Black History

Black perspective on the presence of Black people in Britain


https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/uk.secondwave/bufp-blf.pdf
This short history will attempt to deal with the Presence of Black in Britain since Britain's initial contact with the Slave Trade in the 16th Century. It is not being suggested that this is the earliest Black presence in Britain because it has been suggested by some historians that there was originally a Black Tribe in Britain (the Black Celts) and that they had powerful Kings who ruled area's of Scotland traces of them remaining in Scotland as the 10th Century AD. There is conclusive evidence that Black soldiers served with the Roman Army in Britain 100 BC to 300 AD, and some evidence that the last Roman Governor Septimius Severus 190-211 AD was in fact a Black African. This history will deal with the modern period when Black People would enter Britain under new conditions those of slavery.

The Black peoples contrary to popular opinion have a very long, varied and influential history in Britain. It is impossible to state with any certainty the beginning of Black presence in Britain but the first recorded arrival of a group of Black's was in 1557 brought to England by John Lok from the Guinea Coast. Another early pioneer in the transportation of Slaves was John Hawkins who quickly grasped the financial possibilities of the Slavery traffic, and laid the foundation of English Slavery. Hawkins left England in 1662 acquired Slaves on the Guinea Coast which he traded with the Spanish Hispaniola returning to England with great profits in 1663 English adventurers and traders had taken part in small scale individual slave trading, but the above mentioned formed the first two organized and openly supervised ventures. It should be remembered that the Portuguese and Spanish had been earlier in the trade when they were the most powerful European powers and monopolized the trade at this time.

The Black people in Britain are linked with the trade and its repercussions. The trade transformed the face of three continents Africa-Amercia-Europe, and the other manifold relics of the trade manifests themselves to this day.

This paper is predominantly concerned with the number of Blacks resident in England from the late sixteenth century onward, their varying impact and the attitudes developed towards them. These attitudes are mainly reflected in the legislation passed which affected them, their representation in literature and the use made of them by reactionary politicans. Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

There was much speculation over the causes of the Blackness of the African and George Best in his discourses of 1578 went to great lengths to disprove a prevalent theory that the Blackness of the African was a result of the Equatorial sun. Best states in his discourses "I myself have seen an Ethiopian as black as cole, brought into England, who taking a fair English woman to wife to periods of welcome and to periods of rebuffal. The first example of this rebuffal was in 1596 when Elizabeth I wrote a letter to the Lord Mayor of London and other Cities stating that there were too many Blacks in England and that they should be deported. In 1601 she issued a proclamation ordering all Blacks out of the Kingdom and licensed Casper John Senden to deport them. Senden had previously transported Englishmen back from Spain for the Queen. She also called upon the population to aid Senden in his task.

Elizabeth in 1601 can be seen to have reservations about the trade and its effects. She felt England was over populated and had too many poor, 370 years ago a sentiment that is often heard today. It should be remembered that these were very harsh times to be poor in England, the Peasants were being driven off the Land by growing enclosures and had to take shelter in the Poor Houses provided by Elizabeth earlier in her reign. The English poor were seen as an unbearable burden and often faced starvation. The Blacks were single out as scapegoats even though there were larger foreign minorities eg the Hugenots and the Jews.

This Short History will be continued in subsequent issues of The Black Voice. 20p.
BLACKS in BRITAIN 1500-1980s

This is the second installment of a short history of the black people's in England since the initial contact in the 16th century at the beginning of the slave trade. You're reading this to inform you about the history of the black people's in England.

**Part Two**

None of these minorities were as identifiable and possessed such a universally low social status as the blacks. These attributes are an important factor in the treatment of blacks in their long stay in England and Elizabeth's attempt to expel the slaves proved largely unsuccessful because of the strong resistance of the slaveowners.

There were many black residents in England at the time but they possessed very little influence. Elizabeth was the first person to use the black settlers as a scapegoat, and this set a precedent which became a recurring aspect of the blacks living in England. It also shows that by 1600 there were quite a number of blacks resident in England; enough to cause Elizabeth I to concern. Throughout the 17th century the number of Blacks increased, and they found employment as servants for which purpose they were in great demand by the nobility and leisure classes. (Having blacks as servants was a novelty). Later in the 18th century the black servants were suppressed by Chinese servants. In fact during the 17th century the blacks acquired Poor Law dependence and quickly established themselves as a socially accepted class.

The glowing activities whose intensity is reflected in the number of blacks resident in England really got into full swing after the restoration of 1662. This period saw the victory of the new rising bourgeois over the feudal aristocracy in Britain. The bourgeois who came to prominence were more adventurous and international in their outlook. This new attitude is reflected in a quote from Louis XIV in 1670: "There is nothing which contributes more to the development of the colonies and the cultivation of their soil than the burly nostrum that of the negroes." This new view recognizes the necessary contribution of the African slave, and can be contrasted with the view of Elizabeth I, who was not clear on the role of the slaves and therefore had reservations about the trade. The reinstated aristocracy gave full support to the new bourgeois bourgeoisie by creating the Royal Company in 1672. The company was given a monopoly in the transportation of slaves which it lost soon after, being unable to supply the great volume of slaves needed by the newly developing West Indian colonies owned by Britain and France as well as the established Spanish. One aspect of the treatment of blacks resident in England at the time was that they were treated as pets, and they often wore the same metal collar and exotic mythological name as the other pampered pets and playthings of the aristocracy. The French, if fortunate was treated like one of the pampered pets, if unfortunate, they were treated like any other piece of private property to be bought and disposed at will. A colossal amount of propaganda was done to excuse the treatment of African slaves in the most effective of the propaganda was simple: "He is good for business", with all its variations. During this period a small number of freed slaves found occupation in a few other than servitude; primarily as seamen on the ships or as serving boys in public houses or in advertisements which appeared in 1659 "A boy about 14, a foot 2 inches, in a grey serge suit his hair cut close to his head, was lost on Tuesday last August 9th at night, in St Nicholas Lane, London. If any one will give me notice of him to Mr Thomas Barker at the sign of the Monkey in the Lane, they shall be rewarded for his pains."

It should be born in mind that the inhabitants of any country which was penetrated by the English adventurers, were taken back to England as curios. There are many records of these curios. One report mentions a dark and a Negro being brought back as pets for a little girl in 1662. Black people were concentrated mainly in Bristol and London.

**More Dilemma**

An everlasting effect of the African presence was the confusion caused in the judicial and moralising circles of England. In the moralising circles the trade gave the lie to much of the high sounding tenets on which the society leaned. Even more confusion was caused in the judicial circles, more so in the 16th century a judge declared "the air of England too pure for a slave to breathe". A further statement was made by Chief Justice Holt in Queen Anne's reign (1700). The Justice affirmed "as soon as a negro comes to England he becomes free". An enlightening quote which exemplifies this more balanced approach follows from Thomas Browne's enquires into vulgar and common errors he states: "Lastly whereas men affirm this colour was a curse, I cannot make out the proper meaning of that name. It neither seeming so to them, nor reasonably unto us, neither take so much content therein, that they esteem deformity by other colours, describing the devil and other terrible objects white. And if we seriously consider the definitions of beauty, and exactly perpend what wise men determine thereof we shall not apprehend a curse or any baseness in the skin thereof. Further on in his discovery he concluded a section on beauty with the following: "The Moors being products of nature share a common beauty with all mankind."

Hume, because of his education, could be expected to be an acquired historian of evidence, historical and otherwise which disproved his above assertions and so can be seen as an early racist intellectual, interpreting the world in terms of his own reactionary outlook.
In the 18th century the Slavers, Plantation owners and their propagandist carried the day only losing ground in the 1780s when the more far sighted began to see the dangers and limitations of the old plantation system. The African in England during this time was subject to attacks from many quarters.

They continued to resist through running away from their masters at every opportunity, the successful ones endeavouring to talk their fellow slave into quitting their masters and joining with the English in their battle for survival. From their earliest arrival the slaves had begun to run away, to secure their freedom they used any method at their disposal. Undergoing marriage or baptism, as well as resisting any attempts of their former masters to recapture them.

The argument over whether slaves who entered England were free or not continued. The following legislation reflected the strength of the slave owning classes in the 18th century and their penetration of the superstructure. In 1729 the York-Talbot opposition upheld the legality of slavery in England. Talbot and Hardwicke also judged that slaves who entered England were not free and could be compelled to return to the colonies. In 1749 Hardwicke decided that a runaway slave could be recovered, this gave the full support of the law to slave owners. The trade at this time was at its peak and there was little opposition to it. Throughout the century the price and demand for slaves rose, as the competition for slaves developed so did their brutalisation. The 18th century can be seen as the great capitalist transition period, during that century they laid the basis for the second phase of their development. During this century the English peasant and workers were without effective organisation. The populations of towns were swelling with the influx of peasants who were forced off the land. The workers had not yet reached the stage of development where the capitalist was forced to make concessions to them. The capitalist in this time reorganised their strategy, pushing legality instead of morality thus laying the foundations of the modern judiciary, with the manoeuvres they are able to perform under it.

This was also the time of the French Revolution and Napoleon's wars. All these factors went towards weakening the English capitalists and draining their confidence. This was the time when 25,000 or so black people became a dealt problem and it was decided to send them back to Africa because they were from the black community, a large proportion were from the mouth of the English workers. The return to Africa scheme was suggested by people, not by the so-called friends of the slave whose only real concern was that slavery was practised in their 'Fair England'. This expedition was made in 1787 and failed disastrously. It attracted very few Black people to it less than 1,000 and of those attracted only 450 were transported along with 60 white prostitutes.

All through the attempt the Africans were robbed and abused by incompetent organizers and swindlers, and when they finally arrived in Sierra Leone they were quickly abandoned by the organizers and left to fend for themselves. This was the attempt of the English to solve the problem of the cheap workers in the 1780s. One not much different from solutions been suggested 200 years later in the 1980s.

