

## Contents:

1. UCU Annual Black Members' Conference
  2. Keeping in touch with each other
  3. NEC elections
  4. Stand up and speak out
  5. Double standards on equality
  6. UKBA debacle at London Met
  7. Campaigns: UKUncapped and the Stephen Lawrence Trust
  8. Reparation conference
  9. Black member networks
  10. Race Equality Workforce Advisory Group
  11. Equality conferences and useful contacts
  12. Black History Month
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## UCU Black Members' Annual Conference

### **'Black people building your union: the job you save could be your own' - Friday 16 November 2012**

Black members are urged to register for UCU's annual black members' conference. This is the conference where you can make your voice heard and meet with other black members in a safe and supportive environment. In addition to gaining a valuable update on the work of the union you will have the opportunity to network and find out how other black activists are organising within their workplace and the wider community. As a delegate to the conference you will also be able to vote for your preferred candidates for the Black Members' Standing Committee (BMSC).



Any black member can register for the conference by visiting the UCU website here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2699> If you wish to be nominated for the BMSC or submit a motion for conference to consider you will have to ensure this is signed off by your branch or local association.

The Conference will start with registration and refreshments at 09.45, followed by welcome at 10.15am. During the morning we will be presenting the Report of the BMSC and the Delegation approved at the last Conference to progress race equality within the UCU. The President of the UCU will be addressing the Conference and Sally Hunt; our General Secretary will also be present for a Panel Discussion. We will also be launching our "Black Members Survival Guide", followed by workshops. The afternoon session will include reporting back from workshops, motions from branches/associations and discussions on

BMSC priorities for the next 12 months. There will be a keynote speaker from London Metropolitan University and a student representative.

Conference will also have the opportunity to elect 5 members to the BMSC for a period of two years. If you wish to be nominated for the BMSC or submit a motion for conference to consider you will have to ensure this is signed off by your branch or local association.

The deadline for registration and nomination is **5:00pm on Friday 2nd<sup>th</sup> November 2012**. Nominations should be returned to **Sue Bajwa**, Carlow Street, London NW1 7LH, by fax to 020 7756 2501, or by email to [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk). Receipt of nominations will be acknowledged. If you do not receive acknowledgement, please contact Sue Bajwa **before** the deadline for receipt.

**Please attend this important event and encourage others to do so.**

**Jim Thakoordin – Chair BMSC**

## Keeping in touch with each other

The Black Members Standing Committee has set up a facebook account and blog to keep members informed of our work and key issues in the union. We are trying these methods for an initial twelve month period and would welcome ideas and feedback. We know that many of you use facebook already. If you do, please go to:

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/Ucublackmembers?fref=ts> or search for 'ucublackmembers' on facebook and 'like' our page.

There we plan to post updates on key areas of our work and discussions, publicise events of interest to black members and to initiate discussion on issues concerning black members at work and in the union.

For those who do not wish to join facebook, we plan to mirror all committee posts on our blog at:

<http://ucublackmembers.wordpress.com/> As you can tell, as a group we are new to the use of social media, and some of us (including the interim administrator/co-ordinator) are not at all confident about the range of uses and possibilities of facebook and our blog. We hope that you, the wider group of black members, can help here. These are some of our first 'questions' – please do add others and make suggestions.

- a. Code of conduct – we want to establish some ground-rules for use of both sites – to keep everyone safe and to avoid potential difficulties further down the line. Do people have ideas of what should be included in such a code? Or do you know of something from another group or site that we could adapt for our own use?
- b. We want to use the two sites to get a sense of the most urgent issues facing black members in our sector and union – do you feel comfortable discussing

such matters in these settings? Is there anything we can do to further safeguard members who take part in such discussions?

- c. What are the most urgent issues for you? We think that job losses and instability in the sector are increasing the pressure and insecurity felt by black members and this is a priority for our work at present – do you agree that these are the most urgent issues?

You can email the committee at [ucublackmembers@gmail.com](mailto:ucublackmembers@gmail.com)

We know that many black members feel very isolated at work. We hope that you will use the facebook and blog sites to make connections with each other as well as with the committee. Just don't expect us to tweet ...

