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# DRUM

THE MAGAZINE OF THE RACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## CITIZENS, NOT STRANGERS!

CALLS FOR BRITAIN TO FOLLOW  
THE EXAMPLE OF OBAMA IN THE  
US WITH A REGULARISATION OF  
UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS



## CALL FOR BRITAIN TO FOLLOW OBAMA ON REGULARISATION

CWU sponsored MP John Grogan called for the British government to follow the example of President Obama in the US and work toward a regularisation (amnesty) of undocumented (illegal) workers.

Addressing a 15,000 strong rally of the Strangers into Citizens campaign in Trafalgar Square, John told how "if undocumented workers become citizens, they can pay taxes and national insurance. It will also undercut black markets."

He highlighted how in his area of West Yorkshire the question of undocumented workers was a big issue. "These people have been contributing to the economy of Yorkshire by doing jobs that other people don't want to do," said John, who urged that the campaign needs to spread beyond London.

The CWU Black Workers Conference passed a motion in February backing the Strangers into Citizens campaign calling for those who have lived in the country for four years to be given a path to full citizenship.

The deputy leader of Unite, Jack Dromey, described the event as "inspirational, dynamic and a celebration of all that is best in multi-cultural Britain."

Recalling the struggles of past Irish migrants who had come to the UK seeking work, he called



for "the undocumented workers living in the twilight world of exploitation to be made full citizens of our society."

Labour MP Andrew Mackinlay told how 100s of people come from all parts of the world to his constituency every year. "There are those who have faced persecution and those seeking a better quality of life for their children," said Andrew, who called on the Prime Minister Gordon Brown to accede to the calls for a regularisation of undocumented workers.

Strangers into Citizens policy co-ordinator Austen Ivereigh refuted government claims that regularisation would attract more undocumented people to come to the country in future. Quoting the example of Spain where that had been a regularisation in 2005, he said: "fewer undocumented people have entered during the following three years."

Austen also hit back at claims

from Sir Andrew Green, the head of the right wing group Migration Watch who had claimed that a regularisation would be too expensive. "Sir Andrew tries to estimate the cost of a family where the earner stays on a minimum wage his whole life," Austen said. "It assumes people are static, and stay in one place. Nor does he take into account the fact that immigrants are on the whole fit, young, and educated at other countries' expense."

Catholic Bishop Thomas McMahon of Brentwood claimed that "for the Government to choose to do nothing about regularisation of undocumented workers is irresponsible."

This approach has led to 100,000s living in a state of exploitation, fear and limbo, said Bishop McMahon, who paid tribute to the undisputable contribution that migrant workers have made to life in this country.

## MIGRANT WORKERS FACE EXPLOITATION IN FOOD STORE SUPPLY CHAINS

A report from the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (ECCR) has revealed how major food stores in the UK and Ireland turn a blind eye to the second class treatment meted out to migrant workers in the supply chain.

The report, *Vulnerable Migrant Workers: the responsibility of business*, raises concerns over “the extent to which migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation, denied workplace rights and are insecure in employment.”

The report authors acknowledge that supermarkets employ relatively few migrant workers directly but have a major influence over the labour conditions along the supply chain of food producers and manufacturers.

“Abuses that they may experience, particularly those recruited through gangmasters, include very low pay, excessive or hidden deductions, over-long hours, low quality and sometimes ‘tied’ accommodation, poor health and safety conditions, discrimination and in extreme cases forced labour,” says the report, which looks at nine major UK and Irish food companies. “Frequently in temporary positions migrant workers

may be especially vulnerable in the context of a recession as companies lay off temporary workers first.”

The researchers found few companies were explicit about the potential vulnerability of migrant workers or the additional support that such workers may need. There was also little effort to ensure that such workers knew about their rights and enforcement systems.

On the plus side, most the companies did adhere to ethical codes of conduct and operate anti-discriminatory policies.

