

newsletter

Summer 2005

lesbian and gay coalition  
**against racism**

National Assembly Against Racism

# Unite against fascism

## — stop the racist, homophobic BNP

The British National Party (BNP) continued to advance at the 2005 General Election. Standing in 119 seats, it recorded its best general election results to date with the highest votes ever received by any far right party in a British general election. On 5 May 2005, the BNP's total national vote more than quadrupled compared with its vote in 2001, rising from 47,129 to 192,750. They also saved a record 34 deposits. The areas that they save deposits are likely to become their target areas for the 2006 local elections.



**T**he general election results confirm the increase in the BNP's electoral support. In last year's European elections, they polled 800,000 votes, and came within less than 6,000 votes of getting a seat on the Greater London Assembly. Their target is to increase their council seats in next year's local elections, giving them the basis for a national breakthrough that they crave in order to emulate their counterparts across Europe, where fascist parties hold seats in government.

### The BNP's politics of hatred

The BNP's politics of racism and homophobia threaten us all. Nailbomber David Copeland targeted the Black, Asian and lesbian and gay communities to exacerbate the politics of hatred and turn out the vote for the BNP. In Burnley, where the BNP have the greatest number of council seats, they ran a campaign against a gay pub landlord to put him out of business. They compare gay men and Asian men to paedophiles.

The BNP have been legitimised by a climate of increased racism. The vitriolic debate on asylum seekers and immigration by press and politicians has placed the BNP discourse on the national agenda. It is therefore essential that all politicians and the press cease attempting to outbid each other on who can be "toughest" on asylum – the BNP will always go further and profit at the ballot box by whipping up racism. This climate has contributed to a general rise in racism against all communities who suffer from racism, with a particular focus on the Muslim community. BNP leader Nick Griffin was charged earlier this year with incitement to racial hatred after calling Islam "a vicious and wicked faith".

### Uniting against the BNP's fascism can stop them

In Oldham, the BNP came third in the 2001 general election, exploiting claims being made by the local police that racist

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(from front page)

attacks were being perpetrated by Asians against whites, a line initially taken up in the local newspaper. The Oldham Coalition Against Racism vigorously challenged this, exploding this myth and stating the fact that Asians were overwhelmingly the victims of racist attacks. The results of campaigning against racism were that no BNP councillors have been elected and the BNP vote was halved in both Oldham constituencies in the 2005 general election.

The BNP were defeated in both Oldham and a decade ago in Millwall, by forging an alliance between all those threatened by fascism, to turn out the vote of the vast majority of people who oppose their politics of hatred. An unremitting anti-racist campaign against the BNP was at the heart of both campaigns to ensure that the BNP's policies did not gain public



legitimacy. This revealed the true nature of the far right, presented voters with a clear alternative and countered the hate propaganda of the BNP. It convinced sufficient voters to turn out and vote to stop the BNP. In both areas, the trade union movement actively engaged the involvement of the local black communities, faith groups, the lesbian and gay communities and all others to ensure that powerful local united alliances were built.

Such alliances are essential to successfully challenge the BNP. The lesbian and gay communities have a direct

interest in opposing the BNP. Homophobia, like racism, has no place in the fight against the BNP. That would destroy the alliances we need to defeat the fascists. That is why it was unacceptable for Searchlight to make a candidate's involvement in a gay film a reason not to vote for the BNP as implied in their press release and web article entitled "Hello Sailor, Au Revoir Griffin". An article in the June 2005 magazine, 'Battleground set for next May', suggests that "exposing" BNP's Barking candidate Richard Barnbrook's involvement in this film had the effect of turning away BNP members. Any utilisation of homophobia will contribute to the climate of prejudice against lesbians and gay men in which the BNP thrives. The idea that homophobia can be used to defeat the BNP is totally misguided.

Utilising homophobia to attempt to defeat the BNP will also only serve to isolate the lesbian and gay community from the anti-fascist movement — a division which none of us can afford.

In the run up to the general election, LAGCAR worked with the regional TUC LGBT network and Unite Against Fascism to leaflet the lesbian and gay community in Soho on the sixth anniversary of the nailbombings, in order to turn out the vote against the BNP and to raise awareness about where their politics of hatred lead. The event was picked up by the national press and London regional TV. This was especially important as they got their highest national vote in Barking, where they have their only London councillor. This area has seen racist attacks soar by 18% in one year since the BNP have been active.

LAGCAR will be organising activities in the run up to the 2006 council elections — contact us to be involved.

