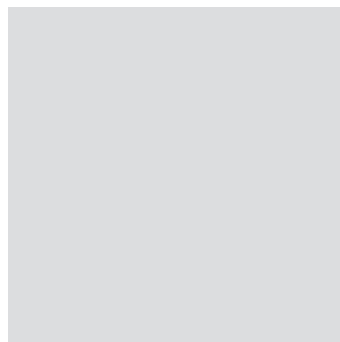


annual report 2006



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
AGAINST
RACISM

Defending multiculturalism, opposing Islamophobia

Last twelve months were marked by the continued undermining of multiculturalism and the propagation of myths around segregation in British society. The false accusation of political correctness is used to attack any progressive measures and discourse that is advanced against racism. Undermining multiculturalism, if unchecked and unopposed, would lead to the reversal of gains that most of us take for granted. It is therefore a priority for the anti-racist movement to oppose these attacks.

These attacks on multiculturalism in effect target all minority communities. The formula of multiculturalism is that everyone is free to express their culture, heritage and faith as long as they do not infringe upon others; if this was overturned, immense damage would be done to many aspects of the social fabric. A Parliamentary report on anti-Semitism published in the summer highlighted the impact of racism on the Jewish community. The acceptance of many cultures, creeds, and ideas has greatly enriched this society and contributed to its development. The campaign to overturn these freedoms is championed by those claiming that cultural diversity is in some way responsible for terrorism, when the precise opposite is true: only by promoting equality and celebrating diversity can a safer society be built.

Muslim communities are currently finding themselves in the front line of this attack on cultural diversity, systematically portrayed as being insufficiently integrated into society, uniquely backward on social issues and supportive of violence and terrorism. This barrage of hostility has helped create a climate in which the fascists have made further electoral gains.

Most recently, the face veil (niqab) worn by a tiny minority of Muslim women has been the focus of a daily media frenzy which has been responsible for an unprecedented level of physical and verbal attacks on Muslim women. NAAR responded to these attacks in the media along with others, in particular through articles and letters by women who reject the distortion of feminist views in defence of racist scapegoating of Muslim communities. NAAR also played a central role in helping organise a national rally against these attacks on Muslim communities.

Racist cartoons

The publication of the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* in October 2005



— and their subsequent republication in other European newspapers depicting the Prophet as a terrorist, with the implication that ‘Muslim equals terrorist’ — provoked a very strong reaction from Muslim communities across the world. In Britain, a peaceful rally against incitement and Islamophobia on 11 February in Trafalgar Square, organised by Muslim community organisations and supported by NAAR, was attended by over 5,000 people.

Throughout the year, NAAR campaigned to question the use of freedom of speech to justify the promotion of racism. NAAR challenged the notion that the cartoons were purely an exercise in freedom of expression, highlighting the racist political climate in Denmark and other countries where the cartoons were published.

Defending civil liberties

NAAR supported a broad based campaign entitled ‘Only united communities can defeat terrorism and protect civil liberties’ and opposed the lengthening of detention without charge during the passage of the Terrorism bill along with Liberty and other campaigning organisations. Although the new legislation saw an increase of detention for terror suspects from 14 to 28 days, the proposals for extending the timescale to 60 and 90 days were defeated in Parliament. As we meet for our AGM, this issue is very likely to be brought back to the Parliamentary agenda.

ID cards

A significant issue for civil liberties and racism in the last year was the passage of legislation introducing compulsory ID cards and a national database of biometric information. ID cards will have a disproportionate negative impact on Black

communities, around which NAAR campaigned during the bill. NAAR prepared a Parliamentary briefing paper, sent letters to the press, and encouraged its members and affiliates to lobby their MPs.

NAAR supported and participated in the protest outside Parliament on the passage of the ID Cards Bill in February, organised by NO2ID and Liberty. NAAR also commented in the media on ID cards’ impact during the final stages of the Bill. NAAR will monitor the impact of their introduction in the next few years.

