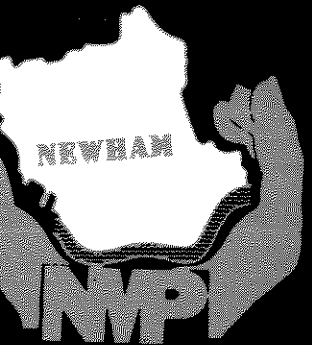


ANNUAL REPORT 1994/95

NMP
NEWHAM
MONITORING
PROJECT

fifteen
15
years



Newham Monitoring Project

f i f **15** e n

years of community resistance

ANNUAL REPORT 1994/95

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Fifteen Years of Community Resistance

It is with great pleasure that the Management Committee of Newham Monitoring Project presents its fifteenth Annual Report. The title - Fifteen Years of Community Resistance - reflects another milestone for NMP, still fighting while so many have given up the struggle. It marks, too, the continuing resistance of Newham's black communities against racism, violence and injustice. Within, we document many of the more serious cases of racial and police harassment in this last year, the diverse campaigns and the important trends that have emerged.

Unfortunately, there are some things that have not changed in fifteen years, including the tragedy of racial murder. The death of Donna O'Dwyer, like the deaths of Eustace Pryce, Panchadharam Sahitharan and so many others before her, has caused great suffering to a family and considerable anger within the community. As this report is published, the trial begins of the man accused of causing her death. We can only hope that, unlike the bungled prosecutions in 1994 of the attackers of Quddus Ali and Mukhtar Ahmed, justice will at last be done.

Racist murders continue across the country. In Brighton, a Sudanese refugee, Ali Ibrahim, was killed on the streets. In Oxford, a Somali refugee, Saied Ahmed, died after his home was firebombed. In south Wales, Mohan Singh Kuller was murdered by a racist gang. The list seems to go on and on. These deaths are, however, only the most horrifying examples of racial violence that takes place every day. In this report, we outline some of the many cases of racial harassment that NMP dealt with in 1994 and highlight the inadequate response of statutory agencies, particularly Newham Council's housing department.

Responding to cases of harassment by the police continues to be an important part of NMP's work. The failure of police officers at a senior level to take this issue seriously can be attributed in part to the total lack of proper accountability of the police to the communities that they are supposed to serve. Existing structures such as the Police Community Consultative Group (PCCG) are wholly ineffectual in ensuring that the police are held to account, a problem which is discussed later in this report. One trend we have noted with concern is the increased targeting of those from the new refugees communities. As legislation is introduced to further undermine the rights of refugee and asylum-seekers, black people in Newham will be faced with more passport checks and more harassment. Fortress Europe is no longer simply an abstract idea, or one faced only by those entering the country - its implications are being felt everyday on the streets of the borough.

Whilst black people are demonised by the state as potential 'illegal immigrants', the fascist BNP will continue to find ammunition for its sickening 'Rights for Whites' campaigns. In this report, we outline NMP's work in stopping the fascists from gaining a foothold in south Newham. This campaign is described in greater depth in a new pamphlet launched in March 1995 entitled *The Enemy in Our Midst*, which draws upon our experiences of the elections in May 1994 and January 1995. We recommend it as essential reading for all anti-fascists in east London.

Finally, we would like to thank NMP's workers and its many volunteers for their continuing dedication and energy, always beyond the call of duty. It is they who make possible the campaigns and initiatives in which we are involved. It is this commitment to the fight against racism, fascism and injustice which means that, during the next fifteen years, NMP will still be fighting to get across the clear message - no justice, no peace!

Newham Monitoring Project
Management Committee
April 1995

Casework

At the core of NMP's work over the last 15 years has been the importance of offering practical advice and support to black people suffering racial harassment and police harassment. This approach means that casework takes a central role in the work of NMP. Our casework is determined by the needs and concerns of individuals and families themselves and our method of working leads us to reject the paternalistic approach of social advice and welfare agencies which is based on an advisor-client relationship. The contrast between NMP's community-based approach to racial harassment and the explicitly "professional" approach of other agencies is paramount. NMP's belief that those at the centre of a 'case' should have real control over its direction, is achieved by providing structures whereby individuals suffering racial or police harassment are involved, at every stage, in dialogue and feedback from statutory agencies such as the local authority and police. These are outlined in the panel right.

In cases of racial or police harassment, another option to the casework described above is to launch a campaign. This effectively exposes or embarrasses the relevant agencies, as well as raising questions of principle such as the right to self-defence. A campaign is also productive in that it raises the awareness of the community, encourages them to identify with the issues thrown up by the campaign and thereby facilitates a process whereby local people take control of their own lives.

FRAMEWORK OF CASES

In all racial harassment cases our role is to :

- Provide adequate support and advice for the victim;
- Put as much pressure as possible on the police to try and ensure that they take action, arrest the perpetrator(s) and bring the appropriate charges;
- Pressurise the local authority and relevant agencies to meet their responsibilities to local black people whether they are council tenants or not;
- Encourage councillors and MP's to intervene so as to ensure that cases are handled satisfactorily by the police and by local authority.

In all police harassment cases our role is to :

- Try and secure the release of a detained person as soon as possible, and to make sure they are legally represented;
- Ensure that those involved receive proper legal advice from a sympathetic solicitor.
- Ensure that people who sustain injuries while in custody receive immediate medical attention once released;
- See that necessary photographs are taken of injuries incurred while in police custody;
- Make necessary complaints on behalf of the victim using photographic and medical evidence, and to help claim any criminal compensation.
- Pressure council officers, councillors, MP's, etc to investigate police malpractice with the view to making sure that officers who perpetrate racial harassment and assault black people are penalised.

382 Centre

The majority of cases dealt with by NMP are taken up as a result of people visiting our office after they have seen NMP publicity or rights cards. However, the use of the Centre goes far beyond this. The 382 Centre remains, for many, the first point of contact in terms of obtaining help or advice on matters not directly related to racial harassment or police harassment, but to other race and/or class issues which disproportionately affect the black community of Newham. These include poor housing, education and in the face of a series of racist immigration laws, which incarcerate and criminalise those whose only "crime" is to want to live in Britain - immigration. The Centre operates an open-door policy. With the help of volunteers, we offer advice on a wide range of issues and act as a referral point. This service has proved so essential and widely-used that we have established advice surgeries using the expertise of other agencies (ie Newham Rights), hence maximising the services provided and encouraging the continued use of the building as a community resource centre. This has proved highly successful with, for example, over 750 people seen by Newham Rights at the 382 Centre throughout the course of 1994. This is in addition to over 1300 people using the centre (many on a number of occasions) in 1994.

In 1995, 129 or 25*% of cases came to the project via the 24-hour emergency service line. The 24-hour emergency service remains unique in the borough and is requisite in the provision of on-going practical support to victims of racial and police harassment. The service has proven itself an invaluable reassurance to those experiencing violent and often persistent harassment ensuring that practical advice and support is only a phone call away.

NMP's emergency service volunteers represent one of the pillars of the project. Without their continuing and unfailing commitment much of our work would remain undone. NMP gratefully acknowledges their help and assistance during 1994. NMP

Emergency Service

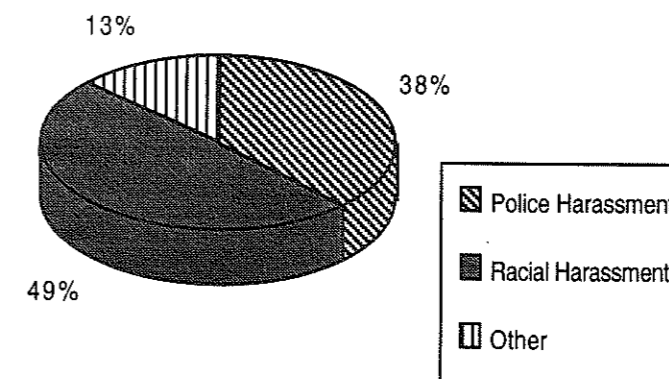


Table 1

Casework Statistics	
Cases Reported	
Police Harassment	196
Racial Harassment	253
Other (see note 1)	69
Referrals	
Direct	259
Emergency Service	129
Other (see note 2)	130

NOTE 1
These cases do not fit neatly into the categories of either racial or police harassment, but are linked to questions of institutionalised racism.

NOTE 2
This refers to cases referred to us by voluntary and statutory agencies.

Racial Harassment in Housing

From the formation of Newham Monitoring Project 15 years ago, following the racist murder of Akhtar Ali Baig, we have consistently monitored racist attacks and analysed patterns of racist violence across the borough. The figures below illustrate the types of racial harassment that black families are subjected to on a daily basis including being threatened, assaulted, abused and having homes and property vandalised. What the figures do NOT illustrate however, is the deliberate and purposeful nature of much of that harassment and its debilitating effects.

Neither do these figures reveal the fortitude and on-going tradition of resistance of the black community in Newham, whether this be families or individuals refusing to be intimidated or the community coming out onto the streets in vigils or demonstrations. The community has continued the fight against increasing racism and discrimination.

Alongside these ongoing struggles against increasing racism and discrimination, new challenges have arisen. As the priorities of statutory agencies become more and more determined by financial considerations, Housing Associations (HA), are taking over the majority of housing stock. This means that black people are experiencing many of the same problems they faced fifteen years ago. The struggle to get racial harassment officially recognised needs to be fought all over again.

Communities under attack

Throughout 1994 we have continued to prioritise the creation of community associations as a crucial element in a local response to racial harassment. Our argument is simple: any effective and long-term response to racist violence must be rooted in the black communities facing the brunt of the violence. NMP works closely with campaigns that have a real base within the black community; it is this base which enables community associations to mobilise support in a way that high-profile media campaigns

Racial Harassment - Casework Statistics

Referrals		Breakdown by area	
Direct	115	E6	42
Emergency Service	54	E7	17
Other agencies	84	E12	27
Breakdown by nature of harassment		E13	33
Murder	1	E15	45
Physical assault/abuse	72	E16	61
Verbal abuse/threats	87	Outside Newham	28
Arson/Damage to Property	58	Breakdown by location	
Other	35	Home	149
Breakdown by gender & age		Work	17
Male	113	School	12
Female	87	Street	75
Children/adolescents	53		

or council-based initiatives cannot do. An important element of this work is the fostering of support from white anti-racists by linking the black experience and the fight against racism to wider demands for social justice.

In September 1994, following a number of vicious attacks from racists living in the North Beckton area, E16, including physical assault, robbery, vandalism and verbal abuse, local residents formed, with assistance from NMP, the Beckton Community Association. Once again residents in and around Nightingale Way, North Beckton, showed that they will not tolerate racist violence in their area and that they will organise to fight against it.

■ A particularly horrific incident was the unprovoked attack on Mr and Mrs S on their own doorstep by two men and a woman. The ferocity of the attack left Mr S with smashed teeth and Mrs S in a state of severe shock. After police arrived on the scene and questioned Mr and Mrs S, they proceeded to the perpetrators' home where, for some unknown reason, officers arrested the woman only, ignoring the two other men that had attacked the couple. When the woman was eventually taken to court she was fined a mere £150. The black community were shocked by this injustice.

The perpetrators of this attack were responsible for a number of other incidents in the area, yet no concrete action was taken against them. Both the police and the council's failure to respond was predictable to say the least. The police's assumed commitment to stamp-out racism is thrown into serious doubt when known racists are allowed to walk free, especially when their activities have been brought to the police's attention on a number of occasions. The council not only failed to provide adequate support and advice to the victims of racial harassment but also failed to take positive and firm action in dealing with the perpetrators, despite NMP's demand that racists must be effectively and quickly dealt with in an area where the environment is hostile to black people. Our concerns were unfortunately borne out by a vicious attack on a 10 year old boy who required hospital treatment for severe bruising on the head. This incident and the lack of response from police and statutory agencies prompted local residents to organise and defend themselves. NMP worked closely with the residents in order to establish the Beckton Community Association (BCA).

On Wednesday 5th October 1994, a public meeting was held at which BCA was officially launched. BCA's demands were simple - the perpetrators of racist violence should be evicted from their homes and criminal charges brought against them. It was in this meeting, which created a sense of unity and confidence amongst residents, allowing them to voice their concerns, that the full extent of racial harassment in the area was uncovered. These were residents who, prior to the meeting, were afraid of the consequences of speaking out against the perpetrators. This unity was made

Beckton Community Association

Public Meeting

The Launch Of The
Beckton Community Association
Uniting the Community

The Beckton Community Association (BCA) with the help of Newham Monitoring Project was created as a result of a number of racist attacks in and around Nightingale Way. The Association, made up of residents from Nightingale Way, Derry Avenue and Eldonwood Drive, has been established to demand the end to racial harassment and violence in the area and also to force the council and the police to act upon the many incidents that occur in the area. We call upon all who are concerned about racial harassment in the area to come to our public meeting to show that the Beckton community will no longer stand such racist behaviour.

WE DEMAND JUSTICE!
Beckton Community Association
Wednesday 5th October
St Mark's Community Centre
Tollgate Road, Beckton. 6.30pm

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
B.C.A. PO Box 273, Forest Gate E7.
(If you are racially attacked telephone
081-555-8151 (NMP 24 hour emergency number)

Left: Leaflet for BCA Launch meeting

Public meeting to launch BCA

more apparent when a racist family attempted to disrupt the meeting but were effectively shut up. This was one of two families who were later evicted from their council homes for racial harassment due to pressure from BCA.

After the meeting the BCA started on a programme of lobbying the council to fulfil its demands. It was only after the BCA had applied consistent pressure on the Council that the racists were evicted, demonstrating the strength and determination of black people in Newham and how racial harassment can be effectively combated.

The BCA continued its fight against racism with extensive participation in the NMP anti-fascism campaign in January 1995. It is important to note how the community association took local concerns and linked them to wider struggles and other people suffering similar problems. Not only did the community actively come out and leaflet against the threat of the BNP but also publicly denounced the BNP and their politics of hatred in a statement which had extensive coverage in the local papers as well as many anti-racist journals.

Prestbury Road Community Association

Through NMP's work and its consistent involvement in community associations, like the BCA, the Gwendoline Avenue and Second Avenue Community Associations (see '93 Annual Report), there have been noticeable decreases in racial harassment in areas where associations have been established. Prestbury Rd was the scene of a number of serious racist attacks. For months Mr B and his family were regularly abused and threatened by racists living next door. Mr B's children were unable to play outside or even in their own garden due to spitting, verbal abuse and stones being hurled. The council were informed that Mr B has a disabled child, also the target of racial harassment, suffering verbal abuse and physical attacks consisting of the little boy being punched and kicked. All these incidents were reported to both the police and council. The harassment then escalated to the point where Mrs B was punched in the face by the perpetrators on her very own door step. The perpetrator then mouthed a barrage of verbal abuse outside the door including, "I'm going to kill you," before picking up the bin, emptying it on the front door and attempting to put it through the window. It was at this point that Mrs B's brother arrived on the scene. It was only due to the intervention of a passer-by that Mrs B did not suffer further injuries. Mrs B's brother later explained that

Breakdown By Incident

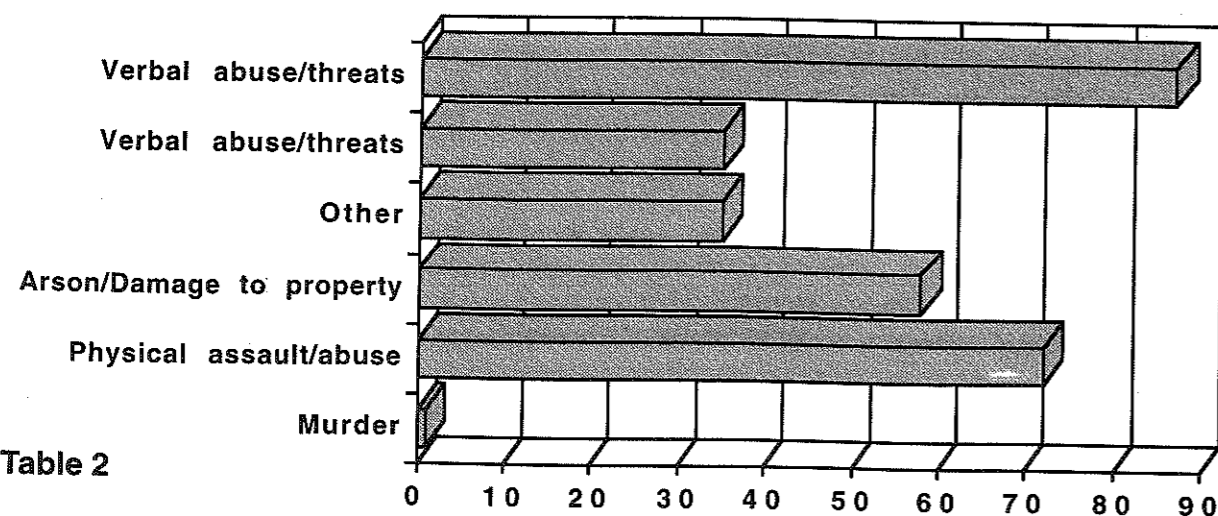


Table 2

he felt unable to intervene as he knew the police would more than probably arrest him instead of the attacker once they arrived on the scene. His lack of confidence was confirmed when, on arriving, the police did not even ask Mrs B about the incident but decided to believe the perpetrators' false allegation that Mrs B had threatened them with a knife. Due to the police's inexcusable behaviour and their total lack of action the harassment continued almost immediately after they left when the perpetrator returned and told Mrs B "Do what you want, I'll still get you."

