

# BNP vote threatens us all

To many people the general election was a non-event: the result was a foregone conclusion and there was only a slight movement amongst the voters compared to four years earlier. For anti-racists however the election was a wake-up call: speak out and act now against racism or the fascists could get a toe-hold in British politics.

Despite relative economic prosperity nationally, the BNP recorded its highest share of the vote in a parliamentary election for 50 years. One in seven voters voted for the fascist party in Oldham West placing them in third place above the Liberal Democrats.

The combined vote for the BNP in the two seats in Oldham was larger than their entire vote for their numerous candidates in London. But even here in seats in the east of the capital, with very little activity on the ground, the BNP was able to muster enough votes to ensure they will be a real threat for the local elections next year where they will use the election campaign again to spread their message of hatred, division and fear.

In Burnley the BNP also recorded over 11 per cent support, with a disgraceful 4151 people voting for the fascists. In six constituencies they got more than five per cent of the vote — three of them in London. The fascists stand on a reactionary platform of racism and homophobia. As well as supporting the deportation of all Black people in Britain, the BNP is also in favour of recriminalising homosexuality. Throughout all of the campaign,

LAGCAR stressed the need for all politicians to speak out against racism and not to inflame tensions with provocative speeches. Some politicians in the mainstream however used the asylum issue as a means of rallying support for their right-wing agenda.

In many constituencies, literature was produced which played on people's fears. LAGCAR was one of several signatories to a letter from black community activists that appeared in the *Independent* before the campaign criticising the use of the race card during the election. William Hague's talk of a foreign land clearly did not help the anti-racist cause and only made voting for the

BNP seem more legitimate. It is a sobering thought that although only a few days after the Asian Deputy Mayor of Oldham Council was firebombed and his family lucky to escape with their lives, so many people in his town thought it appropriate to vote for the BNP.

The nail bombs which ripped through hearts and lives showed how any minority can come under attack. Some of us were already well acquainted with hatred.

Some of us already knew what it feels like to be bullied at school, harassed in our homes and discriminated at work

— because we're lesbian, gay, Black, disabled or somehow different. For others it was the first time to see that prejudice doesn't discriminate.

The BNP's result should be an alarm bell for all anti-racists and all politicians: now is the time to unite against racism, to reconnect voters with positive values in the political process and to refuse the BNP a toe-hold in our communities.

**We face violence together. We can fight it together. Join LAGCAR!**

*Letter published in the Independent and signed by LAGCAR*



Report on the campaign to defend asylum seekers inside

# Hands off my friend



Photo: Rupert Tebb, Stonewall

**On 24th March, LAGCAR joined the thousands of demonstrators that surrounded the House of Commons demanding an end to discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers.**

The 'Hands off my friend' campaign calls for an end to the voucher and dispersal system of people claiming asylum.

There is considerable evidence that these measures stigmatise refugees and make them more vulnerable to racist attacks.

As well as asking for the restoration of benefits for asylum seekers, the campaign is also calling for action against newspapers which publish material inciting racial hatred, and demanding that the

government uses its 'strengthened' legislation on this. The campaign, which has achieved wide support, is organising a letter writing campaign to the new Home Secretary.

The response from the government has been less than satisfactory. It claims that it is reviewing the voucher and dispersal system, but is unlikely to scrap it, once the results of this review are published in the autumn. It is also seeking to reform the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, which is the international framework for the right of refugees to seek asylum in Britain.

It has also announced that certain parts of the Immigration and Nationality Service will be exempt from the provisions of the new Human Rights Act, which came into force last year. Newspaper adverts appeared during the election campaign raising the issue of asylum and refugees to which LAGCAR also contributed.

● To get involved with the *Hands off my Friend* campaign and purchase postcards to send to the Home Secretary or badges contact the National Assembly Against Racism, 28 Commercial Street London E1 6LS. Tel 020 7247 9907.

## lesbian and gay coalition against racism news

● Claire Andrews, the co-chair of LAGCAR and member of UNISON's National Lesbian and Gay Committee, addressed a meeting jointly organised by the National Union of Students LGB and in May to Anti-Racist campaigns to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the racist and homophobic bombings in London.

● LAGCAR will be supporting *Respect*, London's multi-cultural and anti-racist festival to be held in Finsbury Park on July 21st. The festival is being organised by the Greater London Authority, the National Assembly Against Racism and South East Region of the

Trades Union Congress.

● LAGCAR is part of the Lesbian and Gay Advisory Group of the Metropolitan Police Service. The group advises the police about security issues and is chaired by Linda Bellos and Jack Gilbert. They are currently inviting applications from across our communities to fill vacancies on their committee. If you are interested in applying or just want further details about the work of this group (they have produced a very good Annual Report!) then contact them via e-mail on [community@lgbtag.org](mailto:community@lgbtag.org).