Garrville Sharp - A Leading Abolitionist

One serious aspect for present day black involvement is the way that English culture became infused with the stereotype of the black man, a stereotype which dogs us to this day. The ideas promoted was basically that the African had no civilization and it was the duty of the European to civilize them. That without the guidance of the white man the African would revert to the state of a beast from which only the white man was saving him. Other justifications were that only the African could work under the conditions of the West Indian colonies and the Southern plantations those conditions being similar to those in Africa. It was also claimed that the African was being saved from certain death in African Wars and that the Slaves on the plantation enjoyed a better life then the people in Africa an argument still used today by the racist South African regime.

These ideas are most developed in the work of Edward Long in the 18th century and Thomas Carlyle in the 19th century. Long in his history of Jamaica 1744 states "it is astonishing that although they have been acquainted, with Europeans and their manufactures for so many hundred years, they have in all this series of time, manifested so little taste for arts, or a genius either inventive or imitative" compared with this confident quote of the 19th century Carlyles quote written in the mid 19th century is much more bitter. That the Negroes are all very happy and doing well. A fact very comfortable indeed. West Indian Negroes who have witnessed are far from happy. West Indian colonies not unlike wholly sinking into ruish. At home the negro with English white are rather badly off. Several millions of them suffering in the verge of continual famine, and in single towns many millions of them sore put to it, at this time not to live well, or as they should in any way spiritual or temporal but to live at all. These again are uncomfortable facts and they are extremely expensive and important ones but thank heavens for our interesting black population: equaling in number the heads of the counties of Yorkshire, and in worth (in quality of intellect, faculty, docility, energy and available human value and value) perhaps one of the streets of Seven Dials are all doing remarkable.

This outbreak was in 1849 soon after the Irish famine which Carlyle cynically blamed on the blacks who quit the plantations to work for themselves after the abolition of Slavery Carlyle felt that blacks should be made to work that being their only use. Another figure of fun. His activities methods and use of language bear close resemblance to the work of Enoch Powell in more modern times.
AFRICAN SLAVERY - Birth of Racism

One of the most burning issues confronting Black people today is the issue of Racism and the serious form of institutionalised Racism. The racism that exists today is a reflection of the historical development and interaction between black and white people over centuries of struggle. The one event that dwarfs all others and is very much underated and trivialised is that of the theft of tens of millions of Africans from their homes in Africa and their enslavement by the peoples of Europe.

The period of slavery was the most important era in European history, because Africans provided the foundation on which it was possible for industrial societies to develop to the level they now boast of. In doing so they committed the three greatest crimes against black people:
1. The taking of black people’s land (Africa)
2. The taking of black people’s minds (Propaganda)
3. The destruction of 300 million black men, women and children during the active trade in Africans and slavery.

To truly understand this issue we must have a general impression of Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean area at that time in history. Europe in the late 14th Century was essentially a feudal society with the majority of people working as small peasant farmers, making just enough to live on. The King had overall control of the country with a vast aristocracy interwoven with the Clergy. The means of exchange was essentially barter. There were no terms of trade but they involved long journeys across land to the Middle East, India, China and Africa. Africa at the time had vast amounts of different societies with some that had already gone through the Iron Age and had developed a system of documenting information in writing. Their societies were developed in terms of local government organizations and a very structured society. The West Indies at the time were inhabited by Red Indian who sailed down from the central American region. The two main tribes were the Arauaks and the Caribs. These Indians were farmers and fisherman who lived a leisurely, simple life. These Indians were very skilled in pottery and making many items from wood, rock and animal bones. The created ornaments of different forms.

There was said to be an awakening of fresh curiosity in the world spreading over Europe at the end of the 14th Century, which led towards developments in art, science and many other fields. At this time Europeans knew about the existence of Africa, China, India and most of Asia through the trade-routes and routes. But due to the primitive maps they had compiled at the time, they had not known about the existence of the American Continent or the Caribbean area as this involved a long journey across water which they were incapable of navigating.

For trade reason Europeans had always desired a sea route to India and Africa. Christopher Columbus, born in Italy, 1451 was a capable map maker and sea goer. He provided the expensive that was needed. According to his maps he thought he could reach India by sailing westwards through a completely new route which would mean large amounts of money would be saved. No one in Italy believe him or in other parts of Europe except King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain. An expedition of this sort proved to be an expensive venture and the king and queen were not given support because of their belief in the Christian charity but their belief in Columbus that he would find gold to plunder and all benefits would go to Spain.

By Portugal. But the mood of Europe was that of plunder like French I of France who replied:

The sun shines for me as for others. I should very much like to see the clause in Adam's will that excludes me from a share of the world.

The king of Denmark replied:

He wanted to claim his place in the sun (referring to the Caribbean).

After initial contacts had been made with the Indians who had shown the Spaniards how to survive and how to farm under tropical conditions; the Spaniards then began to encourage mass migration to the "New World" in pioneering spirit. When the Europeans arrived they expected an easy life of plenty but what they found was hot tropical conditions, and fertile land that needed plenty of hard physical labour.

The Europeans at the time thought that the Indians could be enslaved as the conquered people and labour for the conquerers. This was to mark the most horrific period of world history.
IT WAS at midnight on July 31st 1834 that almost three-quarters of a million men, women and children in the British West Indies ceased to be slaves, through a Act in the House of the British Parliament. Charles Small this week gives World readers a fascinating insight into the history of slavery.

BEFORE 1640 and 1713, in the West Indies, sugarcane was cultivated on a monomuscum. In 1673, the West Indian planters began to search for a form of labour. White labour was a very expensive thing. The money that a white man survived on for ten years procured him a black man for life. By 1673, the West Indian planters were using indentured servants. By 1680, a shipload of negroes was arriving from Africa.

The first West Indies was known as the middle passage. It was simply the journey of a slave ship from Africa to the West Indies. The slaves were chained together in the holds of the ships. Each one was allowed only the space equal to that of a coffin. The journey lasted between six to thirteen weeks, depending on the weather and the behaviour of the slaves on top of the beach. The purchasers, at the ships owners' command, would dash towards the slaves and get them in the ones that they had intended to buy. Sometimes, fighting would occur between the purchasers if two or more grabbed a particular slave. In such instances, the slave owner would have to settle the dispute. During a stormy season in Grenada, the majority of the women were exiled to the hills. The purchasers, at the ships owners' command, would dash towards the slaves and get them in the ones that they had intended to buy. Sometimes, fighting would occur between the purchasers if two or more grabbed a particular slave. In such instances, the slave owner would have to settle the dispute.

The slaves were divided into gangs, according to their sex, age, and race. The first gang did the laborious work. The second and third gangs did all the lighter work. The slaves that were caught were looked over by their masters and longed for the day when they were free.
The Governor will give your household slaves, and all the negroes will go high up on the river, but don't think they will remain slaves. But at the height of Kofi's power, his authority was questioned by his fellow comrades, per-

were as follows:
1. All slaves were prohibited from carrying sticks at any time.
2. All slaves marriages were to be carried out only with the permission of their slave masters.

The Governor's actions and the reaction of the slaves led to severe consequences. The slaves were punished severely, either by being whipped or being put in chains. Some were even executed. The reaction of the slaves was a series of revolts and uprisings. The slaves' determination and resilience made the plantation owners realize the necessity of changing their policies.

The story of Kofi and his companions serves as a testament to the strength and determination of the enslaved people. Their struggle for freedom and their fight against oppression continue to inspire and educate us to this day.
We can discuss why England abolished the traffic in slaves in 1807, but the institution itself in 1834, although slavery continued in other forms up to the 1880s and new forms have developed which are still with us today. A Parliamentary commission in the 1930s reported that it was possible to buy a slave in Ghana for 500. It should also be remembered that there were slaves taken for the English, Scottish and Irish poor, and that the early 1800s were the time of the Englishman could sell or buy a wife. A famous market turned to be booming when the price of slaves went up from a half to a and a half guineas. There was also a report from Scotland that between 1750-46, 600 boys, and girls were abducted and taken to the United States as slaves. The slave emigration bill of 1834 should be seen along with the other concessions forced to be made at the time. There was also the Emancipation Proclamation 1862, The Great Re-Parliament Act 1932 which extended the franchise, The creation of the police by Peel and various Factory Acts which were passed at the time. These were forced from the by the military and organization of the workers the feared making the revolution.

Blacks were not the only minority there were other minorities, there were some Indians and a thousand or more destitute Chinese sailors called lascars in London in the early 1800s, and Jews, Catholics and other religious minorities could be mentioned. English ships would sail to the East with a small cargo and crew, they would pick up a large cargo in the process as well as cheap labor to sail the cargo back to England then dump the unwanted sailors. They shipped the same African sailors with sailors from the poorer European countries. There were between a result more than a thousand Chinese sailors in the poor houses of London. It should also be remembered that at this time there would be a few Chinese, Chinese, and Indian students in the colleges.

Generally there were differing attitudes to black people in the 19th century the poor were seen as subhuman. A society was set up in 1801, American Negroes and in 1814 a Parliamentary committee was held. There were many negroes in London and condition deserved the attention of the House of Commons. Black people during this period were supposedly inferior and oppressed as oppressed as black people under the heel of the most of the emigrants. It must be remembered that this was the period when the Aboriginal population was being dragged from the land and herded into the factories of the Industrial Revolution.

Blacks people still found themselves employed as salters, servants and entertainers, even finding themselves in the countryside as farm workers, and beggars and part of the teeming life of London.

The 19th century also saw an important period in the struggle for racial prejudice and the work of Anthony Trollope and Thomas Carlyle addressing the social and economic issues laid by the slave owners of the 18th century. Further development of these racist ideas was necessary to facilitate the colonization of Africa towards the end of the 19th century. Trollope and Carlyle were actives from the mid 19th century onwards and got support from reactionary intellectuals like Thomas Carlyle who saw the black as a sin of the devil with whom in his book hereditary genius sought to prove that all individuals races and nations occupied a position naturally suited to their abilities.

Both in Britain and the United States the abolition movement was the centrepiece when their scientists fought to prove that there were superior and inferior races and that the white race was superior one. Attempts were made to treat black people as scapegoats. Under the domination of the landowners black people had been treated as servants with roughly the same social standing as other servants and treated and married among the poor. Only with the victory of the Industrialists over the landowners over the increase in the working class between 1830-50 was overt racism and feeling among the masses by Carlyle and others who began to make a distinction between the interests of white and black as part of the change in power relations and ties was leading to the American Civil War. The development of changing methods and the close contact between workers in the towns and the cities. It was easier for the idea of the black man and the plantation owners to the 19th century witnessed a.

