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SUMMER**OF** REBELLION

THE CARF REPORT

PLUS: THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL

Britain on the brink

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The three faces of British racism

Forthcoming special issue of Race & Class

Including contributions from: A. Sivanandan, Lee Bridges on the Criminal Justice system, Gareth Peirce on the Terrorism Act, Frances Webber on the Human Rights Act, Liz Fekete on the emergence of xenoracism, Jenny Bourne on Macpherson and institutional racism, Arun Kundnani on popular racism. Plus: commentaries on racially motivated murders, deaths in custody and asylum seekers in Glasgow and Leicester.

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In the midst of Blair's 'historic' second-term election victory, in a Britain in which the issue of racism has supposedly been settled and in which nobody dares mention the word 'class', a spirit of rebellion has sprung up among British Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the northern cities. The riots in Oldham, Burnley, Bradford and Leeds have shattered the illusions of our day: that all Asians are able to rise smoothly up into the cosy ranks of middle England; that because the British eat a lot of curries racism is dead; that Asians are soft targets for racist gangs. The riots have stated clearly and precisely what a dozen reports and inquiries have failed to say: that in parts of Britain there is virtual apartheid.

But who is listening? Certainly not the establishment, as can be seen from the alarmist reactions of its spokespeople. They cannot understand why, twenty years after Brixton, Toxteth, Handsworth and Tottenham, black youths have taken to the streets yet again. Instead, the hardliners talk about law and order and the need for the police to get tougher. Only the narrowness of the streets of the former mill-towns stopped water cannon tanks from being used. Then there are the liberals, who wheel out the stock explanation of cultural differences, blaming the Asians for their own deprivation, or placing all the blame on fascist outsiders. But a small band of jackboots could not whip up a string of towns into riot, unless there were already deep problems in British race relations.

As the reporters vacate their Bradford hotel rooms and the commentators turn their pens to other events, it is time for the anti-racist movement to reclaim the debate. For the media has created a climate in which the police no longer have to explain what they are doing about institutional racism (rather they are the heroes of the day, bravely keeping apart warring factions); in which the British National Party (BNP) has become 'respectable' and is now building for next May's council elections; and, on the streets, fascist and racist gangs have found new tactics for causing mayhem and fomenting violence.

The anti-racist movement needs to be clear about the struggle ahead. Fascist political parties are not the cause of racism, but rather they thrive on the back of a wider racism that already exists in our institutions, and in our popular culture. The struggle against fascism has also to be a struggle against institutional racism in the police, against racism in our treatment of asylum seekers and against racism in the media. It is also a struggle to offer white, working-class communities, which New Labour has left behind, an alternative to racism. But, above all, the struggle has to allow the voice of the younger generation of working-class Asians to be heard. ■

For more analysis see www.irr.org.uk/riots

Roger Sylvester update

At the end of July, a police officer faced disciplinary charges after ripping out pages from his notebook which apparently related to the death of Roger Sylvester in police custody. Scotland Yard refused to reveal exactly how the officer, who pleaded guilty to the charges, was disciplined - so much for Macpherson recommendations on secrecy and openness! And, the charges were brought only after the PCA directed the Met to do so. The officers involved in Roger's death were identified for the family, but the names cannot be made public.

Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign, PO Box 25908, London N18 1W0 Web: www.rsjc.org.uk

Youths in Burnley, Stoke, Leeds and Bradford have taken to the streets to defend their communities from racist violence. But it was in Oldham where rioting first erupted. CARF visited the town to report on a catalogue of police failures which never made it into the mainstream media, failures which led to the Asian rebellion at the end of May, and gave the far Right the opportunity to make Oldham its best ever electoral success.



when OLDHAM ASIANS FOUGHT BACK



'WHEN OUR PARENTS CAME OVER, THEY ACCEPTED BEING SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS. NOW YOUNGSTERS WHO ARE EDUCATED HERE SEE THEMSELVES AS ON THE SAME LEVEL AS OTHERS. WE ARE STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS. AND THIS IS WHAT THE POLICE DON'T LIKE.' >>>>AKIL MIAH, OLDHAM CAB-DRIVER

FASCISTS were waging a murderous campaign against our people. It was necessary to defend our community. It was with this in mind that we did what we did.' Those were the words of one of the defendants in the trial of the Bradford 12 – twelve Asian youths who were charged with conspiracy to cause an explosion following the discovery of a stash of petrol bombs. The bombs had been prepared to defend black areas in Bradford from National Front violence. The twelve were eventually found not guilty by the jury. That was in 1981. In the same year, Asian youths in Southall burned down the Hambrough Tavern, a known meeting-place for fascists. In both cases, youths were criminalised for attempting to defend communities from racism, in the absence of police protection. Twenty years on black communities are still facing the same failures by the police and youths are still turning to violence.

Unequal policing

The police in Oldham have long shown an indifference to racially motivated street violence against Asians in the town. In the summer of 1989, Tahir Akram, a 14-year-old schoolboy, was walking to his home through the predominantly Pakistani area of Glodwick when he was shot with an air rifle pellet by a group of whites, who had been taking random shots at people in the neighbourhood. The pellet entered his eye and killed him. The police claimed that the attack was not racist. A protest planned by the Asian community was called off in the face of mass hostility from the town's authorities and the local press.

By 1999, Asian victims of racial violence were planning to meet violence with violence. For four years, Gulfranz Nazir's family had been subjected to racial harassment by gangs of up to thirty racist youths armed with crowbars and

hammers, who tried to attack their shop in the predominantly white area of Limeside. Whenever the police were called they failed to turn up in time to make a difference. Finally Gulfranz organised with friends to defend his family from the gangs. The result was a running battle on the streets between armed white youths and Asians. With the continuing failure of the police and authorities to tackle the racists, violent confrontations between groups of whites and Asians became more common. Inevitably when the police did arrive to break up a mêlée, it was the Asians who bore the brunt of police heavy-handedness.

Soon the police and the local newspapers began to portray Asians as the perpetrators, rather than the victims. This strategy intensified as demands on the police for change grew nationally, in the wake of the Macpherson inquiry. Police would now have to record racial incidents more fully, ▶

► follow new procedures for investigating these incidents, and be accountable to the victims of racist crime: for Asian victims of racism in Oldham, the genuine implementation of these practices would have been nothing short of a revolution. But what, under Oldham's chief superintendent, Eric Hewitt, actually transpired?

In 1999, Hewitt released figures which stated that out of 250 racially motivated incidents in one year, the majority involved violence on whites by Asians. He then used these figures to argue that the real problem was not racial attacks against Asians, but crimes committed by Asian gangs. The local press lapped it up; the *Lancashire Evening Chronicle* ran a front page story with the headline 'violent racial crime rockets: three out of four victims are white', while the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* had 'fears growing over plague of racist attacks by Asian gangs'. In the article itself, Hewitt offered his own interpretation of the figures: 'There is evidence that they [Asians] are trying to create exclusive areas for themselves. Anyone seems to be a target if they are white.' The image conveyed was one of territory wars between rival race gangs, with Asians the worst perpetrators.

As CARF warned at the time, the figures on which these pronouncements were based were highly suspect (see CARF 50). Asian victims of racism had long since given up

reporting incidents to the police, as years of police inactivity had taught them to expect little. One group who were particularly vulnerable to racism were Asian minicab drivers. A typical scenario would involve a cab being called to a white estate, where its windows would be smashed, racist abuse would be shouted and the driver would have a couple of punches thrown at him. For a minicab driver to report the incident would mean that he would have to wait for two to three hours while the police responded – lost time when he could be taking fares. Then there was the issue of how police recorded incidents. An unprovoked attack on an Asian's car by whites would get recorded as damage to a vehicle. An Asian youth robbing a white man for his wallet would get recorded as racially motivated assault. Only the latter would show up in the figures for racial incidents. More than likely, too, only the latter would get reported in the *Oldham Evening Chronicle*.

But, more importantly, at a time when there was, for once, a move at the national level to tackle police racism, the image of gang warfare and 'no-go areas' provided a useful alternative story, one in which the real problem was racialised gang violence. The police would then seem to be caught between two rival gangs rather than, as in the Lawrence case, themselves part of the problem. Hewitt's approach,

and its faithful reporting by the local press, set the template that would be used repeatedly over the following two years to interpret what was happening in Oldham.