With the help of NMP, residents from Prestbury Rd formed a community association. The first stage of their fight back was to produce a petition, signed by over 40 families and then presented to the council to enlighten them about the full extent of harassment in the area. NMP then visited all of these families and took down statements as to what the harassment entailed.

It is important to recognise that it was only due to the lack of response from the statutory agencies that perpetrators could believe that they had a free reign to harass and terrorise the B family or anyone else in the area. It must be said that in the majority of cases the council did take some action, but that action was most often inadequate. It is for this reason that the Prestbury Rd Community Association was formed.

The harassment of the B family continued with fireworks being put through the letter box on a number of occasions. The family was adamant that they would not be forced out by the racists and made that clear to the council. Due to the number of families involved in the community association, the council was forced to take action and the perpetrators, housing association tenants, were removed from the area only to be reallocated to Canning Town. Once again it seems that perpetrators of racial harassment are allowed to use loop holes in policies for dealing with racial harassment.

As seen in previous years, attacks on isolated black families are all too frequent. It remains the case that many black people, especially single-parent families, are housed by the council in predominantly white areas of Newham. In areas such as these not only is there no black community to provide practical support but also no thought is given to the possible problems single black parents might face. This is further exacerbated by the constant police failure to provide adequate support and assistance. Many black single mothers are especially vulnerable in terms of day-time attacks on estates.

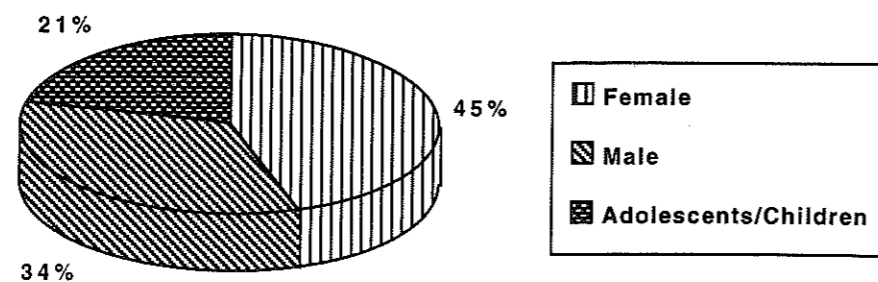
Attacks on Single Parent Families

■ In 1994, Ms W a single mother with four young children, was moved to Stratford after suffering severe racial harassment by members of the fascist British National Party. Ms W, doubly traumatised due to the fact that she was pregnant at the time, lived in constant fear for her safety and that of her young children. She subsequently had a miscarriage when she moved to Stratford.

Almost immediately after being rehoused, Ms W found herself and her family once again on the receiving end of hostility and abuse, this time from a white family living in the maisonette directly above. The harassment initially began with neighbours spitting at Ms W and her family but quickly escalated to the spreading of shit on her front door and front gate. Although the police were called on two occasions, no action was taken. NMP raised serious concerns with the housing department, in relation to the strain the harassment was having on the emotional and physical well-being of the family, but

Breakdown by Gender & Age

Table 3



these were ignored. On one occasion, Ms W found herself in a situation whereby she was almost begging the housing officer to take down her statement.

NMP were appalled to find that a single mother in her position was forced to live under such stress and anxiety because of council bureaucracy. A senior council officer informed NMP that written consent was needed from Ms W before any action on her case could be taken. When Ms W reported harassment, her concerns were trivialised. In one instance she was told that the perpetrator had been living on the estate for nine years and had not caused any trouble before. In the meantime, the harassment continued and Ms W became increasingly depressed. NMP reiterates its stand that one racist attack is one *too many* in whatever shape or form.

Insult was added to injury when the housing department, recognising the racial harassment Ms W suffered, saw fit to award her a paltry 30 points. According to the housing department's own policy, at least 200 points are required if one is to be considered for a transfer.

What is particularly disturbing about this case is the 'parrot fashion' way the council saw fit to deal with an especially vulnerable family. It seems that the council is resting on its laurels, dealing with racial harassment in a mechanical and bureaucratic fashion rather than with any consideration of the traumatic effect it has on people's lives.

A year on, Ms W and her family are still suffering racial harassment. Through NMP's continued involvement, a local councillor who attended numerous racial harassment panel meetings informed us that the case was not even on the panel's agenda and when asked about it he was told 'it is being dealt with.' The negligence shown in this case has had a wide range of ramifications. Due to the history of harassment the children, as in so many other cases, have suffered the most. Ms W's son has been expelled from school due to his sudden change in behaviour which a teacher described as 'most unusual' and 'out of character.' It is important to understand the psychological as well as physical impact that racial harassment can have on children. For a year, in his previous home, Ms W's son had to listen to 'Rule Britannia' music and instead of being moved to a place of safety he was subjected to yet more on going racial harassment. This has caused tensions in the home and effectively stopped the family from living a normal and happy life. Today, Ms W is still enduring racial harassment whilst the council seem more concerned about paperwork and procedure than human life. NMP will continue to stand by Ms W and will not stop pressurising the council until the situation is resolved.



Photo: NMP

Left: Graffiti in Victoria Dock Rd E16

■ Ms P and her young children, living in Custom House E16 for over three years, has been subjected to continuing racial harassment. The sole perpetrator of a sickening campaign of harassment was her next door neighbour, Mr Amersley. This consisted of Ms P and her children being spat at every time they stepped out of the door and abused, being called 'black bastards', 'niggers' and told that black people eat dirt and excrement. Ms P had mud pushed through her letter box and dog excrement thrown into her back garden. On one occasion, one of the white children urinated on Ms P's young child.

Neighbours tried to set fire to Ms P's back fence and her windows were smashed following a stone throwing incident. The harassment escalated, when Ms P's children were returning from the shop, the perpetrator's children, standing outside, called to Ms P's son, 'Where are you going nigger'. One of the racists threw a coke can at the boy, narrowly missing his head. The white child then attacked Ms P's 7 year-old son. At this point, Mr Amersley appeared, but instead of stopping the fight, he encouraged his son, shouting, 'kill the nigger'. Mr Amersley's friends and gathered around the two boys, they had no intention of preventing the fight either. Mr Amersley helped his son to attack Ms P's son as his friends shouted, 'kill the nigger'. Ms P's son was covered in bruises following the incident and the emotional and mental trauma cannot even be estimated.

Although the council were informed about the harassment no action was taken until a letter was sent nearly two months later. During this time, the children were pelted with rocks and stones when they left the house. This one racist family had been the cause of three other black families being driven out of the area. Large numbers of skinheads would congregate outside Mr Amersleys, suggesting that Mr Amersley and his friends are linked to far right groups. NMP continually demanded that action must be taken against the perpetrators. Ms P gave up phoning the police as she found them neither concerned nor supportive. This should have provided even more of a reason for the council to take positive and firm action. Eventually, Ms P was rehoused. But it simply will not do to keep moving black tenants, whilst taking no action against the perpetrators, leaving racists free to harass and intimidate other residents. NMP will now be visiting all black families in the area, and those who have been rehoused, to ensure action is taken against the racists still there.

The above cases illustrate the problem of housing black single parent families in areas where traditional support mechanisms are not available as in established black communities. Where families are placed in such areas (due to inadequate housing elsewhere) it is vital that statutory agencies put extra resources into supporting them. Currently, however, racial harassment is exacerbated by the lack of adequate support and action by statutory agencies such as the police and council.

Harassment on owner-occupiers

As outlined in the 1993 annual report, harassment of owner-occupiers is an increasingly growing problem. Families can, and do, suffer months, even years of harassment with no support or adequate action from the council.

■ The S family of Beckton, E6, have been the target of severe racial harassment including verbal and physical attacks and damage to property dating as far back as 1985. Each incident was reported to the council and the police, yet still the family suffer constant harassment. The council were aware that a number of council tenants were behind this vicious harassment which had led to the transfer of a number of black families from the area. The S family, on the other hand, are owner occupiers; they are therefore unable to leave.

The reaction of the housing department has been, and still is, worrying to say the least. Due to the lack of response from the council the harassment, which has gone on now for ten years, has escalated. The youngest son, beaten up on numerous occasions, has suffered enormously. Mr S has been pelted with rocks and Mrs S has not ventured out unless she is in a car for over 2 years. The family have been subjected to nuisance calls and vandalism to their car. On one occasion the police were called to stop a number of white youths from kicking the car. A number of white families gathered and told the police that the S family had instigated the problem. The police then had the audacity to warn the S family to keep their distance from the youths. To reiterate all the incidents from 1985 would be unnecessary. Suffice to say that the S family are not only isolated but have failed to receive any adequate support from the council or police.

After months of pressure from NMP, and further harassment, housing officers submitted a report, including suggestions put forward by NMP, to councillors. The council's choices, particularly in relation to moving the S family were few, in that government legislation limits the powers of local authorities to purchase housing stock. Despite this, NMP suggested numerous solutions in line with Newham Council's obligation to protect all residents in the borough, including the recommendation that Newham

Council move the family to reasonable accommodation of equal standard free of charge. This would allow the family the opportunity to sell the house whilst the mortgage repayments are kept up. It was also suggested that the Council, via its links to various other agencies (i.e. Housing Associations), assist the S family in the sale of their house. Our recommendations were guided by the vital principle that the family should not be left financially destitute and homeless as a result of their harassment by Newham Council tenants.

In response to a letter from NMP to the Director of Housing outlining the above, a senior officer of Newham Council stated that, despite the seriousness of the

"In previous cases we have tried to rely upon the goodwill of Housing Associations to buy properties where families have suffered racial harassment. However, these were not fruitful due to issues of negative equity, etc."

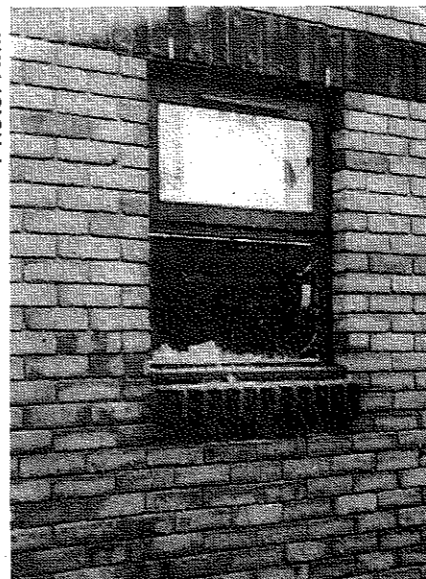
Taken from letter to NMP from Newham Council Housing Dept

harassment, the Council would find it difficult to rehouse the S family. He then went on to say that due to, 'issues of negative equity' it would not be possible to rehouse the S family. Newham Council, due to financial considerations and a lack of constructive political will, have effectively washed its hands of the situation. Whilst the S family are not in public housing, this does not absolve the Council from its obligation to them as Newham residents who have the right to live free of harassment in their own home. It is clear especially in light of the extent and period of harassment the S family have suffered, that the Council's stated objective of providing support to all victims of racial harassment is prejudiced by the fact that the S family are owner-occupiers. As we go to print, the family have still not been offered a suitable solution.

Already NMP has seen a sharp increase in the number of cases arising in housing association properties. It is important to note that HA's have no race officers, no officer to deal solely with racial harassment. As such, HA's are able to deal with racial harassment at their own discretion without informing any external agencies or even the council. The implications of this are that, firstly, there is no local accountability and, secondly, each HA has its own racial harassment policy. As the case below illustrates major issues now exist that we in the black community must address.

■ Mrs K and her three young children, residents of a housing association property in Custom House, E16, were subjected to serious racial harassment which begun in early 1993 and included vitriolic verbal abuse, constant harassment even on the most mundane outing, daily attacks on her property, including windows being smashed and even an arson attack on her home. This harassment steadily escalated and in 1994 Mrs K was viciously assaulted on her doorstep.

Photo: NMP



In a letter to the Area Co-ordinator and regional manager of the housing association, NMP highlighted the following serious shortcomings.

There was a distinct lack of communication between the council and housing association, displaying a refusal to recognise the extent of suffering Mrs K and her family were being subjected to. Both agencies used Mrs K as a 'football', neither taking responsibility and each blaming the other. Yet even when NMP brought the full extent of the harassment to their attention, the council and housing association merely forced Mrs K to go through long drawn-out bureaucratic procedures. One clear example of this was the fact that it was 4 to 5 months after numerous severe incidents before the council or HA decided that any action should be taken. Neither institution provided alternative accommodation for the family, although they must have been aware that the family were forced to sleep on the floor of friends and relatives.

In December 1993, Mrs K had been assaulted on her doorstep by a white neighbour. Yet it was Mrs K, the victim of the attack, and her three children who were arrested and charged with assault. Coupled with per-

Left: Damage to Mrs K's home

Housing Associations and racial harassment

sistent harassment, this outrageous consistent harassment eventually forced Mrs K's daughter to leave home and go and stay at a friend's house. Thus, failure to act by the council and housing association effectively led to the break-up of a family. Then, due to pressure from NMP, the council promised to refer the K family to another housing association. Four months later, it was found that this HA did not cater for 4-bedroom need. The fact that the council did not even bother to inquire about this shows its total lack of regard for the family's safety.

The manner in which the HA dealt with Mrs K also left much to be desired. Her views were not listened to and she was forced to live in a horrific situation. The area manager told her, on numerous occasions, that her case was being reviewed but provided absolutely no support whatsoever on a day-to-day level when Mrs K was being harassed. On one occasion, the council actually rebuked Mrs K for not co-operating. Meanwhile, the harassment continued, with Mrs K's windows being smashed. Although the council issued Mrs K with a super-override, it was over 6 months before the family were rehoused.

Clearly there had been a major breakdown in communications between the council and housing association. It was for this reason that NMP demanded an inquiry into the handling of the case which would provide an appraisal of the council and housing associations structures for dealing with racial harassment.

The central importance of housing

Ever since the formation of NMP in 1980, the housing policies of Newham Council have been central to our concerns. It is inevitable that this is so, as in the past, most racist attacks occurred in and around public sector housing. Housing, therefore, is at the cutting-edge of racism.

Thanks to NMP's campaigns, and the wider struggles of Newham's black communities, the London borough of Newham, whatever its shortcomings in practice, has recognised the importance of tackling racial harassment and taken this on board in its policies. Central to our critique of the failure of institutional policies to combat racism, has been the kind of structures that do or do not exist to tackle harassment.

Many of these issues are re-emerging as the whole nature of public housing undergoes massive change. As housing associations position themselves to take advantage of the new housing stock, NMP must adapt accordingly, reassessing our strategies to combat racism. The avenue of previous years, where, to some extent, elected councillors and democratic council could be pressurised into action are effectively closed as there are

Photo: NMP



Right: Racist graffiti in Waghorn Rd E13

no democratic means of control over housing associations. Public sector housing is now controlled by/business interests, with money and profits taking precedence over providing a service for the community. In previous years, the council was the central focus for concerns in the community. But now all that has changed and we are faced with housing associations which are more inaccessible, where power is more diffuse and where officials are more difficult to pin-down. And in addition to this, many housing associations are new, in the learning-stages, possessing neither the structures, skills or relevant experience to deal with racial harassment.

For the past 6 months, NMP has been assessing how best to deal with the forthcoming challenges and engaged in a project to identify trends. As part of this ongoing work, NMP identified all HA's with properties in Newham and then actively went out to meet each and every one of them. Our first task is to identify each HA's policies and strategies so as to allow us to deal effectively with them in the future. As each housing association begins to draw up policies, NMP is there in the background ensuring racial harassment is an issue.

In the coming year we will most likely see housing associations take over the majority of housing stock in the borough. A few years ago there were only three to four housing associations in Newham but now there are over twenty. This increase has gone hand in hand with the dramatic decrease in LBN staff and the re deployment of officers who previously managed council accommodation. Housing associations are rapidly becoming Newham's main social housing providers as they take advantage of new Government policies in the form of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT).

CCT means:

- Compulsory - Council's are by law required to comply.
- Competitive - No potential tender will have an unfair advantage over others, e.g. Council or outside contractor.
- Tendering - So long as all criteria are met the lowest bid wins.

Effectively, all services will be tendered out including rents, chasing arrears, supervising estate services and general housing management which includes harassment, nuisance and tenancy issues. This means that there could be a number of contractors, including local estate agencies and property companies, housing associations, and national companies in different areas. By April 1996 all council services will have been privatised. Once again we see public resources being depleted and the differentiation between the public and private sectors becoming increasingly divided. CCT is, in a nutshell, a cost-cutting exercise.

As mentioned above, CCT is, in effect, a cost-cutting exercise as what is crucial and central to each contract is generating and collecting income. This leads to the bizarre situation whereby racial harassment cases are only of interest if they generate money. As only 'live cases' (i.e. cases with reported incidents within 3 months) will qualify for money, naturally, there will be a tendency for contractors to deal only with live cases. This has serious implications. Contractors will seek to reduce time spent on racial harassment cases as management issues (i.e. rent arrears and voids), which are money-makers, take priority. And contractors will have no incentive to do more than the absolute minimum. Tackling racial harassment will become a bind when it is seen to interfere with other money-making ini-

How will NMP deal with this scenario?

Implications of CCT

tatives, especially if it is more financially productive to sit in front of a computer than to go out to visit victims of racial harassment.

The fact that racial harassment is increasingly becoming a battle of statistics, with money the overriding factor, poses serious dangers. This Tory government philosophy that nobody will do anything unless it is for money and the belief that the employment of officers to deal specifically with racial harassment is 'anti-competitive', are clear indications that tackling racism is to be at the bottom of the pile. Are we to see, in the future, contractors refusing to deal with racial harassment, or even to recognise its existence, because it doesn't make financial sense? And what sort of message will this send to tenants? *NMP believes that the motivation for tackling racism can never be financial, but that people's safety and their lives are at risk. NMP believes that people's lives, not profit, should be the priority.*

Murder in Leyton

■ On the night of July 16th 1994, 40-50 black people were assembled in a flat on the thirteenth floor of James Collins Tower, Oliver Close in Leyton, London E10. This was to be a happy, care-free party.

