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## 1. Welcome

Welcome to the May 2012 issue of Black Members' news, written by members of the UCU Black Members' Standing Committee. Special thanks to Vice Chair Jim Thakoordin for co-ordinating the newsletter.

### Black Members' Standing Committee 2011 – 2012



*Professor Cecile Wright, Chair of the BMSC*

- Cecile Wright (Chair)(Nottingham Trent University)
- Jim Thakoordin (Vice Chair)(Luton and Beds ACE)
- Dawn Livingston (Lewisham College)
- Gargi Bhattacharyya (Aston University)
- Mumtaz Khan (Leeds Metropolitan University)
- Sandra Tury (University of London)
- Bill Gulam (University of Salford)
- Umit Yidilz (Bradford College)
- Mehdi Husaini (University of Teesside)
- Geraldine Francis (City and Islington)
- Gaverne Bennett (Waltham Forest College)
- Blaise Nkwenti-Azeh (University of Manchester)



*Jim Thakoordin, Vice Chair of the BMSC*

If you would like to receive updates on black member's issues, or for any more information you can join our black members' network by sending an email to [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)

## 2. Getting more involved

**Gargi Bhattacharyya**, explains how members can make a difference....

UCU, in common with all trade unions, relies on our members to run the union. We have a small number of full-time paid staff, but the huge bulk of union work is carried out by volunteers, our members.

Black members play an important role in running the union – but we always need more people to help out and new people to come forward to take up roles.

BMSC understand that we are all under pressure at work - no-one has free time to spare – but even a little help can make a lot of difference.

## **WHAT DOES THE UNION DO?**

Most trade union work takes place in the workplace. UCU has regional and national committees, including BMSC, but it is local work that keeps the union running. You don't have to become an officer or full-time activist to help out.

The main areas of local union work are:

- Negotiating – this is where we talk to management, sometimes about local policies or issues or sometimes about particular areas such health and safety.
- Campaigning – this could be raising local or national issues, talking to people about the union, distributing union material or running campaigning or recruitment stalls.
- Case-work – this is the representation of individual members. UCU will provide training for new case-workers.

There are opportunities to get involved in all of these areas. Perhaps you would like to be trained to support other members facing race discrimination? Or you could act as a departmental or subject rep and distribute union materials? If you want to develop your negotiating skills, you could begin by volunteering to be equality rep or health and safety rep for your local committee. If you can't commit to a regular task, could you volunteer to organise a recruitment and information stall in your building or canteen?

Local branches and associations welcome the involvement of members – you can get your local contact details from the UCU website.

## **JUSTICE FOR BLACK WORKERS**

These are difficult times in colleges and universities. Lots of us fear for our jobs and our conditions are under threat. Too often black and minority ethnic staffs are left vulnerable in difficult times. This will never change until we take control and become more visible and active in our own union. Some of us may be dissatisfied with how the union works, but we do not take the risk of becoming involved ourselves. BMSC recognises that it is hard to become active in the union, but we want to find ways of making it easier and supporting each other.

If there are issues that you would like the BMSC to discuss, or if you have ideas for how we can support each other, please get in touch with the BMSC through the UCU.

Contact Equality Support Officer James Taylor at [jtaylor@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jtaylor@ucu.org.uk)

### 3. Let's dump the disproportionate cuts!

**Gaverne Bennett** invites your feedback...

2012 began positively with the overdue conviction of 2 of the murderers of Stephen Lawrence. However, in spite of this victory, it is becoming clear that cuts are disproportionately affecting black professionals in HE and FE.



However, one of the key things we lack is an objective set of facts and figures that illustrate the disproportionately of what is happening to all of us. We would like to spearhead an objective study that looks at race and the cuts similar to the one carried out by the Fawcett society regarding the impact of the cuts on women.

We are aiming to collect statistics from as many FE and HE institutions as possible to get a clear, up to date picture of what is happening to black members.

What we would like from you, is your stories so we can show what the disproportionate cuts on black members really means.

If you have seen a disproportionate number of black members made redundant in your workplace; feel that bullying on the basis of race/ethnicity/religion has become a bigger issue in your workplace; or simply feel that the issues around race are not taken seriously in your workplace we want to hear from you.

When we are armed with the facts and shared experiences we can dent racism, defend education, making sure 2012 ends positively too.

UCU is to participate in a TUC coordinated research project on the impact of the cuts on black workers. Details to follow.

Please send your stories and observations to Equality Support Officer James Taylor, at [jtaylor@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jtaylor@ucu.org.uk)

## 4. Speak up speak out!

**Dawn Livingstone** spoke at the UCU National Holocaust Memorial Day Event in January of 2012. The theme was "Speak out, speak up", and Dawn recounted her experiences, and why she became a member of a union...



