

FOWAAD!

Double Issue

30p

Newsletter of the Organisation of Women of Asian & African Descent (OWAAD)

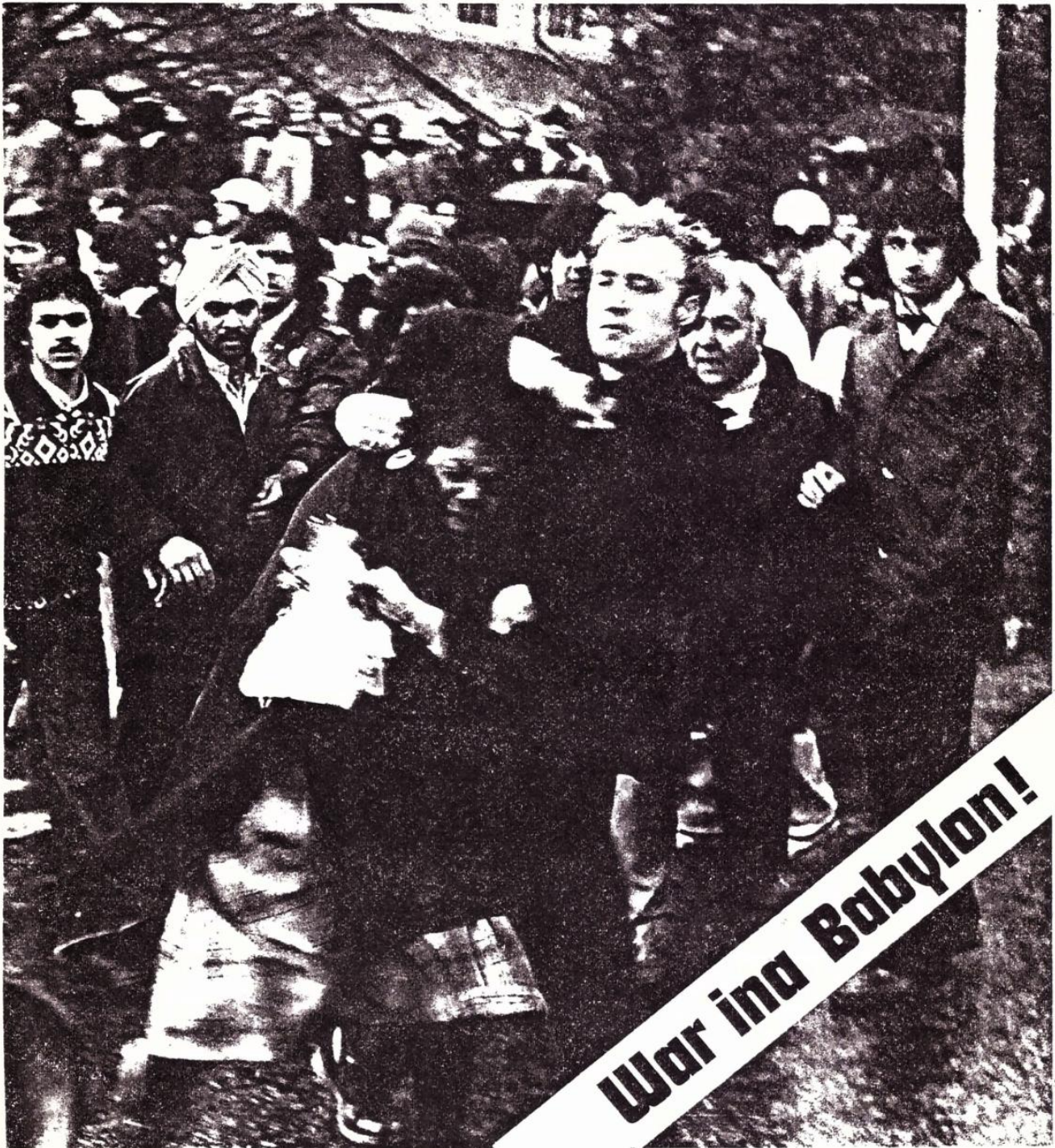


Photo John Sturrock (Report)

War in Babylon!

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EDITORIAL

Following our second National Black Womens Conference (for full report see page 10), we have held a call back meeting for sisters in London to discuss OWAAD and how it is to function. At this meeting new working committees were formed and existing ones were expanded and re-organised. This explains the extended delay between the last issue of FOWAAD (February 1980) and this present issue. Also the Co-ordinating Committee was re-constituted to include representatives from all London based local Black Womens groups and the various OWAAD working committees. This ensures that OWAAD is truly representative and can therefore function as an umbrella organisation (at least for London). Details as to the names and functions of OWAAD's working committees and the time and venue of their meetings are on page 13.

One of the problems we are still in the process of solving is the regional representation in OWAAD of women who are outside London. We need to find means of supporting these isolated groups and individuals. For OWAAD to function as a national umbrella organisation we need to

build up an effective national network. We have had suggestions such as organising a number of regional call back meetings, setting up OWAAD working committees outside London. Also, regular contributions of articles to FOWAAD from Black Womens groups outside London talking about the campaigns and issues they are involved in locally would ensure that our paper reflects what we are doing nationally rather than just concentrating on what sisters here in London are doing. We would greatly appreciate further ideas, especially from sisters outside London, as to how OWAAD can be of service to them.

In the past four issues of FOWAAD we have attempted to give you as much up to date information as we can get hold of about the issues, campaigns and concerns which affect us as Black women. Our aim is to provide sisters throughout the country with a forum where we can form and voice our opinions, exchange our ideas and devise our strategies. But this will only be possible when you make FOWAAD your paper - for it is your letters and articles, your news and views, your ads, cartoons, poems and reviews which will make FOWAAD into the genuine mouthpiece of Black women in Britain.

OWAAD IS ALL OF US
FOWAAD BELONGS TO US !!
MAKE IT YOUR MOUTHPIECE
SISTERS !!

CAMPAIGNS

sin-bin saga (cont'd)

The Haringey Black Pressure Group on Education, set up at the beginning of 1979 to put pressure on the local Education Authority about issues of concern to black parents and pupils in the borough, has been mounting a concerted campaign against plans to introduce "support classes" in every secondary school in Haringey. (See FOWAAD 4: "Sin-Bins for Haringey")

The Pressure Group is committed to expose and oppose the sin-bins, which we see as inevitable dumping grounds for those pupils which the schools are unwilling or unable to educate. From our past experience of ESN schools, and from our awareness of the high

percentage of black kids currently being suspended or transferred into "special education" (ie., off-site provision for school phobics, maladjusted or suspended pupils, truants and young offenders), we regard this latest move as a further attack on the right of the black pupils in Haringey to a decent education.

