

unionlearn

with the Southern and
Eastern Region TUC



Defeating racism

unions working together for a
racism-free London, South East
and East of England

Contents

SERTUC, with London at its heart, is the most diverse of the TUC's regions.

This booklet is designed as a resource for reps and activists in the Southern & Eastern region to support their fight against racism and fascism in their workplaces and communities.

To educate, agitate and organise we have marshalled the facts, outlined what help and activities are available from SERTUC, and shared the resources that already exist.

Foreword	3
Brendan Barber <i>TUC General Secretary</i>	
Introduction	4
Liz Smith <i>unionlearn Director</i>	
Working against racism	6
Wilf Sullivan <i>TUC Race Equality Officer</i>	
Get the facts	10
Migrant workers	14
Arguments for trade unionists	
Black History Month	20
Lord Herman Ouseley, Jarvis Tyner	
Success at work	26
Case studies: Ford, NGSU, Epping	
Diversity works	29
The business case for equality and diversity	
Anti-racist education in SERTUC	33
Checklist	36
for reps fighting racism in the workplace	
Policies on racism	38
SERTUC, TUC, ECHR	
Contacts and resources	41

Foreword

Brendan Barber TUC General Secretary



Racism is still a major problem that many trade unionists are all too aware of. It is an important feature of our labour market.

Unemployment for black and Asian workers is twice as high as it is for white workers. In some parts of the country it is actually three times higher. On top of that, black employees are much less likely to hold senior positions in the workplace.

Trade unions have a major role to play in the struggle for race equality. Black workers who are not protected by a trade union earn less than their non-union white counterparts. But

when they are covered by collective bargaining, their wages on average are actually higher than they are for white workers. We recognise, however, that much more has to be done to address racism in the workplace – especially for young black workers who find that despite their qualifications they still tend to be regarded as second-class employees.

The Southern & Eastern Region of the TUC has produced this booklet, as part of their anti-racist strategy, as a resource for assisting trade unionists to tackle race equality issues in the workplace. It will be used as part of our learning resources in trade union education and provide stewards and activists with information and views on how they can tackle racial discrimination.

Introduction

Liz Smith unionlearn Director



A key objective for unionlearn is to work with unions to address inequalities in the labour market by helping those groups who have had the worst deal from formal education gain access to skills and qualifications.

Many of these vulnerable workers are from black and Asian communities who are often trapped in lower paid jobs with no opportunity to progress and develop their talents. Those who have high level skills also find it difficult to make the same progress as their white counterparts. Additionally they may face racism at work and will need help

from their union to take it up and get fair treatment.

The ambition for a Britain with world class skills, and the challenging targets that must be reached to achieve it, depends on ensuring that the skills of all workers are developed and utilised in the workplace. This is a challenge for government, employers and trade unions, and one which is a priority for unionlearn.

In recent years trade unions have been concerned to support migrant workers, many of whom have arrived from the new EU member states and the majority of whom are in low paid and vulnerable jobs where they have little support and protection.

As well as needing to know about their employment rights they need help to understand how work is organised and how to work safely. Many of them arrive with little or no English. In these circumstances union reps can not only help these workers settle in and know their rights, but can also make sure the local workforce welcomes them and treats them with dignity.

In the Southern and Eastern region of the TUC unionlearn is actively trying to address

these issues, and this excellent booklet sets out both the arguments for opposing racism and xenophobia and assisting people who face labour market discrimination break through the barriers.

That is why Union Learning Representatives are helping migrant workers and workers from settled communities access English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses and why the TUC has argued for free provision for workers to continue, with mechanisms found to ensure employers contribute to these costs.

Unionlearn is now responsible for the TUC Education Service, which has provided a course on *Tackling Racism* over many years. More recently a new course *Challenging the Far Right* has been introduced. It is designed to help counteract the racism that has been at its worst when far right groups organise and disrupt workplace relations and cohesion. The course equips union representatives with the understanding and knowledge to challenge these racist politics and divisive strategies.

Working together with unions, unionlearn can help to break through stereotypes, fight

discrimination and bring new opportunities to those denied them in the past.

This booklet will be an important part of this process.

Working against racism

A trade union challenge for the 21st century



Wilf Sullivan

is the TUC's national race equality officer in the Equality and Employment Rights Department

The changing nature of the labour market, the political consequences of European enlargement, deregulation and the increased penetration of the market into what was previously state provision, have pushed issues of racism and xenophobia to the centre of the political agenda across Europe. With increased movement of capital and a crisis in demographics has come a demand for labour not only in highly skilled areas but also in low skilled jobs resulting in a massive increase in workers migrating from war torn and impoverished economies in the south to the relative prosperous north. European Countries that had once been exporters of labour have seen an influx of new migrants into their labour markets and those countries with colonial links that had used ex-colonial labour to reconstruct their economies after the Second World War and beyond, have seen a new influx of labour from the underdeveloped world.

The political response has been a contradiction. On the one hand governments have recognised the need for migrant labour to fuel their economic growth. Ironically in response to the demand for increased security arising from the “war on terror”, they have pandered to, and in many cases

fanned, the flames of prejudice and fear. In order to manage this contradiction the concept of managed migration has arisen and where settlement of migrants is seen as unavoidable the discourse has become centred on the need to devise integration policies to ensure that these new settlers conform to western views of citizenship. The different histories and experiences of settled communities, immigrants, migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers have become conflated into a political debate that has made difference, in relation to race, nationality and ethnic origin, problematical.

The consequences for the labour market have been the explosion of exploitation in low paid employment; the debate about the effect of migration and whether it undermines pay, terms and conditions in the workplace; and the emergence of fragmentation of workers in terms of differences in the entitlement to, and applicability of, employment rights. The spectre of rivalry between different groups on the basis of race and nationality, often fuelled by the growing numbers of extreme right wing political parties across Europe, poses the question as to whether trade unions will plump for representing the interests of their current membership or seek to find ways of incorporating those workers who have not previously been of great concern. Irrespective of recognition the politics of race are a reality that trade unions across Europe will be forced to deal with.

Whilst the UK has a legal framework to

combat racial discrimination that dates back to 1965, all the issues that are prevalent in the rest of Europe are part of the public policy discourse. The McPherson Inquiry, which was instituted as a result of the lack of police investigation and action into the death of a young student, Stephen Lawrence, resulted in recognition that in order to tackle systemic racism there was a need to tackle the racism, unwitting or otherwise, that existed in institutions.

The Trades Union Congress set up a task group in 2001 that recognised that trade unions were not immune from institutional racism and that this resulted in barriers to involvement and poor representation of black workers within the trade union movement. During the life of the task group the TUC set up a hotline and encouraged workers to report their experiences of racial discrimination in the workplace. What emerged was a picture of working life that had not changed much for 30 years.

The task group came up with a number of recommendations to address this. Their work resulted in the changing of TUC rules to make it a requirement of affiliation that an organisation has a clear commitment to promote equality for all and to eliminate all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination, within its own structures and through all its activities, including its own employment practices. In order to measure progress the TUC Congress also agreed to an equality audit process that would monitor the progress that unions were making.

Despite these developments the trade union movement in the UK still faces a major challenge in dealing with race discrimination in the workplace. Recent government statistics reveal that the employment gap between white and black workers is over 15% and that unemployment rates among black workers are two to three times that of the white workforce. These are statistics that have changed little over the last 30 years. The experience in the workplace as evidenced by a series of TUC reports has consistently shown that black workers lack promotional opportunities, are denied access to training, are more likely to be disciplined or made redundant, suffer from occupational segregation, are often on temporary or agency contracts, and suffer from a pay gap. To demonstrate that progress has been made these statistics need to change.

A 2006 report from research partnership “Working Against Racism in the Trade Unions” (www.workinglives.org/ritu.html) has been timely in opening up the debate on what needs to change in order to meet these challenges. The research was important because it represents one of the few pieces of academic research that reflects the voices of black workers involved in fighting racial discrimination in the workplace, voices that have made uncomfortable reading in trade union debates because they have demanded more than moral commitments in the fight against racism. They have raised the issue of how to turn policy into practice and highlighted the link between ensuring that black workers are effectively involved at all

levels of the union and the union’s effectiveness in fighting racism.