Like many of you here I lived through the shock and despair following the New Cross Fire in January 1981. This happened over 30 years ago. Yet the horror of the communal hurt that affected so many is unforgettable. 13 people all black died. Subsequently 1 person 'fell from a balcony' after being traumatised from losing his friends. 16 more people were injured. I can remember the sadness and anger at the way this terrible disaster

seemed as if it was almost disregarded and felt misrepresented by the police, the media and others.

The police were criticised for ruling out a racial motive. However, black people were used to this sort of attitude from the police regarding any issues affecting them. I remember at around about the same time there was a bombing in Ireland and the Queen made an official statement of sympathy. The black community with others that were sympathetic to the cause had to comfort each other, had to come together to insist on investigation, had to speak up and speak out. As a nineteen year old at the time it was one of the first times I became aware of community action. To date no satisfactory resolution has been made regarding this tragic happening. Two inquests both returned open verdicts.

12 years later Stephen Lawrence was murdered. At this time I had two of my three sons. They were aged 10 and 15 years. My eldest son just a couple of years younger than Stephen was at that time. You can imagine how frightened I was of the possibility of a racist attack on my sons. How terribly desperate I was for the murderers to be brought to justice and how disappointed I was when it was clear that yet again the racists were getting away with murder. I appreciated that my sons were still alive and how devastated Stephen's parents must have been. First because of losing their son but also because of having barrier after barrier put in the way of them gaining justice.

The Lawrence's would not give up and many people affected by their resolute determination to insist that they be heard became part of the community that listened. 18 years! Despite or maybe in spite of the McPherson report that announced 'institutional racism' recommendations were slow to bring change. I shared another community with the Lawrences.

Believing in the principles of union activism I have always been a union member joining as an 18 year old.

Around the time the Lawrences were mourning their son I was finding that my working life was beset by racism, bullying and harassment. At this point I was a single parent with a full time job and 2 sons. My workplace situation was seriously affecting the quality of my life. For the next several years I had no other recourse but to defend my rights and to do this I was supported and protected by my union in a way that made it possible for me to survive.

This led me to the decision to accept the nomination to the role of a union representative. In order to fulfil that role it was necessary to get the relevant training. So off I went to Lewisham College. There I met the people who were to be my future work colleagues. My suggestion to my tutor that I think I would like to do her job was met with an invitation to discuss the possibility with the coordinator of the Trade Union Studies department!. My tutor became my colleague when I began part time work at Lewisham College before gaining a permanent post less than year later.

Within months of starting with the Trade Union Studies Department I was invited to speak at the launch of the TUC Tackling Racism Book event. Doreen Lawrence was a guest of honour. I was able to meet her for the first time and introduce my husband, sons and a daughter who were there too. This initiative provided different ways of speaking up and speaking out. 18 years! It has taken 18 years to bring some redress for Stephen's murder. It has also brought the ConDems, the bankers and the cuts. All our communities are being affected when racism rears its ugly head. We have to speak up and speak out to fight back.

## 5. Partnership not piecemeal for race equality

...says **Professor Harinder Bahra**, *emeritus professor of management and diversity at Leeds Metropolitan University*

Recently we saw the launch of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) commissioned report on the experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic staff working in Higher Education. The report comes at a difficult time when Universities are worried about the impact of marketisation, growth of private provision and student fees. The Government's stated agenda is to improve social mobility for marginalised groups by monitoring Universities and fair access to the labour market. At a time when many Universities are reducing costs through staff reductions, outsourcing services, re-structuring and at the same time trying to attract UK BME and international students, ensuring and advancing race equality becomes an important business consideration and lever for competitive advantage.

Despite 40 years of legislation, the report has confirmed some of the continued barriers faced by BME staff who are still under-represented in the UK Higher Education system. In particular, the poor representation of BME staff within professorial grades (only 0.4% of Black academics, 1.6% Asian academics and 1.1% Chinese academics are professors compared 11% of White academics) and senior management roles at Vice Chancellor, Deputy, Pro-Vice



Chancellors and Dean. With a BME student population approaching 20% albeit skewed towards new universities rather than Russell group, the staff data is pitiful and unrepresentative.

The research attempts to identify some of the key issues such as a gap between policy and practice, poor recruitment practices, workload models, development and how these can lead to a different career trajectory for those who are unfortunate enough to face the inevitable barriers.

Sympathy and understanding or glossy publications alone do not bring about change within the sector or institutions. What is required is the political will and a collective workable policy and operational objectives with clear key performance indicators for the sector.