But at about 2.30 am (Sunday 17th July), a man clad in dark combat gear and a balaclava over his face, stormed his way into the party. He was armed with what appeared to be a machine gun and had a black plastic bin liner in one of his hands. Within seconds, the man released what was later confirmed to be a home made petrol fire-bomb. Because of the soft furnishings in the flat, the flames spread quickly as they let off toxic fumes. Total pandemonium broke out as party-goers tried to flee. The lights went off as soon as the fire started, adding to the panic. People moved out onto the balcony, in an effort to get some fresh air. Those in the lounge managed to fight the fire off. The worst part of the fire was just in front of the kitchen, where many people were trapped. Some managed to get onto an adjacent balcony on the same floor, while others managed to climb onto a balcony on the 12th floor below.

Twenty-six year old Donna O'Dwyer fell to her death while trying to climb out onto the balcony. She leaves behind her a 9-year-old son. Many other party goers sustained serious cuts and bruising. The immense mental trauma they all suffered, is still evident today, most need counselling to overcome their ordeal and rebuild their lives.

On the evening of 17th July, a white man was arrested in connection with this senseless attack. Following police investigation, and a confession made by his wife, Peter Charles Thurston was charged with murder and arson and remanded in custody. What was revealed in court, during the run up to Thurston's committal to trial, was not only sickening, but left little doubt in anyone's mind that Thurston was a racist whose hatred of black people was absolute.


According to the prosecution, Peter Thurston was obsessed with the politics of race hatred. A search of his flat uncovered a cache of replica fire-arms. Thurston's leisure-time was filled up by reading literature from the Third Reich and listening to tapes of Hitler's speeches. Thurston, known on the estate as obsessed with noise nuisance, was totally intolerant of the slightest noise transmission from neighbouring flats. It has been alleged that he had a history of attacking his neighbours, including young children, with base-ball bats in order to 'stop them making noise'. Thurston had allegedly told various people, on numerous occasions, that he could not live with 'that ragga music and the noise that those niggers make' on

the estate. He is said to have remarked that 'this situation has to be brought to a stop'.

Racial harassment in James Collins Tower was an issue that both the local authority and officers of the Housing Trust, which owns the block of flats, were well aware of. Instead of taking positive steps to ensure that black tenants were not at risk, they initially moved Thurston from one floor to another and then went on to trivialise all reports of racial harassment by labelling them as 'noise nuisance and neighbourly disputes.' In fact, the Housing Trust's response to the murder of Donna O'Dwyer and the attack on the

party was to immediately rehouse the Thurston family, leaving the tenant who lived in the house where the party occurred where he was. Unbelievably, the Thurston family were made priority. To further add to their negligence, the Housing Trust later rehoused the tenant of the house that was fire-bombed in the same block of flats! His only offer of alternative accommodation was to move to another block which was shortly due for demolishing. The Housing Trust could give him no guarantees, as to what would happen to him then.

The survivors of this callous attack set up the Leyton Race Attacks Support Group which aims to raise awareness of racism in the community as well as to bring to the fore the awful consequences of ignoring racist violence. With the help of Newham Monitoring Project, the Support Group has held several meetings and activities, at which the emphasis has been on building community unity and action in an area where self-organisation against racist violence is not common. But things are steadily improving. The Support Group has lobbied councillors and MPs to ensure that the Housing Trust and Waltham Forest Council take positive steps to address the problem of racial harassment in the community.

Thurston was remanded in custody and committed to trial at the Old Bailey on charges of murder and arson. The actual trial begins on 24th April 1995. The Leyton Race Attacks Group will be mobilising for a picket outside the court and continue to campaign for justice to be done. Whilst the life of Donna O'Dwyer was prematurely brought to an end, it certainly is not premature to call for a stop to racist violence. All black communities need to come together now to defend themselves for the new systems of housing management that are being put into place leave much to be desired. 

*A time to remember
A time to remember
from July to December
Until the end of time
Cause and effect a devastating crime
Arson with intent to murder
Intending not I to fall but all
As the survivors physically recover
we all mentally rediscover and identify
with the struggle
As surviving as Afrikans abroad
in a war zone
Fortunately we are not alone
We have, and give each other strength and support
We have our creator
The essence of our being, here today,
to give thanks and praises
Ever knowing, ever seeing
I commend all the survivors
For having the strength, to actively seek justice
And the community for gathering to provide comfort*
Ayamba Akim

Left: A poem by Ayamba Akim in remembrance of Donna O'Dwyer

Racism, schools and harassment by children

Racist attacks on young children are a particularly cruel and disturbing aspect of racial harassment, especially when perpetrated by other children. This aspect of racial violence is not only a sensitive issue but one in which the full effects of harassment on the developing child is not explored. We continue to see black children who have been attacked suffering from emotional and mental problems which take the form of being too frightened to go outside and play or generally displaying out of character personality traits as reported in the section on single parents. Quite often, the children who carry out the racial harassment are not challenged and therefore, more than likely, feel free to go on attacking other black children. Just because these children are too young to be charged with any criminal offence should not preclude some action being taken within the school environment. This is vitally important as without some form of deterrent action, the 'problem' is allowed to continue and has the potential therefore to become more serious at a later date.

■ Mrs J and her family were at the centre of a campaign of racial harassment. The harassment occurred not only in the vicinity of their own home but the same juveniles would attack Mrs J's son at school. On one occasion, J's son's teeth were knocked out. Following this, the boy was attacked by children from the school he attended, suffering numerous cuts and bruises. The attack took place in full view of Mrs J and only ceased when she called the police. The police, however, were unwilling to act, insisting that it was a simple 'schoolboy fight'.

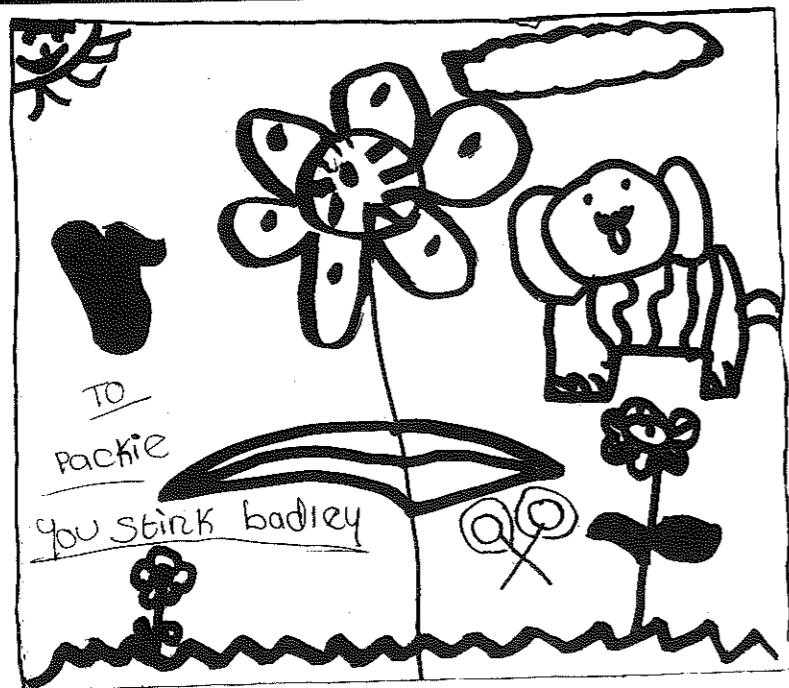
Schoolboys would continually congregate outside the family's house. It came to the point where Mrs J's son, who bore the brunt of the harassment, would not leave the house at all except to go to and from school, which he did with trepidation. The emotional and psychological effect on the family was tremendous. Mrs J was emotionally distressed and it was only after the intervention of an NMP emergency service volunteer, that the police agreed to note the serious racial aspect of the case. Fear for her son's well being increasingly immobilised her. The family, who had previously suffered harassment, were under enormous stress and lived as prisoners in their own home. NMP told the council that the situation needed to be handled efficiently and sensitively as the family feared repercussions. We also arranged a meeting at the school where it became clear that the incidents were simply being passed off as bullying. The school headmaster assured us that the matter would be dealt with and that he would contact the perpetrators' families. But we later learnt that the head-

master's action consisted of suspending the perpetrator for one day only and even then he was seen around school grounds. On numerous occasions, NMP attempted to contact Newham's Education Department in order to ensure Mrs J's son received proper support following the harassment. This was not forthcoming. Eventually, Mrs J and her family were rehoused in a safer area.

It is important that a clear distinction is made between bullying and racism. Bullying, though serious in its own right is something that many children can suffer. Racism on the other hand is particular to black children and implies a power relation between black and white. If racism is to be eradicated from this area then the institutions must accept a major role in dealing with it in a firm and positive way. And this should not simply be in the form of multicultural education. In itself, it is of no use for children to know, for example, that Asian people wear sulvar kameez, if they do not know how being Asian and experiencing racism can affect opportunities in jobs, education, etc. The multicultural perspective tends to focus on culture as being unchanging and static. Children are taught 'how people live' (i.e. food, dress, religion.) Anti-racist education, on the other hand, looks at society and at the roots of oppression in that society in its economic and power structures.

■ Take, for example, the case of S, a 15 year-old schoolboy. S was viciously assaulted as he walked down Langdon Rd E6. Three white youths blocked his path before one of them brutally assaulted him. He eventually broke free and was pursued down the street by the aggressor and several of his friends who then threatened him with a metal object. The attack left S with facial injuries including cut lip, sore mouth and a swollen eye. Later on the same morning, S went to school accompanied by his mother and brother to notify teachers of the attack and to identify the aggressors known to be students at the school. S was taken to the playground by a teacher where he identified the aggressor. The teacher, who promised to speak to the perpetrator later, went on to warn S that if anything happened to the perpetrator he would be held responsible. S, still highly distressed found the attitude displayed by the teacher, insensitive and inappropriate. NMP was also concerned that another teacher was overhead suggesting that S was often hanging around looking for trouble. Following our intervention, NMP did receive a letter from the school informing us of their firm commitment to anti-racism.

■ Another serious case was that of Mrs R and her family who endured a campaign of severe racial harassment from the day they moved to Roman Rd, E6. Mrs R's young children, aged 10 and under, suffered the brunt of the attacks. Both at home and at school the children were frequently attacked, spat on, and generally harassed. In one case, one of the younger children was attacked by a group of white youths who beat him up before attempting to cut the boy's hair. Another incident was a serious assault on Mrs R's nephew who was beaten up and kicked in the head. The group of youths, aged between 14 to 15 responsible for these attacks had been targeting black families in the area and were pupils at a nearby school. When Mrs R visited the school, the headmistress told her that if 'Indian' people got more involved in school this wouldn't happen.' Such an outrageous remark could not go uncontested and Newham's Chief of Education was contacted. The headmistress reacted to this by ask-



Above: A child's racist message posted through a neighbour's door

ing Mrs R why it was necessary and by telling her that the fact that the family were 'outsiders' had aggravated her harassment. Mrs R was subsequently rehoused. To date, no action has been taken against the headmistress.

The headmistress showed a complete lack of concern for the safety and well-being of black children in her care. Children who suffer racism are affected in a number of ways which hinder the child's confidence and self-esteem. There is a direct correlation between racial harassment and educational under-achievement as racism affects a child's behaviour. This, in turn, escalates if the *real problem* is not identified.

■ G aged 7 and his sister aged 5 were returning from North Beckton Primary school when they were confronted by 3 white youths, aged between 14 and 15. Met with a barrage of verbal abuse, the two children ran away. G ran onto a building site nearby but was caught by the youths, who beat him, kicked him in the back before throwing him onto a pile of bricks. On the intervention of a passer-by, the assault was stopped and G taken to the hospital. G suffered severe bruising to his back and body and damage to his spine. Both G and his sister were in a state of shock and clearly traumatised by the incident. Neither wanted to return to school. Their mother informed the school and Newham Council's Education Department about the incident on numerous occasions. Not only was no action taken, but the school did not even contact Mrs G to inquire about her son's health. NMP wrote, on several occasions, to the governors, the Parents and Teacher's Association and also to the headmaster. After this, a reply was received from the school assuring NMP that our concerns would be addressed. Pressure was then put on the police to apprehend the youths. Unfortunately, due to G being so young and so terrified he was unable to give a statement and thus no criminal action was taken.

In this case we can acknowledge and praise the invaluable work done by some within the Education system, especially teachers. All too often, sympathetic and committed people within the system are hampered, and

in some cases prevented, from doing progressive work by the institutions in which they work. We must ensure that the whole school inclusive of children, parents, teachers and school governors are involved in tackling racism and racist behaviour. Clearer messages and firmer actions which relate to the seriousness of racial harassment must be introduced into the classroom. A major problem is that parents often dismiss these attacks, saying 'they are only children.' This is not acceptable. As a deterrent, tougher measures must be enforced on parents. As statistics show, a high percentage of attackers are teenagers. Obviously, social factors come into play here. A recent survey compiled by the Department of Environment, featured Newham as one of the ten most deprived areas in Britain. Indicators used included: unemployment, housing, education and numbers of children in low-earning households and unsuitable accommodation. As cuts in local government expenditure have become the order of the day, provision for youth is increasingly becoming the privilege for those who can pay for it.

The fact that young people of school-age are very often responsible for attacks upon black people indicates a climate in which racism is acceptable. It is not enough to punish the pupils responsible. Racism in schools is a reflection of racism in wider society; it is essential, therefore, that the views of wider society are challenged in schools through anti racist teaching. NMP recognises this is a continuous process, demanding a variety of responses. Although we have addressed the problem of racism in schools previously in NMP's report, 'Racism and Racist Violence In Schools,' the recommendations outlined there are intended to serve only as guidelines towards combating racism. They are not a substitute for developing coherent anti racist strategies. ■ NMP

Police Harassment

For fifteen years now, NMP has documented numerous cases of police harassment which not only illustrate the brutality of policing in east London, but also provide alarming testimony that police officers are accountable to nobody. This year, we report, yet again, on some of the many cases we have dealt with and by so doing attempt to highlight common trends in policing in Newham and east London. From the experiences outlined here, the natural conclusion would appear to be that no member of the black community is exempt from police attack. No matter who you are - male or female, child or elder - as long as you are black, you can expect to be harassed by the police.

Sadly, this year, we also report the death of yet another member of the black community at the hands of the police.

Black women and children targeted

■ The F family live on an estate in Canning Town, E16. From the very first day they moved into their first-floor maisonette, they were subjected to racial harassment from their white neighbours in this notoriously hostile part of Newham. On the evening of 24 March, while Mrs F was relaxing in her front room, her three young children aged three years and two years, were out playing on the balcony with her three-month-old baby in his pram. At no time were the children left unattended, as the front door was open, enabling Mrs F to keep a close eye on them. Mr F was at work that evening.

The two-year-old, who had been driving his toy car, climbed onto it and reached up, thus managing to hang his head over the bannister of the balcony. Immediately Mrs F saw this, she ran out and shouted at her son to get down. This she said in her strong Jamaican dialect. Her racist neighbours understood this to be a threat to throw her son over the balcony.

Police Harassment - Casework Statistics

Breakdown by referral

Direct	118
Emergency Service	46
Via other agencies	32

Breakdown by gender & age

Female	62
Male	97
Children/adolescents	37

Breakdown by nature of harassment

Assault	34
Stop & search/traffic	42
Raids	29
Immigration	28
Verbal abuse	30
Other	33

Breakdown by police station

Forest Gate	59
Plaistow	51
East Ham	5
Outside Newham	46
Unidentified	35

Breakdown by area

E6	45
E7	41
E12	10
E13	18
E15	23
E16	24
Outside Newham	35

Within minutes, whilst Mrs F was still outside calming the children down, she saw a police van driving up close to her home but thought nothing of it. A few seconds later, three male police officers walked straight into her home without invitation, as her front door was still open. Mrs F felt intimidated and humiliated by the audacity of the officers, whose form of greeting was to tell her that they had come out in response to her neighbours' report that she was drunk and was attempting to throw her son over the balcony. Naturally, Mrs F, totally taken aback by what the officers told her, became very distressed. Moreover, she could not understand the policemen's view of the information they had received. They did not even believe that Mrs F was the mother of the children. She had to prove maternity by producing her children's birth certificates.

In keeping with patterns of harassment perpetrated by police officers, Mrs F was then asked to produce her passport, to show what her immigration status was in this country. When she said that her passport was in a suitcase in an upstairs bedroom, she was followed up the stairs by all three officers. Whilst her passport was checked, Mrs F was repeatedly warned that even though she was a legal immigrant, she could still be deported and have her children taken away from her. At that point Mrs F broke down into tears, triggering an extraordinary response from the three policemen. They began to ransack Mrs F's drawers and picked up her pants. Holding them up to her, the officers asked Mrs F who she wore them for. Mrs F was not only stripped of her dignity, but as she later told an NMP worker, so terrified that 'I felt like I had been raped.' Surely, there could have been no justification for such behaviour by police officers in uniform.

What followed next, was not only cruel, but inhumane. Mrs F was told to go downstairs as the officers were taking her and the children to Plaistow police station. Mrs F was not allowed to clothe or prepare a feed for her 3-month-old son before leaving. This was on a cold evening in March. Such was the course of action taken by police officers who later said that they did so 'to ensure the safety and well-being of the children!' Mrs F was denied the right to make a phone call to her husband or to hold her baby until she was seated in the police van - where, according to Mrs F, her young son 'was literally hurled' at her.

