to adopt a set of terms and references, which could be designed around the following:

- To promote the interest and address the concerns of BME members;
- To provide a framework to involve BME members in promoting race equality, equal opportunities, diversity, cultural awareness and anti-discriminatory strategies;
- To provide mutual support and solidarity amongst BME members;
- To monitor complaints regarding racial discrimination, harassment, bullying and to make collective representation to the union branch and/or college or university managers;
- To recruit BME colleagues into the UCU branch and to promote the participation in branch, regional and national activities.

UCU advice on networks states that equality networks are not a substitute for formal democratic union structures; any motions and requests to NEC and its committees therefore should take the normal route through branches and/or regions. Networks are subject to UCU's rules and standing orders. See

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCU167.html>

UCU Black Members' Standing Committee member Mehdi Husaini is working with Sue Abbott, UCU Northern Region Equality Officer to set up a Northern Region Black Members' Network .

Mehdi identified some of the overarching criteria for the establishment of such a group:

- We need to have representative from branches
- Branches have to identify black members from their data base
- The branches should be publicising & sending representative to the region
- How they organise the representative will depend on the circumstances
- We need to establish that members expenses will be met by the region
- Hold three meetings prior to the Regional Council meeting & decide the venue & dates
- In the first meeting, we can invite the Chair of BMSC
- Publicity material to be produced for the branches

The following publicity is going out in Northern Equality Newsletter:

Objectives of UCU black members group in the northern region

The UCU northern region is organising black members group in the region to discuss the issues affecting black members. The group is expected to hold its first meeting in January 2010. Branches should publicise the group and send the names of representatives to the region, to me or to the Equality Unit. Do not suffer from racism in silence. Do something to fight it. Broad objectives of group are:

1. Combating racism & elimination of racial discrimination from institutions
2. Involvement of black members within branches and raising issues
3. Increasing black membership in branches
4. Supporting black members in work places on issues affecting them
5. Encouraging black members to use branches for any problem
6. Networking of black members within branches & region
7. Understanding the structure of UCU for support
8. Participation at regional & national levels
9. Equality policy – monitoring & implementation

If you are a black member in the Northern region and wish to be part of this network or would like further information please contact:

**Mehdi Husaini, Regional Co-ordinator:** [Husaini@goresands.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:Husaini@goresands.orangehome.co.uk)  
Tel: 01642 590880 and/or

**Sue Abbott, Regional Equality Officer:** [sue.abbott@unn.ac.uk](mailto:sue.abbott@unn.ac.uk)

**Chris Nicholas, Equality Support Official:** [cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk)  
Tel: 07966 344 057

## **4. Why we need to be pro-active**

*From Bill Gulam, Chair of the Black Members Standing Committee and NEC member*

There will always be a place and a role for black UCU members to support the struggle of black colleagues in furthering a stand against the oft detrimental racial dynamic in education. It is something, as black UCU members, that we need to commit to.

Recent examples of this include: supporting the long running [over 2 years] campaign against racism at Bradford University which ended in a progressive victory for the black staff in the health faculty; support for a colleague at one of London University's colleges who is facing intense victimisation and harassment; the support that is being given to a colleague in a NE university who is battling institutional harassment and professionally detrimental innuendo as well as cancer.

We need to be proactive, to support each other in struggle. We owe this to ourselves. By doing this we can ensure the issues that face us actually then become intrinsic to the daily work of our union. Listed below are some ideas to support Jim Thakoordin's article on some practical ideas on how we could move forward.