Challenging the myths on segregation

NAAR has worked with academics, including Dr. Ludi Simpson, who say that contrary to the idea that we are ‘sleepwalking into segregation’, segregation is decreasing — government and academic studies show that ethnic groups are increasingly spread throughout Britain.

We have also promoted the research from the Mayor of London which shows that the capital’s diversity, one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the world, makes it successful culturally, socially and economically. NAAR is working with its affiliates, including the trade union movement, to ensure that this message is consolidated with wider strata of society.

Promoting asylum

NAAR joined forces with UNISON and issued an updated version of the asylum myths and facts leaflet, which has been widely circulated, and helped organise speakers in some local branches and regions. This work will continue next year, particularly in the light of the new Border and Immigration bill that was announced in the latest Queen’s speech, promising further draconian measures.

The Asylum, Immigration and Nationality Act, the sixth such piece of legislation in ten years, was enacted this year. NAAR participated in the discussions around the Bill through its role in the Asylum Rights Campaign.

NAAR co-ordinated a successful public meeting in Parliament in October 2005, which was addressed by the CRE, the TUC, Universities UK, the Refugee Council, Flores Sukula who has been affected by Section 9 of the previous bill, Neil Gerrard and Evan Harris MPs.

NAAR also raised concern and publicised the amendments introduced in the bill at a late stage relating to terrorism and access to claiming asylum, implying a severe curb to the right to claim asylum.

Campaigning for equality in our lifetime

A complete overhaul of equalities, with major implications for fighting racism, is currently taking place:

- a new body abolishing and bringing together the existing three equality commissions (race, gender and disability) as well as creating further three areas of equalities (sexuality, age and religion) and human rights has been established under the new Equality Act;
- the Equalities Review and the Discrimination Law Review are ongoing to provide the framework for the new Single Equality Act, which will determine the functions of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and establish anti-discrimination law for a generation.

CEHR

The new Commission for Equality and Human Rights will begin functioning in 2007 without structures that many in the Black community organisations and anti-racist movement believe are essential for its effectiveness. During the passage of the



Equality Act, NAAR campaigned alongside Black MPs, community groups and many others for the inclusion in the legislation of a statutory Race Committee, guaranteed Black representation amongst the commissioners and a ring-fenced budget.

NAAR secured signatures to the statement initiated by the Mayor of London, the 1990 Trust, Operation Black Vote and Black Londoners' Forum, supported by over 100 organisations and prominent individuals. The statement was circulated to all MPs, urging them to support the amendments to the Bill that were put down by MPs Keith Vaz and Roger Berry on the creation of the Race Committee and representation amongst commissioners in advance of the final vote on the Bill in January. The Act was passed without the crucial amendments which would have guaranteed the establishment of the Race Committee, along the lines of the Disability Rights Committee, and guaranteed Black representation amongst the Commissioners.

Following this result, NAAR held a race crisis summit attended by representatives from over 40 organisations, which took place in February and continues to campaign for the changes to be introduced into the statute book. NAAR also participated in a meeting with Meg Munn and Paul Goggins MPs, Ministers in the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry respectively, who are in charge of the introduction of the CEHR, putting the position of the crisis summit to the Ministers.

Equalities Review

The Equalities Review website states: 'The Equalities Review has been established to carry out an investigation into the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in British society'. Contrary to its declared aim, its interim report published in March fell far short of the necessary analysis of the reality and root causes of discrimination. NAAR joined a vast array of organisations from all of the equalities strands in criticising the report for its attempt at reversing the progress made in understanding discrimination. (NAAR's submission to the ER can be found at <http://www.naar.org.uk/newspages/060602.asp>)

The interim report mentioned rac-

ism just once, suggested discrimination is triggered by a series of random life events, introduced disputed concepts such as 'Home Learning Environment' and used a distorted version of the 'capability theory'. It has also widely been criticised for coming very close to blaming the victim for the discrimination they face. The final report is announced for early 2007.

