

# Equality, freedom & justice



## From the chair of the national black members' committee



Eight years ago we all awoke to unbridled joy and excitement that the so-called land of the free had finally broken one its taboos and elected its first black president, Barack Obama. Sadly, these last years have seen an upturn in hate and the lurch to insular ideological views throughout the world.

We have witnessed

unprecedented levels of hate and mistrust towards our fellow humans, due in part to their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and people's religious beliefs.

In our country, who would have thought that we would have a Tory government and, even worse, we would be in the midst of Brexit and all the negativity that this has brought and will for generations to come.

To make the week complete

our employer, the government, announced that it was imposing a further cap on our compensation scheme. The same people who voted for a meagre 11% increase in their salaries while we received an eye-watering 1% increase.

Not content with that they exclude our union from all talks. We as members have to vote and say enough is enough and demand they scrap their imposed cap. Please support your union and encourage

colleagues to join it too. Vote 'yes' in the CSCS ballot to reject the offer and make your voices heard as PCS holds a consultative membership ballot from 7 - 28 November. Look out for your ballot papers.

Unity is strength we only have each other to protect not just our own futures, but for the future generations. We owe it to our forebears who fought for our rights.

Peace be with you all.  
**Newton Thompson, editor**

## Tackling Islamophobia and anti-muslim hatred



The past decade since 9/11 life for Muslims in the UK has been difficult.

Whether it is all Muslims being tarnished by the actions of a small minority due to terrorism, Muslim women having their headscarves ripped from their head, the murder of two elderly Muslims in Birmingham and Rotherham for no apparent reason other than their faith or the numerous

occasions when Muslims are verbally abused on the public transport system. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred has increased massively and is affecting many people's lives. These are just a snapshot of the consequences of ugly rhetoric used by politicians, the media and commentators; this has been evident recently because of the Brexit result in the referendum where some racists thought it gave them a green light to be racist or Islamophobic. You wouldn't be

surprised to hear that 60% of all Islamophobic attacks are against women and the cowards deliberately target them.

Now some will claim "Islam is not a race so we can't be racist" or their freedom of speech allows them to be so abhorrent towards Islam and Muslims. The point is that there is a huge industry mainly on the right of our politics and worryingly on the left who think Islam and Muslims are open season and are a good earner. Islam is not

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immune from criticism or challenge but the examples I have documented above are just pure hatred and we should call it out for what it is. I am proud that our union is at the forefront of the trade union movement to highlight racism,

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Islamophobia and have a rich history of being vocal. That is why the NEC has consistently supported rallies against Islamophobia. Going forward, highlighting this at branch levels to increase awareness and understanding will be required.

**“These are just a snapshot of the consequences of ugly rhetoric used by politicians, the media and commentators”**

We need to highlight the increasing Islamophobia that exists in our society, we need to call it out for what it is and we should not hesitate to build bridges between communities and not let the haters divide our communities. The Trade Union movement can be at the heart

of this campaign against Islamophobia because our values reject this racism and hatred, it is not welcomed or desired and should have no place in our society.

**Mohamed Shafiq, vice chair PCS National Black Members' Committee**

## 2025 vision for race equality

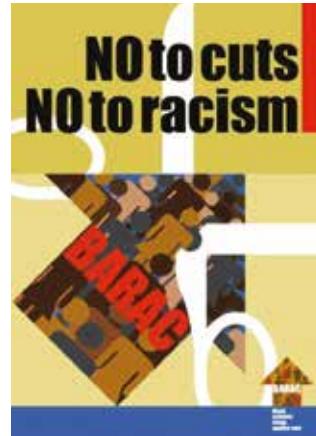
The onslaught of racist attacks we face in the UK mean that we are constantly reacting and responding to racism as it happens.

BARAC [Black Activists Rising Against Cuts] has produced a strategy document aimed at eliminating racism by 2025. The strategy requires political parties, businesses, employers, regions and cities to sign up and commit to a sustained race equality strategy.

A launch of the initial document took place at The

World Transformed in Liverpool in September at a packed out standing room only fringe event focused on Black Lives Matter. A report of the fringe event can be accessed here: [bit.ly/2fRZqFP](http://bit.ly/2fRZqFP)

An official parliamentary launch will take place on Martin Luther King Day in January and we have invited new shadow minister for black and minority ethnic communities, Dawn Butler who is a former union representative of one of PCS's predecessor unions is to host this.



