

Defend multiculturalism — End the racist scapegoating

By Ruqayyah Collector,
NUS Black Students' Officer

Recent months have seen increasingly fevered attacks in the media and by some politicians against multiculturalism. Much of the focus has been on Muslims and asylum seekers, but these attacks undermine the contribution made by all Black and minority communities.

Home office figures indicate that ethnic minority communities produce 10 per cent of the country's economic wealth, despite being 7.9 per cent of the population. Our labour contributes hugely to running public services — such as the NHS — and we make an important contribution to the spheres of art, culture and much more.

Attacks on multiculturalism given authority by the government's 'Commission on Integration and Cohesion', have ignored the fact that racism permeates society at all levels, and blames Black and minority communities themselves for social division and the disadvantage they experience.

This racist climate threatens to roll back forty years of anti-racist progress — such as the creation of the Commission for Racial Equality and the recommendations on tackling institutional racism which came out of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry. Underpinning these gains was the recognition that racism is at the root of the social exclusion faced by Black, Jewish and other minority communities.

And some attacks have focused on students. Last autumn, the government's consultation document



'Promoting Good Campus Relations' actually called for universities to spy on 'Asian-looking and Muslim students'. Recent government guidelines on school uniforms invite schools to ban the veil and some universities are already doing so. The singling out of this issue by politicians has provoked a disproportionate controversy, resulting in Muslim women being vilified and physically attacked by racists.

The Tories also singled out Muslim women when leader David Cameron repeated a stereotype that they are held back from career aspirations by their families and tradition. However, the Equal Opportunities Commission's recent report on Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Caribbean women showed that in fact Black women have high aspirations and good qualifications, but racism and discrimination is the barrier to employment equality, not their own culture.

Multiculturalism is a fact of life in Britain — and one that must be defended. We should support the

basic democratic principle that people should be allowed to lead their lives and express their own cultural and religious identity, as long as they are doing no harm to others. One culture should not be imposed on others by the state or anybody else.

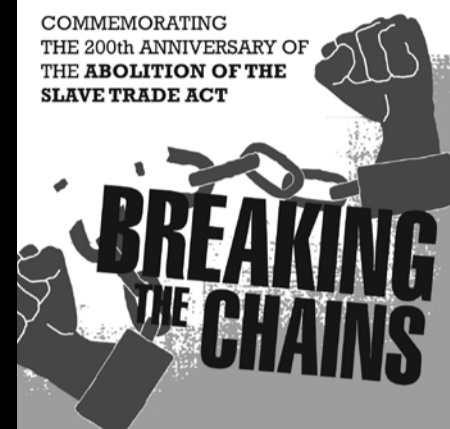
We should instead celebrate the diversity which enriches the country as a whole. Our campuses exemplify this, where students from across Britain and around the world, from a diversity of backgrounds, come together.

At this conference, it is important to support policy for NUS to play an active, leading role in defending multiculturalism and making a stand against racism and fascism.

- Support the motions in the welfare debate on tackling the racist offensive.

- **EMERGENCY MOTIONS: Vote to prioritise the emergency motion on defending freedom of conscience, culture and religion, including the right to choose to wear the veil.**

COMMEMORATING
THE 200th ANNIVERSARY OF
THE ABOLITION OF THE
SLAVE TRADE ACT



Time for an apology

Hannah Hudson,
Racial Diversity Officer,
Keele University

March 2007 marks the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Act. One of the greatest crimes in human history, the transatlantic slave trade resulted in the forced transportation of 20 million Africans and the deaths of countless millions.

Slaves were kidnapped, loaded as 'cargo', packaged flat below the deck of a ship and branded and traded like animals. Britain became a forerunner in this grotesque industry, yet even after having been unjustly enriched by its exploits and displacing and extinguishing the lives of millions, successive British governments have failed to apologise.