CONTO. ON BACK PA
We find ourselves from slavery not Wilberforce

The dust has now settled on the extended commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the death of William Wilberforce. Tributes to Wilberforce flew from all pillars of British establishment, from parliament to the church and we were asked to revere Wilberforce as the man who freed Black people from Slavery. The freeing of Black people from slavery is Wilberforce’s only achievement of note and it is this that we now call into question.

We will have to contend the opposite which is that Black people were not freed from slavery by Wilberforce but by their own determination to fight and make sacrifices for freedom. We also contend that the decisive role played by Black people in the abolition of slavery has been generally suppressed and in its place put the myth that Black people gained their freedom from slavery courtesy of the work of pious slave abolitionists. I shall have more to say on the reasons why this myth was created later.

Like all other changes the destruction of slavery (here we mean in the English colonies) was the result of struggles on various fronts, in this instance, militarily, economically, politically and morally. On the military front slavery was challenged by the endless armed uprisings of the slaves. Pride of place here must go to the 1800s and 1810s in Haiti. The Haitian revolution under the leadership of Touissant L’Ouverture, Dessalines and Christophe. Here the people of Haiti used the French army and any other European power that involved themselves in the Haitian war of Independence between 1791-1803. They not only defeated the white slave owners living in Haiti but a French expedition of 60,000 men and a British expedition of a similar number. This victory led to the birth of Haiti in 1803 a full 16 years before the traffic in slaves was abolished in the British colonies in 1808.

Haiti is the most spectacular example of the continuous wars waged by slaves against slavery. In just looking at the period from 1800 to 1834, we can note 6 major uprisings in Jamaica and other major rebellions took place in Barbados 1816, Guyana 1823, Trinidad 1819,26 and 29, Antigua 1821, and St Kitts in 1834. Only a fool would conclude from all this armed opposition that slavery could be continued for any further length of time. In this context of opposition the victories gained against the British by the Maroons in their anti slavery wars in Jamaica and the resultant creation of independent maroon areas can not be ignored. Berbice runaway slaves also banded together to win and defend a good deal of that territory against the slave-owners. Slaves were also influenced by events in other parts of the world, like the American war of independence in the late 18th century and the creation of Sierra Leone and Liberia in the early 19th century.

On the political front the battle over slavery was fought not between abolitionist (humanists) and slave owners but between the new industrial bourgeoisie and the plantocracy. The new industrial bourgeoisie on the upper hand was behind the passing of the Great Reform Act in 1832, which gave them power and slavery was finally abolished in 1834. The industrialist had no use for slave labour machine production having no need for a slave so they had no vested interest in slavery and they were certainly not prepared to pay the price of endless uprisings. This same issue was raised again by the American civil war later on in the 19th century.

We now look at the work of the abolitionists (philanthropists) who formed their committee in 1787. They certainly did not have the emancipation of slaves on their agenda.

In fact when the French Jacobins proclaimed the abolition of slavery in 1794 they thought then hasty and that the Jacobins had not given enough thought to the question. In fact the abolitionists were dragged to their position by events beyond their control.

Blacks in Britain

Continued from page 7.

much deeper penetration of racist ideas into the society. The abolition of slavery in 1833 was blamed for the problems facing Britain as the century progressed even the Irish famine was blamed on black people it was believed there would be no famine if black people had continued to work on the plantations.

A popular idea at the time was that black working in the colonies was enough to keep the bread in the mouth of 6 Englishmen.

The American Civil War and the propaganda done by Southerners also contributed this growth in racism. There was some opposition to racism by the English working class who gave support to the emancipated slaves sending money to the slaves to buy their freedom. A quote from Anthony Trollope shows what light these racist portray black people. “Physically he is capable of the same bodily work, and that possibly with less bodily pain than men of any other race but he is idle unambitious as to work in position, sensual and content with little. Intellectually he is apparently capable of but little sustained effort, but singularly enough he is here ambitious.”

In concluding our look at the 19th century, we can see that black people were well established in various towns in England for instance Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff and areas of London. They found employment chiefly as sailors, warehousemen and traders of particular interest were those black people who made their living as beggars the most famous of who was an ex-sailor who had made a detailed model of a ship which appeared to be a tooting on a wave as he walked along. In this century too many black people made their mark British music, among them was Mary Seacole who contributed as much as Florence Nightingale to nursing and who was particularly hard during the Crimean War. Tom Molineux in boxing, William Cuffey who worked for the Chartism movement and Samuel Coleridge in Music. These are just a few of the many individual black people who had managed to progress in spite of the racism in society. But by the end of the century the foundation of the more crude aspects of British racism had been laid.

The Haitian war of Independence had a profound effect on them although they did not support it as they thought the war would harden the plantation owners against reform. They in fact all but ceased to campaign between 1800 and 1804 because the sugar plantations were booming and they felt that the plantation owners would not listen to calls for reform, only with a glut of sugar after 1804 did they start to campaign again.

We now end this very sketchy outline by commenting on why the myth of abolition by philanthropists has been created. Its major purpose is to take the fighting tradition out of Black history and replace it with the charitable works of white do-gooders. So that Black people do not win for themselves their freedom from slavery but are granted it by benediction of whites. This is important because the end of slavery instead of being a victory for Black slaves and a defeat for those who maintain slavery becomes a victory for whites and the acceptance of charity by Blacks. An important issue here is that slavery did not just cease after the 1834 Act but that slaves had to fight to break away from the plantations as in Jamaica between 1834-40. The slave trade also continued in the US until the 1860s and in Latin America until the last quarter of the 19th century.
DADABHAI NAOROJI:
BRITAIN'S FIRST BLACK MP

Rozina Visram and Audrey Dewjee

CENTRAL FINSBURY
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, 1895.

D. NAOROJI.

Address to his Fellow Electors in Central Finsbury, July, 1895.

Courtesy of Finsbury Local History Collection, Islington Libraries

Nineteen black candidates stood in the 1983 General Election and yet none was elected. Was this because they were only adopted as candidates for unwinnable seats? Certainly none were selected for a 'safe' or highly marginal seat. Was it because the British public is not yet ready to accept representation by black members of parliament, or because the electors believe that a black member would find it impossible to be a good constituency MP and represent the interests of Britain's black community? Questions for the 1980s one might think, and yet almost 100 years ago the Hon. Dadabhai Naoroji triumphed over similar problems to become Britain's first black MP, representing not only Finsbury Central, but the entire population of India as well. It is ironic that a white electorate sent the first ever Asian to Parliament, where he sat for three years (1892-1895). He was by no means the only Asian to reach Parliament before 1940, two others served in the House of Commons, while a third sat in the Lords.

Dadabhai Naoroji, a Parsee, was born in Bombay on 4th September 1825, the son of Manekbai and Naoroji. Palanji Dordi. His father, a priest, died when he was four years old and he was brought up by his mother. Manekbai was an intelligent woman and with the help of charitable grants she ensured a good education for her only child, who excelled at school, particularly in mathematics. Naoroji was one of the first graduates of Elphinstone College, Bombay, and was to become the first Indian to be appointed Professor (of Mathematics) at Elphinstone. He was one of the leading intellectuals of his time, and instrumental in founding and helping many literary and scientific societies, libraries and museums. He also started, in 1853, the famous Bombay Presidency Association. He was a strong advocate of female education and social reform. While in England, he was a regular contributor to both British and Indian papers such as the Manchester Guardian, the Times, the Daily News and the Gujarati language Samachar Darpan. He founded the Zoroastrian Association, becoming its first President from 1861 to 1907, the East.

‘If the 254 millions of Her Majesty’s subjects in India are ever to be represented by one of their own people in the Imperial Parliament, it would hardly be possible to find among them all one more worthy of the position or more fitted than the Hon. Dadabhai Naoroji.' Pall Mall Gazette

‘Though bearing so strongly Indian a name, Mr. Naoroji is to all intents and purposes an Englishman as well as an English subject. His long residence in this country and his thorough mastery of our tongue, added to his English appearance, take away any objection which might occur to his not being an Englishman.' William Digby
India Association, and was three times elected President of the Indian National Congress. Naoroji was a prolific writer and two of his most famous and scholarly publications are 'Poverty and Un-British Rule in India' (1901) and the 'Rights of Labour' (1906).

Naoroji first came to England in 1855 to help set up the Indian mercantile firm of Cama & Co, with branches in Liverpool and London. He later resigned from the firm on a point of principle (the firm dealt in coffins and opium), and set up his own cotton business. However, to Naoroji commercial activity was incidental to his life's main aim which was to plead the cause of India before the British public. For instance, his business ventures served as a base from which young Indians could sit the entrance examinations for the Indian Civil Service, which were then held only in London and so effectively barred Indians from entering the Service. Although India represented the brightest jewel in the British crown, with millions of pounds being extracted annually, ignorance of Indian affairs predominated both at the level of the general public and in Parliament where even the Indian budget was 'huddled over in an evening to empty benches.' Naoroji set out to educate public opinion about the wrongs of British rule — through distributing literature, writing articles and addressing meetings. But in the end he realised that if India was to receive justice, the Indian voice had to be represented in Parliament since 'Not one single voice is there . . . to tell at least what the native view is on any question.' And so began his campaign to enter the British House of Commons: on the way he had to confront many hurdles, including British racism, but in the end he succeeded, through hard work, determination and with the support of radicals like John Burns, Charles Bradlaugh and H.M. Hyndman.

1886 saw Naoroji canvassing for a constituency, but his approaches to the Liberal Party met with an ambivalent response. On one hand many were desirous 'to see a native of India in Parliament' but he was informed by Bright that 'constituencies wanted either local men or men of distinction.' Hodgson Pratt suggested a university seat or a Scottish seat as 'the Scotch were far more liberal than the Liberals of England,' while Digby recommended 'my changing the headdress to an English hat. Better to appear altogether like an Englishman.'