In a ranking against 10 performance indicators regarding good conduct toward migrant workers the top companies were Northern Foods with a score of 17 out of 24. The next best companies were Sainsbury and Tesco on 14. The worst ranked companies, scoring just 4 were Morrisons and Associated British Foods. Other companies in the study included Premier Foods (12.5), Kerry Group (9.5), Unilever (9) and Greencore Group (7).

“There are few indications that companies have mainstreamed considerations about labour conditions into their core business practice. Only a small

minority appear to designate a senior director or board member with responsibility for labour conditions, or to consider impacts of business practices on labour conditions in determining executive remuneration,” said a spokesperson for the ECCR, which called for companies to be “transparent” about their policies and practices.

Among the recommendations made were that the food companies should establish to what extent migrant, temporary and agency workers are present throughout the supply chain.

They must ensure all the suppliers are registered with the Gangmaster Licencing Authority and designate a senior director or board member with lead responsibility for labour conditions.

The companies must also “strengthen monitoring by increasing regularity and coverage and ensuring that migrant, temporary and agency workers are involved in audits, as well as trade unions and other groups that support migrant workers’ rights.”



## TRIDENT COMBATING GUN CRIME

Operation Trident was set up in 1998 primarily to end illegal gun related activity occurring in and around the London boroughs of Lambeth and Brent. It was in

response to concerns from local groups mainly in the African Caribbean community on the increasing shootings and murders carried out by black individuals involved in criminal activity.

Victims were often linked with organised criminal activity; however, innocent members of the public were also victims.

Levels of violence and shootings continued to rise so Trident was implemented across London as a response. There are over 350 officers and 86 support staff assigned to the operation. The aim is to coordinate resources and intelligence to provide a more effective response. "Neighbourhoods affected by illegal gun activity were reluctant to offer vital information required to assist the intelligence based operation due to fear of reprisals. The success of this operation relies on witnesses coming forward," said Winston Richard, RAC member. "Trident commits itself



to support witnesses and victims of gun crime by working along with the Trident independent Advisory Group and numerous community led anti gun projects creating initiatives combining a network of advice and support specifically for the groups identified as those most likely to be affected. such as the young."

The strategy has resulted in publicity campaigns involving posters illustrating the possible consequences one may expect if they carry guns. It has encouraged witnesses to come forward providing evidence which has seen a number of dangerous individuals removed from the streets. Families and friends of victims have been invited into schools and attended youth groups speaking openly of their personal accounts so that it will act as a deterrent. "Operation Trident believes adopting a combination of a reactive and proactive approach is the most effective method to eliminate gun crime," said Winston.

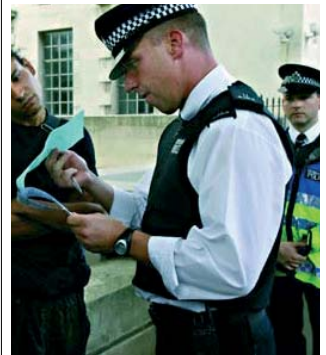
## STOP & SEARCH OVER-USED AGAINST BLACK & ASIAN COMMUNITIES

Powers to stop and search people in the street under section 44 of the anti-terror legislation was used 154,293 times since 2007.

This compares with just 16 stops and searches by West Yorkshire Police and 181 by Greater Manchester Police over the same period.

The powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, enable the police to stop and search people without even reasonable suspicion of having committed a crime, have been used disproportionately against Black and Asian communities with 34 per cent of those stopped coming from these minorities.

"Section 44 is over-used, there is no question of it, and that is causing alienation to some communities" said Lord Carlile, the government's reviewer of terrorism legislation.



## BLACK PUPILS CAN DO BETTER AT SCHOOL

Chair of the Race Advisory Committee **Colin Bell** looks at record black pupil exclusions and how the community is reacting to improve the situation



African Caribbean children make up the single largest ethnic minority group in most inner city schools, but in some boroughs temporary or permanent exclusion is up to 15 times higher for this group. The process of exclusion is in most cases a critical moment for many young people that can make them either re-assess their lives and find a new determination to succeed or make them more inclined to disengage with an establishment they see as

having failed them.

