

GLC Women's Committee



Issue 27

FREE Bulletin

March '86

GLC Working for Women
in London

Special
Issue

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Black and Ethnic Minority Women

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GREATER LONDON COUNCIL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Chair

Valerie Wise (Room 136) — 633 6065

Vice-chair

Yvonne Seive

Policy Personal Assistant to

Valerie Wise

Linda Hunt (Room 133b) — 633 5641

Secretary Personal Assistant to

Valerie Wise

Julie Hallam — (Room 140d) 633 6065

Acting Clerk to the Women's Committee

Margaret Corkin

Assistant Clerk to the Women's

Committee Alison Green 633 1259

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

All members can be contacted by writing to them, c/o Members Lobby, County Hall, SE1 7PB.

COUNCILLORS

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John Carr	Labour
Sonia Copeland	Conservative
Baroness Gardner	Conservative
Muriel Gumbel	Conservative
Peter Pitt	Labour
Yvonne Seive	Labour
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Deidre Wood	Labour

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Iceline Francis	Black and Ethnic
	Minority Women
Philippa Langton	South East Region of
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	Minority Women

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Sheila Spurway	Women with disabilities

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PA to Heads of Unit

Provides administrative and secretarial support to Heads of Unit and Unit Management. Tel: 633 3503.

PA to Divisional Heads of Unit

Provides administrative and secretarial support to Divisional Heads of Unit and Unit Management. Tel: 633 1282.

Policy Development Team

The Policy Development Team works mainly with other departments of the Council. There are advisers in the areas of Transport and Planning, Housing, Policing and Prison, Arts and Recreation and Employment. Tel. 633 8212.

Childcare/Health Team

The Childcare/Health team develops the Committee's policies on childcare and women's health issues and their implementation through grant aid, and liaises with statutory and voluntary groups and campaigns. Tel. 633 3880 633 3894.

Resourcing Women Team (Direct Grants Section/Borough Assistance Section)

The resourcing women team is responsible for developing a policy and strategy for assisting and resourcing the provision of services by women for women in London, including women's centres, advice and resource centres, and counselling support and technical services etc. This involves identifying gaps in existing provision across London, and development work aimed at filling those gaps. The borough assistance team is responsible for channelling resources through certain London boroughs to assist local women's groups and the promotion of women's issues. Tel. 633 2260 633 8201/2.

Unit Administration

Provides administrative support, dealing with the day-to-day running of the Unit as a whole. Tel. 633 1038 (Admin Team) 633 6890 (Grants Admin Team).

Equalities Team

The Equalities Team consults with women, develops policies and projects and ensures that the needs and demands of lesbians, women with disabilities, older and younger women and black and ethnic minority women are incorporated into all the work of the Unit. Tel. 633 6872.

The Grants Monitoring Team

The Grants Monitoring team assists groups to take up their grants, monitors the fulfilment of the projects' aims, monitors compliance with the Committee's conditions, offers groups guidance and assistance in meeting both the conditions and their own aims and assists groups experiencing difficulties. Tel. 633 1114, 633 6820.

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Promotes the Committee's policies by providing publicity and information for women in London; ensures that women are consulted about the Committee's and the Council's initiatives that affect women; campaigns with and for women. Tel. 633 1113, 633 1153.

Wesley House/Kingsway Team

Develops the Kingsway Project for the benefit of women in London as a multi-purpose women's resource centre. Tel. 430 1076.

Outreach Team

The GLC Women's Committee has four Outreach Workers to provide better links between the GLC and its funded groups and other women's organisations. Tel. 633 1614.

GLC Press Officer

(With particular responsibility for the Women's Committee) Jan Trebilcock Room 234. 633 6056.

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Dear Sisters,

This is the last of our special issues and probably the last issue of the Bulletin which has stretched over 3 years and run to 27 issues. It seems appropriate that as our first ever special issue was to celebrate Anti Racist Year, our last one should also be on Black and Ethnic Minority women. The programme of activities we prioritised at the beginning of the Committee's existence and highlighted during Anti Racist Year has been a continuous commitment throughout the life of the Committee. Over the last 3 1/2 years we have agreed 185 grants to Black and Ethnic Minority Women's projects, which represented 20% of all grants made and approximately 25% of our total grant budget. In addition, we have tried to ensure that all of our grant monies only go to groups that are fully accessible to and responsive to the needs of black and ethnic minority women.

On the delivery of services we finally had begun to feel that we had turned the corner and that the structures we had created meant the GLC services were becoming more responsive to the needs of women and black people. That makes it all the more galling to know that this

work has been cut at a stroke. Still we have all learnt lessons from it which we will take with us in our future struggles.

We have had some cause for celebration this month. The London Boroughs of Camden, Islington, Haringey, Lambeth, Southwark, Greenwich, Lewisham and Hackney have agreed to retain a Central London Women's Unit and although the numbers of jobs to work on women's issues has been reduced to 38, we are very happy to know that some boroughs are prepared to support and fund their commitment to equal opportunities for women and black people. There will also be a Central Race Unit with whom the new Women's Unit will work closely. Nevertheless, I regret not only the loss of the positive contribution that we have been able to make but also that the staff who have worked so hard in adverse conditions still have an uncertain future in front of them with redundancy for still a threat. Equally important from my personal view point, I regret very much that this may be the last preface I shall write to our readers and all London women who have over the last 3 1/2 years made my job so challenging and so rewarding. Obviously I shall continue to watch

progress on women's issues with avid interest and hope to get a chance to contribute to women achieving that same high profile in other arenas as they have at the GLC.

Thank you for all your letters of support, suggestions and constructive criticism! There have been hundreds of them over the last few years and it may have taken me a while to respond but they have all helped me to do my job better and to understand the discrimination facing women in London.

I hope that you will find this Bulletin as useful as I know that the other special issues have been and that together with the London Women's Handbook, due out shortly, they will form a resource guide and contact source for London women.

Keep up the struggle!

In sisterhood,

Valerie Wise
(Chair, CLC Women's Committee)

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Working for Black and Ethnic Minority Women — the Work of the Women's Committee

From the very beginning of the Women's Committee, it was recognised that despite the existence of an Ethnic Minorities Unit within the Council, the needs of Black and ethnic minority women would have to be specifically and fully addressed in the new Women's Unit.

This was underlined by the creation of four out of eight voting places on the Committee for co-opted members to be preserved exclusively for Black and ethnic minority women and the appointment of one of the original six advisers at officer level specifically to work on issues in relation to Black and ethnic minority women. These practical measures together with the categorical statement of interim priorities of the early period that Black and ethnic minority women were one of the three identified priority areas was intended to underpin the high political profile allocated to enhancing the status and opportunities of Black and ethnic minority people. Initial strong public statements of intent whilst important, had to be validated by a cogent and practical programme of activities which would develop policy into action. Although the Unit wanted to tackle racism in the widest range of service areas, it had to prioritize those areas where concentrated effort would pay maximum dividends. Both priorities and a strategy and method of working were formulated initially through the consultative meetings in every borough in the spring of 1983. The main issues highlighted, such as employment and training, housing, health and childcare were later developed as a series of separate and extensive consultations and workshops on those particular areas.

In tandem with tackling discrimination and disadvantage in the service areas, was the need to ensure that the Committee's grant aid programme fully recognized and met the needs of Black and ethnic minority women — both in making specific provision for separate ethnic or cultural groups and equally

important in ensuring that all projects funded by the committee were fully accessible to all women and were run by and for the community they served.

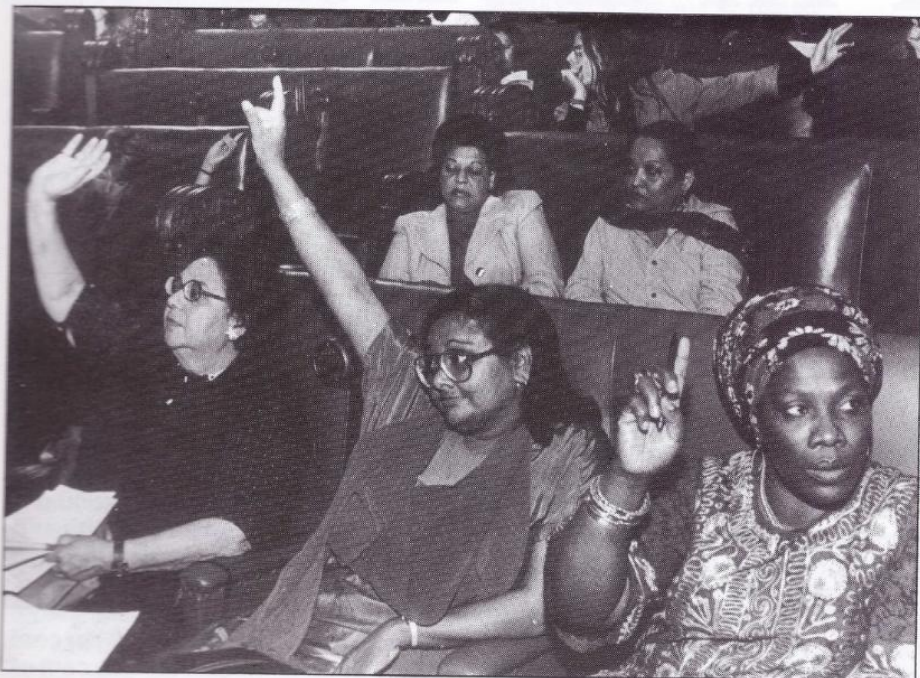
As with any new programme of action, within the overall framework of aims and objectives, there has to be sufficient flexibility to allow the feedback from initial activities to influence and change subsequent plans and events. As Black and ethnic minority women became more involved and active in the Committee's work, they were able to ensure that any previously overlooked issues were, where possible, incorporated in the work programme. In the year 1983/4, the Committee sought projects to benefit Black and ethnic minority who are doubly disadvantaged by prejudicial or unequal treatment. By 1985/6, the Committee still had the same intentions; to provide facilities, services and opportunities for and by Black and ethnic minority women which would enhance their status, but in addition, within the sections on childcare and health, projects for Black and ethnic minority women were specifically sought. During the years 1982-6, the Committee agreed 185 grants to Black and ethnic minority projects, which represented 20% of all grants made and 25% of the total grant and budget.

In order to achieve these results, the ethnic minority advisers have been integrally concerned with outreach, community work and project development. Where no organization existed to meet local requirements in areas of obvious unmet need, they were able to assist individuals to formulate a structure and a grant application that would fulfill the Committee's aims to devolve power and resources as widely as possible, both geographically and demographically. Not only were the benefits of this proactive treatment felt by the Women's Committee, but there was also an increase in the numbers of grant applications to other service Committees, thus improving the community's access to resources and opportunities.

Equally important was the work done to monitor, assist and improve upon the responsiveness of all the Committee's grant aided groups and those seeking grant aid, to the needs of Black and ethnic minority women. After the formation of the Grants Monitoring Team and the Equalities team in 1984, they were able to work together to enhance the selection procedure for high priority applications against approved criteria and also to regularly monitor the performance of groups in the delivery of service to

the community. Where projects had omissions and weaknesses in the areas of equalities, the teams were able to set pre-conditions and conditions to ensure that constructive progression towards a full equality programme became a reality, even after monies had been agreed. In many cases, this necessitated officers working through problems closely with the groups and in the main this enabled difficulties to be resolved.

The creation of an Equalities team which included two Black and ethnic minority advisers and support staff was, however, not restricted only to project development and to the maintenance of a level of excellence in the voluntary sector. The team were equally scrupulous in reviewing, monitoring and revising the policy making documents, the procedural instruments and the practical applications of the GLC services. This meant that they worked very closely with the GLC Policy Development Team in the Unit and through them and with them with the service departments such as Housing, Planning and Transportation, Arts and Recreation and Industry and Employment. Whilst much of this work was visible and quantifiable, such as the creation of a formal equalities structure within the Planning and Transportation Dept and the Industry and Employment Branch, or the important lobbying and policy making role played by the Black Women and Housing group; a good deal went on behind the scenes. This meant negotiation, arguing, lobbying and a level of constant pressure and vigilance to ensure that women and in particular Black women were not relegated to the end of the queue when resources and opportunities were allocated. A significant amount was achieved by the concerted action of the Committee, with the Ethnic Minorities Committee and this resulted in very tangible benefits such as joint consultative conferences, joint policy documents and statements and joint grant awards. As the only two Committees, however, engaged in reviewing the delivery of all council services, the task was almost overwhelming and no one



Jenny Matthews/Format

◀ had any illusions that discrimination would be eradicated within the lifetime of one administration. What has been started, and that is all we can claim to have done, is to have challenged structures and assumptions, infiltrated mechanisms and influenced individuals, begun the process of change and given ammunition and evidence to others to carry on the work.

Whilst the Equalities Team were grappling with the enormous task of watchdog on behalf of Black and ethnic minority women, they also found time to develop specific pieces of work, such as the programme of workshops on employment and training, and the work to highlight the particular position of Black female prisoners. Not all the work on Black and ethnic minority women's issues, however, was carried out by the Equalities Advisers although they were able to advise where their area of

expertise was affected. The Childcare and Health Team carried out two significant and substantial programmes of consultation on the areas of Black women and health, and Black women and childcare. These enabled the Committee to get to grips with the grassroots concerns of women, to make use of their experiences and proposals and to formulate action based on these.

A final major area of concern which the Committee has endeavoured to tackle is the access women have to information, their ability to be publically visible as lobbyists pressure groups and campaigners and the quality and accuracy of information about women and women's issues. Whilst the Committee has not been able to achieve everything it would have wished, there have been major successes. The Committee was the first to develop a policy on translation of booklets, pamphlets and leaflets

and a distribution strategy to back that up. It produced the first of its special issues on Black women and anti-racism and in this edition is now updating and revising this information to be useful as a permanent resource. It is also publishing a much-needed London Women's Handbook with a detailed section on information and contacts for Black and ethnic minority women. The Committee has also publicly given its support in a number of anti-deportation campaigns, and written to the Home Secretary in protest against the racist and sexist British Nationality Act, and immigration regulations.

The above narrative is only the barest outline of the work over the last three years. As said earlier, much remains to be done, but the work will be continued by others and by those who continue to work with the Labour boroughs who have proved their commitment to equal opportunities. ■

SURVIVING AND WINNING: Black Women in London

If you are black and a woman in London (or Britain) today, you can rightfully be called a survivor. Black women in London have survived poor employment prospects, low pay, low job status, and bad housing; as well as discrimination and racism in housing, education, health and welfare.

Our survival is one that is counted in terms of the numbers of our sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, who have been reclaimed from so-called Educationally Sub-normal (ESN) schools and classes, and disruptive units.

It is survival that has been forged on countless demonstrations against virginity tests, racist nationality laws and forced deportations.

It is survival which refuses to accept that our children can be

picked off the streets on dubious suspicions simply because their skin happens to be the 'wrong' colour.

It is survival that condemns and fights against racism, no matter if it's found on a council estate in Tower Hamlets or on a housing waiting list in Camden; whether it's in the form of an 'immigration' check at a DHSS benefit counter, or whether it involves a fighting the all-too-often arbitrarily-applied label of mental illness.

But it is not just a matter of survival alone. But, rather, the experience of black women in London, (a microcosm of our lives in Britain) represents a rebuilding and rebirth of our spirit. Black women have effectively served notice that we are here to stay and fight another day, whatever the issue, whatever the obstacle, whatever the trial.

It has been said that there are 'three generations' of black women in this country. Those who have lived either in London, Liverpool and Cardiff since the Seventeenth Century, who arrived either as slaves or as the daughters of Black ex-slaves, or of unions between black sailors and white women; the middle generation, who came from the ex-colonies of the British Empire, including the West Indies, the New Commonwealth and the Indian Sub-Continent; and thirdly, the growing generation born or predominantly raised here by migrant parents. Most of us are urban: 40 per cent of the 'New Commonwealth and Pakistani origin' community lives in the GLC area (59 per cent of West Indians); 20 per cent are in eight large cities; while the remaining 40 per cent are in smaller cities. Fifty per cent of

the black community is Asian, 30 per cent West Indian, and the remaining 20 per cent come from Africa, the Far East and the Mediterranean.¹ Black people and other ethnic minorities also make up 15 per cent of the workforce in Greater London.

In the early years, before racist controls were clamped down to prevent the migration of black people, black women, from the Caribbean came to London and England, in their thousands, in search of work. It is equally important to point out, however, that they came in response to mass recruitment drives. 'Both government and industry set up job centres throughout the West Indies and started claiming that 'the welfare state' offered full employment for all. Agents were employed to organise recruitment drives. The National Health Service established job centres in order to attract nursing staff to British hospitals. In Barbados state-aided systems of emigration got underway: London Transport recruited bus crews; and the British Hotels and Restaurants' Association recruited workers for their industry.'²

The situation for Asian women, however, was different. Parita Trivedi, writing in the Autumn 1984 issue of 'Feminist Review' points out that Asian women were not generally regarded as part of the working class. 'Those who came to this country direct from the sub-continent or from East Africa, for a number of reasons, including racism, underdevelopment and sexual inequality, had no particular work skills and were pushed into unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, in small organised sweatshops or doing homeworking,' she says. (In the clothing industry in north and east London, up to 50 per cent of the workforce are homeworkers. It is likely that around half of these workers are Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Cypriot women.)³

'Under successive immigration acts', Trivedi continues, 'Asian women have only been allowed entry into Britain as dependents of a male worker. Various immigration acts have been imposed to control the process of re-settlement taking place here. That process of defining and restricting rights of entry, settlement and citizenship culminated in the enforcement of the 1981 Nationality Act'. This, she says, was the logical extension of the State's attempt to ensure that those who entered Britain retained the status of migrants, who could be expelled back to their countries of origin, when their labour was no longer needed. 'In this way,' she adds, 'the rights of settlement and citizenship were stripped from existing British passport holders from the ex-colonies. Asian women have fought against the institutionalised

*racism of the state and resisted attempts to institutionalise their position as dependents of men without an independent political existence of their own.'*⁴

Racism was, and continues to be the millstone around the neck of black people in Britain. For black women this has translated into 'a catalogue of hardships suffered in menial, low-grade jobs. But our responses to these hardships lend optimism to our story. Despite our relegation to the lowest grades and our bitter struggles outside the workplace to support our families, we have always been able to find the energy and the will to resist.'⁵

One example of this resistance is the Grunwick Strike of 1977. It was a long and bitter fight by Asian women to gain union recognition at the North London photo-processing laboratory. But it also proved indisputably the ability of black women to take on and win a battle. An Indian Workers solidarity meeting, held in Willesden in July, 1977, heard it put this way: 'I think in this connection, another thing that has emerged is the role and part of the women workers... It was also shown at Imperial Typewriter. It was shown in the swarm of solidarity at A.L. Dunn. But here, again, we see women workers standing out, not for one week, not for two weeks, not for ten or twenty, it is fifty weeks here, and the myth that women workers, especially Asian, are backward and don't understand the industrial society... No, they have shown beyond doubt that they can fight.'⁶



Pam Isherwood/Format

Grunwick's workforce of predominantly Asian women, with the help and support of many other black women, almost singlehandedly took on not only the Grunwick management, but the whole trade union movement as well. A trade union movement which had initially refused them support. The racism in trade unions meant that its interests were seen by trade union leaders to be more in line with those of the British government than with the workers.

One Grunwick striker best summed up the situation black women faced then and to a degree, still do now, at the hands of the trade union movement:

'We are trying our best to fight and win this struggle. But what did the union do? Always they said no, you can't win this way, no, you can't win that way. We went on hunger strike, we called for mass picketing, but now they made rules, that if we go on hunger strike, if we do mass picketing, if we mass lobby, if we do anything they don't want us to do they will suspend us.

'But if the union had given us the support and that, we might have got something out of it. It is they who have not given us the support. They have just helped the capitalist to have that right not to accept the union. They were just linking everything with the government. That if you do this it will do great harm to the government. We thought the Labour Government is made out of the unions from the labour, from the working class people.'

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◀ Grunwick, as tough as it was, was only one of many battles which black women had to wage in Britain. There were others, just as bitter and just as hard-fought. Imperial Typewriters and Mansfield Hosiery are two which also come to mind. And 'in 1971, agency night cleaners employed to clean large office blocks came out on strike' for the first time ever and West Indian women were in the forefront of that long and bitter struggle for more money, better working conditions and the right to belong to a union'.⁸

In the National Health Service, that bastion of the welfare state, black women's welfare, either as workers or patients, has never been considered to be of paramount concern. In 'Heart of the Race, Black Women's Lives in Britain,' the authors point out that the first contact black women had with the NHS was in the 50s, 'either through direct recruitment or with the aid of subsidies from their home governments. 'The expanding British economy was particularly short of labour, in areas such as transport and health; and the nursing profession, with its low wages and unsocial hours, held little prestige among British women. In the Caribbean, however, it was (and remains) a highly-rated profession, respected enough to attract black women already in work to give up their jobs, and come to Britain to train as nurses. Higher earning power, better educational opportunities and the experience of a new way of life were the carrots offered to us'.⁹

But the reality proved to be quite different. Deliberately limited career opportunities forced many black women to enter the health service as State Enrolled Nurses (SENs) rather than as the more advantageous State Registered Nurses (SRNs). Rigid, hierarchichal structures, combined with the racism inherent in the system, meant that few black women were able to improve their training and position.

Still worse, were the numbers who were prevented from taking up posts, even as SENs. They were forced to provide the army of cheap labour, found in hospital kitchens and laundries, which is so necessary to run the NHS. They 'trudged the wards as tea ladies, cleaners and orderlies.' The testimony of one auxiliary worker from Guyana typifies the plight of many black women: 'The black nurses were given all the roughest jobs, like cleaning the sluice. As for the other workers, some were nice and others were just plain ignorant. For example, one of the girls cut her finger on the ward, and this white woman found it really amazing that her blood was red. I suppose they thought black people had black blood or something'.¹⁰

A few things have changed since those days. Presumably, one hopes, there is no such confusion today as to what colour blood black people have! There are most black sisters on the wards, for example. But advancement for black nurses is still limited by the racism which permeates the system. Black women are among the first and worst hit by cuts in the health service. That is one reason why black women workers in the health service were prominent in the strikes by ancillary workers for more pay and better working conditions in 1972 and again in the health workers' strike of 1982/3. It is a struggle which continues.

Black children, whether Asian or West Indian or African, have, from the outset, been seen as 'problems' for the British education system. Study after study, has described, for example, West Indian children's failure to adapt to the British way of life and how this shows up in their supposed inability to do well in school. Black children have been variously described as aggressive, slow, unable to firmly grasp the English language and unwilling to play the game according to the rules. For the most part, black children are regarded as 'the problem' within the British school system or 'the enemy within'.

One result of the prejudiced and racist view, was that in the 1970s, a curious phenomenon began to emerge. Black children began to be sent, in droves, to 'special' schools. These were called ESN or schools for the educationally sub-normal. The reasons given for this wholesale transfer of black children were that they had 'low IQs', 'broken English' and 'hyperactive behaviour'. The numbers of black children sent to these so-called 'special' schools was grossly out of proportion to the numbers in the school system. As a consequence, black parents and teachers began to challenge these racist assumptions about the children, and the campaign against ESN schools was born. 'By the mid-seventies, increasing numbers of black mothers had begun to demonstrate a readiness to defer the rights of our children, both in the form of individual confrontations with the authorities and within organised campaigns'.¹¹

These were successful campaigns for the most part. Their outcome not only put an end to the racist practice of arbitrarily labelling black children as educationally sub-normal, but gave rise to an important new concept 'up and down the country' — Saturday and Supplementary Schools.



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Black women, no longer content to wholly trust their children's education to an uncaring and unresponsive state system, established their own schools in their own communities. These schools helped black children to understand the relevance of the black experience, and also provided the kind of well-balanced education they were not getting in state schools. Saturday Schools concentrated on black history, maths and English. The schools were 'acknowledged successes.' They were mainly run by black women who volunteered their time. Many Saturday schools are still in operation, among them, the Afiwe Saturday School in Brixton. They again demonstrate what can be achieved by the efforts of black women united in common cause.

Good, affordable housing in London is not easy to find. For black women in London, many of whom are single parents, it has become almost impossible to find decent accommodation and environments within which to bring up their children, without fear of racial harassment and intimidation. This problem is particularly prevalent on housing estates in London's East End, where Asian women are subjected to attacks by their racist neighbours. In addition black families are frequently at the bottom of most councils' housing lists, and are rarely given the opportunity to choose from newer housing. Black families often find themselves closeted in sub-standard bed and breakfast accommodation for months on end.

Several members of one Asian family burned to death last year in bed and breakfast housing that had been provided by Camden Council. They were the victims of overcrowded conditions in a building which had poor cooking facilities, and which had failed numerous fire regulations.

This incident spurred black women and others to mount a campaign to secure decent housing for the remaining black families who also lived in the building, and who had been given excuse after excuse by the Council, to their requests for better, more permanent places to live. That campaign resulted in the families being found housing, which had previously been said to be unavailable. It is unfortunate that it took the deaths of black children to make this happen.

Today, black women are still fighting and campaigning. We fought for the right to organise on our own terms, as black women, because of the racism we encountered in the Women's Movement. We wanted the right to decide which were the most important problems facing us, as black women in Britain society. For example, many of us did not see men

as the great bug-boo that so many white women did. On the contrary, we had fought alongside black men to help bring about change for the whole of the black community. As well as this, however, we needed a forum where we could come together as black women, for the mutual support and help that we could not get elsewhere.

In 1978, we set up the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD). Although no longer in operation, the five years in which OWAAD was active were glorious ones for black women. It brought together black women from a number of different backgrounds and political perspectives in Britain; and it was an important chapter in the history of black women organising.

OWAAD organised national conferences which drew women from all over the country. The first conference discussed a wide range of issues around health, education, the law and immigration, because we saw these as pertinent to us. The women who came were greatly inspired and went away to form black women's groups in their own communities in places like Hackney, East London, West London, Southall and elsewhere around the country.

OWAAD established a newsletter which linked women around the country. This enabled us to know what other black women were doing and also meant that practical help and support could be mobilized. An example of this was the protest over the use of virginity tests at ports of entry. As soon as we were alerted to the use of this offensive practice on Asian women, OWAAD organised a sit-in protest and picket at Heathrow Airport. This later culminated in a demonstration in Central London against state harassment, organised by women from AWAZ (Asian Women's Movement) and the Brixton Black Women's Group.

In other cases, women from OWAAD gave support to women on strike (for example, Fitters); to women involved in education battles against sin-bins, disruptive units and expulsions; to women fighting the *Sus* laws; and to those facing deportations. Women from OWAAD were also involved in the cases of black women who were Sectioned under the Mental Health Act. This action was taken when it became clear that a number of black women were being committed to mental institutions, simply because their behaviour did not conform to what was considered 'normal' in this country. Behaviour which was acceptable in the context of the countries from which they had come, e.g., wailing at the death of a relative.

OWAAD had all the energy and vibrancy that the Black Movement needed at the time. And although it is now gone as an organisation, we learned some valuable lessons from it. Namely, that we, as black women, must learn to appreciate our different cultures, understand our different experiences and distinguish between these differences and objective political differences. For example, OWAAD tackled the explosive issue of sexuality — exploring the questions of our relationships with men, with other women and society at large. We attempted to arrive at a progressive appraisal of black lesbianism, for example, one which would enable us to 'bring it out in the open' and in so doing, help to rid ourselves and our communities of homophobic ideas.

OWAAD helped to legitimise 'Black Feminism' as a viable and workable concept for black women. It helped to bring about some recognition that as black women we are constrained by the triple oppressions of race, sex and class. OWAAD did not solve all our problems, and it presented numerous contradictions. But its importance lies in the fact that, to some extent, it enabled us to transcend our differences and to be together as black women, in a way that had not been accomplished before. The organisation is gone, but its spirit lives on in each of us who were touched in any way, by it.

As black women, we are a force to be reckoned with. We may be down at times, but never out. Our history in London and throughout Britain, has proven us to be not only survivors, but winners. And that is as it should be, because as the old saying goes, 'you can't keep a good woman down.' ■

Melba Wilson

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6. 'Women In Struggle,' pamphlet, 1978, p.38.
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The GLC Women's Committee has funded many women's groups covering a range of issues such as childcare, health, training, publications and women's centres. Below is just a selection of some of these groups:



Chinese Welfare Project. "Learning English Class"

The project provides a range of well social and educational services for ethnic Chinese people in the area of Tower Hamlets. Classes are run in Cantonese and Chinese culture, enabling British and Chinese people the opportunity to maintain traditional and cultural links with their ancestry.

Sarita Sharma/Format



Jewish Women in London Group

Based at Southbank House, Black Prince Road, SE1 7BJ, J.W.I.L.G. is an open collective of Jewish women who meet regularly to study Jewish history with the aim of promoting alternative images of Jewish women within the Jewish and wider communities.



Yaa-Asantewa Arts Centre

Formerly the Factory, this community arts and social centre runs a variety of activities for the Afro-Caribbean community. Home of the Theatre Group, workshops and events take place in music, dance, craft, writing, visual arts and carnival.

Jagonari Women's Educational Resource Centre

Jagonari was founded by local women as a way of overcoming loneliness and isolation that experienced in Tower Hamlets. The centre affords women the chance to become involved in life outside home, in being a social meeting as well as an educational resource.

Sarita Sharma/Format





Berner Tenants Women's Centre

'Greek Jewish Teacher and 2 women students from Bangladeshi — taking a break!

Situated on a housing estate in Stepney, the centre is run by women in the neighbourhood to meet the recreational, educational and social needs of women in the area many of whom are Asian.

OUTWRITE - 'providing a fast news service for women by women'

OUTWRITE is a women's newspaper collective based in Hackney. 'Outwrite' comes out fortnightly and is an internationalist newspaper created specifically to cover issues about the lives of Black and White working class women here and across the world.

Irish Women in Islington Group

The project was set up in 1984 to counter the lack of provision and facilities for Irish women in the area. In liaison with other Irish Women's organisations in London the group seeks to combat anti-Irish racism and meet the needs of Irish women in the community.



The Black Women and Housing Group

The Black Women & Housing Group was set up in June 1984 by some Black women from the GLC Anti-Racist Year Housing Group (now the Anti-Racist Housing Group) to focus specifically on issues relating to Black women and Housing. It has held regular monthly meetings since that date and now has 71 groups on its mailing list. The groups involved cover a wide spectrum of Black women working in isolation in essentially 'white' housing establishments, Black womens' centres and groups where housing is one of many areas of work, Black Housing Associations, Co-ops and advice agencies. It is the only London-wide Black group looking at the issues of Black women and housing.

I joined the Black Women and Housing Group at the GLC about a year ago. It had been set up to look at how GLC properties were being allocated and the poor response in terms of allocation to Black women's housing groups or to groups which were looking specifically at Black women's housing needs. Although the group was partially successful and had control of a few properties, its members were unclear, I think, about what they needed to do in the future. We actually had several discussions about aims and objectives and I think the

membership for several months was quite low. There was a feeling that perhaps the group would not go on.

There was, however, a definite recognition that there are a lot of Black women involved in housing as well as obviously a lot of black women that receive housing. We felt that we had a lot to offer in terms of giving each other support and info and that we had ideas about how Black womens' housing somehow slips through the net of anti-racists and anti-sexist politics because black women's housing needs were specific. So we continued to meet and the group actually became stronger. In particular we were interested in looking at other people's projects or research proposals or whatever to see whether they were still ignoring Black women's housing issues. By and large we feel that's the case.