The publication of Hewitt's figures also alerted the extreme Right to a potential opportunity for expansion. The British National Party (BNP) newspaper, *British Nationalist*, put Oldham on its front page with the headline 'Ethnic cleansing in Britain', suggesting that Asians were involved in a concerted campaign to create no-go areas. A leafleting campaign was organised in the area and, by the summer of 2000, the BNP had established a small branch in the town.

Myths of preference

In fact, there are parts of Oldham which are no-go areas. If a group of Asian boys walk through the shopping centre in town, a security guard or police officer is likely to tell them to disperse. In the white areas of town you will see the words 'Pakis Out' painted on road signs. Abdul Malik-Ahad, a Westwood community worker, believes that if an Asian were to go onto those estates, within ten minutes they would be chased out. 'It is something we just live with,' he says. 'We live with racism day in and day out. We face it in employment, when we go for jobs, when we are on the buses. When people use this phrase "reverse racism," they don't under-

OLDHAM: A HISTORY OF SEGREGATION

OLDHAM is a former mill town on the north-eastern edge of greater Manchester. Roughly 12 per cent of its population are of Bangladeshi or Pakistani descent – communities who arrived from the 1960s to work in the then still active textile industry. As the mills closed down in the 1980s, deprivation and unemployment swept through the white and black populations, both of whom depended on the industry for their livelihoods. With the old mills no more than crumbling wrecks, the Asians who had come to operate them were forced to find work in restaurants or take-aways, corner

shops or minicabbing. The biggest employers in town were now the public services – the local authority offices and the hospital; but most of these jobs went to whites.

Those who could afford to leave the neighbourhoods around the mills moved out to the suburbs, while many poorer whites were rehoused in other areas. Asians made up an increasing proportion of those left behind because they had been excluded from access to council housing. In 1993, the Commission for Racial Equality successfully prosecuted the local authority for operating a discriminatory housing policy. The council

had been following a policy of segregation in housing, allocating certain estates exclusively to whites and other (older) estates exclusively to Asians. In the private housing sector, segregation was also rife as a result of 'white flight'. As soon as a couple of Asian families moved into a street, most of their white neighbours started to move out.

When the council, following the 1993 CRE investigation, began to allocate homes to Asians on the previously all-white estates, the Asians soon found their houses targeted, bricks thrown through windows, sometimes petrol and a lighted match through the letter-box. Hence most Asians preferred the safety of their own areas – Glodwick, Westwood, Werneth, Coppice – and these became very tight-knit communities. Although nobody would choose to live in the old, 'two-up-two-down' terraced houses which had originally been built for mill workers and which predominated in these areas, the sense of security afforded by living close together outweighed the problems of overcrowding.

Segregation in housing was compounded by segregation in education. Although catchment areas meant that schools should have had mixed intakes, some became almost one hundred per cent Asian, as the mechanism of parental choice allowed white parents to send their children to majority-white schools a little further away. The result was ghetto schools of Asians in which expectations of failure were all too common: poor results could be explained away by 'cultural problems'. Asian girls would be married off anyway, so why bother? The minority of teachers willing to tackle these issues found themselves struggling against a mass of institutionalised preconceptions. ■



stand what racism really means.' On the other hand, Westwood and Glodwick, the areas where whites are supposedly excluded, are actually places where white people live alongside Asians. Ashid Ali, who lives in Westwood, believes that his white neighbours have made the effort to understand his way of life and he has likewise got to know them. Many whites in other parts of town take the view that 'Asians keep themselves to themselves' or 'they don't want to mix'. Partly this is based on ignorance – a refusal to go for a drink after work is taken as a personal rejection, rather than a part of one's religion. Yet there are also wider prejudices and fears about Islam: that it is an inherently separatist and dangerous religion. These sentiments have been further fuelled by the BNP which, in Oldham, has recently started to argue that it only has a problem with Muslims, not with African-Caribbeans or Hindus and Sikhs. But the real issue is not religion but the scapegoating of the worst-off groups – Muslim Bangladeshis and Pakistanis suffer greater poverty than any other group. When you add the (false) perception that Asians are creating no-go areas to the (false) perception that they are also getting preferential treatment in council grants, what develops is a sense of victimhood among a white working class that has been all but abandoned by the Labour Party, its historic defender.

Fifty-two per cent of Pakistanis, 61 per cent of Bangladeshis and 7 per cent of whites live in the worst 10 per cent of deprived areas, according to the deprivation index used by Oldham Council. Yet over the last six years, the majority of regeneration grants have gone into white areas. Westwood and Glodwick received £16 million in 1995/96, whereas Hathershaw and Fitton Hill – predominantly white areas – have received £53 million. And none of these grants more than scratched the surface of the deprivation that afflicts all these communities. Yet the perception remains, among many whites, that Westwood and Glodwick have been given special privileges. With the poor and the still poorer fighting



The streets of Glodwick, Oldham, and the offices of the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* which were attacked on 26 May.

FROM OLDHAM TO BRIXTON

OLDHAM | 26/27/28 MAY

Asian youths fought with riot police in the Glodwick and Westwood areas of Oldham after white racist gangs mounted attacks on residents. Local pubs and the offices of the *Oldham Evening Chronicle* newspaper were also attacked.

HAREHILLS, LEEDS | 5 JUNE

An angry crowd of 100 Asians gathered outside Chapletown police station after police used CS spray on Hussein Miah, a local Asian man whom they had been questioning about a tax disc. Six hours of rioting ensued as whites and African-Caribbeans joined Asians in fighting the police through the streets of the multi-racial Harehills area. Hussein's arrest did not result in charges being brought against him, and the incident is now being investigated by the police complaints authority.

BURNLEY | 23/24 JUNE

Groups of racists, including members of the 'Burnley Suicide Squad' football hooligan firm, numbering around 50, gathered in local pubs during Saturday. In the afternoon, an Asian taxi driver suffered a fractured cheekbone when he was attacked by a gang of white racists. Later in the day around 200 Asians assembled in Stoneholme to defend the area as the National Front (NF) approached. Shahid Malik, a commissioner for the Commission for Racial Equality, who was attempting to calm the tension, was hit by riot officers. As violence escalated, two pubs, which had been used by racists, were attacked.

The multi-racial ward of Daneshouse in Burnley, where the trouble took place, is the sixth most deprived area of Britain on the national index of child poverty. The British National Party has campaigned in the town since 1999 (when asylum seekers were accommodated there) and gained 11.3 per cent of the votes in the general



election earlier in the month – 4,151 votes – by falsely claiming that white areas were being discriminated against in the council's allocation of regeneration cash. Local councillor Harry Brooks, formerly of the Labour Party

but, for some years standing as an independent, has suggested on more than one occasion that 'preferential treatment' is given to the Asian minority in Burnley.

Since the weekend of riots, taxi-drivers have gone on a ten day strike in protest at racist attacks against Asians.

BRADFORD | 7 JULY

An Anti-Nazi League rally in the town centre was attended by 600 people during the Saturday afternoon while a number of NF members gathered in the town. An Asian man in the town centre was attacked by racists leaving a pub – while police stood by. Fighting broke out between racist gangs, the police and Asians. As the violence escalated the police drove the rioters



down towards the Manningham area.

Rioting continued through the night between Asians and the police, resulting in 120 officers being injured, two men stabbed and 36 people arrested.



One thousand police officers eventually retook control of the streets but not before damage to pubs, a BMW garage and the



local Labour and Conservative clubs. Manawar Jan-Khan, of the Manningham Residents' Association, said: 'No one was prepared to let the NF march into Manningham and people were determined to show that we would not take this. But instead of protecting the residents, the police turned on our community, herding us like animals.'

STOKE | 14 JULY

Over 100 Asian youths battled with police as rumours spread that NF supporters and racist gangs were going to attack the Cobridge area. Earlier in the day, white youths had attacked a parked car owned by an Asian man in the Shelton area as others chanted racist slogans.

BRIXTON | 20 JULY

Youths attacked police after demonstration protesting the shooting of Derek Bennett by armed police, earlier in the week. ■

VOICES OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

For our politicians and pundits, who love nothing more than tough-talking soundbites, the riots proved the perfect opportunity. CARF surveys a cross-section of knee-jerk responses, stock explanations and unhelpful suggestions.