EXPOSING AND OPPOSING THE SIN BINS

We decided on several lines of action in our campaign. Through a public meeting to which we invited the local press, we publicised the sin-bin proposals which had been passed quietly and with no public consultation months before by the Education Sub-Committee. We contacted the

Local Teachers Union and local teachers action groups, making some valuable allies who were prepared to take the issue up in the schools. We ran off a petition, which we later presented to Haringey's Education Committee with signatures. We used the presentation of our petition as an opportunity to voice our opposition by both lobbying and speaking at their meeting. We also helped organise a local conference on disruptive units under the auspices of the Central Council for Parent-Teacher Associations; gave a talk at a meeting of the local NUT; and produced a leaflet for distribution at local shopping centres, black churches and youth clubs.

DIRECT ACTION

Given the uncharacteristic speed at which the local Education Authority was planning to implement the proposals, we also decided to take more direct action against any school which agreed to an on-site unit. Wood Green School, which is notorious for its high black suspension rate, was the first to produce its own internal plans for September 1980. We got hold of a copy of the plans, which actually listed "stammering, nail biting, desk-drumming and over-sensitivity" as some of the criteria they would use to select pupils for their unit. "Timidity, apathy, depression, anxiety, defiance, refusal to work, lying, stealing and truancy" were among the long list of "emotional and behavioural" difficulties that the unit will cater for.

We produced two leaflets, for parents and for pupils, which we handed out to pupils outside the school one Friday afternoon. The headmaster freaked out, calling in the (white) "Multi-Ethnic Advisor", threatening the HBPGE with a libel suit, and demanding at an emergency staff meeting to know the names of any pupils who were involved with this group of "black fanatics". He sent pupils home early on the following Monday, with a letter for their parents dismissing our allegations. The "support classes" he assured them, would simply be "to help any pupils...who are having behaviour problems, to settle down",

they would "benefit any pupil, regardless of race or colour", and anyway "we have more faith in our black children than the Pressure Group have".

We responded by issuing a counter letter, handed out the following week, in which we pointed out to the parents that the Headmaster was bluffing, and that if Wood Green School thought their unit was such a good idea, how come they hadn't been told about it before now? (etc., etc.,)

The outcome of all this has been that the Wood Green plans have been put off until January 1981, and the Headmaster is no doubt rapidly developing symptoms of anxiety and depression which will make him a perfect candidate for his own sin-bin!!

The HBPGE is continuing its campaign over the next few months by giving priority to contacting local parents, whom we have so far failed to mobilise in any significant number. We meet every Monday evening and as a mixed (m/f) group with a broad political make-up, we would welcome support and involvement from anyone in the community who wants to join.

If you live in Haringey or would like to find out more about the HBPGE, contact Pat at 802-7805.



"MANUSHI"

"Manushi" is a journal about Women and Society. It is the first and only Indian Womens Liberation magazine produced in both Hindi and English and distributed nationally.

"Manushi" is self-financed and in spite of the great response, it is having a hard time surviving due to lack of money. If you wish to take out a subscription please send £8.50 (incl postage) for 6 issues to:

MANUSHI

c/o 147 Grove Lane, London SE5
(all cheques/P.O.'s etc to be made out to MANUSHI Trust)

If you can afford more, donations will be welcome - IT'S DESPERATELY NEEDED.

GLC

Parliamentary Black & Ethnic Arts Archive
1981-1986

murder!

On Thursday 17th July at 4 pm a young Pakistani youth Akhtar Ali Baig was stabbed to death on High Street North, East Ham.

A gang of 4 skinheads some of whom have had a history of attacks on black kids in schools and black teachers in classrooms are being charged with murder.

When local black youths gathered to find out the dead man's identity the police threatened to arrest them. Other threatening incidents including leaving the victim for 2 hours on the streets means that a ruthless message was being signalled to black people on that day - once again if you're Black you're under attack.

On Saturday 19th July over 1,000 people staged a peaceful demonstration which the police with watchful malice tried to wreck. The marchers demanded justice, and protection from Nazi thugs and their supporters who are left to threaten and kill black people.

The message of the Newham Youth Movement to all black people is:

DON'T MOURN - ORGANISE

There will be a demonstration on 2nd August. Assemble 1:30 pm at Plashet Park, Plashet Grove, E6.

DEATH BY SELF NEGLECT

This was the verdict on July 10 at a Coroner's court some 2 hours drive out of central London. This rural venue was to discourage people from going that far. Such spiteful acts though did not keep family, friends and supporters away.

The coroners court is not a criminal court so no accusations are really made. It was at this one, and I am sure all the others, a mere formality to consolidate one sided pictures since the dead cannot speak and defence witnesses were not allowed. Rows of people to support the coroners case gave evidence. Richard

Campbell not only lost the will to live within 3 weeks at Ashford remand centre but surrounded by a team of physicians was being force fed with at least 2 pints of nourishing milk and additives daily

(being too dangerous to be moved to a good hospital) Still he died of dehydration at a weight of less than 58 kilos, alone in a cell from self neglect! It was at this point that the dead boy's mother was told where he was. Its anyone's guess what they did to him in Ashford and what they are doing to other Black youths.

We must stop these outrageous acts on us. The campaign to expose the cover up goes on.

**THERE MUST BE NO MORE
RICHARD CAMPBELLS**

Contact the Campaign at:
135 Lavender Hill
London SW11

Racism at Law Centre

Two workers at the Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre are facing the sack. They have been accused of various things like not doing reception duties. These accusations of not doing duties in the centre is an indirect attack on their work outside of the law centre where they give help and advice to Black people at the Black Information unit.

Most Black people are used to racism from their employers and people they work with but you might expect a Community Law Centre based in a black community to be an exception, this is not the case.

The attempt to get rid of the Black workers is the latest act in a series of conflicts between the Black workers their white colleagues and the management. The management committee of 25 had only 4 Black members one of whom has played little part anyway and two have since resigned in disgust.

The Black Workers Defence Committee at the meeting were disgusted by the treatment of the Black workers at the Law Centre.

of whom have been called 'coons', 'niggers' and 'fucking blacks' by other members of staff.

Almost 200 people turned up at the Law Centre's AGM on the 25th June, after a 4h hour wait the AGM was postponed to the 31st July. Black people filled out membership forms; called for a hearing with members of the public - the community present to institute a Public enquiry into the 'problems of racism in Law Centres' and for a sub-committee of management committee members to investigate the grievances of both Black and white law centre workers, in the presence of 14 observers - this was because there was a general lack of trust in the management committee. The applications for membership of the law centre have been rejected. A staff meeting which is also a union meeting rejected the proposal of any observer and the law centre has put off any internal investigation.

The Black workers could not go^{to} their union because the union representative is also a member of staff and the branch rep is on the management committee.

The law centre is a closed shop. All staff belong to NALGO a union renowned for the racism of some of its members (e.g. immigration officers).