### **How to organise and manage a UCU black members' network**

- Link up with other branch/association networks through the regional network.
- Organise regular meetings and unite all BME staff around strategic issues and activities.
- Invite a black member from the UCU National Executive to address your first meetings and other meetings from time to time.
- Find a black NEC member, or someone from UCU's Equality Unit, who could attend at the launch of your local network as a keynote speaker.
- Produce a local newsletter at least on a termly basis to keep members informed on important issues around race equality. Black NEC members will be happy to write articles for your newsletter.
- Ensure that the network is inclusive and that everyone is welcomed regardless of gender, ethnicity, racial or national origins, religion, culture, ability, disability, age, and status or job title.
- Focus on all forms of discrimination including age, disability, sex, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief and human rights.
- Encourage BME members to attend their branch meetings and to take an active part within the branch and become workplace representatives and health and safety representatives.
- Ensure that race equality and anti-racism strategies are in place and that the branch is aware of any problems BME members may be having.
- Ensure that BME members make full use of the branch structure and facilities to promote race equality and to challenge all forms of racism.
- Ask the branch officers, the regional officer or UCU's national Equality Unit to organise training courses to enable BME members to become aware of the UCU's structure at local, regional and national levels and to explore ways in which BME members can play a greater part within the union by attending meetings and conferences regionally and nationally.
- Encourage all BME staff, regardless of their status, to join UCU or the relevant trade union if they are not already union members. Note that UCU guidelines on equality networks state that membership of UCU networks is restricted to UCU members. Establish close links with student representatives, local communities, other unions and sympathetic managers and governors.

## **5. Unity is our Strength**

*From Bertha Ochieng, Adel Nasser and Felix Labinjo (UCU activists)*

The number of Black workers in higher and further education institutions is relatively small. Yet staff from the black and minority ethnic groups (BME) are more likely to face differential and discriminatory treatment at work than their non BME counterparts and consequently find themselves in positions where they need to raise grievances. There is a growing concern that, in the current economic climate, a disproportionately higher number of BME staff are experiencing disciplinary sanctions taken against them.

Anyone who has been at the receiving end of bullying harassment or discrimination in the workplace can bear testimony to the accompanying stress and sense of isolation that the individual experiences. The stress is immense and its adverse impact is felt not only by the individual concerned but also by members of their household and at times, by the community in which they serve. A sense of injustice can be compounded by perceived inadequate representation during internal hearings of the establishment or during court/employment proceedings.

There is clearly a case for creating networks that would help raise awareness about the particular issues and problems facing Black workers. Black activism has a critical and important role to play in challenging injustice and inequality against Black people and nowhere is more evident than in the United States where Civil Rights Movement against great odds raised society's awareness on racism.

Energising and supporting networks for Black workers will provide its members with an opportunity to participate in critical discussions on race equality, pay negotiations, health and safety and many other issues, not only within their respective institutions but also within their trade unions such as ours. Their voices will not only be heard and seen to be heard held, but also acted upon. Such democratic fora will help enhance efforts at changing archaic mindsets with institutions. They will also provide an opportunity for a stronger challenged to unjust practices and inequality of treatment and this will ultimately lead to better working conditions for all.

The General Secretary's circular 167 on regional equality network is a welcome development in promoting our union's equality agenda. Based on last year's Congress resolution 13 passed at, it sets out the overarching principles that will inform the work of regional equality networks. UCU Equality networks will organise autonomously with support from the Equality Unit and Regional offices. Each network will determine its own character, provide fora for the exchange of informal advice and support where appropriate, and support collective action on equality issues. See

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/UCU167.html>

We all have a collective responsibility to end the isolation that minority groups face. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, we must be the change we wish to see.

For more information about setting up a branch or regional equality network, please contact the Equality Unit [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)

## **6. Survey UCU Black Members**

Since the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, there have been numerous reports from the CRE, unions, statutory, charitable organisations involved in education and government agencies highlighting the many pressures black people working in education, have been facing. Most reports identified widespread discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training and progression. In addition black workers are paid on average much less than

white staff and they are more likely to experience less favourable treatment in contracting, terms and conditions and support. They are disproportionately employed in casual, hourly paid, part-time and lower paid contracts.