At the police station, Mrs F and her three young children were put in a cell and left until a duty social worker was called. That social worker was so alarmed by the way Mrs F had been treated that he gave her NMP's emergency service number to call. After another three hours at the police station, Mr F was finally contacted, coming from work as soon as he could only to be told that his family had been removed from their home because 'there were concerns for the safety of the children.'

Finally, the F family were released with no charge. Mr F was not given a satisfactory explanation for his family's nightmare. The following morning, Mr and Mrs F contacted NMP for help. We contacted Newham's Social Services department to find out what, if anything, they knew about this case. The response was that Social Services had been contacted by the Child Protection Team at Plaistow police station, but had expressed serious concerns about the way in which young children were removed from their home in the absence of a social worker. The police, however, insisted

Breakdown by Gender & Age

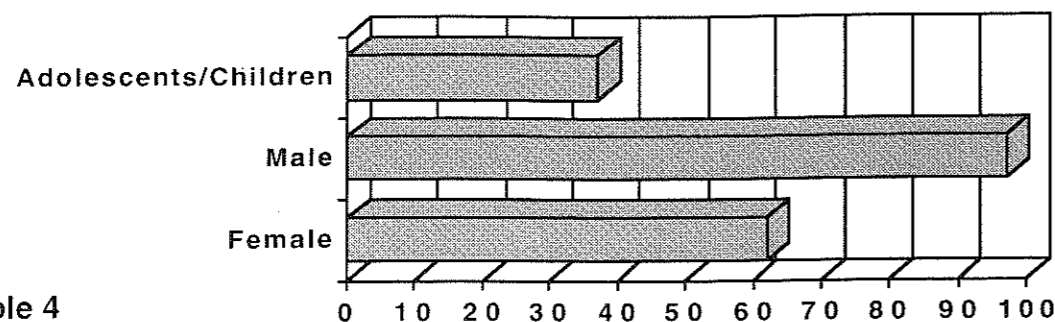


Table 4

that this was part of a 'joint' case between themselves and Social Services.

In the hope that she would get some recompense for her family's ordeal, Mrs F put in a formal complaint. The officers concerned denied all the allegations made by Mrs F against them. The Police Complaints Authority (PCA) came up with what now appears to be a standard response. In a letter, Mrs F was told that 'there were no other witnesses to this incident and therefore no means of reconciling the conflicting accounts given. Having carefully studied all the papers contained in the report of the investigation, the Authority have decided that no formal disciplinary action should be taken.' Yet again, another black family was left with no redress for the harassment they suffered at the hands of police officers. Yet again, officers from Plaistow police station brutalised members of the very community they are supposed to defend. What the PCA failed to address in drawing its conclusion, was the effects and impact of police malpractice on the lives of ordinary people.

That incident left Mrs F so deeply traumatised that she had to be put on tranquillisers. As a result, she was less alert and for a while she could not properly look after her children. During that period, her husband had to take indefinite leave from work to care for his family. Indeed, Mr F's employers were becoming impatient with him and threatened to sack him. This case highlights graphically the full extent of police harassment on working-class black people. Not content simply to terrorise the F family, the police have indirectly threatened their means of financial livelihood.

As a result, the F family became even more isolated and the development of the 3-year-old's speech became even more impaired, as he was afraid to go out and play with other children. Whilst the officers on duty that day justified their actions by stating that they were trying to 'protect' the children, the reality was the creation of a situation that almost tore this family apart. Fortunately, Mrs F's children were not placed on the 'at risk' register. Instead, Mrs F was assigned the support of a home help during this difficult period. Almost a year on, Mrs F still feels very insecure and nervous - a condition which can take many more years to overcome.

We cannot afford to speak about racial and police harassment in isolation, without highlighting the other serious issues raised by the consistent violation of civil liberties - in this case sexual harassment. Mrs F was sexually harassed by the police officers who invaded her home that evening and this left her feeling humiliated and dirty. This is just another of the effects that police harassment has on people. The fact that in 'upholding the law', police officers do as they please - runs contrary to any sense of 'serving the community'.

■ 10-year-old DN lives in the E16 area. He was playing outside with his friends on 24 July, when a white boy walked up and began to spit at him. DN pushed his attacker away, and the latter retaliated by striking him. DN could have been seriously injured by the wooden rounders bat that the white boy swung at him, had a friend not come to his help. At this stage, the white boy ran off to his mother, alleging that he had been attacked. The mother's response was to call the police. On arrival, the officer took the white boy into his car and went on a search for DN. When DN was finally located, the police officer did not bother to listen to his side of the story, but, instead warned DN of the 'consequences' of causing trouble. The officer asked to speak to DN's mother, who was not at home. Despite this, the officer went on to caution DN, causing the intimidated child much distress. NMP wrote to Chief Superintendent Dugmore of Plaistow police station, raising concerns of how officers handled cases involving young children. No satisfactory response was received.

The above two cases, following on from cases reported in previous years, illustrate the continuing brutality of officers from Plaistow police station. In last year's annual report, we extensively covered the case of the Dray family and their nightmarish experiences at the hands of officers from Plaistow police station. Despite the existence of the Newham Police Community Consultative Group (NPCCG), there has been no change in the style of policing. Officers from Plaistow police station are still a long way off from cleaning up their act. In addition to having to resist racist neighbours, the black community in south Newham has to deal with the racism of local police officers - small comfort for black residents in south Newham who live in a racially hostile environment.

Newham has seen the growth of new refugee communities in the past few years. Many are families displaced from their homes as a result of civil war and persecution - conflicts that are more often than not, instigated by Western governments, the countries of which, ironically, then become a sanctuary for those in fear for their lives. Sadly, it becomes all too clear for those who arrive in Britain that their 'welcome' is short-lived.

Immigrants under attack.

Breakdown by Incident

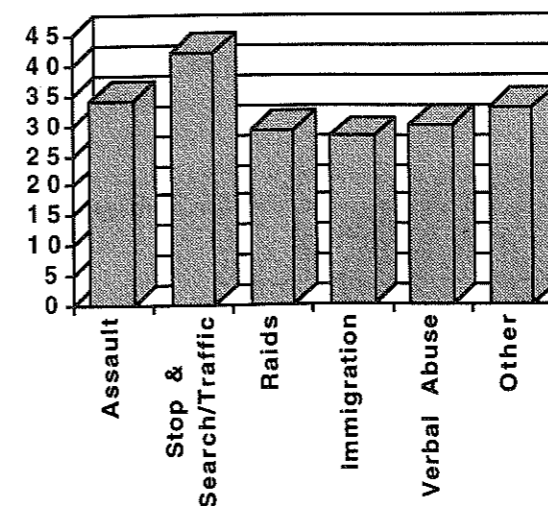


Table 5

Refugees are targeted by racists on the streets and subjected to the racist bureaucracy of the immigration system. This will only get worse as Fortress Europe tightens its restrictions on entry for those from so-called Third World countries. This is not only true for refugees but for all black people who settle in this country.

Over the past twelve months, NMP has dealt with numerous calls on our emergency service from individuals taken into police custody after random police checks to investigate their immigration status. The police appear to be an extension of the immigration services. And what is of immediate concern is the way these detainees are treated at the police station.

'Stop and Harass'

According to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, police officers have the power to stop and search any member of the public if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the person was acting suspiciously. Police officers in east London seem to have interpreted this to mean 'stop and harass' - particularly where the members of the public are black.

■ SE was driving home from work on 12th September. As he approached the check point at St. Paul's, he was pulled over for no apparent reason by officers from Snow Hill police station in central London. To SE's surprise, he was asked what his business was in that particular area. On giving his response, SE was then asked to produce identification, which he did. At that point, one would have expected that any reasonable police officer would have let him proceed on his way home. But that was not to be. SE is black and, therefore, an obvious target for an immigration check. Despite SE informing the officers that he was a British citizen, the constables went on to pursue a detailed line of questioning, wanting to know how and when SE entered the UK. Clearly, the police officers were not satisfied with SE's replies, for, in the absence of SE's passport, they decided to take him to Snow Hill police station. There, SE was held in a cell for two hours, until his wife arrived at the station with his passport. In this instance, SE should finally have been released, but he was asked to produce driving documents - perhaps to 'justify' the officers' decision to detain him in the first place.

Breakdown by Police Station

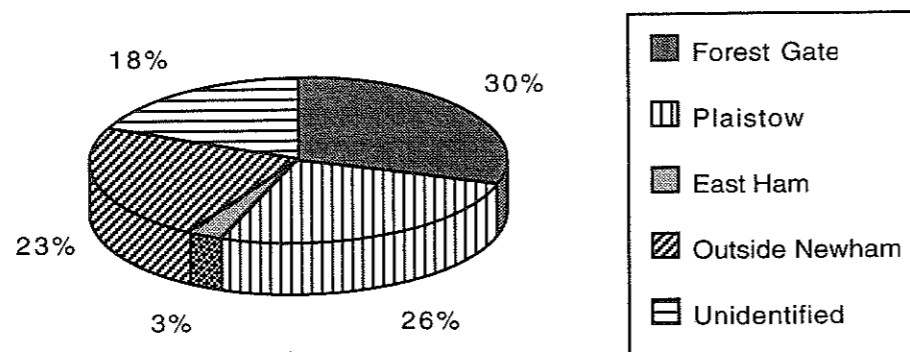


Table 6

Breakdown by Area

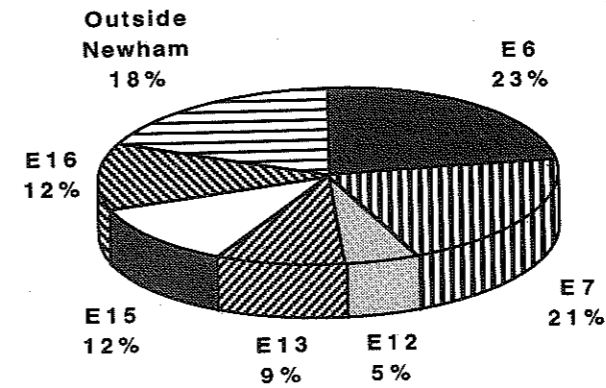


Table 7

■ Earlier on that same day, in another part of London, KK was also on the receiving end of the targeting of black people, again as he was driving his car.

KK was stopped by police officers and asked to produce his driving licence, MOT and insurance. After KK produced all three, the behaviour of the officers not only became aggressive, but he was bombarded with a torrent of racist abuse.

KK, a student from Zaire, was told that the officers believed him to be an illegal immigrant and that his immigration status would have to be checked. The racist motives of the police officer could not have been made clearer as one officer commented, 'You came here because there are no trees for you to jump around on. Maybe there was too much sun there?' KK felt humiliated and distressed. The incident exposed the hypocrisy of the British police's 'commitment to stamp out racism.' KK was eventually allowed to go, but told not to bother to make a complaint about the officers' actions - and refused the number of one of the officers he asked for.

KK approached NMP with a request for help and advice. He was assisted with putting in a formal complaint, the result of which is still awaited.

■ 26-year-old SB lives in Manor Park, E12. On 6th December, SB was going to the shops when he realised that there was a group of six police officers talking to some of his friends parked in a nearby car. When SB walked up to them to find out what was happening, one of the officers turned around and asked, 'What do you want, you half-breed?' The officers then went on to search him 'for drugs'. SB was confused and pleaded to be left alone since he was mourning the recent death of his father. These pleas were met with blows from the officers. SB pulled himself away and tried to escape when one officer from Forest Gate police station caught up with him, grabbed him, and threw him against railings along the roadside. SB was then attacked by four officers, one of whom held him in a head-lock so severe that he nearly strangled him. SB's protests that he could not breathe were ignored. SB was then handcuffed and, on the way to Ilford police station, was told, 'If you don't shut up - we're gonna smash your rib cage.' At the station, an officer escorted him to a cell and said, 'Half-breed, each time I see you, I'll pull you over. I'm gonna get you.'

Photo: NMP



Right: SB after his arrest

The cases outlined above show that the powers of the police are exercised according to the wishes of individual officers. All too often, this translates into police malpractice and abuse. NMP believes that this is an inevitable consequence of a police force granted extensive new powers, but with wholly inadequate supervision of its actions, either by the public or, seemingly, by senior officers. Unfortunately, repeated commitments to stamp out racism within the Metropolitan police will continue to be meaningless if they are not backed up by action at a local level.

After fifteen years of reporting often appalling cases of police brutality and misconduct with little change in attitudes or behaviour by the police service as a whole, we feel that black communities in this borough have waited long enough for the message of senior police officers to 'trickle down'. If the managers of the police force cannot deliver a crack-down on racist policing, by providing effective disciplinary procedures and a service that is responsive to those it nominally serves, then greater accountability and an independent complaints process is the only way forward. These issues are further discussed later in this report.

Police response to racial harassment

This year we report on how police officers have responded to calls from members of the black community suffering racial harassment, as well as the response we, as an organisation, have received from senior police officers to our concerns. The following cases speak for themselves.

■ On 17th September, 15-year-old HA was walking home from the shops when she was physically assaulted by a gang of white girls. HA was rescued by a passer-by who accompanied her home. When Mrs A saw how badly her daughter had been beaten, she immediately called Plaistow police station. Mrs A was reassured that somebody would visit within 10 minutes. When nobody turned up after a long wait, Mrs A called the station a second time. Yet again, she got the same response. Nobody turned up. Eventually Mr A arrived home from work and was greatly distressed by the state in which he found his daughter. To make matters worse, HA's assailants were still standing outside the A family's home. Mr A then decided to take his daughter to the hospital via the police station, in an attempt to get some explanation for the lack of response to his family's call for help. At the station, the police officer who dealt with Mr A told him the incident would be followed up at the hospital. Clearly the officer had decided that there was no urgency in dealing with the crime. In desperation, Mr A requested that at least a

police officer should go to his house to warn off his daughter's attackers. Unbelievably, the police officer simply said, 'We can't.' Mr A could do nothing else but proceed to the hospital, where he waited for the police to arrive, while HA was being treated for her injuries. Mr A's wait was in vain. After three hours, he left for home.

Two weeks later, Mr A got a call at home from a CID officer informing him that he wanted to take action against the perpetrators of HA's attack. Bearing in mind his experiences two weeks previous, Mr A was wary of this sudden concern from the same police officers who declined to go to the scene of the crime when the gang of white girls was still about. Mr A to put in a formal complaint against the officers at Plaistow police station which was dealt with by 3 Area Complaints Unit, based at Lemn Street police station. The explanation Mr A got for the police negligence was as follows: 'In the hour preceding your call at 5.27pm there were eleven other emergency calls all requiring prompt action. The officers on duty that afternoon had already dealt with thirty three emergency calls. Additionally, West Ham United were playing at home that afternoon which affected traffic flow.' Could it be that racial harassment just is not enough of a priority?

■ On 6 August, DD was walking home down Greengate Street, E13 when he was approached by a group of fifteen white men, one of whom spat at him and then punched him in the face in what was a totally unprovoked attack. Given the size of the white gang, DD turned to make his way home, rather than retaliate. However, one of the gang followed DD and, apologetically, offered him his hand to shake. DD returned the gesture and, in so doing, triggered off a vicious outburst from another member of the gang who shouted out, 'He shouldn't have done that, we're gonna get him for that.' DD managed to escape and ran home. On arrival, he rang 999 and reported that he had been racially attacked. The officer who took his call went on to question the classification of the attack as being 'racially motivated'. DD had to virtually prompt the officer to log it as such. When officers from Plaistow police station arrived at DD's home half an hour later, they banged on his door violently and shouted at him, 'Have you got a problem?' in a manner which was rude, hostile and aggressive. The police officers eventually referred DD's case to Newham Organised Racial Incidents Squad (NORIS), which, in turn, visited DD three days later. After taking down a full statement, DD was informed that NORIS would not be able to take any action, except to file the case away indefinitely. With NMP's assistance, DD wrote to Chief Inspector MCEvoy of Plaistow police station and queried the attitude and response of all the officers who had been involved in his case.

The Scotland Yard operator who took the initial call was reprimanded for questioning DD's qualification of the incident as being racially motivated. After listening to a recording of the 999 call, the investigating officer agreed with DD with regards the manner in which he was spoken to. As far as the period between DD's call and the arrival of the officers was concerned, it was interesting to note that the investigating officer went to great pains to explain how the prioritising of 999 calls works. He said, 'I am sure that you can appreciate that calls where a person is in immediate danger or where a crime is being committed or can be prevented should

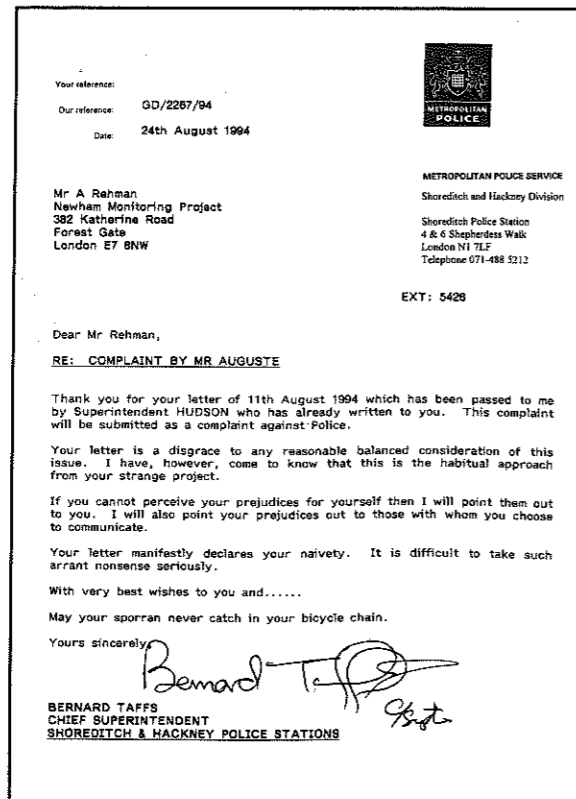
take precedence. In spite of this I do appreciate that attacks of this nature are a major concern in this area and, if I am to deal with this matter, will also direct my attention to that aspect.' For once, there was some action taken against police officers who had not gone about their duties as they should have. It is unfortunate that such action is so rare.

