

Independent radical black politics: Looking at the BUFP & BLF

First Published: October 2017.

<https://wordpress.com/post/woodsmokeblog.wordpress.com/1499>

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Sam Richards and Paul Saba

Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the Creative Commons Common Deed. You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work, and note any of the transcribers, editors & proofreaders above.



There is a history after *Empire Windrush* docking in 1948. Since then the involvement of black Britons in the assertion of their own equality in post-war Britain receives little recognition or acknowledgement. There is a rich vein to explore and acknowledge with the [varied and complex history](#) of self-organizing within different minority communities that have help shaped British society through expression of their political awareness, active democracy and involvement against the racism of state and society, raising the demands for equality and justice.

Even a narrow focus on any decade in recent British history brings to light a varied and complicated history of struggles for civil rights and justice to be respected in terms of family

rights, immigration, employment, defence of communities from racist attacks and policing that was as vibrant and heroic as its American counterpart. The organisation of independent and emphatic opposition pointed to a disengagement and alienation away from existing channels within “the system”.

While the British media focused on the sensationalist and the individual in its coverage, promoting the “Spokesman”, presenting a leader to explain the complex social movement as with Tariq Ali and [the anti-Vietnam war protest](#), there were self-seeking individuals long gone who could rise to the occasion : self-proclaimed leaders were clearly open to skilful media manipulators, self-publicists ever ready with a flamboyant soundbite for journalists, who made them their first ports of call for information on Black Power. This gave them a public profile that was entirely out of proportion to their influence in the black community and often led to their personal opinions being reported as the policies of their organisations. This of course, meant any discussion of the philosophy or stance on issues were through that distorted prism of that individual.

The focus here is introducing the organisational form that independent radical black politics was active in Britain. There are two organisational expressions of Independent radical black politics that reflect a drive for self-assertion, the Black Unity and Freedom Party and the Black Liberation Front, both born out of the same short-lived organisation with the deceptively old fashioned name of the Universal Coloured People’s Association.

UCPA was founded on 5 June 1967 at a meeting in Notting Hill, with seventy-plus at the founding meeting elected Nigerian playwright Obi Egbuna as their president and Roy Sawh as his second in command. At the founding of the Universal Coloured People’s Association (UCPA) in June 1967 it had a clear self-identification as a Black Power organisation – the UCPA’s newspaper was the Black Power Newsletter. Nigerian Obi Egbuna, president of the UCPA and soon founder of the Black Panther Movement (BPM), and Indian Ajoy Ghose, UCPA member, founder of the Malcolm X Montessori School. The UCPA developed in the wake of the visit of Trinidad-American activist Kwame Touré (Stokely Carmichael) speaking at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London [\[i\]](#). Although British Black Power clearly drew inspiration from its American counterpart namesake and the struggles against imperialism, both in the countries from which its members had emigrated, and in Britain earlier in the twentieth century.

By September 1967 Sawh and his supporters had left to form a tiny splinter group. Seven months later, Egbuna He called the UCPA annual general meeting six months earlier than planned in April 1968, resigned as chairman, and founded the British Black Panther Movement, which advertised itself as a revolutionary socialist group. The U.K. Panthers aimed to spread what they termed “black consciousness” through meetings that showcased poetry, music, and film from the West Indies and West Africa.

It was intervention in CARD – Campaign Against Racial Discrimination – that drew publicity: media reports highlighted the role of Black radicals in an article headlined’ Six quit executive of anti-racist body: “Maoist take-over” fear’ and *The Times* reported that the UCPA, ‘an organisation standing openly for Black Power’, had helped bring CARD to ‘crisis point. [\[ii\]](#)

It was the London organisations that had the most members and by far the greatest influence and impact reacting to the social and economic conditions that gave rise to black political radicalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Militant black politics was a reactive rather than an

aggressive phenomenon, doctrinal rigidities that splintered the groups and eventually led to a divide between cultural nationalist organisations like the BLF and Marxist-Leninist groups like the BUFP and BPM, which balanced their focus on race to class. Like many Black Power organisations the BUFP was particularly inspired by Chinese Communism and Chairman Mao, yet never a part of the party building project that others engaged in. At the outset the BUFP used its official journal, *Black Voice*, to proclaim its ideology to be “Marxism-Leninism”. In 1990 it revised this to “Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tsetung thought” and in 1997 changed it again to “Scientific Socialism”.



From the demise of the UCPA arose the two main trends of culturalism nationalism and Black radical left groups.

Socialist elements within the Universal Coloured Peoples Association united with the South East London Black Parents’ Organisation *Fasimbas*, set up by George Campbell at the end of the 1960s .The Black Unity and Freedom Party held its first congress in London on 20 July 1970, deliberately selected as the commemorative day of the Cuban Revolution.

Former UCPA member George Joseph was elected its general secretary. Alrick (Ricky) Xavier Cambridge, Danny Morrell and Sonia Chang among others were involved in its foundation. In its early years the organisation had three branches, two in London and one in Manchester at the same addresses as the former UCPA rented offices. The BUFP was never a wealthy organisation and therefore lacked capital to invest in activities such as publishing. As well as street sales of *Black Voice*, the organisation relied on membership contributions and collections at its public meetings. It never paid its officials or members.

