

Associated  
Society of  
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## Contacts

The Black and Ethnic Minority Consultative Committee would welcome letters or articles from members, and if you want to contact the BEMCC Delegate in your district details are as follows:

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# FRESHTRACKS

Black and Ethnic Minority Consultative Committee Newsletter



## New figures show a bleak picture for ethnic minorities in the UK

Ethnic minorities in Britain are twice as likely as their white counterparts to be living below the breadline and disadvantaged in the job market.

Research published this week by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) found that 40% of those in ethnic minority communities live in poverty, compared to 20% of white British people.

It also found their job prospects and earning potential to be incommensurate with their qualifications. For example a Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduate was less likely to be employed than a white person with a similar degree.

Bangladeshi and Pakistani women are even more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts, and are most likely to be exploited when they find work.

JRF Director, Julie Unwin said, 'We need an urgent rethink from Government and employers so that BEM groups do not miss out on opportunities in the workplace and higher educational attainment is properly recognised.'

There are also variations within the different ethnic communities. While 30% of Indians and black Caribbeans live in poverty, the figure rises to 45% for black Africans and 55% for Pakistanis. Bangladeshi communities are the most impoverished with 65% living below the recognised poverty threshold and only 20% of working Bangladeshis are in full-time employment.

Addressing these statistics Julie Unwin said, 'This shows how policies need to address the different situations of each group and be followed through on a practical level.'

## INTRODUCING AARON



AARON CLAPP is the new delegate from District 6, he is 46 years old and has been in Britain for 11 years. He is married and has two children who are 16 and 11 years old.

He has worked at Central Trains for 11 years and been a driver for 4 years.

He joined ASLEF as soon as he became a driver and this has led him to want to become more active. After attending an Open Meeting of the BEMCC he decided that he would like to try to become the Black and Ethnic minorities Representative if the position became vacant.

Aaron is also a Rail Union Learning Representative based at New Street in Birmingham.

He has developed a keen interest in music and like many ASLEF members is a follower of sports of all kinds.

## REPORT OF THE TUC BLACK WORKER'S CONFERENCE 2007

THIS year's Conference was held in Bristol to commemorate 200 years since the abolition of slavery.

Bristol was the first British port where slaves were brought to the UK from Africa, they were then sold and transported to America and the Caribbean plantations. Bristol became a wealthy city because of the slave trade.

Conference was opened by Roger King, this year's Chair. The theme of Conference this year is 'Work in Freedom'.

Roger's opening address concentrated on the role that slavery played in shaping modern Africa and the contribution that black people have made to the UK. He also spoke on racism in society and that we will have to work together to defeat it.

Brendan Barber, the TUC General Secretary, gave his support to a national slavery memorial day. He continued that slavery still exists today, but in different forms e.g. bonded labour, people trafficking etc. In the UK many of the migrant population are forced to work for wages that are far below the National Minimum Wage. Brendan also reported that institutionalised racism in our society means that black people are less likely to be able to access training, and are more likely to be unemployed than white people.

Alison Shepherd, President of the TUC, also spoke on the role Britain played in the slave trade. She spoke about how important it will be to defeat the BNP candidates in the forthcoming local elections. Both Alison and Brendan then stayed to take questions from the delegates.

Brendan stressed the need for trade unionists to unite against racism and fascism and get the message about trade unionists out to all workers. He supported the Conference's call that the Government should make a formal apology for the UK's role in the slave trade.

31 unions attended this year's Conference, ASLEF's delegation comprised of Pat Blake, Laurence Campbell, Floyd Doyle and Paul Patmore. They were supported by Sharon Allen, ASLEF's Equalities Adviser.

ASLEF's motion was on globalisation and the detrimental affects of global warming on the third world. The motion was moved by Floyd and seconded by a delegate from the NASUWT. This motion was well supported and carried unanimously.

Pat Blake seconded a motion from

## CHURCH RAPS BLAIR ON BNP

CLAUDIA WEBBE writing in *The Voice* said that Tony Blair's comments that the Black community "...need to be mobilised in denunciation of the gang culture that is killing innocent young black kids..." is a kick in the teeth to five generations of the UK's black communities.

In the absence of statutory provision, black voluntary, community and faith organisations had historically stepped up to the challenge to provide vital grass-roots self-help organisations so as to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people and challenge inequality and racism.

Institutionalised racism needs to be addressed holistically by the Government with resources targeted at eradicating poverty and social exclusion in order to remove the need for people to be part of gangs and ensure equality of opportunity for all.

Black Christian leaders are saying that Tony Blair's does not recognise the work these communities - and especially black churches - are doing to tackle criminal gangs.

