



## **Social inclusion and representation strategies in the workplace and community:**

**Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses**

*Miguel Martínez Lucio and Robert Perrett*

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## List of abbreviations

BFAWU	– Bakers, Food & Allied Workers Union
BME	– Black and Minority Ethnic
BNP	– British National Party
BRM	– Black and Racial Minorities
CAB	– Citizens Advice Bureau
CRE	– Commission for Racial Equality
ESOL	– English as a Second Language
NF	– National Front
REC	– Racial Equality Council
T&GWU	– Transport and General Workers Union
UAF	– Unite Against Fascism
VCS	– Voluntary and Community Sector
VSO	– Voluntary Sector Organisations

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## Executive summary

### Overarching objectives

1. To highlight the diversity and richness of trade **union responses** to the representation of black and minority ethnic groups.
2. To assist in the development of **good practices**, vital for any process of learning and development within the trade union movement.
3. To aid the labour movement in sharing information about the wide variety of strategies that already exists.
4. To highlight strategies that contribute to an effective labour movement response.
5. To contribute to the discussion on how responding to **social exclusion** in all its manifestations is important: in effect to avoid 'reinventing the wheel' by using the experiences of those who have developed such responses.
6. To understand the **challenges** to the trade union movement in developing such strategies.

### Research methods

- Two key qualitative research stages were undertaken. The first incorporated over **20 interviews** with regional trade union and TUC officials in terms of their response to social exclusion and the representation of vulnerable workers. From this initial exploratory research **five** innovative approaches were identified for further investigation through **in-depth case studies**.
- The **trade unions** involved in the case studies **vary considerably** in terms of size, sector, strategy and philosophy; these included AMICUS, BFAWU, Community, T&GWU and UNISON. A wide variety of industrial sectors were selected; representatives from various interest groups were interviewed.

### Case study overview

The five case studies presented in this report are as follows:

1. **Case study one** resembles a traditional workplace based organising approach but is customised in response to the ethnic characteristics of the workforce – **Food production**.
2. **Case study two** outlines a union learning agenda in the workplace and community following an increase in migrant labour – **Textiles industry**.
3. **Case study three** documents a union's involvement in a council led black workers representative committee with direct communication channels to voluntary sector community organisations – **Local council**.
4. **Case study four** highlights a union's approach within a Polish community, links with faith based groups, and drop-in advice centre events – **Low paid, manual sectors**.
5. **Case study five** analyses an inclusion strategy developed by South Asian trade unionists where the branch itself forms a hub of community activity – **Transportation**.

### Discussion and findings

1. The cases highlight how broad new forms of activism can be. Learning, representation, cultural engagement, communication, and strategic alliances show us that the work of tackling racism is **very broad** indeed.
2. Different circumstances require different approaches, yet an **awareness** of such approaches is important for an effective strategy.
3. Initiatives may require working with **parallel bodies** in the community or even in the workplace.
4. New migrants might need to be taught basic **language skills** or informed of employment rights or bureaucratic procedures in respect of the labour market.
5. It is important that union officials are aware of successful strategies developed by other unions so that trade unions as a whole can benefit from this knowledge.
6. Unions must undertake **internal audit** of the values, attitudes and beliefs of trade unionists as members and activists.
7. Exclusion is **direct and indirect**, and can emerge from a lack of interest in proactively dealing with the problems and in developing positive action programmes. The very landscaping of the issue requires trade union work i.e. through communicating, learning and education, branch activity, campaigning.
8. Reflecting on change and its implications is related to dissemination and communication, a culture of **openness** and discussion throughout the labour movement is therefore required.

### Appreciating the challenges of developing inclusion strategies

1. The, ever present, challenge to new approaches and the need to share good practice is the need for **extra resources** and time.
2. The ability to store, archive and access the work of trade unionists is becoming easier but it still requires educational and **support structures** to create a climate where individuals seek examples and refinements in terms of what they do.
3. More needs to be done to encourage different unions to work together **collaboratively** as is the case with the regional TUC's Racial Awareness and Equality Forum.
4. The challenge of working with the community is often vital to a trade union's work but is also difficult due to the failure of a systematic or continued **community presence**.
5. Much effort is required on the part of the unions to identify themes of **common interest** with other groups outside of workplace representation.
6. Dependency on **external funding** and short-term project work can result in initiatives being constrained and short lived.