A few days before polling day, Naoroji was adopted for Holborn. The prospect of victory was hopeless — not only was it a strong Conservative seat, but it was anti-Irish Home Rule, and for a Gladstonian Home Ruler like Naoroji to contest it meant sure defeat. Nonetheless, Naoroji threw all he had into the fight. In his election address he put Irish autonomy to the forefront and declared his support for liberal measures of social reform, including changes in the Land Laws affecting town and country dwellers. He addressed meetings and made clear to his audience that he stood before them representing 250 million of their fellow subjects in India and he appealed to them to allow a voice to be heard in the British Parliament on their behalf. He went on to add that he did not forget that his first duty would be to the constituency and if returned he would represent its interests to the fullest extent. He answered searching questions and created a favourable impression. An eye-witness described his political debut as: 'If Mr. Naoroji had changed his name to Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones no one would know him to be a Parsee. But Naoroji is a puzzler for the British elector . . . (he) has the appearance and the manner of a cultivated English gentleman, his face a shade or two off colour, perhaps, but certainly not darker than many an Australian . . . Mr. Naoroji is shrewd and penetrating, with a large leaven of benevolence . . . is an admirable speaker, with a strong voice, capable of many inflections . . . and his mastery of our language is marvellous in its fitness and its fluency.' And so his light skin and English appearance made him acceptable! But the result was a foregone conclusion despite the gallant fight — he lost to his Tory opponent by 3,651 to 1,950 votes.

His second attempt to enter Parliament began when he was elected official candidate at Finsbury Central in March 1888, by a majority of five votes over his nearest runner-up. However difficulties soon arose: the ballot was declared to be not final and Richard Eve was chosen as the candidate by the Local Association. Naoroji stood firm on principle. 'They have thus thrown the gauntlet to me and I have picked it up. I have informed them that I will go to the poll and contest the seat.' The National Liberal Federation seemed to be behind Naoroji — F. Schnadhorst, its organising officer, had written asking Naoroji not to be 'influenced by the attack on you. You have been fairly selected and it is our duty to support you.' He had further opined that 'although a Parsee is much handicapped in an English Constituency, Naoroji is not only the better man and politician of the two but is more likely to win. Naoroji will be more liked the better he is known — Eve just the opposite.'

The dispute, however, dragged on and the Local Party split. Later even Schnadhorst seemed to have a change of heart, believing the only way to heal the split was by arbitration. But Naoroji regarded this as a breach of faith. What finally jacked Naoroji into the limelight was not the backing of the Liberal headquarters, but a racist attack from no less a person than Lord Salisbury, the Tory Prime Minister! In referring to the Conservative majority at Holborn, Lord Salisbury triumphantly declared: ' . . . but then Colonel Duncan was opposed by a black man, and however great the progress of mankind has been, and however far we have advanced in overcoming prejudices, I doubt if we have yet got to the point of view where a British constituency would elect a black man.' Indian opinion was outraged. Queen Victoria expressed anger at her Prime Minister's remarks. Up
Victoria), while the appreciative citizens of Bombay presented to the electors of Finsbury a wooden casket containing an album of photographs of Indian life. But antagonism prevailed in certain sections of the press.

Narooji was derided as a 'fire-worshipping Asiatic'; an alien to India and belonging to ‘a race of mere traders, none of whom ever drew a sword or pulled a trigger either for or against us . . .'; * and *St. Stephen’s Review* declared 'Central Finsbury should be ashamed of itself at having publicly confessed that there was not in the whole of the Division an Englishman, a Scotchman, a Welshman, or an Irishman as worthy of their vote as this fire-worshipper from Bombay!'

Despite his age of 67, Narooji proved a model MP and a tireless constituency worker. He interested himself in the work of Friendly and Temperance Societies, Trades Unions, Working Mens Clubs, and municipal reforms. At Westminster he was never absent from a division or a meeting of any Committee of which he was a member. He supported the party in the House, and worked actively for the cause of Irish Home Rule. He campaigned against the notorious opium trade and the degrading conditions of Chinese labour in South Africa. He also interested himself in women's causes, supporting the Women's Franchise League.

But his main concern, inside Parliament as outside, was India. His maiden speech, made on 9 August 1892, during the debate on the Address, was on the relationship between Britain and India. At every opportunity he tried to educate his fellow MPs about India's grievances, the financial drain on India owing to British trade and taxation practices; and he worked for Indian reforms. With the aid of William Wedderburn and W.S. Caine he organised the Indian Parliamentary Committee devoted to the attention of Indian affairs. He got the co-operation of Herbert Paul to sponsor the famous resolution of the principle of simultaneous examination for the Indian Civil Service in England and India. The resolution was opposed by the Government, but the motion was carried by a majority after a memorable debate in the House.

In 1895, just before Parliament was dissolved, he was appointed to the Royal Commission on Indian expenditure. Though he was re-nominated the Liberal candidate for Central Finsbury in the 1895 General Election, the chances of success for the Liberal were slim. Liberal policies of death duties, land tax, progressive labour legislation, temperance, disestablishment of the Church and reform of the House of Lords all raised the wrath of various vested interests. The Liberals lost and Narooji although backed by the Labour Party and the Irish National League fell as well, but another Indian, M.M. Bhownageree, standing as a Tory for Bethnal Green was elected. Released from Parliamentary duties Narooji could devote all his energy to the Royal Commission, though eventually he was to be disappointed by its results.

Narooji did not give up; at the age of 79 he accepted the nomination for North Lambeth. But the candidature was not to prove plain sailing; events not dissimilar to Finsbury were repeated. There was a split in the Local Association: a rival candidate, W. Wightman, a local man, was put forward. He informed Narooji patronisingly that 'it is against all previous electioneering experience that any candidate, situated as you are, should win the seat, and I should be very sorry indeed if you had a bad defeat, which would have grave results on the movement for Indian democracy both here and in India.' As at Finsbury, Narooji was convinced of his 'just position' and soldiered on, appealing to the electors. Months of haggling followed; feelings grew strong and even Wedderburn tried to persuade Narooji to retire from the field. But

*In this connection it is interesting to note that Narooji's grandson, Kershaw, served in the Middlesex Regiment in the 1914-18 war. Although a student at Cambridge University, he was obliged to join as a lance-corporal because at that time the British army would not accept Indians as officers.*
Naoroji was not to be moved: he considered it 'a duty to humanity, to hundreds of millions of our suffering fellow-subjects in India and the suffering poor in this country.' Even after Wightman died, the hostile members of the Liberal and Radical Association refused to accept Naoroji and put up another Liberal candidate to oppose him. A smear campaign about corruption was bandied about. When the election came it was a three-cornered fight between a Tory, the official Liberal and Naoroji. The electors put their local needs before the needs of India, and Naoroji lost.

Naoroji left England finally in October 1906. Even in retirement he continued to work for Indian justice. He died on 30 June 1917.

Dadabhai Naoroji was a tireless worker for Indian reforms. When he talked about the 'injustices' of British rule, this did not lead him to question the presence of Britain in India and make the logical jump to demand British withdrawal. Naoroji in this respect was not a 'radical' nationalist. He did not envisage complete independence. On the contrary, his remedy was 'self-government under British paramountcy.' His overriding concern was in getting justice and reforms in the administration of India. Despite examples to the contrary, he had a rather naive faith in British fairness and sense of honour. He admired much about Britain and believed that India had benefited from British education and institutions. He was sure if the British were made aware of the 'crushing burden' of taxation, 'the drain' of finances and the resulting poverty of India, of the 'un-British rule', then 'justice' would prevail and the relationship between India and Britain endure.

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Illustrations on pp 10 - 11 courtesy of Mary Evans Picture Library

For further reference:
We will now look at Black people in Britain during the 20th century. At the beginning of the century there was estimated to be between 20 and 30,000 Black people in Britain. They were to be found mainly in the large seaports of England and Wales with the largest concentration being in London, Cardiff, Hull and Liverpool. Cardiff was used as an example of their experience until after the 2nd world war.

There is some evidence of a Black presence in Cardiff throughout the 19th century and a fresh trickle began to arrive from the 1860s onwards. They were settled mainly in the poor dock areas of Cardiff and were mostly employed as sailors. The Cardiff population was made up of a mixture of many Afro-asian peoples and it was claimed by some right-wing writers of the time that certain areas of Cardiff was like an exotic African town.

The 1914-18 war brought many Afro-West Indian workers to serve in the English merchant navy, with some sailors even being forced offshore ships and into the English navy in order to free English sailors for war duty. Many Black people felt that it was not their war and that they should not be fighting, but they were told that they were British citizens and that it was their duty to serve her in her hour of need. Also of note in this context was the British West India regiment which had a force of 15,000 men and which fought valiantly for Britain in the war. Many Black people also came as technicians and to work in Labour battalions to aid the war effort. Of particular note was their contribution to the munitions and chemical factories. Thus we see that Black people were warmly welcomed during the First World War.

Between the First and Second World Wars Black people faced great difficulties due chiefly to the racism. In British industries and a resultant growth in racism. Immediately after the war British servicemen were demobbed from the services being surplus to requirement after the war was won and were added to the ranks of the unemployed. Employment was hard to find, and the unemployment figures reached the 20% mark. Right wing elements used the black presence as a scapegoat for the country's difficulties and this lead to anti-black riots in Cardiff and in most of the other ports with a large concentration of Black people.

The riots started in Cardiff in June 1919 and went on for several days resulting in 4 black people dead, many more injured. In Cardiff the riots were led by men wearing Army uniforms who accused the black men of taking English jobs and women. In reality black people faced even greater unemployment than the white figures for 1919. A report by the British Labour party in 1920 showed that 1500 out of 7000 black people employed. This unemployment amongst black people then rose steadily between the two wars. At this time the age old solution for any black problem was to bring in new immigrants who could be expected to work for less. The response to this was to pass new Commonwealth Act of 1944 and the Race Relations Act of 1976.

During this inter war period Black people remained tied to the ports to the ports and with racism making even greater inroads into transport systems and employers the unions position remained precarious. The shipowners paid black workers less than white workers a practice which continues to this day.

This is the fifth instalment of a short history of the Black People's in England. It deals with the period of initial contact in the 1650s and the impact of the slave trade. It then traces the fluctuation in fortune of the Black British Community up to the present. To ensure receiving the entire history we advise our readers to subscribe to the Black Voice.