The only known union resolution on racism is - to support NALGO people's demos against fascism and not to allow fascist meetings on council premises. The idea is - if you are not a fascist you can't be a racist.

The white staff now want to make an accusation of sexism with an addition of intimidation of white male members of staff etc etc..... The issue has always been the same - racism that boring noose around our necks.

At a recent management committee meeting at which grievance and disciplinary procedures were to take place against the two Black workers almost 100 people most of them Hammersmith residents turned up to observe the procedure. The Procedure did not take place and the management committee promised that no private meeting would be held before a Public

hearing on 23rd June.

When the Black community and supporters turned up on the 23rd June at Fulham Town Hall they found the meeting called off and the hall cancelled without any one, including Black members of the management, being told. Also the management Committee had met in private and agreed on a sub-committee of 3 members with 14 observers from different groups to carry on with grievance procedures.

The people held their own meeting at a nearby hall where it became clearer that not only the Black workers but Black residents in Hammersmith had serious grievances against the law centre. They were angry at the implicit racism i.e. neglect of serious black needs with the operation of a closed door policy which means that people cannot walk in for help and advice when they need it, but must be referred for an appointment by other social work agencies. This is why the black workers saw it necessary to also work in the Black Information unit.

Racism is also implied by the refusal of the law centre to implement official Positive discrimination Policy in employment. The two Black workers had to struggle to get a third Black worker appointed.

The Chairman, acting secretary/Vice Chairman and 2 other white members of the management committee have resigned making a total of 6 resignations. Grievance procedures are being conducted with no observers. The struggle of our people in Hammersmith goes on with your help. The Black Information unit continues to build and expand membership. Meeting to be held Sunday 3rd August at 3 pm.

For further details contact:
BIU
50 St Stephens Avenue
Shepherds Bush W12
Telephone 01-743-7893

OPENING HOURS

Mon - Fri Sat 10:00 - 1:00 pm
Wed - 10:00 to 8 pm

ISSUES

Roads to Repatriation

At the time when Britain needed our labour, racism was used against us to rationalise and justify our exploitation. Now when Britain no longer has that need, racism is being used to rationalise and justify our exploitation. There are various means by which this is being done.

We all know that British immigration policy is centred around keeping Black people out of this country (for details of the racist and sexist nature of immigration laws see the last ~~FOUR~~ issues of FOWAAD). But there is more to it than that - immigration policy is also about the systematic intimidation and harassment of Black people settled here. This aspect is becoming increasingly evident. A clear example is the manner in which the Black community is subjected to random attacks under the pretext of catching "illegal immigrants".

On Friday 20 June the Main gas cooker factory in Edmonton was surrounded by police and immigration officers with dogs. 28 Black workers, mainly Ghanaians, were taken away; by the following Tuesday only five had been released.

Just over a month before the Edmonton raid, there was another massive passport raid, also in North London. On that occasion 50 immigration and police officers with dogs raided the Bestways cash and carry store in Willesden. All the employees were forced into a small room and interrogated. Passports were demanded and about 25 people, including one customer, were pushed into police vans and taken to Kilburn police station. The owners and staff of Bestways are, of course, Black (Asian). They were searched, locked up in cells and interrogated until late evening. Some were taken to their homes to check their passports and then taken back to the police station where they were held for several hours or more for no reason except that their skins were Black.

At the same time eight Bestways shops all over London were raided and there, according to Bestways director, Mohammed Yunus Sheikh, 'police behaviour was even worse. They were abusive, they rounded up cus-

tomers, staff and partners'. The Earls Court Road shop was closed down and an employee's flat above it forced open. Even people who happened to have their passports with them and could prove their legal status were forced into police vans and taken to Kensington police station.

In other words, for Black people in this country the immigration law is being used as a pass law system. We are considered to be guilty of being illegal immigrants until proved innocent (and even then we are not spared any of the harassment!).

As immigration and race policies are changing, so are the functions of the welfare state for Black people. The welfare bureaucracy is now taking on the surveillance of Black people and trying to exclude us from benefits. For example Leonis Pieter Low, a baby whose mother is from Hong Kong, and who was born in St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, was refused NHS treatment in the same hospital when severely ill with a blood disease a few weeks after birth. According to the hospital administrators the 'decision had been made after consulting the Department of Health and Social Security...there were no grounds on which to treat the baby'. In Perivale Maternity Hospital in Middlesex, Asian women who were born in Britain and have lived here all their lives, are being refused beds on the pretext that their husbands are abroad. In fact a new comprehensive circular regarding the eligibility of various categories of people 'from abroad to use the NHS is being prepared by the Home Office and DHSS working together. In the meantime a circular has been sent out urging hospital doctors and administrative staff to watch out for patients they "suspect" may be ineligible for hospital treatment. But how and why should they suspect people? Cathy Fagg, Deputy House Governor of St Stephens Hospital in Fulham, explained that it was 'just a matter of commonsense - whether we go on their being foreign, on their colour or whatever'.

What applies to the NHS is also true of Social Security offices, Working for London

link with the Home Office was demonstrated with startling clarity in the case of Nasira Begum. Nasira, a Pakistani woman who is facing deportation simply because her husband has deserted her, explains that 'the police have been involved in my case all through. Even the Home Office notice of refusal to stay, which is normally posted, was in my case served by the police. I have lived constantly in fear of being arrested. But at the Supplementary Benefits Tribunal I learned that the police and immigration officers are not the only ones involved. The DHSS too are spying and acting for the Home Office. They told me they would be prepared

to make payment if I was ready to leave the country. If I stayed and contested the case, as is my right, they would refuse benefit'.

Thus in every area Black people are being put under pressure. On the one hand laws are on their way, in the form of the new Nationality law which would deprive a large number of us of the right to work or vote in Britain - sure steps in the path to repatriation. On the other hand, the push to repatriation comes in the form of making life in this country unliveable for Black people. But we are here to stay and we are here to fight. We say, defend our rights!

Nasira appeals....

Since last September Nasira Begum, a Pakistani sister from Stockport, has been fighting a Home Office decision to deport her. Even according to Britain's racist and sexist immigration laws, Nasira has every right to remain in this country because she married a British citizen. However her husband has deserted her and the home office are using this as an excuse to deport her. She is being told that her marriage was never valid and therefore she an illegal immigrant. In other words her private life - i.e. whether or not her husband is living with her, is now the home officers business if it can be used against her.

Nasira has been fighting the Home Office on two levels. Firstly through a public campaign of meetings (many sisters would remember her at the National Black Womens Conference this year)

demonstrations and pickets like the picket of the home office organised by OWAAD on 25th April. Secondly she is defending her case at an Immigration Appeals Tribunal. Appeals Tribunals are almost always a sham because the adjudicators who pass judgement on Home Office decisions are themselves Home Office officials (often ex-colonial civil servants). However, legally the Appeals Tribunals are the only channels open to Black people threatened by deportation. Nasira's appeal began on the 8th of May but was adjourned till the 23rd of July. But Nasira is not alone in the situation. The list of Black people under threat of deportation for the most inhumane and trivial of reasons goes on and on.