LAW AND ORDER... Tony Blair, following in the well-trodden path of his political heroine, echoed Margaret Thatcher's response to her own riots of twenty years before. 'We give 100 per cent support to the police,' said Tony, forgetting his own earlier eagerness to tackle institutional racism. 'The fact is that the police [in Oldham] have got a good record on race relations,' he added, demonstrating a pitiful ignorance of the experience of local Asians.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES... In the newspapers, it was amateur sociology season. Decades of well-documented institutional racism in housing was glossed over with the language of 'alien occupation'. The *Times* described how 'over the decades the Asian communities have colonised inner-city districts such as Manningham and Whetley Hill, displacing poor whites into the outer suburbs'. As the pundits searched around for explanations, any explanation except the one staring them in the face – deprivation of a class combined with exclusion of a race – attention focused on cultural explanations. Either Asians had abandoned too much of their culture (imbibing the thuggishness of their white, working-class peers) or they clung to it too strongly and so failed to integrate. Phil Woolas, a local MP, argued, 'the Muslim community has not integrated at a pace which the white population find acceptable'. Woolas' solution involved 'coercing integration on an unwilling public'.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS... In the *Mail*, Lynda Lee-Potter, 'columnist of the year', justified her six-figure salary by providing some handy tips for Oldhamers to tackle their deprivation. She suggested that residents of the 'back-to-back terrace houses where many of the rioters live could always pick up a hammer or a paint brush and do something themselves' to improve their living conditions. For example, they 'could use pumice stone on their filthy front-door steps and wash their curtains'.

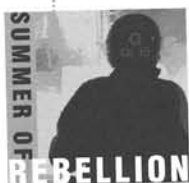
MORE HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS... Bradford MPs prompted a discussion as to whether the police needed

more 'options' in their armoury. Gerry Sutcliffe, MP for Bradford South, suggested that water cannons might be helpful. His appeal was backed by Marsha Singh, MP for Bradford West, a man who had been a campaigner for community self-defence and founder of the Bradford Asian Youth Movement in the 1970s. Singh's ascent of the greasy pole of Labour Party politics seemed to have reversed his earlier distrust of the police. He was now calling for them to have 'the equipment and the resources to be able to clear the streets of rioters. If we have to take tougher measures, they must be taken'.

STILL MORE HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS...

According to Ann Cryer, MP for Keighley, integration of Pakistanis was hindered by inter-continental marriages and the problem of recent arrivals not speaking English. The fact that most of the rioters were born and bred in Britain did not matter: the solution was, nevertheless, to be found in a new tightening up of immigration: 'If down the line five years on we are not getting anywhere and the poverty persists and we are still getting a large number of husbands and wives coming in not knowing English, and not making any attempt to learn English, then I think we start to look at the immigration laws.'

PLATFORM FOR THE EXTREMISTS... Most worryingly, following the general election, many in the media seemed to take at face value the British National Party's (BNP) reinvention as a non-racist, non-violent party. BNP leader Nick Griffin made scores of television and radio appearances, but rarely had to answer difficult questions about his criminal record or his history of racist pamphlet-eering. Oldham's own *Evening Chronicle* led the way, telling its readers, in an editorial of 11 June, that 'the political landscape in Oldham has changed and it has been changed through the proper democratic process by Mr Nick Griffin and his British National Party campaigning properly and legally... At a stroke, the BNP has gained political legitimacy in Oldham.' ■



- ▶ over the scraps of the government's regeneration strategy, the possibility of repairing Oldham's divisions was further diminished.

On a national stage

The strategy of targeting 'Asian gangs' continued into 2001. In

January, the police published figures claiming that the number of attacks on whites was increasing. Of 572 racial incidents, ranging from verbal abuse to violence, 60 per cent were against whites. Again the interpretation was the same: Asians were creating 'no-go areas'. With Asians still feeling unable to rely on police protection, Asian and white youths became further locked into a spiral of tit-for-tat violence.

Towards the end of March, Bernie Choudhury, a

BBC Radio journalist, came to Oldham looking for a story. Finding a couple of Asian youths on a street corner, Choudhury egged them on into a flight of bravado. They were keeping whites out of some areas, they claimed, through a campaign of intimidation. The 'special report' went out on national radio, claiming that streets in Oldham were being adorned with the words 'whites keep out'. No such graffiti existed, as even the police later admitted.

Then in April, Walter Chamberlain, a 76-year-old white war veteran, was set upon by a group of Asian youths as he walked through an industrial estate. The vicious attack on Chamberlain seemed to confirm all of Hewitt's warnings about 'no-go areas'. At last the local press had the white martyr they had been waiting for. His battered face appeared on the front of the *Manchester Evening News*, and the story then spread to all the national

newspapers. In the *Mail on Sunday*, his story was told under the headline 'Whites beware'. In the *Mirror*, his face appeared under the headline 'Beaten for being white: OAP, 76, attacked in Asian no-go area'. Media pundits began to speculate on the apparent transformation of young Asian males – from the stereotype of hard-working boys, who respected their parents, to the new stereotype of angry, violent thugs.

However, the facts of the case had to be distorted to fit this mould. Although the police and the media were treating this as a racial attack, Chamberlain's family themselves did not believe that the attack had been racially motivated. Rather it was a wanton act of thuggery against an old man unable to defend himself. In addition, the widely reported notion that he had been set upon for straying into a 'no-go area' made no sense, since the attack took place in a wasteland



outside Westwood, unclaimed by any of the teenage gangs. Hoping to ease the tension, local Asian businessmen offered a reward for the capture of the attackers and, soon enough, the teenagers responsible were arrested. The police then thanked the local Bangladeshi community for their help.

But the damage had already been done. For racist whites, Chamberlain had become a national symbol for all that was wrong with British multiculturalism. For many Asians in Oldham, the noisy way in which his case had been promoted by the press stood in stark contrast to the silence which surrounded Asian victims of racism. On the same day as the Chamberlain attack, an Asian taxi driver was stabbed in Oldham. It was never reported.

Foothold for the far Right

On 28 April, a second division football match between Stoke City and Oldham Athletic was scheduled to take place in the town. Stoke City

going to kill you, black bastard'. Realising the door would not last the battering, they retreated behind a second door and barricaded it with furniture. Luckily, the second door held off the attackers. 'God knows what they would have done if they smashed through the second door,' Abdul told CARF later. 'If things got worse, we would have been hurt. And they would have been hurt as well.' Outside Abdul's house, eight police vans were parked, their occupants apparently unwilling to intervene to halt the rampage.

By the time large numbers of young Asians came out on to the streets, the racists were being escorted away and there was a stand-off between the police and local residents. It was widely felt that the National Front (NF) and racist gangs had used the pretext of the football match to march through an Asian area. The normal attendance at an Oldham Athletic match is about 4,000. The gate on this day was 9,500. Had the match been hijacked by racists wanting to get revenge after hearing reports of Asian 'no-go areas'? A month earlier, on 31 March, the NF had tried to organise a demonstration through Oldham. But the march had been banned by the Home Office (after some wavering by Hewitt) and an anti-fascist rally had taken place instead, with a thousand people in attendance. Had the NF now achieved its aim of marching through Oldham by hiding themselves among Stoke City supporters? What most angered the Westwood community was that these people had managed to get de facto police protection.

Once the football match was underway, the community tried to persuade the police to route the away supporters through a different part of town on their way

back after the game. Meanwhile inside the stadium, the chant of 'if you hate Pakis, stand up' met with enthusiastic support from the majority in attendance. When the match was over, the advice from Westwood community leaders was ignored and the police escorted the away fans back along the same route. Again, racist abuse was chanted as the Stoke City 'supporters' marched through Asian areas. A line of riot police divided them from large numbers of young Asians now out on the streets, shouting back. Stones and, possibly, a petrol bomb were thrown from the Asian side. Once the 'football supporters' had left the area, the police turned their attention to controlling the angry crowd of Asian youths. The usual armoury of batons and dogs was deployed. A riot van was driven into the crowd in a bid to disperse the gathering. About seven people were injured by police truncheons or dog bites. Among young Asians, hatred of the police reached a new pitch.