Research by academic professor Gus John indicates that school exclusions are part of the systematic wider discrimination faced by the black community that annually sees more of its young people entering custody than higher education. In a recently published book: *Taking a Stand*, Professor John looks at the relationship between school exclusions and social exclusion. He says "We have to equip our children to deal with the discrimination that they will face from the school system in ways that mean they will not be so badly affected by it. Understanding that the school system is institutionally racist means that we in the black community need to look at what we consider schooling to mean and work together to ensure the system is made to start working for us and becomes accountable to us." *Source "Black Britain*.

The majority of the young people are bright enough to go on and get the qualifications they need to have a successful career, but many are reluctant to go back into education because of bad experiences at school.

There is increasing evidence to show that black pupils excluded from school are gaining help to continue their education and training from voluntary projects within the community. The school system is not sympathetic towards black kids who have been excluded.

Professor John believes that the community as a whole need to come together to address this crisis. He said: "Parents and the community need to come together to challenge school practices. For me the question is how are we organising ourselves to address this problem? People have to get together and listen to each other and to our children and their experiences and then plan together how to address this system. I want to see more action coming from the community that begins to bring the system to account."

The work of community organisations and Saturday schools up and down the country may be responsible for the improvement we are seeing in the academic success of black pupils. The Department of Education and skills announced that the GCSE exam results of black pupils has improved at a rate higher than any other ethnic minority group over the last two years and is well above the national average. This proves what can be done.

## HOW EQUAL ARE WE?

**Freddie Jones** looks at why the CWU has minority conferences while **Greg Amissah** assesses how loud the ethnic minorities voice really is in the union

### IS THE CWU MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF BLACK MEMBERS?

The Race Advisory Committee (RAC) was tasked in 2005 with developing a booklet dealing with the question – is the CWU representative of its ethnic minorities? This was done and a booklet of the same name was published and distributed amongst our branches. How many of you I ask have seen this publication? Four years down the line has anything changed?

In 2005 there was the feeling that the union was not being fully representative of its ethnic minority membership hence the booklet. As stated in the publication, the ethnic breakdown of only 19 per cent of the total CWU membership of over 200,000 is known. This in itself is worrying as without knowing the breakdown of the total membership, how can we as a union judge our achievements.

Rule 2.6 of our union states “to actively identify any cause or barrier that prevents the union being fully representative of its members. This shall include positive action in favour of women and ethnic minorities until such a time as the union is satisfied that its structure

reflects and supports the gender and racial balance of the members it represents.” Other unions like UNISON, NATFE and the TUC have deemed it necessary to make changes by being more proactive and inclusive of its membership base.

The question of reserved seats is always going to be problematic as some see it as a system where individuals are just being put into positions as a token gesture.

Have we as a union been successful or is it a case of just talk and no action. In 2006 there were 10 regional secretaries across the regions and 90 per cent of them were males. None came from an ethnic minority. In the same year out of 18 divisional and seven substitute divisional representatives, there was only one ethnic minority divisional representative. These statistics have not changed and are very unlikely to change in the near future unless we as members from ethnic minorities put ourselves forward for these positions as well as local elections in our respective work places. I ask is there no

one within the ethnic minority membership of our union capable of fulfilling these roles or are there unseen barriers stopping you from doing so? Do you not as members have the right, by paying your union subscriptions, to ask for and receive full representation and inclusion within the structure of the CWU?

I shall end by tasking all members from ethnic minorities within our union, both male and female, to put your names forward at election time because if you are not in the race you are never going to win. I am confident there are, amongst the ethnic minority membership of our union, individuals who are capable of giving the membership of the union as a whole excellent representation and a new outlook and focus in our struggles as a trade union. Let us move forward together and ensure that our union, the CWU, moves with the times and in doing so becomes representative of all its members no matter what their backgrounds.

*Greg Amissah*

## PAKISTANI STUDENTS NOT CHARGED BUT STILL DETAINED

The arrests of 12 Pakistani students in April on suspicion of terrorism hit the news headlines. Two weeks later there was less fanfare as all were released without charge.

The Home Office then served deportation notices on 11 of the 12 on grounds of national security. One student was a British citizen.