For Further information:

Contact: Friends of Nasira Begum
c/o 595 Stockport Road
Manchester M13 9PH or phone
225-5111/0548

Some Chance!

To be young, black and unemployed is the conclusion to a careful and well thought out cycle of oppression of a people. Of course to have survived the 'human injustices' widely documented and researched by academics, escaped the remedial/support facilities; scraped through and fought to obtain the minimum CSE's because the society at large plotted out your future 400 years ago is a feat of courage in itself.

THE ROLE OF SOCIETY AND ITS EXPERTS

As black women we should perhaps analyse the demoralisation of our youth within the following context :-

- an underdeveloped non/semi skilled workforce will create a fresh pool of labour to continue the shit work our parents previously did ;
- the increase in 'black youth unemployment' will see the development of a growth industry of black/white experts on the 'black unemployment

problem'. (It's happening now in multi-ethnic education);

c) Statutory agencies such as the careers service will transfer the 'black unemployment problem' onto the new experts;

d) there will be an increase of resources in social services provisions e.g. social workers, probation officers, psychiatrists etc ;

e) the penal institutions will of course be oversubscribed;

f) shorter working hours and more leisure time will not improve the quality of life for our youths.

As can be seen, there will be an increase of employment for a wide range of experts on the 'black problem'. However our youths remain unemployed.

DOES THE CURRENT RACE RELATIONS ACT HAVE ANY RELEVANCE ?

The architects of the 1976 Race Relations Act promised black people that no longer would employers be allowed to discriminate in their recruitment, selection and promotion practices. No longer would employers be able to fire workers on racial grounds. Unfortunately the relevant provisions set down to remove 'direct' and 'indirect' discrimination have allowed employers to practice racism in a more subtle manner. It has certainly not improved the employment chances of Black people.

For young blacks it is a meaningless piece of legislation which has no relevance to their oppression. How can they relate to a paper exercise which has no control over an employer who demands that the Job Centre should only send 'white applicants' for job interviews. Or the Careers Service representative who advises a youth who wishes to become a Social Worker " Oh, you like working with people - well there's a job here filling shelves at Sainsbury's, that's working with people."

If the Act was meant to work then obviously it would have had stronger enforcement powers. What the Race Relations Act amounts to is just a paper exercise and has nothing to do with giving Black people a fair chance.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES (MSC)

Recently Geoffrey Holland, Director of the Manpower Services Commission announced that he was concerned that

the Government were cutting back on the provisions for the Youth Opportunities Programme. The reason stated is that a very high proportion of young people who take part in YOPs are Black.

Whilst it can be argued that since the beginning of the MSC a number of young Black people have been kept off the streets, the MSC has approached our youth from a vantage point of paternalism and a quest to train them for specific semi-skilled/skilled/non vocational roles. e.g. Projects such as -

'An introduction to the world of work with an emphasis on life and social skills.' Supposedly assists our youth in confidence building , interview skills etc.

' Work experience on employers' premises'. Young people are placed in a work situation on an employers premises. The philosophy is that it will help the young person to cope with the world of work. The types of jobs our youths are channelled into are :-

nursery nurses; general office; motor mechanics; community based projects such as painting decorating, plastering, plumbing etc., or working in institutions such as Old Peoples' Homes.

We are experiencing the Micro Chip revolution- technology is here to stay yet our youth are not encouraged or assisted in obtaining the relevant skills to compete in this particular employment field.

MSC PROJECTS HAVE EFFECTIVELY BEEN USED AS A FORM OF SOCIAL CONTROL AND HAS ASSISTED VERY FEW OF OUR YOUTH FOR A MEANINGFUL FUTURE. HOWEVER OUR YOUTH ARE NOT FOOLED- THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.

BRISTOL IS BUT A WARNING FLAME - THE FIRE IS SMOULDERING WITH AN UNCONTROLLABLE VENGEANCE

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OWAAD Newsletter Committee
c/o 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews
London NW1

July 1980

Parmind Vir OBE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
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1981-1986
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WALTER RODNEY

WE THE WOMEN OF 'THE ORGANISATION OF WOMEN OF ASIAN AND AFRICAN DESCENT' WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO OUR BROTHER AND COMRADE DR. WALTER RODNEY, WHO DIED SO TRAGICALLY ON THE NIGHT OF FRIDAY 13TH JUNE AT THE TENDER HANDS OF THE INC. HE WAS OUR BROTHER BECAUSE HE CHAMPIONED THE STRUGGLE OF ALL BLACK PEOPLE AGAINST RACISM, BUT MORE THAN THAT HE WAS OUR COMRADE BECAUSE HE EXPOSED THE WORKINGS OF IMPERIALISM AND HELPED DEVELOP THE PRINCIPLE AND THE PRACTICE OF UNITY BETWEEN OPPRESSED PEOPLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HE DID NOT CHOOSE THE EASY PATH OF THE ARM-CHAIR REVOLUTIONARY, BUT CHOSE INSTEAD TO PUT HIS BELIEFS INTO DAILY PRACTICE DESPITE THE CONSTANT THREAT OF ELIMINATION BY THOSE HE SOUGHT TO OVERTHROW. WE SHARE THE GRIEF OF HIS WIFE AND FAMILY, OF HIS COMRADES IN THE WPA AND OF THE GUINESE PEOPLE. HIS PREMATURE DEATH IS A LOSS TO US ALL, BUT IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT LEAVES WHICH FALL IN THE AUTUMN SERVE TO ENRICH THE EARTH SO THAT STRONGER AND MORE BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS MAY GROW IN THE SPRING. THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

ORGANISATION OF WOMEN OF
ASIAN & AFRICAN DESCENT

Dr Walter Rodney, a guiding light among his people, was the victim of a political assassination on Friday 13th June in Guyana. Known internationally as an historian and academic, Rodney was of the sort which defies confinement within any label.