Issues such as racism and social inclusion require a variety of practices and strategies: such strategies exist but those developing them need support, information and the ability to take these experiences into the mainstream of union activity.

*Please note; the appendix incorporates a training tool for local union officials and a catalogue of practical information that you may find of interest. This includes:*

- 
- a. A list of 10 useful facts regarding the representation of minority groups within the region.
  - b. An equal opportunity audit (adopted from TUC publications). This will allow you to see where the focus of your strategy has developed in relation to equal opportunities monitoring.
  - c. A list of useful web addresses where you can acquire advice and expertise on diversity and equalities issues.
  - d. Some practical recommendations offered to unions by BME voluntary support groups.
  - e. A list of TUC and academic publications of potential interest

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION STRATEGIES IN THE WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY:**

### **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) workers and innovative trade union responses**

Miguel Martínez Lucio and Robert Perrett

#### **Introduction**

Black and minority ethnic (BME)<sup>1</sup> communities incorporate some of most disadvantaged and vulnerable workers within the UK labour market, a sector of the economy that is rapidly increasing in size and represents an ever-expanding challenge to trade unions in terms of representation. This report presents the findings from a second stage of empirical research conducted by industrial relations specialists from Bradford University School of Management on behalf of Yorkshire and the Humber regional TUC. This series of reports seek to bring to the fore the issue of trade union renewal and the role of trade unions in respect of minority ethnic workers within Yorkshire and the Humber. The first report (Perrett and Martínez Lucio, 2006<sup>2</sup>) focussed more specifically on union roles within the community and the potential for the development of alliances between unions and BME voluntary sector support organisations. The first report, based upon a survey and interviews with representatives from the BME voluntary sector, highlighted a number of criticisms of trade unions including: a lack of BME union officials or role models within the union movement, inadequate engagement with BME workers and the community, and the firm belief that unions were specifically workplace based organisations with a remit that did not expand much beyond grievance and disciplinary representation. Despite this, the report found that community support groups did not harbour underlying tensions or antipathy towards unions and that the potential for building alliances was strong.

Rather than focus specifically upon voluntary support groups and the community, this second report identifies a range of innovative trade union approaches to the representation of vulnerable workers. It illustrates that despite the criticisms levelled in report one, unions are responding to the changing ethnic composition of the labour market. This report illustrates that there is, by no means, one singular best method to BME representation. A multitude of factors can influence an approach; sector characteristics for example, type of minority group i.e. recent Central or Eastern European migrants from A8 countries with few English skills or British born third generation Pakistanis; size and philosophies pursued by the union and the time and resources available are other factors, to name but a few. Through in-depth case studies, this report therefore identifies five innovative, but at the same time very different, approaches to BME worker representation. The report finds that trade unions are in some cases developing new and

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the terminology BME and what constitutes a minority, see report 1 and National Statistics guidelines (2003) Ethnic groups statistics: A guide for the collection and classification of ethnicity data

<sup>2</sup> Trade unions and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Yorkshire and the Humber: Employment representation and community organisations in the context of change

innovative ways to recruit minority ethnic workers, how successful these are and to what extent they are utilised by the rest of the union movement, only time will tell. The Report aims to look at the way different responses have emerged within workplaces and in the labour market. It develops the concerns of Davis et al (2006) who in a national TUC report try to identify how the question of racism encourages a variety of union responses. Many of these are never the subject of discussion and contemplation. They exist within the confines of their own workplace or sector. Often, such initiatives and the benefits they can create are not celebrated or adequately advertised, nor are they shared with other unions through, for example, regional TUC or trades council structures leading some to feel as if they have to “reinvent the wheel”. This report highlights instances of good practice and makes a point of trying to outline the way workplace activists, and not just formal structures of trade unions, are also beginning to grapple with the difficulties associated with the representation of BME workers. The problem is how we begin to ‘unearth’ these innovative examples in order to learn from them, evaluate them and ensure that the trade union movement builds upon them. In the light of comments made by representatives of a wide variety of BME voluntary sector organisations in our earlier report (outlined above), who stated that they could not ‘see’ evidence of trade union activity on this matter, this second report references the activities of the trade union movement and further illustrate trade unions’ desire to represent BME workers. The report re-enforces the point that trade unions are pursuing a wide variety of innovative strategies ranging from traditional workplace approaches and internal representation, to linking into community networks and voluntary initiatives and an emphasis on the learning agenda. The question the labour movement needs to address is, ‘Why is this important message not being better communicated to the individuals they aim to represent and how can an overarching approach to BME representation be better coordinated?’