We are inviting people to read the strategy, feed in their thoughts and ideas as it is currently a working document, and to sign up to the strategy as individuals, union branches or other organisations if you agree with it.

You can access it here [bit.ly/2ekqZGz](http://bit.ly/2ekqZGz) or request a word version by emailing [barac.info@gmail.com](mailto:barac.info@gmail.com)

**Zita Holbourne, PCS NEC and co-founder / national co-chair Barac UK**

## Become a PCS neurodiversity champion

It is increasingly recognised that there are an enormous variety of different ways our human brains are 'wired'. One of the ways this 'neurological diversity' finds expression is in a range of conditions such as those on the autism 'spectrum' (asperger's, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, AD(H)D, Tourette's Syndrome and others).

A motion passed at the PCS Annual Delegate Conference in May 2016 stated "...a wide-ranging spectrum of disorders and disabilities that are considered 'hidden' or 'invisible'...will affect a large amount of PCS' membership, including ordinary members, workplace representatives and union advocates...". The motion asked PCS to explore the possibility of establishing PCS neurodiversity champions "...to campaign and advocate for the rights of our

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neurodiverse members in their workplaces".

With this aim in mind, PCS is launching a new (2-Day) course on 'Neurodiversity in the Workplace' in 2017. The training has been developed for PCS by Janine Booth, an experienced trade unionist, and author of the book 'Autism Equality in the Workplace', and a TUC guide on the subject.

As well as encouraging an 'awareness' of the subject, the



course will equip attendees with the confidence to represent members effectively and to campaign and organise for a fairer deal in the workplace for, and with, members with disabilities. The ADC motion recommended that "these champions should preferably themselves have a neurodiverse condition", though the course is open to all members, and will be a good way by which a member can become more active in their PCS branch.

The first courses are planned for PCS Midlands and Northern regions in February 2017, and dates will shortly be established in all other PCS regions and nations.

Please get in touch with your regional office [bit.ly/2fCrOrN](http://bit.ly/2fCrOrN) to find out about your local course dates... and become a PCS neurodiversity champion for your branch.

**Keith Johnston, PCS Education and Learning Officer**

# National black members' seminar

## A delegate's view

Although a union member all my working life I'm relatively new to PCS. I joined when I started working at the Heritage Lottery Fund a few years ago, and last year, when we finally won trade union recognition, I became an equalities rep, a role I share with a colleague. The black members' seminar was my first taste of PCS activities outside my branch and I'm pleased to be able to share my thoughts on the event.

I applied for a place for several reasons. On a personal level, I can sometimes feel isolated. The heritage sector is not known for its diversity and I'm the only black member in my office. As a result I really appreciated opportunities to connect with other black workers. I don't assume we will all think or feel the same but I do think there is something very powerful about being in a room where for once I'm in the majority.

I also thought attending would help in my role as branch equalities rep. I wanted to learn about the issues that are affecting black members more, or disproportionately and how the union is responding. Lastly, I know that our union has a strong tradition of member-led campaigning and thought this event would be a chance to add my voice to others.

### Did the event meet these expectations?

The programme was packed. We kicked off with an expert panel whose brief was to set the context for the event. For me the most interesting part was the discussion about whether we are better off now as black workers than, say, 30 years ago. Answers were nuanced; clearly this wasn't a "yes-or-no" question. It was good to recognise the rights we've won but there were some very clear warnings for us in this post-Brexit landscape, and it underlined the need for us all to work together more as PCS members.

Various activities followed,



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and as a new rep, I found the group work on organising and building the union really helpful. Having time to focus and think about these issues was great and I hope to put into practice some of the ideas I heard about. I really appreciated the time the various speakers, panel members and facilitators put in. Everyone was generous with their expertise and experience.

There were several references to the union's need to keep black workers' issues firmly on the agenda, with particular reference to our lack of representation on union committees and decision-making bodies. It was clear that black members feel the union could do better on this. I hope that organisers can find a way to feed this through. That said, I was pleased to see Chris Baugh,

PCS assistant general secretary, not only spoke at the seminar but attended the whole event. I welcomed his active participation and trust he will take what he learnt and share it with other leaders in our union. Given the PCS' bottom-up approach this is one area where we clearly could do better.