Former UCPA members would have been quite familiar with the BUFP’s discussion groups, demonstrations and pamphlet-producing activities and comfortable with new initiatives like summer Schools for black children. ‘We met regularly and we did a lot of campaigning, for example we did a campaign on the [1971] Immigration Act and we did various things with children – we used to have an annual Christmas party’, recalls Lewis, ‘We were also always involved in solidarity work with the African liberation Movements at the time because Angola and Guinea were Portuguese colonies, Ian Smith had declared UDI and there was an

armed struggle for national liberation there. South Africa was under apartheid, so we were active participants in the South African liberation movements”’.[\[iii\]](#)

The BUFP had never been the clandestine, underground organisation and it never contested elected seats either at national or local levels of the state. From the very start BUFP aimed to develop a Black revolutionary organisation; the first principle stated by the [BUFP Manifesto](#) is that it recognised ‘the class nature’ of British society; the second point was the recognition of class and class struggle, resulting in the revolutionary Leninist commitment to ‘the seizure of state power by the working class and the bringing about of socialism’.



Distancing itself from what it viewed as reactionary Black Nationalism, therefore, the BUFP maintained class above racism as the primary source of oppression in society. What it did not do was belittle that impact racism had. In its activity it sought to address the inequality and damage wrought through racist oppression and practices upon the black communities. The first two points of the BUFP’s Manifesto made this explicitly clear. ‘We recognise the class nature of this society’, stated the first clause. ‘We recognise the necessity for class struggle and the absolute necessity for the seizure of state power by the working-class and the bringing about of socialism’ added the second.

As one-time member, Professor Harry Goulbourne, explained: “The working classes had imbibed the racism of the capitalists; workers, organised or otherwise, had allowed themselves to become divided, seeing colour or race or culture as being more important than objective class interests. In Maoist terms, they had allowed secondary, non- antagonistic contradictions to over-ride the fundamental contradiction between capital and labour. This fundamental basis for organised opposition to, and resistance of, exploitation and the divide and rule tactics of capitalists, was seen to be frustrated and revolutionary action by white workers and their organisations was not to be expected in the foreseeable future.” [\[iv\]](#)

What this was theoretically built upon was the notion of the effect upon the working class in an imperialist country. Lenin argued, following Frederick Engels, that an aristocracy of labour had emerged in West Europe. This meant that with the emergence of reformist social-democratic parties and trades unions, capitalists were able to gain the support of the working classes by offering non-essential reforms of capitalism. Union leaders played a crucial part in this process, because it is through them that the 'deal', or class collaboration, has been effected.

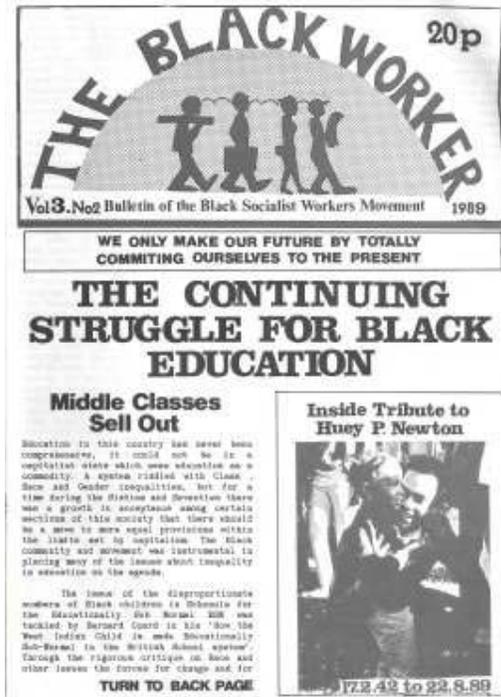
For the BUFP events in Britain, the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere were properly to be understood in class terms. In colonial wars the notion was of 'people's' struggle for national liberation as the first step towards emancipation from capitalism and imperialism. The group condemned the black bourgeoisie as 'Uncle Toms' as vehemently as it condemned

capitalism and imperialism. The BUFP also sought more actively to work with white radical groups than most black groups did, not because they were white but because these groups shared or had similar ideological orientations as the group, that is to say, they placed the emphasis on class, not colour/race or gender.

Black workers were placed at the forefront of revolutionary politics in Britain. Given the history of white working class organisations which marginalised black workers' interests, it was important for blacks to organise themselves autonomously. It was argued that they constituted the most exploited, the most marginalized and therefore the most class conscious element within the wider working classes. This view was also supported by the observation that where white liberals joined black organisations their superior resources usually result in whites controlling the agenda. Additionally, taking a principled stand to maintain its independence of thought and action, the BUFP was consistent in refusing to accept funding from national or local government departments, or charity foundations.

BUFP sought to play a leading part to rebuild the Black movement, "to fight all attacks on our community by the State, racist organisations, institutions and individuals." This includes the fight against the [mis-education of black children](#) in state schools. This educationally subnormal (ESN) system, now replaced by special needs sections in schools was challenged by the Black community, hence BUFP launched the first Saturday school "to cater for the needs of our children".