● For more information on the campaign against the BNP contact Unite Against Fascism on [www.uaf.org.uk](http://www.uaf.org.uk); 020 7833 4916.

## The BNP's politics of homophobia

- The BNP openly target lesbian, gay and bisexual people: "We promise to bring back legislation forbidding homosexual acts — thus driving these revolting practices back into the closet where they belong." (BNP General Election manifesto 1997)
- The BNP on AIDS "Nature is at last taking revenge against the nauseating proliferation of homosexuality" (Spearhead July 1983)
- The nail-bomb attack in Soho: "Dozens of "gay" demonstrators flaunting their perversion in front of the world's journalist showed why so many people find these creatures so repulsive" (Nick Griffin - Spearhead June 1999)
- Banning the 'promotion of homosexuality' — "Homosexuality is wrong... We believe that the promotion of homosexuality should be banned not just in schools but also in the mass media" Identity — the BNPs 'Official Monthly magazine
- Predatory Perverts 'we believe that young boys should be protected from the attentions of older perverts by returning the age of consent for homosexual sex to 21.'
- 'This does not mean that we want to persecute individual homosexuals...but neither are we willing to grant them the "right" to flaunt their deviancy and to try to win new recruits to their sad, disease-ridden lifestyle.'
- In the 2005 General Election Manifesto, the section on "The Armed People — The Ultimate protection against invasion or tyranny" states that the 1996 Dunblane massacre of sixteen school children and a teacher was carried out by "a homosexual paedophile"

# Unite against racism and homophobia

**L**AGCAR exists to ensure that the lesbian and gay community is active in the fight against racism. At a time when racism and fascism is on the rise, it is essential that we are united against our common enemies. Homophobia is unfortunately present in all sections of society and in every community, and we oppose any attempts to feed racism in the lesbian and gay community by claims that black communities are uniquely reactionary and homophobic. This is not reflective of the true nature of homophobia in Britain today and will lead to divisions between our

communities which will allow racist homophobes such as the BNP to advance against both communities.

LAGCAR believes that all forms of homophobia should be taken up and addressed. This struggle should be led by lesbians and gay men within those communities. LAGCAR was proud to be a core supporter of the recent Imaan conference which brought the concerns of the Muslim LGBT community to the forefront and addressed issues of Islamophobia and homophobia. Imaan is an organisation of LGBT Muslims which provides practical support, events and

information. We welcome the joint work between the Muslim Council of Britain and Stonewall, in calling for a Single Equalities Act demonstrating that where our communities join together, gains can be made that will benefit both. Trade unions and the TUC are also putting their weight behind the demand for strengthened, harmonised equalities legislation.

It is necessary to have the broadest possible alliance against racism.

- *For more information on Imaan please visit [www.imaan.org.uk](http://www.imaan.org.uk)*

## Asylum rights must be respected

**T**he general election campaign was marked by the hostile climate created around asylum seekers and migrants as a result of interventions in sections of the press and by some politicians. The mainstream parties may believe this is necessary to appease those who are voting for the far right but the reality is that this only serves to legitimise their extremist views. This was confirmed on the BNP website where they welcomed the negative debate on asylum as it created a 'win-win situation' for them. A Guardian/ICM poll found that 1 in 5 ethnic minority voters considered leaving Britain due to the racism they have faced — much of this hostility was attributed to the debate around immigration. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recently highlighted the continued racism and discrimination experienced by asylum seekers and refugees as a result of the debate being had out by politicians and the press in Britain. Hostilities against asylum seekers are also used to justify successively



regressive policies which inflict misery upon asylum seekers. The government currently plans to increase deportation and detention, despite a recent Amnesty report suggesting this policy breaches human rights and could be unlawful. Recently, we have also seen a partial re-introduction of the widely condemned voucher system being applied to asylum seekers who have come to the end of the process. Many of these measures are contrary to Britain's international obligations and undermine the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, which was designed to provide sanctuary for

refugees, following the atrocities of the Holocaust. It is essential for the LGBT community to counter these measures. We must counter the myths around asylum — contrary to the idea that we are being "swamped" by asylum seekers, Britain only takes 2 per cent of the world's refugees. We must also continue to campaign for full rights for lesbians and gay men to asylum and immigration.

NAAR has produced a myths and facts sheet around asylum which can be downloaded from [www.naar.org.uk](http://www.naar.org.uk). You can also sign up to the 'migrants deserve respect' campaign on our website.

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FREE MUSIC FESTIVAL CELEBRATING LONDON'S DIVERSITY AND OPPOSING RACISM

# rise

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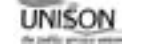
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