Since that time one student has left the country, the other 10 remain held in prison under



category A maximum security status.

The next step will see them go to the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) that deals with appeals against decisions made by the Home Office to deport, or exclude, someone from the UK on national security grounds.

The SIAC operates like a court but those who appear before it are often not told of what they are accused. The lawyers

of the accused are also not allowed to know the intelligence upon which their clients are held. The intelligence is viewed by assigned Special Advocates. The whole SIAC process can result in individuals being held for years if they refuse to leave the country “voluntarily.”

A number of foreign nationals have been held around the country for years. They claim that if they were to return to countries from which they fled seeking asylum in the UK they would be likely to suffer torture and possibly death.

A campaign has been established in support of the 10 Pakistani students.

More information about the Justice For Pakistani Students campaign is available at: [www.j4nw10.org](http://www.j4nw10.org)

## WHY THE NEED FOR MINORITY CONFERENCES?

These questions have been posed many times (worryingly sometimes even by CWU activists):

- If there is a Black Worker’s conference, then why isn’t there a white worker’s conference?
- Why is there not a men’s conference to counter balance the women’s conference?
- Why are there not able-bodied or straight person’s conferences?

Firstly, one myth has to be dispelled – the Black Worker’s; Women’s; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender and

Disability conferences are not just for people of the aforementioned genre. The CWU does not condone any kind of segregation. Anyone wishing to attend any of these conferences is more than welcome.

In an ideal world there should be no need for such conferences but we have to accept that this is not an ideal world. We must recognise that there are still problems and inequalities and appreciate the fact that these have to be addressed.

The following chronicles are historic events of basic human rights obtained after long strug-

gles. The law makers took these basic rights for granted. These are rights the law makers (the mainstream world) already enjoyed. These law makers did not include minorities, people with disabilities, women or lesbians & gay men. We are not asking for special favours but just to readdress the balance by recognising the obstacles and removing them.

Minorities were not part of the original decision making or legislative process. These Conferences are there for equality for everyone.

*Freddie Jones*

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- 1807** Abolition of slavery on 25 March 1807, the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act entered the statute books. Nevertheless, although the Act made it illegal to engage in the slave trade throughout the British colonies, trafficking between the Caribbean islands continued, regardless until 1811.
- 1918** Women over 30 were given the right to vote.
- 1920** Women were given the right to hold a legal professional and accountancy job.
- 1928** Women gained the right to vote equal to men.
- 1964** Civil Right Act was signed in USA, giving blacks the right by law to vote.
- 1965** The Voting Rights Act was introduced to remove the rights of states to introduce restrictions to stop certain minorities from voting.
- 1968** The Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination in the sale of rental housing.
- 1970** Women could not get a mortgage without a man's signature.
- 1970** The Equal Pay Act made it illegal to pay women less than men.
- 1980** Women can apply for a loan on their own.
- 1995** The rights of disabled people are legally recognised – The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 comes into force.
- 2007** The Equality Act 2006 comes into force (with provisions protecting people from discrimination in goods and services on the grounds of sexual orientation) and establishing the Commission for Equality and Human Rights

## OBAMA'S FIRST 100 DAYS: HOW HAS HE DONE?

RAC member **Gus Alleyne** looks at how the first black American President is doing in the early days of his administration

President Barak Obama faced unprecedented problems upon taking up office on 20 January. The world economy in melt-down, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the growing threat of climate change were just some of the problems in his in basket.

In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt inherited a similar financial and banking crisis, but unlike then, President Obama's focus has not been simply on banking. Such is the scale of Obama's agenda, that critics have accused him of over-ambition. Supporters will claim that he has no choice, given the current state of the world economy. So 100 days on how is he doing?

It would be fair to say that there are a number of policies of the new American administration that we as trade unionists will wholeheartedly support. A black president elected by the world's biggest democracy is for me his greatest achievement so far. History will determine his place on the list of great American Presidents and I for one hope that he finishes on top of that list.