Gargi Bhattacharyya – NEC and Member of UCU BMSC

## **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, VACANCIES FOR 2 BLACK MEMBERS IN RESERVED SEATS ON THE NEC**

The timetable for elections to the UCU NEC for 2013 is as follows:

- 5th October 2012 - call for nominations.
- 14th November 2012 - closing date for nominations.
- 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 - closing date for submission of election addresses.
- 4th February 2013 to 1st March – ballot.

We are asking Black members to participate in the elections for 2 National Black Members seats – one must be a woman, and to also participate in the elections for NEC vacancies at regional and national levels. As well as the 2 reserved seats for Black members there are reserved seats for women and LGTB members. There are also regional and national seats that are open to anyone working within the region or at national levels within Higher and Further Education. Information on the National Executive Committee elections can be found here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6338>

I would be happy to assist anyone with information and in preparing the election address who may be interested in becoming a member of the NEC. I have been a member of NATFHE NEC for 7 years and the UCU for 6 years. Please feel free to contact me.

Jim Thakoordin ([dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com))

## STAND UP AND SPEAK OUT - DO NOT REMAIN IN ISOLATION

Members join Union for protection of their jobs, conditions of work, promotion, against harassment & bullying and salary. For years, black members have been concerned about the services provided by the Union catering their needs. Over the years they have been campaigning for greater support, legal assistance & representation. Several motions were passed at UCU Congresses. The actions on their concerns have been slow and inadequate.

The Union have good policies on issues affecting black members but there seems to be a lack of commitment to implement. Branches and region do not actively promote & implement these policies. The Black members feel that they are not a part of the Union and remain in isolation. They are often victims of bullying, racial harassment, lack of promotion and job protection. The consequences of their experiences are that there are only a few black activists in branches, regions and at national levels.

During Natfhe days, there were 3 black presidents and several black NEC members from general seats apart from reserved seats. Since the merger with AUT, the situation has not improved but rather deteriorated. There are 2 black NEC members from reserved seats. In regions and branches, only a handful of members are found. Only a few black members are engaged with the union activities. It is highly encouraging to see that black membership has increased from about 7000 to about 9000.

This situation of isolationism of black members should not be allowed to continue. We have to work together with all to improve the greater participation of black members in branches, regions and at national level. The NEC has to take very active part in promoting the black issues at all levels. Branches should encourage black members to become branch officers, case workers and to elect them for Regions and Congresses. Without our active participation within branches, we will not be able to influence policies on BME issues of discrimination, bullying, lack of career progression and job security. Do not remain in isolation. Develop black members networks in branches.

We should be involved with all branch members and take active part in campaigns. As a combined force we will win. Many issues at local levels can be won if all members are behind you. Legal remedies are expensive and chances of winning are small. The Union does not have large financial resources to take up all cases to legal remedies. Branch Officers and Committee, properly trained on race, can provide and represent members to the institutions very effectively

The Union has to revisit its commitment to combating racism, promoting racial equality and increase its commitment to support black members.

To have a snapshot of the black members' involvement, the Regions & NEC should: conduct a survey of its branches about the involvement of black members as:

- Branch Executive, Branch activist, Branch representatives on different committees;
- Case Workers, Equality Officer, Health and Safety Officer, Branch Training Officer;
- Regional delegates and officers, members of National Equality Committees;
- Members of the National Executive Committee and,
- activists involved in local and regional Black Members Network.

Mehdi Husaini - Teesside University UCU, BMSC

## DOUBLE STANDARDS ON EQUALITY

Before the general election in May 2010 both coalition parties committed themselves defending and promoting equality and fairness at work and in everyday life. 32 months later, both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have agreed to massive changes adverse changes in equality legislation, including employment laws and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The number of staff within the EHRC which has responsibilities for all the various equality strands has been reduced by more than half. This action will seriously restrict the power, status and ability of the EHRC to fulfil its commitment to defending and promoting equality.

The EHRC was established to uphold equality laws covering gender, disabilities, age, sexual orientation and race. It has the power to launch investigations into public services suspected of discriminating and publish "non-discrimination notices" enforceable by the courts. The work of the EHRC is sometimes seen by the public as being remote, and invisible. However, there is a great deal of valuable work going on across the various equalities "strands" to improve protection against unfair workplace practices.