What was crucial about HA's case is that officers did not deem her situation urgent enough to attend to, when she had not only been brutally assaulted but had her assailants standing outside her home for hours after the attack. This is a clear illustration of the lack of importance that the police attach to racist crimes. No arrests were made, despite the obvious threat that HA faced. How are black people in Newham supposed to have confidence in the police when serious incidents like this are completely ignored?

■ On 27th July, Mr A, a mini-cab driver, was stopped by police officers and his car was searched. Whilst the search was conducted, a passenger he was carrying was taken to a waiting police van. Police officers quizzed the taxi-driver about a passport and bank book found in the car, which belonged to Mr A's partner. When Mr A attempted to answer their questions, the officers became increasingly arrogant and threatening. Meanwhile, Mr A's passenger, who was also black, was asked by one of the police officers, 'When are you going back to your country?' Angered by what happened, Mr A contacted NMP to make a formal complaint about the appalling treatment he received. NMP wrote to Hackney police station and our serious concerns on behalf of Mr A were responded to by Chief Superintendent Bernard Taffs. At a time when senior officers including the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, have repeatedly asserted the police's intention to stamp out racism within ranks, we were astonished by Mr Taffs' letter, so much so that it is reprinted here in full.

The response that said it all...

Right: A reasoned response? Letter to NMP from Chief Supt Taffs



The letter appeared in the *Hackney Gazette* in October 1994, along with an interview with its author who remained unrepentant and accused NMP of failing to see its 'humour'. Where, it may be asked, is the humour in the humiliation and harassment of a member of the public? What could be less funny than a serious incident of racist abuse by a police officer? In a further effort to brush aside the adverse publicity, Taffs invited NMP to the launch of Hackney police's Racial Incidents Unit, which is intended to tackle racial harassment in the borough. Somewhat sceptically, workers from NMP agreed to observe the

launch meeting, only to be treated to further evidence from the Chief Superintendent of his attitude towards policing black communities.

Describing a request by the leader of Hackney council to make 'an unequivocal public statement' against racism within the police force, something which has been stated, if not acted upon, at the most senior levels of the Metropolitan police, Mr Taffs said that 'making such a statement seemed to me like answering the question, "have you stopped beating your wife?" Whichever way you answer, you are wrong.' Plainly he failed to realise that black people are aware, through their every-day experiences at the hands of officers, that police racism exists. Admitting the existence of racism is hardly likely to alienate further those communities which have suffered so often. Instead, it must surely be the first step towards addressing the problem.

This remark was compounded by the classic argument, that 'racism is just as bad in other parts of the world', which is so often used against taking racial harassment in Britain seriously. At the end of his speech, Mr Taffs said that 'it is perhaps relevant to mention that there does not seem to be a society in the world that has completely resolved all racial conflict within its borders. Look at the world around us, Bosnia, Ireland, America, Israel and countless others...' Whilst the Chief Superintendent's internationalism is commendable, this argument is of course highly irrelevant. What black people want to hear is that the police will begin to treat acts of racial violence and intimidation from whatever quarter as serious criminal offences, which deserve to be thoroughly investigated rather than, as so often happens, marginalised and ridiculed by the police. On the strength of Mr Taffs' performance, we gravely doubt whether the creation of a specialist unit to investigate racial crime in Hackney is anything more than a useful - and undoubtedly expensive - public relations exercise.

For an officer as senior as Mr Taffs to reply to a serious complaint about police misconduct in such a cavalier and dismissive fashion gives a clear indication of how well-protected police officers see themselves from any degree of public accountability. In these circumstances, his attack on the work of NMP, which has exposed cases of oppressive policing, is perhaps not surprising. It is little wonder that with role-models like Taffs, junior police officers on the street continue to harass and intimidate black people with impunity. With this in mind, NMP wrote to Commissioner Condon pointing out that the way Mr A's complaint had been dealt with 'raises a number of disturbing issues about the quality of leadership' within Shoreditch and Hackney police. Aware of the potential damage to the police's carefully cultivated public relations image, senior officers agreed to meet NMP and offered to settle the matter informally. We refused to allow such disgraceful behaviour to be quietly ignored and demanded that formal disciplinary action be taken. NMP is still awaiting a result.

What is perhaps most interesting about this unfortunate incident is that, for once, the increasingly sophisticated management of public relations by the police has crumbled because a senior officer has failed to understand its importance in preventing greater public scrutiny of policing in London.

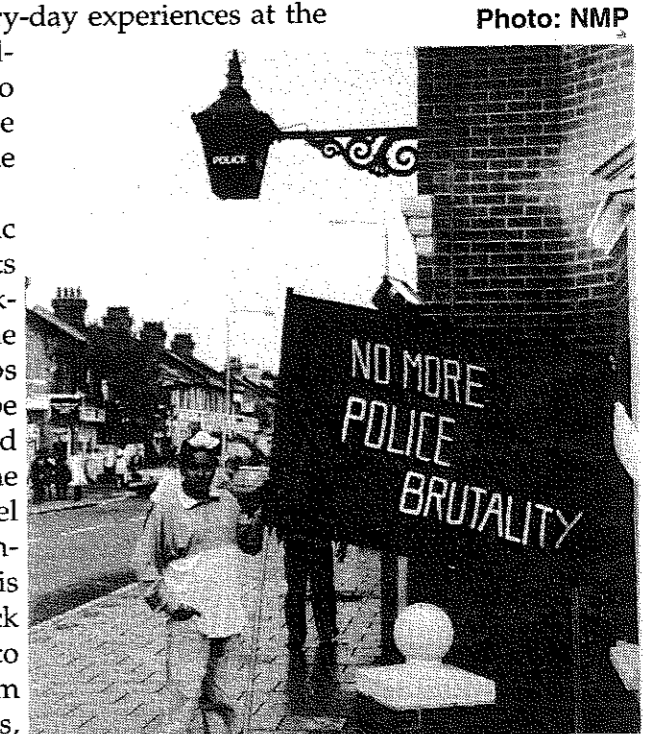


Photo: NMP

Above: Protesting against police brutality - how long before justice is done?

The System has failed us: Our Response

In the following chapters, we report on the shameful depths to which policing in east London has plunged. We give a detailed account of the horrific murder of Oluwashiji Lapite at the hands of officers from Stoke Newington police station. The Inquiry into the harassment of the Khan family by Forest Gate police officers illustrates the urgent need for a move to revolutionise policing in east London and Newham. At the Inquiry meeting of the PCCG, Mr Khan expressed his lack of confidence in the police and went on to voice his frustrations at the lack of support that residents like himself were receiving from the local authority. The black community in Newham should not be expected to wait for a solution to come from the Home Office, when that institution is part of a Tory government that, for the best part of two decades, has passed one racist policy after another. Indeed, those racist policies and the ineffectiveness of the Police Complaints Authority are at the root of the sorry state of police-black community relations. In the next section of this report, we examine existing structures for public involvement in the policing of our communities and ask - why is the present system failing and how should it be changed? NMP

Accountability Not Consultation

The cases featured earlier in the report highlight the continuing impact of racist policing on the black community in Newham. These cases reveal that precious little has changed over the last fifteen years. Concerns about racist and violent behaviour by police officers, the targeting of black people for random 'stop and search' and the inadequacies of the police complaint system continue to be our primary concern. Senior police officers may promise greater 'sensitivity' towards the policing of black communities, but the evidence from NMP's 94/95 cases alone, show that there is a huge gulf between police and community.

Policing Out of Control

This gulf is a damning indictment of the failure of 'community policing initiatives' and evidence that the community do not trust a police force which considers itself above the law and unaccountable for its actions. In the last five years alone, a number of people fitted up by police officers on arrest, have later been released from prison. Yet not one of the officers involved has been convicted of a criminal offence. Many hundreds of people have complained about officers racially and physically abusing them, yet, to date, not one Metropolitan police officer has ever been dismissed for being racist. Over 70 people have died in police custody in the last 10 years and numerous people have died in police custody this year alone - Oluwashiji Lapite, in Hackney, and Mark Harris, in Bristol, to name just two. The list goes on and on. Justice has not been done in any of these cases. Families still have unanswered questions and police officers with 'bloody hands still patrol our streets'.

Lack of police accountability is exacerbated by the racist priorities of the police. Excessive and abusive use of stop and search powers leads to harassment of black people on the streets and wholesale criminalisation of our communities. The *Weekly Journal* Research carried out earlier this year, found that black people are five times more likely to be stopped and searched on London streets than white people and in some areas of London, 14 times more likely. But what statistics do not reveal, is the wider impact of stop and search - the number of people who, after being stopped and searched go on to be maliciously arrested, falsely imprisoned and assaulted by officers only to find themselves in court on fabricated charges of actual bodily harm against police officers or threatening behaviour. The statistics do not reveal how stop and search leads to the criminalisation of communities.

It is unbelievable that in a democratic society police are able to abuse their powers to such an extent. But what or who is there to stop them? The Police Complaints' Authority's (PCA) lack of independence is clearly designed to protect the police. Officers are secure in the knowledge that even if someone does file a complaint against them it will be investigated by other officers, who either take no action or administer 'informal slaps on the wrist' for the most horrific violations of the police disciplinary code. Despite the public's lack of trust in the police complaint's procedure, and the increasing numbers of civil actions against the police, the debate about police accountability has largely been ignored by both local and national government. In Newham, the local authority, opting out of developing

real mechanisms for police accountability, has relied entirely on the Newham Police Community Consultative Group (PCCG), a body set up under provisions in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to deal with growing anger about police harassment in the borough. In the process, the very real concerns of the black community have been trivialised and marginalised to such an extent that they do not even register on the political map. Newham council's spokesperson on policing, councillor Andrew Zachariades, has admitted the glaring shortcomings of the PCCG, stating that it was 'ineffectual in giving a direction to policing in Newham'. So what exactly is the PCCG doing?

Ten years of consultation ... Still no justice

NMP has been highly critical of the PCCG, since its creation in 1987. Its failure to effect any change over the last seven years or bring officers to account in any way is a damning indictment on the failure of the consultation process.

Membership of the PCCG in Newham includes councillors and representatives of local voluntary groups. It meets bi-monthly to discuss and share any new information and to speak directly with senior police officers. Local PCCG's, like the one in Newham, were set up following the Scarman report into the Brixton uprisings in 1981. Scarman, concerned about the gulf between police and community, stressed the need for increased consultation between the police and community. What little consultation that existed at the time was undermined by the "reluctance, amounting to outright refusal, of senior police officers to discuss operational questions with leaders of the local community". The report recommended that a statutory framework be developed to ensure local consultation between the Metropolitan police and the community at borough or police district level, and envisaged that local committees "should not simply be a statutory talking shop but should have real powers" which could include a role in the complaints procedure. Scarman concluded that "accountability is, I have no doubt, the key to successful consultation and socially responsive policing. Exclusive reliance on 'voluntary' consultative machinery will not do, as the Brixton story illustrates".

The Home Secretary picked Scarman's recommendations to the very bone and set out guidelines for the creation of PCCGs. The PCCGs, as they currently operate, have no 'statutory framework' for consultation and have no real powers. They are in fact, little more than 'talk shops' set up to give the community the impression that there is some level of police accountability. In effect, PCCGs were little more than an attempt to legitimise the status quo and thereby avoid the need for real reform by introducing cosmetic changes. Almost a decade ago, NMP vehemently opposed the creation of the Newham PCCG and questioned the real purpose of such a committee. NMP's experience of the PCCG since then, which has culminated in two inquiries into policing incidents in Newham has confirmed our initial concerns. In both cases, despite drawing up a comprehensive list of recommendations, nothing has changed. The families and communities involved still have unanswered questions and the officers implicated are still on the street.

The Khan Inquiry

On Tuesday 12th July 1994, the Khan family of Romford Road were brutally attacked in their front garden by police officers from Forest Gate police station. The attack started when eighteen-year-old Mujtaba Khan was abused and assaulted by police officers as he stood in his front garden, watching a traffic incident. At least three police officers jumped on top of him, handcuffed him, threw him to the ground and held him in a



Photo: NMP

Left: Supporters of the Khan family protest outside East Ham town hall

head-lock so severe that it caused him to choke violently. Mrs Khan, on hearing noise outside, ran out to see what was happening. When she saw her son, choking and gasping for air, she tried to help him. One of the officers grabbed her arm and twisted it behind her back, before handcuffing her and taking her barefoot to the police station. Mr KHan also came outside. When he saw what was happening, he remonstrated with the police to leave his wife and son alone, only to be assaulted and thrown heavily onto the concrete pavement, leaving him covered in cuts and bruises.

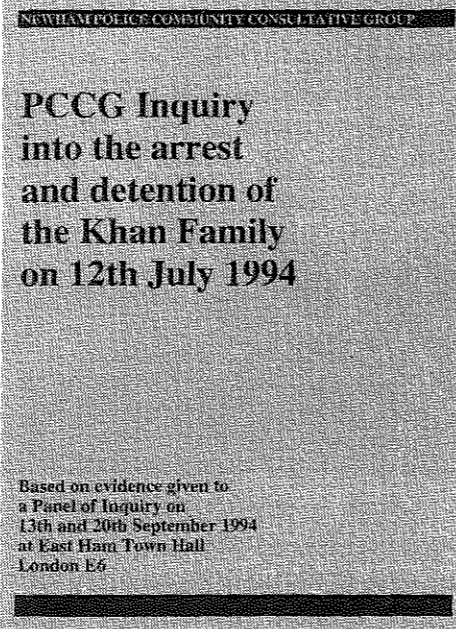
On arriving at Forest Gate police station, Mujtaba was dragged out of the police van by his legs and placed in a cell. When he asked for his handcuffs to be removed, as they were too tight and making him bleed, officers ignored his pleas. Held in custody for over six hours, during which time he did not see a doctor, Mujtaba was not informed of his right to call a solicitor or offered anything to eat or drink. He was finally allowed to speak to his solicitor just after midnight, despite the fact that his solicitor had arrived at the station shortly before 10.00pm.

Mrs Khan, who had recently come out of hospital after having heart surgery, arrived at the police station tired and humiliated by her experience. Whenever she asked what was going on, she was told to 'shut up'. Mujtaba overheard one of the desk-officers, referring to his mother, say, "there's another monkey playing the game of not speaking English" and other officers laughing amongst themselves after one of them asked, "what country shall we send this lot to for a holiday?" Whilst in custody, Mrs Khan, perspiring heavily and having trouble breathing, repeatedly asked for a glass of water but was told that the officers were "too busy". When eventually given a small glass of water, the officers ridiculed Mrs Khan, attempting to teach her 'some manners', by making her repeatedly say "please" and "thank you". In order to keep herself from fainting, Mrs Khan, who was seen by a doctor during the course of the evening and suffered a bruised arm and swollen elbow, resorted to placing her feet in the latrine.

Mr Khan was extremely distressed and angry when he was dragged into Forest Gate police station. His handcuffs were tight and cutting into his arms making them bleed but when he asked for them to be removed, he was ignored. As he was taken to the cell, Mr Khan asked to make a telephone call and for some food. The officer responded by telling him to 'shut up and get in'. Mr Khan eventually saw his solicitor at around 1am, over three hours after the solicitor had arrived.

On Tuesday 19 July 1994, a delegation representing the Khan family and over 200 supporters attended a meeting of the Police Community

Consultative Group, to voice concerns about the arrest and treatment of the Khan family, in particular why Mr Khan, his wife and son, covered in cuts and bruises while in police custody, ended up facing charges of assaulting the police. Mr Khan and his supporters demanded an inquiry into the events of that night, to clarify what had happened and, more importantly, to ensure that it never happened again. In the face of the anger displayed by those attending the meeting and given the gravity of the allegations made, which included police misconduct, racist behaviour, malpractice and abuses of power, the PCCG agreed to conduct an inquiry into this case.



Right: The Khan Inquiry Report

An inquiry panel was set up which agreed that the terms and references of the inquiry would include a reconstruction of the incidents that took place on July 12 1994, an examination of the way police officers conducted themselves during the incident and the issuing of a series of recommendations.

The panel sat twice, interviewing ten witnesses at East Ham town hall. All witnesses stated that they saw between 8 and 10 cars and a police van at the scene of the incident, and over 25 police officers. Many witnesses described the excessive force used by officers and relayed the horror they felt at seeing an elderly barefoot woman being dragged into a police van, while empty police cars stood idle.

The Khan inquiry concluded with a full set of recommendations for the Newham PCCG, police authorities, Home Office and local authority. This included demands for an independent inquiry into Forest Gate police station and for all officers involved in the incident to be immediately suspended pending further investigations. The panel also called for urgent action to be taken to address the problems of racism within the police force.