So about a year ago we put forward a very scanty report on Black women and housing to the GLC which was inadequate but the best that could be done under limited resources. We felt that the best thing that could happen out of our group would be a proper research project with four workers that would analyse Black women and housing right across the board. In particular we felt it was something that people wanted because the GLC has often had groups coming to them asking for information about Black women

and housing and it's clear that this issue has not been raised or looked at in any significant way.

The membership of the group reflected a lot of the different issues around Black women and housing in that we only have members who are Black and Black women working in white organisations, who feel that Black women's issues are not being raised. Other women work in groups which might deal with black housing issues but not specifically women's issues or indeed deal with housing for women but similarly Black women's issues might be peripheral. So there's a wide range of members and at the moment there are about 15-20 of them who attend fairly regularly.

We are looking at the issues which affect young women, middle aged women, migrant women, in terms of their housing in both the voluntary and the local sectors. We are particularly interested in their access to resources and how women find alternative accommodation outside the general service which is

available to them since it's clear that the service lets them down and does not provide the accommodation for them. We are very excited about our research proposal and its innovative nature and we feel that it is important that the group continues after the abolition of the

GLC so that Black women's housing issues don't disappear once more.

One of the most interesting things about the group has been the response by other bodies. We found that the excuse that Black women weren't involved in housing was very much laid to rest because there were a large number of Black women who were meeting on a regular basis and who could pinpoint other women in similar positions who could stand up and talk about the issues

of Black women and housing which previously had been totally ignored.

Another benefit that's come out of the group is the element of support. We have found that many of the sisters involved are having tremendous difficulties in their own organisations, facing racism and or sexism whether from their management committee members or from local authorities who might be refusing to repeat funding. We generally find that at every meeting there are several

sisters who need support and who otherwise would be very isolated. We feel that it is tremendously important that this forum continues and can be used to highlight these issues. ■

Karen Welch

Karen Welch is one of five black members of Homeless Action. If you want further information or a contact number after the GLC has been abolished you can contact them on 251 6783 or write to them at 52/54 Featherstone Street EC1.

I'd like to talk about young Asian women and what we increasingly find in our line of work. When I say we, I am talking about community workers, mainly in Greenwich. The issue of Asian women and domestic violence has been touched upon in the past, refuges have been developed and there's quite a good understanding and experience of how to deal with Asian women leaving the family due to domestic violence and there are some resources to deal with this situation. The question of young Asian women hasn't been looked at very carefully and it's an issue which I and my colleagues think is going to be increasingly important, particularly in the context of housing.

We are finding that a lot of young women are, for various reasons, wanting to leave their homes. Much of it has to do with the Asian family set-up slowly changing and in some ways disintegrating under the pressures that it goes through in this society. A lot of young women are coming to us wanting to know how to get out of particularly tricky family situations. We are finding that refuges, although they will take them, do not necessarily want to prioritise them because it's not usually physical violence involved and they feel that they have to keep their spaces open for women with domestic violence problems. We are also finding that local authorities are unsympathetic; even those local council authorities which do have some sort of stand on women's issues are not really prepared to help us as these women tend to be quite young, in some cases under 16. They are single, do not have children, therefore do not fall in

the priority category nor do they suffer from domestic violence.

We found that there are one or two organisations trying to deal with young women's problems as such Asha in Lambeth who are developing special projects in the area. But it's not really sufficient to cope with the demand. We feel that more people should look into either developing projects or running self-help groups. The difficulty now with projects, as we all know, is that there are limited resources chasing lots of ideas or lots and lots of ideas chasing limited resources and people do tend to prioritise something that is immediate and much more visible. Self-help groups might be a little more self-defeating as most of these girls are quite young, and because of their circumstances they don't necessarily have the freedom or the experience to organise as groups.

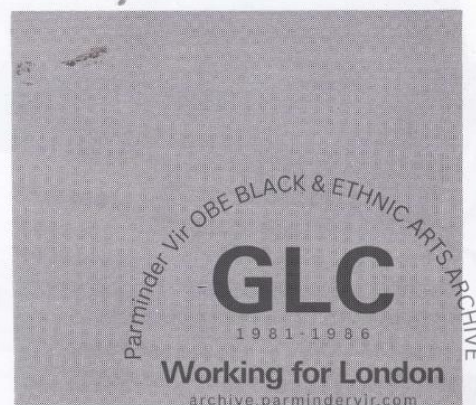
There are changes that are taking place on quite a large scale within the Asian community within the family set-up. Young women are wanting more and more independence, partly because of the influence of feminism, particularly Black feminism, partly because of changes that occur just through a process of living in this country and the breaking down of the old traditional family systems where a girl is traditionally let out of the family home when she is married. Now again I think the type of housing we provide, how we go about providing, it is a very big question and is an issue that really hasn't been touched on by either the housing movement or the women's movement as a whole. We have got to look at it in

very different terms from providing refuge space because the women are quite young, they are quite mobile and what they initially need is somewhere to live where they can sort out their situation, work out their feelings about home, and at the same time get a supportive environment which does not prevent them from going off and pursuing careers or other things which they might want to do.

Maybe what we should be looking at is providing short term hostel space which would, by definition, have to be somewhere away from the family, or setting up co-ops or seeing how pressure can be applied on the Council to provide more housing for single homeless people.

I do feel it is an area which hasn't been touched on, but which is going to be increasingly brought to our attention and which we ought to be looking at very very deeply and trying to provide for. ■

Fozia Rizvi, Worker at Plumstead Law Centre, Member of the Asian Women's Refuge Group.

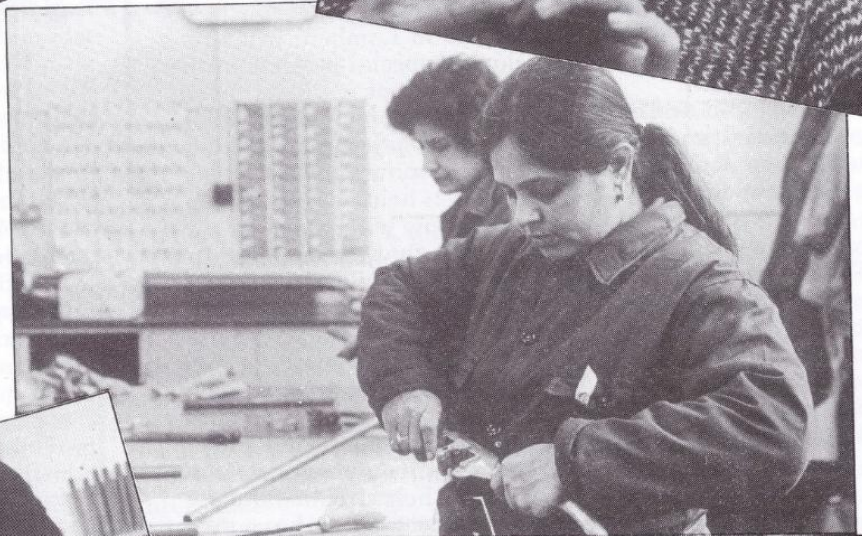




Roshi Kempadro/Format



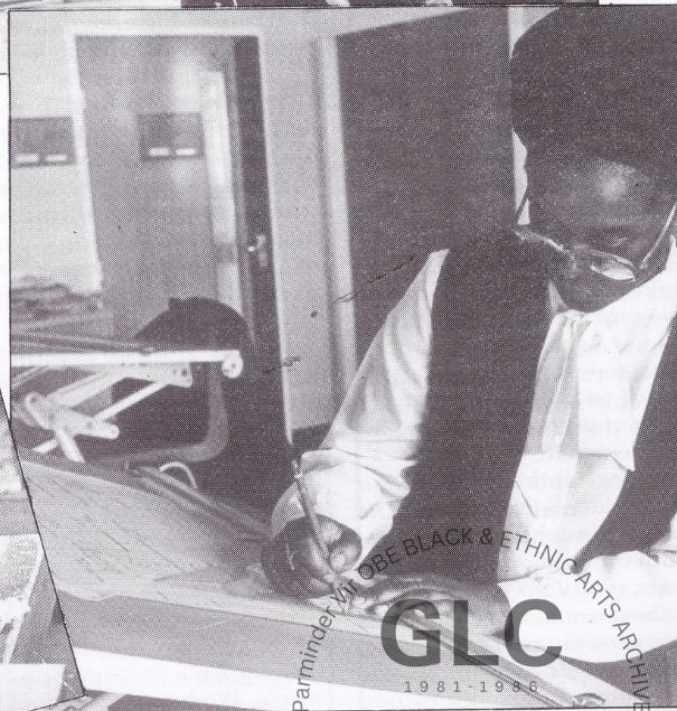
WORK



Brenda Prince/Format



Brenda Prince/Format



Parminder Vir OBE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
GLC
 1981-1986



Women's Issues: Ethnic Minorities Unit

The GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit has over the years funded and initiated many Black and ethnic minority women's projects and events. Below Erika Lawal, a worker with EMU, describes some of their initiatives and outlines their programme of events to celebrate International Women's day in March.

Consultation and Conference

The Ethnic Minorities Unit provided funding for the second London Irish Women's Conference; "Living in England". This Conference was held on 21 September 1985. Organised by the London Irish Women's Centre, and sponsored by EMU, more than 300 women attended, meeting both as a conference and in workshops to discuss issues which included the Prevention of Terrorism Act, strip searching, the experience of migration to England, abortion support, the media, education, alcoholism, housing, travellers, lesbians and older women. The day ended with a ceili. The conference was successful both in consolidating old campaigns and beginning new ones. The full conference report is currently being compiled by the organising group.

The "Irish Communities and Travellers" Conference held on 16 November 1985 included workshops not only on Traveller women, by dint of the amount of time which they devote to living on

site whilst caring for children, found pertinent. The conference passed several resolutions which included one relating to the exploration of the legality of evictions in circumstances where there are Traveller women receiving ante — or post-natal care, or other long term hospital treatment either for themselves or their children.

The Ethnic Minorities Unit provided funding for a conference which drew together Brent-based Asian women working in factories. The conference, organised by local women and held on 23 November 1985 was attended by 60 women and included workshops on unionisation, low pay, employment rights, child care, health and safety at work. A video of the day was made in Gujarati. The conference succeeded in drawing together a group of women who now meet regularly to organise around the issues detailed above.

A conference on gender and sexuality was held on 16th Feb. 1986; Black Communities living and

struggling together. Organised in conjunction with members of the black lesbian and gay communities, the conference offered the black community the opportunity to confront issues which are potentially divisive; including sexism, heterosexism and homophobia. Panelists and workshop facilitators included heterosexual women and men, gay men and lesbians.

In November 1985, officers in the Unit organised the visit of a delegation of women from Northern Ireland to speak publicly about strip searching in British prisons.

The Ethnic Minorities Unit has maintained a continuous consultation programme with Traveller groups in London, a programme which has included consultation with Traveller women. These consultations have led to plans for a Travellers' Centre. It is intended that such a centre would provide women with a place to meet and organise as Traveller women. The centre would also provide health sessions, pre-school and post-natal sessions, pre-school

sessions, creche facilities etc. Officers have provided assistance to Travellers in seeking funding for this centre under the EEC Poverty Programme.

Following consultations with relations and friends of the women concerned, Officers of the Ethnic Minorities Unit prepared a Leaders Report for January Committee on the strip searching of two Irish women in Brixton Prison.

As it is the Women's Committee which takes the lead on the funding of women's projects the number of such projects funded by the Ethnic Minorities Committee is relatively small. However, several projects in which women's considerations are paramount can be identified, and are as follows:

(i) A black lesbian and gay centre. A grant of up to £35,076 was awarded to the Gay Black Group to finance the running of such a centre (EM.768). The centre will provide meeting and social space for black lesbians and gay men, advice on legal and welfare rights and a library. It will provide lesbian only space.

(ii) Save the Children Fund. A grant of up to £3,450 was awarded to SCF (EM.1332) in connection with its literacy work with Travellers in London. Women have traditionally had the responsibility for family life in travelling communities and there is a number of children from single parent families. The SCF workers provide support for the women as well as taking some of the responsibility for their pre school children.

(iii) London Voluntary Service Council for its Migrant Services Unit. A grant of up to £13,047 was made to LVSC for MSU (EM.135) for a six month research project into the needs and experiences of Black and ethnic minority lesbians. The group is undertaking interview and questionnaire based research into all aspects of Black and ethnic minority lesbians' lives, including housing, employment, childcare and social needs. The information gained will, where relevant, be passed to the appropriate agencies in the hope that it will be used in decision making about the allocation of resources. ■

KEY EVENTS

Women have featured prominently in major events organised by the Ethnic Minorities Unit over the past seven months, as they do in the programme for February and March.

Miriam Makebe, a singer of world acclaim for, amongst other things, her dedication to the struggle by her countrymen and women for liberation from South African apartheid, performed at the Royal Festival Hall in September. In the same month a number of female performers including Chaka Khan and Amazulu took part in the two-day EMU sponsored Black Music Festival at Wembley.

Although the programme of events for the months leading up to abolition has not as yet been finalised, officers are seeking to ensure that the skills of and contribution made by Black and ethnic minority women are fully recognised. Plans for future include weeks dedicated to African and Asian culture and to the political struggle of men and women from both continents, at home and abroad. International Women's Day (8 March) will also be given a high profile by EMU this year, with events scheduled from 7-15 March.

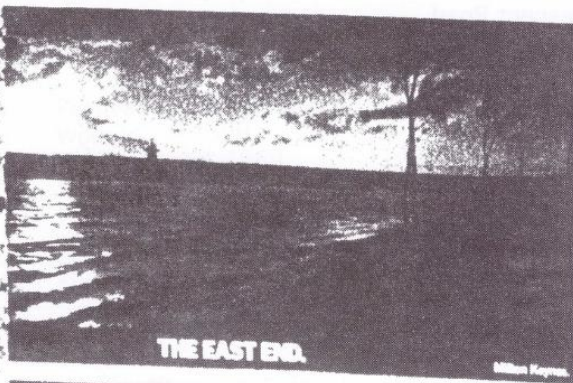
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	TIME	TICKETS
MARCH				
Friday 7th	Festival of films by African Women "La Passante" 1969 "Kaddu Beyrat" Fad Jal" 1979 "Man Sayay" 1980	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	10am-6pm	
Saturday 8th	Films by African Women Safi Faye — W. Kihora	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	12pm-6pm	
	Iranian Women's Festival Music/Film/Food/Talk	London University Badmington Hall. Union of London University, Malet St, London WC1	5pm-10pm	
	Kurdish Women's Festival Social Evening. Exhibition.	Surrey Hall Benfield Road London SW4		£1.50
Monday 9th	"And all of us are strong" Discussing Black Women's Art	The Black Art Gallery 225 Seven Sisters Road, London N4	12.30-3.30pm	
	Palestine Solidarity Campaign "Fertile Memory" (Film) "Women Under Siege" (Film) Discussion	Scala	7pm	£2.50 £1.70
Monday 10th	Dance Evening Shikisha Hackney Asian Women's Dance Group Anjana Batra	Tara Arts Centre 356 Garratt Lane Earlsfield London SW18	7.30pm	£2.50 £1.70 (one)

Tuesday 11th	Gen Magazine Launch (Maul Sulter)	Book Space Royal Festival Hall Level 3 London SE1	10-6 pm	
	Jazz Evening Gail Thompson The Touch Lola Oduwole	Albany Empire Douglas Way London SE8	8pm	£3.00 £2.00 (Conc)
	Official Launch of Focus Special Guest Mrs Sally Mugabe Akina Mama	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	6.30	
	Palestine Solidarity Campaign "La Nouba des Femmes" (Film) Music and Dance (Discussion)	Scala	7pm	£2.50 £1.70
Wed. 12th	Talk and Film "Who knows it feels it" (ELBWO)	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	6.30pm	
Thurs. 13th	Pottery Making 38 King Street,	Africa Centre 6pm London WC2E 8JT	10pm-	
	Theatro Technis Cypriot Women's Theatre Presents "Pandora's Box" Wide Eye Young Women's Theatre Presents "Red Devils" — by Debbie Horsefield	Montague Halls Tom Allen Centre Grove Crescent Road Stratford London E15	7.30pm	
	Palestine Solidarity Campaign presents "Leila and the Wolves" (film) Scala (discussion)		7pm	
14th March	Dance Event Shobana Sathanathan Jazzira Dancers Turkish Women's Dance Group	Tom Allen Centre Grove Crescent Road Stratford London E15	7.30pm	
	Discussion on Exhibition (Lubaina Himid)	Black Art Gallery 225 Seven Sisters Road London N4	7pm	
	Social Evening with Live Music	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	8pm	
Sat. 15th	Munira Black Women's Theatre presents "On the Inside"	Tom Allen Centre Grove Crescent Road Stratford London E15	7.30pm	
	Story telling for children Craft workshops — Zuriya Music Workshops — African Dawn	Africa Centre 38 King Street London WC2E 8JT	10am- 6pm	
	Liberating Fashions — NUBI Liberation Dance — Anita & Rose Disco — Wala Sounds		8pm	
	"Linking the Struggle" — Latin American Women's Conference (discussion)	Surrey Hall Binfield Road London SW4	10am-6pm	
	LA,FA LAIFA "Impressions of Exile" (film) "Encuentro" (film) (discussion)	Cineman Action	7pm	

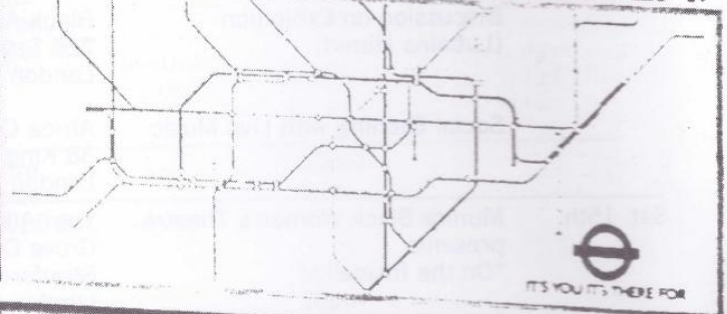
For further information please contact Sarah Micheal - 633 6645

GETTING AROUND?



THE EAST END.

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE SYSTEM.



IT'S YOU IT'S THERE FOR

HORNSEY STREET.

Patminder Vix OBE BLACK & ETHNIC
GLO
1981

Working for London

Is there anything special and different about the way that Black and ethnic minority women travel around London from the way that white men or indeed white women travel? We have to recognise that the way we are able to move around a city actually determines how we use that city's facilities (from jobs we can apply for, to the places we go to shop, or what we might do in our spare time or where our children spend more of their time). What does this tell us about Black Women's access to the things that London can offer them?

Most transport policy is geared to provide a service for the white male commuter and thus ignores not only the needs but almost the existence of women who use the transport network. In the same way Black and ethnic minority people are not considered as a users group and women from these communities are rendered totally invisible in policy making.

The GLC Women & Transport survey was initiated by the Women's Committee in a calculated decision to provide information about women's travel patterns and women's views about public transport. The original survey was subsequently enlarged to ensure that the numbers of Black i.e. Afro-Caribbean and Asian women included were sufficient to provide usable data. This data (hot off the computer printer!) is currently being analysed but already it is possible to see variations between the responses of Black Afro-Caribbean women and of Black Asian women.

MODES

If we look at the different transport modes women use, we know the bus is extremely important for women. It is the most important form of transport for Afro-Caribbean women (37% of whom use a bus more than 5 days a week and 41% between 1 and 4 days a week). The Underground is less important for Black women and British Rail is insignificant. However, the car is very important for Asian women, 10% of whom drive a car at least 5 days a week compared with only 4% of Afro-Caribbean women. The figure for

white women is 21%. Travelling as a car passenger is also important for Asian women, 50% of whom are driven to their destination between 1 and 4 days a week. But for all women, walking all the way is *the* most important mode: 61% Afro Caribbean women do so, 42% of Asian women and 57% of white women.

GETTING TO WORK

Many of the women surveyed did paid work outside the home. Afro-Caribbean women had the highest proportion doing such work (47% of them working full time, 12% working part-time). The figures for white women are (27% full-time, 22% part-time) and those for Asian women somewhat lower (22% full-time, 8% part time). These figures, by the way, only relate to women who go out of the home to do paid work and do not cover all women in paid employment.

For getting to work, Afro-Caribbean women rely more on the bus (42% do so) and the underground (used by 23% of Afro-Caribbean women), whereas Asian women use the bus (38%) or drive to work (38%). White women's journey to work is spread more evenly across different modes.

The time taken to get to work also varies. For Afro-Caribbean women we could say the journey takes half an hour (74% of Afro-Caribbean women's journeys between 15 and 44 minutes). Asian women's trips to work tend to be shorter, (50% of their trips are less than 15 minutes) while again white women's journey lengths are spread more widely over 0-45 minutes.

BLACK WOMEN WORKING IN TRANSPORT

At present nearly a quarter of London Regional Transport's staff are Black. But Black staff are concentrated at the lower grades and Black women are almost entirely to be found doing cleaning or catering jobs. As far as working on the 'operational' side goes, many Black women work as bus conductors but these are jobs which are now at risk because of the introduction of one-person-operated buses.

WHAT NOW

How do these figures relate to the actualities of Black women's lives? Black women in paid employment tend to have the lowest paid jobs. Women almost invariably carry the main responsibility for the home and for children, whether or not we are in paid jobs. For women in full-time work (like the 47% of the Afro-Caribbean women in the survey), the existence of reliable and cheap transport is essential to enable the combination of paid work and unpaid caring and domestic work based on the home.

Many black women work in cleaning jobs which necessitates shift work. For women working unsocial hours, an improvement in the off-peak service and the provision of public transport before 6.00am would be a real help.

Fare structure too is relevant here. Both Asian and Afro-Caribbean women tend to have much shorter journeys and would have suffered more from the recent round of fare increases which fell more heavily on short-hop trips.

When we see how constrained Asian women are at night by the lack of a safe transport system, this underlines the necessity to improve safety at night on public transport by eg. providing good lighting at bus stops and stations, ensuring the service is more frequent and reliable (to cut out time spent hanging around waiting) and more staff at stations and on the underground).

The figures given here are just scratching at the surface but prove that we need to not only collect more information but also to use this information to influence policy so as to claim access to mobility for all Black and ethnic minority women.

In policy making bodies and even in passenger consultative committees Black and ethnic minority representatives are conspicuous by their absence. It is time this is set right and to do this Black and ethnic minority women must be able to see the relevance of this to our lives. In addition a major rethink is required urgently and efforts on both these fronts may encourage and allow Black women to participate.

Women and Policing

Women and Policing work at the Southall Monitoring Group has focused on and highlighted the particular forms of harassment and violence that have confronted women in the local community. These have been predominantly racial and sexual in character and particularly detrimental to black women in Southall.

Evidence gathered by solicitors, voluntary organisations and advice agencies indicates that the police response to domestic violence and sexual harassment is inadequate and poorly motivated. This is so *despite* the fact that most cases involve criminal damage, and that the police have the power to arrest the offender should they choose to do so. A disturbing development is the trend to charge the women suffering domestic violence or sexual assault with wasting police time!

The relationship of women to policing practices has always been side-stepped and treated as peripheral — a bias which is symptomatic of the manner in which women's issues have been and continue to be trivialised. The relationship between black youths and policing has been central in most of the analysis of policing in the black communities. It is, however,

unacceptable that there should be an evasion of the real needs and fears of women which bring them face to face with the police. It is a stance which dismisses over half of the members of the community and sanctions major crimes such as rape, assault, grievous and actual bodily harm. The Southall Monitoring Group (SMG) feels that it is necessary to make a conscious effort to restore the question of women and the police to where it deserves to be: central on the political agenda.

Black women's everyday experience of violence is something which has been *made* acceptable by a racist and sexist society. It is women who end up imprisoned in their own homes by the fear of racial and sexual violence on housing estates and on the streets. This pushes them out of public places, which are experienced as threatening. In too many cases women are held responsible for attacks on them in public places as it is generally accepted that they should not be out in such places *alone*.

A recently published survey of London women suggests that the incidence of rape and sexual assault is far higher than any officially recorded figures indicate (see *Ask any Woman* by Ruth E. Hall). A survey of 1,236 women found that 17% of women

had been raped, 31% sexually assaulted and 20% had suffered attempted rape. Overall 11% of the women respondents had been victims of attempted rape or sexual assault.

The experience of rape centres and other agencies indicates that many more attacks on women take place than are reported to the police. A reason for this is that women anticipate unsympathetic and intimidatory treatment by the police. Often even when women do report such an attack, the police fail to record it. Rape is often 'no-crimed', that is, the police do not record the crime because they do not believe that they have sufficient evidence to bring a successful prosecution. Detective Inspector Ian Blair states in "Investigating Rape: a new approach" that in fact 50-70% of all rape allegations are regarded as 'false' compared with an average of 5.8% for all crimes.

Women's groups and organisations have for some time expressed concern about the police response to violence against women, whether in the case of domestic violence or general harassment. The police attitude is perhaps illustrated by an article

in the *Hornsey Journal* on 20th January 1984, by a police officer in a series called "The force is with you". He writes: "Experience has shown that we cannot believe a woman who says that she has been raped". He goes on to quote examples where he believed that women had fantasies or made trumped up charges of rape and needed intensive intimidation and cross examination.

A year ago concern was expressed when the Policy Studies Institute's report into the Metropolitan Police revealed widespread sexism and racism ranging from a "cult of masculinity" to overt discrimination. The combination of sexist and racist attitudes within the Met arouses particular concern about police treatment of black women in immigration matters, racist attacks and the equation the police make between blacks and crime.

The evidence from both women and the police themselves indicates that the police are very reluctant to get involved in cases of domestic violence. In a submission to the House of Commons Select Committee on Violence in Marriage (1977) the police said: "We are, after all, dealing with persons, 'bound in marriage' and it is important, for a host of reasons, to maintain the unity of the spouses. Precipitate action by the police could aggravate the position'."

The police response ranges from total inaction to deliberate delays usually accompanied by a refusal to note incidents, and a reluctance to press charges, even in cases where injunctions have been obtained. One dramatic example of the consequences of this inaction is the case of Krishna Sharma, a 26-year old Asian woman living in Southall, who was found hanged after 8 years of continuous violence from her husband. The night before she died, Krishna called the police. The officer who called to see her said she complained that her husband had hit her but he could find "no evidence". The police advised her that if she

wished she could pursue a private prosecution.

These practices and assumptions which make criminal violence against women acceptable instead of offering protection or support, and turns the offence back on to women as being "all their fault" and responsibility, have to be challenged and exposed.

There are a number of cases where Asian women, unable to speak English, have called the police after being beaten up by husbands. When the officers have arrived they speak only with the husbands who explain in English "she was getting hysterical". The police accept the explanation and go away. In cases of domestic violence involving Asian women, the only question police are interested in is whether or not the couple had an arranged marriage — as if this somehow justifies or explains the assault. The combination of racist and sexist attitudes makes it near impossible for black women to get their complaints taken seriously by the police.

Police attitudes have been exposed in court where in more than one case they have said: "It was nothing more than a silly domestic tiff getting out of hand". Policemen have often spoken sympathetically for the husband in court giving explanations for his behaviour because his explanation is the only one they have bothered to listen to. They are reluctant to accept a woman's word that domestic violence has taken place. They argue that they have to have "reasonable cause" to believe it — which can only mean that the police have to witness the event in order to act upon it.

In one recent Southall case, an Asian woman was badly beaten but under enormous family pressure kept returning to her husband. When her solicitor phoned the police to ask them to call round to see her after she had been beaten again, the police officer on the phone just laughed saying, "we're always going around there, they'll be O.K. tomorrow".

Police reluctance to take action extends to situations where an injunction has been granted against the husband, that is, where the police have the power of arrest without a warrant. Police reluctance to take men to County Court was revealed in another case in Southall. After continual pressure from a solicitor the police did arrest the husband but kept taking him to the Magistrates Court, where he was fined £5 and released three times consecutively — returning to beat up his wife again.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill gives the police absolute powers to arrest anyone on vague grounds — such as "affront to public decency" which remains undefined. The police also have the right to commit sexual assault, euphemistically defined as "intimate body searches", when they forcibly search body orifices (vaginas and anuses) to look for "weapons". The use of strip searches as in Armagh, Northern Ireland, are completely at the discretion of the police, and are used routinely to degrade and intimidate women.

The SMG's aim is to highlight the extent of crimes against women and open up the debate on "women and policing" within a wider forum as a basis for advancing certain demands on local authorities, the police and other relevant agencies.

In furtherance of this aim we are setting up, with the support of other community organisations, trade unions, a local labour group and local activists, a Police Accountability Committee to enhance the power of women to formulate and implement a policing policy in Ealing. We have set up a 24-hour Emergency Service for victims of racial, sexual and police harassment, whose first caller on the first evening the service started was a victim of domestic violence. We can be contacted on 01-843 2333. ■

Balvinder Gill
Southall Monitoring Group
50/52 King Street
Southall
Middlesex
1981-1986

Latin American Women in London

Twenty thousand Latin Americans are estimated as living in London, having come as immigrants, students or political refugees. About five thousand of these are women, who, because of high unemployment and the difficult economic situation in their own countries, came to Britain in search of a new life and jobs that could allow them to support their families back home. Those who came as political refugees had to leave their countries because their lives were in constant danger and there was no other alternative for them. Many have been able to find refuge in Britain.

Latin American women live in most London boroughs, but are mainly to be found in Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Greenwich, Camden, Islington, Hackney and Wandsworth. They face many of the same problems that affect white women, but in addition they also have to deal with racism in their daily lives — whether it is reflected in the kind of accommodation offered to them, or the lack of places in the few childcare facilities in the areas where they live. The employment situation is even worse as the only jobs available to them are in the lowest paid areas. One of these is catering, where the hours make it impossible for women to attend English classes or study for other skills that could help them get better paid work.

This situation makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers. Many women are threatened with deportation because of racist immigration laws, the restrictive terms of nationality legislation and state racism, which makes them afraid of all kinds of contact with officials. The threat of deportation is all the more urgent because immigrant women often have dependents in their countries.

Language classes for LA women have often been of a very poor standard. The classes appear not to be designed for adults, and the level of language training is very basic, racist assumptions being made about the ability of black people to learn. Inability to communicate properly

makes women accept whatever is offered to them in terms of accommodation. As a result the majority end up living in run-down, over-crowded housing with access to little in the way of recreation facilities.

Older women are in an even worse situation. They cannot speak English and there are no social facilities which take their needs into consideration — those that exist cater only for older women who can speak English.

Some of these problems have been tackled by women from the LA community. The Latin American Women's Service (LAWS) was set up to provide help for women in areas such as housing advice, legal rights, welfare counselling and health. These services are particularly aimed at immigrant women. Among the many projects carried out by the LAWS are English classes at home, as well as courses on sewing and hairdressing. They also organise seminars on women and health; they are preparing one on safety at work as well as an information pack in Spanish that will cover different issues of interest for women.

The Chilean women in exile have set up two Saturday schools for women and children where they teach English to women according to their needs. They also hold seminars in the schools on health, mental stress, nutrition and parents' relationship with teenage children as well as other topics of interest. The two schools provide childcare facilities. The classes for children include Spanish, Latin American history, geography, dance and folklore.

In order to remedy the lack of childcare facilities for LA women, two creches have been set up in North and South London, one run by Chilean women in exile and the other by a group of LA women.

