

# Action on hate crimes



**The Soho nail bomb attack was an extreme example of homophobic violence. Yet hundreds of gay men and lesbians fall victims to incidents of 'hate crimes' every year. As our last newsletter pointed out, LAGCAR supported an amendment to the recent Crime and Disorder Act, which would have added homophobia to the laws against racist crimes. Our argument, borne out by the bombing, was that behind every racist lies a homophobe. Unfortunately, and wrongly, the Government argued against this.**

New laws are needed because existing ones have not protected the most vulnerable. As the inquiry found into the investigation of the Stephen Lawrence murder, the police's institutional racism allowed Stephen's killers to walk free.

Similarly there is the case of Michael Boothe who was the murder victim of a vicious homophobic attack in London nine years ago. Despite claims that the perpetrators were known to the police, no one has ever been brought to justice. LAGCAR supports the campaign from *Gay Times* to re-open the case and a review

of the police's investigation. Making the links between racist attacks and homophobic violence, campaigning for better police and community responses to these incidents and demanding stronger laws,

was the aim of LAGCAR's successful public meeting on May 21 in London, addressed by Angela Mason from Stonewall, Peter Tatchell from Outrage!, Ken Livingstone MP and Linda Bellos. Nearly 100 people attended the meeting, which heard an emotional appeal for action from a partner of one of the victims most seriously affected by the bombing outrage. A collection raised over £100 for the April Bombings Appeal Fund.

LAGCAR will be using the impetus for more action against hate crimes in its role on the London Lesbian and Gay Policing Group which liases with the Metropolitan Police.



# Defeat the Immigration and Asylum Bill

The Immigration and Asylum Bill currently going through parliament will have a severe impact on people seeking asylum or immigration. It withdraws benefit rights to asylum seekers, compels them to live in designated accommodation, extends the use of immigration detention and ends the right of appeal in some cases. It also targets resident black communities through the imposition of financial bonds for friends and relatives wishing to visit Britain.

Despite a few isolated cases, lesbians and gay men are still discriminated against when seeking asylum due to persecution or immigration on the basis of a relationship with their partner. The Immigration and Asylum Bill will continue this inequality.

LAGCAR is demanding clear recognition of the rights of lesbians and gay men when seeking immigration or asylum and

has joined with others in condemning the present Bill. We believe that the Government can't on the one hand talk against racism and then scapegoat asylum seekers and refugees as being a problem. If passed, this Bill will give a green light to racists.

If you would like to get involved in the campaign contact the National Assembly Against Racism on 0171 247 9907.

## Pride '99

LAGCAR members will be ensuring a strong presence at Pride again this year.

If you are able to help carry the banner or distribute newsletters, either in London or on regional Prides, please ring LAGCAR c/o NAAR on 0171 247 9907.

## Unite again and homo



Within 24 hours of the Soho bombing, thousands of lesbians and gay men joined the National Assembly Against Racism march from Brixton to the May Day rally in Trafalgar Square. The demonstration was a wonderful example of making alliances work in practice. Alongside black and refugee communities, banners and contingents from Stonewall, Outrage!, London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, GALOP and the Gay Men's Chorus, mingled with students and trade

## UNISON's response to the bombings in Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho

UNISON condemns the recent bombings in Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho and sends a message of support to those injured and left bereaved by these atrocities.

Although they stand out in the scale of the devastation, these are not isolated incidents. The bombings may have been carried out by a lone individual but they are a symptom of an insidious and widespread bigotry. A bigotry that persists at a low level and then flares up, as is known all too well by the families of Stephen Lawrence, Michael Menson, Ricky Reel and Roger Sylvester. As people

and groups reeled from the emotional shock waves of the bombings, the pain has been intensified by a spate of homophobic and racist phone calls and mail to lesbian and gay and black groups.

On the day a man appears in court charged with the bombings, the four UNISON self-organised groups — black members, disabled members, lesbian and gay members and women members — and the National Executive Council, reaffirm their commitment to working together. Neither racism nor homophobia can be effectively tackled in isolation.