Part Five

The 20th Century Experience

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Part Six

I will now briefly look at the 2nd World War and some of the attitudes which were displayed towards black people in that period. Again a good number of black people answered the call of the 'motherland' left the colonies and came to Britain to aid her in her hour of need. One interesting aspect of the war period was the clash between the British and American attitudes to race. Many instances are documented of American servicemen remonstrating with British landlords who served Black Service men. Some landlords refused to reproduce American segregation practices in Britain but others capitulated. Against this back ground of its need for labour the state allowed racism to flourish by doing nothing about it. Racism was left up to the individual some landlords served blacks while others did not. Black servicemen, both American and colonial British did not accept this discrimination and while fighting the German enemy fought against their own Black and American Servicemen in any section of the British public which would uphold a colour bar.

The segregation issue came to a head when Wallace Constantine the cricketeer later Lord Constantine was refused accommodation in the Norfolk Hotel Russell Square on the grounds that white American guests would take exception to his presence. Lavery filled suit for damages in the High Court and won but this decision certainly did not halt the growing tide of racism sweeping Britain.

As in the First World War Black servicemen served the British army but particularly in the R.A.F., although very few are portrayed in the many Battle of Britain films either as flier or mechanics. Black servicemen also made a great contribution to the Royal and Merchant Navy's inspite of the colour bar that confronted them particularly in the R.A.F. The war though was an important factor in increasing the number of Black people in Britain which was estimated to be 60,000 by 1945.

We now move on to deal with the post 2nd world war situation which can best be characterized as the modern period of Black history in Britain. This modern period begins with the docking of the SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury in June 1948 with 492 Jamaican settlers and one female stowaway all from the West Indies. They were mostly Ex- Servicemen who believed that there were opportunities for progress far greater than could be found in the West Indies. They came in response to the demand for labour needed for reconstruction after the destruction of war. This demand for labour was common to all the industrial economies in Europe. In this same year 1948, Britain also passed a Nationality Act which gave her Colonial subjects British citizenship and lastly ended the entry needed cheap colonial labour. They answered a call made by British politicians such as Enoch Powell. This can be contrasted to Powell's later stance of repatriation.

Another act of importance around this period was the McJaren Walter Act which was passed in the U.S. in 1952. This act limited the numbers of West Indians allowed in the U.S. to 100 annually. Previously the U.S. had acted as a Mecca for labour from the West Indies which since slavery was abolished had continued to act as a source of cheap labour for the U.S. and Latin America. With the door to the U.S. closed West Indian Labour looked to Britain which coincidentally was willing and able to accept them. In fact it was the West Indian labour who rebelled to the extent of adverts in the West Indies.

Most West Indian immigrants and blacks were concerned that they were entering Britain for 4 to 5 years at the most, at the end of which they would be able to return to their homelands with enough savings to make a successful life for themselves and their families. They were soon to be disillusioned by the realities which they encountered in Britain. For the first five years 1948-53, Black immigration fluctuated between 500 and 700 annually. The numbers then increased steadily until by 1954 there were 10,000 annually. In this period the peak of 29,000 annually was reached in 1956. By 1962 there was estimated to be 1,200,000 Black people in Britain (Africans, West Indians and Asians).

Black people in this period 1948-62 came up against the racism of the colour bar. In Britain they were banned from entering clubs, Bars, Dance Halls, Pubs and accommodation because of their colour. Even more important was the colour bar in Housing and Jobs. Where Black would be workers or tenants were greeted with signs which said no Blacks, no Niggers, no Siibs. They would knock on the door of a home with a sign saying Rooms To Let only to have the door slammed in their face when the Landlord saw the colour of their face. Racism was up to the individual a landlord could let you a room or refuse you or a public house serve you or bar you from his pub depending on their individual whims. This obviously caused a feeling of uncertainty in the Black community.

We now look at the Black response to this racism. As in the past Black people responded by creating organizations to defend their rights. This was also the period when the Col. African and the West Indies were moving from a colonial to a period of neo-colonial semi-dependence. The dominant signal was given by the Independence of India which was granted in 1947. This was followed in 1956 by the Independence of Ghana which was the first African colony to gain Independence.

In 1945, Africans, Asians and Indians had the chance to hold a Subject peoples conference. This growth in political maturity continued during the 1960's and was given impetus by the work of Claudia Jones a Trinidadian who from her entry into Britain in 1957 after her deportation from America because of her Socialist beliefs had campaigned for greater unity and for a progressive paper to serve the Black community. This was realized in 1958 when she along with Amy Garvey and others brought out the first issue of The West Indian Gazette. In this period West Indian and Asians formed many small organizations to defend themselves or react spontaneously when confronted by racism to defend their lives. West Indians formed a West Indian Association in Merseyside in 1951 while in 1953 Indian workers in Coventry formed an Indian Workers Association.

The Fifthies in Britain saw a resurgence of the Right Wing with their message of Racial supremacy and Anti-Racial hatred. Organizations such as Colin Jordans White Defence League took to the streets. There were calls for a migration control made in the commons and clashes developed when black peoples were attacked in the streets. In 1954 Racial warfare was waged in Camden Town for two days. In 1958 Notting Hill (London) and Nottingham erupted when Teddy boys egged on by the Fascist Right attacked black people who with no one to protect them were forced to defend themselves "Nigger huting" and "Nigger Baiting" spread and Black meetings in places like Cafe were attacked by gangs of whites. This period of violence ended with the murder of Kelso Cochrane in 1959 a crime for which no culprit has been brought to justice to this day.

Black servicemen many of whom lost thier lives.

This period of attacks on black people was rounded off by the State with the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Act. This Act set out to restrict the entry of black people to Britain in order to placate the growing racism which was developing in Britain. As in the past than trying to defend the rights of black people and to guarantee the Black community the right to exist in the British state capitulated and so took the first step towards institutionalizing racial and immigration laws of Britain.

To be continued in the next issue of the Black Voice.
"Old Soldiers Never Die..."

OVER 16,000 West Indian men and women fought on the side of the British during World War II. Of these, 7,000 lost their lives to keep Britain free from its would-be Nazi oppressors. After Britain gained victory in 1945, the British Government under King George VI did little to compensate its black war veterans, in most cases they were pushed aside and forgotten.

In Jamaica today over 13,000 war veterans discarded by the British Government have returned home to oblivion and poverty.

In 1945, the British Government failing to meet its obligations of resettling the veterans, shed the responsibility onto the shoulders of the Commonwealth countries.

The then poor Jamaican Government by willingly taking up the responsibility "in an act of idiocy" relegated the Jamaican veteran to a life of poverty.

Those veterans who were tradesmen received £25 to buy trade tools, some of them were sent to "school," others were put to the land to work like slaves on a tough and unwilling soil.

Jamaican veterans alive today are little better off than they were 40 years ago, but organisations like the "Jamaican Veterans' Organisation" is campaigning to improve their living conditions and to give a chance to war veterans, many of whom are in their 70's and 80's to spend the twilight of their years in some form of comfort no matter how humble."

The Jamaican Veteran's Organisation based in Kingston is 30 years old. Its patron is Senator Rodrick Francis. The organisation exists solely on voluntary contributions and receives no aid from the Jamaican or any other government.

Where does the Jamaican war veteran stand in the scheme of things? There is an organization known in Jamaica as the Jamaican Legion. It was formed immediately after the last war no doubt a "copycat" of the British Legion. The legion has as its patron the island's Governor-General, Sir Florizel Glasspole. The subvention they receive from Government over the years from all political parties is to say the least miserly. When the money the beneficiaries are given is calculated it works out to an average of $6.00 (six dollars) per week, payable their 80s and 90s and understandably are dying at a rapid rate. In Jamaica we see the common phrase in action: "Old soldiers never die, they only fade away." It should be added "Fade away how? They die poor!"

But much is also made known that in Jamaica today where an ordinary funeral cost approximately two thousand dollars (Jamaican) all efforts are taken to do via the Jamaican Legion to offer the poverty stricken relatives of a dead war veteran the "princely" sum of fifty dollars.

The various bodies that comprised the armed forces in Jamaica during both World Wars are-

- Royal Army Service Corps.
- The Jamaica Battalion formerly Jamaica Infantry Volunteers.
- The Caribbean Regiment.
- Royal Corps of Signals
- Jamaica Military Artillery.
- Jamaica Engineering Corps.
- Jamaica Home Guard Embodied Reserve.
- Royal Engineers.
- Royal Army Ordnance Corps.
- Royal Army Medical Corps.
- Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.
- British West India Regiment.
- The West India Regiment.
- The Royal Air Force.
- The women who served in two bodies.

The Jamaica Legion is a "is only a drop in the bucket." It is supposed to be looking after the interest of war veterans but can offer assistance to only 1,200 men and 150 widows leaving thousands more needing assistance. The task of assisting war veterans and widows is bigger than the Jamaica Legion. Assistance for the thousands of Jamaican war veterans must come from the highest levels.

The West Indians who came to Britain before the Second World War were mainly those with some education or money who believed they could find better opportunities for themselves and their families.

Of them was Londoner Pauline Claxton who remembers the day she discovered a colour prejudice in one week's experience. She was refused service in a London Channel on Wednesday, 16th May at a pub. She was given water to drink in another pub. She said she did not expect such treatment in a London pub.

The Black Britons - REFUSED DRINK

Much later, when Pauline's white husband was refused a drink in a pub when she was with him Pauline says: "It woke me up to the fact that there was colour prejudice and I think the anger has stayed with me throughout the years.

Before 1939, the 20,000 or so blacks in Britain were most likely to be seen as popular with the British public and the sailors who had jumped ship. But the Second World War changed that. The First World War saw great immigration by West Indians as did for many groups coming to Britain.

PREJUDICE

In the 1930s the Rev. Harold Moody took on the prejudice of the British hospital system in getting a West Indian girl to have an operation on her wrong eye. Ironically, in the Second World War, West Indians were warmly welcomed into the health services.

When hostilities ended, labour-starved Britain readily welcomed West Indians and London Transport even sent officers to Bermuda in 1946 to recruit 300 badly needed bus drivers and conductors.