The health group provides psychological support for women suffering mental stress and information on preventative health care. It holds seminars every month on different aspects of health.

Although the main aim of these groups is to provide a service for all

LA women living in London are many women still because they do not know existence. A great effort is made by these groups to reach women and make their available to them, as providing a space where share their problems, discuss effects of racism in their lives and challenge it through their actions.

While the threat of deportation can become a reality at any obvious that the situation of immigrant women is precarious. Therefore the aim of these campaigns is to prevent deportations and to legalise the situation of women who have been living "illegally" in Britain.

For refugee women the situation is different. Many have been campaigning for the right to return to their own countries, and this has been established in the UN Charter.

However, the LA women have to stay whether as immigrants or refugees. They have organised themselves according to their own situations and the campaign for their rights, and groups have provided a consciousness-raising and

● Contact Addresses

Latin American Women's Service.

Beauchamp Lodge,
2 Warwich Crescent, London
6NE

Phone 289 1601

Chilean Women in Exile.
95/97 Old Street, EC1V 9JL
Phone 608 1920 or 253 8404

Saturday Schools

— Albany Centre,
Dowglas Way, SE8
Phone 608 1920 or 253 8404
— Sixth Form Centre,
Chillingsworth Rd, N7
Phone 608 1920 or 253 8404

Health Group
Albany Centre,
Dowglas Way, SE8

Nursery El Volantin
Contact through Chilean Women
95/97 Old Street, EC1V 9JL

Nursery Mafalda
Contact through L.A. Women's Service.

1981-1986

Working for London
archive.parvindervir.com

EDUCATING ANITA: Black Girls and British Schools

Within the four walls of a school classroom lies many a tale of success and failure, frustration and gratitude, injustice and tolerance. We've all got one to tell. The tale I have is a true one. As it unwinds, it becomes the all too familiar story of a Black girl, any Black girl, and the subtle but powerful educational processes that shape and mould her life.

Anita, a young, female, Black, working class pupil living in an inner city borough, would be recorded as yet another statistical 'failure'; a Black 'underachiever', a victim of the burden of negative self-esteem. Pregnant at 16, yet another casualty of her cultural fecklessness and working class deprivation. The inadequacy of such assumptions, all too common in the literature on Black educational issues, becomes clear as we reveal the circumstances and conditions of Anita's schooling.

In the 5th form, Anita was and always had been in the top stream of her year. The school had high expectations of her as far as her summer 'O' Level results were concerned. She had a lovely warm, outgoing personality and was liked by everyone. Her parents were hard working, caring people. Anita's mother had been a canteen cook ever since her arrival from Barbados in the 50's. They lived on a run-down, post-war council estate near the school. In the face of much hardship Anita's mother had brought up three daughters and two sons. The eldest daughter was now a social worker and another a computer programmer; a tribute to the strength, resilience and resourcefulness of their Black womanhood.

Intelligent, confident and with caring parents, all the odds would seem to be in Anita's favour. Why then, did Anita fail at school? (She left without taking any exams) The answer is clear. Anita did not fail at school, school failed her. It failed her because it did not provide the support, understanding or resources she required to succeed. In the end, she just did not believe in the meritocratic equation of British schooling: that EDUCATION ; EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. She had no reason to.

The school was a large co-educational comprehensive with a fair proportion of Black pupils. Its buildings were badly in need of a good painting and repair. Graffiti Ruled OK! The only greenery in sight was the moss that grew on the damp walls. There was a high turnover of staff, no one stayed too long. As a result morale among the staff was low, which was in turn reflected in the daily regime of the school. Lesson times were ill-supervised and poorly carried out. The exam syllabus, by the summer, had not been sufficiently tackled. The educational standards were poor, but this was by no means a consequence of the pupils' ability; their potential had never been explored.

The school failed to recognise and respond to their pupils as young adults, which by the age of 16 they clearly were. This particularly affected Anita and the other Black girls whose experiences, and hence values, led to outlooks and attitudes which the school's directions and goals could not and did not encompass. They felt removed from the decision-making and disliked the pettiness of the rules. This caused strong undertones of resentment about being in this institution. Despite their misgivings, the girls still remained conscientious about their school work.

Anita felt stifled by the naive assumptions about her womanhood. When she did become pregnant she was made to feel an outcast, a disappointment and a failure. So she quietly left and never returned to take her exams. There was no Black member of staff and furthermore no Black female member of staff who could empathise. When it came to dealing with the real issues of home life in relation to school life, as a young Black woman experiences them, the white male and female staff were unable to, or downright uninterested in doing so. The school had created a problem where none existed. Anita did not see her pregnancy as a problem, the school did. On the contrary, she valued her prospective motherhood, and was not ashamed of it. What she did understand was

how difficult her life would become — she was aware of the "obstacle course" of motherhood, set up by the negative attitudes of a society which did not value having children.

In this tale, Anita finally left because she became pregnant. But before this happened, she had already begun to resent her experience of schooling, and had lost interest in classwork. She had become the victim of racist "tokenism".

Anita felt burdened with all the pressure on her to do well at school. She became more and more embittered about it as little or no understanding support or real guidance was provided. The teachers whose minds were filled with half-baked notions about "multi-cultural-education" and uninformed knowledge about all Blacks having educational problems, were thrilled to bits over Anita's apparent ability. They just expected her to do well. The responsibility for her success was placed solely on to her individual shoulders. Little support was provided in the relaxed classroom atmosphere.

Anita was acutely aware of being patronised. She explained: "They do not care about you, all they want from you is to do well so that they look good... They go on and on at you, 'You must do well, you've got to do well'. I'm so fed up, they expect so much from you." She was almost in tears when she explained the pressure she was feeling with the exams looming up. "They think it so easy, you know, they think it so easy." Despite her ability Anita had cracked under the subtle pressures of a racist schooling: bad resources, inadequate educational standards, negative and uninformed attitudes.

Racism is not only about being called a 'black bastard', it does not have to smack you in the face. It is also about the attitudes and values that pervade institutions operating to exclude you from having the same chance as others. Anita's experiences taught her a great deal about injustice and inequality. You could say, Anita had become well and truly educated.

Heidi Safia Mirza
1981-1986

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Strip searching of women in Brixton

Despite public protest, strip searching of women prisoners reintroduced in 1982 at Armagh Prison, Northern Ireland, continues. It is also going on at Brixton Prison, South London.

Since July 1985 two women held on remand, Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson, have been strip searched on average fifty times each month. They are subjected to about 115 body searches i.e. with clothes on, in the same length of time. This involves prison officers running their fingers through the womens' hair and feeling inside the women's trousers. On November 18th Martina and Ella were informed that from that date the folds of their bodies could be probed. Martina records that on the occasion of November 8, Ella O'Dwyer was strip-searched twice within the space of six minutes — which means that having put all her clothing back on, she was immediately undressed and searched again. The women face a further six months of prison custody in conditions which at best have been described as harassment, at worst, torture.

They were arrested last summer in Glasgow and face similar charges of conspiracy to those of the recently acquitted Dr Maire O'Shea. They are being held on remand at Brixton until their case comes to court in May. Treated as Category 'A' or high security prisoners, the two women are kept in isolation from other inmates under continuous prison officer and camera surveillance. Spending up to 23 hours a day in their cells they are permitted one hour of exercise in a segregated yard each day. For the rest of the time they are

either being strip searched or have frequent cell searches and cell changes. Recently conditions have become worse because they are being denied unbroken periods of sleep.

Through the night they are woken at 15 minute intervals by security checks which cause lights to come on in the cells. Martina is suffering migraine attacks and the health of both women is now a matter of serious concern.

Their families, solicitor and members of the Irish community in London are worried that the women will be unable to prepare their case for defence should this harassment continue in the months leading up to the trial. Martina and Ella say that although they have filed complaints, the prison governor refuses to record them.

A public meeting about their circumstances was held in County Hall on February 5th. It was chaired by Sabina Sharkey, Co-opted member of the GLC Women's Committee and speakers included Isabel Anderson, Martina's sister from Derry, Northern Ireland, Council Leader Ken Livingstone, and Mary Daly, spokeswoman for the Irish Prisoners Appeal — the group which formed last November in support of the two women. Isabel Anderson called upon the 200 or so people at the meeting to publicly protest at her sister's and Ella's treatment which, she said was a violation of human rights. Gearoid MacArlait from the Irish in Britain Representation Group and Father Donal Spring of the Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas also spoke and pledged the support of their organisations.

Linda Bellos, Black Councillor for Lambeth highlighted in her speech insidious nature of strip searching practises as a specifically sexual terrorism and abuse of women by the prison authorities and as a totally reprehensible act meeting strongly voiced Irish women political prisoners particular are suffering discriminatory and excess personal humiliation and degradation at the hands of British prisons both here and in Ireland. If a metal detector was good enough for the security measures at the House of Commons, why then, Isabel Anderson pointed out, were the same ones which are installed at Armagh and Brixton prisons not regarded as adequate?

During the meeting the solicitor acting for Martina and Ella also tossed aside weak responses he had received from the Home Office about the justification for prison's search and so-called security tactics. He added in long overdue letters to himself, also to Tony Benn, Kevin MacNamara Labour MP for Hull, the Home Office stated that the prison governor of Brixton was responsible for security and that Brixton prison was not bound to maintain any record of the number of searches to which the women were subjected. The solicitor Mike Fisher, now applied on their behalf, take the matter to the High Court in an attempt to bring an end to the treatment which he said goes well beyond what is right, proper and lawful at the point where it constitutes assault.

GLC
MPs Clare Short and C. Holland have also taken the case and further questions



about it will be raised in the House of Commons. The GLC has applied for Council visiting rights to the prison and has asked for a meeting with the secretary of State, Douglas Hurd. Valerie Wise and Ken Livingstone are also seeking individual visiting rights to the two women. Since the launch of the Irish Prisoners Appeal, its felt that if anything, the prison's treatment of Martina and Ella has become harsher. Their association hours have been cut down and the frequency of the searches have not reduced. Indeed, Clare Short was outraged to be informed that immediately after her own visit to the women they were strip searched again.

The group of concerned individuals involved in the Appeal take food to Martina and Ella, and are publicising and campaigning around the case. Money is particularly needed, to take the case to the High Court and for travelling costs involved for the womens' families and friends who are visiting from Ireland on a regular basis. Isabel Anderson

recalls that her family first learnt of Martina's arrest in a newspaper. They have never been officially notified.

In three years of its use in Armagh prison, strip searching on almost 2,000 occasions on 24 women prisoners has yielded a phial of perfume, a 5,00 note and a couple of keys. Far from proving itself as a necessary security measure, its over-riding effect is of physical intimidation and sexual

violence. Practices at Brixton Prison are evidence that the infamous procedures of Armagh are being replicated both sides of the border.

During International Womens Day celebrations there will be a picket outside Brixton Prison from 8 am to 8 pm on 7/8th March to protest against strip searching and call attention to the women there. The Irish Prisoners Appeal ask people to attend, particularly on the Saturday evening when there will be a singing and torchlight gathering. For further information about the Appeal group's meetings, contact TEL: 6745747 (pm). Should it go

before the High Court, the group state that this is potentially a case which will affect the human and civil rights of people in custody for decades to come. It requires money. They ask for donations to be sent to the 'Irish Prisoners Appeal'.

NAT WEST BANK, Brixton, SW9.

Acc. No. 02478951
Sorting code 60-03-36

Lodge cheques/postal orders — payable to Irish Prisoners Appeal or send to: Irish Prisoners Appeal, c/o Lambeth IBRG, 245a Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8RR Tel. daytimes: 274 7700 ext. 36.

Address for letters of support to the women in prison:
Ella O'Dwyer D25135
Martina Anderson D25134
HM Brixton Prison, PO Box 369, Jebb Avenue, London SW2 5XF.

The Appeal is also asking women to write letters to the press, and MPs and to draw the matter to the attention of trade unions and councils, and local labour party branches.

Women as Carers in the Black Communities

I would like to talk about women as carers in the Black communities, and to draw upon my own particular experience as a carer for my son, Ibrahim.

Black women have a tradition of caring for their elderly, ill or less abled within the family. In this country we are attempting to continue a practice in changed circumstances; we no longer have an extended family or closely knit community to offer help and support, so we find ourselves isolated within the home, unable to give up caring.

Black people often receive the worst housing and this can add extra strain to the task. Living in cramped conditions, maybe up several flights of stairs, can make us more housebound and caring all the more difficult. We are often unsure of the help which is available to us and unsure about approaching organisations and authorities to ask for help. So often we are confronted by red tape: forms to be filled in, questions to be answered. If we do not speak fluent English there is no interpreter available, nor any social services representative who speaks a relevant language. Social services and the statutory organisations should make more of an effort to include black people in their work. They should provide translated information and publicity which reflects the multicultural nature of the communities which they are serving. If more black and ethnic minority people were employed and formulated policy in the social and voluntary services, then the services provided would be more accessible and helpful to black people.

We as black women should begin to see help for carers as our right. After all, the decline in social services and the gradual dismantling of the NHS can only

Suzanne Roden/Format



mean more cuts in staff and facilities. More and more elderly, sick and less abled people from hospitals are put back into the community without adequate provisions being made, such as modifying houses. This means that once more the burden will fall on women as carers within the confines of the home. For as long as society and the state can rely on women in their traditional role as carers, we will remain a valuable source of unpaid care for the less abled, the elderly and the sick. We must learn to expect more support, both financial and practical. We must organise together to demand that support which is our right.

Ibrahim is 14 years old and has been labelled as "mentally handicapped". Once you have been given such a label, no one is interested in your future any more; they just look at your "case history" and put you in a pigeon hole from which it is difficult to escape. I believe that Black children are too easily labelled as "handicapped".

Ever since Ibrahim was and I have been pushed a and told what is best for I often had to fight against decisions of specialists and withdrawn him from several schools in the borough where he was not happy.

In all these years I have much help at all from the services and no help at all from my doctor. I have had to go on my own to get the best possible help for me and my son. I am asking for a list of all the schools in London but only recently have I received it.

The psychologists decided several schools in Tower Hamlets were suitable for Ibrahim but we disagreed. Ibrahim got worse instead of better at these schools. They weren't the right place for him. I wanted a school where he could do activities where they would treat him as an adult instead of a child. He may not read and write but he can do other things. He likes music and he loves to run.

Physically he is very strong and there was encouragement to use that strength.

Each time I took Ibrahim away from a school, I had to keep him with me all the time as I worked in the local community. But I remained determined that Ibrahim deserved better treatment than what was offered. Social services began to tell me that I was mad.

My living conditions do not make things any easier. We are a family of five living in a two-bedroomed flat. There is not enough room for Ibrahim to move about, we need more space.

Brenda Prince/Format



Suzanne Roden/Format



This article was written by Shammis Dirir, London Black Women's Health Action Project for the Carers conference, which took place in September, 1985 at County Hall.

Finally, in July, the authorities gave me a list of schools outside the borough. I visited the school in Greenwich where Ibrahim is now. Although he seems to be happier with his new school, transport is a huge problem. I have to take and pick him up from Greenwich every day and I get no help with the cost of transport. Obviously I would have preferred to have found a good school for Ibrahim in Tower Hamlets. It seems unfair that I should be forced to take my son out of the local community to find a good school and unfair that he should be the only Black person at the school.

I believe that my experiences with Ibrahim tell a lot about the problems that Black women face as carers. Too often we are forced to settle for inferior facilities and resources because we feel intimidated or simply do not know how to demand something better (or even that better care does exist). And when we do fight for better treatment, we fight alone. ■

Suzanne Roden/Format



SURVEYING THE SCENE:

Writings by women of African and Asian descent

Gifts from my
grand mother

As a Black Woman

Charting the
Journey

Because the
dawn breaks

The Threshing
Floor

Black presses Akira and Karia have published three volumes of poetry by women: *Land of Rope and Tory* by Marsha Prescod, *As A Blackwoman* by Maud Sulter and *Because The Dawn Breaks* by Merle Collins. This move by mainstream black publishing looks promising as the strong womanist traditions within these works address the writers' communities black, women, class as a whole. When Marsha writes that her book is dedicated to her friends and family,

And to all those Afrikan
women and men
inside and outside that
continent,
anonymous and otherwise,
who've struggled
and died for us to see better
days.

we are left in no doubt as to the
liberatory nature of the work.

Previously the black woman
poet tended to be published in

pamphlet or short volume form by
presses such as Black Ink and
Bogle-L'Ourverture. Works by
Accabre Huntley and Lorraine
Simeon undoubtedly helped lead
the way. Sheba has followed last
year's *A Dangerous Knowing: four
black women poets* with *Gifts
from my grandmother* by Meiling
Jin. In a wonderful panoramic
sweep Meiling opens up vistas
and possibilities for all women

Poem to Ailin
To you
vulnerable
yet so strong.
When you set your face
to the East
I can see
Many women standing there.

The book also contains an
introduction about the poet's life
and beautifully simple illustra-
tions by Hiang Kee and both
Meiling and Sheba are to be
commended for continuing the
development of more radical and

Over the past year
new trends have
developed in the
publishing of writ-
ings by women of
African and Asian
descent working in
Britain. This short
overview hopes to
offer some
direction to both
writers and
readers.

dynamic writings from a feminist
perspective/press. The Virago
Poets series is working in reverse.
There is no doubt that previous
collections by Grace Nichols and
Amryl Johnson are the best sellers
on the list. This proved both that
readers wanted the poetry of
black women in Britain and that it
was necessary for the develop-
ment of our work. Now in 1986
Virago intends to publish
Blackamerican Maya Angelou as
the token blackwoman. Therefore
an already well-established writer
is being prioritised over black
women writing here and also
blackwomen writers born here,
who are still the least heard. While
our novel writing and other forms
are developing there is no doubt in
terms of poetry we are miles
ahead of the rest. Peruse the six
past Virago Poets books if you
don't believe that. Now is the time
to challenge publicly the
tokenism and the racism of all
white publishing houses,
commercial or otherwise.

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In the field of autobiographical fiction, autobiography and sociology there have been three additions: *The Unbelonging* by Joan Riley, *In My Own Name* by Sharan-Jeet Shan and *The Heart of the Race* ed. Stella Dadzie, Beverly Bryan and Suzanne Scafe.

The Heart of the Race authors are to be commended for completing the book. A collective manuscript developed over a period of five years and it took a tremendous amount of physical effort to put it together. While it leaves too much unsaid around certain issues, OWAAD for instance, it is a very useful resource. It should also be noted that it does *not* represent Black Women's Lives in Britain. It deals only with London and the South East and looks specifically at the experience of the majority group of the '50s and '60s from the Caribbean.

However, the book does offer us the opportunity to take up the pen and document our own histories for ourselves. And without a doubt *The Heart of the Race* is a book written for blackwomen and to the black community as a whole.

That cannot be said of *The Unbelonging*. It is dangerous in that it is both reactionary and anti-feminist/blackwoman. The central character remains a victim from beginning to end, and the book offers no analysis of the situations she finds herself in. Politics, it seems, are outside the scope of the novelist. In presenting a one dimensional picture of black people, Joan Riley offers on a plate the violent debased victim picture that this white supremacist society wants to see. And apart from content, the book itself is badly written, in need of at least another re-write. It is not up to The Womens Press's usual editorial level. We do not need to be patronised. Our work must stand alone but let it stand beside books of equal crafting or not at all.

In My Own Name is a sincere chronicle of the life of Sharan-Jeet Shan. However, the fact that 'some Hindi/Urdu words have been used in the book, to give the story a measure of authenticity' rather calls into question who the book is aimed at. We must not justify the use of our own language to express our own experience. And still the whites come off best — kind, helpful, supportive. (This phenomenon seems to be more forthcoming when we are in adversity. Especially if the protagonists are the men from our communities. Support usually disappears when we are strong in ourselves and confronting racism and the myriad other oppressions we face). Her writing is beautiful and I eagerly await a novel or short story collection by Sharan-Jeet, although she tries to convince us that she is not a writer!

A brief overview of forthcoming publications offers several rays of hope to the conscious woman in struggle.

Charting the Journey: Writings by Black and Third World Women from Sheba next month holds out a lot of promise. Conceived over three years ago (in the white and thankfully distant past where there was only one woman of color on the collective), it offers a broad perspective of views and realities, presenting a more rounded picture of our various selves. Barbara Burford, one of Britain's most accomplished Black Women writers, has a collection of short stories *The Threshing Floor and other Stories* also coming out as a Sheba imprint. The Asian Women's Writing Group are working on an anthology which will probably appear next year and GEN issue 7/8 features writings by women of African and Asian descent and a useful guide to setting up your own writing network.

We must continue to write. There is undoubtedly a conspiracy against the British-

based woman of color writer. Look at the feminist lists and their individual employment (non-employment) practices. Who are the commissioning editors? Where are the designers? Who is actively nurturing our creativity? And when a voice is heard, what is it saying? What are the implications of what is being said? As Alice Walker stated emphatically on her last visit to Britain "We Have To Make Our Own". And we shall. in the meantime the major feminist presses are making a mint out of blackwomen's writings, the American in particular. Yet again we have seen ourselves excluded from yet another lesbian anthology *Girls Next Door* (The Womens Press). For the third year in succession women have won major awards from the ACERC Afro-Caribbean Education and Resource Project) writing awards yet none of them have been published by a feminist press.

All of the books mentioned in this article should be read. To know where we are going we need to know where we have been. We need to engage in constructive criticism of our work and continue a dialogue around the politics of the written word. Writing is very powerful. It can help change the world for better or for worse! We cannot afford to remain silent any longer. So in the spirit of eternal sisterhodd. **WRITE ON SISTER. ■**

Maud Sulter

Gen 7/8 is available by post from WedG ILEA DRAMA & Tape Centre Princeton St WC1. Price £3.

Maud Sulter is a writer of African descent. She presents readings and facilitates workshops for women/young people/blackgroups. This autumn she is launching a new imprint URBAN FOX press. Its first publication will be *CHECK THIS! Creativity by contemporary women of African and Asian Descent*. For more information write to her at WedG (as above).

1981-1986

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Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (project)

At the end of September 1985, the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (BLGC) management committee appointed four part-time workers, to carry out the tasks of administration, outreach and development. The project aims to provide a permanent base for Black lesbians and Black gay men. BLGC is primarily a London-based project, but we will obviously be dealing with any sistahs/brothers, from outside the Capital who contact us.

The idea of the centre came through what is now the Lesbian and Gay Black Group. At its inception in 1981 the group was known as the Gay Asian Group. Within two weeks, the name was changed to the Gay Black Group. In the past the group has been predominantly male/male-orientated, although over the years it has given support to many Black lesbians. Also the contributions of individual Black lesbians has always been present within the group who eventually renamed itself to specifically acknowledge and include Black lesbians. Discussions about having a centre began as early as 1983, and funding was obtained in 1985.

The present management committee is made up of equal numbers of men and women, of African and Asian descent. Many were, and are, still involved with the Lesbian and Gay Black Group, and were members of the original steering committee that was initially drawn from this group. However, the centre hopes to cater to the potential 200,000 Black lesbians and Black gays living in Greater London alone.

Currently the major work of the project, is searching for a suitable building. This is very time consuming. BLGC aims to provide advice, counselling and support that serves the needs and promotes the interests of Black lesbians and Black gay

men. We hope to develop a telephone advice service that is more empathetic than those currently available. We also propose to provide an alternative to the commercial gay-scene, and much needed space for Black lesbians, by providing a social centre and activities for ourselves, by ourselves. The project has already begun to develop resources and a library that focuses primarily on work by and for Black lesbians and Black gay men. This will also include any work that reflects the multiplicity of our oppression, so that, we can have in one place a unique data base that can offer information that is inspirational and reaffirming to ourselves. Some of this material will be available for loan.

The project has so far produced one Newssheet (Dec '85), that briefly outlined the work of the project to date. However in the future this will be developed into a newsletter/magazine for our communities offering us the

space to express ourselves freely in the Black media. Discussion has already taken place amongst the workers around the idea of working towards producing a booklet of Black lesbians and Black gay mens' coming out stories.

BLGC is committed to asserting our right to self-definition, challenging homophobia, racism, sexism and building solidarity between Black lesbians and Black gay men. As Black people we are committed to highlighting the politics of sexuality within our own communities, and building links with our heterosexual sistahs and brothers.

Dorethew Smartt

The Black lesbian and Gay Centre (project) can be contacted on: 885 3543. BLGC, BM Box No.4390, London WC1N 3XX.

or
Annexe 'B', Tottenham Town Hall
Town Hall Approach Road,
London N16 4RX



BLACK WOMEN AND ALCOHOL

In 1979 the British public spent about £9,000 million on alcohol, and during the 1970s women's rate of alcohol consumption doubled, exceeding the rate of increase amongst male drinkers. Between 1964 and 1974, the number of women diagnosed as dependent on alcohol trebled and deaths from cirrhosis rose by 64%.

Today women account for about half of those being treated in mental hospitals for alcoholism. Alcohol services have been slow in recognising and meeting the needs of women with alcohol related difficulties. A recent survey carried out by DAWN London (Drugs, Alcohol, Women, Nationally) highlights this fact. Of the 254 alcohol and drug agencies/organisations they questioned, 154 offered no services for women and of the 100 who did, 90 saw no black women as clients/ users.

Any effort to gain a greater understanding of the attitudes to and use of alcohol by black women was frustrated by the total lack of information available. The first step to redress this imbalance was taken by myself and Linda Crawford

when we carried out a pilot study — "Black Women and Alcohol". The pilot study was aimed at all black women and by this we mean women who suffer discrimination in housing, education, employment and service delivery because of skin colour and culture. Seventy women living in the London area responded to the questionnaire.

In relation to black women and their use of alcohol we must remember that many black women, having spent the greater part of their lives in this country, may be putting forward a black British view-point, rather than say, Afro-Caribbean cultural ideals.

In attempting to make a political analysis of black women's drinking in this country, the experience common to them all is racism; racism that more often than not is compounded by sexism and class oppression. Our pilot study "Black Women and Alcohol" clearly shows, not only are some black women drinking dangerously as a reaction against and a way of coping with the racism, but alcohol agencies operate on such a racist level that these same women are prevented from seeking help. In the pilot study 15% of the women said racism played a

part in their drinking. The 15% represents regular and heavy drinkers as well as women who said they drank moderately.

On a general everyday working level, the few black female workers in the alcohol field have had similar experiences in having to strive to dispel the myths and stereotypes surrounding black women, which range from black women being seen as superwomen to genetically inferior beings. It is these preconceived images which prevent white workers in the alcohol field from conceiving the range of emotional and social problems black women have to contend with in this society.

In our pilot study we asked black women what types of services they would like to see made available to black women with alcohol related difficulties. The response was overwhelming and highlighted the fact that black women no longer feel that they can rely on state provisions as it has become evident that such provisions do not cater or seemingly intend to cater to the needs of black people in this country.

Juliette Small

Counsellor/Development Worker
Women Alcohol Counselling Service

LESBIANS: DIFFERENT ROOTS/ROUTES.

Are you an Asian, Immigrant, a Black or Jewish dyke? Do you perhaps come from the Republic of Ireland, Latin America, the Middle or Far East? Then this project I am involved in is your project and mine.

I am a forty year old immigrant lesbian who has been living in this country for almost seven years now. For a substantial amount of these seven years, I felt my cultural identity denied to me. I was disturbed to find that the racism in society at large was also present in lesbian and feminist networks. I noticed more and more that what you read is always about white/gentile lesbians. There is next

to no information available about our experiences and needs. It is even said that we do not exist!

I believe that while no information is forthcoming about our plight, we will continue to remain invisible. This research project very much came out of these feelings.

To begin with, the GLC Women's Committee was approached for funding but to no avail. The research is now funded by the Ethnic Minorities Unit of the GLC. A report will be submitted to the Ethnic Minorities Unit by the end of March. What I am trying to

document is the needs and experiences of lesbians who are from historically immigrant communities in London. What is important is, on the one hand, our ethnic identity and on the other, our lesbian identity. What is it like for us to be a lesbian in British society. The report will also include a chapter on lesbians and the immigrant law. If you want to remain anonymous, you can.

Interested? Please contact me urgently at Migrant Services Unit, 68 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JR. Telephone: 388 0241 x 37 or 41 and ask for Zehra.

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Moving On... Asian Girls Resource Centre



The aim of our work is to offer Asian girls a varied range of resources in the form of activities, counselling and advice which will enable them in the future to make positive choices about their lives. For a number of reasons, we feel that an autonomous Asian Girls Project is the most successful way of attaining this goal. The necessity for Girls Work has been established by many women workers who have for a number of years challenged the lack of suitable youth provision for girls and young women. A report produced by the National Organisation for Work with girls and Young Women in 1981, illustrates the extent that young women have been neglected by most youth agencies. They found that the number of Girls Clubs had drastically dropped over the last few years, and that the number of girls attending 'mixed provision' had also fallen considerably.

The National Organisation for Work with Girls and Young Women attribute this to:

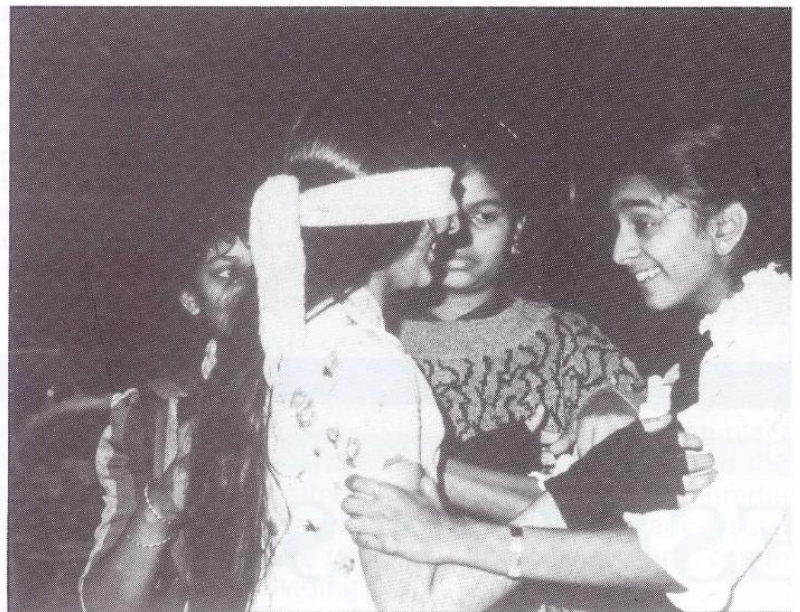
"a) The type of programmes offered by the majority of clubs."

"b) that over 80 of full time workers are male."

It has also been found that in mixed clubs programmes do not include varied activities for girls and that, as not even discussion groups are arranged, girls are left to 'natter' in the canteen.

As a result of this, over the last ten years women workers have come together through a common feeling of dissatisfaction with the 'invisibility' of girls and young

Asian Girls Work has been going on at Isl
Girls Project for four years. By setting
running groups in diverse settings such as s
youth centres, and at our base in Manor Ga
we have developed a highly skilled, inn
and successful way of working.



women within youth clubs — statutory or voluntary — and in small numbers have organised voluntary girls projects, girls nights, girls adventure weekends etc. They have found that given a fair chance girls welcome the opportunity to take part in such activities as rock climbing, canoeing, DIY etc.

For Asian girls, this situation is further exasperated by existing myths and racist stereotypes. These attitudes are prevalent in both schools and youth clubs, and portray Asian girls as either victims of their families traditional customs or as young women who have been trained to be passive.