The EHRC also challenged the Chancellor George Osborne for failing to consider equality issues when constructing his budget, which have disproportionately penalised already disadvantaged groups including women, ethnic minorities, people on benefits and low paid workers.

In May 2012, the Liberal Democrat Home Office minister Lynne Featherstone announced she was cutting the EHRC's budget by half to £26m. More recently it transpired that the cut is likely to reduce the budget to around £18m as compared to the original budget of £70m when it started life with under Labour in 2007. These savage cuts will leave the commission with around 180 staff, fewer than the old Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission had before they were merged into the EHRC.

The Chair of the EHRC has had his contract terminated and the new Chair will be paid £56,000 a year for two days a week compared with the £112,000 Trevor Phillips earned for a three-and-a-half day week. The government also intends to review the EHRC next year and warn that if progress is not made the EHRC risks being broken up. According to the government, "We will seek to implement more substantial reform to ensure that the EHRC's core functions are discharged effectively and efficiently in the future. This could mean more fundamental, structural changes to the EHRC's remit including some functions being done elsewhere, or splitting its responsibilities across new or existing bodies".

Featherstone is also planning a bonfire of the commission's investigation powers as well as burning the "duties" on public authorities to monitor equalities and promote good relations. All in the name of reducing the "burden" of red tape. So if ensuring public services are delivered fairly is a burden, what does that say about the coalition's attitude to equalities in general? Nick Clegg, in a lecture to mark 30 years since the Scarman Report was published following the 1981 riots in London, said: "Real equality is not just the absence of prejudice, it is the existence of fairness." He has been arguing for 'fairness' in education employment opportunities and in everyday life, yet like David Cameron who also made numerous statements supporting a fairer and more equal Britain, are actually implementing policies which contradicts such statements. Vandalising the EHRC will surely make us a less fair country.

The plan to scrap the "socio-economic duty," requiring authorities to assess whether policies might adversely affect the poor – is particularly alarming in our class-ridden nation, with its entrenched underclass and one of the poorest records for social mobility in the western world. A combination of biting budget cuts and the stripping away of many of its powers threatens to turn the commission into little more than a glorified public relations agency for equality, unable carry out its core functions let alone truly get to grips with tackling institutional discrimination or support important test cases in the courts.

Jim Thakoordin

## Thousands of overseas students had to queue outdoors through the night to register with the police on arrival to the UK

International students from 42 countries living in Greater London were required to register within seven days at a single office in south-east London, in October 2012.

The very long waits and difficulties for the 2,000 international students and staff was caused by the cuts in staffing and the rising number of foreign students enrolling in British universities.

The overseas students were required to register with police in order to obtain a Police Registration Certificate (PRC), which can be used as an identity document. Many students started to queue from midnight, prior to registration, even though the office does not open until the morning.

**The students were angry that they had to que for so many hours to register and many were concerned at the prospect of deportation due to the fiasco created by the Home Office and Border Agency. Overseas students bring in billions of pounds to the British economy in fees and cost of living.**

Several universities had raised the problem with the Home Office and the Minister for Higher Education, David Willetts. They stated that similar issues arose every year but that it seemed to be particularly bad this year in London, where a third of the UK's 100,000 foreign students come to study.

The revelation comes after concerns about damage to the UK's reputation with potential students abroad after the London Metropolitan University had its licence to recruit and teach international students revoked. Daniel Stevens, international students officer for the National Union of Students, filmed the queue in the early hours of the morning and sent the video to the BBC News website to highlight the issue.

He said that some time before the office opens a member of staff comes out and starts counting the queue, letting some people in. Then much of the rest of the queue is turned away, only to return the next night for more of the same. Mr Stevens said: "The students who are queuing there are outraged that they are having to do this. It is absolutely unacceptable that students be asked to be queue for hours, often in terrible weather, and be expected to arrive before 06.30 to have any chance of being seen."

A lot of these students have just arrived in the UK and they are new to the British culture. They want to be more vocal about their treatment, but felt intimidated, particularly because the police were involved. Several students were turned away and were uncertain about starting their courses. Many students were unclear as to why they were required to register in this way as the UK Border Agency already held all their details.

A spokeswoman for the Home Office said the way the UK Border Agency requirement to register overseas students is implemented is a matter for the local police.