Discrimination Law Review

'The Discrimination Law Review (DLR) will address long-held concerns about inconsistencies in the current anti-discrimination legislative framework. The Review is considering the fundamental principles of discrimination legislation and its underlying concepts. It is working to develop a simpler, fairer legal framework that fits the needs of 21st century Britain' (from the Discrimination Law Review website).

The DLR offers an opportunity for establishing the kind of legal framework which can make a real difference to the lives of millions of people, indeed the vast majority of people in Britain who are women, Black people, disabled people, lesbians and gay men, older people and those who are members of faith communities. NAAR has participated in the GLA seminar on the DLR early November and is working on its submission to the DLR to press for legislative measures that would be necessary for moving towards reversing the historic impact of discrimination on all affected by it, including a strong law enabling positive action, ensuring that equality is a condition of procurement contracts, extending public sector duties for promoting equality to the private sector, enabling class action and legal aid in discrimination cases.

The Single Equality Act must level up the law and extend measures such as the requirement to make reasonable adjustments to all areas of equality. These are the minimal necessary measures if British society is to reverse the accumulated effects of institutional discrimination and have a law fit for the 21st century. NAAR is encouraging its affiliates and members to participate fully in this once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure inequality is eradicated.

rights

Section 9 campaign

NAAR continued to support and promote the Sukula family campaign, who have fled the Democratic Republic of Congo and have been one of the first families to suffer the consequences of Section 9 because they live in the North West. NAAR invited the family to speak at public events, including the 2006 Labour Party conference NAAR fringe meeting in Manchester.

The government has still not decided to roll out this policy, which is still at a pilot stage and has led to the destitution of over 100 families. There is provision within the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 to repeal Section 9, which stops families gaining any state support after their asylum claim has failed. This has been the result of a campaign, which gathered increasingly broad support, from the Children's Commissioner to the Directors of Social Services and the British Association of Social Workers as well as the local authorities who have been expressing concern at the policy.

Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism



LAGCAR has had an active year, taking up the key priorities of NAAR in the lesbian and gay movement. We have ensured that the issue of fighting the BNP has been a central priority — we ran a workshop on homophobia and fascism at the UAF national conference, issued a press release attacking the BNP for its attempts to shut down LGBT History Month and had a profile and presence at a number of events.

We played a central co-ordinating role at Europride which was held in London this year, working with a wide range of BME organisations to ensure the Black community was represented in the parade, at a Europe-wide conference, where we co-ordinated a workshop on increasing participation from BME and other minoritised communities, and worked with Regard (LGBT disabled people's organisation) on a main plenary session about the rise of fascism across Europe.

As in previous years, we commemorated the anniversary of the nailbombings, working with SERTUC and UAF to distribute a leaflet in Soho on the 7th anniversary of the nail bombings to turn



out the pink vote against the BNP in the general election.

We have also been active in working with Imaan, the LGBT Muslim group to challenge homophobia and racism. This included helping to organise and raise sponsorship for their national conference

in November, and challenging lesbian and gay organisations which have whipped up Islamophobia.

LAGCAR has also had a presence at trade union conferences, including TUC national events, and run workshops at the NUS LGBT campaign conferences.

Rise: London United festival

The Mayor of London's **Rise: London United** festival took place on 8 July in Finsbury Park. The event was supported by SERTUC and NAAR, together with a number of other trade unions. Over 100,000 people attended the event, which was headlined by Graham Coxon, Common, Roy Ayers, the Buzzcocks and many others.

London Assembly Against Racism co-ordinated around 250 volunteers for the festival, the largest number of volunteers to date, and promoted publicity in the run-up to the festival. All volunteers received free membership of NAAR and a commemorative certificate from the Mayor. NAAR also co-ordinated the Unite Against Racism Area. Following the success of the festival, the Mayor of London, SAAR and the NUS Black Students' Campaign have organised a Student Rise Week with students' unions during November, promoting the message of Rise to students around London.



Unite Against Fascism and campaigning against the BNP

Campaigning against the BNP remained a key priority for NAAR in 2006. May's local elections once again saw the trend of rising British National Party (BNP) support, which has accelerated dramatically over the last six years. The BNP vote has increased from over 3,000 votes (8%*) in 2000 to over 238,000 votes (19%*) in 2006.