In the UK black workers and trade unions have grown to rely on the legal framework to tackle problems of discrimination. This approach has had an effect on internal procedures with some employers avoiding making decisions about complaints of racism in the workplace by stating that it is not their role to decide whether a worker has been legally discriminated against. Increasing ‘legalisation’ of the employment tribunal process and the introduction of a costs regime within the employment tribunal system, have made trade unions cautious in their approach to cases. As a result many black workers developed expectations of the legal process being the only route to justice in the absence of other solutions being available to deal with the problems of discrimination in the workplace.

However the reality is that despite a longstanding legal framework, litigation has not had an impact on racial discrimination in the workplace. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the system cannot force employers to change discriminatory practices and only offers compensation once an employer has been found to discriminate against a worker. This has led to employers favouring pre-court settlements, which include clauses ensuring the worker cannot discuss the case publicly. Secondly, the difficulties of negotiating the barriers that have to be overcome in the legal system have resulted in a low level of cases being

successful in the UK employment tribunal system. Of the 3,430 dealt with in 2005-6 nearly 1,500 were withdrawn and 1,200 settled. Only 639 ended up coming before an employment tribunal and of those only 119 were successful.

The intensification of the debate on integration policy and the interest by employers in diversity management policies has also led the TUC to re-examine how race discrimination is being dealt with in the workplace. Many unions in the UK have developed equal opportunities policies at national level but trade union representatives at workplace level have often not implemented these policies. Some unions have developed equality structures in recognition that groups such as black workers are relatively powerless in the mainstream mechanisms of union democracy and as a result are not in a position to influence the bargaining agenda.

However this has rarely translated into the mainstreaming of equalities issues into the bargaining agenda. Issues relating to discrimination have come to be seen as separate or different from mainstream collective bargaining and just about benefiting black workers. In reality many of the issues that affect black workers such as lack of access to employment, pay discrimination, lack of access to promotion and training, higher levels of disciplinary action, high instances of agency and short term contracts and a higher risk of redundancy, are the subject of mainstream

collective agreements negotiated between trade unions and employers.

In response to the need for change the Trade Union Congress has developed a new *Black Workers' and Trade Union Charter*, which focuses on the measures trade unions need to take to more effectively tackle problems of racial discrimination in the workplace.

The charter has been developed on the basis that firstly, the participation of black workers in trade unions is key to ensuring that there is a reference point to construct a bargaining agenda, to test out whether it is achieving its ends and to encourage the membership and involvement of black workers in the mainstream of unions through collectively organising around relevant issues.

Secondly that permanent change in the workplace is the result of collective demands and actions from workers and that in order to tackle racial discrimination workers need to pressure employers in the workplace.

Lastly, that collective bargaining on race equality needs to be part of unions' mainstream negotiating agendas and must be directed towards ensuring that the systemic barriers and disadvantages that black workers experience are dismantled.

If these challenges are not met then unions will become increasingly irrelevant to the growing number of workers from black communities who have the potential to provide a source of activism and renewal for the trade union movement of the 21st century.

Get the facts...

Ethnic breakdown of residents in London, the South East and Eastern Region

	East	London	South East
Residents 2004	5,491,300	7,429,200	8,110,200
White 2001	95.1%	71.2%	95.1%
	5,124,000	5,106,500	7,609,000
Non White 2001	4.9%	28.8%	4.9%
	264,000	2,065,500	392,000

Union membership

Workers from black backgrounds were most likely to be members of a trade union. Union membership rates were lowest among those of Asian background. Ethnic minority women workers were more likely to be union members than their male counterparts; there is little gender difference among white people.

Union densities

Employed people	
East of England	23.3%
London	25.3%
South East	21.4%
Employed people, all UK	28.4%
Asian and Asian British	24.3%
Black and Black British	33.1%
White	28.7%

Source: Trade Union Membership 2006, DTI

Disparities in unemployment

In 2004, the chance of a person from an ethnic minority group being unemployed was 2.28 times greater than for a white person, increasing to three times or more for Bangladeshis, Black Africans, and Pakistanis. Indians and Chinese people had the lowest unemployment rates.

Unemployment

White all	4.3%
White men	4.6%
White women	4.0%
Ethnic minority all	9.8%
Ethnic minority men	9.6%
Ethnic minority women	10.0%

Source: Labour Force Survey spring to winter 2004

Employment by occupation

More than half of the women in work from the Black Caribbean, Black African and Bangladeshi ethnic groups work in public sector services. Ethnic minority workers in public sector services tend to be concentrated in lower grade positions.

Managers and senior officials	
White men	19%
Ethnic minority men	16%
White women	11%
Ethnic minority women	9%

Professional occupations	
White men	13%
Ethnic minority men	17%
White women	11%
Ethnic minority women	13%

Associate professional and technical jobs	
White men	13%
Ethnic minority men	11%
White women	14%
Ethnic minority women	18%

Administrative and secretarial	
White men	5%
Ethnic minority men	5%
White women	22%
Ethnic minority women	19%

Skilled trades	
White men	20%
Ethnic minority men	19%
White women	2%
Ethnic minority women	2%

Personal services	
White men	2%
Ethnic minority men	3%
White women	14%
Ethnic minority women	13%

Sales and customer services	
White men	4%
Ethnic minority men	9%
White women	12%
Ethnic minority women	13%

Process, plant and machine operatives	
White men	12%
Ethnic minority men	12%
White women	2%
Ethnic minority women	3%

Elementary occupations	
White men	12%
Ethnic minority men	15%
White women	11%
Ethnic minority women	11%

Source: Labour Force Survey spring to winter 2004

Highest qualification by ethnic group in Great Britain, 2001-2 (percentages)

	White British	Black Caribbean	Black African	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese
Degree or equivalent	15.3	9.5	21.0	22.2	10.7	7.7	23.0
Higher education (below degree level)	8.5	9.1	10.1	5.3	3.0	–	6.2
A level or equivalent	24.8	22.6	14.6	18.2	13.4	10.3	13.1
GCSE passes A*-C or equivalent	23.2	25.2	11.6	15.6	16.3	15.3	8.4
Other qualifications	16.2	17.0	15.3	18.3	33.8	43.9	19.6

Source: Annual local area labour force survey, Office for National Statistics

Population ages and employment

In 2004 the median age for white people was 40 years, compared to 27 years for ethnic minorities, consequently the ethnic minority share of the working age population is increasing and is likely to continue increasing.

‘Economically active’ is defined as those members of the working age population who are either in paid work, are unemployed, or are looking for work.

Working age economically active

White men	84.2%
White women	74.8%
Ethnic minority men	74.6%
Ethnic minority women	56.2%

Source: Labour Force Survey 2005

Ethnic minorities make up 73% of all people in work, but 10.1% of 25 to 34 year olds in work.

Women are less likely to be employed than men, but the differential is greater for ethnic minorities. The difference in employment rates is most pronounced among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, with Bangladeshi women (36.9%) and Pakistani women (36.8%) less likely to be in employment than men from the same groups. Exceptionally, Black Caribbean men and women had similar employment rates.

Working age in employment

White men	80.0%
White women	71.0%
White all	76.2%
Ethnic minority men	68.0%
Ethnic minority women	51.0%
Ethnic minority all	58.9%
Ethnic minority Eastern region	66.8%
Ethnic minority London region	58.4%
Ethnic minority South East region	67.4%

Source: Labour Force Survey 2005

Pay comparisons

The pay gap between ethnic minority and white workers has been increasing since 1998. The relative pay of each ethnic group has remained fairly constant except that the pay rates of black people has tended to fall behind that of Indian people.

Ethnic minority women earn about 70p an hour more than white women reflecting the larger proportion of white women working part-time.