- ✓ Ordered the closure of Guantanamo Bay prison facility
- ✓ Majority of troops withdrawn from Iraq by 2010
- ✓ Revised military plans and strategies for Afghanistan
- ✓ Legislation passed to make it easier for women to sue employers over discrimination
- ✓ Extension of healthcare to cover millions of children
- ✓ Eased a ban on stem cell research
- ✓ Sought to ease the relationship with Cuba
- ✓ Made conciliatory contact with the Muslim world
- ✓ Removed the head of General Motors
- ✓ Met with over 50 world leaders
- ✓ Travelled to nine countries
- ✓ Drew up a \$787bn economic stimulus plan, offering help to struggling homeowners and bailing
- ✓ Drew up a \$23bn renewable energy plan
- ✓ Invited Palestinian, Egyptian & Israeli leaders to the White House to discuss a new way forward for the Middle East
- ✓ Stated opposition to harsh interrogation techniques such as water-boarding

## CALL FOR MORE BLACK REPRESENTATION AT CWU IN NEW OBAMA ERA



◀ Armarjite Singh & Fevzi Hussein at the CWU Black Workers Conference in Belfast

The arrival of Barack Obama as President of the United States and the lack of black representation at the top table of the CWU were recurrent themes of the Black Workers Conference in Belfast.

Deputy general secretary Andy Kerr recalled that it was less than a generation since black people were denied a vote and segregated in the United States. "Racism is still a serious issue in the US, remember there have already been white supremacists arrested for trying to murder Obama," said Andy, who went on to warn of the threat of the BNP in the UK. "The Equalities Department has a budget to work with the Unite Against Racism campaign."

Andy recalled that black and ethnic minority (BEM) workers

were still discriminated against in the workforce. "It is clear that that the BEM are not properly represented in the decision making structures of the CWU," said Andy.

Equalities officer Linda Roy urged BEM members to come forward and take an active part in the union. "We can increase BEM representation. You must contact your branch or regional secretary if you want a role. Get the branch to nominate you for the Race Advisory Committee or the Executive. We can't make you get involved, only support you in that effort," said Linda.

The theme of under representation of BEM members was picked up in the motion 5 which called for the RAC and the NEC to work together to produce an action plan to

address the problems of under representation.

Proposing the motion RAC member Ian Taylor questioned whether there was institutional racism at work in the CWU. He claimed it was an intimidating environment to be black and female and easier to be white and male.

Ian felt there was a reluctance in some areas of the CWU to have reserve seats but that also that there are black activists who can hold their own without such provision.

Amarjite Singh of South West Wales Amal called for a process to identify what is stopping people coming through the system.

John Hunt of Essex Amal suggested that the RAC need to find out why only 50 per cent of

branches send delegates to the Black Workers Conference. "We need to write to the branches who don't attend and ask why," said John.

Carl Maden of the NEC also called for more research into the reasons why BEM people are not coming forward. "We need to know whether people are standing and not getting elected or not standing," said Carl.

Motion 5 passed but one of the possible incongruities of reserved seats was exposed in Motion 6 that called on the NEC to "use some common sense when electing delegations to TUC Equality Conferences."

This motion came about because the reserved seats for women policy, including to the TUC Black Workers Conference, has resulted in under strength delegations going forward because women had not come forward to fill the positions.

Proposing the motion, Linda Keitz of West London, asked that in a situation of a five strong delegation where two are reserved for women that if those positions are not filled then a man should come in.

Guest speaker Hratche Koundarjian, co-ordinator of the Strangers into Citizens campaign, paid tribute to the CWU vote in support of the campaign last year that seeks to bring undocumented workers out of the shadows.

Hratche recalled the passing of the fifth anniversary of the death of 23 cockle pickers on the beaches of Morecambe Bay. He recalled how the plight of those cockle pickers typified the lives of many undocumented workers. They had been exploited by the gang master but he was now in jail. "But what of the British cockle pickers who attacked and beat up the Chinese a few days before on the Morecambe beaches. This was why they were collecting at night," said Hratche, who wondered what would have happened if the Chinese had felt they could have reported the attack to the local police. There was also responsibility for the deaths that lay with the Home Office and British business in general.