There are now 49 BNP councillors across the country. In particular the BNP gained 12 councillors in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham, largely due to the whipping up of the racist myth about Africans receiving grants to move into the borough. Figures from the Barking and Dagenham Race Equality Council, which collates statistics for racist incidents in the borough, show that in the 2 years between 2004 and 2006 racist incidents have increased by 30%. This corresponds with increased BNP activity in the area. By contrast, across London, the same period saw a year on year fall in the number of racist attacks recorded by the Met Police.

Over the last fourteen years the BNP's vote has risen dramatically. In general elections the BNP's vote has increased from 7005 votes in 1992 to 192,750 in 2005 and the BNP saved their deposits in 34 constituencies compared to just 5 in 2001 and none previously. In June 2004 in the elections for the European Parliament the BNP gained over 800,000 votes, narrowly missing winning four seats. In the London Assembly elections in 2004 they gained over 90,000 votes missing the five per cent threshold necessary for a seat by just 0.1%.

The BNP will be targeting the 2007 local elections, and the Scottish Parliament and Wales Assembly elections. They will also aim to win seats on the London Assembly in 2008 and the European Parliament in 2009. Therefore campaigning against the BNP and fascism will remain a priority for NAAR in the next few years.

NAAR continues to support the work of Unite Against Fascism, which aims to build the broadest and biggest possible national campaign against the BNP. Earlier this year in February

*percentage vote in wards where the BNP stood

UAF organised its second national conference, attended by over 600 people, which brought together key elements of the anti-fascist movement including trade unions, MPs, local councillors, faith, black, Asian, lesbian, gay communities and disabled people. The conference was addressed by Ken Livingstone, film director Gurinder Chadha, UNISON's Deputy General Secretary Keith Sonnet, Daud Abdullah from the Muslim Council of Britain, Stonewall chief executive Ben Summerskill, Michael Meacher MP and many others.

UAF organised campaigns around the country against the BNP in the run-up to the local elections, and supported and helped organise the Love Music Hate Racism rally with music in Trafalgar Square on 29 April, headlined by Belle and Sebastian, and supported by Roll Deep, Lethal Bizzle and others. Speakers included Amicus General Secretary Derek Simpson, Lee Jasper and Mohammed Azam from NAAR.

Since the local elections UAF and NAAR have supported the establishment in June and the subsequent work of Bark-

ing and Dagenham Alliance Against Racism and Fascism (BDAARF), a local black community organisation. BDAARF organised two demonstrations outside Barking and Dagenham Town Hall against the borough's BNP councillors, which were supported by NUS, SERTUC, TGWU, UNISON and the Cable Street Group.

UAF has consolidated and sought to strengthen the regional groups in Yorkshire and the West Midlands after the BNP polled their highest regional vote in the local elections in these regions.

A regional conference took place on 7 October in the West Midlands and will take place in Yorkshire on 2 December.



Introduction

Defend Muslim communities — stop Islamophobia

Just as this report is going to press, we are witnessing a relentless onslaught of racism particularly targeted at the Muslim communities. The hysteria that followed comments by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Jack Straw MP, about women wearing the veil (niqab) unleashed a barrage of Islamophobia. The consequences of Jack Straw's comments and the media's so-called 'debate' resulted in arson attacks on mosques and physical and verbal attacks on Muslim women wearing the veil or the headscarf (hijab). There has been opposition to this offensive from many quarters of society and NAAR is playing an active role in an alliance with Muslim organisations, trade unions and many others.

Defend multiculturalism

Multiculturalism, which has been the overriding framework for many decades in Britain, is now coming under a determined attack. The assault is not only coming from the extreme right fascist BNP and right-wing tabloids, but politicians who should know better are calling this framework into question — some even make the ridiculous suggestion that it contributes to terrorism. NAAR must firmly resist the attempts to create the type of society of forced assimilation that would result from overturning multiculturalism. A society that is tolerant of people leading their different lives in the way they choose is a more safe society than one that demands minorities must leave their cultures behind. Acceptance of diverse cultures, creeds, and ideas strengthens our society and benefits all.