We will work together to forge the unity needed to defeat racism, homophobia and all forms of bigotry.

UNISON recommits itself to the campaign for effective legislation:

- against hate crimes, including racist and homophobic hate crimes;
- against discrimination; and
- for full civil rights for all groups of members.

UNISON calls on all trade unionists to work together to challenge prejudice and oppression, individual and institutional.

# Anti racism phobia



unionists.

Addressed by Linda Bellos and Angela Mason before the march set under way, the event set a precedent for anti-fascist marches in the future. Together in solidarity we are stronger! At the rally afterwards in Trafalgar Square, speakers were united in their call for banning extremist groups who openly advocate the murder of black, lesbian and gay people. And the question was asked: if the police have information on members of far right terrorist organisations such as Combat 18 and the White Wolves, than why haven't they already been arrested and locked up for inciting hatred?

## April bombings appeal fund

LAGCAR have been asked to advise on the Appeal Fund established after the April Bombings. If you would like to contribute to the Fund, please send donations to the organisers: Massow's, 36-38 West Street London WC2H 9NA. Cheques should be made payable to the April Bombings Appeal.

# Pull the Plugs on the BNP

The racist and fascist British National Party, which calls for the forcible repatriation of black people and the criminalisation of homosexuality, were allowed by the BBC to run European Election broadcasts on Friday May 21<sup>st</sup>. In the wake of the April bombings of the black and lesbian & gay communities, it is vital that we all unite in opposition to any free publicity given to those who choose to propagate their vile opinions within society. There is no legal obligation on the television and radio companies to broadcast the views of any political party simply on the grounds that it is fielding a certain number of candidates.

The National Assembly Against Racism organised protests outside the BBC to urge them not to force the BNP's message of racism and hatred onto its viewers.

The BNP were entitled to free circulation of millions of copies of racist and fascist election material by the Royal Mail. This is clearly an outrage and we should campaign against this on the grounds that its election literature breaches the Malicious Communications Act.

History shows that fascism threatens the democratic liberties of every person in this country, and above all those of the people whom the fascists choose to scapegoat: the black, Jewish and gay communities, those with disabilities, trade unionists and many more. The recent nailbomb atrocities highlight this and underline the importance of unity in the face of such terror.

LAGCAR urges all of you to join us in campaigning to oppose racist and fascist ideology every time it rears its ugly head.



## QX Apology

Following a salacious and offensive story in QX Magazine, LAGCAR received numerous complaints about the racist connotations in what purported to be a story for the sexual gratification of readers. The article used offensive and derogatory words against black people and told of their torture and mutilation. Following protests to the author and publishers, the magazine carried an apology, a commitment not to publish articles of a similar nature and will, we hear, carry stories of particular interest to black lesbians and gay men.

Whilst welcoming the apology, this example demonstrates that racism within the lesbian and gay community needs to be tackled head on.

lesbian and gay coalition against racism



## Support the Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism

**Opposition to the recent nail bomb attacks on lesbian, gay and black communities in London must be used an opportunity to unite all of us against racism and homophobia. Fascists want to destroy a multi-cultural, pluralist society based on equality for all.**

In the build-up to the millennium, we must demonstrate our determination to fight racism and homophobia and defeat the right-wing extremists who claimed 'responsibility' for the bombings.

The Lesbian and Gay Coalition Against Racism provides a voice for lesbians and gay men committed to fighting racism and homophobia. Drawing support from UNISON and Stonewall amongst others, LAGCAR is affiliated to the National Assembly Against Racism, the first anti-racist organisation to have direct representation of lesbians and gay men.

Priorities for the forthcoming year agreed at LAGCAR's recent Annual General Meeting

includes:

- campaigning for the recognition of lesbian and gay

partnerships in immigration and asylum cases;

- making the links between racist and homophobic violence and abuse;

- isolating and monitoring the activity of extremist far-right fascist groups.

Join LAGCAR as an individual, get a lesbian and gay organisation to affiliate and actively support our struggle against racism and homophobia.

### 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.