While most of the activities in which the BUFP engaged could be described as of a community welfare nature in Goulbourne's account of the BUFP in the early 1970s, their community building work was guided by consistent and deeply committed political perspectives. Opposition to attacks upon the community were vigorously publicised through their paper, *Black Voice*, whether it was through localised campaigning or part of wider national mobilisations, throughout its existence BUFP members were active challenging racism, in its many incarnations, that affected black lives and communities in Britain.





1961, 'Black Peoples Day of Action' march after New Cross massacre.

Before the horrific attack at New Cross, a decade earlier the BUFP had campaigned around an attack at Sunderland Road in January 1971: [1971 Black Voice](#) three petrol bombs thrown into a black people's party in a house in Sunderland Road, Ladywell, injuring 221 people, several of them seriously. Two white racists later jailed for the attack. In the week after the attack, eight members of the Black Unity and Freedom Party are arrested after being hassled by police on their way back from visiting the injured in Lewisham Hospital. This leads to a march by 150 people to Ladywell Police Station a few weeks later, and more arrests.

Attacks on members of the group by the police in the early 1970s led to several confrontations and locally celebrated court cases. The group's support, for example, of the struggles of others such as the Irish against the 1971 Internment Act, or the trades unions' demonstrations against the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, again led the BUFP into

confrontation with the authorities. BUFP members were involved in numerous defence campaigns right up to the transformation of the organisation in 1999 as the African People's Liberation Organisation (APLO).

The journal *Black Voice*, exposed evidence of police brutality towards the black community, and became integral in campaigns against these crimes. Their pamphlet '*Who killed Aseta Simms?*' exposes the suspicious death of Aseta, who died at a Stoke Newington police station during the night of 13 May, 1971 in circumstances that the a doctor, apparently representing the police commission, who examined the body was reported to say that he could not '... say what was the cause of her death' [v]. She had bruises to her face and swelling to her brain 'consistent with someone who had been beaten', but the inquest into her death came to a quick conclusion: death by misadventure. The North London branch of the party led a campaign, involving publications, demonstrations, meetings, etc., to demand a public enquiry into the circumstances of Mrs Simms' death.

According to its Wikipedia page [vi], "even during its heyday in the early 1970s the BUFP was an extremely small organisation, never having more than about fifty paid-up members. For most of its history membership fluctuated between about 10 to 15. Its low point was in 1983, when following a split, it dwindled to just three regular members for a few months. However, its members were always very highly motivated, studious and committed activists."

Members were particularly visible in support of public black community protest campaigns and demonstrations involving alleged 'police brutality' and other allegations of "racially motivated" violence such as the New Cross Fire march in 1981. [1981 BUFP New Cross Massacre](#) Therefore, anyone attending community demonstrations in support of, for example, Cherry Groce (shot by police), Joy Gardner (died during a violent deportation) or Colin Roach (shot inside a police station) would certainly hear a BUFP member lecturing the assembled crowd about the ills of capitalism and its links to racism through a megaphone.

The BUFP was also ahead of the rest of the radical left as it visibly pay more attention to the issue of sexism and the role of women in the movement. Criticism of the prevailing sexist attitudes expressed in the Black Power movement both in the United States and the radical scene in London was well-deserved. By the early 1970s, openly denigrating women was no longer acceptable in the movement and the BUFP, BLF and the female-led BPM all had written policies on the correct treatment of their female members. A two-day National Conference on the Rights of Black People in Britain in May 1971, jointly organised by the BUFP and BPM, included a dedicated women's session entitled "'Black women want freedom"- Black sisters speak out!". The conference programme contained a page on women in the movement written by the BUFP's Black Women's Action Committee (BWAC). *Black Voice* also regularly carried articles with titles like, 'Male Chauvinism is Counter Revolutionary' and 'The Role of Women in the Vietnamese People's Resistance'.

The initiative in the formation of OWAAD (*ORGANISATION OF WOMEN OF AFRICAN AND ASIAN DESCENT*) in the late 1970s represented a major turning point in the political consciousness of many Black women, an activist organisation for British black and Asian women founded in 1978, founder members included Stella Dadzie and member of the British Black Panther Movement Olive Morris. It has been called a watershed in the history of Black women's rights activism. See [1985 BUFP OWAAD](#) The Rise and Fall Of O.W.A.A.D.

BLACK LIBERATION FRONT

CALLING ALL BLACK PEOPLE!!

ORGANISE FOR YOUR SURVIVAL IN THIS
RACIST COUNTRY

WE WANT DECENT HOUSING FIT FOR
HUMAN BEINGS

WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT ACCORD-
ING TO EACH ONE'S QUALIFI-
CATIONS

WE WANT PROPER EDUCATION FOR OUR
CHILDREN

WE WANT AN END TO POLICE BRUTALI-
TY AND HARRASSMENT

WE WANT THE REPEAL OF ALL RACIST
IMMIGRATION LAWS

GET UNITED AND ORGANISED
BROTHERS AND SISTERS WAKE UP
TO SHAKE THE MAN UP
WRITE TO THE BLF 54 WIGHTMAN RD N.4
OR DROP IN ANY FRIDAY 8pm OR SUNDAY
FROM 3pm to 6pm

Black Power groups in Britain

The split from the UCPA, reconstituted itself as the Black Panther Movement (BPM) and its offshoot the Black Liberation Front (BLF). Beside members in London, the BPM had Birmingham and Hull branches as well as an offshoot organisation, The Black People's Action Collective with branches in Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds and London.