Prior to analysing some of the debates and background surrounding the topic of trade unions and the representation of minority ethnic workers, this report shall briefly discuss the research methods adopted for this study and present a brief overview of the five case studies and the structure of this report.

## Research methods and case study overview

This second stage of the research (Report 2) aimed to generate qualitative data to assist in the development of an in-depth understanding of the innovative approaches to the organisation and representation of black and minority ethnic workers that trade unions were already using. An intensive research design was therefore adopted. Over 20 interviews were conducted with regional trade union officials so as to identify the wide variety of approaches adopted by different unions and to highlight their understanding of issues relating to BME representation. These initial exploratory interviews led to five innovative approaches being identified for further investigation through in-depth case studies. Although many more innovative approaches were identified, these cases were selected for the following reasons:

- They cover a range of sectors and will be relevant to the widest number of trade unions.
- The cases focus upon the following sectors, all of which, to varying degrees, are reliant upon BME workers: food production, textile/manufacture, the public sector/council, transportation and a range of community based approaches geographically located close to a variety of minority groups.
- The trade unions varied considerably in size, sector, strategy and philosophy. Again, the widest variety of trade unions may therefore relate to their characteristics and experiences.
- The strategies range considerably in their degree of sophistication, commitment and investment, however all can be considered to be innovative in their own right. This is important, as a successful strategy adopted by one union may not be the best approach for another.
- The case studies were located in the main sub-regions of Yorkshire and the Humber.

The number of interviews conducted for each case varied due to the degree of access permitted with the average being around ten interviews per case; although in one case more than double this number were undertaken and even photographic evidence compiled. The large majority of interviews were semi-structured in nature although some unstructured discussions and focus groups were also conducted. Three case studies (1, 2 and 3) incorporated a temporal element in that a number of visits were made to re-interview the same individuals over a six to twelve month period. The researchers sought to minimise bias and obtain the most ‘rounded’ view of each case by interviewing a wide range of individuals with a variety of interests; these would typically, but not exclusively, include regional and branch union officials, shop stewards, learning representatives, employees (both white British and from minority groups), representatives from community groups where appropriate as well as management representatives. Interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed in full.

Case study one closely resembles a traditional workplace based organising approach but still represents an innovative means of organising BME workers. The small union in this case had pursued more elaborate strategies in the past but gained little because of the strain on their resources, however, by customising their workplace campaigns in response to the ethnic characteristics of the workforce – they had developed a successful strategy which most closely fitted their requirements. Case study two outlines a union learning agenda triggered by health and safety concerns following an increase in migrant labour with a limited understanding of English. A workplace learning centre was established and plans developed to extend its influence into the local community. Case study three documents a union's involvement in a council led 'black workers representative committee'. This case represents a very innovative approach whereby well-established structures existed linking the council, the union and external voluntary sector BME support organisations. Communication appeared to be channelled in all directions from the council and the union to the community and perhaps more importantly, from the community to the council and the trade union. Case study four highlights the growing importance of new actors, including faith based groups, when pursuing a community agenda. This case illustrates how links with the Polish Catholic Church and adjoining social clubs enabled the union to successfully organise and advertise a drop-in event to offer a wide variety of advice, beyond the confines of employment expertise, to Polish citizens. Case study five analyses an inclusion strategy developed, primarily, by South Asian trade unionists in the transportation sector. Not only had the branch become the hub of organising activities for BME workers (not just South Asian), the branch had also become synonymous with a plethora of other social and community activities. Furthermore, their success in recruiting workers from various minority groups had led them to develop further proactive inclusion initiatives for white workers.

The following section reviews some of the literature and recent debates in respect of trade union renewal and black and minority ethnic workers. The five case studies are subsequently presented in the order described above. A discussion and conclusion is then presented, bringing together many of the lessons from the literature and the five cases. Finally, the appendix explains how this report can be used as a training tool for local trade union officials and incorporates a range of useful and practical information.