Oldham erupts

The following Saturday, 5 May, around fifty extreme-Right supporters came to Oldham from the Midlands and London. This time, the police did organise a large-scale operation to prevent the outsiders from entering Asian areas. Nevertheless the Bank Holiday weekend was marred by a string of attacks: a number of Asian homes and shops were smashed up; an Asian restaurant worker suffered head injuries after being beaten unconscious as he walked home; a dart was thrown at an Asian boy from a passing car; a white man was attacked in Hathershaw; two Asians walking through Hathershaw were beaten up by a group of ten to fifteen whites.



The Live and Let Live pub on the edges of Glodwick, Oldham, was attacked on 26 May.

Below right: disused mill, Westwood, Oldham

fans had a reputation for racist hooliganism and police were expecting trouble. In the run-up to the Saturday fixture, Asian shops had received threatening phone calls.

Before the game, pubs in town filled up with football supporters, many of whom were chanting racist abuse and intimidating non-white passers-by. At about 2pm, they were escorted by the police through Chadderton Way, a predominantly Bangladeshi business and residential street in Westwood. Abdul Malik-Ahad was in his front room when he heard noise from outside, chanting and racial epithets. He looked outside to see groups of whites chasing after people, smashing windows and doors. His brother ran in and slammed the front door shut behind him. About seven racists were outside attempting to kick in the door, shouting 'fucking Paki, I'm



For the rest of the month, the extreme Right continued to meet in pubs around Oldham. On Saturdays, Asians would stay away from the town centre, as NF members gathered there to hand out racist leaflets and shout abuse. On Monday 21 May, at a majority-Asian school in Breeze Hill, groups of ex-pupils who were NF supporters (including one who had already been excluded for racist violence) came into the school to racially abuse and throw stones at Asian students as they left exams. The incursions were repeated each day till Thursday, when the police arrived. They arrested four Asians for retaliating.

The final fuse was lit on Saturday 26 May. Football hooligans, BNP supporters, Combat 18 thugs and other racists gathered in the Britannia pub, Limeside. According to the anti-fascist

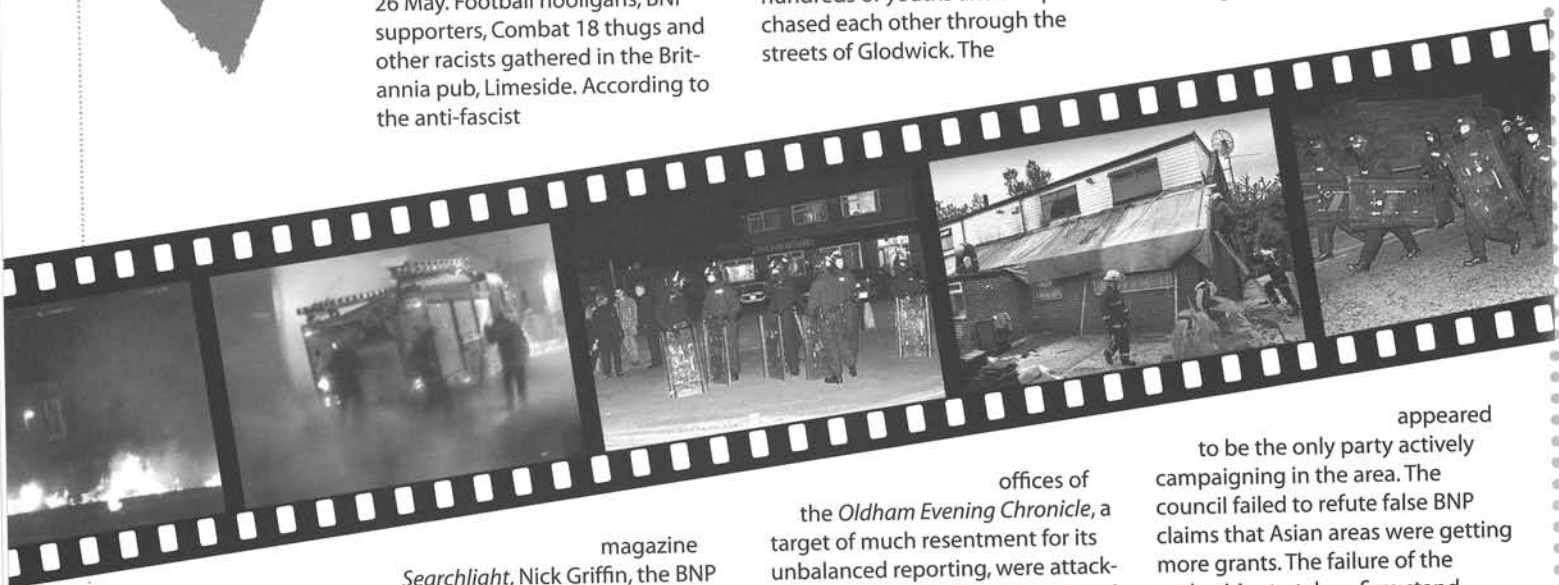
around the square on Waterloo Street, the focal point of the neighbourhood. The police, now in full riot gear, attempted to disperse the crowd but were repelled with stones. Instead of withdrawing and negotiating a calming of the situation, they sought to 'regain control of the square', mounting a military-style operation. As more violence was meted out against local residents, the anger against the police escalated. As Ashid Ali put it: 'We had had enough. We were getting beaten up in our own areas. Women were getting beaten up. And then the police were there with their dogs and batons to beat us up.'

Petrol bombs were thrown, as hundreds of youths and riot police chased each other through the streets of Glodwick. The

screaming, saying "get off my dad, he's done nothing wrong".

The general election

Two weeks after the riots, the BNP took 12,000 votes across Oldham in the general election. In the Oldham West and Royton constituency, 16 per cent voted for Nick Griffin, giving the BNP leader the largest ever vote for a fascist party in a British parliamentary election. As cab-driver Akil Miah told CARF, 'with that many people in this town voting for racism and fascism, every day in my job I could be picking up a passenger who looks at me in that way.' Many felt that the three main parties had not done enough to challenge the BNP, which



magazine *Searchlight*, Nick Griffin, the BNP leader and parliamentary candidate for Oldham West, was there too. Later in the day, members of this group made their way to Glodwick. Their plan, as before, was to launch random attacks in an Asian area, hoping to provoke a large number of youths to come out onto the streets. The racists would be long gone by the time the police arrived to face an angry Asian crowd.

Later on the Saturday night, a group of ten white men went on a spree of violence through Glodwick. Shop and house windows were smashed and bricks thrown. Farida Azan, who was seven months pregnant, was showered with glass as a group chanting racist abuse smashed her front window. Another Asian woman sat in her car clutching her baby while yobs jumped on the bonnet and glass smashed around her.

When the police came to the scene, they arrested an Asian youth.

As word of what had happened spread through Glodwick, local residents began to assemble

offices of the *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, a target of much resentment for its unbalanced reporting, were attacked. A number of pubs suspected of being launch pads for racist attacks were also targeted. Police took six hours to clear the streets and the nation woke to news of 'the worst race riots in fifteen years'.

Fighting continued through the rest of the Bank Holiday weekend, spreading to Westwood on Sunday night. According to local residents, the police were running into people's homes, kicking doors, saying 'come out you fucking Pakis, I'm going to smash your face in'. Eye-witnesses claimed that everyone on the streets was being shouted at, photographed and searched, in what the police termed a 'zero tolerance' operation. Even the older generation were now saying that the police frightened them more than the NF. Akil Miah, who was in Glodwick on the Sunday night, saw a man in his forties attacked by the police: 'In front of his home, the police attacked him with their dogs. He was down on the floor with a dog biting him. His little girl was

appeared to be the only party actively campaigning in the area. The council failed to refute false BNP claims that Asian areas were getting more grants. The failure of the authorities to take a firm stand against BNP propaganda continued after the election, when the decision was taken to end the allocation of grants to particular areas, based on need, and instead to spread the money across the whole borough, an implicit concession to BNP allegations of preferential treatment for Asians. The election result catapulted Griffin into the political mainstream, as he appeared on a host of television and radio current affairs programmes, presenting himself as a 'common-sense' opponent of multiculturalism.

Meanwhile the violence continued. Riaz Ahmad, Oldham's deputy mayor, had his home petrol bombed on 1 June. Then two weeks later, the Qureshi family shop in Hathershaw received the same treatment.