Median earnings per hour, aged 18+

White all	£8.00
White men	£9.30
White women	£7.06
Ethnic minority all	£7.50
Black men	£7.00
Black women	£8.27
Indian men	£9.56
Indian women	£7.60
Pakistani/Bangladeshi men	£6.25
Pakistani/Bangladeshi women	£6.24
Mixed/other men	£7.60
Mixed/other women	£7.58

Source: Low Pay Commission 2005

Racial discrimination in tribunals

According to the Employment Tribunals Services annual report, in 2005-6, 3,430 applications involving complaints of racial discrimination were lodged at employment tribunals (2.1% of all claims).

42% of these were subsequently withdrawn, 31% subject to ACAS conciliated settlements and 6% disposed of otherwise.

Of those that were heard just 3% were successful (119 cases). The average award was £30,361, the median award was £6,640.

Migrant workers

Arguments for trade unionists

We all know that the impact migrant workers have had on life in the region in recent years has been huge. They serve us food and drink, harvest the crops, and build just about everything. As with all other waves of immigration into the UK this has been accompanied by views in the host population which are often not just ill informed, but also racist.

Let's look at the kinds of things that people are saying about migrant workers, put the record straight, and offer some facts to help trade unionists build the movement based on the belief that the essence of the trade union movement is solidarity between all workers.

“Do migrant workers just take from the economy?”

No. In this country, the overall economic impact of immigration is limited but positive. Migrant workers contribute more in taxes than they receive in services, and migration probably leads to slightly higher levels of employment and wages for native workers. Migration may possibly be linked to an increase in wage inequality in this country, but the evidence is not conclusive.

There is anecdotal evidence that jobs may be lost and wages depressed in certain, specific sectors of the economy. As trade unionists we have to take real examples of this seriously. But the trade union response to the small number of specific cases where problems do arise is to demand equal rights for native and migrant workers alike. These problems usually occur because unscrupulous employers take advantage by exploiting poorly informed and poorly organised workers and undercut more principled employers or those employing indigenous and/or organised labour.

As trade unionists we are not simply concerned with economic arguments. Our vision is of one where all workers can live full

lives free from poverty, prejudice and exploitation. Therefore we support the freedom of people to move around the world as a right as fundamental as the right to freedom of speech. However, the global context of failed development, poverty and precarious jobs cannot be ignored. We believe migration can deliver economic gains with the potential to improve all our lives, but we take seriously the interests of workers who fear they could lose their jobs or that their wages will be undercut.

Migration facts and figures

In 2005 there were just over 1.5 million foreign migrants working in the UK, accounting for 5.4% of all employees. In the past 10 years the number of migrant workers has increased by about 600,000. This is a phenomenon being seen across Europe.

Nearly two thirds of migrant workers in this country live in the South East of England – 45.3% of these live in London and another 18.5% in the rest of the South East. Immigrants are, on average, younger than the native-born population; 90% are aged between 15 and 44. Migrant workers tend to be more likely than UK nationals to work at either end of the spectrum – in professional or routine jobs – and less likely to work in intermediate jobs:

People living and working in the UK by socio-economic classification, 2005

	UK nationals (%)	Foreign nationals (%)
Professional, employers and managers	40.1	42.2
Intermediate	32.1	24.5
Routine	23.7	27.1
Other	4.1	6.1

These differences are real, though less extreme than some reports have suggested. However, this pattern may be changing: the differences from UK nationals are increasing – recently arrived migrant workers are less likely to work in professional occupations and much more likely to work in routine jobs.

Proportion of workers earning below £5 an hour, 2005

UK born	All immigrants	New immigrants
10%	9%	16%

The migrant workers in the statistics in this table are mainly documented workers; obviously it is very difficult for official statistics to categorise undocumented migrant workers. The Home Office has estimated that there were 430,000 ‘unauthorised’ migrants in the UK in 2001, and the Institute for Public Policy Research has concluded that “while regular migrants to the UK come to fill vacancies across the skills spectrum, most irregular migrants are likely to be doing jobs that could be characterised as dirty, difficult and dangerous”. The IPPR has calculated that



Workers getting advice at a Migrant Workers event organised by unionlearn at City College Norwich

regularising the position of these workers would not only make it more difficult for them to be exploited, it could produce as much as £1 billion extra a year in National Insurance contributions and income tax.

“Don’t migrant workers cause unemployment?”

No! Linking immigration to unemployment is an old story. Sometimes this link reflects what is known as the ‘lump of labour fallacy’. This is the notion that there is a fixed amount of work that can be done in the economy and that if one group gets more of that work then existing workers will get less. If it was that simple then the arrival of the baby-boom generation into workplaces after

the Second World War should have impoverished the country. Not only did this not happen, we saw a great expansion of employment, because the new young generation increased the level of demand.

Similarly the latest government research has found “no discernible statistical evidence to suggest that [the latest wave of] migration has been a contributor to the rise in claimant unemployment in the UK”. An independent report concluded that “a broad view of the data does not suggest a clear general link between immigration and unemployment”. It pointed out that while net immigration has been rising since 1997, the unemployment rate fell between January 1998 and August 2005, from 6.4 per cent to 4.7 per cent.

They also find that “immigration since 1998 has raised GDP by 3.1 per cent. The immigration in 2004-5 has on its own contributed 1 per cent to GDP”.

“But don’t migrant workers drive down wages?”

No, employers drive down wages, and low levels of union organisation allow them to. A Home Office report published in 2003 found “that there is no strong evidence of large adverse effects of immigration on employment or wages of existing workers... Insofar as there is evidence of any effect on wages, it suggests that immigration enhances wage growth”.

Another Department of Work and Pensions study of the impact of the new EU member states, published at the end of 2005, also found that there was no evidence of wage growth slowing in most industries. The one exception was agriculture. The Labour Force Survey shows wages in the agriculture and fishing industries growing more slowly than the rest of the economy. The authors admit that the evidence is mixed, but point to the fact that, compared to other sectors, employment in agriculture has grown very rapidly since 2004. This makes it more difficult to claim that migrant workers are displacing British-born workers, and one interpretation is that farmers are now able to recruit workers to jobs that do not pay enough to attract British-born workers, or where the terms and conditions are not sufficiently attractive. It is, by definition, difficult to estimate the impact of

undocumented migration on wages, but it is likely that workers who are unable to enforce their employment rights, and are constantly at risk of being reported to the authorities by their employers, are more vulnerable than any other group. It seems extremely unlikely that this would not have some impact on wage levels, at least at the bottom end of the labour market. Most trade unionists would recognise this as a case for better enforcement of employment rights and the minimum wage regulations.

“But come on, don’t migrant workers cost the taxpayer millions?”

Actually no. Immigrants, not just migrant workers, pay more in taxes than they take out in services. A Home Office study using 1999-2000 data found that migrants to the UK:

- paid £31.2 billion in taxes;
- received £28.8 billion in public goods and services;
- made a net contribution of around £2.5 billion – worth about 1p on the basic rate of income tax.

In 2005 the IPPR updated this work to cover the five year period from 1999-2000 to 2003-4. That study presented similar findings in a different way: immigrants consistently made a higher net annual fiscal contribution than British born people.

Put simply this is because migrant workers tend to be in the prime of their working lives

and so don't rely on the state for the costs associated with childhood (their schooling) or old age (pensions and increasing ill health).

Although migrant workers do have a positive impact on the economy as a whole, there can be acute problems at grass roots level. Local councils' expenditure varies in line with the number of people who need their services, but their revenue grants from central government are determined by estimates of how many migrant workers and their families live there now and projections of how many there are going to be. Where these estimates are wrong there can be severe pressures on housing, schools and other services. There are similar issues for other public authorities.

The calculation of the central government grant is a more important issue in the UK than in other countries because it accounts for such a high proportion of local authorities' funding. While most of the positive fiscal impacts of immigration accrue to central government (through a higher tax yield), a high proportion of the negative fiscal impacts are borne by local authorities, so the accurate calculation of the revenue grants is essential. But the problem is that while these grants are based on predictions of how many people will need to use each local authority's services, the predictions themselves are almost impossible to make with any accuracy. This means that some local authorities are bound to have shortages of, for example, school places and

health services from time to time. The important point for trade unionists is that these problems are not necessarily a negative impact of migration. Rather, they are a consequence of poor planning, the system of local government finance and technical problems relating to how the government gathers statistics and uses them to predict behaviour. The TUC will support efforts to address these problems, not least because they increase the risk that migrant workers will be blamed for problems not of their making.