Very early in his academic career it became clear that this was a man with a brilliant analytical and constructively critical mind. Dr Rodney won a scholarship to the University of the West Indies where he took a degree in History. From there he came to London where he did his doctoral research on the slave trade on the Upper Guinea coast. He completed his doctoral thesis in June 1966 (published: A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, Clarendon Press). Rodney broke new ground in choosing as his particular interest of research the beginning of the European exploitation of Africa from the time of the Portuguese. This was important because here was a Third World scholar examining our history and thus presenting a more meaningful point of view than that given by Europeans. Dr Rodney himself says, "Colonial rule generated a great deal of written material which can serve as one of the bases for historical reconstruction. Even the non-specialist in African history would be well advised to look at some original sources... Approached with care, several of the anthropological texts also yield information and insights with regard to detailed changes in African social structures. Above all, however, the generations who suffered under colonialism are still living repositories of the continent's history. The collective knowledge of the African people derived from experience is the most authentic basis of the history of the colonial period. Unfortunately, much of that experience is not yet written down." (How Europe Under-developed Africa)

After London, Rodney spent a year teaching in Tanzania. He returned to Jamaica where he spent most of his free time with the Rastafarians in sessions called "Groundings" (later published as Groundings with My Brothers). He enriched the Rastafarian understanding of African history and social change, and started the activity of politicisation among the grass-roots. As a result, the reactionary JLP government of the time (1969) banned him from Jamaica and his job in Canada where he had gone to attend a Black Writers' Conference.

After this Dr Rodney returned to Tanzania where he wrote his book How Europe Under-developed Africa which, as he says in his Preface, "derives from a concern with the contemporary situation". But in his search for an understanding of the sources of the

present times, his researches for the book took him back to the 15th century and forward to the sixties; in other words, we cannot fully understand the present until we search backward to know the past. As Rodney points out, "Ideally, an analysis of underdevelopment should come even closer to the present than the end of the colonial period in the 1960s. The phenomenon of neocolonialism cries out for extensive investigation in order to formulate the strategy and tactics of African emancipation and development". This would be no less true of the West Indies than of Africa.

Once again in Tanzania, Rodney's academic work was mixed with active participation in the lives of the people. He worked closely with the teachers of the liberation movements in Africa and with the leaders of the Southern African liberation movements.

For someone who linked theory and practice it is not surprising that Dr Rodney should have turned his attentions to Guyana where he was offered the post of Professor of History at the University of Guyana. But on his return he found that the Prime Minister of Guyana had intervened and blocked the university's appointment. Nevertheless, Rodney deliberately chose to stay and work among the working people of Guyana. He believed that liberation would come through the education of the people and so he became a member of the Working People's Alliance.

For six years before his death, Walter Rodney committed himself to politicising and educating the working people of Guyana along socialist principles, cutting across

race barriers which had been set up to divide, weaken and so dominate the people of Guyana for class interest.

Dr Rodney had the ability to communicate complicated ideas to ordinary people and it is this combination of brilliance and clarity, along with his patience, which presents his extraordinary value.

Dr Rodney also undertook research into various aspects of Guyanese society. A history of Guyanese Plantations in the Nineteenth Century, published in Guyana, dealt with plantation society at the time when indentured labour was introduced, following the effective abolition of slavery.

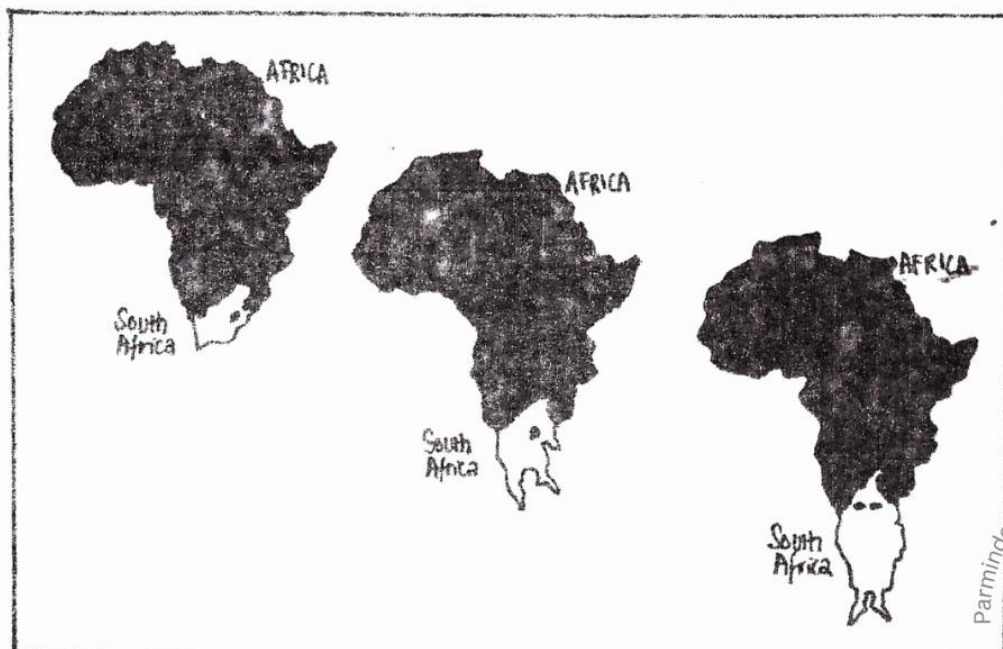
At the same time, he was writing a longer work on the history of the Guyanese working class based on research into historical documents in Guyana and Britain. The first volume is now with his publishers in America.

With the murder of Dr Rodney, the international academic community has suffered an irreparable loss. But there is no way to measure the loss to his own country. Here was a man eminently fitted in every way to work with the people for freedom. It is the ultimate tragedy of imperialism and its aftermath that men of this quality should be destroyed by internal agents of neo-colonial regimes.

WPA SUPPORT GROUP (UK).

* A bibliography of Dr Rodney's work is available from:

WPA SUPPORT GROUP (UK)
11 WANDLE ROAD
LONDON SW17



Parmindevir
Copied from a cartoon by DON WRIGHT
OBE BLACK & ETHNIC ARTS ARCHIVE
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archive.parmindevir.com

REVIEWS

SECOND CONFERENCE

The 2nd National Black Women's Conference organised by OWAAD, was held over the weekend of Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th March in Tottenham, North London. If we compare the conference with the 1st held in March 1979, we can see that it was a visible example of the progress made over the past twelve months. This year's conference was a two-day event as opposed to the one-day event last year; it attracted double the number of sisters, almost 600 this time, once again from many different areas, age-groups and political persuasions. The organisers of the conference tried hard to correct the mistakes made last year and this time we used the Conference as a forum for a variety of groups, rather than simply as an opportunity for OWAAD to talk. This was made easier by the fact that so many Black women's groups have sprung up over the past year (particularly in the London area), many as a direct result of meeting at the first National Conference.

The general theme of the Conference was "Black Women Fighting Back". This broad theme was chosen because it emphasised the need for us to work out ways of fighting back and also because it provided Black women's groups across the political spectrum to contribute on any area they considered important. Thus on both days we began with a plenary session at which groups were able to talk about the area(s) they had prioritised. Inevitably these talks covered a wide range of subjects: Black women and health; Black women and Rastafarianism; Black women Political Prisoners; education; organising locally; autonomous Black women's organisations within the Black Liberation Struggle; immigration (during which both Anwar Ditta and Nazira Begum talked about their personal experiences as victims of the British immigration laws); and Afro-Asian unity.