There is now the real threat of BNP councillors in Oldham unless anti-racists can organise to defeat the far Right before next May's council elections. ■

Thanks to Deeder Zaman for help with this article.



challenging racial violence

1 using the law

Anti-racists have long campaigned against the way the police and criminal justice system have failed to deal with racist attacks. In 1998 the Crime and Disorder Act introduced, for the first time, a series of racially aggravated offences – to take account of racial motivation.

In 1999 Macpherson recommended a new, wider definition of a racial incident – intended to change police practices. Evidence is now emerging from a number of trials to show that prosecutors and judges are reluctant to embrace racial motivation in their deliberations. And some police forces are not distinguishing between inter-racial crimes and racial incidents – and are therefore presenting controversial crime statistics which show whites as the most likely victims of racial violence.

At the NCRM conference in May two legal experts, Professor Lee Bridges and Mike Mansfield QC, discussed the implications of recent changes. Lee Bridges warned anti-racists how the law can be used against them under the present (law-and-order) government, while Mike Mansfield underlined the important educative function of legal provisions such as the racially aggravated offences.

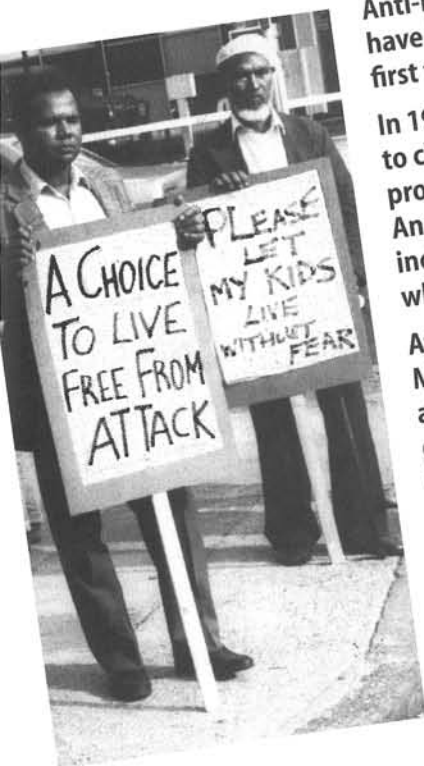
Lee Bridges: I want to talk about some of the problems associated with the new offences in the Crime and Disorder Act. I think it also raises a wider issue – that there are real risks and dangers in trying to use the law and the criminal justice system, not just to defend people accused of crime, but as a positive instrument for combating racism in society.

When the Home Office came to implement the Labour Party promise at the 1997 election, to make specific legal provision for racially motivated crime, they did it in a really odd way. They took a number of offences – assault, criminal damage, various public order offences – and created out of these ordinary offences, new racially aggravated ones. If such offences are committed with racial motivation, under the new law you will now be convicted of, for example, racially aggravated assault or racially aggravated criminal damage.

The purpose was to be able to lay down in statute much higher maximum sentences where there is racial motivation in committing these

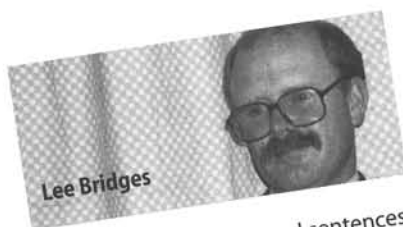
offences. This approach was problematic for several reasons. First, if you took more serious offences like murder, you couldn't increase the sentence beyond the present maximum of life imprisonment. The act did try to cover this by saying that if you committed any offence other than the ones specified, and it was shown to be racially motivated, that could be taken as an aggravating factor when it came to passing sentence.

I find it all odd, because as far as I know, nobody was arguing that if people got arrested, charged, prosecuted and convicted of offences like racially-motivated assault, criminal damage, etc against black people, that they were getting too lenient sentences. That wasn't the problem. The problem was they didn't get arrested; if they got arrested they didn't get charged; if they got charged, they very often had the charges dropped or the prosecutors did a deal to bring the charges down to a less serious charge for a guilty plea (as is quite common in the system) and you had trouble convincing magistrates and juries about the offences. Only on rare occasions



Lee Bridges is Chair of the School of Law at Warwick University.

Mike Mansfield is president of the National Civil Rights Movement and lawyer to the Lawrence family.



Lee Bridges

were there convictions and sentences. But no one was suggesting that if people went all the way through that system, the problem was that they didn't get heavy enough sentences.

And it is arguable that the law has now made that situation worse. If I am a prosecutor and I have someone in front of me who has committed an assault against a black person, if I want to prove racial motivation, I have to get evidence of that, ie additional evidence. And I might very well think, in the atmosphere of a trial before a jury, that to try to meet that extra burden by finding the evidence and proving racial motivation, is not worth it. I've got enough trouble proving the assault and getting the jury to go along with that.

It will be more difficult to convict people of these racially motivated offences because you know that the *Daily Mail* will be there saying this person is being oppressed, called a racist etc. And that is a line which will be spun to the jury by lawyers defending people accused of these new racially-motivated offences. Indeed, it could have the reverse effect, of making juries or magistrates more sympathetic to the defendants in such cases and less likely to convict them of the actual offences of criminal damage, assault, etc. So I think the new law has probably made it worse than it was before, when there would have been a prosecution for criminal damage, assault, etc without the additional factor of racial motivation.

The law is not a neutral instrument; those administering it are not neutral in the process. They are tainted with racism through and through. And they will turn things around against the black community. I will give two further examples. Black groups, in fighting racial harassment in housing, pioneered the idea of using civil injunctions against racists, because it was often very difficult to prove criminal offences against them. So the idea was you could take them to court, get a civil injunction against them to tell them to stop doing something and then, if they did it again, you could punish them under the civil injunction. This was a very creative way of tackling what was a very difficult problem. But the idea has been seized on and turned into anti-social behaviour orders – which

are used against people in general, including a lot of black people.

We have emphasised the need to care about the victims of racial attacks. But the New Labour government is going to use victims as the battering ram for destroying the ability of people to defend themselves in the criminal justice system. We are going to get victims' rights, we're going to get victims' statements in trials, we are going to get a whole raft of those things and they'll say that this is to help black victims of racial crime, as much as to help anybody else. But in reality the government is using this concern about victims to tear down quite fundamental rights in the system.

On racially motivated crimes, I personally would get rid of those sections of the Crime and Disorder Act which created specific racially aggravated offences. But I'd leave that section of the Act that said that for any criminal offence where there is evidence of racial motivation, this can be taken as an aggravating factor in sentencing.

But what the government resisted, interestingly, was *any duty* on the prosecution and the police to bring forward evidence of racial motivation. That is probably what we do need to have. We need to start with Macpherson. If there is an allegation of racial motivation, the police should act on that presumption. I don't go along with the view that people should be charged with racially motivated crime if there is no specific evidence of this, but where there is such evidence the police and prosecution should be under a legal duty to act on it and bring it forward to court, even if they think it is weak. It can be challenged in court by the defence, I have nothing against that, but the evidence should see the light of day.

Mike Mansfield: I am particularly concerned about the racially aggravated offences debate. I am afraid I am going to disagree with Lee. One has to go back to the debate about creating an offence to incite racial hatred. That debate was all to freedom of speech. (Interestingly, about freedom of speech. That debate was all to freedom of speech. (Interestingly, that same debate raised its head again in the general election campaign, when the CRE asked various politicians to sign a pledge which many refused to do.) There is a whole lobby of people who believe that people should be entitled to abuse others as part of what is called freedom of speech. Now we fought a battle against that argument to put it on the statute book. I am not saying that it has necessarily been implemented properly, that's a different

question, but it was to set the agenda, at that time, to say that this was not to be tolerated. Unfortunately, in the current debate no one raised the point that it has nothing to do with freedom of speech in the legitimate sense and it has everything to do with oppression, it has everything to do with those who would wish to see the elimination of parts of our society.