Conclusion

A number of clear messages emerge. Firstly, host countries gain from migration. It is possible to debate the size of these gains, but the important point for British debates is that immigration does not have a negative impact. Migrant workers pay more in taxes than the value of the public services they receive. At a national level, the old accusations of the extreme right, that immigrants take native workers' jobs or are a drain on the welfare state, are as false as they have ever been.

Secondly however, this does not mean that it is impossible for immigration to be associated with problems. But it does mean that trade unionists need to be able to separate the real problems from the racist myths. We have seen that local problems in delivering public services can arise when authorities fail to anticipate the arrival of significant numbers of migrant workers and their families. This problem is caused by

poor planning, not immigration, but failure here can lead to a reaction against immigration, rather than calls for better public services. Unions will encourage the government to work towards more accurate local-level predictions of the numbers of migrant workers and dependents and the capacity to respond rapidly to changes.

The answer to this problem is not to oppose immigration: in a globalised world this would not be effective and would undermine the real benefits migration brings as well as being an unacceptable challenge to the principle of free movement. Instead we need to increase the supply of jobs available to all workers, and campaign for services that will make it possible for all workers and unemployed people to get even better jobs. The country as a whole is benefiting from migration, the Treasury expects it to account for at least a tenth of future economic growth. The country as a whole has a duty to set aside most of this growth for an improved social wage. Migrants should of course share in the wealth they are helping to create. But to do so they will need to be guaranteed rights to social services and benefits to protect themselves against poverty and social exclusion. To avoid exploitation they need equal rights with native workers and the enforcement of employment standards, especially the minimum wage.

Native workers and their families can gain a great deal from the increased output and net tax contribution migrants bring, to say

nothing of the general enrichment to the culture of the country. But for the real benefits of migration to be seen unions need to continue to organise workers and defend services.

The information contained here comes from a report entitled *The economics of migration: managing the impacts*.

The full report, including references, can be downloaded from

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13542-fo.cfm>

‘Swamped’ by refugees and asylum seekers?

Britain hosts less than 3.2% of the world’s refugees and asylum seekers. There are about nine million refugees around the world, the majority of whom are living in less developed countries (who provide asylum to 74.3% of the global refugee population, leaving the wealthier countries to help just 25.7%).

Asylum applications to the UK continue to fall. 22,750 applications were received in 2006, down 10% on the previous year. 15% were successful at first decision plus 20% of those that appealed. Source: Home Office, 2007

Black history month

“To fight to end racism is a noble fight. It is a fight that all decent people must engage in. It is a fight to save humanity. And you workers, the working class has always been in the forefront of this fight.”

Jarvis Tyner speaking during
SERTUC Black History Month 2006

In October every year, as part of SERTUC’s celebration of Black History Month, we invite keynote speakers to share their experiences and views. We have been privileged to hear from people as diverse as Paul Robeson Junior and Willie Madishu (from the South African Congress of Trades Unions).

In 2006 the Black History Month Lecture was delivered by Lord Herman Ouseley, and we also organised an evening with Jarvis Tyner. These lectures humanise and politicise the experience of racism (both in Britain and elsewhere in the world), point the way forward, and celebrate and highlight the achievements of black citizens of the world. They revive and encourage, inspire, create solidarity, and strengthen our determination to defeat racism and fascism wherever they appear.

It is a delicate matter extracting words from the whole, but following are part of the texts of Herman’s and Jarvis’ addresses to give you a flavour of their contributions.

The full text of both lectures is downloadable from www.tuc.org.uk/sertuc



Lord Herman Ouseley was a local government officer for 30 years, before becoming the Chief Executive of Lambeth Council. He was the Executive Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality for seven years.

The struggle for equality goes on

I have come through the struggle as a poor person, in a family headed by a single parent and have walked the streets bare footed, as part of that poverty. That is why my empathy is with the poor, the oppressed, the down trodden – that is the struggle we don't leave. I am grateful not to be poor now, however, I am not sitting in an ivory tower pulling up the ladder and forgetting about others.

It is eye opening to reflect on the struggle, which goes back to the late 1950s when commonwealth citizens were invited here to come and assist in the rebuilding of the economy following the ravages of the second world war. The West Indian servicemen and women could find no accommodation in which to live. They had to live in air raid shelters on Clapham Common and when, eventually, they were able to move out they moved into bedsits, where they didn't have a room, they hired a bed. The nightshifts and the dayshifts occupied the bed at different times during the 24 hours a day. That was the reality of their struggle. They had to face up to the effects of the colour bar (because don't forget that it wasn't removed until 1965) – some would say it moved in theory but is still around in practice. The signs used to say: "no Blacks, no Coloured, no Irish, no Dogs" and when we come to look at the question of segregation and separation that set a pattern, that struggle to find basic accommodation, that pattern for segregation, separation, exclusion, denial, discrimination, poverty

and disadvantage, was repeated in many of the towns and cities where non-white migrants settled.

This was not some process of sleepwalking into segregation, it was about locating the black presence in the UK into its place among the poor, having to fend for themselves and to be demonised in the process until the next cohort of migrants for such treatment arrived on scene.

Today it is the Muslims, tomorrow it's the Bulgarians and the Romanians (and they haven't even arrived yet) and there's already speculation about them being restricted, about them being racist, about them being criminals, scroungers, etc. So they're being denigrated before they even arrive...

The only time we are absolutely free of prejudice is when we are born, From that moment on our future attitudes are influenced by parents, families, friends, then formal education, and the media. Inherent prejudice reinforced by sensationalised media coverage on issues like immigration is all part of the stereotyping and demonising, contributing to our bias, ignorance, bigotry, hatred and violence. Part of what Black History Month is about is helping us to open our minds and liberate ourselves to see that what we are told isn't necessarily the truth. The reason we have Black History Month now is about how we find the truth about the black contribution to the world, not just to Britain, as our understanding of the truth is always evolving...

Let me tell you about the committee on standards in public life and a study conducted during 2004. This was as a result of the waning confidence in the British political system, fewer people voting, but also the decline in confidence in our politicians. Who are the people we most trust?

Doctors 93%, Head Teachers 84%, Judges 81%, Police Officers 77%, TV Journalists 69%... and who do we trust the least? At the bottom of the list were Estate Agents, and second to last on the list were Tabloid Journalists (7%). Government Ministers were trusted to tell the truth by only 24% – only 1 in 4 of the population trust Government Ministers to tell the truth! MPs were a little higher with 27%.

When you look at what people in that survey said had the greatest impact in helping them to get information and form their attitudes it's the same politicians and the media – scary isn't it? We get our information and are influenced most by the people we least trust!



Jarvis Tyner

was born in Philadelphia, worked in the printing industry and was a member of the Amalgamated Lithographers Union. He is a civil rights activist and comrade of Angela Davis and a long-time supporter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists.

Race and class – the American experience

Keep in mind that when slavery was introduced as the means by which to develop the United States as a capitalist country, it was the most vicious system of slavery humankind had ever known. It was more vicious than slavery in ancient times and it was so vicious because it was forged onto the development of American capitalism. In ancient times slaves could actually work their way out of slavery; they could have families, it was not a life sentence, and they had some rights. From the beginning of slavery in the United States, slaves were not treated as human beings; they weren't even considered human beings. Slaves were treated like commodities, they were treated like tools, cows, like livestock, like equipment.

As a result, in the minds of the slave holders, no punishment was immoral because these were not considered human beings. The ideology of racism that was formed under the system of slavery has been used to inflict great oppression on people all over this world for 400 years; the ideology of racism was from the beginning designed to rationalise this barbarity of the commoditisation of human beings.