Hratche estimated that there were probably some 1 million undocumented workers in the UK. He highlighted the impracticality of the Government's approach which seeks only to deport these workers. It will cost billions of pounds and take up to 25 years at present estimates. A regularisation would bring in excess of £1 billion a year to the exchequer in taxes. "Considering the country is in serious financial trouble, the economic arguments are where this battle lines will be drawn on this debate over the next year or two. We believe that a



▲ Hratche Koundarjian

well managed regularisation could bring the UK out of recession more quickly, consequently that more hard working British families will be able to keep their jobs, that fewer homes will be repossessed," said Hratche. "An earned amnesty would help to provide the injection of cash required to meet some of the increasing amounts of Government debt."

The Strangers into Citizens campaign seeks to offer individuals who have been in the country for a period of time contributing a four year path into citizenship.

Motions also passed calling for asylum seekers to be allowed to work and rejecting Government plans to link qualification for citizenship benchmarks relating to integration.



Conference Report by **Paul Donovan**

## HOW OBJECTIVE WERE THE BBC OVER GAZA APPEAL?

As a licence fee payer **Fevzi Hussein** questions why the BBC did not air the Disaster Emergencies' Gaza appeal



On the issue of Gaza and the DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) there was a public outcry when first the BBC controversially decided not to air the DEC appeal to get humanitarian aid to the dying people of Gaza and then the Sky decided to follow suit.

I was one of the hundreds of thousands of people who were genuinely shocked by this decision. I took a path, which I think more of us should do, by writing to the BBC to complain about this awfully unfair decision.

They wrote back to me and said they did not want to "compromise public confidence in the BBC's impartiality in the context of covering a continuing news story where issues of responsibility for civilian suffering and distress are intrinsic to the story and remain highly contentious"

The bottom line is that the BBC let down the people of Gaza. This was not just a Muslim thing – in Palestine, there are Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths. The indiscriminate and disproportionate mass destruction against the civilian people living in Gaza was appalling to witness. The claim that there was somehow a comparable degree of distress being suffered by the Jewish settlers was very unfortunate. I do not play down the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas into the (illegal) Jewish territories as this undoubtedly served to severely traumatise those people on the receiving end.

There is still horrible suffering going on, months after the ceasing of main hostilities. The infrastructure was already very

fragile and the Israeli army has made sure it will remain a third world infrastructure for many decades to come.

As a TV license paying person, I was deeply upset by the BBC's decision. There were some suggestions at the time that the BBC could not be sure that the money raised would go to those who needed it most. All these new theories came into the fray, which never before was cited on previous DEC appeals, such as the one made for the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I imagine the same concerns would have been expressed but were not publicly made.

The credibility of the BBC has been fatally wounded by the blatant bias that has been shown towards the Israeli establishment. It clearly creaked under the pressure that was undoubtedly put on them by senior Israeli figures/institutions.

Hang your head in shame BBC – anyone who cared for the humanity of mankind would not have agreed with your decision not to air the DEC appeal. The DEC Gaza appeal is still running, such is the level of humanitarian crisis in that region.

If you want to help, go to:  
[www.dec.org.uk](http://www.dec.org.uk)

## HOW ONE WOMAN DEVELOPED BLACK HAIR PRODUCTS

**Pauline Granton** tells how one black woman rose to become a millionaire designing hair products



Photo credit:  
Madame Walker  
Theatre Center,  
Indianapolis, USA

Madam C.J. Walker's legacy to what we now know as the multi-billion dollar black hair product industry is one that should be celebrated by women of colour because without her foresight, it is arguable whether women of African descent would have the array of hair products they do today.

Born into freedom as Sarah Breedlove on 23 December 1867, she lost both her parents by the age of 8. She was already working by the age 10 and married by 14. She had a daughter by 18 and was widowed two years later.

Like most African-American women, the type of employ-

ment available to her was limited, so she worked as a washerwoman and then as a cook. During this time she worked and saved hard. Whilst living in St. Louis, she had a dream where a black man appeared to her and gave her a formula for curing baldness.