Now I think racially aggravated crime is important; we have to make certain distinctions. And what it did for the first time, and I agree that it is unusual, is to make motive, something that the prosecution had to prove. Historically they had never had to prove a motive. For the racially aggravated crime we have to start to make some important and clear distinctions. The first is that what Macpherson put in his report was not a definition of a racial crime. He just said that a racial incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist either by the victim or by any other person. And it's quite clear that he was intending this, as he puts in a further recommendation, to include crimes and non-crimes in policing terms. What he was actually addressing is that the police and other institutions have to be alive to what constitutes a racist incident, in order to then gather the material to enable an investigation to develop – whether it's an internal investigation of an institution vis-à-vis its staff or whether it's proving a racially aggravated crime. Now in many cases the prosecution will say 'we can't look into the heads of people, we can't say what their motive is'. But you can infer it from the circumstances. In such cases there should be a duty on the prosecution to gather the information and the evidence which suggests a racially motivated attack. That might be the words spoken through letter-boxes, it may be the behaviour, it may be the nature of two groups of people and so on. There are a multitude of factors which can be put before the court in relation to racial motivation. I do not wish to see this element taken off the legislative agenda because that is precisely what the detractors of the incitement to racial hatred clause wanted. I am anxious to preserve it, anxious to prosecute it. ■



Mike Mansfield

challenging racial violence

2 Scotland's eviction row

Glasgow is proving to be one of the most dangerous areas for dispersed asylum seekers. Family after family have fled the notorious Sighthill estate because of racist violence. So when Glasgow city council instigated eviction proceedings against the Brown family for racially harassing other tenants, one would have thought that there would have been a collective sigh of relief. Not so. As the BNP announces it is to target Sighthill, the eviction proceedings were challenged by many on Glasgow's Left, with Socialist Party MSP, Tommy Sheridan, vowing to protect the Brown family from eviction – by setting up barricades if necessary.

Socialists against the eviction

On 6 June, a letter in the *Glasgow Herald*, signed by, among others, Bill Speirs, leader of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, members of the Socialist Party and Glasgow Refugee Action Group, opposed the eviction proceedings and called for a united fight against poverty in Sighthill, the tenth poorest area in Britain. Since then Speirs and the Glasgow Refugee Action Group have distanced themselves from the letter, saying that they had thought they were signing just a declaration against poverty. But the controversy still rages. On the website of Positive Action in Housing, which supports the eviction, opponents continually trot out the same tired 'arguments': you can't ban attitudes; this is a criminal matter for the police; eviction will create a white martyr for the fascists; Glasgow city council is to blame for racial violence.

Why eviction?

The first eviction for racial harassment in Britain took place in east London in 1985 when Newham council, pressurised by the black community, evicted the McDonnell family from Canning Town, an area with social problems very similar to Sighthill's. The eviction did not create a 'white martyr' for the NF, largely because the procedure was part of a strategy against racial violence in the borough, and was

accompanied by wider community development work and measures which taught tenants that racist behaviour was not acceptable. Every house in the area was leafleted to explain the reason for the action. There was no predicted backlash, and today Newham, while not without problems, is a much safer place for black people than it was in the 1980s.

Eviction without education

Unfortunately Glasgow city council has not done the same preparatory work to accompany the proceedings against the Brown family. In fact one could argue that eviction is a knee-jerk reaction to a problem of its own making. There was no development work prior to refugees being sent to Sighthill and the council did not use the financial support it received from NASS for the benefit of the whole community.

But the council's short-sightedness in no way justifies the Left's assault on the eviction proceedings or explains its failure to engage in anti-racist work in Sighthill. As one community activist told CARF, the Browns were infamous on the estate for their anti-social behaviour, long before the latest savagery against asylum seekers. The council should have taken action long ago. The family has made itself so unpopular with many tenants that the worry about a white backlash is quite misplaced.

Ignorance of racism

The other arguments against eviction display, at best, a complete ignorance about the reality of racial violence (opposing which, of course, has nothing to do with censoring attitudes). The policy of evicting perpetrators of racial violence (which has already been applied in Edinburgh in 1992 and Dundee in 1994) came about because black communities showed how local authorities had formerly perpetuated racial harassment through housing policies that led to 'whites only' zones of housing and penalised the victims through their policy of removing them from estates.

Nor is it justifiable to argue we should prioritise the fight against poverty over the fight against racism. These were the arguments anti-racists were having with a largely white socialist movement, which excluded black concerns, in the 1970s. Are we really to believe that we should wait for socialism before doing battle against racism? Are we really so one-dimensional that we can't be against poverty and against racism, for more resources for Sighthill but against people who by their racist actions deny access to those resources for asylum-seekers, at one and the same time? ■

More information on racism against asylum seekers in Glasgow from Positive Action in Housing: www.paih.org and Glasgow Asylum Rights Campaign, c/o Scottish Human Rights Centre, 146 Holland Street, Glasgow G2 4NG.

'If Tommy Sheridan and all those who signed the letter will come and live in Sighthill and defend the asylum seekers from racists, then I am quite happy to stand shoulder to shoulder with them against evictions. If they won't, then I support Glasgow council in evicting the racists.'

John O,
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

Glasgow protest against racism and in support of asylum seekers, November 2000



Gerry McCann/Reportdigital.co.uk

people's tribunal on

In July, the first People's Tribunal into deaths in custody took place in Conway Hall, London. Organised by the United Families and Friends Campaign (UFFC), a coalition of family campaigns for those who have died at the hands of the state, in police, prison and psychiatric custody, it gave family members, black and white, the chance, for once, to tell their stories in public.

The panel, which included Paul Macey (*The Voice*), the Reverend Arlington Trotman (Churches Commission for Racial Justice), Liz Macmin (mental health campaigner), Harry Fletcher (National Association of Probation Officers) and Ian Macdonald QC, heard evidence over two days from families who had lost loved ones.

Listening to the testimony of bereaved families, what emerged was the vitally important role played by Inquest and UFFC. Many of the families would have been at a loss without the support and advice offered by Inquest, whose tireless campaigning to provide families with the means to find information that is so often not forthcoming and the moral support and solidarity offered by families who have gone through similar experiences.

The families' stories were all startlingly similar in their descriptions of the humiliations suffered at the hands of police or prison officers and then at inquests, followed by a decision from the PCA or CPS of not enough evidence to prosecute or bring disciplinary action. However, each story revealed a unique human tragedy. Below we reproduce excerpts from the testimonies of bereaved families who gave evidence to the People's Tribunal.



United Families and Friends Campaign | c/o Inquest, address below | web: www.peoplestribunal.com
Tel: 07770 432439

Inquest | Ground Floor, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2PJ
Tel: 020 8802 7430 | web: www.inquest.org.uk

■ Janet Alder sister of Christopher Alder who died while in the custody of Hull police in 1998

'Within 20 minutes of Christopher leaving hospital he was dead on the police station floor. That video [police CCTV] it's the most horrific 11 minutes anyone could ever see. It starts off with the buzzer, with me sat there really apprehensive, and thinking to myself they are going to bring him in a minute. Sure enough they do. He's got his head down, his arms handcuffed behind his back, there's a copper on each arm dragging him over the floor. Trousers and boxer shorts down. You could not leave an animal like that. He was literally gasping for his life while they were laughing and joking. And I will be outspoken because they have tried to cover it up. It goes on and on and on. When I hear time and time again, the similarities that other families have got to go through, it sickens me. They are not getting away with it. You've got to shout and you've got to scream.'



Migrant Media

■ Myrna Simpson mother of Joy Gardner who died during an attempted deportation in 1993

'Joy didn't deserve to die the way she did. Joy was just an ordinary human being. She was made out to be the worst woman in the world. Some of the police officers had never seen so strong a person in their lives. How could she be so strong that she could fight off five police officers and one immigration officer?'

deaths in custody

■ Joanne Bennett

**sister of Rocky Bennett who died in
Norvic psychiatric unit in Norwich in 1998**

'David Bennett, or Rocky as he was known to his family and friends, developed a mental health problem in 1980 when he was only just 21, and for the next 18 years had a terrible, distressing, painful experience of the psychiatric services. He was in and out of hospital numerous times in various secure units. In 1995, he was admitted to a secure unit in Norwich. He was in that unit for three years. Naturally I was concerned about the quality of treatment my brother received over the years. Despite numerous discussions, numerous telephone calls and numerous meetings with doctors and nurses, overall treatment was to merely give him medication, more medication, increasing doses of medication and different medication. That was all he had for the three years he was there.'