Len Fairweather, now unemployed and living in London, came from Jamaica and remembers: "In the days of the Teddy boys I had to walk on the streets with friends otherwise I got beat up.

RIOTS

The crisis came in 1958. Notting Hill riots but despite that London Transport continued to take West Indians and made homes here.

No one knows how many black Britons there are now, but the 1961 Census was withdrawn by the Government and previous figures were gathered.
We have reached a watershed in the history of black people in this country - 1981 Black People's Day of Action. Last summer young blacks firebombed their way into the headlines and for the last five years we have seen the development of the Asian youth movements. We need to understand and clarify events in order to strengthen the forces of the black community. I have been asked to talk about the black worker in Britain since 1945. I want to make a speech analysing the situation not an agitation speech. If we have now a concept of a new Britain with black workers at the forefront. We have seen two of the three gold medals won at the Olympics by Britain were won by black workers.

When we talk about black workers in this country we are talking about an international social force and we have to understand the whole world. Quote from an article in Washington Post saying that all over the world, both east and west, we have reached a situation where there is no consensus of support between the governed and the governors. In my opinion this is a correct view. In Britain among the black population, there is no one who feels represented by Thatcher. Nowhere else is the situation the same as for in Northern Ireland. We have reached a serious position, a critical situation. Because when there is no consensus, the government will attempt to wipe out the people. Either the government goes or you go. This is the framework in which we are working and we need to seek alliances with others who feel the same way. Only a mass movement can sweep away all and restore the relationship between the governors and the governed. That is what is on the agenda - sweeping away all away. In order to understand this development we have to make an analysis of the background.

Example of foreign visitor coming from Switzerland reading about black people in Britain in an article on plane and gradually becoming aware of their presence in key areas as he comes into London: immigration authorities; cleaners and canteen workers in Heathrow; going through Southall - Asian labour; driving Ford car made by black workers in UK; passing school with black students and teachers; working on tube and in buses, in hospital. We work in all the key areas and in every major city in this country. And this power we have is of crucial importance. It is power which has been accumulated over the last 50 or 40 years.

How do we come to be here? In 50's James Callaghan put in bluntly. He said that every immigrant is a store of capital. It took £4,000 to raise a person in this country for productive employment. This sum is transferred as a free export wherever immigration takes place. Britain needed immigration urgently. Out of a population of 50 million 25 million were productive workers. Immigration helps provide for the unproductive population of 25 million. He said that Germany lost the war but got reparations in human capital; so did Britain.

1945 was a breakaway date for black people. In this year in Manchester there was a conference on African and colonial independence attended by Padmore, Nkrumah and CLR James. The Labour Party, right left or middle, thought they were crazy to talk about independence. But in 17 years all the empire had gone. It was the Labour Party that was crazy. There has been no other period in which so much has been achieved. This was the first open political struggle of black workers and intellectuals in this country. This conference decided the programme and strategy for independence. This was achieved by intellectuals and black workers in Cardiff, Liverpool etc. In 1982 we can do much more. The question is now posed again. We are faced with the question of the liberation of Africa, India etc from neo-colonialism. This is a crucial question for us here and there is a tradition of mobilising here in the north, in Manchester. The conditions now are much better than they were in 1945.

Let us look at the political situation before mass immigration. There was a shortage of labour. This meant that the working class was in a strong position. There was the bus strike in the fifties. So what did they do? London Transport went to Barbados and recruited workers. This was the case in all the major cities in this country. From the Midlands they went to the Punjab to recruit workers for the foundries. They used the surplus labour in our countries to undermine the strength of the white working class here. We were prepared to accept worse wages, worse working conditions and worse living conditions that
What did the trade union movement do? The trade union movement and the 'left' stretched out no hand to us, they gave us no guidance. For them the working class was white and male and not international. When we were faced with discrimination and police brutality, the Communist Party said we should change out social behaviour. We should behave in a more British way.

These were the economic circumstances of the time which led to the next major date - the race riots of 1958. The economic conditions - competition in the labour market - led to the race riots. The economic conditions did not make race riots inevitable. It was the failure of the left that made riots inevitable. % Whites attacked blacks. Of course elements of the right surfaced but the left should have made it impossible for these elements to surface.

The Labour Party dare not say anything because asa always they wanted to get back into power. But there was no way that we would put up with this. When we reacted we were labelled violent and anti-social. Before we were docile slaves. Now we became violent. And the police did not take a neutral position even then. They were on the side of the fascists. The right is a force for discipline because if you have a situation where black people are afraid to walk the streets, then you have a pliable and obedient work force. The government will go slow on the fascists until we make it impossible for them. Until it is counter productive for them. If we bomb down their cities if they allow the fascists to march, then they forbid the fascists to march. Those who have been the primary force are the young West Indians and Asians. The white anti-racist movement has been secondary. But in 1958 we felt a certain restraint. When Kelso was murdered, we gave him a fine funeral but it was nothing like New Cross 20 years later.

1970 was the next important date for West Indians. Society needs a disciplined work force and West Indians devoted from British behaviour. 'Tempted'. We had parties; we didn’t like pubs so we organised sharees; we smoked ganja.

This led to police harassment. Our reason for being here was to work so they invented status for a black man on the streets. Because we could only be here to work. The foreman was responsible for discipline at work and the policeman for outside. These were the origins of last summer when black youth rebelled in a blaze of glory from Liverpool to Southampton and firebombed our way into the headlines. There had always been a tendency among West Indians to say 'to hell with work - I refuse to be a white man’s slave'. And so we organised other activities to make our living. And thus you had the front lines that exist in all major cities. The police used to do what they wanted then. Older West Indians closed their eyes to what was going on. And the police got away with it. Then there were no constraints on the police. 1970 was the first time the issue was posed. The Mangrove was opened as a cafe and there was a lawyer there all day so if someone got arrested the lawyer was down at the police station before the police even. This was a challenge to the police and they didn’t like it. They decided to close down the Mangrove. But we had grown up, we were confident. We weren't prepared to accept that kind of behaviour. We held a demonstration against police brutality. There were about 200 demonstrators and 1000 police. The police couldn’t believe it. That ended with street fighting with bricks and bottles. Maudlin set up an inquiry into Black Power subversive activities. 9 of us were charged with incitement to kill the police etc.

We won our cases outright. That was important because the jury was 10 whites and two blacks and in those days that was a formidable hurdle. But white working class people are not irremediably racist. They have a shared experience of the police. I’m not saying there aren’t difficulties in making common cause, but it is possible.

For Asian workers 1966 was an important year. In 1973 I did some interview with Asian workers. At first they had thought of the boss as all powerful. I asked one Asian worker when he first lost that feeling. He said it was when he saw white workers telling the foreman to piss off. By the late sixties, Asian workers,
had moved to be one of the most militant sections of the working class. Barbara
Castle set up an inquiry to investigate the strikes in the Midlands and in the
North. There were strikes against the bosses and strikes against the trade union
bureaucracy. At the time the strikes were organised by the IWA whose leader
was a man called Joshi. The inquiry was to look into the rising influence of
the Black Power movement in industry. Grunwick perhaps was the peak of this
militancy but the late sixties were the most strikes. It was the time when
the Indian Workers Associations were at their most progressive at that moment.
After that many of the leaders go recognition, got to be Councillors, they got
jobs on the backs of the struggles of Asian workers. Now none dare pay Asian
workers less than a white worker. Look at Imperial Typewriters. There was
a major strike in Southall in 1965 then in the Midlands, then in the north.

The next important moment was the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in Southall.
Asians had tended to complain to everyone but not take any action on the racist
attacks that had been going on for a long time. But by 1976/7 there was a
new generation of Asian youth who had grown up here, had been through the
jungle of the schools here, who spoke English and were used to urban life.
When Chaggar was murdered, the Asian organisations backed down. But from the
youth there was a hostile and violent response in contrast to that of the Asian
Mafia. There was a fierce struggle between two lines. The Mafia wanted to
call a demonstration under the slogan One Race The Human Race. The youth wanted
Here To Stay Come What May. The struggle was so fierce that a meeting in a
Southall cinema was broken up. This was the generation that included Tahirah
and Tariq Ali. The Asian youth movement spread throughout the country and
everywhere contested the old guard. The old guard moved against them. In Blackburn
a leader of the youth movement was beaten up. Where they didn’t use
brutality they used money — grants for law centres etc. No government has ever
financed political revolution and the youth movement was guided into paralysing
projects with government money. And this is why the UBYL got clobbered. It
wasn’t because they made petrol bombs. Hundreds of youth made petrol
bombs up and down the country. The state did not want the youth to transcend
the traditional organisations. It was the same pattern as the Mangrove. The
West Indian Standing Conference was eclipsed for ever. The contest has now been
won. And it is the same with the Asian old guard, Chapatty Shairma, the mosques
and the temples. It is the same contest in the Asian community.

I was greatly upset by the Bradford 12 campaign. It did not advance the struggle.
Asian youth everywhere would have responded to the need to make petrol bombs and
fight back. But as for the frame up line that the campaign took up, they simply
didn’t believe it. I knew the campaign had lost its way when I saw them meeting
in LSE instead of Newham, Southall etc. The conspiracy arguments were cited
for the NCCL not for the Asian youth. The campaign did not talk to the Asian
youth.

This is the background of the struggles of West Indian and Asian workers. Now
we have a situation where there is no government by consensus and it is the
black community that is in the vanguard of the fight against our present rulers.
I think it is time we began to look inside the white working class and ask what
forces are there with whom we can make alliances?
BLACKS in BRITAIN 1500-1980s

THIS IS THE SEVENTH INSTALLMENT OF A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BLACK PEOPLE’S IN ENGLAND SINCE THE INITIAL CONTACT IN THE 18TH CENTURY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SLAVE TRADE, TO ENSURE RECEIVING THE ENTIRE HISTORY WE ADVISE READERS TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE BLACK VOICE.