UCU commissioned a survey of its black members during the Spring of 2009 as a follow up to the Waddington Report of Autumn 2007 which surveyed all UCU members. The survey was conducted electronically and distributed to 3,764 members on the database of the UCU who defined themselves as black. A total of 592 responses were received, thus the rate of return was 15.7 per cent. It was designed to ascertain some of the issues black members were experiencing at work and the perception of the level of support available and accessible through the UCU structures. The survey was conducted by Jeremy Waddington and the initial findings show:

- Almost 40 per cent of respondents report joining UCU since 2006;
- UCU black members stay in the union because they want support should a problem arise at work. However, 38 per cent of black members say they would go outside the union if management threatened to take disciplinary action against them;
- UCU black members tend to work considerably longer than their contractual hours.
- More than 20 per cent of black members say they do not know what to do if they were threatened with disciplinary action;
- When asked what key aspects of support they require from UCU, black members emphasise representation on equality issues and on professional issues;
- Almost half of black members have experienced racism or racial discrimination at their place of work and, of these members, 65 per cent experienced racism in the 12 months prior to the survey;
- The proportion of all members who are content with the workplace representation provided by local representatives is less than 47 per cent: among black members this falls to 29.8 per cent;
- Black members view education managers as the primary source of racism or racial discrimination;
- Almost 64 per cent of all members are certain that they have a local representative at their workplace compared to only 50.7 per cent of Black members;
- At branch, regional and national level the UCU was viewed by black members as performing better than management on allegations of racism or discrimination.
- Black members prioritised the improvement of promotion prospects in preference to policies designed to stop racism from the employer or from students

The UCU have discussed the Survey findings at various committee meetings since July and have agreed to set up four focus groups to explore a number of these issues further and to provide a more detailed contextual narrative in the final survey report. The four groups are:

- Recent joiners
- Representative sample
- Further Education Members
- Higher Education Members

The Black Members Standing Committee has been consulted and will be making their submissions to the UCU on how to move things forward. A final survey report outlining various actions by the UCU should be available in spring 2010.

## **7. UCU Training Opportunities**

Whether you are new to UCU or an experienced activist, it is worth taking the time to visit the UCU activists' training web pages ([www.ucu.org.uk/training](http://www.ucu.org.uk/training)) to look at the courses we have on offer. Delivered on a regional basis, UCU's comprehensive programme of rep

and activist training will help you to increase and develop your knowledge and give you the skills and confidence needed to effectively represent and support UCU colleagues at work. Our course programmes also provide an invaluable opportunity to network with members from other branches and LAs within your region and learn from each other's experiences.

Courses on offer include:

- UCU representatives
- UCU safety representatives
- UCU learning representatives
- UCU green representatives
- UCU equality representatives

All of our training courses are TUC-accredited and are open to all members who are new to being a UCU activist or who have never attended training. In addition, members working in FE can count attendance at UCU training as part of their 30 hours' contractual CPD entitlement. If you would like to book a place on any of our courses, or if you have any questions about the training on offer, please visit our website:

[www.ucu.org.uk/training](http://www.ucu.org.uk/training) or email Kate Cook, Training Administrator  
[kcook@ucu.org.uk](mailto:kcook@ucu.org.uk).

## 8. Joining UCU on-line

UCU has almost 120,000 members, and joining has never been simpler. The more members UCU has, the stronger UCU will be in the workplace, along with the support and protection that comes with being a member of UCU. If colleagues in your workplace are not UCU members, encourage them to join, they can find out more details and join on-line by going to [www.joinonline.ucu.org.uk](http://www.joinonline.ucu.org.uk) if you would like hard copies of membership forms, please e-mail your request along with the amount to:

[mwhelton@ucu.org.uk](mailto:mwhelton@ucu.org.uk)

## 9. Anti-bullying materials

UCU has produced anti-bullying materials to help raise awareness of the issue including a variety of posters and stickers. To view the materials available or to download posters from the website please go to: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/harassment> If you would like the materials sent to you, please e-mail your request including quantities to:

[mwhelton@ucu.org.uk](mailto:mwhelton@ucu.org.uk)

## Contacts:

If you have any queries regarding the articles in this newsletter or would like to submit an article for a future newsletter, please contact the **newsletter co-ordinator**:

**Jim Thakoordin** – [dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com)



**Chris Nicholas** – UCU Equality Support Official with specialism for race and religion or belief: [cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk) Tel: 020 7756 2536 | Fax: 020 7756 2501

**Get involved:** to join UCU's network for black members email: [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)