"This is usual for September and October, as the reopening of universities means an influx of students from countries whose registration with police is required by law."

The University and College Union general secretary Sally Hunt said such poor arrangements were damaging Britain's international reputation. "At a time when we need to be attracting the brightest brains to this country, and are already facing huge competition from other countries, we seem to be intent on committing PR disasters for the whole world to see." We need a clear statement that the UK is open for business and welcomes foreign students."

Adel Nasser

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## UKUncapped

As you will know from reading Adel's article the UK Border Agency revoked the sponsorship licence of London Metropolitan University. This effectively meant that the University could no longer recruit international students and that those who were currently in the country having already applied for and been accepted onto courses would have to leave their studies potentially losing large sums of money in the process.

The UKUncapped campaign is a coalition of trade unions and campaigning organisations working to highlight the inequities of the current immigration system. UCU is closely involved in the campaign and we are hosting the next meeting of this group which will take place on Monday 22 October 2012 at Carlow Street in London. Staff and students directly affected by the incidents at London Met will be attending this meeting. If you would like more information on UKUncapped and/or would like to attend the meeting please contact Chris Nicholas ([cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk)). Please also see the following article by UCU member Kirsten Forkert: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/cash-cows-and-job-poachers-non-eu-students-and-austerity-politics>

## SUPPORT THE STEPHEN LAWRENCE TRUST

Doreen Lawrence spoke at TUC Black Workers Conference in April 2012 about the need to ensure that her son, Stephen, was remembered for more than being the victim of an act of murderous violence. The Stephen Lawrence Trust assists young people who wish to pursue careers in architecture and design. The Trust is facing serious funding cuts that endanger its valuable work. Please consider supporting the Trust through a personal donation or by proposing a motion pledging a donation from your branch or local association. <http://www.stephenlawrence.org.uk/>

## UCU JOINED IN THE REPARATION DEBATE



The Reparation Conference is an annual conference in which the RMT Union work in collaboration with other community organisations to: raise awareness, to have an informed debate on Reparations and unpick the notion of Reparation in both topical and culturally relevant contexts. The year 2012 was the first year that the UCU'S Black Members' Standing Committee (BMSC) got involved with this conference and played an integral role in the organisation of this event.

The sixth Reparation Conference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2012 at the Institute of Education, London. The conference took place in the wake of the London Olympics 2012 which saw the

descendants of slavery and British colonialism grace the global stage with a display of immense sporting success. Of course, in recent years the Olympic Games had been used not only as an arena for demonstrating black athletic success and prowess, but it has also been used as a stage for protest against racial injustice. For instance, the act of two black Americans, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, at the 1968 Olympics Games, wearing black gloves, raised their fists in the 'black power salute' as a symbol of resistance and defiance, which in turn embodied a critical moment in 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

The historical backdrops of slavery and colonialism were integral to the presentations and discussions relating to the Reparation Movement within the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The conference brought together scholars, trade unionists and community activists from the Caribbean, African Diasporas and the continent to facilitate a dialogue for taking forward the 'Reparation Movement'. The conference was chaired by Professor Cecile Wright (UCU). The conference commenced with the viewing of, "**Haiti: Where did the Money Go?**"- A documentary film produced/directed by Michele Mitchell of Film at Eleven. The conference agenda proceeded by a presentation from Dr Cecil Gutzmore on the historical relationship between the Industrial Revolution and reparations.

This subject- and others- was later unpicked further in a panel discussion on the, '**role of the trade unions in the campaign for reparations**'. Panel speakers included: Frank Murray (RMT); Jim Thakoordin (UCU), Gee Bernard (Global Afrikan Congress UK), Omowale Rupert (Pan Afrikan Society Community Forum) and Olu Femiola (The National Forum). Solidarity greetings were received from the sponsors of the event, RMT General Secretary, Bob Crow and UCU General Secretary, Sally Hunt.

Additional topics and themes explored by the speakers included: an update by ... on Diego Garcia, information on the Mau Mau court hearings- in which coincided with the date of the conference, the status and growth of the campaign movement, the use of the legal framework(i.e the European courts) ,the symbiotic relationship between slavery, the rise of capitalism, the white working class and trade unionism; facilitating activism in the case of improving the lives of people of African/Caribbean descent, education and liberatory pedagogies. The panel discussion engendered a lively debate and a sense of urgency for a concerted transformative agenda, amongst the 100 plus delegates. This extremely successful event was brought to a close by Geraldine Francis (UCU) and Glenroy Watson (RMT).