The Prime Minister, speaking recently in Cardiff, said Britain's black communities must speak out against gang culture.

Bishop Joe Aldred, the secretary for Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs for Churches Together in England, said: "I'm not sure where the Prime Minister has been, or who he's been talking to, if he thinks black communities have not been denouncing the gangs and gang activity.

"Black communities, particularly the black Christian communities, have not

only been denouncing this evil, but have been hard at work, taking action to try to find solutions. There are now several church-led initiatives around the country working with young people and parents.

"What is needed is not further legislation - when what we're dealing with are young people who will simply be further criminalised.

"What we need is better support for those initiatives working with young people, parents, schools, and community groups, to help to give - particularly to our young boys - some sense of a better code of behaviour, aspiration, and a sense of belonging."

The Rev. Katei Kirby, chief executive of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance, said the Prime Minister highlighted an issue which is of continuing concern, not just to black communities but to wider society.

"It is unfortunate, however, that the Prime Minister failed to recognise the proactive and measurable contribution of black Christian communities in tackling these issues," she said.

She added that while local authorities have been reducing their investment in activities for young people, black churches have maintained, or increased, the resources committed to youth work development.

It is easy to see why becoming a gang member would be attractive to young people - especially young black or ethnic minority men who statistically do worse at school and are 75% more likely to be out of work than their white counterparts.

Community calling for the TUC to take steps to ensure that migrant workers should be allowed to work and are advised about UK unions and encouraged to join once they are in work. This motion was also carried unanimously.

ASLEF's Emergency Motion on Gun Crime was adopted by the TUC Black Worker's Committee as a statement and Laurence Campbell moved the statement to Conference.

ASLEF's final contribution at the rostrum was from Paul Patmore who spoke on the Amicus amendment to the RMT's motion

on the BNP. The amendment congratulated ASLEF on our successful case at the European Court of Human Rights. Paul said that ASLEF had drawn a line in the sand and it was up to other unions to follow suit. This motion was carried, as amended, unanimously.

Gus John, an eminent writer and academic, addressed Conference and spoke about how in the slave trade people were taken from their homeland in chains and often died from the voyage or were worked to death on British and American plantations.

# SOME EFFORTS TO TACKLE GANG WARFARE

Gangs provide them with a community, somewhere they belong, the company of people like themselves, often financial gains due to drugs and prostitution – and most importantly gang membership gives them power.

Young people either join the gangs because they are attracted by what they have to offer, or they join them for protection from other gangs, or sometimes they are intimidated into joining them by other gang members.

Once you recognise how attractive membership of a gang can be you have to look at the root causes of gang membership.

Not all gang members are black or from an ethnic minority, but it is mainly these members that we hear about in the media when gun crime is highlighted.

What are the root causes of gang warfare? Of course there has always been gang crime related to the sale of drugs, much of which has been imported from other countries, but ASLEF believes the recent huge rises in gang warfare is a direct result of institutionalised racism in the UK.

So what do we do about it?

ASLEF in a recent Emergency Motion on the subject to the TUC Black Worker's Conference put forward the following proposals:

Criminalisation of the young people is clearly not working and not a long-term sustainable solution to the problem, neither is expecting the black communities to sort out the matter themselves.

Clearly, these are long-term measures, in the short-term the TUC

should be talking to the Home Office and the Police about working with communities to identify how they see the issue being tackled and providing support.

The TUC should also be calling for general amnesties for illegal firearms and knives, and looking at measures to make it more difficult to buy guns and harsher penalties for the illegal possession of firearms.

The Police and the Home Office

should be producing teacher's packs and trained educators to talk about the reality of gang membership in schools and colleges to try to dispel the myths that make membership so attractive.

Above all there needs to be a recognition that until racism is tackled seriously and the issues of poverty addressed gang warfare and guncrime will continue – and many more needless deaths will follow.



Slaves were treated as a commodity, and it was not uncommon that if disease broke out in the ship 200 slaves would be thrown overboard to their death. Slaves were insured in the same way as other cargoes so ships would not lose out at their loss. Slavery was a holocaust that lasted 400 years and involved millions of Africans and Caribbeans. Gus John said that slavery was the worst crime committed against mankind.

Glenroy Watson from the RMT gave a report of the 3rd World Conference on Racism, which was held in Durban. The

ASLEF delegation supported the RMT delegation (there were only 2 of them), as they were both new to Conference.