The lines of difference with the BUFP involved their understanding of the concept of Black Power and the place of the class struggle in the fight for equality in Britain and elsewhere. The BPM placed the emphasis on cultural awareness and the unity of all blacks, and were 'cultural nationalists' given to cross class alliances. This meant that African history, culture, dress, hairstyle and so forth were of predominant importance to them. They too had an internationalist focus on events in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Third World. Black

Power reached its critical mass and achieved its greatest successes, its high water mark was, perhaps, the Mangrove Nine trial of October to December 1971.

In 1970, Special Branch produced a ‘security and intelligence’ report assessing the “significance of recent incidents in the general context of community relations and relations between the police and coloured communities in London and giving separate Special Branch general comment with some detail about organisations and personalities.”
[\[vii\]](#)

According to the Special Branch assessment “Black Power is at the heart of all militant action by West Indian members of the community.” Based on that assessment, covert action was undertaken to watch and collect information on individuals and groups, and to ‘harass’ particular individuals deemed to supporting ‘Black Power’ activities. Attempts were also made to criminalise those identified as ‘Black Militants’ and as a threat to ‘harmonious community relations’ and ‘law and order’ in society. A theme evident in the fictionalised account of the black Britons who took on the system in the 1970s – and the real-life counterintelligence unit who tried to crush any black activism portrayed in the 2017 Sky Atlantic six-part series , *Guerrilla*, a political drama by John Ridley.[\[viii\]](#)

There was the case of Tony Soares, discussed below, a well-known member of the Black Liberation Front who was one of the first proponents of Black Power in the UK. Soares was charged for his editorial decision in allowing an article on making Molotov cocktails (from Black Panther Community Newspaper – Vol.4, No.2) to be reprinted in *Grassroots* Community newspaper.

Winston Trew explores the little known case of the ‘Oval 4’ in 1972 that saw four members of the Fasimba arrested after a fight with plainclothes police at the Oval underground. Charged with theft, after a five-week trial at the Old Bailey the ‘Oval 4’ were found guilty of attempting to steal, theft, and assault on police. All were jailed for two years in November 1972. In July 1973 they were released from prison after a ‘successful’ appeal. [\[ix\]](#)

The Mangrove Nine trial was regarded as political not just because it involved black people protesting against the Metropolitan Police but also because the defendants had been the subjects of police surveillance (and harassment in the case of Frank Critchlow) for a long time because of their Black Power activism.

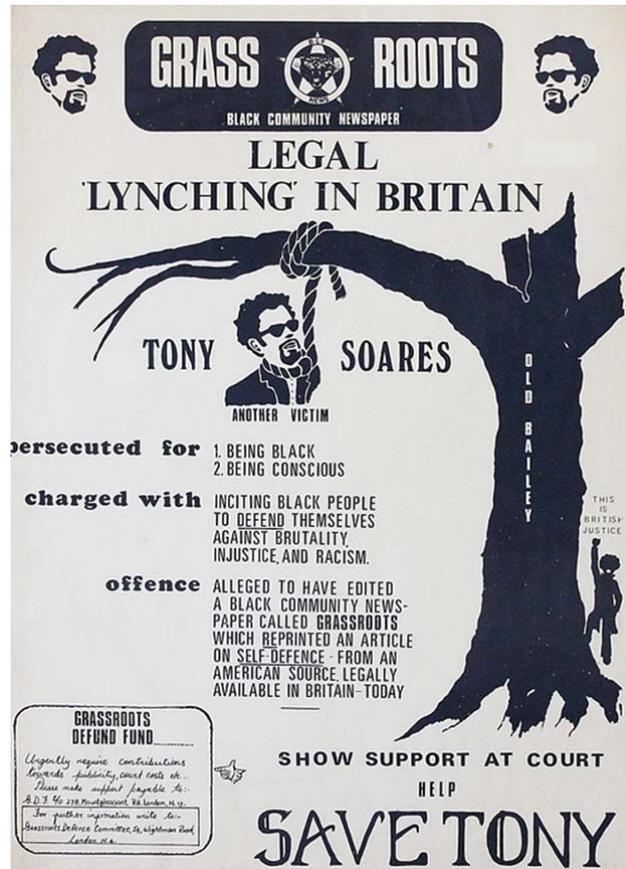
The Mangrove Nine trial lasted for eleven weeks between 5 October and 16 December 1971 and was widely covered by the press in Britain, as well as attracting significant interest abroad. The nine black defendants were charged with riot, affray and assaulting police officers, after a march on 9 August 1970 against police harassment of the Mangrove Cafe in Notting Hill ended in violence. The police said that the fighting at the end of the march had been part of a well organised and pre-planned riot by black agitators. The defendants countered that a disproportionately large and antagonistic police presence had deliberately provoked the marchers.