It's interesting to reflect on this event a month on. What were the highlights for me? What did I get from the event?

I loved talking to such a diverse range of black members, both during the organised activities as well as the breaks. Everyone was encouraging and supportive to me as a new Rep, which I found hugely heartening. While I didn't always share the same experiences I could identify with others in our desire to work together and raise a common voice. I was invigorated by connecting with colleagues who have been activists for so much longer and still feel motivated to keep on keeping on.

I have come away feeling better informed about some of the issues that the union is campaigning on. I will be trying to put this knowledge into use and share it with other members in my workplace.

I enjoyed the social aspects too. In particular I really enjoyed some sparkling, urbane and

sometimes surreal conversation over supper and breakfast.

As someone who organises training and events, I also considered what could be done better or differently next time. While naturally we focused on race, we need to recognise our diversity as a black workforce. Although I was delighted to see so many confident, knowledgeable and passionate black women as speakers, organisers and delegates there was little reference or space to discuss the issues that affect black women specifically.

My request for future events, then, is to consider the intersectional aspects of discrimination – how we can recognise the interconnection between the different aspects of our identities (for example, sexuality, ability, gender and so on) and how these combine to create different experiences of discrimination. I'd love to see this built in to all the different equalities seminars.

I want to finish by thanking the 'behind-the-scenes' team – the people who printed out the packs, prepared the badges, liaised with the hotel, and booked the speakers. You all beavered away quietly but without your hard work events like this wouldn't come off. Thank you.

**Maya Sharma, PCS rep**

# Opposing forced mass deportations of black people

In September 2016, 50 Jamaicans were snatched, detained and deported in the space of a fortnight. It was sudden, unexpected and heartless. It happened here in Britain

Among the 50 targeted were partners, parents, grandparents and primary carers of British people. Several had been living in the UK for decades, some had come as small children. They included those going through naturalisation or appeals and those who had not been regularised because of administrative errors.

Many were taken when attending their regular signing-in appointments with the Home Office. They were given no advance warning, no option of booking their own flights to Jamaica on a commercial flight without the stigma and consequences of "deportation" being attached to them and no option of saying goodbye to loved ones and leaving with some dignity.

By deporting them, their right to apply and return has been taken away.

One man arrived with his baby to sign in. While detaining him the Home Office called social services to take the child with no opportunity to call a family member to collect the baby, causing additional trauma to an already shocking and stressful situation for him and his family.

One woman was in the final stage of being naturalised when her British husband passed away. Despite being in a period of grieving and with her family in Britain, she was deemed to be "illegal" and no longer worthy of staying. She was one of the eight fortunate people taken off the flight before take-off. Lawyers representing some of these eight people made judicial review applications and one person applied for asylum.

Since 2014, under the racist and divisive Immigration Act, those with criminal records — irrespective of served or spent



**“On the aircraft they were restrained, their heads and bodies bound to seats**

sentences, rehabilitation, the length of time that has passed or the nature of the crime — can be forcibly removed from the country.

However, in the case of the Jamaica 50, a broad range of people were grouped together and deported regardless of their background criminal record in a forced mass removal on a flight that could not be tracked. Some of those taken had very minor convictions, but no custodial sentences at all, and were targeted under Operation Nexus. Others were deemed to be administratively "illegal," despite living in the UK for many years, raising children and grandchildren, and despite the fact that for some the administrative error may have been the responsibility of their guardians when they were small children.

A partner of one of the deported men recounted the screams and calls of distress she could hear in the background when he called her from the aircraft; one of those calling out in protest was witnessed by other passengers being beaten by security forces and taken behind a curtain where he was sedated for the duration of the flight. He has no one in Jamaica and is now destitute.

One person who was seeking asylum was tragically killed within days of arriving in Jamaica for the very reason he was seeking asylum in the UK.

For many on the flight, Britain is home. It's where their families are. Some fear for their lives in Jamaica, which they do not see as their home, and worry they will become poverty-stricken or destitute. Without money or a home their life chances are greatly reduced.