ASLEF's delegation were a credit to the union and looked polished and well rehearsed at the rostrum. Congratulations are due to Floyd Doyle who was elected on to the TUC Black

Worker's Committee.  
**Paul Patmore**  
**BEMCC**  
**National**  
**Secretary**



The ASLEF delegation to the 2007 TUC Black Worker's are delighted when they hear that Floyd Doyle has been elected to the TUC Black Worker's Committee, the first ASLEF member to serve on this Committee.



# FRESHTRACKS



## NO HONOUR IN KILLING

THE recent stoning to death of a 17-year-old girl in Kurdistan is evidence of the fact that clocks are rapidly being turned back on women's rights in Iraq.

Du'a Khalil Aswad was brutally and publicly murdered in May 2007 in Bashika for the 'honour crime' of entering into an 'unsuitable' relationship. A group of men carried out the murder, during which the teenager was stripped naked and taunted as she lay pleading for help.

Houzan Mahmoud of the Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq blames the United States led 'war on terror' for the increases in oppression of women and the steps being taken to move Iraq from a secular state to a religious state along the lines of neighbouring Iran.

She said, 'The war in Iraq has unleashed the most backward and misogynist trends in society. The occupation has imposed religious political bigotry, and women are therefore more oppressed than ever.'

After she was beaten, kicked and stoned to death by a baying mob of men who filmed the event and then placed it on the internet to presumably warn off other young people who might commit the transgression of falling in love with

someone from the 'wrong' religion, Du'a's body was buried in an unmarked grave.

Her body was later exhumed by the Kurdish authorities – not to determine cause of death – but to check if she was still a virgin. She was, so was innocent of the crime she was stoned to death for.

Research in the UK and elsewhere has shown that the overwhelming majority of victims of 'honour killings' are women and girls, and the greater proportion of perpetrators are male. They encompass a variety of manifestations of violence against women including 'honour killings', assault, confinement, imprisonment, and forced marriage.

Justification or mitigation for the violence is attributed to notions of 'honour' (related to family, conjugal or community 'honour') requiring the preservation of male control of women, particularly women's sexual conduct whether real or perceived.

In the UK most of the reported cases of 'honour killings' involve women from South Asian or Middle Eastern, mainly Muslim, backgrounds, but it is a mistake to associate these practices with these communities or societies. 'Honour killings' are not condoned in Islamic doctrine.

'Honour crimes' such as forced marriage have become more visible in the last five years, both internationally and domestically, including in the UK.

It is estimated that around 13 women a year in the UK are murdered in so called 'honour crimes', and worldwide, although it is much more difficult to monitor this, at least 15 women a day lose their lives for such barbaric reasons.

ASLEF developed its Domestic Violence Policy in 2004 and the union takes a strong line on domestic violence.

Sharon Allen, ASLEF's Equalities Adviser, says that 'honour killings' are domestic violence and murder, there is no 'honour' in taking another person's life, and instead it is about the exertion of power and control over women.

ASLEF supports the right of people to choose the religion and the partner's of their choice and joins the Muslim Council of Britain in condemning 'honour crime'.

ASLEF's Black & Ethnic Minority Consultative Committee are raising the issue of women's rights in Iraq at this year's ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates.

ASLEF's BEMCC are working jointly with the LGBTCC on the issue of HIV and AIDS and how the ASLEF policy developed by Jim Peters can be implemented across the union.

In the UK we have been aware of HIV or the Human Immunodeficiency Virus since the early 80's, and really it has not impacted on us to any great extent.

In the West, becoming HIV positive is no longer the automatic death sentence that it was thought to be in the 80's. With antiretroviral drugs people can fight off the minor infections that will cause HIV to become AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

AIDS is not a disease in itself – it is the stage of HIV infection where the body becomes unable to fight off an infection (such as pneumonia) and the condition becomes more serious. With the right drugs, people can become well again and their status returns to being HIV positive.

If you have any questions about HIV / AIDS or are affected by any issues related to the subject, and would like to speak to someone in complete confidence, contact Sharon Allen, the Equalities Adviser on 0207 317 8600.

### Useful addresses

**Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)** Government funded body working for equality for BEM people in the UK. 0207 939 0000 [info@cre.gov.uk](mailto:info@cre.gov.uk)

**Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)** Provides support and legal advice around a wide range of immigration and asylum issues. 0207 251 8708 [info@jcwi.org.uk](mailto:info@jcwi.org.uk)

**The Afiya Trust** National charity working on ethnic minority health issues. 0207 582 0400 [www.afiyatrust.org](http://www.afiyatrust.org)

**BLINK - Black Information Link** Independent Community interactive site for black communities. 0207 582 1990 [Blink1990@blink.org.uk](mailto:Blink1990@blink.org.uk)