You know in writing the constitution (1789) they were struggling over whether to count the slaves or not. In that struggle the South wanted to count the slaves so they could have more representation in the Congress but they did not want to give them the right

to vote. The North did not want them to count the slaves because that would give the South too much power. The slaves had no say, there were no black people in the Continental Congress who could argue or anybody with enough sense to argue for the right thing. So they came with this compromise where the South would count all the white people and each black person would be counted as 3/5 of a human being. Of course that is ridiculous and racist. But at the time it was the compromise, it was either that or count every slave and get more representation for the slave owners, and the slaves still could not vote, still had no power to participate. This was at the inception of US democracy.

There were free blacks who were also denied the right to vote. This democracy had a congenital deformity about it from the beginning because it was at peace with, or living in harmony with, the system of slavery itself. All of the signers of the Declaration of Independence (a great document, which really moves you when you read it) – all those signers had slaves (Jefferson, etc). The principles they were pushing were good principles and frankly the fight against slavery was motivated and inspired by those principals. Frederick Douglas, who was born a slave, became one of the most articulate, if not the most articulate, voice against slavery. He delivered an historic speech in Glasgow on why slavery was in violation of the US constitution, which somehow the founders of the country hadn't yet figured out. But he

understood that and he was brilliant. So brilliant that some of the people said this man could have not possibly have been a slave because he is too smart, too articulate and so forth. They underestimate the power of African people, I must say, in that regard. But, in general, history has proven that once a people understand that they are oppressed, they will fight their way through that oppression and find their way to freedom, which is a natural, normal and powerful part of what it means to be a human being.

Let me tell you about the Republican Party. It's very important to understand that the Republican Party was the party of Abraham Lincoln back during the slavery times. Most blacks supported the Republican Party during slavery times. This was the party of the rising Northern capitalist class. As I mentioned, they were fighting against slavery. In 1932 the black vote shifted en masse to the Democratic Party because you had the New Deal with Roosevelt. The Republican Party were kind of a minority party, almost since that depression until the 50s with Eisenhower. Kennedy defeated Nixon in 1960, Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson resigned over Vietnam and Nixon beat Humphrey in 1968. When Reagan won the Presidency in 1980 the Republicans started to gain new momentum. You know what that new base was? It was built on racism.

Brothers and sisters, racism is a weapon of mass destruction.

To fight to end racism is a noble fight. It is a fight that all decent people must engage in. It is a fight to save humanity. And you workers, the working class has always been in the forefront of this fight. It probably does not appear that way when you read the history books. But do you know who populated the Civil Rights movement of the 60s? Black workers coming out of the black churches in the deep South, that's who did

it. That's the people who went through the fight; their children were the ones who faced the police dogs, fire hoses, the mace and being beaten and jailed and so forth. Black working class children did that. And the white working class came in because Dr King had the knowledge and the ability to build a broad coalition. It took the white working class to come in on this fight in order to defeat it.

UnionCity at Rise

The Rise festival is an annual, free, one-day festival celebrating multiculturalism and promoting anti-racism and is organised by the Mayor of London in conjunction with the Southern & Eastern Region TUC and the National Assembly Against Racism.

In July 2007 SERTUC launched UnionCity – a part of Rise where trade unions came together to pledge their opposition to racism in London with the message “fight racism at work, join a union”.

As well as speakers from the TUC, SERTUC, and individual unions on the main stage during the day, UnionCity included a DJ bus programmed by the mighty Trojan Sound System, a bar run by the Workers' Beer Company, trade union stalls (including unionlearn with SERTUC's own stall) where festival goers could get information on employment rights, union membership and the fight against discrimination in the workplace, and a live art installation by artist Victor Landeta and friends.

The message to the 80,000 Londoners attending the festival was clear – “if you're a union member come and visit us, if you're not, come and join us!”.

The logo for UnionCity features the word "Union" in a large, black, cursive script font. Below it, the word "CITY" is written in a bold, grey, sans-serif font with a slight shadow effect.

Success at work

Case Study – Ford

In the 1990s, Ford suffered a series of high profile racial discrimination claims in the UK and was threatened with formal investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Both the Ford Motor Company and the trade unions took the issue of discrimination very seriously, with meetings not only in the UK, but a delegation from the recognised trade unions, and the TUC at its highest level, going to Ford headquarters in the USA.

Action plans were drawn up by the company and unions to challenge racism in each plant. At each plant there was an assessment of equal opportunities. Every employee was sent an information and guidance pack to their homes. These packs covered such issues as harassment and bullying, responsibilities of managers and employees, discipline and grievance procedures, along with recruitment, selection and career development.

At the Ford Southampton Plant, the trade unions, with local management, carried out an audit of the plant and found that progression was largely based on seniority rather than equal opportunities of

competence. This has now changed.

They also started to advertise job opportunities directly in the ethnic minority communities and work with the Wheatsheaf Trust, a local charity, on CV writing to help the BME community with job applications. Along with developing more robust joint policies and procedures, Ford Southampton brought the Garnett Foundation, a theatre company that deals with diversity, into the workplace to challenge established attitudes.

Ford also started to engage with the local community by sponsoring Art Asia and the Southampton Mela Festival. Ford has now won many awards for its equality actions and outcomes. At the Southampton Plant productivity has had a 25% improvement, both management and trade unions put this down in part to its diversity programme.

Colin Lumber, Regional Officer for the TGWU says “Within Ford in general and Southampton in particular, we have worked tirelessly within the framework of partnership to achieve a culture of respect, inclusiveness and innovation, based on a trust, value and openness not found in many large manufacturing organisations”.

Both full-time officials and shop stewards have been key in challenging racism in Ford. Ford today is a very different place to what it was in the 1980s and 1990s.

Case study – Nationwide Building Society and NGSU

For nearly 10 years the Nationwide Group Staff Union (NGSU) has worked with Nationwide Building Society to ensure the business was promoting the importance of diversity and equality.

Towards the end of 2002 it was felt that more action was needed, therefore, a new group was set up: the Diversity and Equality of Opportunity Committee (DEOC). The new committee is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive of Nationwide and made up of senior managers from across the business together with the general secretary of NGSU, Tim Poil.

At the same time the union's National Executive Committee (NEC) progressed this agenda by establishing a series of equality advisory committees including one for the union's ethnic minority members. The purpose of the committees is to provide avenues for consultation with members and to receive feedback. These committees provided feedback not only to the union's NEC but also directly to the DEOC.

The union appealed for volunteers to join the committees by producing a special issue of its journal *Rapport*. But the initial response was slow. In order to speed things up the

general secretary wrote directly to members who had informed the union of their ethnicity and the response was overwhelming.

At the first meeting of ethnic minority members in March 2003, some 30 people attended.

Since that time four further meetings have been held and attendance has been good.

From the meetings there have been a number of positive results and examples of questions, issues and suggestions made via the general secretary to DEOC and NEC are as follows:

- the need to identify and tackle processes and procedures that lead to institutional racism;
- ensuring that the impetus for diversity and equalities strategies is maintained and that staff do not give in to apathy;
- using best practice in recruitment to ensure the company reaches the widest audience;
- making sure that members from minority groups seriously consider applying for jobs at all levels;
- how Nationwide will support staff involved in the committees;
- Nationwide has prepared a number of action plans and the ethnic minority plan included much of this feedback. These have been issued to all employees and are reviewed at the DEOC's six weekly meetings.

Included in the action plan for ethnic minorities is the aim for the workforce to reflect the local population, as revealed in census data. Other aims include:

- to identify best practice with external organisations;
- to produce a new look recruitment candidate information pack;
- to pilot a 'breaking down the language barrier' project to investigate the possible use of multiple languages in the business.

The action plans are to be living documents: as items are achieved they will be removed, with other items added.

A recent development was to provide more detailed guidance notes to managers carrying out appraisals to guard against discrimination in reviewing the performance of their team members; the guidance notes on this were signed jointly by the Deputy Chief Executive and the NGSU General Secretary.

The NGSU has seen many benefits from the Advisory Committees. In particular, a number of activists from the various committees have become involved in a range of union activities, including one person from the Ethnic Committee being elected to the NEC.