Each day was structured in such a way that the areas covered in the morning plenary sessions gave rise to workshop discussions in the afternoon. Two impromptu workshops were also organised, one on Black women and the Media, and the other on Conscious-

ness raising/Black feminism. The latter workshop was the outcome of a heated discussion, during which a lot of sisters expressed a wish to clarify the term "Black Feminist" and its implications. The purpose of the workshop discussions not to come up with any ready-made solutions, but through exchanging experiences and ideas to report back to the Conference with some realistic suggestions on the issues under discussion could be taken up by local groups and/or by OWAAD. The objective was not achieved to the extent that some of us would have liked, but our experience of last year's Conference indicates that a lot of the decisions to take up different issues will come in the weeks months which follow the Conference. For sisters the weekend was their first experience of being with so many other concerned Black women at one time. The chance to meet and talk and discuss, to make new contacts and to learn about new issues was, to a certain extent, an end in itself. But if last year is anything to go by, the 2nd Conference also provided the inspiration or impetus necessary to spur sisters into getting actively involved immediately or taking issues at a later stage.

On a purely organisational basis, the Conference was a considerable achievement. In addition to bookstalls, exhibitions, badge-making facilities and a creche which was run by brothers who wished to demonstrate practically their support of the Conference, a video of last year's Conference and a film on Angela Davis were shown. There was also plenty of food and both a cultural and social event on the Saturday evening. The cultural show included African, Calypso and Soul dance routines, performed by young Black sisters from the Elimu Centre in Paddington, London; song by a group of Malaysian sisters; and poetry written and read by a Caribbean sister in patois. The cultural show was followed by a social with an all-women's disco apart from being an opportunity to relax and socialise, it provided a lot of sisters with their first ever experience of a night out, free of the usual sexual competition and cattle-market/wall-flower syndrome.

The entire Conference was sound-recorded by sisters from the Women's Radio Workshop and OWAAD's Visuals Committee, while slides were also taken which are being developed into a tape-Working for London

Conference. The talks that were given will also be brought out in a journal, as happened last year.

To comment on the overall success or failure of the Conference is not an easy task, but there is no doubt that sisters went away with a clearer idea of the issues they will have to take up in the coming months, with a renewed sense of unity and solidarity, and with a high feeling from being together with so many other Black women.

OWAAD CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE.

Which "♀ in Society"?

With eager anticipation I arrived at Plashe School on the 25th of April for the Conference on WOMEN IN SOCIETY given by the Women's Movement. It was with greater eagerness that I awaited the ending of the Conference. If the Women's Movement had wanted to use the Conference as a chance to recruit new members they seemed to find it very hard with the girls who did turn up. Also, half of the people at the Conference were boys which seemed to surprise the organisers.

WHITE MIDDLE CLASS

One point that was raised on many occasions was "What can a White Middle Class Movement do for Black Working Class Women?" This question was never really answered, only evaded. In the talk given by Hilary Wainwright on the 'History of the Women's Movement, and the way forward to Feminism' we heard of the success of the Movement. The talk was too self congratulating. When asked what they had achieved, she replied the right for equal pay. As young black women, we have to fight for employment, we cannot afford to waste our time congratulating ourselves on getting equal pay.

The trouble with the women speaking at the Conference was that they were too concerned in keeping their middle class status; to them the Working Class and Black people seemed to be a different species. There was no effort being made to bridge the gap.

WALKING THE STREETS, LOOKING FOR MEN

One speaker, a Mrs Boukeru, in her talk 'Women at Work and Women in the Trade Union Movement' said that young women did not want to work, all they cared about was "walking the streets,

looking for men." How degrading and insulting. If that was all we were concerned about, why were we at the Conference in the first place, and why would many of us be fighting to get into University. When we brought the point up with her at a later time she refused to answer our questions. When asked what we thought of the Conference by Mrs Boukeru, we told her the truth. We thought it showed lack of communication between the Movement and the people it should be reaching, and that the movement seemed to hold nothing for us.

To this she replied sarcastically that we should start our own movement if we were not satisfied with their efforts.

NOW I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY OWAAD WAS FORMED.

"BLACK YOUTH, RASTAFARIASM AND THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN BRITAIN"

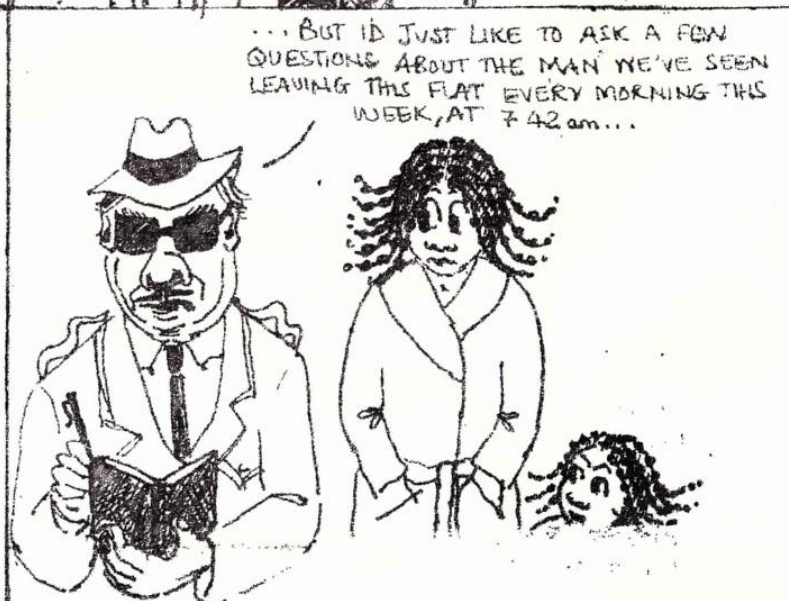
by Len Garrison.

This book gives brief but good definitions and explanations of Rastafarism (e.g. Why Rasta men have their hair in locks to resemble the warriors of the Masai tribe, for anyone who is ignorant about the actual Rastafari movement). However, he doesn't look at the role of Rasta women.

The author is talking about Black youth of West Indian origin in Britain. Therefore, he explains the reasons why W. Indians had to come to Britain, the type of jobs we had to do and the type of communities we had come from. He explains why children cannot agree with their parents e.g. they know their work is the same standard as their white school mates whereas a lot of parents have been indoctrinated by colonised ideology.

Len Garrison provides constructive criticism of the British education system i.e. its mono-cultural bias and racism. Thus his analysis of W. Indian childrens underachievement and alienation seems correct.

He comes to the conclusion that Black youth are relating with Rastafarism as a means of finding their identity through Rastafarian philosophy, new hope has been provided for the struggle against the racism of this society.