PART SEVEN

This period of our history in Britain starts with the passing of the racist Commonwealth Immigration Act in April 1962. This act crowded the growing tide of racism sweeping the country. The Secretary of State, Griffiths, campaigned with the slogan “If you want a bigger for a Neighbour vote Labour,” and won seats turning over the Labour majority in the process: although Labour won the election, the Labour party was far from the race in the Commonwealth Immigration Act in fact strengthened it in 1965 by restricting Black immigration even more by cutting the quota of Black people allowed into Britain. Labour also at this juncture September 1965 passed the Race Relations Act and set up the Race Relations Board to protect Black people from racial discrimination was Michael X a black man.

But this important issue that began to affect Black people in this period was the schooling of their children, and how far they could go to beat the immigration Act. It is estimated (there were no official figures) that the number of Black children had grown from 50,000 in 1960 to 140,000 in 1967 when figures were available. By 1953 Black children had been began to play as a test in British schools. The schools were not much better. Edward Boyle, the Conservative minister of education visited southall in 1960 and stated that segregation was "wrong and dangerous" but also that Black children was told to spread and became the government policy. The issue of the education of Black children from this time was one of the major preoccupations of our community here in Britain.

The Black community also struggled in the area of employment and took part in strikes and demonstrations. A series of strikes against racism and exploitation throughout the 1960s. There were important strikes for example at the Conwygr Foundry in Tipton in 1967 and in 1968 at the Bollom motor cylinder company these strikes as well as being against the exploitation they found at work as Black were also often a protest against the racism they found in the trade Union movement. This often meant that their strikes very often had no official backing and so were totally dependent on community support (which they received) if they were to succeed.

The consciousness of the Black community was also raised by the developing Black Civil rights movement in America. England also participated in this, but the Black Panther movement in 1964 which lead to the formation of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) and the Conference of Afro-Caribbean Organisations (CACO).

Apart from its major aim of stopping the primary immigration of Black people, which it accomplished the Bill had an important impact on other areas. For the Black community it accelerated the pace of the entry of Black children into Britain. Black parents knowing that the Bill was aimed at them hastened to bring their children over before the Bill made it very difficult if not impossible for them to do so. This explains the marked increase in Black children and adults who arrived in Britain in the 3 years either side of 1962. It also to a certain extent forewarned the consciousness of Black people the idea that they would be in this country for some time. On another tack, Black politicians up and down the country gave a boost to the racist and racist organisations of Britain which now found racism respectable by Parliamentary decree.

In the wake of the Bill came a deterioration in the conditions under which Black people existed in Britain. Town Councils suddenly discovered that the White workers objected to Black workers or that Black workers could not do certain jobs, e.g., bus driving. In our reaction were slower than that of whites, all the most backward ideas about Black people now gained ground. In brutality towards Black people was now also on the increase and the Metropolitan Standing Conference documented police excesses in Brixton in a report published in 1962, a feature which still remains to the present.

Other developments were making an impact on the Black community in the early 1960s. As well as the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962 we also witnessed the 'Independence' of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda. Events which were to have important effects on the consciousness of Black people living in Britain because it marked the first stage of the struggle against British colonialism for independence in Africa and the west Indies in Britain. It was also a time of growing maturity and awareness for the Black community. The Labour party had promised to repeal the Commonwealth Immigration Act but with the approach of the 1964 general election less talk was heard of repeal. Race
eventually sentenced to 18 months imprisonment for his death).

We close this section with the response of our Black community to these attacks. The response was to develop even better organisations. We have already mentioned the Black panther Movement. Also of significance was the Universal Coloured Peoples Association (UCPA) which was formed in 1967 and which was a broad organisation which attracted Black people from all sections of the Black community. We should also say here that the Black Panther Movement was an outgrowth from the (UCPA). There was also the formation of the Black Peoples alliance (BPA) in 1968 which saw the coming together of over 50 organisations and reflected the growing unity between African and Asian peoples. These organisations also reflected the fact that Black people saw the need to organise on a national level. This layed the foundation of the political movement of the 1970s which will be looked at in the final instalment of this short history.
In dealing with the history of Black people in Britain since 1970, we must be particularly careful because we are dealing with a period which would have been lived through by many of our readers. Many of the events described here would have been particularly relevant to some of your family or friends, who will have their particular interpretation and as of necessity some very important events will not be covered.

By 1970 the Black Power movement which had developed in Britain since the mid-1960s had matured and was beginning to seek the political form that would more clearly reflect the political developments within the Black Movement. The more far-sighted elements were beginning to see that more politically disciplined organisations were essential. The early 1970s saw the break up of the broader organisations like the Universal Coloured People’s Association (UCPA) and the Black People’s Alliance (BPA). These were followed by a host of organisations the most important of which were our own organisation the United People and Frees Organisation (BUF) which emerged from the UCPA, the

Black Liberation Front (BLF) and the Black Workers Action Committee (BWAC). In the early 1970s there would be as many as 20 Black organisations in London and Black organisations in almost every major town in Britain, for example the Black People’s Freedom Movement in Nottingham. It should be remembered here that the Black Panther Movement (BPM) had heralded in this trend by breaking away from the UCPA in 1965. Our organisation the Black Unity and Freedom Party was founded on the 26th July 1970 at its first National Congress and in commemoration of the day set aside to celebrate the Cuban Revolution. The first issue of the Black Voice was brought out in September 1970 and pledged itself in its first issue to carry on the work started by Claudia Jones in West Indian Gazette. Other Black Organisations like the (BLF) and the BPM produced their own papers the Grassroots and Freedom News respectively.

The Black conservatives in response to this grassroots movement attacked in his home in Sept. 1973 and charged by the police with attempted murder for which he was sentenced to 2 years. The police also attacked groups and taught them how to arrest as in the case of the Mangrove 9 in 1970. There was also the police riot at Peckham fair in which Radcliffe Carr was almost blinded. This was followed by the Croydon Collective. One event which saddened the Black community as much as the assassination of George Jackson in 1971 was the assassination of Amilcar Cabral on the 20th January 1973 by Portuguese agents. On the more positive side Guinean Bissau attacked its independence on the 24th September 1973 followed by Mozambique in June 1975 and Angola shortly after.

The Black community also had to fight its own battles, here in Britain. This ranged from the campaign against the first bombings of Black people which lead to the Sunderland Road bombing tragedy on the 10th of January 1971, almost 10 years to the Day before the New Cross massacre. Many Black people were disfranchised for life when those Black National Front inspired white youths threw petrol bombs into a party of over 100 Black people with the intention of causing their death. The petrol bombings by racists continued and reached its first peak in 1973 when more than 36 Black businesses and homes were attacked within a week by petrol bombers. The Black community also continued its campaign against police brutality following the death of Aseata Simms in Stoke Newington, police murder in 1971 and John Lomelie in 1974 also in police custody. The media had not reported this time involving the word mugger (an import from the US) and the police had rediscovered SUS and was using it extensively against Black Youths. Black Individual and groups came under even greater attacks exemplified by the case of Joshua Francis who was badly beaten up by 12 police men in 1971 and sentenced to 9 months by the court in 1972 and Cecil Sampson who was

**Part Eight**

**1970-5**

struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Support was also given to the Freedom fighters in the racist Heartlands of Rhodesia and South Africa. This support took organisational form with the formation of the Africa Liberation Committee in 1972 which organised the African Liberty Action Day (ALD)celebrations in 1973. The committee was originally formed by the BUF and the Croydon Collective. One event which saddened the Black community as much as the assassination of George Jackson in 1971 was the assassination of Amilcar Cabral on the 20th January 1973 by Portuguese agents. On the more positive side Guinean Bissau attacked its independence on the 24th September 1973 followed by Mozambique in June 1975 and Angola shortly after.

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CARIBBEAN Association summer school. Black parents and individuals also formed organisations to campaign for better education and important among these was the South East London Black Parents Organisation and the Caribbean Community and Education Workers Association.

We now briefly look at the Industrial struggle of Black workers. As before there were strikes aimed primarily against racism from employers, unions and workers as well as the perpetual struggle against low wages. The Mansfield housekeepers went on strike in 1972 at Loughborough and this was quickly followed by the Imperial Typewriters strike in Nottingham which lasted 13 weeks. The Pervale Guttermen strike in 1973 involved 70 workers and the Standard Telephone and Cable strike also involved 300 Black workers and I white one. All these strikes were sustained by the Black communities and their organisations.

Before closing this section we must quickly note Ted Heath's prediction of 1971 which was primarily aimed at the Black community. He predicted that the greatest threats facing England were not from external aggressors but from the enemy within. It was in this period also that the first campaign was launched to attract Black recruits to the police force. We will start the final segment of this history in our next issue with the Spaghetti House Siege.

The blacks in British history

Martin Walker reports on a growing interest in the role of blacks covering 400 years

BBC black legislators in Britain, a group of influential Black figures around the Scottish King in 1700' and Good early Black contributions to British history is becoming steadily more understood.

A special issue of the magazine, "Black Britain," has been published this week containing articles on the Black presence in Britain and is aimed at the first major historical conference on the subject to be held in London later this year.

The conference, organised by the BBC, includes a programme of lectures and discussions on the history of the Black presence in Britain, with a particular focus on the contributions made by Black people over the centuries.

The Conference, designed to bring together historians, scholars, and community leaders from across the UK, will explore the diverse experiences of Black people in Britain, from the arrival of the first Africans to the present day. The event will also provide a platform for discussing the ongoing challenges faced by Black communities and the role of Black people in shaping the future of the country.

The conference will cover a range of topics, including the history of slavery, the impact of racism and discrimination, and the contributions of Black people in various fields such as arts, sports, and politics.

The BBC has also launched a new digital platform to support the conference, featuring a comprehensive online resource with articles, videos, and podcasts. The platform aims to provide a accessible and engaging way for people to learn about Black history and to promote a more inclusive understanding of the past and present.