The story of Britain’s Black Panther that challenges a more palatable and benign version of 1970s history emerges from a biography of Darcus Howe, which offers the first detailed history of Britain’s little-known Black Power movement, claims that the racism it fought is being overlooked in modern narratives about the nation’s past. Howe, himself proved to have a contentious media career – by 1995, the BUFP regarded Howe as a “sellout” – however the

biography by Paul Field and Robin Bunce, recounts the development of the early Black power movement and subsequent trajectory of its activists.

The Black Liberation Front

The Black Liberation Front was founded at the start of 1971 by the former Members of the North and West London branches of the Black Panther Movement. Its headquarters were at 54 Wightman Road, formerly the BPM's North London branch address. Started in mid-1971, its newspaper *Grass Roots*, was edited by a variety of different people including Tony Soares and Ansel Wong.



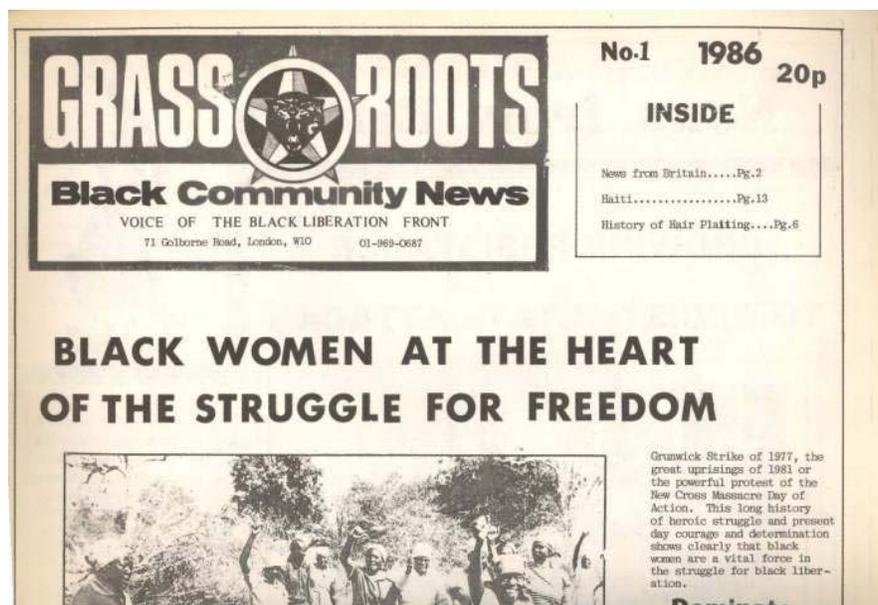
Two incidents had propelled the BLF into a wider spotlight:

Its September 1971 issue contained a reproduction of a page from the American Black Panther Party newspaper, which featured instructions on how to make a Molotov cocktail. Although The Black Panther, from which the 'recipe' was taken, was legally available in radical book shops and even some libraries, in March 1972 the BLF's Tony Soares was charged with attempted incitement to arson; bomb-making; possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life and murder of persons. The Defence campaign received wide support and publicity. The manifest injustice of the charges brought against Soares and the behaviour of the judge in the 1973 trial won the BLF much publicity and public sympathy, which was marshalled by the well-supported Grass Roots Defence Committee. On the other hand, the time the BLF's linchpin Soares, spent absent from the movement and the strain the trial put the BLF under undoubtedly burdened the organisation. In 1977, he left the organisation for entirely unrelated reasons.

The Black Liberation Front hit the headlines again, in October 1975, when three young black men claiming to be part of the Black Liberation Army, a supposed adjunct of the BLF, attempted to rob the Spaghetti House restaurant in Knightsbridge and ended up taking eight members of its staff hostage for five days. [x]

The BLF represented the more cultural-nationalist vein of Black Power thought, partly sprang from a grave disillusionment with white society at all levels. Dismissing 'Orthodox Marxism' as 'irrelevant to the Black struggle', because it was 'drawn exclusively from Western proletarian experience, the BLF argued that 'Real communism represents a way of life that was already in existence in parts of Africa and Asia before the coming of the white man'. The BLF's reasons for not wanting to work with whites did not just have their basis in theory, but were a reaction to white working-class and trade union racism. 'Organised, militant and so-called progressive workers supported Enoch Powell', its pamphlet explained.[xi] This separatist perspective meant that the BLF focused entirely on organising within the black community and withdrew from activities, such as demonstrations, that were intended to provoke a response from the white community.