This results in agencies concluding that there is no point in offering Asian girls such facilities as extended careers advice, counselling and support.

In this respect, the Project has done much to offer opportunities to Asian girls, creating an environment where it is felt to be safe both by girls and parents. Participation in the Project has enabled girls to develop new friendships, interests and skills. It has also increased their visibility and involvement in their schools and communities. It is through the friendship and support networks which have developed amongst the

who attend the groups have helped them to cope with some of the pressures that effect their lives. We feel that our work provides resources which rarely exist elsewhere.

During that past year the Project has carried on with the successful format of running cross cultural Asian Girls Groups. "In these groups we try to facilitate the positive development of cultural, racial and sexual consciousness through activities in a non threatening, non intimidating and relaxed atmosphere. Here, there is no fear of being sneered at or having to take a second class position so as no to attract attention for being 'different'."

Running a group that has girls from different Asian backgrounds has meant that in Islington, we are the only group that caters for some of the smaller Asian communities such as the Mauritian and Punjabi Sikh communities. It also means that by sharing common experiences, perceptions and situations the girls can form strong uniting bonds.

The groups that we have been concentrating on in the past year have been:

1. The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School Group. This is a large group — it has a membership of 80 young women, the age group is 11-18 years old. This school year we have not encouraged more girls to join because of inadequate facilities. This group is held in a large school room, and the activities which we have provided in it have been varied eg. video, traditional music and dance, drama workshops, cookery classes, the celebration of different festivals, outings, discussions of issues of health, education, Asian history, future employment, new technology, beng Asian in this country etc. We set up termly programmes with the girls, and encourage active participation in the decision making process. Ideally we would like to cater for more of the Asian girls who attend the school, but in order to do so we need facilities where we can provide several activities on

the group night. The group already functions like a mini youth club, but needs permanent fixed facilities like the ones that exist in ordinary youth clubs — we need enough space to run smaller, more effective workshops such as photography classes, drama groups, discussion groups etc.

2. The second group which we have been running is an Asian music class which has a membership of 15 girls aged between 11-18. In this group the girls have been learning the Hamoniam Tabla and voice training.

3. We also started a group at North London Technical College — age group 16-21 years. These girls came together to gain support from each other, in order to function better at college. It has now developed into a self functioning group, and our role has become information and advice giving when approached by the Group. They have found some problems in finding a suitable meeting place, due to hostility from the boys at the college, and would benefit greatly from a Girls Resource Centre, where a safe environment could be created for them to meet and hold activities that they want to.

For the past two summers we have run successful holiday trips, lasting over a period of four days. These trips were a combination of fun and educational activities such as exploring the English countryside, horseriding and canoeing. Over the past year work with individuals has increased enormously. We have found that in order to work effectively with Asian girls, much of our time has been spent in home visiting and making links with Asian parents and the Asian community. The inadequacies of Social Services provision for Asian people puts pressure on us to respond to requests for advice and help from parents and young women. Requests for our help from a variety of agencies have sometimes been overwhelming and impossible to respond to.

We have been contacted by the police, social workers, womens' centres etc in such cases as a battered young woman of 19 years old, suspected incest etc. We have also been involved in giving advice and support to other workers who come into contact with Asian girls. This has ranged from request from schools as to where to find an Asian dance tutor, to providing training around how to help a girl who is going through sexual abuse. Recently the number of calls about sexual abuse have grown, and in order to deal with this we have been involved in an Asian womens network which has set up an Asian womens' incest victims/survivors line.

In order for this work to be carried out successfully we have formed a sub management group of Asian women. This group, manages, supports and advises the Asian girls work co-ordinator. It has been working on a constitution of it's own which would be used for an Asian Girls Resource Centre which would run the following groups.

In order to meet the demands made of us more fully we would like to extensively develop the Project in the form of an Asian Girls Resource Centre which would run the following groups:

'After School Group', Young Mothers Group, Unemployed Group, Incest Survivors Group, Arts and Crafts Group, General Youth Activities, Advice, Information and Counselling Assertiveness Training, Self Defence, Media Workshops.

We envisage that this centre will not only be a support to Asian girls, but to other agencies and workers that work with Asian girls and young women. As this goes to press, we have heard that our application for funding for an independent Asian girls resource centre has been successful. We are now in the process of looking for premises.

Akela
Islington Asian Girls
Project

1981-1986

This is an extract from my book *"Living and Winning"* which was written at a time when I had been feeling very depressed and thinking that I couldn't cope. I wanted my writing to be published to prove to people that I am not a fool and that I can lead a normal life.

LIVING AND WINNING

"All of my life I have to express myself and live with people around me, whereas many others act as if they don't really care about others, or they should care even less about me if I didn't. Because I am not beautiful or a bit above average even, I can't get away with the things that some people get away with. If I behaved like some people behaved towards other people, I would be alone and lonely. People would not want to know me. I would have the burden of rejection and loneliness, and my loneliness is bad enough as it is — sometimes."

"On my passport I came here with, it said 'retarded' it makes me have to joke about it. How can a retarded person live on their own and write a book about their life? My new passport says 'disabled'. Saying 'disabled' don't bother me because there are many, many people who are disabled."

Reading and writing are quite difficult for me because of my eyesight so the way that I worked on the book was with the help of friends who read aloud and discussed my writing with me. Early in the book I describe the prejudices that women with disabilities have to contend with if they want to have children.

"Many people think disabled people can't have children. They think they are disabled through and through. Some people even think we shouldn't have children because they will look like us. Some of them even ask, 'Did the child come out like you', as if my child would have a skinny frail often sick body, withered arm, lame legs and speech defect exactly like me and they don't understand that we can love and look after a child just as well as normal people can, and in many cases, much better. How many disabled people turn out to be child-beaters?"

When I wrote this book I hoped that it would help my family to understand that although I am disabled I can help myself. The expectations they had for me were very low. Also I wanted to explain the feelings I had about my family and how they treated me. I had tried talking to them about this but that did not work.

"A lot of things I know about life people don't realise that I know, because they always talk about me as though I'm not there. I have been in the same room as them, watching telly, and they will talk about me without saying my name but I know it's me they are talking about. One day, I was lying on the couch and my sister was on the phone talking about me. They thought I was sleeping but I heard everything they said. I pretended to be asleep because I wanted to hear what they said. They were talking about how I chat to people and complaining that I tell people how I feel about things."

Another reason I wrote about my life was because I feel that being disabled and black you have to go through a lot of pressure to get what you want. Being in a white country you suffer a lot, always having to go to the Social Services to get what you need. It's difficult for white disabled people if they can't speak for themselves, it's harder though if you're black because disabled or not I see black people being pushed around and patronised all their lives.

I went to a Day Centre in Hackney.

"I soon discovered a number of disadvantages. The centre had been set up for the training of mentally handicapped. Because of this the 'trainees' were treated as though they were all of low mental standard. I felt out of place. I am lame and have a speech defect but despite this I have lived normally both at home and socially."

"If I was still at the Centre I wouldn't get so far in life as I have got today. I am glad I can make decisions for myself and don't have anybody to say. 'Do this' or 'Do that'."

I hope other disabled people will learn from my book that they can live a normal life and that they shouldn't feel that they can't do things.

("Living And Winning" by Pauline Wiltshire is available from Centreprise/Hackney at £2.25 and at other bookshops at £2.95)

Parmaninder Singh
OF BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
GLC
Pauline Wiltshire
Working for London
archive.parmandervir.com

Violence against Black Women

Violence against women has been taken seriously by many feminists, who have felt that violence against women was an issue we should be campaigning on. But in the past it has been almost exclusively a white issue; campaigns concentrating on dealing with violence against white women.

There were groups such as, Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) which formed in Leeds and London in late 1980 to campaigns against various forms of male violence. They were not exclusively white women's groups, and a few of us as black women struggled to ensure that black women's experiences were not left out of the analysis and practice.

I believe that it has been crucial for women to look in detail at the ways violence affects us and particularly to look at the ways in which violence affects different groups of women. At last there was a feminist issue relevant and about all women, and not just the privileged middle class few. As a black feminist talking about the issue of violence against black women is not without problems. Firstly the issue of racism is ever present and however much we may wish to focus only on our experience as women, we cannot leave aside our experience as black people.

Neither can black women overlook the particular ways white men use our being women as part of their practice of racism. The examples of Jackie

Berkeley who was raped by police in Manchester, or the Asian women in Leeds being raped and sexually harassed by National Front men illustrate this. While there is a common experience of racism shared by all black people, there are also particular forms it takes dependant upon the gender and culture of the black people. Virginity testing at British Airports, part of an attempt to humiliate and degrade Asian women by the Immigration Official's.

When we move on to talk about experience as black women of rape or incest, we may be talking about rape or incest by black men. To write or speak publicly about such experiences of black men is to give racist, both men and women the opportunity to use what we say to reinforce their racism.

Recently when an Asian woman was murdered by her husband while living in a Refuge, the press quickly focussed on the attack and used it to highlight Asian men's violence. When white liberals talk about women's position in India they focus only on dowry murders in order to patronise Asian women and to claim that Asian men are more violent than white men. Whilst the media have responded to feminist demands to take violence against women seriously, they have done so in typically racist ways.

Rape by black men is always highlighted, and whilst the press are no longer allowed to state the race of the rapist they get round this by publishing a

photograph. The impression that is constantly reinforced is of rape being done only by black men, but only if the women raped are white. Black women who are raped rarely get as far as the courts because the police deem us "legitimate targets", as they do women who work as prostitutes. What this media coverage has done is allow the majority of men who are violent against women to go unchallenged, and to further inhibit our ability as black women to speak openly about the violence we experience. I have no doubt that Joan Riley's book 'The Unbelonging' will be used by racists to condemn black men. On the other hand the book does look realistically at one black women's experience of incest, an experience so painful and honest that cannot be denied. Are we as black women to remain silent because those that oppress us are also oppressed?

I hope not. Violence by black men does occur but must be seen in the context of all men's violence against women, it is no more or worse, and as black women we must constantly fight against racists who try to insist that it is. Men in all cultures grow up to believe that they are superior to women and that maleness can be reinforced by violence. As black women we have a huge task ahead of us to assert our right to live without the threat or fear of violence and we take on this task in the full knowledge that we are also fighting the racism that affects black men and women.

GLC

Linda Bellos

Working for London
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Black women and racist attacks

Little is written about black women and racist attacks. It is this section of the community, however, who suffer the brunt of such violence. The women who are most vulnerable are usually single women living alone with their children or those women who, because of their circumstances, are at home all day.

Ms P is a young Afro-Caribbean woman, living with three children who are three, four and eight years old, in an area notorious for racist attacks. She has a six-year history of being racially attacked and abused in her home, while shopping, and as she takes her children to nursery school. All her children are on tranquillizers because they are unable to sleep at night. On one occasion her eight-year-old son was attacked by a gang of white thugs as he returned from school. He was so frightened that he ran all the way home and waited in darkness by the rubbish chute until his mother arrived home after picking up the two smaller children. When she contacted the police they said they could do nothing. When asked by Ms P if an officer could call just to reassure her son, who was extremely frightened, the officer she was speaking to flippantly refused. A few days later, at 4 in the morning, a brick was thrown through the front window of her flat. Ms P decided that she could no longer live with this hell and left the flat with her three children, having no alternative. The housing and social services departments were totally unsympathetic, and after days of sleeping on the floor of a relative's home, she was eventually found a room at a women's refuge in a nearby borough by Newham Monitoring Project and she was able to stay there until she was found alternative accommodation.

Isolation, fear and suffering is a part of daily life for many black women, and the state, rather than recognising this, perpetuates the

situation by forcing black women to live alone in the middle of large white council estates.

Mrs M is an Asian woman who is separated from her husband and lives on the fourth floor of a tower block, on a predominantly white and hostile estate, with her two-year-old daughter. She is also nine months' pregnant. Similarly she suffers verbal and physical attacks both at home and whenever she travels outside her flat. Every time the front door is banged, she flinches knowing that it is the same white youths who have tried again and again to scare and harass her. Both the housing department and the police take advantage of the fact that she speaks very little English by pretending that they do not understand what she is complaining about, and thus they do nothing about the racists who have been identified by Mrs M as living in the same tower block.

Local councils, despite various paper policies, continue to force black women into situations where racial harassment and attacks are inevitable. Any protest by the women is met by hostility from white racist housing officers, some of whom cannot even define the term racial harassment, and therefore, proceed to make life more difficult for the black tenant.

The police response to black women and racist attacks is naturally determined by the factors which affect their response to racist attacks generally:

- (i) Their failure to recognise a racist attack as such, and act accordingly.
- (ii) Their failure to turn up, when called by a black person who has been attacked, or their arrival only after a long delay.
- (iii) Their refusal to recognise the seriousness of a racist attack, and in

very serious cases where charges of actual or grievous bodily harm should be brought, their advice that the victim should take out a private prosecution. Or, if the police do prosecute, they impose the minimum of charges and pursue the prosecution with such a lack of vigour that the case is lost.

(iv) The criminalising of victims of racist attacks, e.g. the Newham 8, Newham 7, and Mr Kassam, whose wife and three children were murdered by racists in July 1985. Although he too nearly died, he was interrogated by police for over 36 hours.

(v) Their treatment of those who call the police, or go to the station to report an attack, who are often subjected to further racial abuse from police officers.

These are just some of the general complaints made time and time again. When we combine this with the sexual and physical abuse suffered by black women the situation is considerably worse. How can we, as black women, have any faith in a police force which allows officers to rape us and get away with it, as in the case of Jackie Berkley at Moss Side Police Station in April 1984. We know that this was not an isolated incident, proved by the fact that so many black women, after hearing of the incident, came forward and revealed their own brutal experiences with officers of that police station. Numerous black women suffer similar experiences in silence.

It is frightening enough to be confronted with ten teenage youths banging down your front door at midnight, while your children cry in fear, but what comfort can we get by calling out the "men in blue" who are supposed to protect us, yet have a licence to abuse and rape us. And experience proves that we are treated no better by police women. Two WPC's aided their fellow officers in the rape of Jackie Berkley. 1981-1986

N.O.W.

Physical and sexual violence pervades the treatment of black women by the police and nowhere is this better exemplified than by the recent shooting of Mrs Cherry Groce in Brixton, and the death of Mrs Jarrett in Tottenham during a police raid.

One must also recognise that black women encounter the police regarding racist attacks when our children or husbands are attacked and then criminalised. It is here also, where black women are forced to protest the innocence of other members of their families, that they themselves become criminalised by the police force.

There is a desperate need for single black women in particular, who are council tenants, to be housed in areas where it is possible for them to receive support from other members of their community and to make contributions to that community. Families or single black people should not be placed alone on predominantly white estates where there are no support networks. In addition, black women should receive greater support from both the voluntary and statutory sector. Not many black women have the resources to organise themselves collectively and women who suffer racist attacks, and those women who are working to support them, need to have these resources made available.

At present, however, for Ms P and Mrs M and other women like them, the situation is extremely bleak and no matter what the political nature of the party in government we know things will remain the same. Thus as black women we are left with only ourselves and our community to rely on. ■

Carol Burgher
Newham Monitoring Project
382 Katherine Road
Forest Gate
London E7
Tel: 555 8151

A demonstration against violence against women, is being planned for International Women's Day, Saturday 8 March, 1986.

The march is planned to start at 12 noon, at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park, and will be routed through Central London, passing Scotland Yard, Whitehall-Downing Street, through Fleet Street, and will end with a rally and speakers at Jubilee Gardens.

We are hoping that the march will be attended by women from all over London, as well as nationwide — either as individuals or from different kinds of organisations and groups — including Trade Unions, refugees, migrant and refugee women's groups, schools and colleges. We feel very strongly that male violence is an issue that affects *all* women — whether at home, on the streets or in the workplace. Women are also affected in terms of fighting back — their resources are steadily cut away by the state and its attack on the funding of women's organisations, on women's access to Social Security benefits and housing, and on women's jobs.

As black women involved in organising this demonstration, we feel that it is vital for the march to have a strong and united presence of black women. Violence is often seen as the problem of only certain sections of women; those of us who struggle against violence against women in black communities are only too aware of how it can all be interpreted as a "black

phenomenon". Already as women we are denied decent housing, employment and other resources but as black women we face the added dimension of racism. We are constantly engaged in pitched battles with racist local authorities, the police and the judiciary, who refuse to recognise our rights to self-determination, as they might, however grudgingly, those of our white sisters. Black women's issues must not be ghettoised, but taken on board by the whole of the women's movement. We therefore appeal to all black women in groups, or as individuals, to join us with their banners.

We appeal to all women to take direct action, to mobilise in a massive display of strength and solidarity. Whatever the odds, our determination will not be crushed: we will make our demands heard!

N.O.W (Network Of Women) is the organising committee currently working on this demonstration. However, we need all women to help us build support by spreading the word and mobilising in their own areas. Financial help in the form of donations etc. is greatly needed. We also intend to have travelling creches, music floats, women's bands and entertainments both during the march and at the rally. We welcome any ideas and suggestions that you may have. For further information contact: N.O.W. c/o UNIT C16, BRIDGE ROAD, SOUTHALL, MIDDX. TEL: 01 843 0578

BLACK WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

The Black women's Campaign Against Rape and Sexual Abuse of Girls and Young Women was formed by a group of Black women six months ago primarily to deal with the specific issues that affect us as survivors of child sexual assault. Most of us have previously had experience of being involved in other incest survivors groups, all of us have been sexually abused as children. The campaign was formed after a group of Black women met to discuss our experiences at a one-day workshop in London.

We all realised that there was a need for Black women to organise autonomously because whereas other incest survivors groups try to deal with the issues that affect us as survivors of child sexual abuse, they cannot fully address our specific experiences as Black women living in a racist anti-woman society. Though child sexual abuse has been an issue in the context of the Women's Liberation Movement, it has been portrayed and dealt with as a "white" problem. Books that have been written on the subject have ignored and excluded any experiences of what it means to be a Black survivor.

It is probably true to say that many Black women will have at some time during their childhood experienced some form of sexual assault by a "trusted adult". This can vary from being assaulted by friends and members of the family to other people in a position of power like a schoolteacher, doctor, religious leader. As girl children we are taught that we should trust certain adults, and we turn to these adults for love, protection, guidance and affection. We are told too that there are other adults that cannot be trusted. Most of us will have been given lectures about not getting into strangers' cars, never accepting sweets from strangers, never talking to strangers and so on and so forth, but we are also told that there are some strangers that it is alright to go to for "help".

Children are taught at primary school level that the police are there to protect us all! Because all of these strangers are adults, they are all in position of power over us, and therefore are capable of sexually assaulting us. But a lot of the time it isn't strangers that we have to worry about, is it? Who can we turn to when daddy is kissing us goodnight while he's got his hand up our nightdress abusing us? or uncle is tickling us in funny places?

From birth, we are trained that we have no right to say no to *anyone*. As children and young women we have no rights or control over the access that people have to our bodies — it is automatically assumed that adults know best. How many children are forced to kiss or be affectionate to members of our family or extended family, for example.

One of the aims of CARASAGAY is to set up a refuge in London, which will be a place for young women who have nowhere else to turn to. Very often, young women who want to escape from their abusers feel that no one will believe what is going on. It is a common experience that if we try to tell anyone we're treated as if we're lying, we may be further abused or put into care. Our first policy is to believe every girl who comes to us for help and advice and to offer her support in whatever way we can. We also aim to set up an emergency phone line to counsel survivors of child sexual abuse.

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But what we need first is accessible office space. Our largest problem of course, is money, or rather, the lack of it. We are attempting to fund-raise for the campaign. A large part of what we hope to do is educational work around the issues that affect us. We intend to produce literature, pamphlets and so on that are aimed at both survivors and adults. We intend to talk to schools, youth clubs, universities, colleges, as we realise that there is a lack of awareness on the subject. Black girls and young women are usually more readily institutionalised as social workers are ignorant of the needs of Black children. Racist stereotypes of our families exist and social workers don't bother to take the time to find out what our specific

needs are: we are more likely to be labelled as "problem" children and are put into care or foster homes where we are also at risk...

Those of us who survive the vicious circle of sexual abuse, leading to punishment and disbelief, can end up emotionally troubled for a large part of our lives. Some of us do not survive the self-hatred, feelings of guilt and self-loathing that these experiences in our childhood can cause. None of us can escape the reality that we will be dealing with these for most of our lives.

Each of us deal with our experiences differently, and for some of us it is easier to write our experiences down as a way of releasing the pain and anger

that we have been put through. A group of us intend to put together a book about our experiences. We would welcome contributions from other Black women/girls.

Obviously we want to make contact with other Black women/girls who are survivors. We welcome Black women who want/need support to come to our meetings as we do not meet only as a campaigning group but also have sub-groups that meet in a caring supportive atmosphere where we can share our problems, hopes, experiences, dreams and aspirations. A lot of our strength has come from knowing that we are not alone.

For more info contact Black Women Centre 01-274 7696.

MITAG: Minorities Information Technology Awareness Group

The MITAG Women's Unit is based in Camden and has many contacts with local businesses, community and women's organisations. As members of the MITAG Women's Unit, and of the London New Technology Network's Women's Training Course Project Group we have a special concern for women — specifically looking at the wider issues of women's involvement with new technology and trying to improve women's access to it.

Women make up 40% of the work force, but are concentrated in the lower paid, lower status jobs with little or no training opportunities or no real promotion prospects. In 1982 the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) published a report showing the occupational distribution of women in employment. It found that almost 60% of

women were employed in just three service industries.

Many women work to keep their families off the breadline, but although society expects women to care for family dependants as well as run their households and go out to work, there is no recognition of this situation in the provision of support services for women workers; only a very tiny proportion of employers provide childcare facilities, most maternity provisions are paltry, women's pension schemes are blatantly sexist. It comes as no surprise that the EOC concluded their survey of "Women and Underachievement at Work" with the following comment:

"The survey has shown the necessity for action by all organisation and individuals who believe that a better utilisation of women's abilities would not only

enable women to realise their full potential but will also make a major contribution to the economic well-being of the country as a whole."

This research also led to the formulation of MITAG — Minorities Information Technology Awareness Group — with a special Women's Unit as part of the organisation. For it was felt that although most non-Black and Ethnic Minority women face discrimination, it is the Black and Ethnic Minority women who suffer most — hence the special women's unit which looks at women in New Technology generally — and specifically at Black and Ethnic Minority women.

The MITAG Women's Unit and LNTN Women's Training Project Group are positively working towards these goals outlined in the EOC report above.

We are particularly interested in how the location/environment of New Technology affects access to it. This is particularly important for women where the education/community environment of the New Technology (ie. computers) is male dominated. It would be interesting to see whether placing computers within women-only community centres/ girls schools etc, in Camden could have any affect on achievement and access.

Furthermore, we are particularly interested in the *social* as well as the *physical* implications of the introduction of New Technology in Camden. These implications could range from health hazards from operating VDU's to how technology in the form of computers contribute to the increasing alienation of women — by making women passive objects with no control over the technology.

Our conference on Race & New Technology and our six Workshops on New Technology in Camden demonstrate our commitments to facilitate women's needs and indicate the ways the unit is used by women/women's organisations:

The Race & New Technology Conference was held on July 20 1985 at London New Technology Network. There was a 400-450 turnout with over half being women. Although we had a special workshop on Women & New Technology, we also had other workshops which were well attended by women:

1. Race & New Technology
2. New Technology and the Third World
3. Training & New Technology
4. Health & New Technology
5. LNTN Women's Training Course
6. Open Technoshop for Businesses
7. Database/Networking

The conference was a success for the unit in the sense that it enabled women from different backgrounds and organisations to come together to discuss and participate in New Technology and related issues.

Six New Technology workshops took place in Camden between August/ September 1985 at
1) Surma Community Centre
2) Swiss Cottage Community Centre
3) Kingsgate Community Centre
4) Theatro Technis
5) Harwood Community Centre
6) St Pancras Community Centre.

The idea of these workshops was to de-mystify the stereotypical notions that technology in the form of computers were centralised objects or just objects of desire and to place computers within the community context. This was particularly important for women, because of the way the New Technology environment is male-dominated. Some of the staff at the workshops were women and most of the people who turned out at the workshops were women or young girls.

The MITAG Women's Unit is part of the MITAG National Executive Committee and also a project group of LNTN which means that it has access to LNTN resources and facilities. These resources are outlined in the LNTN development plan.

Through different projects we found that various community groups use our combined resources. These community groups range from women's organisations from different backgrounds and other types of voluntary groups.

Most computer training is partiarchal and paternalistic. This means that organisations and educational institutes use their judgement to run particular types of training that they think will be right for the public.

What mostly interests The MITAG Women's Unit is not trying to find courses that we feel will be right for women, but encouraging women to participate in the design/structure of the course. Then they could decide what type of course would best suit themselves.

We have contact with the City & Guilds organisation and are particularly interested in their 7-6 Information Technology Scheme. We also have contact with the Brighton Polytechnic Centre for Social and Educational Applications of Knowledge Engineering (SEAKE) and are interested in their training programmes. Other organisations we have contacts with that provide a variety of training programmes are:

Nottingdale ITEC
Brent ITEC
Institute of Education
Interaction Centre
Deptford Study School Centre
Camden Adult Institute
Camden ITEC
GLC Computer Unit
Commission for Racial Equality
City Centre Project
Open Access Project

The computer services and advice would be (eventually) determined by the needs of the local women's group and organisations. However, in the short term, the MITAG women's unit would like to provide a range of computer services and advice such as:

- a) *Access to equipment* — such as different machines that are specialised in different packages.
- (b) *Consultancy* — as different types of equipment and software packages including databases and
- (c) *Traning* (d) *Workshops* ■

Veronica Morris
MITAG
86-100 St Pancras Way
London NW1 9ES
Tel: 01-482 3816

BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Starting from a standpoint which looked at the world from a man's point of view and defined that view as the objectively correct description of reality, it took many, many years for feminists to establish some validity for the idea that sex and gender matter. It was not till the 1970's that discussion on the need to rescue women from invisibility really took off. Even now relatively little has been written and done about the ways in which we, as women use our environment and even less, about what should be done to respond properly to women's needs in this area. In addition, the original viewpoint was that of the dominant culture and in this country, and indeed most of the world which had been colonised by European powers, this dominant culture was and remains white.

Let us not be too complacent about how widely understood are these arguments which have been raised in the last 10-15 years. The view seems still to be generally held among many working in the fields of housing and environmental design that "women are not really different from men except for their sex", that "a house designed to meet the requirements of *men* living in it will also automatically suit the women who live with those men" and that "a house which suits a white family will also of course suit a Black or other Ethnic Minority family".

How true are these assumptions? I believe that because women's experiences of life and the attitudes to and expectations of women's roles in this society are different from those of men, our needs are different too. And this includes the needs we have in relation to our built surroundings and our homes.

In the first place, women carry the main responsibility for looking after the home, carrying out the household chores and caring for young children and for ill or

disabled members of the family. Thus even if a woman does paid work outside her home she is likely to have far more ties to the house than a man. She may find it essential to be able to travel quickly between her place of work and her home, or the school or the hospital, so as to be able to fulfil all her responsibilities.

This is just as much the case for Black and Ethnic Minority women as for white women, especially if we consider that 58% of Black (West Indian) women do paid work outside the home as compared to 38% white women [*Black and White Britain, the 3rd PSI Survey 1984* — Colin Brown] and that Black women are much more likely to have to work full-time as their contribution to household income is crucial [*London Labour Plan, GLC/1 and E*]. So what we require are good, reliable links between the home and the workplace. But these are difficult to find because of the separation between the two parts of "normal" life by the zoning of different functions in different parts of our cities. This highlights the dilemma for planners; there is the need to reassess traditional approaches to designing our cities but at the same time we must beware of perpetuating the role of women as the primary carers and homebuilders.

Women who do not go out to do paid work on the other hand, may find themselves feeling lonely and isolated, depressed and trapped in the home, whether this is at the top of a tower block or in a suburban semi-detached far from the nearest bus route. And yet this household that requires so much of a woman does not usually confer any power or autonomy on her; the important decisions are still often taken by the male head. This marginalisation is embodied in a failure even to provide her with her own room or

domain: few dwellings these days contain a boudoir or a study for the "mistress of the house". So although the whole house is seen as her responsibility she has no private place within it where she can be on her own when she so wishes.

In some cultures, living accommodation always includes spaces which are allocated to women whether they be particular huts within a compound in a village, in Mali or Devon or a separate sitting room for women in a Moroccan house. In some societies women do not take part in public events in the company of unknown men. In this country the reduction in the size of the home and the loss of the woman's domain could be seen to be particularly problematic; it would be useful to have an inner adjoining living space which would enable women to be involved though not totally excluded inside the house, and in the "public" arena we should press for meeting halls which are provided specially and solely for women.

Similar to the way that women are marginalised within the home, Black and ethnic minority communities are often marginalised in a city and forced into areas with run-down and inappropriate housing with poor access to amenities and open space. Public parks in any case tend to favour men in the provision for sports like football or fishing but all leisure provision should be given serious consideration to allow participation by Black women. For instance, setting aside times at swimming pools for use by women only would give many Asian women the chance to swim; and the existence of meeting rooms for women would ensure more of us reclaim our part in "public life".

In thinking about housing there is clearly a need to get away from the definition of a "normal" household as the heterosexual able-bodied

◀ nuclear family. Housing is also needed by individuals who wish to live by themselves, by those who do not have children, by lesbians, by gay men, by people with disabilities and this need must be recognised as legitimate for Black and white. With racial discrimination preventing many Black and ethnic minority people from having access to decent housing, the primary issue is that of allocations. Nonetheless we must also look ahead and plan for the range and mix of different kinds of homes that we should build for example, sheltered housing designed with particular ethnic minority communities in mind, larger homes with more bedrooms for the use of large and extended families, perhaps groups of dwellings sharing childcare or cooking facilities.

Of vital importance to women is the question of safety and security. In the streets and in public space women, like men, may be "mugged" and robbed but women are also subject to sexual harassment and rape. Moreover the general view is that if women are attacked we somehow "asked for it", and that we have no right to be in public places on our own. Many women modify their behaviour when not accompanied by a man, taking care not to "draw attention" to themselves. Despite women's fears about attacks in public places, the disturbing fact is that women are most at risk from violence within our homes, from men within the household. However, security within the dwelling is still very important for many women who would welcome having a robust front door as a barricade against hostile attackers from outside. Black and Ethnic Minority women are often on the receiving end of racist attacks and therefore the need for tangible security is multiplied. To provide this feeling of comfort and security dwellings need, besides a stout front doorlock, to feel neither isolated nor too exposed with a

pleasant approach through well-lit spaces, not down narrow dark alleyways with hiding places for attackers.

The final aspect that I'd like to raise here is that of lifestyle. Clearly lifestyle varies between different geographical regions and climates and stages of the household's development (eg. are there tiny babies? Is the household made up of adults who are all out during the day?). It is fascinating to look around the world to see what the traditional house plans give away about each society's view of the individual's place within the community: does everyone have their own inviolable space? Are there collective spaces of rooms for being together with other members of the household? Do outsiders have easy access either to the collective spaces or to an individual's private room?