GROUPS

Southall Black Sisters

Less than one year old Southall Black Sisters have travelled a long road, fairly quickly. We are out of a 'girls group' not the first in Southall, which recognised the situation of many young Black girls in the family as trainee housemaker, wife and mother; and without even the freedom to go out on our own. When we did manage to get we found all leisure facilities were male orientated and/or controlled.

Initially formed to discuss and provide alternatives, the girls group was made up of young Black women (mainly Asian). However, once formed we soon became concerned about the

position of Black women generally, drawing on knowledge and experience within the group, of the struggle against sex, race and class oppression, the group accepted the principle of independent Black Womens Organisation and structured itself to work collectively.

We took on the task of developing our understanding of the history and workings of our specific oppression, that of the particular sexism and exploitation within our own cultures which the white women's movement has not recognised and racism as a whole which the white left fails to take into account.

To this end we produced the first issue of our newsletter and distributed it widely.

Its success has led us to take on the task of producing a newsletter on a regular basis.

We have also recently set up a local study group to meet once monthly, to co-ordinate reading, discussion, and writing towards developing 'black feminist' theory.

We are also involved in practical struggles both locally and nationally. Locally we are involved in providing support for individual black women; a once-weekly womens advice session at the Southall Rights Centre; a young girls centre (including hostel) with the Southall Single Homeless Group; and also work through the involvement of many individual sisters in the community as youth and community workers, women's refuge and resource centre workers, voluntary English language tutors etc.

Another major part of practical work is campaigning around local issues such as the 23rd April events in Southall- the Chix strike at Slough; immigration etc., and on a national level working with sisters from OWAAD, and taking part in the activities such as the Bradford march where we forcefully took our views into that typically very sexist part of the black struggle.

There is still much to do and the group has a lot to learn but we have full confidence in our underlying principles of organising on a collective, democratic basis, continually questioning the way we operate as a group and our relationship to the community and struggle, both locally and nationally. We are confident that our struggles, which are directed towards our liberation from being "paki and nigger girlies and mummies", will lead us to take full control of our destinies.

Camden B.W.G.

The Black Womens Group of Camden and Islington, stimulated by the 2nd National OWAAD Conference, has met 3 times already. Our aim is to highlight issues and to learn more about the things that specifically affect Black people. We have so far discussed the continuous growth of police harassment and racist attacks, the immigration rules and new Nationality Law changes which have been promised by the new government.

No one expected liberal Camden, multi-ethnic Camden to have such racial attacks but the Black Womens Group are more than aware and know that there is a lot to be done. Black women who are interested are more than welcome.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
LEE at 485-9282.

WORKING COMMITTEES

THE NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

The OWAAD Newsletter Committee was set up to plan, edit, produce and distribute "Edwards" every 2 months. We meet regularly about once every fortnight for this purpose, and would welcome any sisters who wish to get involved.

If you are interested, please get in touch with Ramani: 01 727 5663

THE STUDY COMMITTEE

Owaad's Study Committee is trying to combine the theory and practice of Black women's politics. It does so by helping Sisters to develop their own political understanding of the issues and campaigns which concern Black women most and, as a consequence, arriving at a consensual view within OWAAD. We meet once a month to discuss a particular topic with a view to writing papers which can be presented at open forums, distributed to local groups, written up as pamphlets/leaflets or simply reported in FOWAAD. We are still a fairly small committee and would welcome new members. Anyone who is interested should contact: Maria, (01) 800.3977.

THE VISUALS COMMITTEE

The OWAAD Visuals Committee was set up to record and document OWAAD's activities and Black women's struggles in the country. The Visuals Committee will be holding its next meeting shortly and would be pleased to hear from Sisters who are interested in becoming involved in its work. Please contact Maria (01-800.3977) for further details.

GLC

THE CALENDAR COMMITTEE

The Calendar Committee has decided on the following areas to be covered each month in the 1981 Calendar:

Double Day

Solidarity with our Sisters in South Africa

Exploitation of Women Agricultural Workers

Black Women's Self-Image

Immigration

Women and Islam

Third World Women and Health

Problems faced by Young Black Girls

Black Women and Prison

Afro-Asian Unity

Tribute to Black Women thru History

Our aim is to express through the calendar our belief that Black women are oppressed as a race, class and sex; that our oppressor is Imperialism; and that we have a history of resistance to this oppression; the calendar should be an expression of solidarity with all our sisters who face the same oppressor as we do in Britain.

We urgently need GOOD IMAGES which could be used in any of the areas above. These should be photographic or simply graphic and people should send in any ideas they may have of ways of portraying the above in an effective, visually attractive and original way ! If sisters do not have access to original photographs, and do not want to send ones found in magazines, books etc., please let us have the name and date of the source (ie. magazine, etc.) so that we can try to get hold of it ourselves.

Contact Stella (01-341 0181)

Sister's Poem

"Only Black man for me" you say
"And it's so they like a lady be"
A-trute it's so that they like
But only if they can't get white

Black Lady
Who do you think you are
With your hair pressed so straight
An your lips paint so red
Don't you know
Your Black skin still show

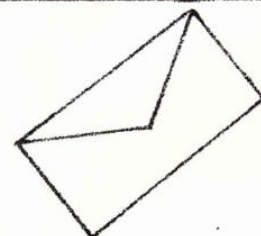
Black Lady
Can you really walk
In your high heel shoe
And that pencil skirt
Don't you know
You're destroying what was a fine body

"Who do think you talking to" you say
"Bitch" and you give me that look
That hard stare
That only a Black woman knows
From another
So challenging and yet so scared

Black Lady
Don't look at me so
I could never be your rival
Don't fret for your survival
Can't you see
It isn't me
That threatens

Black Lady
Sister of mine
Leave your trinkets and come
Black people still fighting you know
Let this system that oppress you go.

Letters



Dear FOWAAD,

I am writing to you as a Black mother who has recently experienced difficulties in transferring my child to a secondary school.

My son is bright as testified by school reports and has been graded as Band I. In choosing a school I bore in mind the following: (a) my child is a practising catholic; (b) the easy access to our home and (c) its record of academic success. (High aspirations for a Black parent !!) After I informed the headteacher of our choice (a voluntary catholic school) there followed a series of contradictory explanations as to why my son was refused admission. By implication there seems to have been collusion by all parties. It began with sudden concern from my son's school teachers about his behaviour which supposedly had deteriorated to the point of juvenile delinquency in a matter of weeks. No positive steps were taken to rescue my son from this sudden 'behavioural disintegration' but steps were taken to prevent

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his address on the school of our choice.

I have been told that one criteria for selection is being the nephew of a teacher in the school. On the other hand, had my son been a band III he would have walked into the school.

Stacy has responded to my complaints by assuring me that those pupils who had been selected had a stronger degree of catholic practice than my son. Given his rocky attendance at mass and recommendations from his priest I can only assume that the sins of the father (as a non practising catholic) were being visited on the son.