■ Stephanie Lightfoot Bennett

**sister of Leon Patterson who died
in Denton police station in 1992**

'My brother Leon, he was my twin in fact, was in Manchester for the day. He, supposedly, tried to take a till from BHS at 5.30 on a packed Saturday evening. He was arrested and taken into custody. When he went into custody he weighed 14.5 stones, when he left the station he weighed 10.5 stones. He lost that in six days. He was initially on the run from prison, he was on home leave and didn't go back. Stockport [police] knew this and didn't even notify the prison authorities as to my brother's whereabouts. While my brother was in custody he was ill, he was very ill, no-one believed him. Doctors came to see him, in all of their reports it says "feigning illness in a bid to escape." He got arrested on the Saturday and by the Wednesday my brother was in serious trouble. He was incoherent, he was naked. And as far as they were concerned he was feigning illness, trying to pretend there was something wrong with him so they could take him to hospital, in a bid to escape. Anyway, I get the phone call on the 27th from my father, at 6.30 in the morning. He said "I've got something to tell you, Leon's dead." So I phoned the police station, and said I'm ringing up regarding Leon Patterson, he died in police custody. Then it was 20 questions over the phone, they asked who I was, I was his twin and I'd like to know what happened, "Oh, your brother died of a drug overdose." Disbelief, there was complete disbelief. He had been in custody for six days so where did he get the drugs from?'

■ Irene Stanley

**wife of Harry Stanley shot dead by police
in Hackney in 1999**

'There are a lot of things I can't say for legal reasons, so I'll just go through the actual facts of what happened that day. It was Wednesday 22nd November 1999, when my husband Harry met his death at the hands of armed police officers from the Metropolitan police.



Paul Watson

Harry, who was 46 and a painter and decorator from Lanarkshire, was shot twice, once through the hand and once through the head as he was walking home. He had just recovered from a colon cancer operation, from which he had a scar from the ribcage to the groin. Harry stopped at a nearby pub where he had a lemonade.

The police say that someone rang from the pub and said a man had what looked like a sawn-off shotgun in a plastic bag. Harry wasn't carrying a gun, nothing resembling a gun. He was carrying a coffee table leg which his brother had mended for him. The police say that when he turned into the road, they challenged him and shot him believing they were under threat. I believe there is evidence to show that Harry didn't have a chance to turn around when they shot him dead. It took them 18 hours to tell me that my husband was dead and they did a post mortem without my consent. The police came into my home, and I felt that they took over my home.

There was no time to grieve. I felt that we were guilty that we had done something wrong and they had killed my husband. We felt that we had done something wrong as a family and we hadn't done a thing wrong. That's why its given me the courage to fight for justice for the Harry Stanley campaign, Inquest and the UFFC, because I think the government and the panel has got to do something, its got to change they can't keep killing people and getting away with it. It can't keep happening.'

**United Families and Friends
Procession in 1999, Stephanie
Lightfoot Bennett (middle),
Janet Alder (holding plaque)**

■ Adrienne Jemmott

**sister of Paul Jemmott who died in Stoke Mandeville
hospital after being transferred from Aylesbury Young
Offenders' Institute in 1999**

'Paul was 19 and serving a five years in Aylesbury Young Offenders' Institute for robbery. He was no angel. He had been in and out of institutions since he was 15. He was ten months into his 5 year sentence, he had worked his way up to the enhanced wing, E-wing, which meant that he had a TV in his cell and he had longer association. So we thought he was doing well, he was putting his head down and getting on with his bird. Paul got some of his friends to smuggle him a pair of trainers on a visit. The officers saw this and stopped the visit. Paul was taken

people's tribunal on deaths in custody

off E-wing and put onto A-wing, the wing for vulnerable copers. Paul wasn't a vulnerable coper, he had never been on suicide watch in his life.

Anyway they whacked him on this wing and he lasted three weeks. During this three weeks he became very confrontational with staff, he decided not to go to education, which he had been doing for the last ten months, refused to eat, refused to come out of his cell. But nobody realised that these were signs of a boy that couldn't cope on this wing. He decided to hang himself on Wednesday 28th April at 2.20 in the morning. Within 10-15 minutes, as far as we can ascertain, Paul was found. An officer looked in his cell because he thought it was

strange that the light was on, and saw Paul hanging. The officer that saw Paul couldn't actually enter his cell, so while my brother was hanging, he rang for assistance. They decided to cut Paul down. Though this is the vulnerable wing in the prison, the cut down kit was at the main gate, which is a good five minutes away from A-wing. They cut Paul down, and surprisingly enough, they managed to resuscitate him. He was taken to Stoke Mandeville. We saw Paul there, in the intensive care unit, wired up, breathing on a life support machine. That lasted for five days, he died May 3 1999. In Aylesbury from April 1999, there were five deaths in 17 months and they were all under 21.' ■

police kill man armed with novelty lighter



On 16 July, Brixton police shot and killed 28-year-old Derek Bennett for carrying a lighter shaped like a gun. Police allege that they had been called by a member of the public who said that an armed man was in the area. On arriving at the scene, police found that he had already left and he was 'tracked' to a nearby street where he was allegedly

challenged by officers who then fired six shots. However, local witnesses gave different accounts of the incident, alleging 'The police shot the dread twice in the chest, then they shouted to him to get down. Then they shot him a third time and a further two times after that. I saw him fall.' Another local resident said 'The policeman with a gun was red in the face and appeared to be panicking, mumbling "What have we done?" I saw two wounds which had gone right through his torso. They were trying to revive him but he didn't look like he was breathing.' Assistant Chief Constable John Scott of Northumbria police is investigating the death for the PCA; an officer has been removed from operational duties. ■

review fighting injustice

INJUSTICE is a harrowing, but painstaking reconstruction of the events surrounding, and following, the deaths in custody of a number of black people over the past ten years. While exposing the events that led to the deaths of Brian Douglas, Shiji Lapite and Ibrahima Sey (among others) this uncompromising film never falls into the trap of portraying them as 'victims'. Instead, it commemorates their lives by focusing on the campaigns fought by family members and their supporters – on their pain and anger and courageous struggles to wrest answers from unaccountable institutions.

With the families' questions ignored, locked behind walls of silence, this film is unique in providing a widely accessible vehicle to articulate their demands for justice. By naming names the film challenges the criminal justice system to be accountable for its actions.

It is a challenge it refuses to meet. On 6 July, a drama, as poignant as anything portrayed in *Injustice*, was played out in the Metro Cinema in Soho as those who had participated in creating the film, heard that the preview screening had to be abandoned. Just minutes before the showing the Police Federation acting on behalf of individual police officers, threatened legal

action if the film, were shown. Mothers, sisters, aunts, fathers, grand-parents of those who had died in custody had gathered from all over the UK to hear *their* story, for once, told. Now, on top of the frustration at the lack of information about a death, they learnt that they were not even allowed to have their questions publicly aired. Frustration and fury was palpable. And yet, within minutes, family members took control of the disaster. One by one they took to the stage and told the audience of their loss, connected their individual grief to a larger injustice and called for the end of a system that called no one to account. 'We are always told the where and when, but never the who and why', called out one mother. The families refused to be silenced.

And Ken Fero, the producer, who spent seven years making *Injustice*, refuses to kowtow to censorship. The film has already been shown at the Human Rights Film Festival and at Conway Hall. Screenings will be made across the country. If you would like to arrange a showing in your area, contact Migrant Media. ■

Migrant Media | 90 De Beauvoir Road, London N1 4EN
Tel: 020 7254 9701 | Fax: 020 7241 2387
Email: migrantmedia@pop3.poptel.org.uk
Web: www.injusticefilm.co.uk



Demonstrations following the deaths of Shiji Lapite and Ibrahima Sey

College students rally to support Kosovan refugees

On 7 July, more than 200 students and supporters from the College of North East London marched from Manor House to Wood Green in



north London to demand that asylum seekers be welcomed to the UK. Asylum seekers from Kosova, Turkey, Colombia, Somalia, Iran and Iraq, many of whom are students at the college, came together with local people to demand an end to deportations, detention and dispersal. Three days earlier, a public meeting had been held in Tottenham at which Alketa Hoti, a refugee from Kosova who studies English at the College of North East London and recently narrowly escaped deportation, described her experiences and the reasons why she cannot return. ■

For more information, contact Haringey Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, Email: haringey@defend-asylum.org

REVIEW

The school as 'safe haven'

Every school, every nursery – indeed every organisation involved, in any way, in the struggle for asylum rights – should have a copy of *In Safe Hands*, a training and resource pack, comprising a 153-page book and 35-minute video. The book, including background information on refugee children and asylum laws in the UK, provides teaching staff with a clear framework within which they can include refugee children and their families at every stage of the education process, from admissions and induction, to curriculum and language support, to specific measures designed to deal with issues of trauma and loss through art and play therapy. The pack also includes an excellent set of training exercises, to be used with teaching staff alongside the video which documents how two pioneering London schools set about welcoming and including refugee children.