End racist attacks

Home Office figures released in July 2006 show that nationally there has been an increase by 7 per cent in the number of racist incidents in 2004/5. Some of these attacks have resulted in death or serious injury and NAAR will continue to campaign to highlight these attacks and offer solidarity to the families and friends who are campaigning for justice.

Attacks on multiculturalism, credence given to myths around segregation and increasing Islamophobia are contributing factors to these figures. Recently, the attempt to play down the reality of racist violence gained momentum when it was suggested that white victims of 'racist' murders were invisible in the media. NAAR challenges



this distortion of the truth.

The national rise in racist attacks is not inevitable — in London, the most diverse part of Britain, racist attacks have been declining for the past five years, although there are still 35 attacks a day in the capital. The figures in London show that a Jewish person is three times more likely to suffer a racist attack than a white European. A person of African, Caribbean or south Asian descent is ten times more likely to suffer a racist attack. And an Arab person is eleven times more likely to suffer a racist attack in London today. NAAR is working with organisations from all these communities to oppose racism, including Muslim Council of Britain, Alif-Aleph that brings the Muslim and Jewish communities together, the Sikh Federation, the 1990 Trust, Jewish Council for Racial Equality and many others. It is notable that where the BNP is active in London, attacks are on the rise.

Oppose the fascist BNP

2006 marks the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street, reminding us of the historic legacy of fascism in Britain. The unity in the East End against the Blackshirts in 1936 which included the Jewish community and the labour movement that stopped the fascists marching was commemorated in October. NAAR joined in these commemorations, highlighting the need for continued unity against fascism today.

Following the local elections in May, the fascist BNP now has 49 local seats across the country, of which 12 are in Barking and Dagenham. This result came against the backdrop of national media hysteria over foreign prisoners just days before elections. Since the BNP has been targeting Barking and Dagenham, racist incidents have increased by 30 per cent. BNP leader Nick Griffin and Mark Collett, the former youth BNP leader, escaped conviction for incitement to racial hatred having called Islam a 'wicked faith' and likened asylum seekers to cockroaches. With elections to local government in May 2007 and forthcoming London Assembly elections in 2008, exposing the fascist BNP and campaigning against it remains a priority for NAAR.

No to the erosion of immigration rights

The government announced the Border and Immigration Bill in the latest Queen's speech. Whilst recent years saw a more positive discourse towards immigration, this stance has now been reversed with the announcement of limits on employment rights for people from Romania and Bulgaria when they join the EU in January. The linking of immigration and crime issues in legislation, whilst not new in discourse, bodes ill for the future public debate on this question, particularly with the Conservative government arguing for draconian limits to non-EU migration.

Demand equality in our lifetime

With the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and the current Discrimination Law Review which will eventually result in a Single Equality Act, we are witnessing the biggest overhaul of equalities in a generation. So far, all signs indicate that unless there is a massive campaign to create a legal framework fit for the purposes of reversing the devastating impact of discrimination, next year may see the creation of a piece of legislation that will fail to combat racism. NAAR is calling for bold measures in the context of this 'once in a lifetime opportunity' if we are to make 'equality in our lifetime' a reality.

Priorities for the next year

The defence of the values of multiculturalism must be at the centre of our work for the coming year as it provides a framework for the other campaigning required. Within this we will fight against the advance of fascism, defend Muslim communities, campaign against racist attacks and oppose an increasingly racist approach being taken to immigration. Next year's bicentenary of the Parliamentary abolition of slavery and the European Year for equality should also be marked as part of this campaign.

NAAR will continue to act as a broad based campaign opposing racism in all its forms, that builds unity between the black, Muslim and Jewish communities and wider society, to bring about changes to our laws so they are more effective tools for rooting out institutional racism and discrimination.