Find out more about the Reparations Conference, the wider campaign and UCU's role within it, by attending the next annual Black Members' Conference at UCU Head office on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012. See you there!

By Geraldine Francis and Professor Cecile Wright

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## Black Members Networks

at the workplace and within the UCU regions

**We need Black Members Networks at the workplace and within the UCU regions because black members are: -**



- Often isolated and marginalised in colleges and universities;
- Suffer disproportionately from racial discrimination, prejudice and stereo-typing;
- Grossly under-represented in colleges and universities and especially in permanent full-time posts and management grades;
- More likely to be in either part-time, temporary, low-paid jobs and over-represented in some areas such as ESOL, Learning Support and in Outreach, Basic Skills, IT and Business Support;
- Likely to benefit from sharing experiences and discussing ways in which they could address racial discrimination at work, problems with the unions and promoting mutual support, understanding and solidarity.

### **The purpose of the Black members Network is to: -**

- Meet, network and support each other;
- Increase their involvement in UCU at branch/association, regional and national levels;
- Strengthen the voice of black members in the workplace and within the branch;
- Promote the interests and address the concerns of black members;
- Raise awareness of UCU structures and support facilities;
- Become involved in the promotion of race equality/equal opportunities/diversity policies, practices and strategies in the workplace and in the union branch;
- Raise awareness of discrimination in relation to race, religion and beliefs, culture, sex and disability;
- Organise training courses on the structure, procedures and facilities relating to UCU;
- Monitor incidents of racial discrimination and to work in partnership with other colleagues, UCU Equality Unit, universities and organisations to combat racial discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping.

### **How to set a UCU Black Members Network at your branch:**

- a. Contact your branch/association offices and ask them to help you set up a local black members' network. If your branch has an Equality Officer, speak to that person. If you require further assistance talk to your regional official or contact UCU's equality unit at [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk).
- b. It is a good idea to contact black staff at your workplace and across the various sites, as appropriate, and ask them whether they would be interested in setting up a UCU Black Members Network within the branch. You can do this by telephone, email or by letter.
- c. If your college or university has several sites, which are miles apart, you may consider starting a network on your own site and then encourage UCU black members from other sites to join in or to start their own site back members network. A person from each workplace network could then meet once in each term to address issues, concerns and suggestions to promote race equality and to combat racial discrimination, as well as monitoring and advancing race equality issues.

The Black Members' Standing Committee is keen to see the development of networks in the devolved nations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Work on this is in train with the relevant UCU offices. We are hoping to have Black Members Networks in all Regions and Nations within the UK by the end of February 2013. We need your co-operation and support to achieve this. If you would like further information on this particular initiative and/or you currently work in one of the devolved nations and wish to become involved please contact Chris Nicholas ([cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk)). We can help you to set up BWN.

**Chris Nicholas and Jim Thakoordin**

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## Race Equality Workforce Advisory Group

The Race Equality Workforce Advisory Group (REWAG) is a group of FE and adult education sector organisations looking at the issue of race equality. The purpose of the group is to work with employers and key agencies to achieve a workforce in the further education sector that reflects the ethnic diversity of modern Britain and of learners within the sector.

The group emerged from the work of the Commission for Black Staff in FE which reported in 2002 on the state of race equality in the sector (a link to the report can be found here [http://www.nbp.org.uk/publications/commission\\_for\\_black\\_staff\\_in\\_further\\_education](http://www.nbp.org.uk/publications/commission_for_black_staff_in_further_education)). After the report a working party was established to take forward the recommendations which emerged. The initial working party was supported by the then Department for Education and latterly the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Since the coalition government came to power in 2010 all ministerial support for the group has evaporated leaving stakeholder organisations to maintain the work and focus of the group.

REWAG last met on Friday 5 October 2012 and received an offer of logistical support from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). The group will now be looking to develop a concise, well organised work programme and garner support from the AoC in order to articulate the case for workforce diversity based on fairness, social justice and economic growth.

UCU's representatives on REWAG are Chris Nicholas and Dawn Livingston. If you would like any further information on the group please contact Chris Nicholas ([cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk)).

Chris Nicholas and Dawn Livingston

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## UCU Women members' conference 2012 –

Getting our activism together, 9 November 2012 at 10am-4.30pm, at UCU, Carlow Street, London NW1 7LH

Registration is now open for UCU members to attend this year's women members' conference. It is important that as many Black women as possible attend this important event, as Black women are disproportionately facing issues of discrimination, harassment, bullying, lower rates of pay and poorer conditions than the average worker in education.

To secure your place, register by **Friday 26 October** – details below. Remember that all reasonable travel expenses can be claimed back using UCU's expense form given out on the day, and lunch will be provided. The conference will be chaired by Pauline Collins from the Open University. And the **keynote speaker** will be **Cath Elliott**, feminist and freelance writer, researcher and blogger. Cath writes for **The Guardian** amongst others. In addition you will have a chance to hear about the "UCU women moving further,

reaching higher” network project and there will be workshops on recruiting a new generation of women activists, how to get campaigning and understanding how the union works, with practical examples of motion writing etc. The conference will also debate and vote on motions from branches and regions, as well as elect members to the women members’ standing committee. This is an excellent opportunity to meet other UCU women members, form links and to discuss key issues affecting women members in particular.

**To register:**

Go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/women-members-12> or contact Sue Bajwa in the conference team for hard copy forms: [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk) The deadline is **26 October**. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. **Interested in being a member of the UCU women’s committee?** There are 5 vacancies for a 2 year term. The committee meets four times a year in London (travel expenses paid) in addition to the annual women members’ conference. No previous committee experience necessary; new members very welcome. For further information go to The deadline for nominations is **19 October at 5pm**. Nomination forms can be downloaded here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2701> Or you can get them from Sue Bajwa: [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk)

## **LGTB AND DISABLED MEMBERS ANNUAL CONFERENCES**

The UCU Annual LGBT Members Conference is on Saturday 10 November 2012. This conference will take place at UCU head office, Carlow Street, London, NW1 7LH. The BMSC is encouraging Black LGTB members to participate in this event.

The conference will start from 10:30 - 16:30 to enable delegates to travel to and from the conference on the same day. Registration and refreshments available from 10am.

**To register:**

Go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LGBT2012> or contact Sue Bajwa in the conference team for hard copy forms: [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk) The deadline for registration is the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

**Interested in being a member of the LGBT Members’ Standing Committee?**

There are 5 vacancies for a 2 year term. The committee meets four times a year in London (travel expenses paid). No previous committee experience is necessary; and new members very welcome. The deadline for nominations is **Friday 27 November**. Nomination forms can be downloaded here: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2700> Or you can get them from Sue Bajwa: [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk) Each branch/local association can nominate one person to the committee. To be eligible for election or co-option to the committee, candidates must be in good membership and belong to the relevant equality group. The nominations form can be downloaded below. If you would like to speak to a member of the Equality Unit informally about the role, please contact [eqadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:eqadmin@ucu.org.uk)

## Disabled Members - Friday 23 November 2012 Register

here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Disabled-members2012> . Similar information as above applies to the Disabled Members Conference. The BMSC is encouraging all disabled black members to participate in this important event. *Deadline for registration Friday 9 November.*

## TUC Black Workers' Conference

The TUC Black Workers' Conference will be held in London next year from Friday 12<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Details of how to be part of the UCU delegation will be sent out shortly. This is a unique opportunity to meet Black activists from other trade unions and to find out how other unions are tackling racism within their own structures and at the workplace.

### INFORMATION IS POWER - CONTACTS IN THE UCU EQUALITY UNIT

UCU has a national team of staff with expertise and involvement within the equality agenda. They implement the policies and priorities determined by members through the democratic lay structures.