Case study – Epping Forest Council

Following an alleged racist remark being made by one member of staff to another, Epping Forest Council's management team, who were determined to address the issue,

enlisted the help of unionlearn SERTUC. Unionlearn were approached by the council's HR department who asked if we could work in partnership with them to provide a course that would give council employees a greater understanding of the issues and obligations around diversity and racism. Affiliate unions with members who were employed at the council (Unison, GMB, Amicus and UCATT) were contacted and the initiative received strong support from both Regional Secretaries and local officials. A meeting took place between unionlearn's union development team, the council's HR department and trade union officials. It was agreed that the TUC study centre at the College of North East London (CoNEL) should be approached to see if it would be possible to provide a course in order to promote racial awareness. The TUC tutors at CoNEL, who have a wealth of experience around equality issues, held a number of planning meetings with trade union officials and the Council that resulted in the development of a course titled *Dignity at Work* which addresses the following issues:

- Stereotypes
- Discrimination Law
- Disability Discrimination
- Equality & Diversity Policies
- Equality Case Studies

At the end of the course, participants were asked to draw up an action plan to deal with any points that had arisen during the course.

Diversity works

The business case for diversity in the workplace

Diversity Works for London is an initiative from the Mayor of London to help employers to enhance the diversity of their workforce and suppliers.

It aims to tackle the disadvantage faced by different groups of workers in the labour market while improving the competitiveness and productivity of businesses in London.

It does this through providing businesses with information, advice and guidance on the benefits of diversity to their organisation and help in putting together strategies to promote diversity in their workplace.

SERTUC is a key partner in the process, working with trade unions in London to provide advice and support to reps who want to engage their employers in this agenda.

One of the key principles of this strategy is to demonstrate to employers the benefits that a diverse workforce brings to an organisation. Some of these arguments are outlined below.

Many companies have identified the benefits that can accrue from the different perspectives and experiences a diverse team can bring to their workplace.

Managing diversity strategically can assist companies in becoming more competitive in serving the needs of their customers, expanding into new markets, and also in recruiting talent from a workforce that, in London, is increasingly diverse and highly mobile.

Diversity gives businesses the opportunity to:

1) Move into new markets and source a wider range of customers, including increased penetration of overseas markets

A diverse workforce can act as useful resource for a business to engage with diverse communities and new markets. It may be that a business can tap into language skills that exist among the

workforce or use connections to different communities to help develop marketing to new customers.

There is a huge potential spend among diverse communities. It is estimated that black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in London have a disposable income of £16 billion. Nationally, disabled people's spend is in the region of £80 billion and the 'pink pound' (ie. the spending power of LGBT communities) is estimated to be worth £70 billion.

Furthermore, there is strong evidence that links between ethnic minority workers and their family's country of origin aids access to foreign markets and supports innovation. This provides an essential competitive edge in a globalised market.

2) Create an inclusive working environment, motivating existing employees and improving productivity

Research evidence from the UK and US suggests that businesses with a diverse workforce are more strongly placed to attract and retain quality staff. Well-led diverse teams can outperform homogenous teams with higher levels of productivity, creativity and employee satisfaction.

Implementing strategies in the workplace that increase work life balance and flexible employment opportunities for workers with care duties, many of who are women, enhances worker satisfaction and morale.

In turn this reduces absenteeism and helps

retain skilled and experienced workers with care duties who may otherwise need to leave their employment.

Effective equalities and diversity strategies also help reduce incidences of harassment and discrimination. This both increases staff morale and reduces costs incurred through investigation, disciplinary procedures and possible tribunals.

3) Find and retain skilled and versatile employees

According to government forecasts, by 2010 only a third of the workforce in London will be white and male.

80% of the growth in London's population in the next 15 years will be from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Businesses in London that fail to recruit from a diverse labour market will fail to access the full range of skills and talents available and be unable to compete with those that do.

Figures from the Labour Force Survey suggest that by opening up recruitment processes to those aged over 45, people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled people, businesses gain access to 1.3 million potential employees qualified to at least degree level.

There are clearly competitive benefits to be gained by employers who take every step to ensure they recruit from the widest possible talent pool.

Furthermore, research suggests that businesses that have diverse teams and effective equalities policies and an inclusive environment attract skilled staff.

A survey by Business in the Community found that 90% of workers wanted to work for a “diverse employer”. In an increasingly competitive labour market, diversity is becoming an increasingly important part of the ‘job offer’ to prospective candidates.

4) Increase creativity and innovation

A diverse team will also bring different talents to the workplace. These enhance the ability of a business to innovate and thus maintain a competitive edge.

A recent survey of financial analysts by Ernst and Young showed that innovation was rated one of the top 10 non-financial variables crucial to the success of a business.

In their report into the competitive advantage of linguistic and ethnic diversity, Kingston University’s Small Business Research Centre asserts that “places with diverse mixes of creative people are more likely to generate new combinations of ideas and resources which, in turn, lead to greater innovation, firm formation, job generation and economic growth”.

5) Win larger public and private sector contracts, which are increasingly being awarded on the basis of non-financial criteria such as diversity

Many contracts today are won on the basis

of a range of criteria, not just cost.

Increasingly, contracts contain non-financial criteria such as commitment to social and environmental objectives. A commitment to diversity in recruitment and employment will be included among these.

In March 2007, the government-commissioned *Equalities Review* recommended that diversity policy should be a key factor when awarding public sector contracts. It said the law should be changed to place greater responsibilities on public bodies, including “a specific requirement to use procurement as a tool for achieving greater equality”.

The Greater London Authority and Department of Work and Pensions are two high profile public authorities that have begun to insert diversity objectives into their contracts.

This is not only true of the public sector. Large private sector organisations also use their procurement process to deliver on diversity.

From February 2006, Barclays began to request diversity monitoring from a number of its suppliers. And Microsoft recently cancelled a contract with one of its suppliers due to a lack of commitment to workplace diversity.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) confirmed that private firms were now increasingly insisting on good diversity practices from their suppliers.

The CIPS director of marketing Brian Ford told *Personnel Today* “It is a growing trend for suppliers to be asked for their diversity policies. We have seen this grow over the past few months and we can’t see that changing. It would be sensible for employers to put policies in place so they can’t be caught out”.

For businesses to capitalise on public and private sector contracts, they must be in a position not only to demonstrate a commitment to diversity but to deliver on those commitments as part of the contract.

More information on this project can be gained by emailing SERTUC at mDYkes@tuc.org.uk

Anti-racist education in SERTUC

Educate and organise!

Several TUC education centres within SERTUC have organised information and organising events for migrant workers. These have been well attended and have aimed to bring together the knowledge and experience of TUC tutors and union organisers. TUC tutors have usually provided the venue and used their networks to promote the event in local media. Participating unions have also promoted the events and used their local knowledge to help, advise and organise the workers that attend.

Mark Hughes, a TUC Education tutor at **City College Norwich** said: “The local trade unions were able to give anecdotal evidence that companies were specifically encouraging workers from other countries to take up employment within the UK, setting up recruitment agencies and putting in place procedures that made access to UK workplaces that much easier. However the local trade unions were becoming increasingly aware that some companies were denying migrant workers their legal rights. Anecdotes of workers being charged to find work and to receive their P45s and of

being charged rent for substandard accommodation led many to conclude that migrant workers needed organising. While many workers in the area believed that migrant workers were being used to undermine terms and conditions, it was felt that it was important to ‘equalise up’.

“For that reason it was decided that a one day event focusing upon ‘Knowing Your Rights’ would appeal to all workers and be especially relevant to migrant workers. The identified aims of the event were to foster greater understanding of the issues surrounding migrant workers among the local community and to break down some of the barriers that prevented migrant workers and their families from integrating into the local communities.

“The one day event was held in December 2006 in Great Yarmouth. As well as the trade unions, other voluntary organisations that work with migrant workers assisted in making sure that the event was publicised and facilitated stalls on the day. Richard Howitt, an Eastern Region Labour MEP, came and gave a speech which highlighted the importance of migrant workers to the British economy and encouraged the trade unions

to continue their hard work in not only raising the terms and conditions of their members but also in their endeavours to create a society that is both just and fair, a movement that supports the eradication of prejudice which blights so many lives.”