This leads to further questions: how easily can the traditional English town house be adapted for use by, say a Chinese extended family? If you come from a culture where you'd expect to have many visitors of many different ages for meals, how would you fit everyone in? If your normal way of cooking delicious meals is in a wok or kuali the conventional kitchen and cooker will probably make life pretty difficult for you. You may find yourself wondering why it is that in our multi-racial society the built environment ignores the particular needs of Black and ethnic minority women. In fact credit must be given to the Royal Town Planning Institute who together with the CRE have recently publicised a booklet *Planning for a Multi-Racial Britain* bringing the race dimension into planning. The RTPi is working on another one raising the issue of women and planning. And the soon to be abolished GLC transportation and development department is producing separate guidelines for planning on women and on race. Although there has not been 100%

support from all planners for these initiatives, the planning profession seems streaks ahead of the architectural profession on this front. I can only speculate that although both planning and architecture are male-dominated (only 7% of architects are women) and white, planning is a bit less so. In addition the vast majority of planners are employed by local authorities whereas the ethos of architecture is overwhelmingly that of private practice. In both fields winning acceptance and recognition is still difficult for women: for Black and ethnic minority women particularly so. In this situation we may feel it impossible to challenge traditional attitudes within our professions and to open them up to discussions and projects that deal with real, detailed, concrete needs of the oppressed section of this society made up of Black and ethnic minority women. Certainly it will be very difficult if we try to act alone, as individuals.

In addition, all the issues raised in this article require a redistribution of resources. Extra rooms in a house cost money; larger kitchens cost more; *differently* designed kitchens are likely to cost more money. Discussing needs and desires with users takes time and is often seen as wasteful. In this current climate of cuts and retrenchment this extra money will not be handed out on a plate.

The conclusion I would draw is that we need to get together, as Black and ethnic minority women and as planners and architects, to think clearheadedly about the different aspects of our lives and what we need from our homes and towns. This will enable us to frame and fight for policies that will result in environments that allow our full potential to be met. This subject is just being opened up and there's still lots of work to be done. But the end will be that the environments themselves will be the richer.

Benedict Foo

West Hampstead Women's Centre needs a black/ethnic worker. Jobshare 17½ hrs per week for centre administration, outreach & advice work. Ability to work independently important. Send SAE for application form to, 55 Heinstal Road, NW6 or phone 328 7389, Closing date 15th March, Section 5 2D Race Relations Act 1976.

The Things that Divide Us is an exciting and expressive collection of Short Stories by 16 American Women writers. This anthology brings to life the conflicts emerging from Women's diverse experiences. Through wonderful and accessible stories women confront issues of race, class, age and sexuality.

Below is an extract from one story, tilted Sisters by Barbara Neely.

The Things that Divide Us will be published in April in Britain by Sheba Feminist Publishers. £4.95.

SISTERS

Barbara Neely



*... and are we not one
daughter of the same dark
mother's child
breathing one breath from a
multitude of mouths ...
from the Sisterhood
Song of the Yenga
Nation*



The offices of Carstairs and Carstairs Management Consultants had that hushed, forbidden air of after five o'clock. No light shone from beneath any of the office doors bordering the central typing pool which was also deserted, except for the new cleaning woman working her way among the desks. Lorisa was the last of the office staff to leave. She'd pushed the button for the elevator before she remembered the notes on Wider Housewares she wanted to look over before tomorrow morning's meeting. She turned and took a shortcut through the typing pool to her office.

"Good evening", she said to the grey uniform-clad back of the cleaning woman as the woman reached down to pick up a wastepasket. Lorisa automatically put on her polite, remote smile, the one that matched the distance in her tone, while she waited for the woman to move out of her way.

Jackie turned with the wastebasket still in her hand and let her eyes roam so slowly over the woman who'd spoken to her that she might have been looking for something in particular. Then she nodded, briefly, curtly, before turning, lifting the basket and dashing its contents into the rolling bin she pushed along ahead of her. Only then did she step aside.

Lorisa hurried into her office, careful not to slam the door and

show her irritation. Where did they find the cleaning staff, the asylum for the criminally insane? The woman had given her a look cold enough to cut stone and barely acknowledged her greeting — as though she were not worth the time it took to be pleasant. She, who was always careful to speak to the gum-chewing black girls who worked in the mail room, the old man who shined shoes in the lobby, the newspaper man and any other of her people she met in the building who did menial work. None of them had ever been anything but equally polite to her. She had noticed the shoeshine man always had something pleasant to say to the mailroom girls and only a "Good day" to her. But considering the difference in their positions, his reticence with her seemed only natural and nothing like the attitude of the cleaning woman.

Although she'd only returned for her notes, she found herself moving papers from one side of her desk to the other, making a list of small tasks for tomorrow, staving off the moment when she would have to confront the cleaning woman once again. But Lorisa realised it wasn't the woman's curt nod or the slowness with which she'd moved aside that made her reluctant to leave her office. It was those eyes. Big, black, dense eyes with something knowing in them — something that had made her feel as though her loneliness and her fear of it, her

growing uneasiness about her job, the disturbing hollowness where pleasure in her comfortable life should be, and all her other fears and flaws were as visible to the cleaning woman as so many wrinkles and smudges on her dress. When their eyes had met, the sense of secret knowledge already shared had filled her with an almost overwhelming desire to say something, to explain something about a part of herself she couldn't name. The woman's look of cold disdain had only corroborated her feeling of having been revealed and found wanting. "Your shit ain't so hot, honey, and you know it," the woman's eyes seemed to say. It didn't occur to Lorisa that the way she'd spoken to the cleaning woman could have anything to do with the woman's response. She was tired, with too much work and too little rest. And she was always over-imaginative when her period was about to start. She forced herself to open the door to her office and was nearly lightheaded with relief to find the cleaning woman nowhere in sight.

In the descending elevator, she realised that the term "cleaning woman" rang false against the face and figure she'd just encountered. Cleaning women were fat and full of quiet kindness and mother wit. They were not women who looked to be in their late twenties — her own age — with faces strong and proud as her

▶

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Jackie ran her fingers along the edge of the desk as she walked slowly round it. She stood in front of the leather desk chair and placed the fingertips of both hands lightly on the desk. She leaned forward and looked toward the sofa as though addressing an invisible client or underling. Then she sat — not as she usually sat, with a sigh of relief at getting off her feet as she plopped solidly down. She sat slowly, her head held high, her back straight. In her imagination, she wore Lorisa's raw silk shirtwaist and turquoise beads. Gold glistened at her ears and on her small, manicured hands. Her hair was long and pulled back into a sleek chignon. The desk hid her suddenly corn-free feet, sporting one

What happened to the part of yourself that dreams and hopes, she wondered. Was it just a phase of growing up, to believe you might amount to something, might do something with your life besides have babies and be poor? And how come some people got to have their dreams come true and others didn't?

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SOCIAL WORK AND 'BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN'

It is generally recognised that institutional racism operates in welfare organisations. Moreover, social work theory and practice revolves around a white middle-class analysis. Under such circumstances what can Black & Ethnic Minority women expect from a social services department?

The term 'Black & Ethnic Minority' (B & EM) complicates and confuses the question of racism which affects service delivery and resources. 'Black' used to be applied as a political category for individuals and groups who face discrimination on the basis of race. For many institutions and individuals, the meaning has since changed to refer solely, to the Afro-Caribbean communities, with the term 'Ethnic Minorities' embracing the Asians, Greeks, Turks, Arabs and so on. One has to ask what purpose these terms serve. Is it because the term 'Black' cannot absorb different cultures and languages? Or are we taking on definitions declared by white academics to be more acceptable (and to whom)? Is it a eurocentric argument to deflect away from the real issue — which is racism — and focus instead on differences of culture? Or is it a way of quantifying racism as experienced by different groups? How is it used by the local authorities as employers and as service deliverers? These definitions have gained acceptability and recognition by the local authorities and the GLC. Does marginalization of certain groups take place within such definitions?

When social services departments are challenged about the lack of service provision for B & EM women the answers often are that take up of service is poor from these groups, that there are not the resources available, or that there are not the workers. These kind of blanket statements are branded around without major changes being implemented or

services made available to meet these needs. Often an impression is created by local authorities of social work jobs and service delivery going to B & EM Women, which in fact means that attention is given to needs while they are not actually met. For example, a group of Asian social workers in a certain borough approached the director of social services because of lack of provision for the Asian communities. He advised them to contact a local Asian centre to which they could refer clients. So even when a need is recognised it is often deferred elsewhere.

Nonetheless, despite these patronising attitudes some changes have occurred through campaigns by Black groups, as in Hackney and Lambeth where Black children are now being fostered by Black families. Previously Black mothers were thought to be inadequate, hence a high percentage of Black children being received into care.

On the other hand, B & EM communities have to be wary of social work involvement undermining the natural self-help processes within their communities. Power is given to the state to interfere, more often to the detriment of the community. This is not to say that social work help is unnecessary, as B & EM communities live under circumstances whereby the network of support which exists in their country of origin may not be available here, in cases of childcare or marital disputes, for example. But these communities have to be clear about the kind of services that are going to be beneficial. This means

input into policy recommendations and decisions which affect their community. An example of the kind of problems that can arise from a narrow perspective is the assumption in social work practice that children need toys to be stimulated. Most working class Bengalis do not consider toys to be a major factor in childcare, thus their children are labelled as "understimulated", and their mothers thought not to have an adequate concept of childcare when measured against "usual" white practices.

There is also a tendency in social services departments to refer Ethnic Minority women to relevant community groups instead of providing them with the services required, whether it is welfare advice, counselling for depression or marital problems, or whatever.

Despite a massive campaign within certain local authorities, such as Hackney, Camden and Islington, to recruit more B & EM Women, the reality remains that certain groups are still not being recruited, even when the need has been expressed. This is one area where marginalisation takes place. For example in Tower Hamlets a Chinese welfare group employed two women workers, who had taken on board all the problems encountered by their community, and on top of that had clients referred to them from social services. Yet, the social services department stated that the Chinese community did not require any social services assistance. Here their need was made "invisible" and not acknowledged, though it clearly existed.

◀ This raises the issue of what do social workers do, what services they provide and how they prioritise service delivery. Obviously there are statutory responsibilities such as child abuse, mental health, the elderly, physically handicapped which override other aspects of Social work depressed women or under fives' provision, for example. On the other hand Ethnic Minority communities need to be aware that is not only service delivery that is an issue. It is also a question of social workers' interference through the investigation of cases and of value

judgements being made, particularly in child abuse cases which may have been referred to social services by an outside agency or individual. The social worker will have to investigate these allegations which may or may not have any foundations in reality. Control is taken away from the family and communities.

There are many areas of concern where white workers will often be judgemental about different cultural practices, such as arranged marriages for example, and bring these prejudices to bear on the case without considering its particular

contact.

B & EM women want a service that will be sympathetic, sensitive and relevant to their needs. But there is inevitably a contradiction for every such service exacts a price in terms of the handing out of control and allowing of interference in what would normally be considered private or community business. There is also a problem of expectation versus resources in the present economic climate. ■

Gurcharan Virdee

Aurat Shakti

A Photographic Reflection of Our Lives



Mumtaz Karamjee

Surjeet Kaur

"I came here with my husband. I would not have come on my own. I have a lot of love and feeling for India, although I am happy here. I have work, my children, my friends ... I was bored at home. Working outside gives me a possibility of going out, meeting society, friends. We talk and joke and laugh together and that feels good."

The exhibition will reflect various aspects of the lives of Asian women in this country. Each panel will consist of different representations of the individual women/organisations and will include text edited from interviews with them.

Its aim is to show how complex the lives and expectations and the experience of Asian women are. We want to create nana chaubi (many different pictures) and we want to do that in a way that is determined by and controlled by ourselves.

The exhibition is being compiled by Manjula Mukherjee, a community worker at Dalston Children's Centre who compiled the collection of writings in *Breaking The Silence*; Vibha Osbon, a community worker/historian/builder; Amina Patel, a media worker who has co-produced the tape slides *Stepping out of Frame* and *Our Colourful Lives*; and Mumtaz Karimjee, a photographer.

Venue:

The Cockpit Gallery, BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
ILEA Drama & Tape Centre
Princeton Street
London WC2E

3 — 26 March 1986

GLC
1981-1986

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OVA — the four women collective running a Women's Music Resource Centre in Camdan opens its doors to girls and women wanting to learn all about music and recording. They are holding an Open Day on March 25th from 10am to 9pm. Women are invited to come and see/use their 4-week recording studio and get more information about women's music, and attend these workshops:

- Use of sound equipment in live

performances — all day workshop:
 — Finding your voice — a voice empowerment workshop: 11.30pm to 1.30pm.
 — Learning rhythm — drumming and percussion: 3.30 — 5.30pm
 — Sing and drum in combination: 7pm to 9pm
 And its all FREE. For more info, contact Tel 281-2528. For more Information on OVA's support to women's music, contact them and come to their open day.

We are offering English language teaching to Asian women and children through their own mother tongues. The centre can also provide leisure activities to Asian women. Contact Tel No. for more information: 381-3086/4608.

International Women's Day: The Anti-Apartheid Women's Committee, ANC Women's Section, and SWAPO Women's Council are organising a picket outside the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square. Women wishing to show solidarity with women of Namibia and South Africa are asked to be there on March 8th between 12 — 2pm. Further info from: Anti-Apartheid Women's Committee, 13 Mandela Street, NW1 0DW. Tel: 387-7966.

Irish Women's Research Project: Grainne Mhaol is a collective of three Irish women doing research about Irish women's immigration to Britain. We wish to interview more Black Irish women about their experiences, also Irish women who have had mixed race children. Please contact us on Tel: 740-8901/627-0934/740-8223.

New Lesbian Rights Publication: 'All In A Day's Work' is the result of 18 months research into the employment rights of Lesbian women. Funded by the GLC, it includes in-depth interviews with women who have experienced discrimination both at work and on the dole. Chapters on equal opportunities and on trade unions are included. The publication, edited by Nina Taylor, also looks at racism, sexism and discrimination on the grounds of class, disability and motherhood status. It is published by and available from: Lesbian Employment Rights, Room 203, South Bank House, Black Prince Road, SE1 7SJ. Cost: £2.50 p.p.



Mumtaz Karamjee

Paula Udin

Jaganari will be the first women's education resource centre in this area. It will be a drop-in place with a major emphasis on a creche because childcare is such a problem ... It is for women only. It is so simple to coordinate all women's activities in a women's place. Men are worried about women getting together and questioning certain things, but some women are also worried because they don't know they can do this. This is what they do in the village, they get together in the afternoon and talk about things.

SEPARATE MUSLIM SCHOOLS — A COMMUNITY DEMAND?

"O ye who believe! Protect yourselves and your families (from) a fire whose fuel is people and stones..."

This quotation from the Koran, is how the prospectus for the Moslem primary school in the borough of Brent begins. For me the irony of the quote is its startling ambiguity, as it touches on the two main issues surrounding the debate on Muslim-only schools, which at the same time have been causing such an uncomfortable paradox for most progressive groups and institutions which have tried to debate it.

On one hand, we have an educational ideology, which when in the hands of a group of right-wing self-appointed "leaders" — all men of course — is open to interpretation, to suit their own needs: — In the words of one such 'leader', in the movement for separate moslem schools — Rashid Siddiqui (President of the UK Islamic Mission) among one of the aims of Moslem-only schools will be to teach the different roles in life of men and women, the 'less' rational more 'emotional nature of women and all the traditional muslim virtues of modesty, chastity and obedience. The pupils will also be taught the supremacy of the "Shariat" (Islamic Law). Historically and presently, all sorts of atrocities and discriminatory practices against women are carried out in the name of Shariat.

On the other hand, we have seen the demand for separate moslem schools, arising as a direct result of every growing dissatisfaction with British education system, which is part and parcel of an increasing vocal racist society. Hence to "protect yourselves and your family from a fire..." is no longer a symbolic metaphor, but very much of an every day reality for black families living in this country. Recently sitting in a workshop on education in a women's conference where the issue of moslem only schools was being discussed, I was astounded to witness most of the workshop supporting the concept of separate moslem schools, and whats more, this was being done in the belief that to support this concept was being anti-racist!

Another problem seems to be that to seriously question the concept, or oppose it altogether has the danger of allying one with the reactionary response of both media and most educationalists: For example Peter Newsam (Chair of CRE) said *"The evidence shows that if you separate people they become the focus for hostility"*. In presenting this argument he chooses to forget the daily physical attacks on black children, which go on both inside school premises and outside. And the cruder Sunday Express headline: — *"Why come here if they don't want to fit in?"*

The sudden media interest in this issue, is partly due to the news that Brent Council have in principal agreed to support a voluntary aided status to a moslem primary school, which already exists in the borough. Although there have always existed many voluntary aided Church of England, Roman Catholic, along with a few Jewish schools, local education authorities have in the past refused to back application for similar status from moslem groups.

Voluntary status in effect means that the LEAs pay the staff and 85 per cent of capital costs, but the school remains under the control of the governors appointed by the Church/Mosque, with LEAs having a representative on the governing body. So although over the years there have existed about ten private muslim schools, none to date had been granted voluntary-aided status, as yet.

Full grassroot support for such schools from the Moslem community in Britain is very much in question here. So far those most committed to such a demand, appear to be a group of muslim fundamentalist, who have formed pressure groups, at times with the help of finance from outside Britain.

Many of the prominent people who have become 'leaders' of these pressure groups, have strong links with right-wing fundamentalist

Islamic political parties. For example many prominent members of these pressure groups are associated with "Jamatt Islami", who among others are firm supporters of General Zia — the military dictator of Pakistan, who has revived many fundamentalist Islamic laws over his 8 year rule and through these has tried to take away basic human rights, particularly from women.

There is also some evidence of the Saudi government financially backing some of these pressure groups, which in the main belong to a particular sect. In 83-84 alone one million was donated to 35 mosques and religious schools. This particular sect are in the minority among British moslems, and moslem leaders outside this sect have openly criticised the Saudis for *"misguiding moslems in Britain by giving them money"*.

At the moment most moslem children, go to classes held in local mosques, after school hours, and previous attempts to take Islamic education outside this local level have failed to win wide support from the Moslem community. In Bradford about three years ago there were attempts made to gain support to convert five state schools, where there were mostly moslem children to voluntary-aided moslem schools. At the series of consultation meetings which followed, there clearly was not enough support for such a move to succeed, hence the proposals were dropped.

But the fact of the matter is, that there is increasing racial hostility, alongside with the revival of Islamic fundamental movements, and the Tories have spotted this as a good vote-winner with the moslem community in the forthcoming local elections. In the face of such pressures it may be very tempting for parts of the moslem community to give their support to separate schools for their children — for the wrong reasons.

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POLISH WOMEN's FORUM

We are writing to let you know about the Polish Women's Forum, to be held in London in March 1986.

Among the many black and ethnic minority groups in London there are many women of Polish origin. The majority of our families settled here just after the second World War, started families and organised themselves socially and culturally and live quite happily in Greater London. So why the Polish Women's Forum? We feel the project would definitely benefit women who live and work in Greater London.

The idea of the Forum was to bring together Polish women living in London, all those who emigrated more recently, and after Martial Law, second-generation Polish women — all those who feel connected with Poland and being Polish, though they may belong to different social and age groups and have different beliefs.

We feel that at the present time, Polish women in Britain, and specially London, are in a particularly unique position. We want to record the many different perspectives of Polish women while we have the opportunity (the post-war exile community will soon disappear). We want to establish links between the experiences of Polish women, to break down women's isolation in the Polish community and within British Society, by examining our own needs as Polish women. We are particularly concerned about the culture shock experienced by recent Polish immigrants, the past and present discrimination met by Polish women and their families in education, employment, housing, language difficulties, health, practical problems such as legal status of immigrants. We also want to help second generation Polish women to establish a sense of cultural identity.

The need for this conference has arisen from work carried out by the Polish Women's Group which was formed in 1980. The group has functioned in the past as a support group for Polish women from a variety of backgrounds and ages, including first and second generation Polish women immigrants and women from minority groups within the Polish community. The group has also organised public meetings and exhibitions about women's experience of life in Poland and conditions for refugees from Poland in this country. The group has supported the campaign for the release of women political prisoners under martial law.

The group encourages the development of Polish women's cultural expression both in traditional ethnic forms (e.g. music, dance, folk-art painting and writing) and within British culture such as writing by English speaking Polish women, or research projects).

In the programme for the Forum, there will be discussions of issues relevant and important to us as Poles and as women, exhibitions, films, as well as food, music, poetry and dancing.

Material from the Forum will be reproduced as part of a post-Forum publication, in which, in various written and visual forms, will be expressed, our experiences, our creativity and our ideas.

We believe that a Polish Women's Forum is an important event for all of us, and that with all our combined efforts, we can ensure that 1986 will be a year to remember in the lives of Polish women.

**Forum Polskich Kobiet
c/o 14c Colvestone Crescent
London E8**

DEFEND WOMEN'S CHOICE THROUGH ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The only two organisations in Ireland who offer unbiased pregnancy counselling are being threatened with closure. The Well Woman Centre and Open Line Counselling are being taken to court charged with 'offending the Irish Constitution' and 'conspiring to corrupt public morals'.

The Well Woman Centre offers a comprehensive service on all aspects of women's health. In 1984 they were used by 70,502 people. About 800 of these received pregnancy counselling.

The action against these two organisations is a direct follow-on from the constitutional amendment of September 1983, which made abortion in Ireland illegal under any circumstances.

It is estimated that about 10,000 women per year come to England from Ireland for abortions. Until these centres offered counselling, women had no opportunity to think through their options in advance, nor did they have any guarantee of safe treatment on arrival in Britain.

The real issue is a woman's right to discuss her pregnancy and, if appropriate, be referred to a country where abortion is legal.

The court hearing will happen before the end of this year. The legal costs are estimated at £20,000. If the action is successful, both clinics face restriction, if not closure. Help defend this invaluable service by making a donation, however small, to:

Irish Women's Abortion Support Group (IWASG) c/o 52-54 Featherstone Stree, London EC1

THE ONE-EYED MONKEY GOES INTO PRINT

It was winter. The sun was shining like anything. It was pleasant, it was cool. The temperature was about 70 degrees. The one-eyed monkey was feeling mellow and middle-aged. "I have travelled," she said. "I have seen the world. I have lost my tail, 6 of my teeth and 1 eye. I have lived. It's time I wrote down what I think about it." But her friends, the crocodiles appeared not to have heard.

"Ahem", she said loudly. "I'm going to write a book."

"What for?" murmured one crocodile and went on dozing.

"What about?" muttered the other crocodile and went on basking.

She ignored the first crocodile and addressed the second exclusively.

"About me," she said strongly.

"Oh," replied the crocodile. "Will I be in it?"

"Well, I don't know," she answered. "Why would a book about monkeys have crocodiles in it?" But she saw that his eyes were beginning to close, so she added quickly, "But I'll put you in it."

"Me as I am?" he asked, stretching out his tail luxuriously.

"No, you as you are in relation to me."

"Oh." He sounded dubious.

"And you have to help me," she put in quickly.

"Help you to write it?" He sounded interested.

"No, no, I can do that. To tell you the truth I've already done it. I want you to help me get it published."

"Oh." He thought for a moment. "Well, I have some contacts with the animal

rights people. Send it to them and see what they think."

So she wrote to them and they wrote back that her title was lacking in human interest. That's what makes a book sell. People are interested in people, you know, they pointed out perfectly pleasantly. But they enclosed the addresses of a few publishers who were non-mainstream.

The one-eyed monkey had a crisis of conscience. Should she change the title? She changed it. It had been called "The Life and Leanings of a One-eyed Monkey". She went through the text. Wherever the word "monkey" appeared she put in blank. "The Life and Leanings of a One-eyed Blank." She said it out loud. She persuaded herself that it had a ring to it. "I speak in parables," she told herself bravely. "The intelligent will know how to read in between the blanks and will appreciate my true, my native, my deliciously malicious monkey wit."

She sent it off to the publishers. Some wrote back and some misplaced it. Those who wrote back told her bluntly, "The syntax slithers and the vision is monocular. Who is talking to whom? may we ask. We regret to inform you that your work is entirely lacking in clarity." The one-eyed monkey felt disheartened. She brooded for days. Then she re-submitted the manuscript with the word "monkey" typed in clearly. And the miracle happened. A smaller publisher wrote to her saying that they were intrigued by her manuscript and would like to publish it. But please, they begged her to remember that an audience of exclusively one-eyed monkeys was hard to

find: could she help to pay for it?

The one-eyed monkey tore her fur in utter despair. Her friends, the crocodiles, happened to notice.

"Oh, all right," they said. "We'll help you to re-write it."

"But it mustn't be about monkeys and it mustn't be about crocodiles."

"No," they agreed. They made suggestions and monkey re-wrote it.

In the end the book achieved a moderate success under the title, "The Amorous Adventures of a One-Eyed Minx". "Is it autobiographical?" the reviewers wondered. "No," declared the monkey quite truthfully, "I do not recognise myself in it." But her publishers beamed. They patted her back. "Art transforms," they murmured kindly. ■

Suniti Namjoshi is a writer born in India, living in Canada.

Amongst her many books is feminist fables pub. by Sheba Feminist Publishers and 'The Conversations of Cow pub. by 'The Women's Press.

Sheba is publishing, Aditi and the One-eyed Monkey in April 1986, Suniti's first children's story book. Price [2.95.



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BIRDS OF A FEATHER

A magpie and a robin at the edge of a well compare reflections.

"Brighter than you." Thus chirpy Robin.

"Bigger, better and more dapper than you," Magpie scowling and shoving a little, puffing himself up.

"Yeah, but that snowy shirt front — inclined to get a bit dingy in the end," Robin protesting, fluffing up feathers, beady eyes rolling to trace the curvature of his own red front.

A pack and a squawk, a wicked glitter: they're about to fight, when a wren comes up.

"Both dowdy and dingy." Magpie and Robin glance at each other. "The female of a species... They shake their heads. They look tolerant. Then they preen and smirk, and feel greatly cheered up.

Suniti Namjoshi

IRISH WOMENS CENTRE

Opening

In February this year
Nell McCafferty, writer
opened the London Irish,
Women's Centre. They
can be contacted on
249-7318



Black autonomy hijacked

When we fought for Black autonomy as Black women, and indeed as Black people, it wasn't with the purpose that even this concept would be hijacked to give credibility to white racist structures. Black autonomy basically means that as Black women, and as Black people, we best know how to organise against the oppression which society has inflicted on us. Black autonomy means defining and controlling our struggles. It isn't a means by which white people can opt out of their responsibilities towards challenging the structure of racism which they have initiated and are perpetrating.

We now have a swing from one end of the pendulum to the other where at one time they were saying that they were not racist because they treated everyone (black and white) alike, white professionals, with their doses of "racism awareness", are now saying that they are racist and therefore cannot deal with Black people. Where before they saw our cultural norms and values as being responsible for the racism which we experienced, they now see the same as something which *they* as white people cannot handle because of *their* racism. So a social worker can refuse to deal with an Asian woman because "as a white woman I am incapable of appreciating the problems she faces." There is talk of "community consultation" only

when a Black woman teacher is seconded to work on the issue of gender as now the issue of gender has to include the dimension of race! Previously when white women teachers were working on this issue, there was no talk of community consultation to include the effects of racism. This line of reasoning has made a mockery of Black autonomy and entrenched white racism even further.

By no means is this reasoning confined to individuals. Even "progressive" councils and other organisational policies follow the same reasoning. Local councils have undertaken to co-opt Black people on various committees knowing full well that token representation cannot effect swift and *lasting* changes. In a nutshell, it is all to do with replacing white faces with Black faces without as much as tinkering with the structures. It makes the position of the Black people co-opted in this way very difficult, setting them up as a buffer between the perpetrators and recipients of racism. They act as the sponges which absorb the white individuals' guilt. In this manner, Black people's commitment to challenging racism is being used by white people to justify their own inaction. Racism therefore very much remains the sole problem of Black people.

Black autonomous organisations have fought very hard to achieve the marginal resources which they have. It is, and always was, an effort towards "self help" — towards redressing the imbalance which racism has created. But now these organisations are being defined more and more as alternatives to statutory provisions.

For example, white teachers, youth workers and social workers are constantly bombarding Black workers with what *they* see as their dilemmas. Should the teacher intervene when an Asian girl says she is experiencing incest? Or would they be seen as white racist outsiders "interfering"? Enveloping the facts in liberal, non-committal, "progressive" tones do not take the focus away from racism. Using an Asian psychiatrist to take an Asian young woman (a survivor of suicide attempt) "into his care because he has more knowledge about her culture and language" does not mean that he is not being used as an interpreter and that the young woman is not ending up with a psychiatric label!

A good guide for "progressive" white workers who see themselves challenging various forms of oppressions within their own fields is to ask themselves: "How would I deal with this situation if it was a white girl/woman given the fact that as a white person I am going to be racist?" It is also for them to ask how and when they are challenging the structures of racism. To put the onus on Black people itself is racist.

If we are to work towards a situation where racism and other forms of oppression do not exist, then we have to stop guilt-tripping each other and to look towards our own action/nonaction in combatting forces which have oppressed and controlled Black people as well as women and other groups in society. ■

Parminder Dhillon-Kashyap

Parminder Vir Oberoi
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Report from the Bahamas:

Conflicts of a Black American Tourist

Originally reprinted in 'Emergency No 3. 1985. Due to be published in 'On Call: Political Essays' June Jordan by Pluto Press August 1986. £4.95

I AM STAYING IN A HOTEL that calls itself the Sheraton British Colonial. One of the photographs advertising the place displays a middle-aged black man in a waiter's tuxedo, smiling. What intrigues me most about the picture is just this: while the black man bears a tray full of 'colorful' drinks above his left shoulder, both of his feet, shoes, and trouser legs, up to 10 inches above his ankles, stand in the also 'colorful' Caribbean salt water. He is so delighted to serve you he will wade into the water to bring you banana daiquiris while you float! More precisely, he will wade into the water, fully clothed, oblivious to the ruin of his shoes, his trousers, his health and he will do it with a smile.

I am in the Bahamas. On the phone in my room, a spinning complement of plastic pages offers handy index clues such as CAR RENTAL and CASINOS. A message from the Ministry of Tourism appears among these traveler's tips. Opening with a paragraph of 'Welcome', the message then proceeds to 'A Page of History', which reads as follows:

'New World History begins on the same day that modern Bahamian history begins — October 12, 1492. That's when Columbus stepped ashore — British influence came first with the Eleutheran Adventurers of 1648. After the Revolution, American Loyalists fled from the newly independent states and settled in the Bahamas. Confederate blockade runners used the islands as a haven during the War Between the States, and after the War, a number of Southerners moved to the Bahamas...'

There it is again. Something proclaims itself a legitimate history and all it does is trace white Mr Columbus to the British Eleutherans through the Confederate Southerners as they barge into New World surf, land on New World turf, and nobody saying one word about the Bahamian people, the black people, to whom the only thing new in their island world was this weird succession of crude intruders and its colonial consequences.

This is my consciousness of race as I unpack my bathing suit in the Sheraton British Colonial. Neither this hotel nor the British nor the long ago Italians nor the white Delta airline pilots belong here, of course. And every time I look at the photograph of that fool standing in the water with his shoes on, I'm about to have a West Indian fit, even though I know he's no fool; he's a middle-aged black man who needs a job and this is his job: pretending himself into a servile ancillary to the pleasures of the rich. (Compared to his options in life, I am a rich woman. Compared to most of the black Americans arriving for this Easter weekend on a three-nights, four-days' deal of bargain rates, the middle-aged waiter is a poor black man.)