The pack's focus on 'best practice' in London is also its greatest selling-point. The government's policy of dispersal undermines the rights of the child, but this pack teaches us that we can fight back. The video, with

telling accounts from refugee children of the hardships they have faced, makes for compelling viewing and could be shown at public meetings as well as in education training. Many schools are providing a safe haven for refugee children. The politicians who undermine their work should look, listen – and be humbled. ■

In Safe Hands: A resource and training pack to support work with young refugee children, published by Save the Children in association with the Refugee Council. Available from Plymbridge Distributors Ltd. Tel 01752 202301. £20.00 (Add £2.50 for p&p)



campaigns & reports

Iraqi-Kurds hold day of action

The plight of the Iraqi-Kurds rarely makes the newspapers, except as a footnote to the Jeffrey Archer saga, or when dishevelled travellers make it to western European beaches. On 3 July, a day of action was held to



try to break this silence. Protesters gathered outside the Home Office to demand an end to the policy of rejecting asylum claims from northern Iraq. And a meeting was held at the House of Commons, later in the day, to discuss the reasons why the region should not be considered a safe or secure place to return refugees. The General Federation of Iraqi Refugees in Britain believes that more than 5,000 women have been killed since 1991 and, as well as the fighting between various Kurdish factions, there is the threat of further intervention in northern Iraq by either the Iraqi central government or the Turkish government. An estimated 15 per cent of the region's population has been forced to flee and made a perilous, sometimes fatal, journey towards western Europe to claim asylum. The British government's response has been to adopt a policy of blanket refusal to claims for asylum and to threaten deportations. ■

For more information, contact: General Federation of Iraqi Refugees in Britain, PO Box 1575, Ilford IG1 3BZ. Email: sahand@shamal.freereserve.co.uk. Tel: 07810-128481

diary of race and resistance

JUNE-JULY 2001

RACISM

24 MAY Adejumo family appeal to police after latest in campaign of racist attacks results in £1,000 damage to their car in Bromley, south London

25 MAY 21-year-old Asian man suffers burns to his face and arm, after being sprayed with inflammable liquid and set alight by two white men in Birmingham

27 MAY Asian youths attack house in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire after reports of fascists in the area

28 MAY Police arrest 18 white boys and three Asians after second night of rioting in Oldham

1 JUN Asian taxi driver pulled from cab by gang of six white youths who beat and rob him in Bracebridge Heath, Lincoln

5 JUN Judge places 13-year-old Daniel Franey under an anti-social behaviour order, 'naming and shaming' him as responsible for campaign of racist abuse and attacks on black community in Kensington, Liverpool ■ 17-year-old Brazilian Pedro Portella suffers fractured skull in unprovoked racist attack by three skinheads in St Austell, Cornwall

6 JUN 34-year-old Mohammed Kavani suffers broken jaw after a beating by skinheads at same spot that Walter Chamberlain was beaten in Oldham

8 JUN Police arrest black election agent Carol Virgo after remonstrating against abuse from BNP party members at election count in Newport

10 JUN 30 white youths dressed in KKK gear erect and burn a cross on Bemerton estate, Caledonian Road, London

14 JUN Three white men arrested after Asian man stabbed and his son hurt in racist attack in Blackburn

15 JUN 19-year-old Christopher Lees jailed for 14 weeks for racist attack on Asian man in Mirfield

17 JUN Two Turkish pizza shop workers racially abused and attacked by two white men in Carlisle ■ 61-year-old Southend man arrested in connection with the distribution of race hate material ■ Asian and white gangs clash on an estate in Bermondsey, south London; police arrest two people

20 JUN Two Kurdish refugees abandon their home in Stoke, after arson attack; the latest in a series of racist attacks on their house

22 JUN 23-Year old Moroccan Mohammed Ousellam beaten unconscious by gang of 40 in Leith, Edinburgh; head swells to twice its size after the attack

24 JUN Two Asian men punched and kicked in racist attack by three white men in Sutton Coldfield

25 JUN Gang of 20 white youths pelt Asians with stones and bricks on Southend seafront

29 JUN Two Asians hurt as gangs of white and Asian youth clash in Leverhulme park, Bolton

30 JUN Asian family of seven forced to flee after arson attack guts their home in Accrington

3 JUL Police find Nazi paraphernalia after raiding homes of three prison officers from Holloway and Pentonville prisons

4 JUL Shepherd's Bush Housing Association ordered to pay £3,500 compensation to a black family after suffering three years of racial harassment from tenants

10 JUL 16-year-old black boy suffers fractured shoulder after racist attack by 12-strong gang in south Bermondsey ■ Fascists daub graffiti on a synagogue in Dundee

11 JUL 20-year-old Wayne King jailed for four years after pleading guilty to manslaughter of Glyne Agard; 21-year-old Thomas Myers, who admitted ABH and affray, was sentenced to two years; judge says the murder was not racially motivated

13 JUL 16-year-old David Young banned for ten years from Cheltenham under Anti-Social Behaviour Order after campaign of racist abuse in area

16 JUL 19-year-old John Hudson found guilty of GBH with intent and racially aggravated assault after attacking two Iraqi refugees in Newcastle in December 2000

23 JUL Gang of 30 skinheads racially attacked and abused Asian taxi drivers in Bolton

IMMIGRATION

11 JUN David Blunkett, new home Secretary, announces proposals for 'green card' system in UK, to fill skills shortages in the UK ■ Ten dispersed asylum seekers go on hunger strike in Liverpool, protesting at living conditions and delays in asylum decisions

18 JUN Three men, who smuggled a 17-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker to Britain, superglued his mouth together to stop him talking to police

19 JUN Seven asylum seekers rowed across the Channel from France and were arrested by Kent police

25 JUL Government announces asylum seekers who fail to move to dispersal areas will have benefits withdrawn in 48 hours

29 JUN Two Afghani asylum seekers hit by train in France and seriously injured as they attempted to smuggle themselves to the UK

11 JUL Report by Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture finds that Home Office has reneged on commitments not to lock up

tortured asylum seekers

17 JUL Home secretary announces conversion of Dover Young Offenders' Institute into an immigration detention centre to house 316 rejected asylum seekers

18 JUL British immigration officers in Czech Republic stop Roma families from boarding UK bound planes ■ Group 4 moves Campsfield detainees to other prisons in anticipation of protest planned at the detention centre

28 JUL Home secretary asks his staff to investigate alternatives to voucher system for asylum seekers

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

9 JUN Private security guard from Reliance charged with racially aggravated assault; two others charged with assault in connection with assault on Garfield Dorkins in cells at Bristol magistrates' court in February

20 JUN Home Secretary announces reforms to double jeopardy rule

2 JUL DPP, David Calvert Smith warns that judges and magistrates are failing to hand down harsher sentences for racially motivated crime as they are allowed to under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act

6 JUL Inquest jury records verdict of suicide in suspicious death of Harold (Errol) McGowan in 1999

10 JUL David Blunkett, home secretary, threatens to use water cannon on rioters in Bradford

16 JUL Police to use 'New Deal' employment package to encourage more black recruits into force

18 JUL David Blunkett agrees to introduce the Macpherson Inquiry recommendation to record ethnic origin of those stopped by police ■ Court of Appeal rules that Esther Thomas can sue the Sun under stalking legislation, after it published an article which led to her harassment by Sun readers

20 JUL Two Brixton police officers injured after protest at police shooting of 29-year-old Derek Bennett on 16 July; 27 are arrested

26 JUL Inquiry into CPS reveals that blacks and Asians are more likely to end up in court because of a culture of racism in the CPS

30 JUL Family of Zahid Mubarek go to Court of Appeal to challenge CRE decision not to hold a public inquiry into racism in prisons

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