Mohammed Azam, Co-Chair
Lee Jasper, Secretary

Campaigning for justice

Justice for Jay Abatan



NAAR continues to support the Justice for Jay Campaign. Jay Abatan, a 42 year-old Black man, was attacked by a gang in Brighton on 24 January 1999. He died in hospital five days later after sustaining severe head injuries. No one has yet been tried for Jay's murder. His family were concerned about the nature of the investigation — investigations conducted by the police have found serious flaws in the way the case was handled. NAAR has worked with PCS to provide support for the campaign. Jay and his brother were both members of PCS at the time of the attack. Jay's brother Michael addressed PCS national Conference and the Black Members seminar at TUC Congress in September. The campaign also held a vigil in January to commemorate Jay's death. We have also helped produce a leaflet and petition and launched a fighting fund.

Justice for Paul Coker



Paul Coker from Plumstead, South East London, died in police custody in the early hours of 6 August last year. Paul was arrested after police were called to a house in Plumstead following a non-physical dispute between Paul and his girlfriend. Even though they were advised that the

dispute had been resolved, 16 police officers turned up. Restraint methods were used on Paul. He died 2 hours later in Plumstead police station. The family are demanding Justice for Paul Coker. NAAR will continue to support Paul's family and has invited Pat Coker, Paul's mother to address the 2006 AGM.

The Anthony Walker Foundation



29 July marked the first anniversary of the racist murder of teenager Anthony Walker, highlighting the ongoing reality of racist attacks and violence. Young Black people are often the victims of racist attacks in their most violent forms. His murder echoes the deaths of Black students Stephen Lawrence and Ricky Reel in the 1990s. Anthony was an A-level student who aspired to becoming a lawyer.

Anthony had been waiting at a bus stop with this girlfriend when he was subjected to a torrent of racist abuse. Anthony and friends left to find another bus stop. Minutes later, Anthony was bludgeoned in the head with an axe, sustaining fatal injuries.

Over 3000 people attended his funeral in Liverpool at which NAAR had representation, and a 'Unite Against Racism' festival was also organised in his memory.

Two people have so far been convicted of his murder but the police believe more people were involved. It is essential that everyone involved in his murder is brought to justice.

Members of Anthony's family are setting up an educational foundation in his memory to raise awareness amongst young people around challenging racism.

For more information contact:
The Anthony Walker Foundation on:
d.walker69@binternet.com
www.theanthonywalkerfoundation.com

Student Assembly Against Racism

The Student Assembly Against Racism has been successful this year in achieving wide support for NAAR's campaigns and getting large numbers of students active in our work on campus, in students' unions and in the NUS.

A key priority has been opposing the ongoing assault on multiculturalism, which has been particularly directed against Muslim students. This has been typified by the recent reports encouraging lecturers to spy on their Muslim students, and the recent racist hysteria surrounding the niqab. It follows from the Glees Report published in the wake of the July bombings last year, which called for Islamic Societies to be shut down and quotas on Black students entering university. Bill Rammell, Higher Education Minister, has said recently that he agrees with the decision taken at Imperial College to ban the wearing on the veil.

A priority has also been to mobilise students to campaign against the BNP with Unite Against Fascism through raising awareness among students of the threat posed by the BNP and campaigning to implement 'No Platform' policies.

At NUS Conference in March, we won policy against the BNP, against the rise of Islamophobia and in support of student asylum seekers. Dominique Walker, sister of murdered student Anthony Walker, addressed the Conference.

We have also continued to offer support and solidarity to Flores Sukula and her family who have been made destitute under Section 9 of the 2004 Immigration and Asylum Act.

We have supported the initiatives of the NUS Black Students' campaign for increased Black representation. SAAR promoted volunteering at the RISE festival to students and have successfully involved unions around London in Student RISE, a month of cultural events and anti-racist initiatives, with the Mayor of London and the NUS Black Students Campaign. This also had the support of NUS conference.

SAAR has continued to engage students in anti-racist activism and will do into 2007 and beyond.