Sarah became a hair care entrepreneur, driven by a vision but also personal need as she was losing her own hair.

Working with other black women entrepreneurs such as Annie Malone and Marjorie Joyner, Sarah perfected her creative and business ideas. She became Madam Walker in 1905 when she married CJ Walker.

She then developed a hair care and grooming system for African-American women that healed scalp disease through more frequent shampooing and application of her special ointment. Within seven years of establishing her product line, she was a millionaire.

Prior to her invention, African-American women who wanted to de-kink their hair used a flat iron; now the new system allowed hair to be straightened using hair softener with the aid of a

straightening comb.

As a business woman, Madam Walker promoted her products by selling them from door to door, via newsletters and mail order. She also opened training schools – Lelia College for Walker Hair Culturists, in Pittsburgh – and supported her local community. She promoted black self-help groups, funded many scholarships and was a major financial contributor to black charities.

Madam Walker used her wealth to empower other women. She made it possible for some black women to find alternative work other than domestic labour and to earn decent wages. At the time her company paid black women wages of around US\$5 to US\$15 a day and when this is compared to the wages of unskilled white labourers of US\$11 a week, that was certainly a great achievement.

Madam Walker died, aged 51 in 1919. In 1998 the US Postal Service issued a stamp in her honour, which became the third in the Black Heritage series.



## FACING UP TO LUPUS

### Pauline Granstan

outlines the dangers of Lupus, including the plight of one young woman and the trade union's response

Lupus is a little known, but deadly disease. There are around three in 10,000 people in the UK who have a form of lupus known as Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE). There are other types, such as drug induced lupus and the Discoid Lupus Erythematosus, but for the purposes of this article we will be discussing SLE.

SLE is a chronic condition which results in inflammation in the body's tissues because of a fault in the immune system. The unpredictability of the illness can result in an attack on the main organs such as the heart, lungs and kidneys and if left untreated it can become fatal. With the use of steroids and other powerful drugs, though the condition is not curable, the prognosis is good, especially if diagnosed early.

Women are more prone than men to developing SLE, especially during their child bearing age. Though, some children have developed SLE. Furthermore SLE is more common in Afro-Caribbean, Asian and Chinese than it



is in Caucasian people.

Some of the symptoms of SLE include but not limited to arthritis (swelling and pain of the joints); muscle pain and weakness, fatigue, sun sensitivity, hair loss, butterfly or malar rash (a rash across the nose and cheeks), fever, anaemia, headaches, and recurrent miscarriages.

The symptoms may vary depending on the individual. However, as other conditions may manifest the same or similar symptoms, it is best to get yourself checked by a qualified practitioner to have your condition confirmed. In addition SLE is a multi-system disease which

develops slowly and can therefore be difficult to diagnose.

The exact cause of lupus is unknown but factors that could contribute to the condition include a person's genetic make-up and exposure to certain trigger factors such as ultraviolet light, certain prescription drugs and antibiotics, infections or viruses, hormones and stress.

### MARY'S JOURNEY ON BEING DIAGNOSED WITH LUPUS

Mary suffered from lupus for approximately eight years before she was diagnosed with the condition in 2005. Some of her symptoms included fatigue

especially in the morning, tiredness, breathlessness, hair loss, back pains and headaches.

Many times having finished her day's work, Mary was left breathless and unable to care for her family responsibilities in the way she would have liked. Because of her condition Mary made use of the flexible time keeping arrangement at her workplace. In addition she paid several visits to the doctor where they carried out test after test but still could not give her an accurate diagnosis.

Mary also spent a considerable amount of money trying to get treatment for her back problems, especially those related to the lower half. She became particularly anxious when at one point she noticed that her fingers were changing colours, red, white and blue. .

The turning point came when she saw a programme on lupus and immediately realised that she may be suffering from the condition. She then returned to her doctor and after a process of elimination they were able to finally confirm that she was indeed suffering from lupus. Having diagnosed the condition she still had to go through the process of finding the right medication, which took a great deal of time.