We will jostle along with other (white) visitors and join them in the T-shirt shops or, laughing together, learn ruthless rules of negotiation as we, black Americans as well as white, argue down the price of handwoven goods at the nearby straw market while the merchants, frequently toothless black women seated on the

concrete in their only presentable dresses, humble themselves to our careless games:

'Yes? You like it? Eight dollar.'

'Five.'

'I give it to you. Seven.'

And so it continues, this weird succession of crude intruders that, now, includes me and my brothers and my sisters from the North.

This is my consciousness of class as I try to decide how much I can spend on Bahamian gifts for my family back in Brooklyn.

No matter that these other black women incessantly weave words and flowers into the straw hats and bags piled beside them on the burning dusty street. No matter that these other black women must work their sense of beauty into these things that we will take away as cheaply as we dare, or they will do without food.

We are not white, after all. The budget is limited. And we are harmlessly killing time between the poolside rum punch and the 'Native Show on the Patio' outside the hotel restaurant, tonight.

This is my consciousness of race and class and gender identity as I notice the fixed relations between these other black women and myself. They sell and I buy or I don't. They risk not eating. I risk going broke on my first vacation afternoon.

We are not particularly women and more: we are parties to a transaction designed to set us against each other.

◀ 'Olive' is the name of the black woman who cleans my hotel room. On my way to the beach I am wondering what 'Olive' would say if I told her why I chose the Sheraton British Colonial. If I told her I wanted to swim. I wanted to sleep. I did not want to be harassed by the middle-aged waiter, or his nephew. I did not want to be raped by anybody (white or black) at all and I calculated my safety as a black woman alone would best be assured by a multinational hotel corporation; in my experience, the big guys take customer complaints more seriously than the little ones. I would suppose that's one reason why they're big; they don't like to lose money any more than I like to be bothered when I'm trying to read a goddamned book underneath a palm tree that I paid \$264 to get next to.

A black woman seeking refuge in a multinational corporation may seem like a mixed metaphor to some, but there you are: in this case it's a coincidence of entirely different self-interests: Sheraton/cash = j.j.'s short-run safety.

Anyway, I'm pretty sure 'Olive' would look at me as though I came from someplace as far away as Brooklyn. Then she'd probably allow herself one indignant query before righteously removing her vacuum cleaner from my room: 'And why in the first place you come down you without you husband?'

I cannot imagine how I would begin to answer her.

My 'rights' and my 'freedom' and my 'desire' and a slew of other New World values: what would they sound like to this black woman described on the card atop my hotel bureau as 'Olive. The Maid?' 'Olive' is older than I am and I may smoke a cigarette while she changes the sheets on my bed. Whose rights? Whose freedom? Whose desire?

And why should she give a shit about mine unless I do something, for real, about hers?

It happens that the book I finished reading under a palm tree, earlier today, was the novel *Bread Givers*, by Anzia Yezierska. Definitely autobiographical, Yezierska's book lays out the difficulties of being both female and 'a person' inside a traditional Jewish family at the start of the 20th century. That any Jewish woman became anything more than the abused servant of her father or her husband is really an improbable piece of news. Yet Yezierska managed such an unlikely outcome for her own life. In *Bread Givers*, the heroine also manages an important, although partial, escape from traditional Jewish female destiny. And in the

unpardonable, despotic father, the Talmudic scholar of that Jewish family, did I not see my own and hate him twice, again? And when the heroine, the young Jewish child, wanders the street with a filthy pail she borrows to sell herring in order to raise money for the ghetto rent: 'Nothing was before me but the hunger in our house, and no bread for the next meal if I didn't sell the herring. No longer like a fire engine, but like a houseful of hungry mouths my heart cried. 'Herring — herring! Two cents apiece!' " Who would doubt the ease, the sisterhood of conversation possible between that white girl and the black woman selling straw bags on the streets of paradise because they do not want to die? And is it not obvious that the wife of that Talmudic scholar and 'Olive' who cleans my room here at the hotel, have more in common than I can claim with either one of them?

This is my consciousness of race and class and gender identity as I collect wet towels, sunglasses, wristwatch, and head toward a shower.

I am in the bathroom cleaned by 'Olive', who reminds me of the usual women's studies curriculum because it has nothing to do with her or her job: you won't find 'Olive' listed anywhere in the reading list. You will likewise seldom hear of Anzia Yezierska. But yes, you will find, from Florence Nightingale to Adrienne Rich, a white procession of independently well-to-do women writers (Gertrude Stein/Virginia Woolf/Hilda Doolittle: standard names among the 'essential' women writers).

In other words, most of the women of the world — black and Third World and white, who work because we must — most of the women of the world persist far from the heart of the usual women's studies' syllabus.

In the same way, the typical black history course slides by the majority experience it pretends to represent. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune will scarcely receive as much attention as Nat Turner even though Black women who bravely and efficiently provided for the education of black people hugely outnumber those few black men who led successful or doomed rebellions against slavery. In fact, Mary McLeod Bethune may not receive even honourable mention because black history too often apes those ridiculous white history courses that produce such dangerous gibberish as the Sheraton British Colonial 'history' of the Bahamas. Both black and white history courses exclude from their central consideration those people who neither killed nor conquered anyone as the means to new identity, those people who took care of

every one of the people who wanted to become 'a person', those people who still take care of the life at issue: the ones who wash and who feed and who teach and who diligently decorate straw hats and bags with all of their historically unrequired gentle love — the women.

Oh, the old rugged cross

on a hill far away

Well I cherish the old rugged across

It's Good Friday in the Bahamas. Seventy-eight degrees in the shade. Except for Sheraton territory, everything's closed.

It so happens that for truly secular reasons I've been fasting for three days. My hunger has now reached nearly violent proportions. In the hotel sandwich shop, the black woman handling the counter complains about the tourists; why isn't the shop closed and why don't the tourists stop eating for once in their lives. I'm famished and I order chicken salad and cottage cheese and lettuce and tomato and a hard-boiled egg and a hot cross bun and apple juice.

She eyes me with disgust.

To be sure, the timing of my stomach offends her serious religious practices. Neither one of us apologises to the other. She seasons the chicken salad to the peppery max while I listen to the loud radio gospel she plays to console herself. It's a country black version of 'The Old Rugged Cross'.

As I heave much chicken into my mouth, tears start. It's not the pepper. I am, after all, a West Indian daughter. It's the Good Friday music that dominates the humid atmosphere.

But it's time to pack it up. Catch my plane. I scan the hotel room for things not to forget. There's that white report card on the bureau.

'Dear Guests,' it says, under the name 'Olive'. 'I am your maid for the day. Please rate me: Excellent Good. Average. Below Average. Poor. Thank you.' I tuck this memento from the Sheraton British Colonial into my notebook. How would 'Olive' rate me? What would it mean for us to seem 'good' to each other? What would that rating require?

But I am hastening to leave. Neither turtle soup nor kidney pie nor any conch-shell delight shall delay my departure. I have rested, here, in the Bahamas, and I'm ready to return to my usual job, my usual work. But the skin on my body has changed and so has my mind. On the Delta flight home I realize I am burning up, indeed.

So far as I can see, the usual race and class concepts of connection, or gender assumptions of unity, do not

apply very well. I doubt that they ever did.

Otherwise why would black folks forever bemoan our lack of solidarity when the deal turns real. And if unity on the basis of sexual oppression is something natural, then why do we women, the majority people on the planet, still have a problem?

Yes. *Race and class and gender remain as real as the weather. But what they must mean about the contact between two individuals is less obvious and, like the weather, not predictable.*

And when these factors of race and class and gender absolutely collapse is whenever you try to use them as automatic concepts of connection. They may serve well as indicators of commonly felt conflict. But as elements of connection they seem about as reliable as the precipitation probability we get each night for the next day.

It occurs to me that much organisational grief could be avoided if people understood that partnership in misery does not necessarily provide for partnership for change: *When we get the monsters off our backs all of us may want to run in very different directions.*

And not only that: even though both 'Olive' and 'I' live inside a conflict neither one of us created, and even though both of us therefore hurt inside that conflict, I may be one of the monsters she needs to eliminate from her universe and, in a sense, she may be one of the monsters in mine.

I am reaching for the words to describe the difference between a common identity that has been imposed and the individual identity any one of us will choose, once she gains that chance. That difference is the one that keeps us stupid in the face of new, specific information about somebody else with whom we are supposed to have a connection because a third party, hostile to both of us, has worked it so that the two of us, like it or not, share a common enemy. *What happens beyond the idea of that enemy and beyond the consequences of that enemy?*

I am saying that the ultimate connection cannot be the enemy. The ultimate connection must be the need that we find between us.

It is not only who you are, in other words, but what we can do for each other that will determine the connection.

I am flying back to my job. I have been teaching contemporary women's poetry this semester. One quandary I have set myself to explore with my students is the one of responsibility

without power. We had been wrestling ideas to the floor for several sessions when a young black woman, a South African, asked me for help, after class.

Sokutu told me that she was 'in a trance' and had been unable to eat for two weeks.

'What's going on?' I asked her, even as my eyes startled at her trembling and emaciated appearance.

'My husband. He drinks all the time. He beats me up. I go to the hospital. I can't eat. I don't know what/anything.'

I knew Sokutu and her husband because I had organised a campus group to aid the liberation struggles of southern Africa.

Nausea rose in my throat. What this presumable connection: this husband and this wife fled from that homeland of hatred against them and now what? He was destroying himself. If not stopped, he would certainly murder his wife.

She needed a doctor, right away. It was a medical emergency. She needed protection. It was a security crisis. She needed refuge for battered wives and personal therapy and legal counsel. She needed a friend.

I got on the phone and called every number in the campus directory that might prove helpful. Nothing worked. There were no institutional resources designed to meet her enormous, multi-faceted, and ordinary woman's need.

I called various students. I asked the chairman of the English department for advice. I asked everyone for help.

Finally, another of my students, Cathy, a young Irishwoman active in campus IRA activities, responded. She asked for further details. I gave them to her.

'Her husband,' Cathy told me, 'is an alcoholic. You have to understand that. It's not the same as anything else.'

I listened, fearfully; did this mean there was nothing we could do?

'That's not what I'm saying,' she said. 'But you have to keep the alcoholic part of the thing central in everybody's mind, otherwise her husband will kill her. Or he'll kill himself.'

'Will you come with me?' I asked her, after a silence. 'Will you come with me and help us figure out what to do next?'

Cathy said she would, but that she felt shy: Sokutu comes from South Africa. What would she think about Cathy?

'I don't know,' I said. 'But let's go!'

We left to find the dormitory room of the young battered wife.

It was late, now, and dark outside.

On Cathy's car that I followed behind with my own, was the sticker that reads *Bobby Sands Free At Last*.

My eyes blurred as I read and reread the words. This was another connection: Bobby Sands and Martin Luther King, Jr. and who would believe it? I would not have believed it; I grew up terrorized by Irish kids who introduced me to the word 'nigga'.

And here I was following an Irishwoman to the room of a black South African. We were going to that room to try to save life together.

When we reached the little room, we found ourselves awkward and large. Sokutu attempted to treat us with utmost courtesy, as though we were honoured guests. She seemed surprised by Cathy, but mostly Sokutu was flushed with relief and joy because we were there, with her.

I did not know how we should ever terminate her heartfelt courtesies and address, directly, the reason for our visit: her starvation and her extreme physical danger.

Finally, Cathy sat on the floor and reached out her hands to Sokutu.

'I'm here,' she said quietly, 'because June has told me what has happened to you. And I know what it is. Your husband is an alcoholic. My father was an alcoholic. He killed himself. He almost killed my mother. I want to be your friend.'

'Oh!' was the only small sound that escaped from Sokutu's mouth.

And then she embraced the other student. And then everything changed and I watched all of this happen so I know that this happened: this connection.

And after we called the police and exchanged phone numbers and plans were made for the night and for the next morning, the young South African woman walked down the dormitory hallway, saying goodbye and saying thank-you to us.

And I walked behind them, the young Irishwoman and the young South African, and I saw them walking as sisters walk, hugging each other, and whispering and sure of each other and I felt how it was not who they were but what they both knew and what they were both preparing to do about what they knew that was going to make both of them free at last.

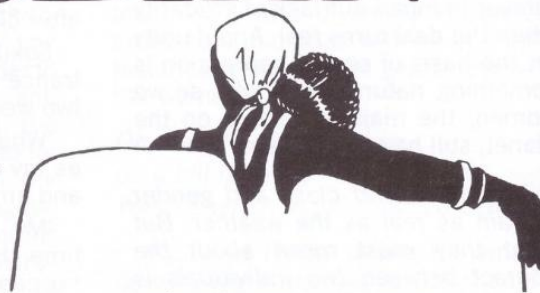
And I look out the window of the plane and I think this is how it will happen: this is how we will all make our way home — carried there by the personal strength of what we can do for each other one by one. ■

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June Jordan's most recent work include *Passion: New Poems 1977-1980* and *'Civil War' (both Beacon)*. She is a professor of English at SUNY/Stony Brook.

1981-1986

BLACKLESBIAN SUPPORT NETWORK



The Blacklesbian Support Network (BLSN) was formed in 1984 to provide support, advice, information and counselling to other Blackwomen who are questioning their (hetero) sexuality-

BLSN was born out of discussion with individual Blackwomen in London, and finally at the "We Are Here: Black Feminists in Britain" conference in May 1984. There was a general feeling that with the demise of the Black Lesbian Group, some of our needs could no longer be met. This group had provided a regular meeting place, on a fortnightly basis, for Blacklesbians around the country. For many women this was their first opportunity to meet and talk with other Black lesbians.

An initial meeting of sistahs interested in being part of the network was called. Invitations were sent to all Blackwomen who had left a contact address at the "We Are Here" Conference. About 300 women attended, mostly from London. Discussion centred around what we could offer, in terms of time, energy and experience. At the end of that meeting a smaller group committed itself to publicising the Network and generally "get-it-off-the-ground". We have since made contacts in Cardiff, Leicester, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham. A letter introducing the Network has been sent to gay/lesbian organisations around the country. More contacts have been made through the National Union of Students and lesbian and gay conferences. We have also had contact with the recently formed US based International Network of lesbians of African Descent. We have appeared in *City Limits*

lesbian and gay page, and a Black magazine. We have restricted our publicity, as we can only realistically deal with so much.

All the requests we have received from Blacklesbians/Zami's* over the years have been dealt with by a small group of women. We are particularly grateful for the assistance of Brixton Black Women's Centre, for their practical support, the use of the centre's resources, and being the "first-contact" for so many Blacklesbians/Zamis.

The Network has its own disco equipment purchased earlier this year. We have had informal discussions with Blacklesbian DJ's, who have offered their talents and skills. But we need more Sistahs to become involved. In 1986 we hope to expand our activities to include a regular disco/social and a more formalised calendar of events, and to carry on discussions with Lesbian Line and the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre (project). A calendar of events could include Diwali and Kwaanza celebrations, outings to theatre, cinema, discos and dinners, also picnics or day-trips.

Over the years the network has compiled a collection of articles, by and about Blacklesbians. It includes work from various publications, and also work specially composed for BLSN. The collection has articles about Blacklesbians/Zami's in London, the US, parts of Africa, Indonesia, India, Cuba, Holland, Brazil, Malaysia and Mexico. Any Blacklesbian/Zami can write to our address for the collection. There is no charge, but postage (34p) in stamps, would be appreciated.

As always we welcome new Blackwomen as enquirers or potential "networkers". Our priority has been and remains providing support and social contact for

Blacklesbians/Zami's. We hope to cover a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and languages. The network is currently made up of Afro-Caribbean sistahs, and sistahs of Indian descent, the majority of whom are under 25. At a second major meeting in 1985, the attendance was very poor. BLSN needs the input of other sistahs. We hope to organise in such a way so that the various tasks are allocated evenly among the network. Some areas of responsibility could be taken on for a specific time, and then passed on to someone else. Please contact us if you feel you can become part of BLSN, and/or if you need support, advice information or counselling.

NB. We would like you to appreciate that we do not have the time, energy or interest to be involved in "educating" non-Blackwomen about the reality of our lives — THIS IS NOT WHAT WE ARE HERE FOR. ■



**BLSN
(BLACKLESBIAN SUPPORT
NETWORK) c/o BRIXTON
BLACK WOMENS' CENTRE
41A STOCKWELL GREEN
LONDON SW9 (01) 274 9221**

* "Zami"... is a Carriacou word used specifically for women who live, love and work together. Audre Lorde, London 1984.

* "Zami: A New Spelling of my Name. A biomythography" by Audre Lorde. Sheba Feminist Publishers £3.95 1984.

1981-1986

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Women and the Turkish Education Group

" 'When I see Turkish people, especially girls like myself, who are happy to be what they are and are proud of their country and its life, I feel a sudden loss, as if I also would like to have that sense of 'belonging' and identity, and begin to wish that I too had been born in Cyprus, so that I could feel more whole as a person.'"

*(Nurcan, a 16 year-old Turkish Cypriot girl, born in London, talking about her feelings at the first ever Community Language Summer School in ILEA in 1983.)"*¹

The Turkish Education Group (TEG) was set up to deal with these kind of feelings from some of our young girls, and with all the confusion and pain that living in a racist white society subjects us to. Its aim was also to find ways of challenging and fighting against it.

According to ILEA statistics — no other reliable statistics exist partly due to the classification of Turkish speakers under various headings including "other" the Turkish Community is the second largest language group in ILEA. In Hackney the second language after English is Turkish. The Haringey statistics also indicate that its second largest language group is Turkish.

We feel that the above classification is designed to make us socially politically, educationally and economically invisible, unless of course a "problem" arises. Even more seriously, it silences us. This silence is not more evident than in the case of women in our society. The combination of forces in the racist, white society and the sexist structures in our own community have ensured until recently that Turkish women and

young girls were not able to raise and deal with issues concerning them.

The TEG was established in 1982 as the direct result of demand from those layers in our community. It was the first organisation among all the Turkish speaking male-dominated organisations which had a leadership of women and served the needs of women. Today we still carry on that tradition. Our executive committee of nine only has one man; out of the 20 workers we employ, only two are men. We are convinced that this has encouraged the development of our women in the group and in our community, and that it has also gone a long way towards dealing with some of the stereotypes as to the role of women. In the wider British society we are still struggling to get rid of the sweet, sickly image of us being "Turkish Delights", rather than women fighting for a more just society.

I would like to illustrate the work we do by giving examples of the situations our workers and women have faced. I have changed names to protect the identity of some of the women.

Ayşe was 18 when she was brought over to this country by her husband's family. She was from a village, couldn't speak English and had no idea of British society. Her husband was 19 and very much dependant on his family. She gave birth after about a year. While her baby was a few weeks old she had the courage to run away from home carrying the baby and one plastic bag containing all her worldly belongings. She came to one of our group members for support and advice. She had been beaten senseless between the legs by her father-in-law. We as a Group supported her and placed her in a refuge, despite the threats of violence to our members by various men in our community. Today she has made the choice of living on her own, learning English and re-establishing her links with her family in Turkey. She admits that without the support of TEG members and our firm stand against threats, she would not have survived.

Emine is 48 and from a village. Girls

were not educated in the villages of Turkey in those days — they were most useful in looking after the other children, working in the fields and in the house. Her husband sent for her after he lived and worked here for 11 years. She came about five years ago and felt humiliated by her isolation here. TEG set up a Turkish literacy class to which she came faithfully every week. Emine can now write home and can read her own letters. Her husband who told her she was too old to learn to read and write, is still unable to read and write himself.

Gulay was born here — she is in her early twenties. There are many other young women like her who feel cheated out of their identity and aspirations. They have lost their ability to use their mother-tongue at a level they feel comfortable with. At times they have questioned their identities; which society they belonged to. Are they part of British society? How can they be when they are rejected? Are they part of Turkish society? How can they be when they can't even speak the language and they reject parts of the society!

To deal with this situation, which at times can reach a crisis point of attempted suicide and running away from home, we provide counselling and support systems as well as establishing second generation Turkish classes and other cultural activities which build up the confidence of young people. Some of the older members of the group are able to support younger members by providing positive models and creating a safe environment to be different and yet normal. We help some of them come back into our community and begin to use their skills as professionals — teachers, health workers, and women, youth and elderly project workers.

We do not accept the concept of "kayıp kusak". We do not consider ourselves the "lost generation" — on the contrary we are challenging, defining and changing our position in society. We are, together with other Black sisters, creating a new concept of Black, immigrant women in the inner cities of the Western world.

◀ Hafize is a trained and experienced nurse, yet she could only work as a nursing auxiliary in this country for a pittance. She is now a valuable support worker for many women dealing with the health authorities. Nilgun is a trained teacher with years of experience in Turkey, yet here she is only paid unqualified rates in ILEA. Both women are professionally qualified and experienced and an asset to our community yet the racist regulations do not allow them to make a full contribution. Many professionals are wasting their time in restaurants or sweat shops or doing home working while our community is crying out for help. TEG has been a support for this group of people by creating working situations as well as putting pressure on the authorities for action.

Finally the group has created a support system for professionals who have trained in this country but who feel isolated, partly because they are doing "non-traditional" jobs but also because of the attacks on our abilities, professionalism and integrity by the racist structures of our workplaces. The group provides emotional as well as professional support and has created an atmosphere of intellectual discussion on the role of women in Turkish society, as well as other issues concerning us racism, bi-lingualism, deportations.

The TEG works with young people, children (school age as well as under-fives), women, young girls, the elderly and professionals. A more detailed account of our work can be found in our Annual General Report 1983-1985, available from our offices.²

The main projects we run are:

Women's Projects

We run three women's projects: in Islington, Hackney and Haringey. These projects between them run nine support groups which meet various needs. These include: elderly women, women with literacy needs, learning English, women's writing and health support. We create situations where women feel confident about themselves and able to express their needs. We hope that the projects will

give more responsibility to women to determine and run their projects. We aim to train women to become the future women's workers in their areas and to be able to make better informed choices about their lives. In fact recently we were able to appoint workers from women who were attending some of our support groups. Our work with women has inevitably brought us into contact with their husbands and a lot of hard work had to be done around convincing them to let their wives join the groups.

Youth Project

We have probably one of the most successful youth projects in London. Its success lies in the fact that Turkish young people bring their Afro-Caribbean, Greek and English friends and they run it themselves. We paid special attention to the work with young girls — in fact the youth project developed out of the Girls Project and many of the young women who now provide leadership and run the Youth Project come from that project originally.

As well as tackling the role of women in our society, we take on the issues of sexism amongst our young men. It is because of this relentless stand on sexism that members of other Turkish organisations call us "feminist" as a derogatory term. We do not identify ourselves as a "feminist" organisation, but we do have a very clear stand on sexism, chauvinism and racism. We deal with these issues in all our projects, including the elderly and nursery projects.

Turkish Bi-lingual Nursery

The nursery was established in February 1985 and has been successful despite all attempts to frustrate our efforts. It is the first Turkish nursery and was set up on a bi-lingual basis. We hope it will provide a model for other language communities. The question of sexual stereotypes is part of our work with under-fives whether in the nursery or in the various creches we run

alongside the women's support groups.

Schools

Finally the group works in many schools running mother-tongue classes and providing bi-lingual support. Through this work we are careful to select material which is relevant to the lives of our community and our children and based on those issues which concern us, such as immigration, deportations, home working, racism. The role of women and sexism is also important here.

Turkish women have known for a long time that as Black and immigrant women in London, we are not satisfied with the treatment we are receiving. We are now slowly finding the strength through our organisations to begin to challenge both the racist and sexist structures within British society, as well as our own sexist community. We feel that in Nawal al Saadawi's words, we alone can define ourselves, our needs and aspirations and determine our struggle towards liberation. We cannot talk about a society free of oppression unless we begin to talk about the liberation of women "the oppressed of the oppressed". ■

Aydin Mehmet Ali

1. "Why Are We Wasted?" by Aydin Mehmet Ali. In *Multi-Ethnic Education Review*, Vol.4, No.1.

2. TEG office c/o Islington AEL, Shepperton Road, London N1, tel: 226 8647, 359 4315.

3. *The Hidden face of Eve-Nawal al Saadawi.*

Black Women's Centres and Resource facilities in London

Black Women's Centres in London

Asian Women's Forum, c/o Asian Centre, 8 Caxton Road, N22. Nursery Premises, 2nd Floor, Wood Green Shopping City, 65 Ben Penwortham Court. 888 2446.

Mother & Toddlers group Mon-Fri, 10-4.30. Activities include: Indian Classical Music, Eastern Fash Dress making classes, creative embroidery & knitting, Beauty classes and keep fit classes. Also skin care, eyes. Doctor counselling, English as 2nd language. Also provide advice and counselling on welfare rights, Social, personal and other matters. Books for women and children in Asian languages. Workshops on racism and sexism. Every day 10-4. Children's activities. Open 9-5 Mon-Fri. Contact Mrs V K Rottal. Access A. by lift.

Asian Women's Resource Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, NW10, (961 5701). Access A to ground floor. Phone for times & details.

Information, library, duplicating facilities, Research Projects, eg. childcare (Asian children in care). Work with schools young Asian girls. Advice sessions Tues 10-1.00, Thursday 2-5, Fri 10-1pm. Typing classes Sat 2-4 (under review). Individual support for Asian women. An incest survivors group. Recently produced exhibition on Asian Women and Work, being circulated round borough libraries but available for women's groups from end of March. Urdu & Gujarati classes Sat 10-12 at Harlseden Primary School — developing languages classes in language and history classes. Involved in Brent campaign against racist attacks. Discussion groups. Advice on issues eg. immigration & nationality, education, employment, domestic violence, welfare rights and health issues.

Asha, 378 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 (274 8854)

Primarily a resource and advice centre; also has refuge for Asian women on separate premises. Hours: Drop-in sessions Wed 9.30-5.30; other weekdays phone first between 9.30-5.30. Access: N.

Barnet Women's Centre, 2 Stanhope Avenue, Finchley N3, (346 8858), 10-4 (phone first). Access: Ramp. Building is being adapted for women with disabilities. Lift being installed. Services for Black & Ethnic Minorities — setting up a translation network for women especially Asian languages. Black women's group (open) has been meeting regularly, phone centre for details. Asian Women's sewing group Tues 10-1.00 pm also Thurs & Mon. Black & Ethnic Minority women are involved in running of the centre. Have own transport service for hire ie. running cost of bus.

Women's information & resources centre for all women in Barnet. Courses, Meditation, pre childbirth, self defence, home maintenance, yoga, counselling service, lesbian counselling service. Outreach work in Borough. Fund raising, discussion groups, library service, newsletter — also taped local info/London info service for women.

Battersea Black Women's Centre, 248 Lavender Hill, SW11 (228 8532). Mon-Fri 9.30-5.00pm.

General advice and family support centre Mon-Thurs. Take part in fund raising events, creche facilities and provides space for meetings. Drop-in session Fri. Housing Welfare advice Tues, Supplementary Education Weds — also doing research in deprived areas 4-6pm. Immigration/nationality advice Fri 2-5pm. Young peoples project — Mon 6.30-8.30pm for anyone 7-15 yrs, ring for info. Access: N (2nd floor accom, no lift, looking for alternative premises, help for disabled women attending centre (also mentally ill).

Berner Tenants Women's Centre, Philchurch Place, Pinchin St, E1 (480 6790).

Multi racial centre. English classes Wed 10-12, Tues 1-3, Thurs 1-3. Sewing classes Thurs 1-12. Bengali Mother tongue class Tues 10-12. pensioners club Wed 12-3 (inc lunch) Bingo Thurs 7-9pm. Welfare rights advice 10-12, 1-3, Mon-Fri. Shopping Trip once every 3 weeks (Tues). Girls club — Sun, 3-6, Mon 7-9. Mon-Thurs 4-6 Urdu Mother Tongue for children (no age specification). Also Bengali Mother

Tongue for children Sat (all day). Programme changes according to demand — phone for details for films, shows, courses etc.

Brent Black Women's Group, Stonebridge Neighbourhood Project, 11-12 Donovan Court, Exton Crescent NW10, (961 3337/965 2477/965 0047)

Creche and access, classes, workshops, lunch club, and occasional health speakers. Open 10-5 Mon-Fri. Deals with welfare rights, housing, general advice and info. Also has a mental health drop in centre 10-5, Mon-Fri. Access: P. 1st Floor, no lift. Not purpose built but a disabled toilet on ground floor, also access to ground. Help provided.

Brent Women's Centre, 232 Willesden High Road, NW10, (459 7660). Open 10.30-5.30 Weds/Thurs/Fri's (drop-in). Creche on Mon/Tues/Wed/ Thurs. Access A.

Full & varied programme of classes, phone for full variety. 3 workers Irish, Afro-Caribbean, Asian. Local Black women workers support group meets irregularly, (ring for details). ESL classes Wed 10-12, also Sat 11.30-1.30pm. Self help for Asian women Thurs 5-7pm. Basic home maintenance Fri 10.30-12.30pm. French for beginners Fri 1-3pm. Afro Caribbean womens group Fri 2-5pm. Drama Sat 1.30-3.30pm. Pregnancy test and counselling Sat 10.00-12pm. Classes arranged according to demand, preference to access for courses given to Black & Ethnic Minority women. Classes include: Computing — women with basic knowledge. Tues 1-3pm. Computing — women with no knowledge. Tues 7-9pm. Massage and relaxation, Tues 1-3pm. Assertiveness Training Thurs 7.30-9.30pm.

Brixton Black women's Centre, Mary Seacole House, 41a Stockwell Green, SW9. (274 9220).

No creche, no access. General advice and information, community work. Open 10-6pm Mon-Fri (Thurs till 10pm). Has details of all black women's groups throughout London. Also publishes Black Women's newsletter 'Speakout'. Access: N.

Camden Lesbian Centre, c/o 2 Malden Road, NW5, (267 1402). Currently looking for new premises but hope to be open soon. Telephone for details. General meetings once a month. Thurs 8.00 (phone). Has Black Lesbian group and Jewish Lesbian group. Phone for details.

Centre for Black Women (Hackney). Correspondence address: 136 Kingsland High Road, PO Box 29, E8. (254 9145) 25 Hackney Grove E9 — Feb '86 (telephone above number).

Creche, no access. Legal advice and information, playgroup. Young single mothers group, library with black literature, history and culture, elderly black women's club, racism awareness, health and sickle cell sessions.

Croydon Women's Centre, 13 Woodside Green, South Norwood SE25, (656 2369).

Open 9.30-4.30 weekdays. Access P. Black women's group meets every Tues 7.30 onwards. Asian Women's drop-in session Fri 10-12pm.

East London Black Women's Centre, 747 Barking Road, Plaistow E13, (552 1169).

No access, creche occasional. Workshops and classes, phone for details. Open 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri. Saturday school 2-4pm for Afro-Caribbean children (no age limit). Any Afro-Caribbean women interested in joining ELBWO please phone for details of meetings.

Greenwich Asian Women's Group, MacBean Centre, MacBean Street, Woolwich SE18. 9-5, Mon-Fri. Access A. Creche provision. Moving to own premises (latest March 1986) 307 Plumstead High Street, SE18.

Welfare and advice, immigration, domestic violence, social services etc. Language classes in Punjabi and Gujarati Sat 10-12pm. Drop in session in Barnfield Community Centre Tues 10-12. From Feb, drop-in session at Plumstead Health Centre, Wed 1-3pm. Aerobic classes Mon 6-7.30pm, keep-fit Thur 10-11.30pm. From Feb, Wed 5-7.30 session on advice and using facilities of local youth club, Trinity Church.

Greenwich Lesbian & Gay Rights Centre, (temp no.854 8888, Community Affairs Section). Maggie or Jill. Currently looking for new premises but hope to open soon.