It is interesting to see how invested in the fairness of an educational system which sees its as 'lazy' and 'not having' the 'right' highlights the plight of the children.

It is also worth noting that the educational system continues to fail its children despite the reality of a market on the so called 'black educational problem'. Voluntary schools are particularly insidious in the way that they continue the old boy network of hidden racism.

It is like to know if sisters have had similar experiences with their children.

B.P.

Last Word

*"You have nothing to be afraid of..."
(or have you?)*

From my recent experience with the 'British' police I have come to the conclusion that it is very hard to imagine how badly the police can behave until they actually deal with you personally.

It is like 'imposed' and 'proven' and 'justice' and 'have

long been forgotten if they were ever part of the average policeman's vocabulary.

On Wednesday 26th June my brother's girl friend gave birth to a baby. However, the birth was very difficult and my brother spent all day at the hospital, returning on Thursday morning.

I met him at the hospital on Thursday evening and we left there around 8:15 pm.

My brother came home with me and stayed to have a meal (after his ordeal). He left for his house at about 11:45 pm.

That night between 1:00-1:30 am the door bell rang. I opened the door and saw my brother with 2 uniformed policemen. I immediately thought something awful had happened to my brother's girlfriend's baby.

I asked the policeman what the matter was.

One of the policemen said that I shouldn't waste his time and that my brother should just get his passport. I asked the policemen what they meant by this to which they made several nasty remarks one of which was "I don't want any of your lip".

They continued to be very aggressive so I asked them for their numbers and which station they came from. One of them shoved his shoulder near my face and said here's my number are you blind or something.
(G123 and G54 from Stoke Newington Police station).

By this time my mother had arrived at the door. Even she was surprised by the aggressive attitude of the two policemen and said "Just because you're policemen there is no need to talk to my daughter like that". She asked what was going on. The policemen then explained that they had picked my brother up because they suspected him of rape and they also wanted to see his passport.

My mother in fact didn't have my brother's passport but he thought it was safer to say it was at our house because he didn't want

... were the night before with two policemen.

My brother told the policemen that he wanted a witness if he was going to his flat to get his passport. He then broke down and said "you don't know what they've been doing to me".

Later I found out that on his way home my brother had found it difficult to get a bus so he decided to phone a friend to come and give him a lift from a telephone box on the corner of Brownswood Road.

Two white men arrived outside and began to behave strangely. My brother decided to drop the phone so that there wouldn't be any trouble.

As he left the telephone box one of the men stopped him, flashed a card and said CID.

They then asked him if he was Evans, he said no and that he didn't know any Evans and gave them his name. They said that somebody had just been assaulted and that my brother fitted the description.

My brother explained how he had got stranded, that he had spend all day at the hospital and that he was going home from his mother's home.

The policemen said that they had to take him to the woman that had been assaulted to see if she could identify him.

My brother said that he wasn't going with them unless he could make a phone call. Before he could finish talking two uniformed policemen arrived. The plain clothed policeman told the uniformed policemen that my brother didn't trust them.

One of the uniformed policemen told my brother to get into the car so he got in.

They drove my brother around for a while and then back to a house not far from the phone box where he was originally picked up.

The plain clothed policemen were already there and one said that he was going into the house to see the woman. While he was away the uniformed policemen in the car with my brother made remarks like "Was your mother ever done for mugging?" Even though they were trying to get him into a fight my brother ignored their comments.

A third plain clothed policeman then came up to the car and asked the uniformed policemen what my brother was in for. The uniformed officers said that somebody had just been assaulted.

The plain clothed policeman said "I feel like shooting him". By this time my brother was terrified.

This policeman went away and came back carrying two bottles wrapped in paper. He pointed them at my brother as if they were guns.

The plain clothed policeman holding the bottles said "we'll still nick him for something".

They then decided he was an illegal immigrant and drove him to my house where my brother had told them his passport was.

I agreed to go with my brother to his house to get his passport and act as a witness.

The policemen asked my brother where he lived and he gave them his address at Caledonian Road. These so called "British" policemen however had no sense of direction.

They drove us to Manor House to Finsbury Park from Finsbury Park to Holloway from Holloway to Camden Town from Camden Town to Holloway and then finally to Caledonian Road which you can get to directly from my house!!

During this tour of the local area the uniformed police officers (one of them was tall and thick, the other short and mouthy) tried all means to provoke either myself or my brother into a fight.

They started off by saying you think that we are racist pigs don't you.

Well since they knew exactly what they were there was no need for us to elaborate. We didn't reply.

They then said "we thought your brother was a cry baby because he kept asking for his mum".

I said that I expected the "British" police force (term they had used) to use more devoted vocabulary than cry baby.

They also said that they thought that he was mentally retarded because he didn't answer their questions.

They kept on about the relationships between Black people and the police were bad. This however they had come to the conclusion was not their fault.

Then the short mouthy one said "Just because we went to your countries with our superiority and technology and stole your gold you now think you can be illegal immigrants in our country".

If that's not provocation what is it !

I tried to give stupid answers to their stupid comments so the tall thick one (brought along only for his size as far as I could tell) said "you sound like you've been to college



and had the benefit of our education system" to which I replied "you wouldn't have an education system if it wasn't for people like me!"

When we eventually arrived at my brother's flat he got his passport while I stopped the policemen from going into his flat. They checked it and found everything in order.

They drove my brother and I back to my house. On the way 954, the thick policeman, said "well I'm prejudiced until I'm proved wrong".

When a policeman says this to you, you tend to think there is something wrong with the system

G123 the short mouthy officer replied saying "I'm not prejudiced I've got a half caste girl friend and my best friend is a Nigerian".

He then asked me out for lunch.

I can't really convey on paper how angry both my brother and I were at the time and how frightened.

We also felt completely powerless.

When we reached my house they let us out of their car and G123 said "If we see you again we'll carry out exactly the same thing".



An encounter with the "British" policeforce can never be a pleasant event. If you're articulate you might be able to beat them at their own game. If you can keep your temper, while your family and your fellow countrymen are abused you're very strong.

That night I realised my back was up against the wall. I hadn't done anything wrong but I had plenty to worry about !

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REMINDER

WE NEED YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO "FOWAAD" URGENTLY, IF THE NEWSLETTER IS TO GENUINELY REFLECT THE ACTIVITIES AND ISSUES WHICH BLACK WOMEN ARE INVOLVED IN BOTH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY. IF SOMETHING IS HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA, IF YOUR GROUP IS INVOLVED IN A CAMPAIGN, IF YOU HAVE COME ACROSS A GOOD BOOK, FILM, POEM (etc) LATELY, SEND IN A REVIEW OR A REPORT FOR THE NEXT ISSUE?