'As a small minority in Britain, we cannot claim we will liberate the country or change its system. That is something the native working class must do for itself, announced an editorial in Grass Roots, '[Our] sole concern is survival for Black people in Britain and socialism in their homelands'! [xii]



Outside of the black community the BLF was best known for Grass Roots . Issues published in 1976 and 1978 cover similar issues to those included in other radical and left-oriented press disseminated local black news as well as information about revolutionary struggles throughout black diasporas – racist attacks, police harassment, unjust deportations – but the paper indicates its commitment to what has been described as 'cultural nationalism' by its exclusive emphasis on issues relating to people of African origin. The BLF at the time seemed to attract the younger, more black nationalist, more black conscious youths. The significance it placed on education, family life, and 'black heroes' (where black is the code for African), and the stress it gave to Africa Liberation Day (celebrated in May 1978 with a march and a week-end of cultural and educational events) indicated its aspiration for a social and cultural life in the UK which is quite separate from that of white citizens. [xiii]



The BLF established community self-help institutions like bookstores, Headstart programs, Saturday schools, women's groups, and housing for squatters, especially women and children. Self-help initiatives like these became the foundation of the black feminist movement in 1970s Britain, and grew into lasting social welfare institutions.

In mid-1980s a series of popular pamphlets was published by the Black liberation Front that when developed had been first intended to serve as starting points in the discussions which began to take place within the Black Liberation Front in the late 1970s that challenged the narrow nationalist political line, which the organisation had followed up till then.

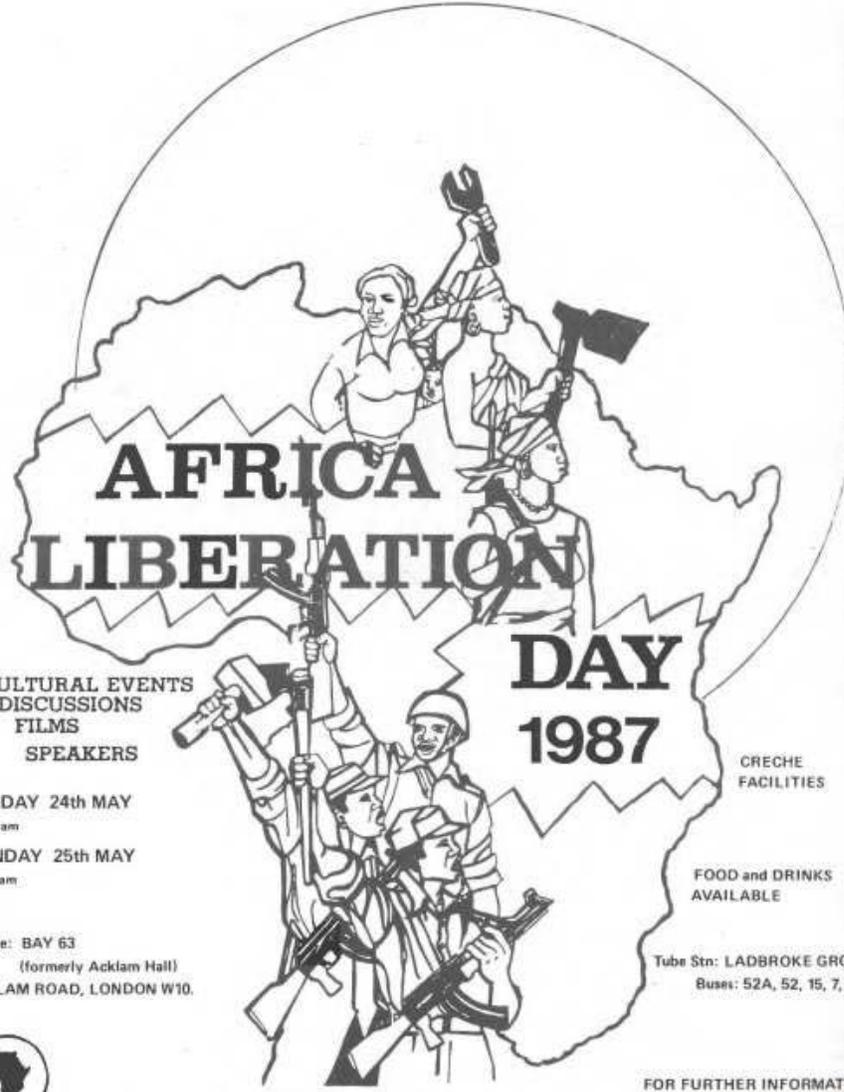
That political refinement dealt with many questions which were seen as important to the organisation to break away from its narrow nationalist past and to build a more revolutionary understanding of the rising struggle of the Black community.

There was a dual purpose in the publication of the Black Liberation series: in providing an understanding of the organisation's general political position, there was available a popular and accessible explanation of the philosophy and ideas of the BLF and as a contribution to the ongoing discussion within the Black Liberation Movement.

- No. 1: Understanding Society [BLS1](#)
- No.2: Capitalism and Socialism [BLS2](#)
- No.3: Racism [BLS3](#)
- No.4: Pan-Africanism [BLS4](#)
- No.5: The Black Community in Britain [BLS5](#)
- No.6: Who Controls Africa? [BLS6](#)

These ranged from general questions, such as understanding how societies work, to more specific ones such as the structure of the Black community in Britain. These discussions were a clear example of the development of the organisation's political understanding since it had published, at the start of the 1970s, the pamphlet "Revolutionary Black Nationalism". What remained consistent was an internationalist perspective drawing inspiration from the lives and example provided by such icons as Amilcar Cabral and Malcolm X, and in the space devoted to the struggles in Africa given in the pages of the BLF's newspaper, *Grassroots*. The celebration of African Liberation Day remained a highpoint in the organisation's year.