The discourse marking the bicentenary has largely omitted the large scale African resistance that was key to the trade's demise and has ignored the role of Black abolitionists Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana, Ignatius Sancho, Toussaint L'Overture, Samuel Adjai Crowther, Sam Sharpe and Nanny Maroon, centring instead on William Wilberforce.

Let us seize this opportunity to challenge slavery's most destructive product. Racism and fascism need to be openly and strategically combated. We have the power to set the agenda for the 21st century.

For information on how you can set the apology agenda in your college, and for lobbying postcards, briefings and posters, contact the NUS Black Students' campaign at www.nusonline.co.uk/blackstudentscampaign



Stop the fascist BNP at May's elections

By George Woods, NUS NEC

The coming weeks are critical as the fight gears up to stop the fascist British National Party at May's local elections. The BNP is not just another political party, but a fascist organisation that stands in the tradition of Hitler, and seeks an all-white Britain — an aim that could only be achieved by violent means.

Racist attacks increase wherever the BNP is active. A number of prominent BNP members have convictions for racist violence.

Fascism stands for the total annihilation of whole communities, freedoms and democracy. The BNP is now targeting the student movement. It has set up a 'Student Association', contested students' union elections

and flyered NUS demonstrations. In Salford, a BNP activist pleaded guilty to common assault in a students' union election campaign.

Alarming, the BNP vote has increased 75-fold in just six years — from just over 3,000 votes in 2000 to over 238,000 in 2006. It now has 49 councillors and is targeting the local elections the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections this May. Next year it will target the London Assembly elections.

The fascists are prospering from the current climate of racism against Muslims and asylum seekers and spreading racist myths, given credence by politicians and the media.

Whilst the threat is very serious we can make a real difference by building broad-based campaigns

against the BNP. Racism on which the BNP thrives, must be challenged head on. Campaigns in Tower Hamlets and Oldham in recent years have seen the BNP gains rolled back.

Unite Against Fascism unites Black, Jewish, and Muslim communities, trade unions, lesbian and gay and disabled people and students — exactly the powerful alliance needed to challenge and drive back fascism. UAF is coordinating campaigns in the run-up to May including mass leafleting, rallies and media work, to counter the racist myths and mobilize the anti-BNP vote.

- Make sure you are registered to vote by 18 April.
- Visit www.uaf.org.uk and come to the UAF fringe to find out how you can get involved and make a difference this May.

**Unite Against Fascism —
Stop the BNP in 2007**

NUS conference fringe meeting
Wednesday lunchtime 1–1.45pm in
the Renaissance Room

Speakers: Henry Guterman MBE,
refugee from the Holocaust,
and others

The Sukula Family must stay!

By Jason Travis, Sukula Family Must Stay Campaign

Bolton FE student Flores Sukula is a refugee, who, with her family, fled the Democratic Republic of Congo in fear of her life. Draconian asylum laws mean Flores and her family do not have permanent leave to remain in Britain.

Last February the Home Office attempted to evict the Sukulas from their Bolton home and move them to Liverpool. However, a town centre demonstration, media coverage and the prospect of mass pickets against any forced eviction led the Home Office to back down. The family have lodged a new case with the Home Office.

- You can help by writing to the Home Office supporting permanent leave to remain for the Sukulas, quoting reference number N1056620, and by inviting Flores to speak at your college.



For more information email contactsaar@hotmail.com

Black students call for greater representation

By Bellavia Ribeiro-Addy, NUS Black Students Committee

Students' unions must give a voice to all their members' concerns. Yet Black students are often marginalised from students' union decision-making bodies, and their views excluded. The link between under-representation and Black students' experience of racist discrimination in education cannot be underestimated.

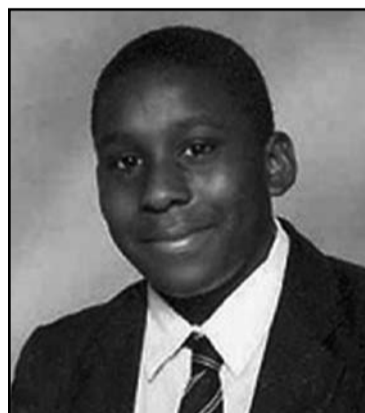
Black students face lower marks and higher drop-out rates. With proper Black representation this can begin to be challenged.