#### Helen Carr, National Head of Equality

E: [hcarr@ucu.org.uk](mailto:hcarr@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2537 F: 020 7756 2501

#### Seth Atkin, Equality Support Official

E: [satkin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:satkin@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2535 F: 020 7756 2501

#### Charlotte Nielsen, Equality Support Official

E: [cnielsen@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnielsen@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2534 F: 020 7756 2501

#### Chris Nicholas, Equality Support Official

E: [cnicholas@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cnicholas@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2536 F: 020 7756 2501

#### Sharon Russell, Equality Officer

E: [srussell@ucu.org.uk](mailto:srussell@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2538 F: 020 7756 2501

#### James Taylor, Administrator

E: [jtaylor@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jtaylor@ucu.org.uk) T: 020 7756 2539 F: 020 7756 2501

If you would like to:

- Receive any of our publications (including alternative formats)
- Sign up to receive a copy of our newsletters and/or join a equality network
- Wish to receive information relating to our annual equality meetings
- Unsure of who to contact in the Equality Unit

Please send an email stating your requirements to [egadmin@ucu.org.uk](mailto:egadmin@ucu.org.uk)

**KEY UCU RESOURCES.** UCU produces a number of resources aimed at supported individual members and branch /LA activist in their working environment.

#### Equality Act

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4136>

#### Public Sector Equality Duty - Wales

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/0/s/Public\\_sector\\_equality\\_duty\\_in\\_Wales.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/0/s/Public_sector_equality_duty_in_Wales.pdf)

**Public Sector Equality Duty - Scotland**

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs//9/Public\\_Sector\\_Equality\\_Duty\\_-\\_Scotland.doc](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs//9/Public_Sector_Equality_Duty_-_Scotland.doc)

**Public Sector Equality Duty – Northern Ireland, Section 75**

[http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/c/8/The\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Equality\\_Duty\\_in\\_Northern\\_Ireland.doc](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/docs/c/8/The_Public_Sector_Equality_Duty_in_Northern_Ireland.doc)

A full copy of the TUC report ‘**Two Steps forward, one step back – How the Coalition is dismantling our equality infrastructure**’ can be downloaded here <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-21425-f0.cfm>

**Equality Communications** <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2131>.

**UCU Activist Education Programme** <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3311>

**Branch / LA Contacts** <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3771>

**Developing Activist Network (DAN)** <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2813>

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# BLACK HISTORY MONTH – A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND ACTION – NOTES FROM JIM

THAKOORDIN ADDRESSING BLACK WORKERS IN LONDON

WHEN BLACK HISTORY MONTH STARTED?

**Black History Month (BHM) started in America in February 1926. It started as “Negro History Week” by African and white American scholars as a serious platform to address the widespread ignorance, and deliberate distortion of Black history, civilisation, culture and contributions to the development of humankind in all areas of activity over thousands of years.**

**BHM started in Britain as part of the process of Black self-organisation following the Civil Rights activities during the 1960’s and 1970’s. It started off with Black Studies and issues relating to Black Liberation and self organisation in trade unions, the Labour Party and the response to racism during the 1970’s 1980’s and culminated in a number of local authorities in partnership with Black community organisations formally organising activities associated with Black culture, art, politics, music, history and racism. The first major BHM activity I attended was organised by Ealing Council in 1989 and addressed by Mrs Mugabe, Neil Kinnock, Leader of the Labour Party, Bernie Grant and others.**

## WHY BLACK HISTORY MONTH?

**To plan our journey ahead we need to know where we have come from and how we got where we are. History is important for all of us Black and white. Unfortunately, the history of Black and Asian people until the 20th Century was denied, distorted and denigrated by Europeans in Europe, North America, Australia and in other countries where the descendents of white Europeans ruled.**

**Black and Asian people especially Africans were dehumanised, stereotyped, labelled and described as uncivilised, inferior and unequal to white people. White colonialists, merchants, slavers, imperialists, capitalists, plantation owners, traders, churches, monarchs and scholars had convinced themselves and brainwashed their fellow white citizens that Black and Asian people had never created any civilisation of any kind.**

**This belief was essential in order to justify slavery, colonialism, imperialism and the right of Europeans to conquer and exploit countries inhabited by Black and Brown people. Racism was given respectability and accepted by white states, the nobility, churches, institutions and the powerful. The legacy of centuries of racism still distorts our history and contributes substantially to the world in which we all live and work.**

**It is no co-incidence that Africa has been the poorest continent soon after Europeans arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and is likely to remain so for a long time. It is no coincidence that the white population of the world which represents less than 25 % of the world population has by far the majority of the wealth and controls almost all the key economic, political, military and scientific decisions which affects the majority Black and Asian population.**