Yet, to date, the Khan Family has heard nothing from the PCCG about what, if any, progress has been made with regards to the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations. Unfortunately, it looks increasingly likely that the Khan inquiry will suffer the same fate as the PCCG's Canning Town investigation which, despite being heralded as a 'landmark' in the PCCG's history, has never been followed up. The PCCG has failed to appreciate that an inquiry is only the first and easiest step on a difficult path of pushing for real and significant change in policing practice. It is difficult not to conclude that the PCCG was simply 'going through the motions' of holding the police to account. However, what became clear in the course of the inquiry was that the police have absolutely no regard for the work of the PCCG or for the concerns of the black community. They refused to sit on the panel of inquiry and failed to send even one representative to the final meeting where the inquiry's findings were discussed.

The PCCG has also become increasingly hostile towards those who bring cases of police harassment to its meetings, particularly if they show their anger when questions raised are ignored or trivialised by senior police officers. The extent of that anger was eloquently expressed by Mr Khan

when he first attended a PCCG meeting and forcefully reiterated by many other members of the local community present, the majority of whom were colleagues and friend of the Khan family. Rather than acknowledge the strength of feeling which exists in the local community, the PCCG chose to blame NMP for 'stirring up trouble', presumably in the patronising belief that people cannot be angry without being told to be. Not only is this attitude insulting, but it indicates the dangerous direction the PCCG is taking. Instead of acting as a channel for community concerns, where senior police officers are held accountable for police practice at street level, the PCCG prefers to marginalise the issues of police harassment, spending its time instead on pouring over the minutiae of various new policies. Little wonder, then, that the Khan Inquiry was so begrudgingly carried out.

Although the PCCG has abandoned any attempt at police accountability, NMP casework shows that the need to take up the struggle for police accountability has never been greater. If the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Paul Condon can argue, without public censure, that the only way to secure convictions is for police officers to act as judge and jury ('noble cause corruption' he calls it) then what hope do we have of achieving a genuinely accountable police force. His words and its underlying message have given the green light to all officers that corruption - fabricated evidence, false statements and all other acts which pervert the course of justice - will be looked upon kindly by the police authorities. Condon's words are particularly disturbing coming as they do after the release of the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6, Tottenham 3, East Ham 2 and many, many more victims of what today would be described as 'noble cause corruption'.

Not surprisingly, the public's confidence in the police has been shattered following years of such police malpractice and miscarriages of justice. Police harassment continues to be part and parcel of black people's experience of policing, and this will continue to be the case until we have democratic control of the police in London and effective means of dealing with complaints against the police. We need a wholly independent Police Complaints Authority (PCA) and borough-level police authorities, consisting of elected representatives, which local police are directly accountable to. The lack of control over the police is particularly acute in London. Outside London, police authorities, consisting of local councillors and magistrates have the duty to secure the 'maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force for the area'. The powers of these PAs are not ideal but at least they allow for some local accountability. However, in London, even though borough authorities pay millions of pounds towards its police service, they have no control either over how that money is spent or the policing priorities of their area. Metropolitan police officers are only accountable to the Home Secretary who acts as London's police authority, despite the fact that he is not aware of local policing issues and priorities and therefore is in no position to make decisions about local level policing.

The net result of this is police forces operating as mini dictatorships at a local level with no controls. The current consultative framework represented by the PCCG is incapable of coming to grips with such a situation. It is shocking that in a democratic society the PCCG is the closest we can get to having an impact on the policing of our communities. We need more than consultative machinery with no powers. The PCCG is no substitute for real accountability. 

Conclusion

Death in Hackney

Newham's experience of policing is not unique. Communities in Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Stoke Newington have been campaigning against police malpractice for years. Stoke Newington police station has become particularly notorious over the years as accusations of police corruption and violence have mounted. Recently, following allegations of police corruption and drug dealing, over 40 officers were investigated in an internal police investigation, Operation Jackpot.

Stoke Newington has also become infamous for the number of people who have lost their lives whilst in police custody. The deaths of Aseta Simms, Michael Ferreira, Colin Roach and Tunay Hussain stand as glaring and horrific testimony to the nature of policing against black communities across east London.

On Friday 16 December 1994, Oluwashiji Lapite - or 'Shiji' as he was known to his friends - became yet another victim of police brutality. Shiji, a 34-year-old father of two, was beaten to death whilst in the custody of police officers from Stoke Newington police station. Stopped for 'acting suspiciously' by two plain clothes police officers, thirty minutes later Shiji was dead.

Shiji's family and friends, who were not informed by the police about his death, were obviously concerned when Shiji did not return home that Friday night. On Saturday morning one of Shiji's friends was watching television when he read on teletext that a man had 'collapsed and died' in a police van on Knightland Road in Clapton. Concerned, as Shiji had last been seen in that area, he immediately alerted Shiji's family, who went to Stoke Newington police station to make enquiries. The family were kept waiting for several hours and eventually told that Shiji was dead. They then demanded to see his body.

The family were shocked by what they saw. Shiji's face was covered in cuts and bruises, his lips had been split wide open and were caked in blood and his head had been kicked to a pulp. Police reports had not indicated any violence - instead they suggested that Shiji had been fine when arrested and was sitting up on a seat in the police van when he 'suddenly went limp and died'. Clearly, no one sustaining the injuries

Below: Headline from Nigerian News, 20 January 1995

Man killed by police officers

Stoke Newington Police criticised for behaviour



Photo: Paul Mattsson

Left: Flowers on the spot where Shiji was killed

that Shiji had would have been able to climb into a police van and sit down. We can only conclude, that Shiji either sustained his injuries before or after he was put into the police van. Either way he died at the hands of the police.

Naturally, the sight of Shiji's body made the family deeply suspicious about the nature of his death, but the police reassured them that they would establish the truth about what happened. They promised to send officers to Nigeria to personally break the news and give condolences to Shiji's mother. They then went on to ask the family not to go to the press, putting it to them in terms of the distress that learning of her son's death from the radio would cause Shiji's mother. For several days, the family went along with the police. But, as the police began to tell them inconsistent stories about the events leading up to Shiji's death, they became increasingly concerned.

Initially, the family were told that Shiji was stopped for acting suspiciously. He was searched and the police officers found 41 grammes of crack cocaine in his pocket. When they tried to arrest him, a violent struggle ensued. The police then called for reinforcements and Shiji was placed in the back of a van. But the following day, the police told a member of the family an entirely different story. According to this version, Shiji had been seen crouched behind a tree 'acting suspiciously'. He was stopped and searched, but nothing was found. However, when police discovered crack cocaine buried beneath a tree, they pursued and arrested Shiji. A third version of the story - the official version - was that Shiji was stopped by two officers for acting suspiciously. He then 'threw away' a quantity of crack cocaine as he walked past a tree and a struggle ensued when police attempted to arrest him. The officers then radioed for reinforcements and a van containing up to 10 officers arrived on the scene. Shiji was placed into the van and at this point he suddenly went limp.

It is unbelievable that three days after Shiji's death, the police were unable to provide one straight version of the events of that night. The confusion around the drug issue, in particular, came as no surprise to the local community who are well aware of the notorious reputation of Stoke Newington police station and drugs. Part of 'Operation Jackpot' had been an investigation into allegations that Stoke Newington police planted drugs on suspects and were also involved in drug dealing.

Not surprisingly the confusion and contradiction on the part of the police made the family suspicious about the police's intentions and they suspected a cover-up. A public meeting was called in Brixton. Though

Shiji Lapite had died in Clapton, many of his friends and family were from Newham. They came to NMP for advice and support and also invited NMP to speak at the meeting. Following the meeting, it was agreed that the family, together with NMP, would organise and set up the Shiji Lapite Memorial Committee, to direct the fight for justice for Shiji.

On Friday 23 December 1994, a week after the death of Shiji, the committee called for a picket of Stoke Newington police station. Over 200 people protested against Shiji's death and demanded justice. Demonstrators shouted angrily at the police and traffic had to be diverted as people spilled on to the streets expressing their rage at the loss of yet another black brother. A minute's silence was called during the four hour protest. Olamide Lapite, Shiji's widow, Diane Abbot MP and members of the committee led a delegation across the road carrying a wreath and a photo of Shiji. In an emotional and brave tribute to her father, his young daughter laid a wreath outside the front door of the police station.

**We remember ...
Forty days on**

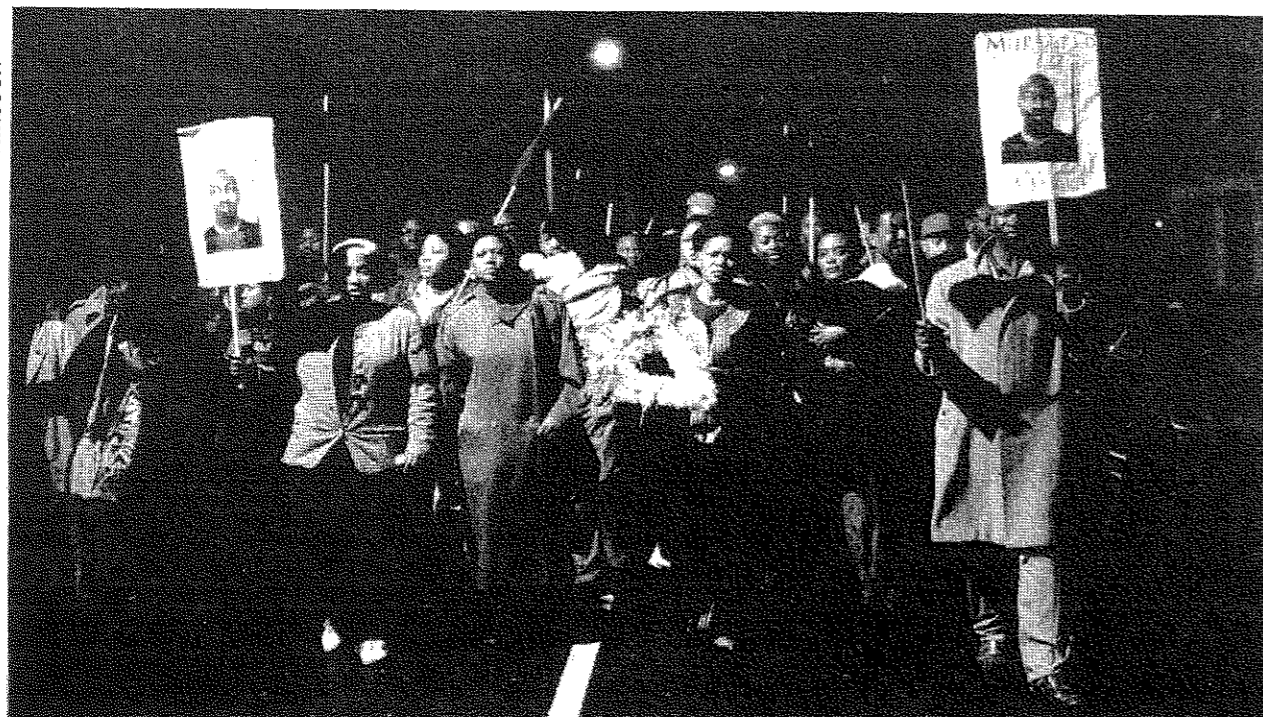
Forty days after the death of Shiji Lapite, the family was still no closer to the truth about his death. But, they were determined to keep his name and their fight for justice alive.

The committee organised a memorial service, in memory of Shiji and all those who have lost their lives at the hands of the police and for whom justice has not been done. Following the service, there was a black flag and candlelight procession from the church to Knightland Road where Shiji died. The procession was silent, dignified and charged with emotion and anger. The demonstrators placed flowers, black flags and black arm bands at the spot, marked by a painted tribute, where Shiji died.

The Shiji Lapite Memorial Committee are determined to continue their campaign for justice. Police authorities must show that they take community concerns about police malpractice and brutality seriously; police officers must be held accountable for their actions. The black community is fed up of the police talking about their commitment to improving community relations, when black people are being criminalised and brutalised daily. If the arbitrary and violent abuse of police powers is not stopped, the gulf between the black community and the police will widen irrevocably. **NMP**

Below: March to Knightland Rd where Shiji died

Photo: Paul Mattsson



Fighting Fascism in South Newham

Fascism is a very real problem in Newham. Whether it be on the terraces of West Ham United Football Club or the streets of Canning Town, historically, Newham has been a prime recruiting ground for fascists. NMP's anti-fascist strategy has to be long-term and based on community resistance. A truly effective strategy has to target communities that fascists recruit from, as well as mobilising those who are the target of hatred and violence. This means working with all communities in the borough.

Throughout the year NMP workers and volunteers spoke to many groups in the south of the borough, including tenants associations, community associations, trade union branches, citizens advice bureaux, churches, neighbourhood work projects, schools and theatre groups.

As we wrote in last year's annual report, NMP's campaign during the May elections, in Beckton Ward and Custom House and Silver Town, was in full swing, with mass leafleting sessions in the area.

The BNP's selection of these wards came as no surprise. They targeted areas where established political parties have failed to deal with local problems such as the high incidence of racial attacks, high unemployment, decimation of local industry, and poor quality housing stock.

The BNP stood five candidates in this election, Peter Hart and Michael Davidson in Beckton Ward, and Jeff Edmunds, Kevin Vinecombe and Vincent Parker in the Custom House and Silver Town ward. A sixth candidate, Henry Vinecombe informed Newham's Returning Officer that he had no connection with the BNP and was unaware that he had been selected as a candidate. The BNP attempted to cover up its stupidity by claiming that Vinecombe's daughter, a council employee, had been threatened with dismissal if her father stood. His son, Kevin, however, remained a candidate in Custom House and Silver Town ward.

Predictably, the BNP campaign attempted to fuel the flames of racism in the hope of electoral gain.

NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT

Equal Rights

Local Government
ELECTIONS
MAY 1994

For All!



On May 5th Keep Newham
UNITED
Against the BNP

COUNCIL WORKERS AGAINST THE NAZIS

NMP supporters distributed leaflets throughout the wards exposing the true facts about BNP policies and politics. NMP workers and volunteers contacted many local people to emphasise the need to turn out to vote against the BNP.

NMP looked to build a broad base of support against the BNP in the May elections. We did so by drawing up a statement, (see last year's annual report), and getting local groups to sign it. The statement condemned the BNP, its violence and bigotry and went on to ask people to reject the politics of the BNP and 'Vote for Equality Not for

May elections 1994

Equality, not Hatred

Left: NMP's leaflet in May 1994

Hatred'. To ensure maximum publicity, the advert appeared throughout the borough, published in both the *Newham Recorder* and the *Newham News*.

Local Tories endorse BNP politics

The statement was sent to all established political parties. While many community, religious and residents groups were happy to endorse it, among the few that did not sign was the Newham South Conservative Association. They were contacted on a number of occasions with no response. In fact, the local Tory response to the fascist threat in Newham was to align with fascist ideology, creating their own 'Conservatives Against Labour's Unfair Ethnic Policies'. The same people behind this group were also involved in the highly emotive 'ethnic cleansing' slogan used in leaflets distributed in the borough in 1993. One Tory candidate, Dave Gladstone, is also a member of the Newham Tenants & Residents Federation who also refused to sign the statement.

Conservative Central Office failed to respond adequately to our letter complaining of the racist campaign their members had ran in the elections. To state that Conservative candidates are required to follow the party's 'anti-racist policy' is not good enough. The local association should have been suspended, pending investigation.

Election Day

On election day NMP provided transport to the polling stations for those fearing intimidation from the BNP. This followed allegations that many people in the Isle of Dogs were prevented from voting in the Millwall by-election in September 1993, when Derek Beacon was elected. As we also discovered in the January by-election, this strategy was indispensable.

The BNP had decided to target Beckton Ward rather than Custom House. With limited resources, it was forced to concentrate its supporters outside the polling station at Rosetta School, with the intention of intimidating black voters by their presence.

On the evening of May 5th, a picket of the count held at East Ham town hall took place. Around 150 people, including a broad range of anti-fascist organisations and community groups, kept the picket lively and defiant despite a torrential downpour of rain.

During the evening a van of 10 BNP members arrived at the count. Their presence resulted in a number of scuffles. A NMP supporter, falsely arrested and charged with threatening behaviour, was later acquitted by the magistrate immediately after the police gave evidence (the defence did not even have to put its case). The police used the arrest to intimidate anti-fascists and stifle attempts to protest against the BNP. The result was that BNP supporters were allowed free access to the count itself.

Photo: NMP

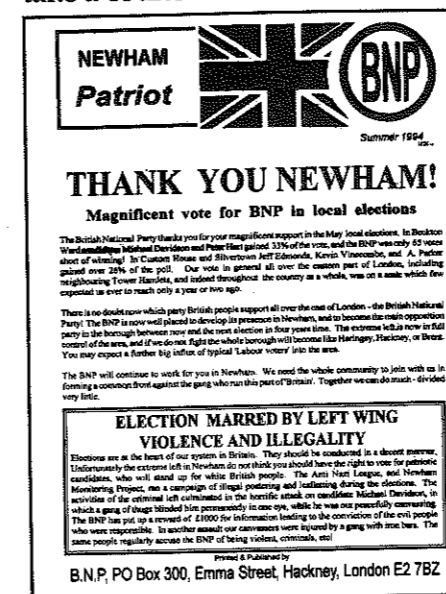


Right: Stephen O'Connell, BNP election agent with local Tory, Valerie Furlong.

Inside the town hall NMP supporters witnessed cosy chats about alliances between the fascists and the Tories. The BNP election agent, Stephen O'Connell was heard to say "One of us must stand aside", to the Conservative agent.

The result of the May election is undoubtedly of great concern to all anti-fascists. In Beckton Ward the BNP were only 66 votes short of getting an elected councillor, and overall they managed to gain 32.89% of the vote. In Custom House and Silver Town Ward the BNP did not do as well but managed to capture a significant 24.2% of the votes cast. The result here will encourage the BNP to target the ward in future elections.