What is clear is that progress on Black and Minority Ethnic access to both student places (Russell group) and employment in HE falls well short of what it should be. BME staff in particular has watched the snail's pace of progress slow down completely. At a time of crisis, it is even more important for education leaders to challenge received wisdom, and have the courage to tackle inequalities in educational employment and provision, and to ensure that this remains at the heart of any institutional offer.

*Professor Harinder Bahra is Professor Emeritus of Management and Diversity at Leeds Metropolitan University and Visiting Professor at the University of Hertfordshire. He was Deputy Chair of the HE Race Forum from 2008-11 which contributed to the HEFCE funded ECU commissioned project. He writes in a personal capacity.*

**Jim Thakoordin** believes little has changed in FE from 2005, when the Commission for Black Staff Further and Higher Education and the CRE indicated that...

- Black staff are under-represented in further and higher education.
- Most colleges and universities employ fewer than 6% of black staff.
- Black staff are under-represented at management and senior management level.
- Black lecturing staff are over-represented in part-time, hourly paid and temporary posts.
- Black staff are disproportionately concentrated in contracted-out services.
- Black staff are concentrated in certain curriculum areas, particularly in Basic Skills and English for Speakers in Other Languages.
- Overall black learners continue to under-achieve compared with white learners.
- Black students are 3 times as likely to live in deprived areas than white students.
- Black staff were less satisfied with equality policies on staff development and recruitment than white staff.
- Almost one third (30%) of black staff reported experiencing direct disadvantage or discrimination because of their race. More black staff (43%) than white staff (38.8%) had jobs that they considered 'too stressful'.

- Black staff were concerned about lack of promotion opportunities and experiences of racism and discrimination.
- Black staff were more likely to identify poor conditions of employment including lack of job security, inflexible working hours, lack of resources to do their jobs and attitudes of colleagues, as factors influencing their decision to leave their job. Poor or 'bullying' management styles emerged as an important factor.
- Black staff expressed low levels of satisfaction compared with white colleagues. Many black staff saw positive action as the only lawful way to tackle under-representation in employment and training.

UCU is currently working on producing a survival guide for black members – part of the BMSC campaign to fight discrimination at work.

## 6. Working with the general secretary

**This motion was passed at the black members' annual conference on 11 November, 2011**

### **Emergency motion**

*"This meeting deplores the continuing racism and discriminations faced by black workers in colleges and universities. Attacks on education threaten to further disadvantage black staff and students- and we have seen numbers of experienced black staff leave the sector, including long term union activists.*



*In this context, it is imperative that UCU is able to credibly represent black members. Yet colleagues tell us that they continue to experience poor representation and inadequate support in the face of employer attacks.*

*The meeting demands:*

- *BMSC collate black members' concerns about representation in order to report to NEC;*
- *BMSC participate in an evaluation of the race equality training provided by officials*
- *The president and General Secretary meet with a delegation from this conference to address ongoing concerns regarding the representation of black members*

*The delegation will comprise of: Three members of BMSC and three members nominated from the Black members Conference"*

The BMSC then prepared a 70-page Report which included 25 recommendation/action points.

These are:

1. No Black member who contributed to this Report in any way should be subjected to any form of detriment, and no part of this Report to be published or used by the UCU outside the UCU Senior Management Team or the NEC without permission from the current subscribers to this Report
2. This Report must be treated with strict confidence by the UCU
3. Production of a strict timescale for actions and outcomes by the UCU, and further meetings to progress and review such actions and outcomes must be arranged
4. The UCU will review all pending cases on racial discrimination and respond positively to Black members seeking legal and financial support to pursue racial discrimination cases including those cases involving people who have provided testimonies
5. The UCU will take immediate positive actions to avoid marginalization of the BMSC and Black members seeking support and recognition
6. The UCU will take all complaints from Black members on racism at work seriously, and all complaints and outcomes will be monitored and reported to the BMSC on a regular basis. The UCU will report to the BMSC at least 3 times each year on the number of cases and actual outcomes of each case, including legal support, and compromise agreements. Also to include gender and ethnic breakdowns of complainants and the relevant sector such as HE and FE without revealing any personal or confidential information about the detail of the complainant or the workplace
7. The UCU will share with the BMSC matters relating to monitoring of grievances, complaints, requests for legal support and assistance, representation at the workplace and disputes involving Black members registered at local, regional and national levels on a regular basis
8. The UCU will urgently review the process for Black members seeking legal support
9. The UCU will include at least one Black member of the Legal Support Panel
10. The UCU will train and support all Regional and National staff as appropriate on handling race issues, and will work towards ensuring that Black staff are employed by the UCU at all levels within the UCU
11. The UCU will recruit, train and support Black activists within all regions on case work. The UCU will urgently register all current members of the BMSC, who wish to be case workers, and provide them with the necessary training and support
12. The UCU will seriously consider setting up an independent enquiry on the issue of racial discrimination within HE and FE and to include the Universities of Swansea, Brunel and Sheffield College
13. The UCU will allow the BMSC access to the database of Black members
14. The UCU will organise race awareness training for all NEC members
15. Democratic decisions taken by the BMSC must be respected and UCU staff should cease threatening Black activists for raising legitimate questions, concerns and issues.
16. The BMSC must be seen as a resource by the UCU to assist Black workers across all regions of the UCU. UCU staff must cease to take actions and decisions which could lead towards disagreements and divisions within the BMSC
17. Members of the BMSC must be involved in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of training on case workers and combating racial discrimination