**BHM provides all of us with an opportunity to critically and objectively reflect and evaluate not only our history, but also our present and where we want to be in the future. Our world has become a small village given the advances in transport and the media. Look around your workplace, your community and your cities and you will see a variety of races, cultures, religions, lifestyles and skin colours. Our world is multi-racial and multi-cultural. We all need to come to terms with our history, our environment and the society in which we live.**

**BHM is a timely reminder that we are one race – the human race. We need to celebrate of differences as well as the things we have in common such as human rights, freedom, justice, liberty, equality, democracy. We need to use build on activities and awareness created during BHM to ensure that we respect each other and that we commit ourselves, our union, our government and our nation to work towards real and positive freedom, justice, equality and access to health, education, economic and social justice in our modern world.**

**We must never the reasons which enabled inequality, exploitation, degradation, inhumanity and injustice endured by Black and Asian people, especially Africans and the poor around the world through slavery, colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, chauvinism or uncontrolled capitalism to influence our relationship.**

## WHO SUPPOSED TO CELEBRATE BHM?

**We should all celebrate BHM. BHM should be positively and pro-actively celebrated by all races, ethnic groups, religion, ages, and institutions. It is not only for Africans or people of African descent. We must find ways of learning about the history of all racial groups including the indigenous community, so we can work towards greater understanding of each other and build trust and respect for each other throughout the year. BHM should be a major catalyst to bring us physically and emotionally towards each other.**

## WHY BLACK HISTORY MONTH IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US AS WORKERS, WHETHER WE ARE TRADE UNIONISTS OR NOT?

**My interest in Black History, trade unions and radical politics led me to discover that:**

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- **Black people took part in the struggles to establish trade unions, democracy and political parties in Britain since the 17<sup>th</sup> century;**
  - **Africa, Asia and South America had great civilisations long before Europe became civilised;**
  - **Black people lived and worked in Britain for hundreds of years. At least since the Roman invasion of Britain;**
  - **Millions of Blacks and Asians fought against Germany in the First and Second World Wars;**
  - **Black and Asian people contributed enormously to the civilisation of mankind in every area of activity, including science, language, education, mathematics, medicine, art, music, culture, architecture, transport and material things for centuries, which we all use on a daily basis;**
  - **Blacks and Asians were great inventors, pioneers, philosophers, and adventurers for centuries;**
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- *African culture, art, and creativity were recognised and much valued by ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other empires. It was not until the Europeans conquered, colonised, and enslaved much of Africa between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries that Africa was labelled the “Dark Continent.” Stereotypes of Africans as uncivilised, barbaric, and biologically inferior were nurtured in European literature, myths, culture, and values simply to justify the inhuman and barbaric treatment of Negroes;*
  - *Prior to the European involvement, much of Africa was as developed as Europe, with agriculture, arts, language, learning, crafts, trading, mining, and other areas of activity which were at least as complex as sophisticated as elsewhere in the world. Before the colonisation and enslavement of Africa by the Europeans, the Africans were approximately on the same levels of economic, human, and cultural development as most of Europe. Colonisation and slavery were significant turning points for African development;*
  - *Four centuries of the capture, slaughter, and enslavement of millions of Africa’s most able people – the young, the strong, and the economically active – robbed Africa of its opportunity to develop its independent, economic, social, and political structures and infrastructures such as roads, transport, communication, and education. Various sources have estimated that up to fifty million Africans perished due to enslavement and persecution by the deliberate actions of Europeans. The history of Africa over the last four centuries was largely written by the European conquerors in such a way that it denies Africans and others the opportunity to reflect on the rich history and civilisation.*

Colleagues, I want to say a sincere thank you for inviting me to this important event. I am proud to be here, to be Black and to share my thoughts with you during this year’s Black History Month.

I have had a rough time health wise having had heart and kidney operations which have had enormous impact on my life and family. Can I just end by saying that we will never achieve equal rights and equal access to resources unless we are united, and involved in the race and class struggle? Being Black and beautiful is not enough, we need to be Black and powerful through unity amongst ourselves and then to build unity and solidarity with other groups of people irrespective of race, gender, disability or class, across the UK, Europe, and the world.

I am happy to answer any questions.