The BBC Black History Month programme has been designed to contribute to this discussion by highlighting the achievements and challenges faced by Black people in Britain, thereby fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of their contributions to the country's diverse heritage.
We start off this concluding section of our brief history with a look at the Spaghetti House 3 incident which occurred in September 1975. Three young Blacks Meley Dick, Tony Monroe and Frank Davis took some hostages in the Spaghetti House Knightsbridge after a robbery in which they were involved went wrong. This incident was particularly important because of the responses to it, on one side there was the response of the British state and on the other that of the Black movement and community. The state's response was one of total atrocity. Robert Mark the then commissioneer of police subsequently saw it as his greatest achievement because the Spaghetti siege reflected what had become a nightmare scenario for the British establishment that is young Blacks with guns. This should be placed in the context of the attacks then been made on the British state by people fighting for Irish freedom eg The Balcombe House siege. The police attacked the community as in the cases of the Railton 4 and the Harlem 7 but their biggest attack came at the Notting Hill Carnival where nearly 2000 police ran riot as a part of their strategy of convincing the Black community that we have no rights in Britain. On the Industrial front we were attacked at Grunwick where Asian workers lead by Women stuck for their right to unionise against a massive police campaign and held out for over a year. On the International front African countries took their stand against the South African Racists. The Black youth also rose up in Soweto and other South African towns to challenge the system of Apartheid.

1977 started as the year of the beard with Jack Jones declaring that we had to work harder. John Callaghan soon turned it into the year of the panjandrum declaring that the pen- dulum had swung far in the direction of workers and had to come back towards the employers.

1977 was also the year of free expression for the races who went around in vains from which they were not free to attack Tone Black people. The National Front was at its peak and the racists went as far as to attack Black children at the Cowley Road playground in Brixton with iron bars and machetes. This was also the year that the National Front attempted to march through Lewisham with the aid of 2000 policemen but were driven from the area by the attack of Black and anti-racist youths. The police answered this by carrying out their own attacks in Brixton with over 200 of them battering down the doors of black homes in the early hours of the morning and arresting a total of 24 Black youths. This strategy was duplicated in many other areas for Instance Ken- sai Rise where 10 youths were arrested by the winter of 1978. We had moved from the year of the beaver to the winter of discrimination.

1978 saw further attempts by the state to confuse the Black community; another American expression 'Positive Discrimination' was imported from that same kind that gave us mugging. It was claimed that Black people would be given and benefit from positive discrimi- nation which would aid us in our fight against racism. From the start it was obvious that this was a ploy which was in tended to generate even more racism among the working class by creating the image that Black people were being favour ably treated for white consumption while the reality of oppression and discrimination continued unabated. In this there was also an alarming growth in the number of racist Killings which included those of Michael Ferreira, Gurudip Singh, Benjamin Thompson, Mich- ael Nathaniel and Attab Ali, other Blacks eg. Carl Foster were shot at but survived. These racist attacks reached a new low with the killing of 10 years old Kenneth Singh. This was also the year when Margaret Thatcher made her infamous 'Swastika' speech which so emboldened the fascists that they attacked groups of Asian workers leaving their workplace in broad daylight. The Black community responded to these attacks by defending itself in all the ways that it could. It turned itself into defence committees eg The George Lindo Defense Campaign in Bradford which eventually freed him from a police frame up. Black women; at this time also consolidated their unity by forming the Or- ganisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD). Black people were also under attack internationally tragically evident of which is provided by the Kissangha Massacre in Angola where over 500 refugees were exterminated by South African forces.

1979 opened with the Scandal of virginity testing of Asian women at the ports of entry which was exposed by (OWAAD). The Black community also cam- pained around the issue of Sickle Cell Anaemia a disease of the blood which mostly affects Black people. The first Black womens centre in England was opened in Brixton but the most important event of the year was the Uprising in Southall in April of 1979 by the Asian community against police and fascist attacks which resulted in the murder of Blair Peach by the Special Patr- rol Group (SPG) and the arrest of 342 demonstrators. The Black community poured in all its greatest fighters with the death of Olive Morris on the 12th July 1979 at the age of 27 from cancer.

In 1980 this pattern of resistance was continued with the Bristol uprising which occurred in April around the harassment of the customers who used the Black and White cafe by the police. Internationally this was paralleled by the ris- ing of Black people in Miami also against police brutality and harassment. The deaths of Black people in police custody also continued and Cartoon Campbell was found dead in his cell on the 21st March 1980, to add insult to injury a jury was later to return a verdict of death by self neglect. The Black community had to mourn the passing of another of its great servants with the murder of Walter Rodney by agents of the Burnham regime in Guyana. In England Attar Ali Baig was stabb ed to death by skinheads and...
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this racist murder was only a taste of what was to come in 1981.

On the 18th of January 1981 the single most traumatic event of the Black presence over the last 600 years in Britain occurred. On the morning of that day a party of Black youths celebrating the birthday of a 16 year old girl was fire-bombed by racists. This resulted directly in the death of 13 Black youths and the serious injury of 27 others. Another Black youth subsequently died as a result of the tragedy and every Black person in the community has been touched in some way or the other by it. The Black community's response was immediate it set up a fund which eventually raised over £20,000 for the relatives of the victims and also set up a fact finding committee to ensure that the facts about the tragedy came out. It subsequently mobilised a demonstration in March 1981 (The Black People's Day of Action) when over 20,000 took part in the biggest demonstration ever organised by Black people in Britain.

After the tragedy of January 1981 the Black community had had enough of police harassment and racist attacks. Black youths with the support of progressive white youths rebelled against police harassment in Brixton (Swamp 81) in April of 1981 and this was followed by similar uprisings in all the major cities of Britain with a black population of any size.

The New Cross Massacre and the uprisings that followed in 1981 marks a new phase in the Black struggles in Britain. The Black community adopted progressive slogans "Blood Ah Go Run If Justice no Come" "Come What May we're Here To Stay" and "Under Attack We Fight Back". Both the state and fascist organisations have got this message and the consciousness of the Black community has been raised by the events of 1981. The state has been quick to counter attack. It has increased police powers and offensive hardware (The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill) on the one hand and on the other it has increased its efforts to buy off sections of the Black petit Bourgeoisie. It is now argued that the people who benefitted most from the Black uprisings are the Black petit bourgeoisie. The progressive Black movement is also now much clear about its tasks than it was before the uprising and it is to be seen if the state will be as successful in buying off its Black critics post 1981 as it was post 1971.

In concluding this short and unsatisfactory history we should be clear about the most important underlying change in the 35 year period from 1949 to 1984. The most important single thing for us to grasp is the change from an estimated 50,000 people in 1949 to close to 3,000,000 at present. As a consequence the question of race has moved from the periphery to the centre of British consciousness. This Black presence is now seen more than ever before as a threat to the status quo, that is as the section which through its oppression both on the levels of class and of race could prove the most difficult to win to an unquestioning support of all things British.

Our Black community continues to be challenged by the persistent harassment of our community by the police and fascists, by unemployment and institutionalised racism. We must build upon our past attempts at unity eg, The New Cross Massacre Action Committee The African Liberation Committee and the Black Peoples Campaign against the Police Bill. This unity is essential so that we can more ably respond to the challenges now before us.
Monument to Black history

THERE are not many monuments in Brixton. True, there are monuments to decay and neglect, like the boarded-up shops. And there are monuments to bad planning, like the sprawling Loughborough estate. But you'd be hard-pressed to find monuments that the locals are proud of. That may be about to change.

In the shadow of Loughborough, a site which is now ignored may soon house a monument to the history of black people in Britain, the country's first ever cultural archives centre, writes Clive Davis.

The scheme has been put forward by a group called the African People's Historical Monument Foundation. They want to set up the centre in the heart of Brixton, at the junction of Coldharbour Lane and Somerleyton Road. As the Chairman of the Foundation, Len Garrison, puts it, the roads could be described as 'the roots of black settlement'.

Plans for the centre got fully underway last year. An architect, produced a blueprint for the building. The costs were worked out; they amounted to £1.5 million. Applications were made to Lambeth Council, who own the Somerleyton site. They've yet to decide whether to hand it over to the Foundation. A serious setback came last month, when the Department of Environment turned down the Foundation's request for funds under the Inner City Partnership Scheme. Now the Foundation has decided to press ahead with the first stage of the building, at a cost of about £700,000. That sum still has to be raised from some source, although the Greater London Council has stepped forward with £44,000, enough to pay the first year's running costs. The Foundation's most pressing priority is to persuade Lambeth's councillors to set aside the Somerleyton site. It's not certain which way the decision will go.

Last week, a delegation from the Foundation handed in a petition to the Council, containing six thousand names. The council's response was muted. Some of the councillors were clearly not keen to see the Foundation receive any help.

Much of the inspiration for the project came from America, from New York's Harlem district. There, on Lenox Avenue, you'll find the Schomburg Centre for Research in Black Culture, one of the most important black archives in the world. Apart from manuscripts and books, the Schomburg houses a huge collection of video tapes, tape recordings, motion pictures and records. It also subscribes to over 500 newspapers and periodicals from Africa, the United States, Europe and the Caribbean.

A British archive could obviously not hope to compete with the Schomburg - not immediately anyway - after all, the Americans have had a fifty-six year head start. But Len Garrison believes there's already more than enough material in private collections and in other public libraries and archives to make a start. "Most of the members of the committee have been building up collections of their own," he says. "Ranging from books to sculpture and much more besides. We're also been in touch with librarians who could put us onto the trail of material in collections belonging to other institutions."

So what kind of material would be housed in the Centre? The Foundation has put together a draft list which contains items as diverse as carnival costumes, biographies, servicemen's uniforms, Caribbean recipes, carvings, sports photos and skin lightening creams. While the emphasis would be on the history of communities in Britain, the rest of the world wouldn't be excluded. As one of the Foundation's members, Richie Riley, put it, "People are always trying to make divisions amongst us."

In America, for instance, in the old days, white people tended to treat West Indians as a sort of black Americans. And I think that mentality still affects us. If the archive presents the history of all black people, we'll begin to realise that we share a common history, even though we might be separated by oceans.

To some people, though, history can be a luxury, especially when you're on the dole and looking for work. The Foundation could come under fire from critics who think Brixton needs jobs, not archives. It's a point of view that Len Garrison recognises, but doesn't accept. "Many young people growing in up Brixton can't see why they should be in Brixton. They haven't been given the opportunity of seeing how the community grew into what it is today. A Centre like the one we're proposing would fill in that missing background. It would give them reason to be proud of their community and a reason to develop it further."

The Foundation's main problems aren't just with official indifference or stinginess. There's also the question of time. With each week that passes, more documents are lost,