In Beckton the racist vote was split, as two parties were running on a racist platform. In Beckton Ward the combined vote of the Conservative Against Labour's Ethnic Policies and the BNP would have been enough to take a council seat. This is a matter of great concern.



The BNP were satisfied with the election outcome, subsequently distributing the *Newham Patriot*, thanking people for their 'magnificent support'. In an article entitled 'election marred by left wing violence and illegality', the BNP accuse both NMP and the Anti Nazi League of running a campaign of illegal fly-posting and leafleting throughout the elections. They go on to claim that the 'criminal left' were responsible for the attack on the fascist candidate Michael Davidson, who was left blinded in one eye. Combat 18 have been strongly implicated in this and a number of other attacks, including one on BNP member Tony Lecomber, the Redbridge BNP organiser and convicted bomber. It is hardly new to reveal that whatever their internal disagreements, BNP and C18 membership overlaps, and includes people with convictions for extreme violence. We document instances of BNP supporters' violence in the January election below.

Left: BNP's post-election leaflet

The work carried out by NMP volunteers was essential in preventing the election of fascists onto Newham council, but the BNP and its politics will not go away. In the *Newham Patriot* they state: 'the BNP is now well placed to develop its presence in Newham and to become the main opposition party in the borough between now and the next election in four years.'

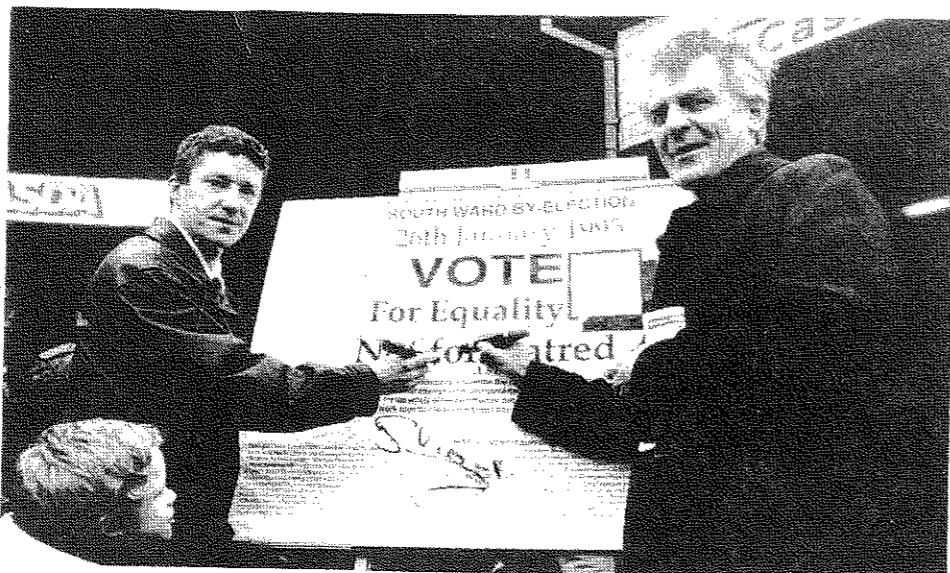
The lessons of the campaign were many but perhaps the greatest was that it needed a massive effort by NMP supporters and anti-fascists to ensure that the BNP were not elected.

The BNP did not have to wait four years to build on its election success, as 1995 saw another local government by-election in Newham. On 26th January the British National Party once again tried to gain an electoral foothold in south Newham by selecting Peter Hart, an ex-National Front member, who had previously stood in the May elections, as its candidate.

The election followed the death of Labour's Tom Jenkinson, the councillor for the South ward covering North Woolwich, parts of Beckton and the High Street South area. The BNP hoped to build on the 33% vote that it received in the neighbouring ward in the May elections in 1994. South

January election

Photo: Paul Mattisson



Right: Terry Marsh (left) and Rev Roger Sainsbury sign NMP's statement in Beckton

ward has all the essential problems that the BNP had tried to exploit in previous elections, including deep dissatisfaction with the established political parties.

The anti-fascist campaign started in earnest in the New Year. The local community, trade unions, anti-fascists and NMP supporters were mobilised. Over 20,000 leaflets were circulated, by more than 100 people during a three-week period, with each house in the ward being leafleted. Again the help of NMP supporters was essential and their commitment to anti-fascism was clear. Many spent lunch times and any spare time distributing leaflets across the ward.

On Saturday 14 January public figures, including the former boxing champion Terry Marsh, and the Bishop of Barking, the Right Rev. Roger Sainsbury publicly launched NMP's 'Vote for Equality not for Hatred' statement with excellent speeches. Both canvassed local people and encouraged them to sign the statement condemning the BNP's politics of hatred. The statement (similar to the May election statement) was signed by over 90 local community groups, trade unions, schools and businesses. It also appeared in local papers including the *Newham Recorder* and the *Yellow Advertiser*.

Following the successful public launch of the statement, NMP volunteers and local people leafleted the Beckton, Cyprus and Winsor areas of the ward. Our leafleters encountered the BNP who had congregated in Savage Gardens. Over 60 anti-fascists peacefully interrupted BNP leafleting, forcing the police to escort the BNP out of the area.

The January campaign-strategy to combat the potential BNP vote, based on 'equal rights for all' and urging people to 'Vote for Equality, Not for Hatred', had two focuses. One element of the campaign targeted the white working-class community, exposing BNP politics, and the other focus was to mobilise the black community to use its vote to defeat the BNP.

Groups of volunteers visited black families, as we did in the May elections. Again the purpose of this was to impress on people the need for everyone to come out and vote on election day. We offered transport to and from polling stations for those who were unable to go by themselves or for those concerned with the very real threat of BNP intimidation.

NMP's publicity served to expose what BNP politics really stand for. The BNP has no answers to problems of unemployment, the lack of local investment and poor housing. It has no solution to offer white working-class people. Instead it pedals the politics of community division, hatred and violence.

The Docklands Voice

NMP believes that the *Docklands Voice*, a new community initiative which has come out of anti-fascist campaigning in south Newham, has an important part to play in future struggles against fascism. It is produced by people living in South Newham and targets issues that clearly affect them - fascism, local government, poverty, housing and education. As part of the January election campaign, NMP distributed an election special of the *Docklands Voice* which focused on precisely those issues which the BNP exploits for its own political gain.

The *Docklands Voice* played a significant part in placing the truth behind these issues onto the agenda of the January election. We hope it goes from strength to strength.

The BNP re-affirmed what its politics really stand for on the 23rd and 24th January. On the 23rd January, the BNP were responsible for an unprovoked attack on a 16 year old boy, in Roman Road, East Ham South. The boy was walking home from Brampton Manor School with fellow pupils when they encountered a group of five men and women. The boy passed the group, all in their early 20's, and was taunted with chants of 'Vote BNP! Vote BNP!' The boy and his friends ignored the racist chants, and continued walking. But the chants became more sinister. 'Pakis and niggers, we're going to kill you!' - the sentiment was clear. The students ran fearing that they would be attacked, but the 16-year-old fell to the ground. What followed was a barrage of kicks and punches, which can only be described as shameful and cowardly. The boy managed to escape the five attackers, but was again caught and beaten outside a house in Beckton. Fortunately, the boy was rescued by local residents, who dragged him into one of their homes.

This was by no means an isolated incident. The following day two more school boys and a school girl were attacked by a group of over 15 men and one woman who were positively identified as being BNP supporters. On this occasion the racists asked white children whether or not they supported the BNP. Those who said they did not were subjected to both physical and verbal abuse.

The language used and the viciousness of these attacks showed a direct link to the BNP campaign in the local election. Yet Plaistow police Superintendent Dugmore in a letter faxed to NMP on election day stated:

"Whilst there have been two recent assaults on pupils from this school, it would be a distortion of the facts to connect these incidents with BNP activity in the area."

His conclusion is unfathomable, as eye witness reports clearly indicate the opposite.

Councillor Chris Seddon, a resident in the ward, felt the intimidatory tactics when he went to vote and canvass for the Labour party on election day. In a letter to Barry Sansom, the Returning Officer, Councillor Seddon wrote:

"While visiting the polling station at Roman Road I was very unhappy to see BNP members on school property in force (3 men and one van full of Nazis) harassing both people trying to use their vote, and others from political parties."

"At this time the police officer was sat inside the polling station keeping warm. I believe this was not the only incident of this kind."

From the outset the casual attitude of the police to the BNP was appar-

Attack on School Children

Attacking defenceless children: the fascist electoral contribution

Above: Headline from *Asian Times*, 4 February 1995



Right: NMP picket of the by-election count

ent. The presence of NMP legal observers was essential in monitoring the activity of the police, political parties and the BNP. We utilised local solicitors and experienced NMP supporters, to ensure that no harassment of voters was taking place at polling stations throughout the ward.

NMP Pickets Election Count

Despite a bitterly cold evening, a large and vocal picket of 250 people, made up of a broad range of anti-fascist and anti-racist groups as well as many people from community and residents' groups, gathered outside East Ham town hall where the election count was taking place.

Soon it became apparent that a few BNP had already managed to enter the count but NMP supporters managed to drive away some BNP supporters, who were intent on disrupting the picket.

After the election result was announced Peter Hart and his fellow BNP members suffered the indignity of being removed from the town hall in the back of a police van.

The result is one which has been welcomed by the anti-fascist and anti-racist movement. In an area that has the potential for a high BNP turnout, limiting the BNP to 13% of the vote is an achievement that should be acknowledged. Even though the BNP was pushed into third place, the battle is not over. Derek Beacon may well have been defeated in Shadwell; the BNP may well have been defeated in south Newham, but the fascists have not been defeated outright. As we stated in last year's annual report, the BNP see east London as its best electoral hope. Achieving success in south Newham is its goal.

By-Election Result

Sarah Ruiz	Labour	1441
Chris Boden	Con	473
Peter Hart	BNP	360
Alex Thomson	Independent	276
Liz Laird	Lib Dem	248

Lessons of the Local Elections

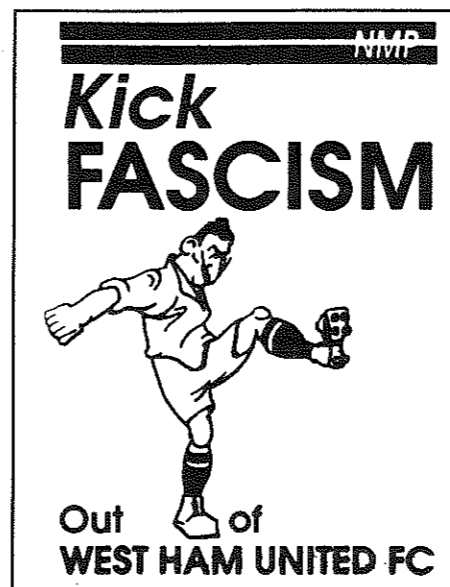
Newham Council must recognise that greater resources have to be injected into the whole of south Newham. NMP's agenda is geared towards pushing for these resources to provide an alternative to the politics of hatred and violence of the BNP. Therefore we will continue to demand that established political parties deal with the problems facing communities in the south of the borough.

When the BNP stands candidates, even those who would never consider voting for them need to be motivated to turn out, especially in a by-election. The established parties with a policy commitment to anti-racism, are simply not doing enough to mobilise potential voters. Our campaign, 'Equality not Hatred' is neither a substitute, a bail-out, nor an excuse for the lack of action and organisation amongst the political parties. They must draw on all their resources in election campaigns. We saw no party

canvassers on the streets in May and January, other than on the eve of the election, and on polling day.

A large and concerted effort is needed, time after time, if the fascists are to be prevented from being elected. Significant economic investment is required to regenerate South Newham and stem the tide of fascism. A genuine and real decision making process which involves local people is required, not a situation whereby Newham Council and the London Docklands Development Corporation fail to listen to the views of those they purport to represent. The perception of a failed local democratic system will only serve to reinforce racist attitudes that exist in large areas of east London, resulting in an increase in racial violence, and fuelling the fires of fascism.

Achieving this is no easy task. Councils must ensure that local democracy is responsive to the electorate's views and feelings; greater resources in areas are needed where the fascist support is greatest - Beckton, Custom House and Canning Town. That means progressive policies which seek to tackle the problems of economic deprivation and racism head-on, rather than policies that may pander to the racism that exist in these areas.



Football grounds have traditionally been a recruiting ground for the fascists. Though not all football hooligans are fascists, many fascists have infiltrated football hooligan culture. This was dramatically illustrated on February 15th 1995 in Dublin, when English football hooligans attacked Irish fans, at an England and Ireland friendly. Fascist chanting seemed to go hand-to-hand with 'patriotic' support for England.

West Ham Football Club has also had its fair share of fascist activity on the terraces. Over the year we have had an on-going campaign against fascists who have, for a number of

years attempted, and to some extent succeeded, in tarnishing the reputation of Hammers fans. Though there has been a marked reduction in the level of racism connected with the club, the problem is not extinct. For example in the 1993/94 season Paul Ince of Manchester United faced a barrage of racist abuse when his team played at the ground. Racist graffiti, including that of Combat 18, is still a weekly occurrence around the ground.

NMP have been campaigning to 'Kick Fascism Out of Football.' This follows West Ham United Football Club agreeing to sign the 'Vote For Equality Not For Hatred' statement in the May 1994 elections.

We built on that commitment by further campaigning and leafleting outside the ground, joining forces with the Football Supporters Association (FSA) to launch the 'United Colours of Football' fanzine. This has been distributed at the majority of football grounds throughout the country. We organised local supporters to join NMP and the FSA to distribute the anti-racist fanzine at Upton Park. We involved West Ham United Football Club and the Commission For Racial Equality (CRE). Representatives of FSA, and the CRE joined Stephen Timms MP, fans from West Ham United and Leeds United and NMP at a public launch of the campaign, in

Kicking Fascism Out of Football

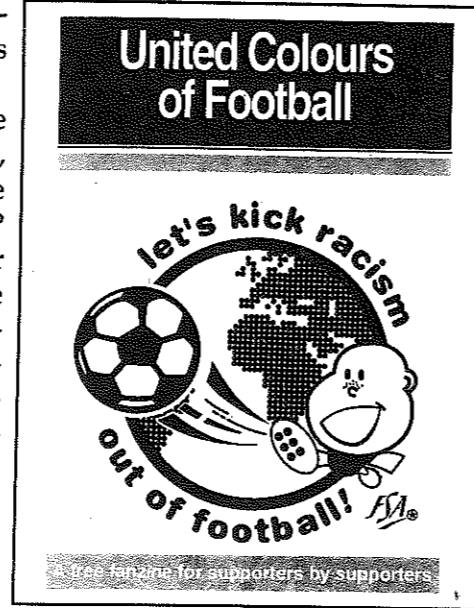
Left: Anti-Fascist fixtures list distributed at Upton Park

United Colours Of Football

Right:
The Football Supporters
Association's fanzine
'United Colours of
Football'

front of the waiting media. The campaign was covered by the local press and the *Sunday Times*.

Following the launch of the 'United Colours Of Football' fanzine, NMP compiled an anti-fascist fixture list. This was distributed by NMP supporters and West Ham fans over a three-match period. The response to the campaign has been very positive, and a number of fans have expressed an interest in setting up 'West Ham Fans United Against Fascism And Racism in Football.' NMP will give wholehearted support to any anti-fascist initiatives that come from the fans, and await further developments.



Conclusion

The only effective strategy against fascism and the racism on which it breeds has to be based at a local level. Both the election campaigns in May and January and the Kick Fascism Out of Football campaign are an effective localised response to very real issues of concern. We believe that the community must be part and parcel of the battle against the fascists. Over the last few years a number of groups have emerged to oppose the rise of fascism. Many strategies have been developed but few have recognised where the heart of the battle truly lies.

National initiatives to deal with fascism and racism are important in bringing such issues onto the national agenda, but we call on all those anti-racists and anti-fascists to accept the lessons of experience, and to respect the history of resistance to racist and fascist activity. NMP's work is directed by what is occurring in the communities that are under attack. We are not about parachuting in, attempting to lead the fight against the fascists. Rather we assist the black community in its fight, through case-work and campaigning. Using the black community as an arena for activity is both patronising and unacceptable. *We ask all anti-fascists to fight not on our behalf but with us.* NMP

Outreach

NMP has continued its commitment to work in the community. This year we have initiated and supported community action in Newham and neighbouring boroughs and have linked up with groups across the country and Europe. We have also sought to reach out to individuals, groups and communities, through campaigning and educational work, sharing the experiences of 15 years of struggle and resistance. Below, we document some of the issues and events of the past year.

In our last Annual Report we reported on the case of Oliver Campbell. Oliver was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of a Hackney shopkeeper in July 1990. His conviction was based primarily on circumstantial evidence and a garbled confession made without a solicitor being present. He has always protested his innocence.

Oliver was granted leave to appeal in June 1994. But campaigners' optimism that justice would be done was short-lived. Oliver's appeal was rejected on 30th June 1994. Olive Tunstall, a distinguished psychologist, testified that Oliver has profound learning difficulties. Most importantly, she explained that Oliver is highly suggestible and therefore especially vulnerable to agreeing with whatever the police posed, under questioning. She concluded that anything he told the police would be unreliable. It is particularly disturbing that her evidence was disregarded.

The dismissal of Oliver's appeal is a travesty of justice and a damning condemnation of the legal system. Serious miscarriages of justice in recent years have exposed the scandal of the kind of 'evidence' used to convict Oliver. Yet the judges failed to quash Oliver's conviction. An innocent man remains in prison and the government is spared further embarrassing exposure of police misconduct.