Mary felt relieved that finally

there was a name to her condition; however she was not prepared for the reaction of her line manager. During the period leading up to being diagnosed with the condition, Mary felt she suffered discrimination in the workplace because she was being treated differently from those of her non-disabled colleagues. Her line manager referred several times to her attendance and sick absence record, which was disproportionate to the number of times he made the same reference to other members of his team. Furthermore, her employers and in particular her line manager, appeared to ignore the company's own attendance procedures which allowed exceptions to be made in the case of disability related absence and attendance. Her line manager also appeared to have ignored the provision under the Disability Discrimination Act to "make reasonable adjustment". Instead, the management offered her medical retirement as that was the easiest way out for them. However this would mean that Mary could never work again, She was a relatively young woman with a small company pension. At this point Mary decided to involve her trade union which is currently speaking to the employer on

her behalf to see what "reasonable adjustments" can be made.

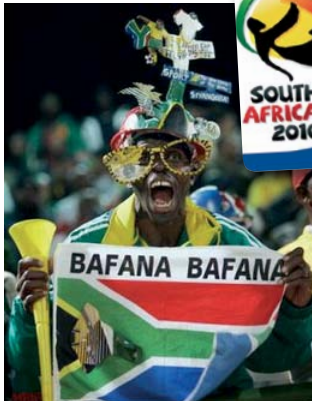
## **WHAT CAN TRADE UNIONS DO?**

Mary's case is not an uncommon one and it is understandable why many disabled people have a feeling of lesser protection. Nevertheless, it is important that trade union representatives are aware that under the Disability Discrimination Act, employers are required to show that they have tried to make some form of "reasonable adjustment" for prospective employees who have a disability or for those who have developed a disability during the course of their employment. Union representatives should also know the company's internal procedure on sick absence and attendance.

With the help of the trade union, people like Mary can be confident that the union will not allow employers to get away with breaking the law. Moreover disabled members can also be assured that they have some protection under the law and that with upcoming legislation and the new Equality Bill, the trade union movement will be fighting to improve on existing legislation, so that disabled people are treated as equals in society.

## BAFANA BAFANA 2010

RAC member **Graham Colk** assesses the 2010 World Cup in South Africa



The hosting of the first World cup on African soil will throw a harsh spotlight on the first period of Jacob Zuma's African National Congress (ANC) government.

For as long as South Africa's opposition parties champion pro-business policies, they will fail to threaten the power of the incoming government, led by the controversial Jacob Zuma.

The ANC, elected by the poorest South Africans, will always be difficult to beat. The same is not necessarily true of the South African national team (Bafana Bafana). However, the 2010 World Cup will be the best opportunity for an African team to fulfil Pele's prediction, (albeit later than he forecast), to

become world cup winners.

The poor black population in South Africa saw football as their game during the years of apartheid. They are also the biggest threat to Mr Zuma's government. These are the people who gave Mr Zuma a decisive victory. They are part of the social movements that have emerged in South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994 to campaign around bread-and-butter issues.

There is pressure to deliver on the football field and also pressure to deliver in the country.

There are about 8,000 protests a year in South Africa, mainly over service delivery issues like access to water, housing, land, education and health.

Per person, this is the highest number of protests in the world. They are part of the resistance culture forged during the anti-apartheid struggle. The question is will the ANC government deliver on its promises, and will Bafana Bafana deliver on Africa's football promise?

This World Cup could be the finest and the best showcase for African football and African Culture. The flair and diversity of both will be on display to millions across the world. The

same is true of the South Africa of Jacob Zuma.

Football and politics are interwoven in this part of the world and we can only hope the goals of the ANC and the poor in South Africa and the football hit the same heights.

## DING FIRST FOR CHINA

Did you know that the Chinese has just selected their first black athlete to its Olympic team? He plays volleyball and his name is Ding Hui. He is the son of a South African father and Chinese mother. Ding is expected to play for China at the London Olympics 2012. He was born in China and only speaks Mandarin and the local dialect. He is still seen as a foreigner to many Chinese people.