18. The UCU must set targets for recruiting, training, accreditation and supporting Black case workers in each region including Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England, to be completed by April/May 2012, clarify issues and confusion around case workers, and establish a list of at least 30 Black case workers by May 2012
19. The UCU must give priority to the setting up of Regional Black members Network
20. The UCU and the NEC to take urgent action to ensure representation of Black members on the NEC, the Committees of the NEC and within the staffing structures of the UCU at all levels
21. Black members must be given due consideration and a positive image through the UCU Newsletters and publications
22. The UCU must ensure that all Regional Officials are aware of the list of Black case workers and make such a list available to all UCU Black Members Regional Networks
23. The UCU must take positive action to increase the number of Black activists at all levels of the union structure and activities.
24. The UCU must implement Congress motions and decisions taken at the BMSC Conference on race
25. The UCU must acknowledge its limitations on race equality, and commit itself towards working with the BMSC and Black activists to redress such concerns within a framework of mutual commitment, respect and professionalism. The UCU must go on the offensive and show leadership in challenging racial discrimination in the workplace. ROCC must develop a plan of action for raising awareness of racial equality, and provide the resources to support activities to eliminate racism in the work place. Activities in this area must be monitored and reported to BMSC/NEC.

The following list was tabled at the first meeting on 29 March by Sally Hunt, General Secretary of the UCU. A further meeting took place on 26 April, 2012 to discuss the action plan and to decide on timescales for and how we monitor progress. A further meeting will take place in late June 2012.

*Why this issue is important – Mehdi Husaini – UCU Teeside University Executive. Member of the BMSC and Chair of the Northern region black workers network*

*'it is disappointing to see that institutional racism, racial harassment, bullying and discrimination have fallen off the agenda for most of the recent candidates in the UCU National Executive Council elections. This serious omission means the union often does not prioritise the needs of its black members. Many black members feel that when they are racially harassed, discriminated against and bullied there is very little support from branches and from UCU's legal scheme. UCU also has very few black activists who can offer support and representation to black members in need. It can often mean that black members suffer in silence to keep their jobs.*

*UCU needs to revisit its commitment of combating racism, promoting racial equality and should review its procedures for supporting black members. It would be helpful if UCU conducted a survey about the involvement of black members as branch officials, caseworkers and trainers. This would help inform a review of how black members are represented and also help target the training and networking that may be needed to encourage black members to come forward as activists. UCU must look at its rules and procedures to enable trained black activists, including those on the BMSC to have a more active role in providing support, advice and help to black members'*

## Agreed list of tabled proposals

1. All action proposed and agreed between us today should be given achievable timescales and be the subject of review and report back between my office and the BMSC.
2. I have asked our Head of Legal Services to instruct an external review of all pending cases on racial discrimination.
3. I wish to further expand UGu's employment and legal resources to allow members faster advice and representation (subject to Congress agreement).
4. I would propose that we work together to ensure that these improvements also deliver a better service for black members.
5. We should report the global figures of complaints in the workplace of racism to the Equality Committee and with a breakdown of all equality strands including black members. This will need to be delivered without revealing any confidential information
6. I will review training and support for all regional and national staff again in order to make sure staffs is fully aware of the issues of discrimination.
7. I will keep staffing under review and assure you that equality monitoring is conducted on all applicants and this information can be reported to the Finance and Staffing Committee of the union.
8. I would like to propose that my office jointly and urgently review with you training provision of case workers.
9. We should do further work on the prevalence of discrimination within FE and HE and will approach the Equality Challenge Unit and a partner in the FE sector to seek support for an independent inquiry on the issue.
10. I am happy to agree a protocol which gives a nominated BMSC officer the ability to send emails to the list as happens with the other equality strands. As with all communications, we would need to agree that they would be within the remit of the BMSC and within UCU policy.
11. The union does provide training for new members of the NEC and I will make sure that this includes race awareness training. I will also make this available to the entire NEC
12. I will listen seriously to your concerns about UCU staff and their relationship with the BMSC.
13. I am happy to consider with you ways in which black members can network with each other and within the union.
14. I will also ask for a review of all relevant Congress motions (including those passed by BMSC Conference) and check against implementation.
15. I will translate this response into a program of action