Greenwich Women's Bus, c/o 14 Ebdon Way, Ferrier Estate, Kidbrooke SE3 (856 3808).

Travels the borough of Greenwich with information for women on welfare benefits, housing, childcare, training opportunities and local activities. Often invite women with expertise in specialist areas to travel with them and answer queries. Also visits local schools.

Women in Greenwich, 14 Ebdon Way SE3 (856 3808). Hours 10-5, Mon-Fri, but telephone first as also have mobile women's centre (bus) and may be out of the office. Access: N.

Women in Greenwich (Office), Mobile Centre (see above). Have several Black and Ethnic Minority women's groups throughout the borough, which are self-help groups—phone office for details.

Hackney Muslim Women's Council, 101 Clapton Common, E5 (809 0993). Creche, no access.

Playgroup classes and talks. Open 9am-7pm, Mon-Fri, 10-12 Sat, 11-1 Sun. Starting classes in computing, numeracy, knitting and how to use the machine. Please phone for details and times of classes.

Hackney Pakistan Women's Welfare Centre, 42 Stamford Hill, N16 (806 3289).

Open 9.30am-4.30pm. 24 hr phone service available. Advice given on; family matters, education, cultural preservation, language difficulties, immigration, employment, police, consumer affairs, welfare rights (Health & Social Security) and any other problem bothering you and your family including young girls. Education centre; help and assistance is given to learn: — Holy Quran/theology, Urdu language, English language, Pakistani culture, cooking, sewing, knitting and embroidery classes. Also produce a newsletter quarterley Khatoon. Phone for times or details of classes.

Hackney Women's Centre, 20 Dalston Lane, E9. (254 2980). Access: A. Hours 9.30-5, Weekday.

Black Women's discussion group — Fridays. Black Women's talk/writing group — Tues 7.30-10pm. Provide classes for Black and Ethnic Minority women throughout the year, also workshops — phone centre for details. Urdu and Gujarati classes Fri 4-5 — Urdu, Thurs 4-5 Gujarati. Luncheon club Wed & Thurs provides Afro-Caribbean, African and Asian food.

Haringay Black Women's Centre, c/o Old former Somerset School, Lordship Lane, N17. (808 7973). Creche provision.

Workshops; Music, employment, welfare rights, crafts. Evening classes, typing, sewing, English, IEC Yoruba. Phone centre for times and details. Open 10-6 & 7-9 Mon-Sun.

Haringay Women's Centre, 40 Turnpike Lane, N8 (889 3912). Access: P (ramps on entrance, no toilet facilities). Advice and information and support on health, relationships, housing, children, unemployment, for women. Mon-Thurs 12.30-4.30, Sat. 1-4. Pregnancy testing: Tues 6-8, Sat 10-12 by appointment. Advice for women in violent relationships: Wed 1.30-3.30pm. Legal advice by appointment only. Black women's group meets fortnightly phone for details. Prajati Women's group to resume regular meetings soon, phone for details. Also Women with mental health problems group meets Tues 1.30-3.30pm.

Hillingdon Women's Centre, — not yet established in premises. Contact Vivien Woodcock (Development Worker) on Ruislip 37248 for further information.

Hounslow Asian Women's Community Centre, 126 Hanworth Road, Hounslow, Middx, (572 2484).

No creche, partial access. Language & sports classes. Hours: 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri. Phone for details. Creche facilities provided for Asian Women's user group meetings. Tues/Thurs & Sat, 10-1pm. Accommodation is temporary until other premises are located.

Kings Cross Women's Centre, 71 Tonbridge Street, WC1, (837 7509). Information, advice and referral services for women, including support for problems of racial and sexual assault or harassment, rape,

prostitution, immigration, social security, child benefit, custody, health, and housing; Mon-Thurs 11-5pm. Legal Action for Women: Thurs 6-8 (legal advice from women lawyers). Correspondence; PO Box 287, NW6 5QU. Access P. Ground floor premises but no special facilities for women with disabilities ie. no toilet. Fri phone open, closed to public. Black Women for Wages for Housework organisation based at centre. Discussion and Study Group for B & EM women called Sex Race & Class. Phone for details and times. Creche provision if arranged with centre.

Kingston-Upon-Thames Women's Centre, 66 London Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, KT2 6PX. (541 1964).

Hours; 9-4.30 Mon-Fri. Note: temporary office/moving into new centre in 1986. Access currently N/new centre A. Creche facilities always available. Asian Women's support group, Fri 7.30-9.30pm. Black & Ethnic Minority Drop-in session + creche Tues 10-1, Fri 1-3pm. Lesbian support group alternate Tues — phone for details. Asian Girls Group, Sun 2-4pm no age requirement (average age 13).

Lewisham & Deptford Women's Centre, 74 Deptford High St, SE8 (692 1857). Hours: 10-4pm, Mon-Fri. Closed Sat & Sun. Access: N.

Establishing a Black Women's Group on Fri 2-4pm (open group). Advice & info on housing, law, welfare rights, health. Pregnancy testing available, generally mornings but on demand if necessary. Yoga classes Mon 2-4pm (open class), Wed 10.30-12.00. Luncheon club on Wed. Waged & unwaged. Classes/workshops available according to demand. Phone centre for details.

London Irish Women's Centre, 59 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16 (249 7318).

Irish language and cultural classes, social club, children's classes etc. Opening day 1st Feb 1986. Open Mon-Fri 9-5pm. Evenings according to courses/classes avail. Health Welfare, housing & employment advice (phone for times) Research and library facilities, video and photography, and radio equipment. Ground floor fully accessible, no access to 1st floor, help avail. Creche facilities provided for courses/classes etc. Mothers & toddlers groups & childrens facilities available. Transport available for elderly women, disabled women and children.

Lenthal Road Women's Workshop, 81 Lenthal Rd, E8 (254 3082).

Women's services centre offering darkroom, screen printing and other facilities. Aims to offer skill sharing with women. Open 10-6 weekdays. Access P. All workers are Black women. Provide workshops/courses for Black women. Phone for details.

London Lesbian & Gay Centre, 67/69 Cowcross St, EC1 (608 1471).

A complex including a gay community centre, women's floor, cafe and bookshop. Based in central London. Opening hours (July 1985). Closed all day Mon, Tues and Wed open from 6pm-12 midnight. Thurs and Sun open from 12 midday to 12 midnight, Fri & Sat open from 12 midday to 2am. Access to basement, ground, 1st and 2nd floor. 3rd floor not accessible, disabled facilities on 1st and 2nd floor. No specific provision for B & EM women but all lesbians welcome. Tues 7-9.30pm lesbian co-ordinating committee meeting open to all users. Thurs 7.30-12 women only event. 9.00 Underground club/live music women only (phone centre for details). Sat 8.30-2.00 women only disco, basement.

Lambeth Women & Childrens Health Bus, c/o South Western Hospital, London Rd SW4.

Mamensia (centre for African women), 135 Clarence Rd, Lower Clapton E5 (985 0147) Hours 10-5, Mon-Fri. Access: N

Advice and information centre. In process of providing nursery care for under 5's (scheduled for 87/88) and setting up a Black Women's refuge. Phone centre for details of future plans on training, skill-sharing etc.

Milap Day Centre (Mixed centre for elderly women), Milap Day Centre, Town Hall Annexe, Southall, Middx, UB1 3HA. (574 2311 ext 223). Hours: 10-5.30 Mon to Fri Access: A.

Separate facilities for elderly women Sat 10-5pm. Provide Asian menu. Tues 2-3pm — Punjabi & English language classes and craft classes provided. Tues 10-12.30 Indian films and videos. Reading room and outings arranged — phone for details.

Millan Asian Centre, 59 Trinity Rd, SW17, (767 8628). Access but no creche.

Legal advice, classes, playgroup, mother and toddler group, after school care, language classes, playgroup, supplementary education in English and Maths for children between 11-16 yrs. Accupressure class, sewing class, Elderly women's group, luncheon club, Senior Citizens Club 2-6pm Mon-Fri, Sat, Sun 1-6pm. Opening times 9.30-5.30 Mon-Fri. Latchkey scheme open to 6pm. Senior Citizen weekend opening. Phone centre for times of classes.

North Paddington Women's Centre, 115 Portnall Rd W9 (9699 8897) Hours 10-15pm, Mon-Fri. Access P. Black Women's group 10-6pm Mon-Fri.†

Peckham Black Women's Group, 69 Bellenden Rd, SE15 (701 2651). Hours 10-5 Mon-Fri. Access: P.

Creche, workshops, counselling, discussions and meetings on issues affecting Black women. c/o St Giles Parish Hall, Benhill Rd, SE5. (Hope to move to Bellenden in August). Free pregnancy testing Mon 10-1pm. (Can be arranged for alternative times). Health workshops Tues 2-4pm. Lesbian group, once a month on Thursday, phone for details. Black women & Mental health group, once a month, Wed. Phone for details. Welfare rights and advice Wed 10-1pm. Provides resources eg. tool library, sewing machine, video & camera equip, photocopier and typewriter.

Southall Black Women's Centre (for Asian and Afro-Caribbean women), 86 Northcote Avenue, Southall, Middx (843 0578).

Resource centre and base office for Southall Black sisters organisation. Hours 9-6 Mon-Fri. Access P. Ground floor accessible plus facilities but 1st floor not accessible. Creche provision. Advice on welfare rights, domestic violence, health, education, housing and employment.

South London Women's Centre, 55 Acre Lane SW2 (274 7215). 10-6 Tues-Sat. Access: A.

Black Women & Fibroids Health Group meets on irregular basis, phone for details. 3 Black and 2 Irish workers providing counselling and general advice. Irish Women's group meets last Monday of every month 8pm. Will do home visit. Classes and courses provided on demand. Ring for details.

Southwark Muslim Women's Assoc., Old Bellenden School, Bellenden Rd, SE15 (732 8053)

Creche, no access, workshops, language classes. Open 10-9pm (approx). Mon-Fri, open late. Open Sat-Sun 12-5pm for youth activities, spec in work with young women up to 21 yrs. Advice and information, Sewing classes and ESL. Phone centre for details and times of classes.

Southwark Women's Centre, 6 Peckham High St, SE15 (701 2564). Hours 10-5, Mon-Thurs, Sat 2-5, closed Sun. Access: A.

Also has mobile bus (women's centre) for use for meetings, giving out information etc. (Bus adapted for disabled access). African Women's Group meets on Sun 3pm. Phone for details as meetings are irregular. Drop-in centre providing lunch and creche. Photocopying, typing and poster making equip. Classes, meeting room, support groups, action groups, advice session, pregnancy testing, personal counselling and currently running until Easter a pregnancy rights and childbirth exercises classes. Sewing classes Mon 2-5. Info for women with disabilities Wed 2-5pm. Support group for women coming off tranquilisers Wed 6.30-9.00pm. Lesbians Group Thurs 8-10.30pm. All groups etc have B & EM members. Phone centre for times and details.

Sutton Women's Centre, 3 Palmeston Rd, Sutton SN1; 4QL (661 1991). Hours 9.30-onwards Mon-Fri. Access: P to ground floor, 1st floor not accessible.

Creche provision, Asian Women's Group Mon 10-12. Mothers & Toddlers Group for Asian women and others Mon 1.30-4pm. Courses on self-defence, assertiveness, yoga, craft, toymaking, sewing, knitting, a sewing group, feminist discussion group, a darts team, current affairs group. Open to all women. Phone for details and times of courses.

St Raphael Women's Workshop, 46 Henderson Close, NW10 (459 2501). Access: N.

Creche, Pregnancy testing, after school collection service — currently advertising for a welfare rights worker. Starting an Assoc for battered women. Phone for times and details.

Waltham Forest Women's Centre, 109 Hoe St, E17 (520 5318).

A creche provision. 10-4pm Mon-Fri (open evenings for groups/meetings). Black women's group Wed 7-9.30pm. Black lesbians Group Wed fortnightly 7-9.30pm (phone for details). Tai Chi class (mixed) Mon 7-9.30pm. Advice & information, has Christian Women's group meets Thurs 2-4pm, swimming group Thurs 11-1pm, craft afternoon Tues 2-4pm. Open to all women. Resuming Lunch Club Tues in March. Phone center for details/times.

West Croydon Women's Centre, 1st Floor Metrostore, 231 The Vale, Acton W3 (743 0326).

May be moving, phone for details. Hours Wed 10-7pm. Access: P.

West Hampstead Women's Information & Employment Advisory Centre, 55 Hemstell Rd, NW6.

Employment and Unemployment

Many Black and Ethnic minority women work out of economic necessity to supplement a low family income or because they are the sole earner in the family. Black and ethnic minority women work longer hours than white women but at lower hourly rates. They are even more concentrated in the lower paid sectors of the economy than white women. Racism, fears of immigration checks and both racist and sexist harassment all contribute to stress and insecurity and make women vulnerable to exploitation and active discrimination by employers. Some organisations dealing specifically with employment issues are:

Open Access, 5-5a Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 (928 9941). A job placement agency serving the needs of Black women and men, helping them to identify their training and employment needs and break into fields of employment from which they have been traditionally excluded.

Black Trade Union Solidarity Movement, 5-5a Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 (928 8108). Network and resources for all Black workers in London and elsewhere.

Migrants Workers' organisations

Migrant Resource Centre, 2 Denbigh Place, SW1 (630 5842). London-wide resource for all migrant workers.

Maendeleo Project (379 6889)

Africa Centre, King Street, WC2 (836 1973). Support for African women workers throughout London.

National Union of Eritrean Women in Europe, PO Box 7007, WC1 (837 2936/7).

Housing

A number of local organisations now exist to fight racial harassment.

They include:

Greenwich Action Committee Against Racial Attacks, 1st Floor, 78 Sandy Hill Road, SE18 7AZ (855 4343).

Racial Harassment Bill Group, Chair Rizwan Razaq, c/o SHAC, 189a Old Brompton Road, SW5 0AR (373 7276).

Tower Hamlets Association for Racial Equality, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 (729 1946).

Black and Ethnic Minorities' Housing Advice

African Refugee Housing Action Group (women), 2nd Floor, St Margarets, 23-25 Leighton Road, NW5 (482 3829). Access: N.

African Women's Association, 135 Clarence Road, E5 8EE (985 0147). Access: N.

ASHA, Lambeth Asian Women's Resource Centre, c/o 378 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 (274 8854/737 5901). Two refuges for single women and women with children. Access: N.

ASHA, Southwark, PO Box 484, SE5 0HS (703 4319). Refuge for Asian women. Access: N.

Asian Women's Resource Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, NW10 (961 5701/6549).

ASRA, 5 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 (928 9379). Access: N.

Black Roof Women's Group, 19a Groveway, Stockwell, SW9 0AH (582 4436). Access: N.

Housing Co-op La caye, c/o THARE Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 (729 1946). Access: N.

Haringey Young Single Homeless, Tottenham Green Education Centre, Town Hall Approach, N15 (808 9330).

GLC
1981-1986
Working for London
archive.parmindervir.com

Homeless Action, 52-54 Featherstone Street, EC1 (251 6783) Women only. Access: A.

Latin American Women's Rights Service, Beauchamp Lodge, 2 Warwick Crescent, Harrow Road, W2 (289 7277).

Mixifren Association, 33 Braydon Road, Stamford Hill and 38 Cranwich Road, Stamford Hill, N16 (800 5969). Advice for young black people. Three hostels for women are being opened.

Ackee Housing Project, 55 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16. Threshold Centre, 101A Tooting High Street, SW17 (672 2162). Access: A.

UJIMA Housing Association, 413-419 Harrow Road, W9 (960 5141). Access: N.

Film, video, television and radio

Opportunities for Women in Film and Programme-making

The television, film, video and radio industry is one of the most male-dominated and white areas of employment in Britain. There is an alarming lack of programmes and films made by women, something which needs to change if women are to see a better representation of themselves and the world on screen and tape. Access to jobs and to training is a key element in that.

The following groups and organisations either have an interest in the involvement of women and of Black people in the film, television, video and radio industries — in some cases they have policies to this effect — and/or they are concerned about the representation of women on the air, on screen and on tape.

Association of Black Film and Video Workshops, c/o Black Audio Film Collective, 89 Ridley Road, Dalston, E8 (254 9527/9536). An umbrella organisation which represents Black film and video workshops in London and nationally.

Black Audio Film Collective, 89 Ridley Road, E8 (254 9527/9536). Exists to prioritise and encourage a Black film culture.

Black Women's Radio Group, c/o Local Radio Workshop, 12 Praed Mews, W2 (402 7651). They aim to challenge the white media's representation of Black people as a 'problem' and make recordings for and about the Black communities and especially Black women's

activities and have made tapes covering Black conferences and Black music etc. Hope to set up a tape library.

Sankofa Film and Video, Unit 5, Cockpit Yard Workshops, Northington Street, WC1 (831 0024). Black film and video group.

CEDDO Film Video Workshop, 1st Floor, Seven Sisters School, Seaford Road, N15 (802 9034). A group of Black film/video makers concerned with the needs of Black people in general and in relation to the industry.

Training

Many women have been out of work for several years after bringing up a family and are now desperate to return. This can be a daunting experience for women who feel they do not have the right qualifications or confidence to go for a training course or apply for jobs. Many colleges and institutes are now offering courses, often with names like Fresh Horizons, Second Chance or Wider Opportunities for Women, that are designed to give women the confidence to re-enter the job market.

Black and ethnic minority women encounter additional barriers. The process which pushes Black women to the bottom of the labour market starts at school with an unsuitable and often discriminatory education system and inadequate and often racist careers advice. Training to achieve promotion and greater opportunities within large organisations is also comparatively rare and Black women are frequently excluded because of racist and sexist practices, despite stated equal opportunities policies. Little attention has been paid to the specific training needs and demands of Black and ethnic minority women.

Discrimination

The Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act make it illegal for training bodies to discriminate on the grounds of either race or sex when affording access to vocational training facilities to any person who wishes to undergo this training in order to increase their chances of employment. These training bodies include: Industrial Training Boards, the MSC, the Employment Service Agency, the Training Services Agency and Employers' training

associations. However, Sections 47 and 48 of the Sex Discrimination Act allow training bodies and employers discriminate positively in favour of one sex for training for particular areas of work where no-one or very few people of that sex have been doing that work during the last 12 months.

If you think that you are being turned down for training either because you are Black, or a woman (or both), get advice from:

Commission for Racial Equality, Elliott House, 10-12 Allington Street, SW1 (828 7022)

The Equal Opportunities

Commission, Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3 3HN (061 833 9244: ask for the Legal Officer)

Mental Health

The psychiatric profession still operates circular arguments as to what constitutes mental 'health'. Normality is viewed as the ability to fit reasonably comfortably into the behaviour and attitudes expected by society, according to gender, sexuality, race and class. This can have disastrous implications for women whose 'mental health' will be defined in terms of a 'feminine psyche' which many women consider to have been defined by a historically misogynist and racist male academic and therapeutic establishment. These stereotypes of 'normality' are particularly devastating to women who are Black or who belong to an ethnic minority, or are lesbians.

The idea of a 'cure' all too often means some form of pressure on the patient to accept and conform to oppressive stereotypes and/or to adjust to, rather than struggle against, whatever conditions have caused her to break down. Attitudes within the system towards Black women, lesbians, mothers, incest survivors, victims of domestic violence are considered by many women's groups to be generally negative. Blame is placed on the victim who needs to be 'cured'. Women are very vulnerable to being detained ('sectioned') against their will, under the Mental Health Act.

GPs, therapists and hospitals usually resort to the control of symptoms by the use of drugs, ECT and in extreme cases, psycho-surgery. There are now much stricter controls on the long-term prescription of minor tranquillisers which are seriously addictive but the

system is still built around the widespread use of both minor and major tranquillisers, in spite of their appalling side-effects.

There are a number of organisations concerned with researching mental health, supporting, advising or offering therapy, and promoting critical attitudes towards an oppressive mental health system.

The following groups can give general advice and assistance:

Afro-Caribbean Mental Health Association, 48 East Lake Road, SE5 9QL (737 3604). Befriending and support services for Afro-Caribbean psychiatric patients and others of Afro-Caribbean origin with mental health problems, their families and friends. They want to expand into a community care centre providing community care, counselling, psychotherapy, group therapy etc. Can also give advice on rights including legal, housing, etc.

Afro-Caribbean Self-Help Voluntary Organisation, 48 East Lake Road, SE5.

Asha Asian Women's Resource Centre, c/o 27 Santley Street, SW4 (737 5901/274 8854).

Black Health Workers and Patients Association, Annexe B, Tottenham Town Hall, High Road, N15 (808 1000).

Brent Asian Women's Resources Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, Harlesden, NW10 (453 0243).

Brent Black Mental Health Project, 13 Nicoll Road, Harlesden.

Brent Sickle Cell Centre, Willesden Hospital, Harlesden Road, NW10. (459 1291 x 235) Access: A.

Jewish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, 140 Wembley Road, Wembley.

Lambeth Sickle Cell Information Centre, Swan Mews, 2 Stockwell Road, SW9 (737 3588).

Southall Black Women's Centre, 86 Northcote Avenue, Southall, Middlesex (843 0578)

like the way the school operates. As a result, Black parents have set up a network of pressure and support groups to challenge racism in schools and to argue for the type of schooling they want for their children. In some cases, Black parents have set up alternative Saturday schools or daily supplementary schools.

Local Organisations, Parents' Groups and Supplementary and Saturday Schools

Camden

Afro-Caribbean Parents' Group, c/o Social Services, 156 West Lane, NW6.

Camden Black Parents' and Teachers' Group, c/o 146 Kentish Town Road, NW5.

Hackney

Hackney Black People's Association, Stoke Newington Road, N16.

Lambeth

West Indian Parent's Action Group, c/o 7 Canterbury Crescent, SW9.

Mafalda, c/o Brixton Black Women's Centre, 41A Stockwell Green, SW9 (622 6285).

Lewisham

Lewisham Parents' Education Action Group, 56 Pascoe Road, SE13 5JB

Escuela 'Amanacer', Albany Centre, Douglas Way, SE8 (965 0257) Saturday School, 11-3.30pm.

Newham

Newham Parents' Centre, 745-747 Barking Road, E13 9ER.

East London Black Women's Group, 66B Sebert Road, E7 (552 1169). Supplementary School, Sat. 2-5pm, ages 4-18 years.

Tower Hamlets

Muslim Parents's Association, c/o 13E Hoe Street, E17 4SD.

Waltham Forest

Afro-Caribbean Education Project, 593 High Road, E10 (556 0602).

Wandsworth

Asian Parents' Group, c/o Millan Centre, 59 Trinity Road, SW17.

Caribbean Teachers' Association, 8 Camberwell Green, SE5 (708 1293). Aims to promote the educational interests of the Black community. Members are people of Caribbean or African origin who work in the field of education. The association runs a daily supplementary school and provides an educational counselling service. Contact the coordinator for further information.

Bookshops, Materials, Resource Centres

The following is a selection of organisations and bookshops which specialise in anti-sexist, anti-racist materials and books and offer resources to both parents and teachers.

Black Ink, 258 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 (733 0746). Collects, publishes, distributes and promotes Black people's writing. Readings and discussions in and out of schools. Bookstalls available. Mon-Fri 11am-5pm.

Black Women's Centre, 41 Stockwell Green, SW9 (274 9220). Tues-Fri 10-6. Provides a place where Black women can come together for support, help and encouragement. There is an information and advice service available on matters such as housing, education, social security and welfare benefits. The centre has a reference library, an art and craftwork room and a creche and is open to Black women of all ages and with all interests. Runs a summer project for children 5-16.

Childcare

The following is a list of organisations and groups either concerned with developing anti-racist policies in nurseries and schools and implementing those policies, or are directly involved with childcare provision for Black and ethnic minority children.

The New Black Families Unit, 121-123 Camberwell Road; SE5 (703 1089). The only independent Black organisation set up to find foster and adoptive parents from the Black community. The unit is interested in hearing from Black families and single women with a positive Black identity, commitment and the skills needed to look after and care for a child.

Independent Adoption Service, 160 Peckham Rye, SE22. Tel: 703 1088. This organisation finds permanent

Education

According to the 1981 Education Act, parents and pupils have the right to make specific demands for a young person's schooling and should be consulted before any major decisions are made. In practice parents are rarely consulted and parents, particularly Black parents, who are critical of their children's schools are told to transfer their children if they don't

Equal Opportunites in Education — Campaign Groups and Resource Centres

Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Project (ACER), Wyvil School, Wyvil Road, SW8 2TJ (627 2662). Promotes and produces multi-cultural materials for use in schools, including videos. Competitions for young Black writers.

families for children of all ages, particularly older children and ethnic minority children. It has a very active programme for encouraging Black families to adopt.

Camden

Black Parents Group, c/o John Oke, 70 Leverton Street, NW5.

Bengali Boys and Girls Group, Kings Cross Neighbourhood Centre, 51 Argyle Street, WC1 (833 4740). Access: N.

Bengali Workers Action Group, 1 Robert Street, NW1. (388 7313). Organises women's groups with creches, youth projects, language and religion classes. Access: N.

Camden Women's Bus: 213 Eversholt Street, NW1. (380 0304).

Community Centre, 173 Arlington Road, NW1. Tel: 267 3019. Organises under-fives group and after school club.

Chinese Welfare Project, 152-156 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2. (836 8291).

Fitzrovia Nursery Group (for Asian and Chinese children), 24 Warren Street, W1. (387 1516).

Hopscotch, Asian Mother and Toddlers Group, Basement, St Richards House, Eversholt Street, NW1 (387 8747).

Camden Committee for Community Relations, 58 Hampstead Road, NW1. (387 1125). Organises five nurseries and four are playgroups with special emphasis on the needs of Black and ethnic minority children. Access: P.

Greenwich

Charlton Training Centre, Charlton SE18. (317 9636 ext. 44)

Hackney

Claudia Jones Organisation, 55 Stoke Newington Church St, N16 (808 9330).

Mixifren Association, 38 Cranwich Road, N16 (800 5969).

Hammersmith and Fulham

Speak Pre-School Language Group, 47 Ashchurch Grove, W12 9BU. (743 7677).

Haringey

Nktewa Community Nursery for Black Children, 10 Hornsey Park Road, Hornsey, N8. (888 0102).

Tottenham Single Parents Group, Approach Road, Tottenham Green, N15. (801 6492/804 6188).

Asian Women's Forum, Wood Green Shopping City, Wood Green, N22 (882 2446)

Willan Road Nursery, 3 Willan Road, Broadwater Farm, N17. (808 1196).

Islington

Black and in Care, 20 Compton Terrace, N1. (359 6251)

Union of Turkish Women in Britain, 129 Newington Green, N1. (226 7544).

Turkish Education Group, 129 Newington Green Road, N1.

Lambeth

Asian Community Action Group, 322 Brixton Road, SW9. (733 7494).

Consortium of Ethnic Minorities in Lambeth, 403-405 Brixton Road, SW9. (733 1236/7).

Gresham Supplementary Education Scheme, 1 Gresham Road, SW9. (733 7617).

Knight's Hill Day Nursery, 55 Case- wick Road, West Norwood, SE27 (761 2267).

Latin American Children's Project, 14 Brixton Road, SW9. (582 5590).

Myatts Field Mobile Creche, c/o Myatts Field Health Centre, Patriots Road, SW9. (735 9171x207).

One Love Playgroup, 4 Harcourt House, Albion Avenue, SW8. (622 6076).

Southwark

Southwark Council for Community Relations organises a supplementary school and mother and toddlers group. Ring for details. (703 1906).

Building Blocks, Castlemead Estate, The Rampway, Camberwell Road, SE5. (701 4418).

Wandsworth

Asian Parents' Group, 12 Ascot Road, SW17 (767 0617). Access: N.

Battersea Black Women's Group, c/o York Gardens Community Centre, Lavender Road, SW11. (223 7961).

Wandsworth Council for Community Relations organises the Millan Community Project, which organises supplementary schools for ethnic minority children. Ring (767 3631).

The Federation of Black Self-Help Group, 361 Clapham Road, SW9 may be able to give information on community-based Black childcare initiatives in your area.

London-wide

Commission for Racial Equality, Elliott House, 10/12 Allington Street, SW1. (828 7022). The CRE's Education Department is producing a book on anti-racist strategies in childcare aimed at parents and trainee workers.

Information and advice on immigration and nationality issues

The following organisations will provide information and advice on immigration/nationality issues:

African Refugee Housing Action Group, (ARHAG), St Margarets, 23/25 Leighton Road, NW5.

Asian Centre, 17 Dalston Lane, E8 (254 4898).

Asian Women's Resource Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, NW10 (961 6549/961 5701).

Basle Court Centre for Refugees, 28 Fairmont Road, Brixton Hill, SW2 1AD.

Black Information Unit, The Hut, 50 St Stevenson's Road, W12 (743 7893).

Brent Law Centre, 190 Willesden High Road, NW10 (451 1122).

Brent Young People's Law Centre, 272 Willesden High Road, NW10 (451 2428).

Brixton Black Women's Centre, 41A Stockwell Green, SW9 9HZ (274 9220).

Carila, Latin American Women's Group, 29 Islington Park Street, N1 (359 2270).

Central London Community Law Centre, 13 Ingestre Place, W1 (437 5764/437 5854).

Colmena, Latin American Women's Rights Service, 2 Warwick Crescent, W2 (289 1601).

Community Centre for Refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, 37 Peak House, Woodberry Down, N4 2NU.

Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers, CFMW, St Francis Centre, Pottery Lane, W11.

Ealing Housing Aid Service, 92-94 Warwick Road, Ealing, W5. Nirmala Sharma (840 1886).

Greenwich Asian Women's Group, Macbean Centre, Macbean Street, Woolwich, SE18 (854 1188).

Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre, 106-108 King Street, W6 (741 4021).

Hillington Legal Resource Centre, 12 Harold Avenue, Hayes Middlesex (561 9400).

Hounslow Law Centre, 52 Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex (570 9505).

Immigration Widows Campaigns, c/o 131/2 Upper Street, N1 (354 0133).

Iranian Community Centre, 465A Green Lanes, N4 (341 5005).

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), 115 Old Street, EC1 (251 8706).

Migrants Resource Centre, 2 Denbigh Place, SW1.

Migrant Services Unit (Part of London Voluntary Service Council, LVSC), 68 Chalton Street, NW1 (388 0241) Mary Dimech, Mandana Hendessi.

Newham Rights, 285 Romford Road, Newham, E7 (555 3331).

North Islington Law Centre, 161 Hornsey Road, N7 6DU (607 2461) Non Ardill.

North Lambeth Law Project, 381 Kennnington Lane, SE11 5QY (582 4425/4373).

North Lewisham Law Centre, 28 Deptford High Street, SE8 (692 5355).

Paddington Migrants/Immigrants Employment Unit, 439 Harrow Road, W10 (960 5746).

Paddington Advice/Law Centre, 441 Harrow Road, W10 (960 4481).

Philippine Resource Centre, 1/2 Grangeway, NW6.

Plumstead Community Law Centre, 105 Plumstead High Street, SE18 (855 9817).

Refugee Action Group, 17 Deptford High Street, SE8.

Rights of Women, 374 Grays Inn Road, WC1 (278 6349). Campaigning and legal advice.

Runnymede Trust, 178 North Gower Street, NW1 4NB (387 8943). Information Centre with publications for minority groups, on housing, immigration, etc. Library available. Access: N.

Southall Black Women's Centre, 86 Northcote Avenue, Southall, Middlesex (843 0578).