In June 2007 the TUC Education department at **Dunstable College** organised a Migrant Workers Day in conjunction with local unions. Ged Peck, TUC Education Coordinator for Hertfordshire commented:

“The Migrant Workers Day was a huge success. Thousands of leaflets in English and other languages were distributed in and around the Luton and Dunstable area. However, the event began to take on a momentum of its own when, only a couple of weeks beforehand, the BBC reported on the story of Pratt’s Bananas of Luton, where largely Polish workers had to meet unreasonable production quotas, work 10 to 12 hour shifts, and where they were refused breaks.

“The outcome was that a number of workers from the plant turned up at the college, and with the help of a Polish translator from the PCS, were advised as to their rights and encouraged to join a union. As it was, the day was a success with many other workers coming in to see what unionlearn had to offer, and also to find out more about college courses in other areas.

“The support from Ucat, Unite/Amicus, and PCS was excellent, with stalls with recruitment materials and people to answer specific sector-related questions.

“There was also representation and leaflets from Migrant Gateway who gave free advice on employment and other matters affecting migrants.

“Overall, the day gave TUC tutors a chance to speak to the unions about how we could work together in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire to develop and improve TUC education. And it gave trade union organisers an opportunity to reach unorganised workers.”

In June 2006 the TUC Education team at **South Thames College** organised an event with Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council. Entitled ‘Decent and Safe Jobs for Refugees and Migrant Workers’ it attracted over 60 people. Various speakers reported on the plight of refugees and explained why it is so important that trade unions support them.

An organiser for the TGWU gave a heartening account of the T&G Canary Wharf Cleaners campaign: “Canary Wharf is home to some of the most powerful banks in the world. The workers who clean the offices here would have to slave for 188 years, day and night to earn what their boss earns in a year”. Since the T&G began organising, 80% of cleaners had joined the union. “We’ve had our pay increased and are now campaigning for more holidays and the introduction of sick pay” he added.

The remainder of the afternoon was taken up with *Wild Geese*, a play performed by Banner Theatre Company. The rapt audience

were treated to a lively combination of songs, video and film based on the stories of refugee and migrant workers coming to the UK in the past 50 years. TUC tutor Angie Birtill thanked Banner theatre for their “powerful inspiring production” and the speakers and audience for supporting the event.

Using the Race Relations (Amendment) Act as an organising tool

Several courses have been delivered to union branches in the public sector on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. These courses specifically looked at the employers’ duty to promote good race relations and at how unions can influence the process and organise on the back of it.

Course tutor Dawn Livingston of **Lewisham College** explains: “These courses are part of the short course programme and one result of this is that participants invariably want to spend more time working on these issues, request follow up courses, and identify areas for further research and information. Reps are stimulated and interested by the subjects covered in the activities and are able to share experiences, problems and problem solving techniques and ways to organise around the issues including recruitment of non-members.

“Course participants are able to gain further knowledge and understanding of how their union works, and the structures that support and facilitate anti-discrimination work. They gain further insight into the roles of the union representatives in equalities and how

all the different union reps: shop stewards, health and safety reps, Union Learning Reps and equality reps can get involved, and work cooperatively to deal with discrimination.

“Participants are able to examine and identify key points of discrimination legislation and gain confidence in utilising these to tackle equality issues in the workplace and union. Learners are able to explore agreements, policies and procedures make comparisons to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement. They are able to action plan how to, and when to, take issues forward.

“Participants can also take up the opportunities provided by the course for effective and supportive networking.”

Challenging the Far Right

TUC Education have developed the *Challenging the Far Right* course to enable reps to understand the politics and strategy of the far right in the UK. It is available on-line or as a normal face-to-face course and aims to get reps thinking about how they can link in with, or initiate, trade union-based campaigns against the far right. A recent course included reps from various Barking & Dagenham union branches, amongst others. A UCU rep described the course as “very strong, politically coherent, giving insight into an area of acute concern: a vital resource”. If unions or branches want to find more about how to get onto one of these courses they should contact the TUC Regional Education Officers or their local TUC Course Coordinator.

Checklist...

for reps fighting racism in the workplace

Racist behaviour can often go undetected in an organisation leaving victims isolated and vulnerable to numerous abuses. The most difficult form to detect is done covertly, in secret, without witnesses.

The key to preventing racist behaviour is that an act of racism should be perceived as an attack on the culture of the organisation – against its ethos.

Unless organisations exude this ethos it is likely that many forms of victimisation of workers will be taking place.

So how can union reps identify if racist activity exists in the workplace?

Try the checklist to help you healthcheck your workplace:

Identifying racist behaviour

- Do all workers know that there is a union in the workplace regardless of whether they can speak and read English?
- Do safety reps involve all workers when undertaking workplace inspections? And do they include in the inspections attitudes and characteristics of certain workers that may make them vulnerable?
- Are safety reps involved in Risk Assessments with the employer? Again do they consider risks to workers vulnerable to abuse – physical and verbal?
- What is the ethnic spread of workers in the organisation and how is it distributed? Does it reflect the local community?
- Does trade union representation reflect the ethnic spread across the organisation – if not how has the union worked with various ethnic groups to bring them into the union to build their trust and ensure their voices are heard?
- Do union reps have the knowledge and skills to detect and deal with racist behaviour in the workplace?
- What is the attitude of the employer

towards reps undergoing TU education and training to develop those skills and knowledge?

■ Are learning opportunities given equally to all workers?

Workplace policies to prevent racist behaviour

■ Does your employer have a policy?

■ If they do is it formal and written or is it an ‘understanding’ – a few words in the disciplinary procedures?

■ Are all employees and people who come into contact with the business aware of the policy and the consequences of not abiding by it?

■ Is the policy understood?

■ Are supervisory staff and management trained to develop skills to deal with issues related to racist behaviour?

■ How do staff feel about the policy – what is the attitude towards it by workers and by the various levels of management.

■ Is the policy embedded in the culture and beliefs of the organisation?

■ How is the policy enforced – by all staff or by management – is this consistent across the organisation?

■ How is it implemented: via the disciplinary procedures to punish those breaching the policy, or as an opportunity to educate and change behaviour before implementing the disciplinary procedures?

■ If it is the latter is this done meaningfully as it is the ethos of the organisation, or as a token – not really dealt with? And again is this constant across the organisation?

Monitoring the policy

■ Does this happen?

■ If so how – is there tangible evidence and who is involved?

■ Is there meaningful consultation between the employer and the trade unions to develop systems and procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy?

■ If so, is this at the senior level of the organisation or by all who implement the policy and trade union workplace representatives?

■ Does the organisation have named members of staff responsible for the implementation of the policy?

■ Is there guidance to employees and users of the organisation on how the policy is monitored and how they can contribute to the improvement of this?

■ When undertaking or reviewing risk assessments, do risk assessors include identifying risks associated with racist behaviour and groups of workers who are most vulnerable?

Policies on racism

Our work in SERTUC is founded on the decisions taken by delegates at the Regional Council. Similarly, the TUC is driven by affiliates' views at the annual Trades Union Congress.

However, we also exist within society and, on occasions, the courts – not always a friend of workers – make decisions that help us in our struggle against the far right.

Following are: the motion that drives SERTUC's anti racist anti fascist work, statements approved by Congress 2006 on migrant workers and Islamophobia, and the TUC general secretary's statement on the European Court of Human Rights' decision that unions cannot be forced to accept people into membership whose principles are opposed to ours.

Southern & Eastern Region TUC

Motion carried by the SERTUC Regional Council at its meeting October 2006

Regional Council welcomes and endorses the anti racist anti fascist action plan brought forward by the Executive Committee as being coherent, inclusive and, we believe, containing the essence of success.

We strongly believe that the lessons of history show that racism and fascism, if unchallenged, will provoke fear and intimidation among many communities in London, the South East and East of England.