The BMSC would welcome your feedback. Please send to James Taylor at [jtaylor@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jtaylor@ucu.org.uk)

The delegation is

*Cecile Wright, Chair BMSC, NEC, Nottingham Trent University*  
*Jim Thakoordin, Vice-Chair BMSC, NEC, Luton and Beds ACE*

*Mumtaz Khan, BMSC, Leeds Met*  
*Adel Nasser, Senior Vice President of UMUCU Branch*  
*William Gulam, BMSC, University of Salford,*  
*Juliana Ojinnaka, Sheffield College*

## **7. Reparations conference**

UCU is supporting the RMT Union's Black & Ethnic Members (BEM) to plan and execute their annual Reparations Conference. This conference has been running for five years and is primarily a trade union to community event. It is a one day conference- usually with a social after the conference plenary- wherein a variety of speakers from various contexts are invited to speak on issues pertaining to reparations and to generally bring awareness of reparations to the wider community.

### **What does this mean for UCU Black Members?**

In light of the current climate-particularly to the disproportionate effects to black workers-the BMSC can no longer be silent to issues that affect black workers and their community. This conference aims to raise the profile of the UCU within our community, provide a platform for the BMSC to speak on issues regarding education, build, and promote networks with the RMT Union and create networks with other community organisations.

Black Members are welcome to attend this conference and are encouraged to promote this event. The conference will be in the month of August and entrance is free.

When the African World Reparation and Repatriation Truth Commission (AWEETC) met for the first time in Accra in 1999 they issued a declaration that called for \$777 trillion over five years as reparation for enslaving Africans during the colonization of the continent. The money was to come from "those nations of Western Europe and the Americas and institutions who participated and benefited from the slave trade and colonialism."

The commissions co-chairman, Dr Harmet Maulana, stated that "Africa deserves compensation and we demand it now", and that all of Africa's "woes" could be traced to the "damage" the slave trade caused.

On a March 1998 tour of Africa, then-President Bill Clinton offered a "semi-apology" for America's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. The president expressed regret and contrition, admitting that America had not always "done the right thing by Africa," yet he stopped short of a formal apology, asserting that to do so might antagonize race relations in the United States. Slavery was permitted by law in the southern United States from the era of British colonial rule in the seventeenth century until the surrender of the Confederate secessionists following the Civil War (1861- 65). Legal in Washington, D.C., slave labour was used to build the U.S. Capitol and the White House. The U.S. government, however, had never apologized to the more than 30 million African Americans living in America whose ancestors had toiled as slaves, nor had an apology been offered to the West African nations from which millions of Africans had been captured and transported on a harrowing, and often deadly, trip across the Atlantic Ocean.

Further details will be circulated shortly. Please contact James Taylor, [jtaylor@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jtaylor@ucu.org.uk) for more information.

## 8. BNP “finished as an electoral force”

In the last UCU anti-fascist newsletter, we gave members information about where members of racist far right parties were standing up and down the country. The elections were a great success for anti-fascism and a disaster for the far right, particularly the BNP, who were virtually wiped out as an electoral force.



Griffin and the BNP went into these elections hoping to stem its electoral demise, which was triggered by a combination of infighting and the party's failure to break through at the 2010 general election. Now the party faces the daunting realisation that it is no longer a significant player in British electoral politics. Put simply, the BNP's electoral challenge is over.

The BNP's vote collapsed to its lowest ever in the poll for the Greater London Assembly. This was the main target for the fascist party, which aimed to regain the seat it took in 2008 through the 'top-up list' vote for London-wide assembly members.

But the BNP received just 2.1% of the poll, with only 47,024 votes – it's lowest vote ever for the GLA. This total is less than 36% of the votes it won in 2008 and is even lower than the previous low of 47,670 in the 2000 elections.

The London result follows a complete wipeout for the BNP, which lost every seat it defended in the 3<sup>rd</sup> May local council elections.

The results have left the BNP with just three councillors in England.

UCU affiliates to **Unite against Fascism** and **Hope Not Hate**. Please check their websites for details of how to help and receive information on the fight against fascism.

**To sign up for updates about UCU's work for black members, join the black members' network by sending an email to [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)**