● LAGCAR spoke at a meeting organised at UNISON National Delegate Conference in June on anti-racism held in the light of

the recent increase in support for the fascist right.

● LAGCAR will also be organising distribution of this newsletter at the Summer Pride events throughout Britain. If you would like further copies or wish to volunteer in distributing our newsletter than contact us on 020 7247 9907 or at [lagcar.fsnet.co.uk](http://lagcar.fsnet.co.uk).

● A final word of thanks to all those organisations that have supported LAGCAR and through their actions and not merely their words, have shown to be committed to the anti-racist cause, most notably UNISON, PCS, Stonewall, Outrage!, the NUS LGB Campaign and REGARD.

# Ban the fascist marches

Despite this government supposedly strengthening legislation on incitement to racial hatred, the authorities, notably the police and Crown Prosecution Service have varied their interpretation of these new laws.



For example, whilst the Greater Manchester Police rather belatedly stopped the National Front marching in Oldham, the BNP was allowed to march in Bermondsey despite protest to the Metropolitan Police. This was particularly insensitive as

the march passed an area that has seen an increase in racist attacks including the near-death of a Turkish resident. Although few BNP supporters actually attended the march, there was an increase in racist attacks after they dispersed. LAGCAR

has always campaigned for a ban on fascist propaganda, whether it is the modern day black shirts swaggering on the streets or the promotion of these parties by giving them party political broadcasts in the media during election campaigns.

lesbian and gay coalition against racism

## Citizenship 21: Together for equality

Stonewall's new initiative Citizenship 21 aims to enable communities to look beyond labels, find the links that unite us, respect our differences, and work together for equality for all. Citizenship 21's resources are available to the private, public, voluntary and community sectors. They include:

**Citizenship 21 Awards** small grants for LGB voluntary and community groups to work in partnership with other communities who face prejudice, on projects whose aim is to develop awareness of and tackle homophobia and other prejudices. For example, an LGB might develop a project with a local homeless organisation to raise awareness of homelessness and the experiences and needs of LGB people who are homeless. Or a Black youth

group might join forces with an LGB youth group to develop their own anti-bullying campaign.

**Diversity Training** publishing best practice diversity promotion and training models and materials for tackling bullying in schools and youth groups, discrimination at work, etc.

**Website and Information Service** providing information on legislation, policy, research, rights, relating to lesbian and gay issues and multiple discrimination; diversity training; and the Citizenship 21 Awards.

Citizenship 21's Advisory Group is still looking for 2 youth members – please get in touch if you are interested or know someone who might be. We will shortly be looking for people to join the **Grants Committee** that will make recommendations for

the awards scheme.

Interested? We'd love to hear from you. For full details of Citizenship 21 and the awards scheme please contact Andy Forrest, Stonewall, 46 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0EB, or [andy@stonewall.org.uk](mailto:andy@stonewall.org.uk), or call 020-78819440, minicom 020-78819996. LAGCAR attended the launch of this initiative held at the newly improved Sadler's Wells in June. If you would like to hear more about Citizenship 21 we have invited the project manager to our next meeting in September, details from the NAAR office.

● **Thanks to all at Stonewall for coming on the *Hands off my Friend* demonstration and contributing to the newspaper advert.**

lesbian and gay coalition against racism

# Why join the Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism?



Because of the bombings in Soho, Brixton and Brick Lane attacking the lesbian and gay, African, Caribbean and Asian communities. We were all targeted.

Because we should be sharing and celebrating difference, not suppressing and destroying it.

Because I do not want any more people to die because of their colour, sexuality, race, etc.

Because we are all part of this society and deserve equal rights and respect.

We should fight for equal rights for all of us, and not allow our differences to divide us against each other. This is about basic human rights. This is why I joined LAGCAR.

I cannot do a lot on my own, but I cannot ignore what is still happening.

I welcome an organisation which is building alliances within communities, particularly one that links race and sexuality because there is discrimination within our own community and there should not be.

**Bob Taylor**

**respect**  
An anti-racist and multicultural festival for London

**21 July 2001 12-8.30pm**  
Finsbury Park, London N7

With  
**RUN DMC**  
and **Courtney Pine**

organised by: The Greater London Authority  
National Assembly Against Racism: TUC South East Region

**LAGCAR is going online!**  
Visit us from mid-July at  
[www.LAGCAR.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.LAGCAR.fsnet.co.uk)

**UNISON**  
Sponsored by  
**UNISON**  
1 Mabledon Place, London WC1  
[www.unison.org.uk/lesandgay](http://www.unison.org.uk/lesandgay)

**Join the Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism**

I/we wish to affiliate to the Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism

I enclose  £25 organisation  £5 individual waged  £2 individual unwaged, plus donation £.....

Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Tel (h) ..... (w) .....

Fax .....

Please return to: LAGCAR, c/o NAAR, 28 Commercial Street, London E1.