Southall Community Law Centre, 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex (574 2434).

Southall Rights, 54 High Street, Southall, Middlesex (571 4920/843 0094).

Stockwell and Clapham Law Centre, 337 Wandsworth Road, SW8 (720 6233).

South Islington Law Centre, 131/2 Upper Street, N1 1QP (354 0133).

Tamil Refugee Action Group, (TRAG), 52 Acre Lane, SW2.

Tottenham Law Centre, 15 West Green Road, N15 (802 0911).

Vietnamese Refugee Community, 10 Collinson House, Lindley Estate, Commercial Way, SE15.

West Hampstead Law Centre, 220 Belsize Road, NW6 (326 4523).

Women Immigration and Nationality Group, c/o JCWI, 115 Old Street, EC1 (251 8706).

Useful Reading

Immigration Law and Practice, Lawrence Grant and Ian Martin 1982, (Published by The Cobden Trust) £10.25.

World's Apart, Women under Immigration and Nationality Law, Women Immigration and Nationality Group Ed Bhahba (Pluto £4.95).

The Thin End of the White Wedges, Manchester Law Centre Immigration Handbook No.5 (Steven Cohen). Can be obtained from Manchester Law Centre, 595 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester.

Immigration Bulletin, Runnymede Trust.

Black and Ethnic Minority Lesbians

Black lesbians are welcome at most Black (and other) women's centres who will advise on local groups and activities.

Lesbian and Gay Black Group, held at Gays the Word Bookshop (see below) at 8.00pm Fri. BM Gay Black Gp, BM Box 4390, WC1N 3XX.

Black Lesbian Support Network, Brixton Black Women's Centre, 41a Stockwell Green, SW9 9H7 (274 9220/7696). Social events, advice, support. No wheelchair access.

Camden and Islington Black Lesbians, 15 Manor Gardens, N7.

Chinese Lesbian Group, 7 Marriott Road, N4.

Irish Lesbian Group, c/o LIWC, 59 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16.

Jewish Lesbian Feminist Group, c/o Box 39, Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, N1.

Peckham Black Lesbian Group, c/o Southwark Women's Centre, 6-8 Peckham High Street, SE15.

Young Black Lesbian Group, 25 Bayham Street, Camden Town, NW1 (387 7450). Meets Tues 6-9pm.

ZAMI Conference on Black Lesbians, Brixton Black Women's Centre, 41a Stockwell Green, SW9 9H7 (274 9220/7696).

Prison

Black Female Prisoners' Scheme, 141 Stockwell Road, SW9 (733 5520). Aims to provide a service with a view to reintroducing women prisoners (Afro-Caribbean and

Asian) into the community. This involves mediating with the families of ex-prisoners, making provision for housing, helping in the search for jobs and giving careers advice. Acts as an education and recreation unit for ex-offenders and also single parents. In the past, great emphasis has been centred around Black men in the penal system. There has been a corresponding lack of information and concern about Black women prisoners who, although fewer in numbers suffer the same racism inside prison and on their release. Access: N.

Camden Community Relations Council, 58 Hampstead Road, NW1 2PY (387 1125). Setting up support group for black prisoners and their families, also to act as a pressure group on local authorities and the Home Office on Black prisoners. Access: P.

Violence Against Women

Black women have set up Black women's refuges, support networks and women's groups for Black women who are victims of domestic violence, rape, incest and racial and sexual harassment. There are also a number of mixed Black groups which have set up to monitor and give advice on racist attacks.

Asian Women's Resource Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, NW10 (961 6549).

Black Incest Survivors Group, Brixton Black Women's Centre, 41 Stockwell Green, SW9 (274 9220/7696).

Southwark Asian Women's Resource Centre (ASHA) P.O. Box 484, SE5 0HS.

Lambeth Asian Women's Resource Centre, 27 Santley Street, SW4 (737 5901) Refuge, young women's hostel.

Black Women's Aid Group, c/o Women's Aid Federation, 52-54 Featherstone Street, EC1 (831 8581).

Black Lesbian Support Network, c/o Black Women's Centre, 41 Stockwell Green, SW9

Health

Black Health Workers and Patients Group, 259a High Road, Tottenham N15 (809 0749) Main areas of work archive.parmindenvir.com

supporting black workers in their struggles, pushing for better treatment of black patients and monitoring racism and racist policies on health. Access: N but will visit at home if required.

Black Women's Health Group, Black Women's Centre, 41a Stockwell Green, SW9 (274 9220). Meets fortnightly on Thurs evenings 7.30-9.30. Access: N

Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FOWARD), Africa Centre, 38 King St, WC2E 8JT (379 6889). Women's development agency promoting good health and education amongst women and children (particularly in Africa). Has links with women's groups in Africa. In UK special Mandeleo project (African mother and child health campaign) provides education and counselling service (particularly concerned with female circumcision). Access: P.

Greek Cypriot Women's Health Group, Cypriot Centre, Earham Grove, N22 (881 2329), available Mon-Thurs 10am-5pm. Lift for disabled being built.

Haringey Greek Cypriot Women's Health Group, Social Services Centre, 14a Willoughby Road, N8 (341 1100x59). Aims to provide specialised health information, to act as referral agency, to establish a support system amongst women and to increase their knowledge of an confidence in the NHS. Also contact Cypriot Centre, Earham Grove, London N22 (881 7826).

London Black Women's Health Action Project, Wickham House, 10 Cleveland Way, E1 4TR (790 2424). Areas of work cover Black and ethnic minority women's health in general in this country and internationally. Particularly involved in fighting to stop female circumcision in London and internationally. Access: A.

Maternity Services Liaison Scheme, Brady Centre, Hanbury Street, E1. (377 8725). Team includes Bengali and Somali workers — community-based linkworkers befriending and escorting women during pregnancy and after the birth. Accompany women to hospitals, clinics etc.

Multi-Ethnic Women's Health Project, c/o City & Hackney CHC, 210 Kingsland Road, E2 8EB (739 6308). For greater understanding of health needs of ethnic minority women, innovating several new projects. Working in conjunction with the Mothers' Hospital in Hackney. Access: A.

Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research (OSCAR), 200a High Road, Wood Green, N22 4JJ (889 4844/3300). A national organisation, carries out and sponsors research into sickle cell anaemia. Access: N.

Sanqam Association for Asian Women, 235/237 West Hendon, Broadway, London, NW9 (202 4629) Counselling and advice in women, health. Access: N.

Sickle Cell Society, c/o Brent CHC, 16 High Street, Harlesden, NW10 4LX (451 3293). The Society helps to support sickle cell sufferers by fund raising events, and by bringing together those affected and their families. Membership open to any person who supports objectives of the Society Regular Newsletter. Donations welcome. Access: A.

NHS Sickle Cell Counselling Centres; Phone first for appointment as most of these centres are only open for short periods during the week.

Brent, Brent Sickle Cell Centre, Willesden General Hospital, Willesden, NW10 3RY (459 1292 ext 235). Access: A.

City and Hackney, City and Hackney Sickle Cell Centre, St Leonards Hospital, Nuttal St, N1 5LZ, (739 8484 ext 369). Access: A.

Haringey Community Health Clinic, Prince of Wales Hospital, Tynemouth Rd, N1J (808 1081). Access: A.

Islington Sickle Cell Centre, St. David's Wing, Royal Northern Hospital, Holloway Rd, N7 (272 7777). Access: A.

Lambeth, Lambeth Sickle Cell Centre, Swan Mews, Stockwell Road, SW9 9EN (737 3588).

Southall Black Women's Centre, (Afro-Caribbean and Asian Women), 86 Northcote Avenue, Middlesex, UB1 2AZ (843 0578). Advice on health care and holds occasional workshops on health related matters. Access: N.

Thalassaemia Society, 107 Nightingale Lane, N8 7QY, (348 0437). Access: N.

Greek Cypriot Women's Health Group, Social Services Centre, 14a Willoughby Road, N8.

Women & Medical Practice, 666 Tottenham High Road, N17.

Black Health Workers & Patients Group, Annex B, Tottenham Town Hall, Town Hall Approach Road, N15.

Latin American Women's Group, 29 Islington Park Street, N1.

Southall Black Sisters, 86 North Avenue, Southall Middx

Irish Women's Centre, Cabin Y 25 Horsell Road, N5.

Centre for Black Women, 136 Kingsland High Street, PO Box 29 E8.

Sickle Cell Centre, St Leonard's Hospital, Nuttall Street, N1.

Bengali Community Health Project, 10 Bernays Grove SW9.

Iranian Community Centre, 465a Green Lanes, N4.

Brixton Black Women's Health Group, c/o Black Women's Centre, 41 Stockwell Green SW

Matern

c/o Montefiore Centre, Deal S re E1. (

Training in Health & Race, 18 Victoria Park Square 2

Somali Women's Association, 17 Victoria Park Square, E2. (tel 981 6827).

Asian Community Action Group, 15 Bedford Road, SW4.

Tooting Project, St Peter's Church Hall, Beechgrove Road, SW17.

Portuguese Community Centre, 7 Thorpe Close, W10

Asian Women's Resource Centre, 134 Minet Avenue, NW10.

Irish in Islington Project, Caxton House, St John's Way, N19.

Peckham Black Women's Mental Health Group, c/o Peckham Black Women's Group, c/o St Giles Parish Hall, Benhill Road, SE5 (701 2651). Access: A.

Newham Women's Centre, Community Links, 81 High Street South E6 (472 6652). Offers pregnancy testing. As n wom n's group mostly women who a divorced or separated. Interpreter for Hindu, Punjabi, legal adv ce. Access: A.

Accept Ethnic Network, 170A Heston Road, Middlesex TW5 0QU (577 6059). Offers counselling and group therapy for people who have drink problems.

Organisations for Black and Ethnic Minority Older People

ASRA, 5-5a Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7XW (928 9379). Specialised Housing Association which develops and manages sheltered housing for elderly Asians and for single Asian women aged 18 and above, with and without children.

Standing Conference of Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens, 5-5a Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7XW (928 0095). Information on all groups; ring for details re your area.

North

Black Pensioners Group, c/o Lord Morrison Community Centre, Chestnut Road, London N17. Tuesdays 10-12. Access: No information. Contact for both above groups: Annexe B, Tottenham Town Hall, Town Hall Approach, London N15. (801 6522). Access: N.

Cypriot Elderly and Handicapped Centre, Cypriot Community Centre, Earlham Grove, Wood Green, Haringey N22 (881 2329). Access: A.

Heads, Community Centre, 128 Rectory Road, N16. Lunch club and meeting place for West Indian elderly, used by many older women. Access: No information.

Unity Pensioners Group, c/o Triangle Community Centre, 93 St Ann's Road, London N15. Mondays 1-3. Access: A.

West Indian Community Centre, 91 Tollington Way, N7.

West Indian Women's Association, (WIWA), c/o Marie Ologbosere, Co-ordinator or Gerry Williams, Pensioners' Officer, 71 Pound Lane, Willesden, NW10. (451 4827). Has cultural groups in the evening — dance, arts and crafts (e.g. pottery and silk screening) to which older women come.

East

Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, E1 (790 9077). Wed. 10-12 Arts and Crafts, 2-4 Keep Fit. Access: A.

Health Group, Chelmer Road, E9. Discussions on health issues, mainly women. Friday mornings. Would welcome new members.

Abeng Centre, 7 Gresham Road, London SW9 (737 1628). Thursday afternoon. Access: N.

Asian Community Action Group, 322a Brixton Road, SW9 (733 7494) Mon-Fri 9.30-5.00 Access: N.

Battersea Black Elderly Group, c/o York Gardens Community Centre, Lavender Road, London SW11 (223 7961). Thurs 1-4 Access: A.

Brixton Neighbourhood Community Association, 1 Mayall Road, London SW4. Mon-Fri normal office hours.

The Calabash Day Centre, 26 George Lane, SE13 (461 3420), Day Centre and lunch-club for Afro-Caribbean pensioners offering day care, and to be used by older women. Access: A.

50 Plus Association meets at Abeng Community Centre, 7 Gresham Road, SW9 (274 7722 ext 2167); postal address is c/o CCRL, 441 Brixton Road, SW9 9HE. Caters for the needs of Afro-Caribbean elderly and pensioners. Regular discussion groups, offers welfare advice and arranges visits to other similar clubs for exchange of information. Tues 10.30-1230/Weds 10am-2pm Discussion group Fridays 12 noon — 4pm. Access: N.

Lambeth Age Concern. (274 7722 ext 2009): will inform on groups in Lambeth for Black and ethnic minority older people.

Milap Day Centre, Town Hall Annexe, Southall, Middlesex (574 2311 ext 223) 10am-5.30pm. Monday to Saturdays. This centre is mainly used by Asian Groups. Access: A.

Seventh Day Adventist Church, Day Centre for the Elderly, Santley Street, London SW9 (674 2592) Mon-Wed 10-3. Access: A.

Black & Ethnic Minority Women's Groups

African Refugee Women's Group, c/o African Refugee Housing Action Ltd, 25 Leighton Road, NW5. Or 42 Albany Street, NW1. Support/advice group.

Arab Women's Group, c/o Outwrite, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2.

Armagh Co-ordinating Committee, Tindlemannor, 52-54 Featherstone Street, EC1.

Asian Women's Aid, (703 4319/4291). Refuge for Asian women, with childcare and developmental workers.

Asian Action Group, 30 Willoughby Road, Hornsey, N8 (341 3802).

Asian Women's Action Group provides cultural activities, racism and sexism awareness courses, and publishes a magazine. Open 10am-6pm, and when refurbished will be open 10am-9pm.

Asian Women's Forum, c/o Asian Centre, 8 Caxton Road, N22 (889 6938).

Asian Women's Resource Centre, (Brent), 134 Minet Ave, NW10 (961 5701). Girls' work, classes, advice/info/referral (for people with disabilities as well as general). Open 10-5pm Mon-Fri.

Bangladesh Women's Association, 91 Highbury Hill, N5.

Battersea Black Women's Group, 248 Lavender Hill, SW11 (228 8532). Open only Sundays 4pm

onwards. Crech provided. Discussion meetings on general issues. Aims to involve Black women in public affairs in Wandsworth. No wheelchair access.

Black Women's Radio Group, c/o Local Radio Workshop, 12 Praed Mews, W2.

Black Women for Wages for Housework, PO Box 287, King's Cross Women's Centre, NW6 (837 7509).

Brent Black Women's Group, 11-12 Donovan Court, Eston Crescent, NW10 (961 3337/965 0047 965 2477). Creche and access. Classes, workshops, lunch club and occasional health speakers. Open 10am-5pm Mon-Fri.

Brixton Black Women's Centre, Mary Seacole House, 41a Stockwell Green, SW9 (274 9220). No creche, no access. General advice & information, community work. Open 10am-6pm, Thursdays till 10pm).

Camden & Islington Black Sisters, c/o Law Centre, 146 Kentish Town Rd, NW5 (485 6672).

Centre for Black Women, 136 Kingsland High Road, PO Box 29, E8. Creche, no access. Advice & information, playgroup. Young single mothers group, library with black literature, history and culture, elderly black women's club, racism awareness, health and sickle cell sessions. Open 9am-5pm Mon-Fri.

Claudia Jones Organisation, 103 Stoke Newington Church St, N16 (241 1646). Access and Creche. Advice and info on education, health etc. Recreational activities. Open 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri.

Croydon Asian Women's Group, c/o Secretary, 9 Howden Road, SE25 (653 1565). No premises, organises activities on issues of health, education, welfare, Asian culture, local community affairs, and has a youth project. Creche.

Cypriot Women's League, 96 Palmerstone Road, N22.

East London Black Women's Organisation, 747 Barking Road, Plaistow, E13 (552 1169). No access. Creche occasionally. Workshops and classes. Open 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri. Saturday school 2-5pm.

Eleanor Street Women's Group, 8 Eleanor Street, Bow, E3. (Self Help by residents of official travellers' site.)

Eritrean Women's Association, PO Box 7007, WC1 (794 6931).

FAERU Women's Group, 116 Ladbroke Grove, W10 (221 2007).

Grainne Mhaol Collective, 26 Boscombe Road, W12. Closed group documenting the history, culture,

struggles and activity of Irish women in London.

Greenwich Asian Women's Centre, c/o Macbean Centre, Macbean Street SE18 (854 1188).

Greenwich Asian Women's Group, c/o Asian Resource Centre, LEB Buildings, Macbean St, SE18.

Hackney Muslim Women's Council, 101 Clapton Common, E5 (809 0993). Creche, no access. Playgroup, classes and talks. Open 9-7pm Mon-Fri, 10-12 Sat, 11-1 Sun.

Hackney Pakistan Women's Centre, 42 Stamford Hill, N16 (806 3289). Open 9.45am-6pm Counselling service and wide range of cultural/recreational activities. Variety of classes and translation service.

Haringey Black Women's Centre, c/o Former Somerset Lower School, Lordship Lane, N17 (802 0912).

Hounslow Asian Women's Community Centre, 126 Hanworth Road, Hanworth, Mddx. (572 2484). No creche, partial access. Language and sports classes. Open 9.30am-5.30pm. Already checked.

Iranian Women's Support Group, c/o Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1.

Irish Women in Islington Group, Cabin X, 25 Horsell Road, N5 (609 8916/7325).

Latin American Women's Group, CARILA, 29 Islington Park Street, N1 (359 2270).

Lewisham Asian Association Women's Section, 170 New Cross Road, SE14.

London Irish Women's Centre, 59 Stoke Newington Church St, N16 (249 7318). Irish language and cultural classes, social club, children's classes etc. Admin address — Cabin Y, 25 Horsell Road, N5. 609 8916. Open 9.30am-6.30pm. Mon-Fri.

London Jewish Feminist Group, c/o AWP, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, WC2 (836 6081).

Milap Ladies Group, Milap Day Centre, Town Hall, Annexe, Southall, Mddx. (843 1893).

Millan Asian Centre, 59 Trinity Road, SW17 (767 8628). Access but no creche. Legal advice, classes, playgroup, mother & toddler group, after school care.

Muslim Women's Welfare Association, 200 Capworth St, E10 (539 7478).

Peckham Black Women's Group, c/o St Giles Parish Hall, Benhill Rd, SE5 (701 2651). Creche and access. Workshops, counselling, discussions. Open 10am-5pm Mon-Fri.

Philippine Women's Support Committee, IBM Box 758 WC1 3XX (603 1873)

Polish Women's Group, c/o 165 Lyndhurst Road, N22 (881 3285). Discussion Group.

Pragati Asian Women's Association, 9-13 Nicoll Road, NW10 (965 8643).

Shepherds Bush Black Women's Group, c/o 119 or 139 Becklow Road, W12.

Somali Women's Group, c/o Oxford House, Derbyshire St, E2.

Southall Black Women's Centre, 86 Northcote Avenue, Southall, Middx. (843 0578).

Southwark Muslim Women's Association, Old Bellenden School, Bellenden, SE15 (732 8053). Creche, no access. Workshops, language classes. Open 10am-9pm approx. Mon, Wed, Fri open late.

SWAPO Women's Council, 96 Gillespie Road, N5 (359 9116/7).

Tamil Women's League, c/o 3 Canonbury St, N1 (226 2367)

Turkish Women's Project, c/o Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, 199 Caledonian Road, N10.

Union of Turkish Women in Britain, 129 Newington Green Road, N1. 226 7544.

United Black Women's Action Group, c/o Wood Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, N15. 802 0911.

West Indian Women's Association, 71 Pound Lane, NW10. 451 4827.

Ethnic Minority Organisations

Projects and Resources based at 5a Westminster Bridge Road;

Asian Sheltered Residential Association Co. Ltd.

Black Media Workers Association

Black Teens Magazine

Black Trades Union Solidarity Movement

Confederation of Indian Organisation

Federation of Afro-Asian Sports

Multi-lingual Print Shop

National Association of Asian Youth Open Access Project Co. Ltd.

Racism Awareness Programme Unit Searchlight

Standing Conference of Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens

West Indian Standing Conference

There is also a conference hall which can hold 175 people, as well as meeting rooms available for hire. Hours 9.00am to 10.30pm seven days a week. Access: A. Tel 928 8108.

Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group, 192 Burdett Road, E3 4AA.

The Africa Centre, 38 King St, WC2E 8JT (836 1973). General African community centre with regular theatre and music events, meetings and discussions. Also restaurant, bookshops and meeting space for hire. Hours — 9.30am to 5.30pm weekdays (phone for programme of events). Access: A to ground floor rooms only.

African Refugee Housing Action Ltd, 42 Albany Street, NW1. Campaigning group and Housing Association — Women's group attached.

Black People's Information Centre, 301 Portobello Road, W10. (969 9825)

Bolivian Working Group, 29 Islington Park Street, N1.

Brent Irish Cultural Centre, 76-82 Salisbury Road, NW6 6NY.

Chile Democratico, 95-97 Old Street, EC1V 9JJ (278 3329)

Chinese Information & Advice Centre, 152-156 Shaftesbury Ave, WC2 (836 8291). Mainly advice and support. Has autonomous women's section. Open Mon to Wed and Fri 11am-5pm. Closed Thurs. Access: N.

Chinese Welfare Project, Sailors Palace, 680 Commercial Road, E14 7HA. (515 5598).

Commonwealth Centre, Kensington High St, W8 6NQ, (603 4535). Cultural central centre with particular interest in Black Commonwealth communities. Facilities include cinema, theatres, workshops and seminar spaces, bookshops, exhibitions, restaurants, cafes. Phone for programme. Access: A.

Comunidad, Latino Americana Magazine (CLAM), 2 Warwick Crescent, Beauchamp Lodge, W2.

Eritrean Relief Association, 391 City Road, EC1.

Haringey Travellers' Support Group, c/o Mr I Ashton, Area 4, Social Services, 115 King's Road, Woodgreen, N22.

Indo-Chinese Project, Greencoat House, 10 Francis Street, SW1P 1DH. (834 5911).

Iranian Centre, 465a Green Lanes, N4 (341 5005/348 9115).

Community centre providing language classes, musical events, socials, classes on Iranian culture.

literature and exhibitions. Open 10am-5pm Tues to Fri (closed 1-2pm.) Access: N.

Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, NW1 (485 0051). General cultural and social activities, also with advice and information available. Hours — 9.30am to 5.30pm weekdays (closed 1-2pm lunch), 9.30am-12.30pm Sat. Phone for details. Access: A.

Kurdish Cultural Centre, 13-15 Stockwell Road, SW9.

Lambeth Irish in Britain Representation Group, 245a Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8RR.

Latin American Advisory Committee (LAAC), Beauchamp Lodge, 2 Warwick Crescent, W2.

Latin American Community Project, 10 Bernays Grove, SW9 8DF. (737 3617)

Latin American House Association, 97 Caledonian Road, N1 9JY.

Liberation Cuba Resource Centre, 313/5 Caledonian Road, N1. (607 0465).

London Interpreting Project, 245a Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8RR.

London Roadside Travellers Group, Box 18, Kingsland High Street, E8 2NS.

Millan Asian Community Centre, 59 Trinity Rd, SW17 7SD. (767 8718/9/0, 767 8628/9/0)

National Gypsy Education Council, c/o Mr N Lee, 7 Taylor Court, Clays Lane, E15.

Pakistan Welfare Association, 21 South Park Rd, SW19. (542 6176)

Polish Social and Cultural Association, 238-246 King St, W6 ORF (741 1940) Largest Polish library outside Poland, cafe, restaurant, theatre, social events. Open 9am-11pm weekdays (12 midnight Fridays/Saturdays) 10-11am Sundays. Access: A.

Portuguese Community Centre, 7 Thorpe Close, W10. (969 3890)

Rastafarian Advisory Centre, 17a Netherwood Road, W14.

Somali London Community & Cultural Association (SLCCA), 17 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green, E2.

Turkish Education Group, 129 Newington Green Road, N1. (359 4315) Classes, youth clubs, children's groups, creche, interpreting, translating, library.

Turkey Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5965, WC1N 3XX.

Ujamaa Centre, 14 Brixton Road, SW9. (582 5590)

Vietnamese Association Services, 3 Ravensdale Gdns, SE19. (771 5199)

Westway Site Support Group, c/o Ms T Suddaby, 26d Powis Square, W11. (Residents & Workers on official travellers site)

TRIBAL GIRL

"I am of the Masai
i live on Mayers Ranch
my country is Kenya
our village could no longer
survive
many of us died
each day the tourists come to
visit
they take photographs
as we talk or eat or dance
for them
for that we are allowed to live
on Mayers Ranch
i am of the Masai
my country is Kenya"

Will they shut the door
when she comes to visit
Do they welcome us into their
homes?
Or is it only in print/in ebony
that we are admired.
Do they care for her as they
adore the beads
that hang bet ween her
breasts?
Do they care about us as
they love the prints
that they now wear and
make their
own?
Or do they want to stuff us/oil
us/ and preserve us
as beautiful works of art
our breasts bare to be fondled
as we stand in their living
rooms
contrasting with the white
walls
forever silent
to be placed where they desire
forever silent.

Bernardine Evaristo



Parminder Vir OBE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
GLC
1981-1986
Working for London
archive.parmindervir.com

VESUVIOUS AGAIN!

There is blood in my veins
pumping an anger
so powerful
so unrelenting
that i have to contain it
within the hard confines of my
cauldron
Vesuvious again!
I am told by yet another friend
that she was constant sexual
prey
to her mothers husband
at night/by day/in youth/in
fear
after twenty years she could
finally
speak this nightmare
one that so many women
have silently carried to their
graves
the woman in the asylum?
the suicide daughter?
your mother/sister/lover/friend
And they say that feminism
is an idea/a theory
removed from our day to day
living
our lives/women's —
lives/easily dismissed
irrelevant to the 'ordinary
woman
on the streets
who is not my friend/is not me
this elusive abstract woman
is not you my friend
who bear the scars
of a crime so brutal/so
inhuman
that we all know what to fear
all our nights and days
constant/unrelenting

There is blood in my veins
pumping an anger
so powerful
so unrelenting
that i tempt its release

A woman of Nairobi
has had her two eyes
gouged out by her husband
crime?
she left him
crime?
Female

So you say that feminism is a
theory
relevant only to the
priveledged few?
when little girl children
are being raped to death
it is happening now
it happened yesterday
it will happen tomorrow
Raped to death
Raped to death!
Raped to death!
Yes it is constant
it is unrelenting

Hey! Did you hear
the police shot a black
woman today!
they shot her in her back
and we all know that they will
get away with it

I was beaten into submission
by a father who knew no better
than the strength of his hand
and the sting of a belt
to erase my rebellion
erase me
fuelling my anger
and burning it out
all in the same bloody swoop

It is hard work containing this
anger of mine
within the confines of my
cauldron
though it urinates into my
everyday life
when a capsule contained lava
boils out and over
but a thousand hands hover to
declare
Aggressive!
Destructive!
Un-womanly!
Un-feminist!

Horror upon horrors!
where does it go
but back into my cauldron
to simmer and boil itself
into cancerous liquids
that travel and melt
into the bloodstream
for the short distance to death

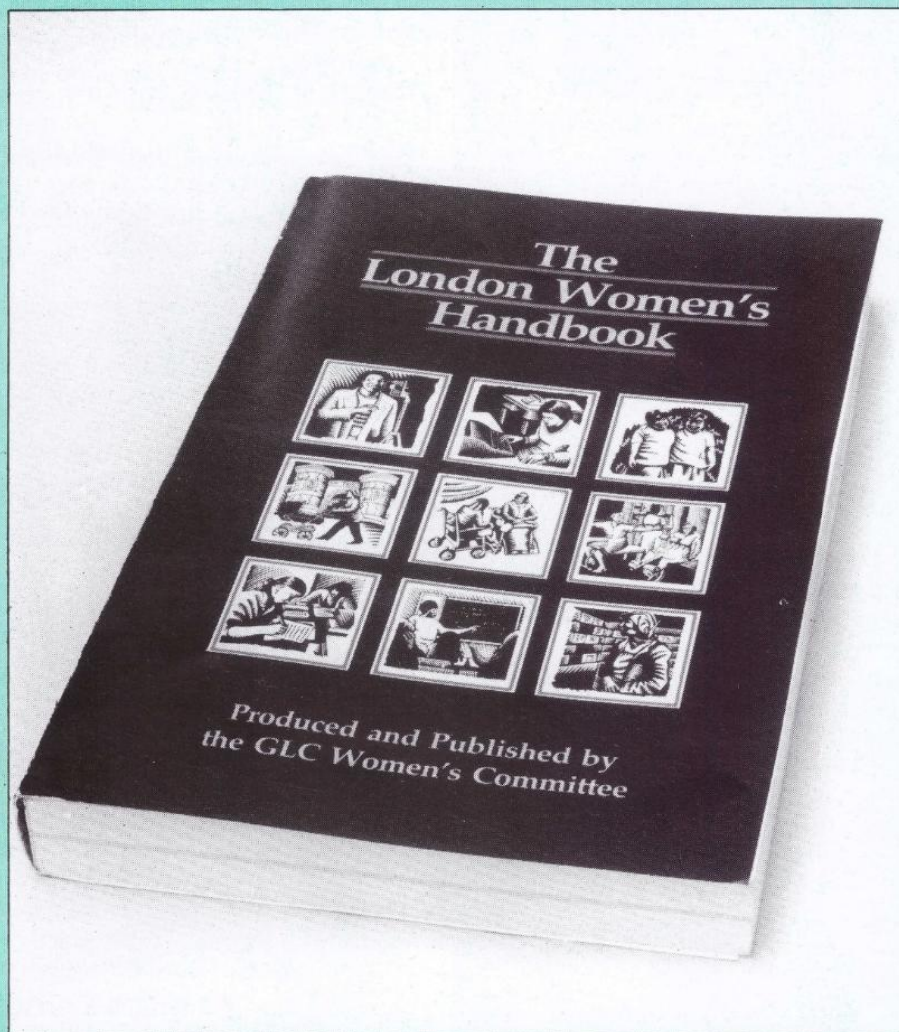
There is blood in my veins
PUMPING!
PUMPING!
PUMPING!

Vesuvious again?

Bernardine Evaristo

It's Like Yellow Pages but it's Women's Pages

In fact, it's 400 pink and white pages with a black, green and purple cover. It's the first comprehensive guide to resources and services for women in the Greater London area. And it's been produced for women in the Greater London area by the GLC Women's Committee — still working for women in London. Order your free copy now! Copies available in March.



The London Women's Handbook is an essential resource full of information on the groups, agencies, voluntary and statutory organisations which offer support, advice and information to women in London.

One section is basic information on a borough by borough basis. The other 24 sections are on Black and Ethnic Minority Women Carers, Childcare and Children, Disability, Education and Further Education, Employment and Unemployment, Family Relationships and the Law, Funding for Voluntary Groups, Health, Housing, Immigration and Nationality, Lesbians, Media and Arts, Older Women, Peace, Planning, Policing, Prison, Prostitution, Sport, Training, Transport, Violence against Women and Young Women. And there's an extensive index to help you find it all.

The Handbook is free and will be available from, and in use at, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Women's Centres and some libraries and bookshops.

If you want to ensure you get a copy please fill out the tear-off form below and return by 28th February or ring 633 1113/6943. If you are already on the Bulletin mailing list you will automatically receive a copy.

The London Women's Handbook

Please send me _____ copies of The London Women's Handbook

Name _____

Group/Organisation _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Please also send me further information on the GLC Women's Committee ☐ Tick if applicable

**Send Freepost
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