The NUS Black Students' Campaign has launched a 'Charter for Black representation' which is calling for 'A Black Students' Officer in Every Students' Union', for proper representation throughout NUS in proportion to Black students' numbers and for all colleges and universities to comply fully with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

- For further information contact: Ruqayyah Collector, NUS Black Students' Officer, ruqs@nus.org.uk and visit www.officeronline.co.uk/black

Remembering Anthony Walker

Anthony Walker, an eighteen year old A-Level student, was murdered in a horrific racist attack in July 2005. The Anthony Walker Foundation is being established by his family and friends to speak out against racism and fascism.



Anthony's death draws attention to the reality of racism in its most brutal form, and demonstrates that, tragically, young people and students are too often the victims of racist attacks. The Foundation organised a successful festival in Liverpool last summer, which will now become an annual event, featuring sports, music and educational events to challenge racism. Other events are being planned, which students are encouraged to get involved in.

- Visit www.theanthonywalkerfoundation.com.

Eight years on, time for justice for Jay

Jay Abatan was murdered in a brutal racist attack in 1999. The police investigation into the murder has been seriously flawed and Jay's murderers have still not faced trial. Jay's family are calling for your support in insisting on an inquest into his death and an investigation into the Brighton and Sussex police handling of the case.

- Please email your MP asking them to support parliamentary Early Day Motion 758 calling for justice. Visit www.justiceforjay.co.uk.

STAR day of action success

By Natasha King, STAR

Warwick students running a food parcel distribution scheme, Hull students holding a world music fundraiser and Southampton students sleeping out on the street for a night, are just a few examples of action taken by members of Student Action for Refugees (STAR) to raise awareness about asylum seeker destitution.

Government policies of withdrawing support to refused asylum seekers have forced tens of thousands into abject poverty.

STAR is involved in the 'Still Human Still Here' campaign which calls on the Government to end the threat and use of destitution and to continue financial support, accommodation and access to health care and education to refused asylum seekers until they have left the UK or been granted leave to remain.

STAR is a network of university groups and young people who raise awareness of and campaign for refugee rights and support refugees through volunteering.

- More information: www.star-network.org; www.stillhere.org.uk

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rise
London United

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Clapham Common
12noon - 8.30pm

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EMAIL info@risefestival.org **TEL** 020 7983 6554
WEB www.risefestival.org



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Save ESOL courses

The government recently announced plans to drastically cut funding for free English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.

Such courses are an invaluable lifeline for thousands of asylum seekers, migrants and international students and of value to the economy.

Cuts to ESOL have come despite the government proposing this April to cut access to benefits for immigrants who cannot speak English.

The University and College Union has launched a campaign to protect ESOL funding, with the support of NUS and students who took part in a 1000-strong lobby of Parliament in February. Support the campaign by lobbying your MP.

For details visit: www.ucu.org.uk

- Support motions defending ESOL in the education zone debate.

Fundraising at summer festivals

Join SAAR teams pulling pints to raise money at festivals over the summer, including Reading and Leeds. Volunteers gain free access to the festival, two free drinks per shift, hot meals and a dedicated campsite with hot showers.

Volunteer at Rise — London United festival

Every year the National Assembly Against Racism jointly organises Europe's largest anti-racist festival. Come along and help get the anti-racist message out!

Email: contactsaar@hotmail.com

Join the Student Assembly Against Racism and get active against racism on your campus

Affiliation fees: £3 individual student
£10 student society/SAAR group
£20 student union; £35 NUS Areas

Name.....

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Phone

E-mail

Club/Society/Organisation

Position (if any)

I/we enclose £..... affiliation fee, plus £..... donation.

Cheques payable to SAAR. Return to SAAR, c/o NAAR, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS