

BLACK HISTORY
MONTH2015

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR RACE EQUALITY



50 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE
RACE RELATIONS ACT 1965

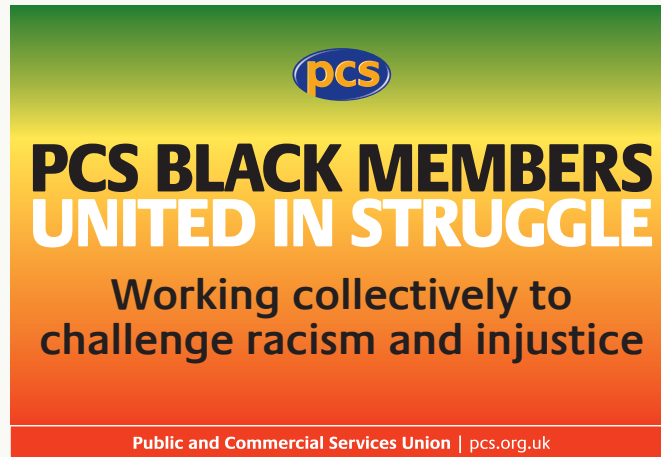


Public and Commercial Services Union | pcs.org.uk

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2015

Working together for change

2015 is the fiftieth anniversary of the first Race Relations Act in the UK and the seventieth anniversary of the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester that set the impetus for independence for nations across the world.



In Black* History Month (BHM) 2015 PCS is marking these events, celebrating the activism that drove the changes, reflecting on what progress has been made and what we still need to do. Our current challenges include continuing the fight against slavery and campaigning for better mental health support for black communities.

The annual Black History Month in October is an opportunity for all PCS members to join together to learn about the past and plan for the future.

Since 1965 trade unions have played a vital role in ensuring that race equality law is improved and implemented, in driving forward workplace rights and employment rights and in progressing better opportunities for black people in the UK. We have seen achievements and disappointments on our journey to race equality.

In the last five years we have seen the government adopting deliberately divisive policies and undermining structures that ensure that equality law is understood and enforced – including reduced resources for the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The 2015 general election campaign was

fought on platforms of hate and division with some parties claiming that equality laws are no longer necessary.

In parallel with the undermining of equality rights we have seen attacks on employment rights and on trade unions.

This is all part of a deliberate attempt to prevent workers from challenging and seeking remedies for unfair and discriminatory treatment at work. Trade unions have always played a key role in political change. Today we face threats to our activity to defend workers' rights and achieve equality. We must stand firm to oppose these attacks, taking inspiration from the achievements of earlier activists.

Our revised PCS race equality strategy is the basis for our renewed commitment to race equality in the workplace and in society.

PCS salutes those who throughout history have joined together to challenge racism, injustice and exploitation. All our members have a crucial part to play in spreading the message of trade unionism and campaigning collectively for equality, freedom and justice.

Let Black History Month inspire you to get involved and support PCS by standing up to racism, challenging stereotypes and promoting equality today.

**PCS uses black in the political context to apply to people from African and Asian Diasporas, including people of dual heritage.*

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50 Years of the Race Relations Act

Britain, 1965: The Who release My Generation, Ronnie Biggs escapes from prison, Stanley Matthews is knighted and Britain is becoming an ever more diverse society.

In the previous decade the racial landscape of Britain had changed rapidly. After World War Two, Britain faced a massive labour shortage that was filled by workers from the ex-colonies and the Commonwealth. Life was often difficult for migrants. Racism and discrimination, fuelled by a lack of understanding, stereotyping and fear, were rife amidst these social and cultural changes. Skilled workers often had to take low paying, insecure jobs well below their qualifications and expectations.

the first piece of UK legislation to make race discrimination unlawful in public places. It was subsequently strengthened in 1968 and 1976. While by no means perfect, the Act started the journey towards a system where BME people who faced discrimination could defend their rights. It also put pressure on trade unions to organise black workers.

There is still a long way to go. Black people continue to face barriers in the workplace, whether that's from a lack of representation, lack of opportunity or a lack of understanding. Migrants coming to the UK continue to find

It became clear that the inequalities faced by black and minority ethnic



people needed to be addressed. Collective action played a crucial part in strengthening the bargaining position of black workers in the UK.



Sadly, in many cases trade unions were part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Black activists with experience of campaigning in the anti-colonial struggles in Africa, India and the Caribbean used their skills in new struggles in Britain. Responses to the problems ranged from the 1958 riots in Notting Hill in London to the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1963 – a protest against the refusal of the Bristol Omnibus Company to employ Black or Asian drivers.

themselves in jobs well below their skills level. All PCS members can help address these inequalities by getting involved in our equality structures, networks and campaigns.

Working together does change things. Trade unions are democratic organisations where every member's voice can be heard and every member can help to create a fairer society. Decent pay and pensions, good working conditions, opportunities for education, development and progression and reliable health care can only be won through collective action.

The 1965 Act was a landmark in race relations:

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PCS Race Equality Strategy

This year PCS has published an updated strategy which explains our priorities for the next three years in organising, campaigning and bargaining on race equality. Speak to your local rep or your regional office about how you can help implement the strategy and make a difference.