**AFRICA IS MARCHING FORWARD
TO FREEDOM AND NO POWER
ON EARTH CAN HALT HER NOW**



**AFRICA
LIBERATION
DAY
1987**

**CULTURAL EVENTS
DISCUSSIONS
FILMS
SPEAKERS**

**SUNDAY 24th MAY
10.30 am**

**MONDAY 25th MAY
10.30 am**

**Venue: BAY 63
(formerly Acklam Hall)
ACKLAM ROAD, LONDON W10.**

**CRECHE
FACILITIES**

**FOOD and DRINKS
AVAILABLE**

**Tube Stn: LADBROKE GROVE
Buses: 52A, 52, 15, 7, 295**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
RING 969 0687/960 4590**

 **ORGANISED BY AFRICA LIBERATION COMMITTEE**

The Africa Liberation Committee was a coalition of black groups first formed in 1972 to organise Africa Liberation Day (25th May) celebrations each year. In 1982 after a low ebb in the ALCs work the committee was re-organised and reconstituted. The New committee now comprises the Black liberation Front, The Brixton Defence Campaign and the Black Unity and Freedom Party. Part of the aims of ALC was to provide a platform in Britain for representatives of those involved in struggles taking place on the African continent.

The Black Socialist Workers Movement, consists mainly of comrades formerly involved in the B.U.F.P, spoke of the realignment and regrouping, in organisations like the B.U.F.P. and the B.L.F. in the early 1970s which resulted in the numerical decline of these organisations,

and the emergence of a new class orientated revolutionary socialist philosophy in Black organisations. Indeed, the Black Panther Movement changed its name to the Black Workers Movement (BWM) in 1973 to reflect a change in emphasis that black workers should be in the vanguard of the battle against racism and its progenitor capitalism. BSWM noted, “the Black nationalist elements, tended to re-emerge in state financed organisations as paid community workers, whilst the socialist elements, have organised independently of state funding and work towards, a more- developed and class positioned political perspective”^[xiv] Equally critical of the petty bourgeoisie and their attempt to take leadership of the black communities were, their old comrades in the BUFP. see [1983 BUFP Peti-bourgeois](#) The Politics of the Emerging Black Peti-Bourgeois . Black Voice Vol.14 No.1 1983.



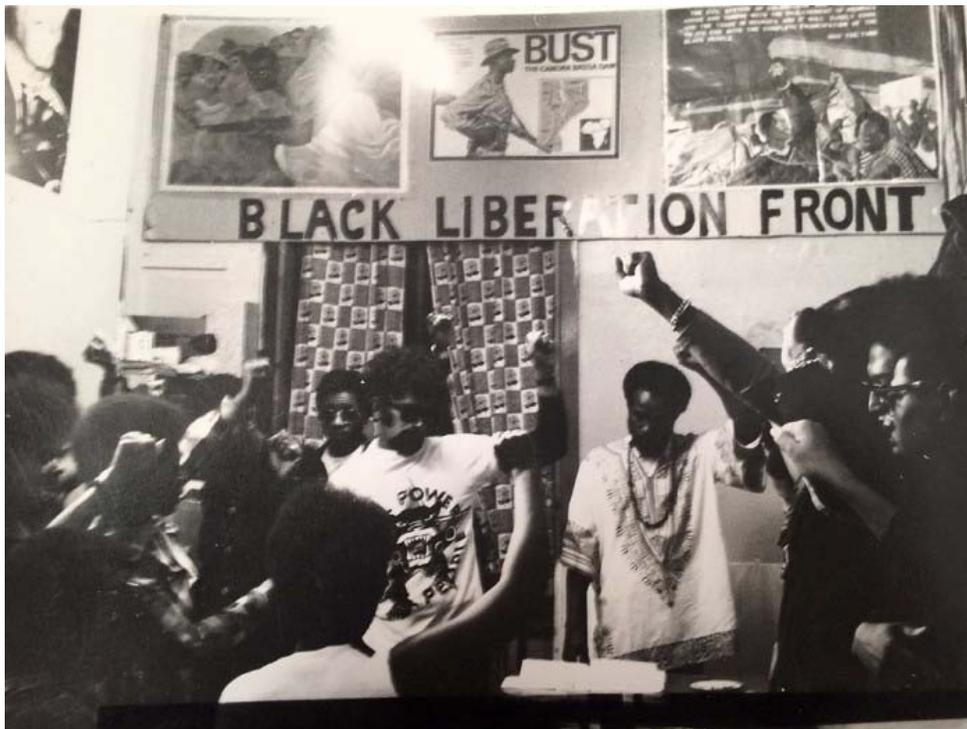
Black People Campaign for Justice demonstration from Brixton to Hyde Park November 11 1985 (above & top right). Photo:Lance Watson

The Black Liberation Front had believed that racism was a much greater source of oppression than class and therefore collaborations with white people, especially the white working class, which it identified as the most racist section of society, were ill-advised. ‘Nobody can tell a Black worker that he must unite with a white worker when all the time the white worker tells him to get back to where he came from’ advised a BLF pamphlet from 1971.