It was wrong to group this wide range of people together and put them on an undocumented flight. Late at night, the 50 were taken to a holding centre near Heathrow and told they would depart via Heathrow but their flight

actually departed from Stansted. They were transported in vehicles surrounded by police and security officers, restrained and cuffed and driven right up to the aircraft and boarded one by one. On the aircraft they were also restrained and their heads and bodies bound to seats.

The way they have been treated is inhumane with no consideration for article 8 of the Human Rights Act and the right to family and private life. Their personal circumstances were disregarded, including the impact on those left behind.

Effectively they were rounded up like cattle and hastily herded on to a plane, leaving them barely any time to obtain advice, support or legal representation — that is for those who could afford it as legal aid is no longer available for such cases.

Those who face the most injustice have the least access to justice in the UK. For those that did have criminal records, we must not forget that the criminal justice system is institutionally racist — black people receive disproportionate and harsher

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sentencing than their white counterparts. There are more young black men in prison than there are in university because of racism.

The ancestors of those affected faced enslavement, colonial rule and empire. Jamaicans and other Caribbeans were invited to the UK to support the post-war recovery, where they soon found themselves facing signs in public places which read: "No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs."

When the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed, it was the slave owners who received unprecedented amounts of compensation from the UK government — this included the family of David Cameron and created the economic divide which still remains to this day.

Meanwhile there have been no reparations for the enslavement of African people. Jamaican and other Caribbean people have contributed to and influenced British culture, redefining what it is to be British. From signs reading "Keep Britain White" in the 1950s for the "Windrush" generation, to the "Go Home" vans some 60 years later, the attack on migrant

communities in the UK is not just targeting new migrants and refugees but established communities who were invited here and have been here for generations.

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell has given a commitment that under a Corbyn-led Labour government the Immigration Act will be repealed. But with more such mass deportations expected, we need to act urgently to challenge them. Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (Barac) has asked McDonnell to raise the issue of mass forced removal in Parliament.

It was wrong to deny people the right to conclude naturalisation processes or appeals here in the UK. Appealing to the Home Office from outside the country is a slow and costly process with a very limited chance of success, and has to be carried out away from support networks and loved ones.

The forced removal of people from the UK is a shocking development and it seems that the legacy of Brexit is already upon us. Despite the government's assurances that those from the Commonwealth

would not be targeted, the "pack your bags and go" taunts in the days following the EU referendum result are being realised before our eyes and carried out by the state.

Campaigners Roots to Return have initiated a crowd-funder for those who wish to initiate an out of country appeal which costs the claimant £140. Out of country appeals are challenging with a very low success rate and take longer than 18 months for appeals to be heard.

We are using the hashtag #Jamaica50 for the campaign. On 2 November we held a lively lunch time demo outside the Home Office to demonstrate our anger and disgust that not just Jamaicans are being forcibly removed in this way but others from the African and Asian diaspora, with regular deportations of Nigerians and Ghanaians taking place. There were speakers from BARAC UK, Movement for Justice, Global Justice Now, plus immigration lawyer Shiraz Peer from Peer and Co Solicitors and PCS vice president John McInally. This was followed by an evening public meeting on how we take the campaign forward and work

together with other groups opposing deportations and attacks on migrant rights.

There are reports from some of those forcibly removed that for each person deported the British government paid the Jamaican government £20,000. With the cost of the flight, police and security factored in, this is a substantial amount of money that could be better used to address the deepening poverty faced by people here in Britain, rather than creating more poverty and destitution.

An opinion piece I wrote for the Guardian has been shared 15,000 times, yet there has still been no coverage by the mainstream media outside of The Guardian clearly indicating their bias and disregard for the experiences of black communities in the UK.

Black lives matter, especially when they are being herded like cattle and forcibly removed from their homes and families under the threat of violence and at risk to their futures and wellbeing.

You can contribute to the Roots to Return crowdfunder here: [mstar.link/roots-return-fund](http://mstar.link/roots-return-fund)

**Zita Holbourne, PCS NEC**

## DIARY DATES

- 20 Nov:** Trans Day of Remembrance
- 22 Nov – 22 Dec:** Disability History Month
- 3 Dec:** International Day for disabled people
- 10 Dec:** International Day for Human Rights
- 27 Jan:** Holocaust Memorial Day
- 1 – 29 Feb:** LGBT History Month
- 8 March:** International Women's Day
- 28 April:** Worker's Memorial Day

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