Visit bit.ly/EqualityGroups



70th anniversary of the 5th Pan African Congress in Manchester

The Pan African movement was founded in 1919 to seek self-rule from colonial powers following the First World War, when troops from around the world fought alongside European forces. The 5th Pan African Congress – re-located from Paris because of travel problems – was held in 1945 at Chorlton-upon-Medlock Town Hall. 87 delegates representing 50 organisations debated topics such as ‘The Colour Problem in Britain’, ‘Oppression in South Africa’ and ‘The Problems in the Caribbean’.

With the Second World War creating a renewed drive for independence, the 1945 Congress had great political significance. The war had been fought for freedom and the hundreds of millions of people living in colonies run by European powers were ready for change. The Congress brought together important political activists including Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah, who went on to lead anti-colonial struggles in Kenya and Ghana, and academics such as W.E.B. DuBois, Dudley Thompson and Jaja Wachuku.

Also at the Congress were black activists who lived in Manchester, including Len Johnson, the former boxer and Communist Party GB activist; Dr Peter Milliard from Guyana, who had formed



the Negro Association; Ras Makonnen of the International African Service Bureau; and James Taylor, who ran the Negro Welfare Centre. In 1944 Milliard and Makonnen had called a meeting in Manchester of all black organisations and set up the Pan-African Federation.

This year Manchester is commemorating the anniversary with a free conference and community events to reflect on the historical significance and legacy of the 5th PAC meeting and discuss the future of the Pan African Movement.

An essential part of the conference is to give a role to young people in promoting and sustaining the future of Pan-Africanism world-wide. A Pan-African Foundation will be established in Manchester at the end of the conference.

Find out more

- Manchester's role in the 5th PAC at the Manchester Working Class Library wcml.org.uk
- See the programme and register for the 2015 commemorative conference at the PAC Foundation pac45foundation.com
- Donate to help fund this event bit.ly/AfricanCongress

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2015

OCTOBER EVENTS



No to austerity, Yes to workers rights

4 October – TUC march and rally, Manchester – bit.ly/TUC-demo

Defend our hard won rights by joining PCS and other trade unions in a family friendly, colourful protest against austerity and the Trade Union Bill. Details at bit.ly/1L67oTj

Dignity in mental health

10 October is World Mental Health Day –

mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/world-mental-health-day/

Inequality in mental health was the topic of several motions at this year's TUC black workers conference. Speakers highlighted that not only are black people more likely to experience poor mental health and be medicated as a result of the diagnosis, but often they are unsure about where or how to seek support. The conference agreed to press for mental health initiatives that are better targeted for black communities and to encourage people to voice and share experiences and messages of hope.

Mind – mind.org.uk

ReThink mental illness – rethink.org

Time to Change – time-to-change.org.uk

These organisations are all campaigning to change perceptions of mental health and remove the stigma bit.ly/TacklingStigma that surrounds the topic.

If you are finding your job or workplace stressful, PCS guidance can help

pcs.org.uk/en/resources/health_and_safety/stress.cfm

Fighting slavery – the past and the future

18 October is anti-slavery day – antislaveryday.com

For over two thousand years people in many different parts of the world have been forced into slavery. The campaigns against the transatlantic trade by European slavers between the 1500s and 1900s are well known but the success of the abolitionists doesn't mean that slavery has been totally eradicated. In the UK there are nearly 2000 cases reported each year and many more hidden cases.

Modern Slavery estimates that the crime affects 29.8 million people of all ethnicities across the world. It's important that we bring this hidden crime into the open.

Get involved with one of the many campaigns against modern slavery or organise an event to raise awareness and raise funds:

Modern Slavery – modernslavery.co.uk

Stop the Traffick – stopthetraffik.org

A21 Abolishing injustice in the 21st century – a21.org/index.php

Purple Teardrop – purpleteardrop.org.uk

Find out about the history of slavery at the International Slavery Museum

liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery

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What will you do?

More resources on black history

Black history archive – bcaheritage.org.uk

Making histories – www.makinghistories.org.uk

Race relations law – 20thcenturylondon.org.uk/race-relations-acts-1965-1976

Runnymede trust – www.runnymedetrust.org

The national archives – nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/race-relations.htm

Trade union history archive – londonmet.ac.uk/libraries/tuc

Black history month – blackhistorymonth.org.uk



Photos: Andy Aitchison

Organise your own event

Request your “Events in a box” pack from your PCS regional learning officer who will be able to help you set up an event in your workplace. Use the ideas and resources in this leaflet and on our web site to mark Black History Month 2015 in your branch and workplace. Let us know what you are planning by emailing equality@pcs.org.uk. There is more BHM information on the PCS web site equality pages. pcs.org.uk/en/equality/guidance-and-resources/black-history-month/black-history-month.cfm

Keep up the pressure for change

Despite our collective achievements, inequality and discrimination continues to be a problem in many workplaces. Contact your local PCS branch to find out how you can make your voice heard through your union. Join your regional black members and equality networks to help achieve achieving equality at work and in society.

For more information on how you can get

involved contact your local branch committee, GEC or National Black Members Committee bit.ly/BlackMembersCommittee.

Promoting equality and tackling discrimination is one of the founding principles of PCS. Make sure we can continue this important work in the future by talking to your branch about signing up to pay your PCS subscription by direct debit.