There were political developments within the black communities as BLF later explained that:

The real nature of the British state’s new found concern for Black people was soon clear however, when the first target of the laws against incitement to racial hatred turned out to be Black political activists and not the racist gangs which were notorious for inciting and organising violent attacks on Black people. Nevertheless the state’s “race relations” legislation was to have a further effect on the Black movement, in that it opened the door to those who had been knocking on it for years. The Black petty bourgeois who had for years tried to persuade the British capitalists to “outlaw racism”, and who were convinced that the struggle for Black freedom could best be carried out by the oppressors of Black people,

greeted the creation of the race relations industry with joy and saw it as a great new opportunity. As a result many deserted the independent Black organisations to take up jobs with the Race Relations Board and with the Community Relations Commissions. Despite these developments the Black Power movement in Britain in the late sixties and early seventies which reflected the more militant political tendency in the Black community, sent a cold shudder down the back of the British state. The state replied with a police onslaught against those Black people who were politically active. Cases such as the Oval Four, the Mangrove Nine and the attack on Grassroots were the result of direct state action against the militant section of the Black movement. However the Black community did not remain passive in the face of the police attacks, and throughout the seventies and into the eighties Black resistance grew both in size and intensity leading to such major clashes as the 1976 Nottingham Carnival and the 1981 Brixton and Toxteth uprising. Nevertheless by the mid-seventies the organised and militant section of the Black movement had rapidly declined both in size and influence from its high-point in the early seventies. This decline in part coincided with and was partly due to the state's Urban Aid programme, which for the first time made money available for the funding of projects to meet the social and cultural needs of Black people. The focus of organised Black activity was moving away from the political organising of the Black community and drifting towards the running of projects. [\[xv\]](#)



The radical black groups were not immune to the general malaise that affected the rest of the political left in the late Twentieth Century, The demise and dissolution of activist organisations was mirrored in the failure to relaunch despite various initiatives aimed at “rebuilding the black movement”, the organisations were by the mid-1990s, more of a marginal fringe force. The BUFP in 1998, after two years of internal discussion and public consultation, the African People's Liberation Organisation (APLO). The APLO was far more [Afro-centric](#) in its rhetoric and programme. The lack of the word “party” in its title was of crucial significance – signalling a potential retreat from outright battles in the political arena. A few months later the BUFP convened for the last time and formally transferred all of their

collective assets to the new organisation, before permanently adjourning their last General Meeting.

ENDNOTES

[i] <http://www.dialecticsofliberation.com/1967-dialectics/>

[ii] The Sunday Telegraph, 'Six quit executive of anti-racialist body- Maoist take-over fear', 4 December 1967, p . 9 and The Times, 'Threat to CARD from extremists', 7 November 1967, p . 11. **SEE** Benjamin W. Heineman, Jr. *The Politics of the Powerless: A Study of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination*. (London: Oxford University Press 1972). A Times news team wrote that 'the ominous lesson of CARD ... is that the mixture of pro-Chinese communism and American-style Black Power on the immigrant scene can be devastating' Times News Team, *The Black Man in Search of Power* (London, Nelson, 1968).

[iii] Former member Lester Lewis, interviewed by the R.E.Wild, 14 September 2004. Quoted in Rosalind Eleanor Wild, 'Black was the colour of our fight. Black Power in Britain, 1955-1976. Thesis 2008 Sheffield University p96

[iv] Professor Harry Goulbourne (2000) Africa and the Caribbean in Caribbean consciousness and action in Britain

[v] BUFP Who killed Aseta Simms? 1972, p.3

[vi] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Unity_and_Freedom_Party

[vii] National Archives: Home Office HO 376/00154

[viii] <http://www.historyextra.com/article/feature/guerrilla-real-history-british-black-power>

[ix] Trew, Winston (2012) Black for a Cause...Not just Because. TaoFish Books.
<http://www.blackforacause.co.uk/>

[x] See: Jenny Bourne, The line between the political and the criminal can be a blurred one. *The Guardian*, Monday 26 September 2011

[xi] BLF, 'Revolutionary Black Nationalism'.1971: 3

[xii] Grass Roots 1:2 (7 July 1971), p. 2.

[xiii] Max Farrar Social Movements and the Struggle Over 'Race' in Perspectives on Democracy and Protest <http://www.maxfarrar.org.uk/docs/StruggleOverRaceMerlin1.pdf>

[xiv] BWSM. The Black Worker Editorial Vol3 No.2 1987

[xv] BLF, The Black Community in Britain. Black Liberation Series No. 5

* **Heavily indebted in use of the following sources**

Black Voice & conversations with Dannie Morrell

Rosalind Eleanor Wild, 'Black was the colour of our fight. Black Power in Britain, 1955-1976. Thesis 2008 Sheffield University

Goldbourne, Harry .Africa and the Caribbean in Caribbean consciousness and action in Britain. David Nicholls Memorial Trust 2000