The campaign is now exploring any remaining legal channels to secure Oliver's freedom. NMP will continue to support Oliver's fight for justice.

Satpal Ram is now serving his ninth year in prison for defending himself against a racist attack. In December 1994, NMP joined over 100 supporters picketing the High Court where a judicial review, whereby Satpal's case could be referred back to the Court of Appeal was being heard. However, High Court judges refused to grant an appeal, despite admitting that Satpal had received unsatisfactory legal advice and should have entered a plea of self defence at his original trial. Instead they 'invited' the Home Secretary to consider the case again. Campaigners asked why the judges had left Satpal's fate to the discretion of the Home Secretary,

Oliver Campbell is Innocent!



Above: Picket at the High Court during Oliver Campbell's appeal

Satpal Ram ...One Step Closer to Freedom

Photo: Newslife

whilst acknowledging that Satpal had entered the wrong plea. However, in February 1995, the Home Secretary agreed to refer Satpal's case back to the Court of Appeal. As yet no date has been set. We salute the spirit of resistance and fightback embodied by the family, friends and supporters of Satpal Ram. Progress in Satpal's case is a testament to community organisation and campaigning.

Darnall Defence Campaign

Photo: CARF



Above: Local youth picket Attercliffe police station

NMP was pleased to assist the Darnall defence campaign. A close-knit, predominantly Asian community in Darnall, Sheffield, has shown how a united community can beat the fascists, in this case quite literally, off the streets. On May 4 1994, over 20 white men, who had been drinking heavily in a nearby pub, ran amok in the area with metal bars and baseball bats, threatening young children playing on the streets and elderly passers-by. This was not the first time that the black community in Darnall had been attacked by racists, and the local Asian youth decided enough was enough. Within minutes, the community came out on the streets and drove the fascists out of the area.

The police arrived shortly after this and to everybody's disgust, arrested a young black man who was trying to explain what had happened. They also forcibly removed black youth from the area. In sharp contrast to the treatment of the Asian youths, the police simply herded the white thugs into a van, drove round the corner and let them go. This, was only the first of many incidents which have exposed the racist policing priorities of Sheffield police, confirming the wider black experience of the policing of our communities.

Soon after this incident, there were rumours that the BNP were organising a public meeting in the area. Asian youths immediately gathered in the street to plan the defence of their community. The police responded swiftly and brutally. They swamped the area in large numbers and deployed riot vans. Six Asian youths and two white anti-racists, aged thirteen to twenty-seven, were randomly arrested as riot police patrolled the area. Many of the older Asian youths, were arrested whilst attempting to stop police officers from intimidating, bullying and racially abusing young children.

On 7 May 1994, over 500 people from all sections of the community attended a public meeting. This launched the Darnall Defence Campaign. NMP was invited to speak at the meeting and was asked to advise and support the campaign. The Campaign demanded an end to all police harassment, that all charges be dropped and called for an independent inquiry into Attercliffe police station. The police responded with a public attack on Asian youth, referring to them as 'violent', and more disturbingly they implied that Asians were to blame for the poor race-relations in the area. This played into the hands of the local racists, lending tacit support for the local 'Rights for Whites' campaign. Disgusted by the attitude and behaviour of the police, the Campaign organised an 800-strong picket of Attercliffe police station to protest against the overt racism of the police authorities.

The campaign maintained its fight for justice. Over 300 people picketed the court on the day of the first hearing. Eventually the breach of peace charge against Nissar Jaffir, (Chair of the Campaign), was dropped. The police were ordered to pay £200 costs. Subsequently charges against

five of the defendants were dropped all together. Four defendants were found not guilty even of reduced charges of criminal damage, disorderly conduct and threatening behaviour.

The Darnall Defence Campaign shows that a community united in action is a formidable force for achieving justice. A successful fightback by the youths after years of police harassment and brutality is a massive boost to the community. A community centre has been secured, aptly named the Darnall Unity Centre.

Nissar Jaffir, explaining that the fightback has not ended, said "We are an integral part of the community and we will fight any attempt by the police or any other institution to criminalise, divide or marginalise us".

In last years report we discussed our work in Tower Hamlets, highlighting our involvement in the Tower Hamlets 9 Campaign. The Tower Hamlets 9 were arrested and charged with riot, following the vigil outside Whitechapel hospital in September for Quddus Ali, viciously beaten into a coma by a gang of racist thugs. The Campaign organised numerous meetings and pickets. There was a groundswell of support in the community and across the country. This eventually left the CPS with no choice but to reduce the charges. However, the police were determined to prosecute the nine young men. The campaign remained equally determined that all charges must be dropped, continuing to put pressure on the CPS.

In February 1994 Asian Dub Foundation, Hustlers Convention, and Apache Indian, played at a benefit gig for the Tower Hamlets 9 and Quddus Ali.

Representatives from the campaign were invited to speak at Earl Marshall School in Sheffield. The children were visibly moved and angry about what was happening in east London. Their poems in defence of the Tower Hamlets 9 and letters of support to Quddus and his family, were recently published in 'School of the World'. The book has a section dedicated to Quddus Ali. NMP would like to thank the children for their support.

The Tower Hamlets 9 trial began on Monday 6 February 1995. Family, friends and supporters of the campaign packed the public gallery. The police and Crown Prosecution Service had spent over a year bringing these youths to trial.

Meanwhile, only one person was charged for the attack on Quddus Ali. John Rutter was found not guilty. The police and CPS's failure to bring the racist thugs who attacked Quddus to justice is a disgraceful indictment of their incompetence and lack of will.

Another shameful example of British justice, was the sentence of one year for actual bodily harm (ABH) given to Nicki Fuller, the only youth arrested after the horrific attack on Mukhtar Ahmed. Fuller was allowed to walk free, having served six months on remand.

A massive campaign mounted by the police to secure the conviction of the Tower Hamlets 9, contrasts with half-hearted attempts to investigate

Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign

School of the World

Writings from Earl Marshall School, Sheffield



Left: Earl Marshall School's book 'School of the World'

these two horrific attacks. This is yet another kick in the teeth for the black community. The message from British justice is that black lives have little value. Mukhtar was horrifically disfigured in the attack, every bone in his face was broken. Quddus Ali will never fully recover. When it comes to a choice between criminalising black youth for defending themselves, or defending black communities under attack, there is no doubt where police priorities lie.

Victory for the Tower Hamlets Nine!

Following a committed and determined campaign, the charges against the Tower Hamlets 9 were reduced and all the defendants received minimal fines and community service. The campaign and its supporters were victorious as the nine young men avoided custodial sentences, which only weeks earlier had seemed a certainty. The judge acknowledged the 'serious external factors', such as the increased levels of racial violence in the area.

The Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign comprised of eighteen months of unflagging community campaigning. Though the nine young men are now free, the campaign against racial violence and fascist activity in the area will continue and intensify as the black communities stay united in their fight-back against racist attacks and fascist activity.

TUC March Against Racism

The NMP played a key role in ensuring that the TUC Unite Against Racism demonstration in March 1994 took place in east London. This was a TUC 'first'. The significance of a national demonstration against racism in the heart of the East End cannot be over-estimated, coming as it did on the heels of the BNP's electoral victory in Millwall, and a spate of horrific racist attacks. Over 50,000 people supported the march, calling for justice for the Tower Hamlets 9 and Quddus Ali. The local black community turned out in large numbers and formed an angry and vocal section at the front of the march. This was a spontaneous display of black outrage at the growing levels of racial violence in the area and the lack of police response.

Women's Group

The NMP women's group was re-launched after the last AGM, to focus on the issues that particularly affect black women who face racial and police harassment. The experience of the Second Avenue campaign, in the previous year, shows the key role black women play in organising community fightback.

Throughout the year there has been a significant increase in cases from south Newham of single women and young children, often from the refugee community, rehoused in isolated areas. Racists pick on those perceived to be most vulnerable and least likely to fight back and, therefore, these women and children have become targets for racial violence and harassment.

This is the consequence of the Council rehousing single black women in sub-standard properties, in isolated areas, in the most deprived parts of Newham.

We have made contact with women throughout the area, aiming to build up a supportive network between women in isolation.

During the Beckton anti-fascist campaign in the January by-election, we encouraged women to use their vote against the BNP, contacting them and offering escort to the poll, to counter intimidation and the presence of fascist supporters. We organised women only transport, as women may not wish to accept lifts from male drivers. As a result, we achieved an increase in the turnout of black women voters.

The women's group followed the bye-election campaign by leafleting the area to give women feedback on the election result, and further information on NMP.


Throughout 1994, the NMP was approached by schools, colleges, universities in London and across the country. We were also visited by groups and individuals from Britain and abroad.

Locally, we organised stalls at Freshers Fairs at the UEL, and West Ham and East Ham colleges. This was followed up by workshops. We have also visited local youth clubs, including Forest Gate and Little Ilford, and plan to build on those links in the future. We have spoken at local schools including Little Ilford, Woodside and Stepney Green. School children and students also drop into the centre regularly, to collect information or annual reports. They have interviewed workers about police harassment and racial violence in the area. We have also spoken and organised workshops in youth clubs in the neighbouring borough of Tower Hamlets, including the Berner Club, Dame Collett House and Poplar and Tower Hamlets College. We were invited to run workshops at the NUS London conference, on involving students in active anti racist campaigning. We spoke on the impact of racism in Britain, at the Amnesty International British conference.

We were invited to participate in a youth conference in Chelmsford attended mainly by white teenagers, many of whom openly expressed racist ideas and stereotypes. However, by the end of the day these same children had developed short plays, articulating the themes of 'Self defence as no Offence' and the need to beat fascists off the streets. This emphasises the importance of anti-racist education with young people.

NMP is committed to anti-racist education and values all opportunities to work with young people. Therefore NMP was pleased to contribute to a civil liberties education package, which will be distributed throughout schools in Britain. The pack covers different areas of discrimination and prejudice. NMP is the only group featured in the racism section. A video highlights the work of the project, showing how NMP combats racism. It includes interviews with workers, volunteers and local people who have experienced racial harassment. Questions and role play that follow involve children assuming the role of an NMP worker, and answering questions directly relating to the work and experiences of the project. We believe educational resources should reflect the black experience, and the history of black organisation and fightback. This approach should be at the centre of anti-racist education.

We were pleased to host a full day of discussions with representatives from a delegation of Trades Unions from Germany. On their return, the unions included NMP's suggestions in their own report on racial harassment. We have been interviewed on several occasions by Radio Berlin and visited by refugee and anti racist groups from Germany and France. NMP has also been featured in *Auslander* and several other German papers, spoken to the Japanese press on the nature of racism in Britain and contributed towards articles in US publications.

We were invited to speak at a conference of European anti-racist and anti-fascist groups at Luxembourg, which discussed the emergence of Fortress Europe, and to an international congress on 'Migrational racism in sea-ports' in Hamburg. 

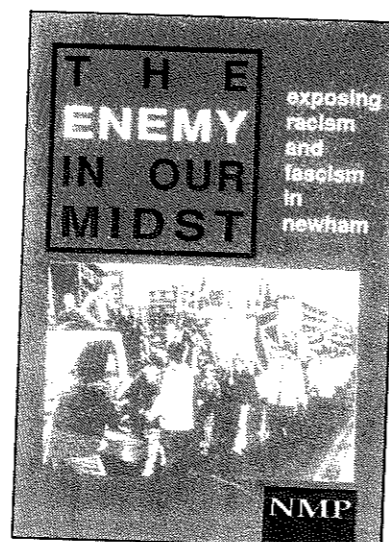
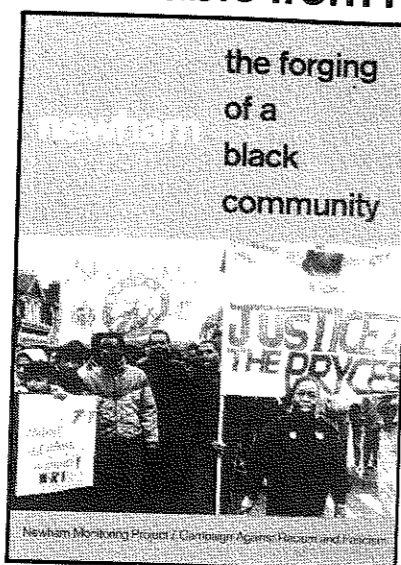
Local & National Links

Anti-Racist Education

International Links

Resources

Available from NMP



Resources available from Newham Monitoring Project

Newham: The Forging of a Black Community (1991)

History of the struggles of the post-war black community in Newham based on interviews and original research (published jointly with the CARF). £3.50 plus 50p P&P

Racism and Racist Violence in Schools (1990)

Critique of tokenistic multiculturalism which proposes a new positive anti-racism that improves education for all children.

Newham Monitor

Quarterly bulletin of NMP, detailing cases, campaigns and community resistance in Newham. Free to members, copies 30p

Newham Monitoring Project Exhibitions

The History of Racism in the East End (23 panels)

Conspiracy (12 panels), which documents different campaigns and struggles of black people in Britain.

The Enemy in Our Midst (1995)

Could the nightmare of the Isle of Dogs in September 1993 come to Newham? We believe the answer is, yes. High levels of unemployment and poverty make Newham an attractive target for the neo-nazi BNP, anxious to build on the 'Millwall factor'.

In October 1993, when the BNP announced it would stand for election in south Newham, NMP set out to stop them. This is the story of our campaign. £1.00 plus P&P

Annual Reports (1983-1993)

Accounts of the struggle against racist violence, fascism and police harassment in Newham in the context of trends and events nationally.

Campaign Against Racism & Fascism (CARF) magazine

Copies available from NMP or on subscription - £7.50 (individuals) or £12 (organisations) from CARF, BM Box 8784, London WC1N 3XX

Financial Statement

	1994 £	1993 £	
Current Assets			Balance Sheet
Debtors and Prepayments	2 803	19 122	
Cash at Bank and in Hand	43 364	7 657	
	46 167	26 779	As at 31 March 1994
Creditors: Amounts Falling Due Within One Year	23 948	12 381	
Net Current Assets	22 219	14 398	
Capital & Reserves			
General Reserves	9 124	7 749	
Designated Reserves	13 095	6 649	
	22 219	14 398	
	1994	1993	
	£	£	
Income			Income & Expenditure Account
Grant Funding	138 861	111 018	
Other Income	3 027	2 237	
	141 888	113 255	For the Year Ended 31 March 1994
Expenditure			
Salaries and National Insurance	83 777	67 841	
Rent, Rates, Light and Heat	2 742	2 187	
Building Repairs, Maintenance and Cleaning	3 258	1 501	
Equipment Maintenance	3 692	2 640	
Insurance	772	1 390	
Telephone	5 984	4 731	
Stationery, Postage & Office Materials	8 874	6 198	
Printing, Publicity and Reports	9 996	8 455	
Literature and Subscriptions	629	652	
Audit and Accountancy	1 619	2 398	
Legal and Professional Fees	2 742	460	
Courses, Conferences and Training	82	1 840	
Motor, Travel & Subsistence Expenses	3 210	3 090	
Volunteers Expenses	2 735	1 161	
Bank Charges	229	316	
Equipment Purchased	1 138	-	
Recruitment and Advertising	2 635	4 542	
Sundry	1 366	295	
	135 480	109 697	
Surplus for the Year before Taxation	6 408	3 558	
Taxation	(33)	890	
Surplus for the Year after Taxation	6 375	4 448	

Affiliates

Affiliation to NMP is open to anyone who lives or works in Newham and agrees with the constitutional aims and objectives of the project

Art of Change* • Asian Ltd • Australian Institute of Criminology* • Beckton Against Racism • Behno-Ki-Milan • Bengali National Association • Black Justice Project* • Birnbergs & Co Solicitors • Cairde Na nGael • CALA Training Centre* • CAPA* ‡ • City of London Anti-Apartheid Group* • Columbian Fathers • Community Links • Cumberland School NUT Group • Defend the Deane Family Campaign • East London Teachers* • Eastwards Trust (Hostels) Ltd • Edward Son and Noice Solicitors • Fellowship House Asian Womens' Project • Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! • Forest Gate Youth Centre • General Union of Palestinian Women (UK)* • Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA)* • Gujarat Welfare Association • Gwendoline Avenue Community Association • Inquest* • Jewish Socialist Group* • Justice for the Dray Family Campaign • Justice for Oliver Campbell Campaign • Little Ilford Youth Centre • Leeds TUC* • LSE Women's Group* • Manor Park "Faith in the Community" Project • Newham Asian Women's Project • Newham Citizens' Advice Bureau • Newham Community Advice Unit • Newham Community College Students' Union • Newham Community Housing Ltd • Newham Consortium for Youth • Newham Drugs Project • Newham Gatekeepers • Newham Rights Centre • Newham UNISON • Newham Voluntary Agencies Council • Nottingham Anti-Fascist Action* • Ocean Youth* ‡ • One Love Community Association • Plashet School NUT Group • Poplar College Students' Union* ‡ • Racial Harassment Project (Sheffield)* • Sheffield Community Safety Unit* • SARI* • Second Avenue Community Association • Sherico Care Homes • SOLON CHS* • South Newham Action on Policing • Theatre Royal Stratford • Tom Allen Community Arts Centre • Tower Hamlets Against Racism* ‡ • Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee* ‡ • Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign* ‡ • University of East London Students' Union • University of Brighton Students' Union* • Vicarage School, PHU • Waltham Forest Trade Union and Community Resource Centre* • Workers' Power* • Youth Connection* ‡

* Other organisations which support and agree with the aims and objectives of NMP although not based in Newham. ‡ Organisations based in Tower Hamlets.