Our combined regions are the most ethnically, culturally and socially diverse in the United Kingdom. We believe that racism and fascism will only divide worker from worker using our diversity as a weapon to attack us. On the other hand, we believe our diversity is a strength and a cause for celebration.

In the East of London, it is not migrant workers who have caused the exodus of manufacturing and with it thousands of working class jobs. It is not migrant workers who have sold almost the entire stock of public housing and prohibited the building

of new homes. Yet migrants are being made the scapegoats by the fascists for these economic and social wrongs.

Regional Council resolves to work with organised anti-fascist groups including NAAR, UAF and Searchlight in opposing the BNP and its ideological allies. In London, we welcome the opportunity to co-operate with the Mayor's Office on anti-racism and anti-fascism work. We will also work with political parties, affiliates' Race Equality Committees, faith groups and others (including schools, colleges and education groups) that are taking a stand against the BNP and the far right.

Regional Council resolves to:

- make anti racist anti fascist work (as outlined in the action plan) one of its top priorities in the period to May 2008;
- support affiliates, trades councils, and groups of workers taking a stand against racism and fascism; and,
- positively celebrate our ethnic, cultural and social diversity.

Trades Union Congress

General Council statement on Migrant Workers, carried at TUC Congress 2006

The TUC wants workers to be treated with respect, treated fairly and treated equally, wherever they come from. Government and employers have responsibilities to ensure that people who come to Britain to work are not exploited, and are able to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. If migrant workers are treated fairly and paid a decent wage, they represent no threat to the livelihoods of people who are already living and working in the UK, and the work they do and the wages they get for it will pay for the increase in services required to meet the needs of new arrivals. Unions must, and are committed to, play our part in making sure indigenous and migrant workers are treated equally and have their rights respected.

Joint General Council and Muslim Council of Britain statement on Islamophobia, carried at TUC Congress 2006

Islamophobia is a real and present threat, fuelled by misunderstandings, prejudice and the characterisation of whole communities because of a small number of dangerous

extremists and a loud but tiny fringe made larger than life by some sensation mongering and self-fulfilling reporting in some parts of the media. Such groups threaten their own communities just as they threaten society at large...

The rise of the far right and electoral successes of the BNP, sometimes through the exploitation of heightened feelings of deprivation and discontent amongst certain white groups, are alarming features of recent years and we commit ourselves to work together to address both the problems faced by these groups as well as counter the political exploitation of this constituency.

European Court of Human Rights

TUC press statement welcoming the ECHR judgement, March 2007

The TUC has welcomed today's decision by the European Court of Human Rights that unions can expel members of the far-right BNP, and that this is not incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

The case was brought by traindrivers' union Aslef, after the UK courts found in favour of a BNP member expelled from the union because of the incompatibility of BNP views and those of the trade union movement.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said, "This is an important and welcome judgement. The European Court of Human Rights has made the common sense decision that the right to freedom of association does not force unions to accept into membership people opposed to the basic principles of trade unionism. Instead it says that the European Convention's provisions protect unions from excessive interference by government in deciding how they run their own affairs, including how they choose their members.

"We will need to discuss further all the implications of this judgement, including what changes now need to be made to UK law, but every union will welcome this clear decision that they can now expel BNP members."

Contacts and resources

There are various organisations offering support and advice on issues related to racial equality. The main sources of help for trade union reps are their own union structures and the TUC.

Two additional contacts outside of the trade union movement are the Commission for Racial Equality (to be incorporated into the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights in October 2007), and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Also included in this section are contact details for the main anti-racist campaign organisations supported by SERTUC.

Trade unions

Most trade unions have a legal department that provides advice and guidance to reps on the best way to deal with, and take up, issues. Many unions also have key officials or self organised groups (nationally, regionally and maybe at branch level) to offer support and advice on various equality issues.

Unions have different procedures for accessing support, your branch secretary or full time official will be able to help you.

SERTUC has produced a regional directory of trade unions and other useful contacts which is available in hard copy from the SERTUC office, or an updated version as a pdf file can be downloaded from www.tuc.org.uk/sertuc

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

One of the TUC's functions is to carry out research on employment issues and produce publications and support mechanisms for affiliate unions and their members to access. The TUC website (www.tuc.org.uk) is a good source of information on all aspects of work-related issues including a link 'Know your rights' – one click on this opens up the 'Worksmart' site (www.worksmart.org.uk).

Worksmart is an internet advice service providing access to information, publications and links to work-related issues.

If trade union reps don't have access to the internet there is a Know Your Rights Line (0870 600 4882, national rate, 8am-10pm).

The TUC has published *A TUC Workbook, Tackling Racism*. This is available from 020 7467 1294, price £5 for unions (£7.50 for educational and voluntary organisations, £10 others).

Also available from the TUC and the Working Lives Research Institute, *Working against Racism, the role of trade unions in Britain*. Prices as above.

Vulnerable Workers Project

The TUC is the lead partner in this government project based in the SERTUC office: www.vulnerableworkersproject.org.uk. Over the next 18 months the project will work with unions, vulnerable workers, employers, community organisations and statutory agencies to support vulnerable workers in achieving their full employment rights entitlement. The project may be able to support reps in dealing with some race-related issues if they involve vulnerable workers: vwp@tuc.org.uk

Diversity Works for London

This SERTUC project provides information, advice and guidance to trade union reps looking to implement diversity and equality strategies in the workplace. An on-line toolkit has been developed which can be accessed

at the TUC's union reps website on www.unionreps.org.uk. Those reps registered in the Southern and Eastern region can access the toolkit on the left hand side of their homepage. The toolkit provides a range of information and case studies on diversity and disadvantage in the London labour market, business case strategies to use with your employer and advice on what you can achieve in your workplace.

The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)

The CEHR will bring together the work of the three existing Commissions, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

The CEHR will take on all of the powers of the existing Commissions as well as new powers to enforce legislation more effectively and promote equality for all. It will bring together equality experts and act as a single source of information and advice.

The creation of the CEHR followed consultation on *Equality and Diversity: making it happen*, a Task Force, and a White Paper *Fairness for All*.

The new commission will be responsible for addressing discrimination relating to age and sexuality as well a Human Rights in addition to those areas covered by the previous commissions on gender, race and disability.

At the time of writing this publication,

permanent contact details were not available for the CEHR but an interim website has been set up at www.cehr.org.uk, telephone 020 7215 8415.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)

The CRE currently funds a number of racial equality councils (RECs) across England, Scotland and Wales. The range of services provided by individual RECs varies, but all will be able to provide you with information and advice about your rights, and may also offer legal assistance where appropriate. A link on the CRE home page helps you locate RECs in your area: www.cre.gov.uk.

The CRE website will be closed down when the commission closes at the end of September, however there will be a section dedicated to race on the website of the new CEHR. At the time of writing they do not know the exact content and structure of information that will be placed on the CEHR website.

The Citizens Advice Bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide free, confidential and independent advice from over 3,000 locations including in high streets, GP surgeries, hospitals, colleges, prisons and courts.

To find your local centre go to their webpage www.citizensadvice.org.uk. Alternatively look in your local telephone directory for their telephone number and address or visit your local library.

Campaigning organisations

National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR)

Established in 1994 at the initiative of black community organisations based in Tower Hamlets following the community-led campaign against the election of a BNP councillor in a by-election in Millwall. NAAR's Executive includes representatives of the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, Jewish Council for Racial Equality, national trade unions, black organisations, refugee organisations and reps of NAAR's youth and student wing: www.naar.org.uk

Searchlight

Searchlight magazine is a key source of information on the activities of the far right, both in the UK and overseas, is published monthly and available on-line or by subscription at www.searchlightmagazine.com.

Searchlight also established "Stop the BNP" to counter racism and fascism in elections and beyond – their website provides up to date news, good practice and analysis: www.stopthebnp.org.uk

Unite Against Fascism (UAF)

UAF aims to unite the broadest possible spectrum of society to counter the threat of the extreme right, in particular the BNP, from gaining an electoral foothold in this country. www.uaf.org.uk



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