Local groups

Coventry Against Racism

Members of Coventry Against Racism have been actively involved in anti-racist campaigns in the city throughout the year. A pre-election public meeting in April brought together representatives from a range of political and community organisations to discuss tactics for united action to ensure the defeat of the BNP candidates. The campaign was supported by students from the newly formed anti-racist society at Warwick university. Successful public meetings have also been organised during Coventry's multicultural festival in July and during Peace Month in November. The aim of these events have been to provide opportunities for people from Coventry's multi-racial community to come together to share ideas about raising awareness, celebrating diversity and uniting against racism. Our members participated in Holocaust Memorial Day and CAR supports the City Council's organisation 'Reducing Hate Crime in Coventry'. We hold monthly meetings which are open to members and friends, topical discussions take place and strategies are planned. Further details from CAR, c/o Coventry TUC, KOCO building, Sparn End, Coventry. Tel: 02476 464 900.

Lewisham Anti Racist Action Group

LARAG has sent teams of volunteers to support a number of UAF initiatives to stop the BNP in Bexley, Greenwich, Essex and most importantly Barking and Dagenham, in the election period. Speakers from BDAARF addressed our AGM in November 2006. We also got media coverage for our success in driving the BNP out of Lewisham where for the first time in many elections they did not stand. We had another successful May Day Unite Against Fascism festival in conjunction with Lewisham TUC, addressed by Billy Hayes and Sabby Dhalu with lots of free music and

dance. We put pressure through a media campaign on the local police to account for their actions following the outrageous treatment of a local officer, who settled out of court following a racist incident.

Sheffield Assembly Against Racism

Sheffield Assembly Against Racism's main focus in the last twelve months continued to be highlighting and exposing the racist myths that the BNP tries to use to fuel its growth. In particular we have challenged the misrepresentations by the media that segregation is increasing in British society. Members have worked closely with Muslim groups in the city and have also been active in the anti-fascist campaign in other towns in South Yorkshire and at the two Sheffield universities. NAAR supporters have organised a number of anti-racist meetings and stalls which have raised awareness about a wide range of issues.

Birmingham Assembly Against Racism

In Birmingham, over the recent period, NAAR supporters have been active in the fight against the BNP, organising through Unite Against Fascism. Although racism rears its head on many fronts, the direct struggle against the BNP and other fascist groups has mobilised the largest forces. The West Midlands is the BNP's number two regional target nationally; they have no councillors in the Birmingham area, but they polled a very worrying average of 11% in May when they stood in all council seats. Birmingham has a large Muslim population which constitutes the best potential counter to the virulent Islamophobia which lies at the heart of the BNP's current activities. Anti-BNP activity across the whole West Midlands conurbation has been growing in the past year and our goal must be to hold the fascists back next May, as part of a general attack on racist and fascist politics.

4th European Social Forum in Athens: 4-8 May 2006

NAAR attended and participated in the Athens European Social Forum, holding three seminars on institutional racism with French and Belgian trade unions, on the rise of the far right across Europe with German and French organisations, and on the case of the Danish cartoons and their impact on the rise of Islamophobia with Greek anti-racist groups and a Danish

group with Prof. Tariq Ramadan as a guest speaker. NAAR's participation in the ESF was very useful, as it led to new links with organisations that NAAR was not in contact with previously and ensured that some of the key questions in relation to racism in Europe were raised and debated. NAAR is aiming to continue its participation in the ESF in the future.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST RACISM

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Outgoing Officers and members
of the Executive Committee:

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Lee Jasper

Co-Chairs

Diane Abbott MP and
Mohammed Azam

Vice-Chairs

Milena Buyum (ex-officio)
and John Campbell

Treasurer

Mick Connolly

Campaigns Officer

Reeva Bell

Legal Officer

Peter Herbert

Parliamentary Liaison

Harry Cohen MP

European Parliamentary Liaison

Claude Moraes MEP

Executive Committee:

Pav Akhtar
Maggie Bowden
Lorna Campbell
Ruqayyah Collector
Jayne Fisher
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