## The region, social exclusion and the challenge of racism

### Yorkshire and the Humber – The challenges ahead

The population of Yorkshire and the Humber stands at over five million. The region is divided into four geographical sub-regions, each incorporating a number of local authorities. According to the Office for National Statistics (Census, 2001<sup>3</sup>), 6.5 per cent of the Yorkshire and the Humber region was characterised as non-white, lower than the UK average of 8.7 per cent, however, this varied considerably by sub-region. In the area categorised as the Humber (excluding York), the average proportion of the population which were from non-white ethnic groups was 1.9 per cent (York was 2.2 – officially part of North Yorkshire), the corresponding figure for, the largely rural, North Yorkshire was 1.1 per cent, 4.8 per cent for South Yorkshire and 11.4 per cent for West Yorkshire. The five local authorities with the highest levels of non-white population were Bradford (21.7 per cent), Kirklees (14.4 per cent), Sheffield (8.8 per cent), Leeds (8.2 per cent) and Calderdale (7 per cent). By far the largest proportion of the non-white population within Yorkshire and the Humber was that of Pakistani, representing 45.2 per cent of the non-white population within the region; the corresponding figure for England and Wales as a whole was just 15.8 per cent.

Manufacturing still accounted for the largest proportion of employment within Yorkshire and the Humber (LFS commissioned statistics: August 2005 – in ref to Autumn 2004); this was particularly the case for BME workers within the region, 22 per cent of whom worked within this sector. There was also a relative concentration of BME workers within wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants, transport, storage and communication, and health and social work. BME trade union membership within the region was around 22 per cent, not considerably lower than the UK average as a whole. A large decline in overall BME union membership was recorded within the region between 1994 and 2004 (see table 1.5, Report 1), this was exclusively a private sector phenomenon, with proportions of public sector BME membership increasing over the same period. It is worthy of note that retracting manufacturing (de-industrialisation), a feature of the regional economy, is likely to have disproportionately affected BME workers who have traditionally been concentrated within this sector. According to a recent Department for Work and Pensions report (Djan Tackey et al, 2006) the decline in manufacturing and the rise in the service sector within mill towns in Northern England have had a severe impact upon Pakistanis.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst outlining trends within Yorkshire and the Humber, to inform the labour movement, it is impossible to ignore the rising phenomenon that is the BNP within the region. According to Unite Against Fascism (UAF – see web page), between 2001 and 2005 the region has experienced the largest growth in BNP votes in the country, nearly four times their average share of the vote nationally. In the local elections in 2006 the BNP polled over 88,000 votes in the region, five councillors were elected taking their total to eight - two in the borough of Bradford, two in Calderdale, three in Kirklees, and their first ever seat in Leeds, Morley North, with over 2000 votes. In addition, the BNP came second in a further 28 wards. This is a worrying trend for the region and illustrates the growing need for the labour movement to coordinate its efforts, present a united front in the face of this growing political threat and improve its representation of, already excluded and increasingly vulnerable, minority groups within the region.

In *Tackling the Roots of Racism* (2005) Reena Bhavnani, Heidi Safia Mirza and Veena Meeto argue that racism is changing and multifaceted. Questions of ethnicity and culture are now compounding the question of race and racism: exclusion and marginalisation are operating at various levels from the

<sup>3</sup> See Region in Figures: Yorkshire and the Humber (ONS - Winter 2004/05)

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed analysis of regional characteristics see Perrett and Martínez Lucio 2006, ONS – Region in Figures, Labour Force Survey and Census data.



institutional to the personal. For this reason, they argue that tackling racism should be undertaken at all levels and on a daily basis through the media, the workplace, the legal dimension, cultural issues and welfare service delivery. The question of exclusion and marginalisation through racism has become a more complex problem and challenges institutions to respond in terms of their auditing, monitoring, representation, and training mechanisms and not solely their recruitment processes and mission statement.

### **The position and attitudes of BME organisations towards trade unions**

In an earlier research project conducted within the region for the TUC (Perrett and Martínez Lucio, 2006), the main criticisms levied against trade unions by BME voluntary sector support groups were: first; that they had too few officials or representatives from minority groups at all levels and so exhibited a lack of understanding of BME concerns; second, that their representation of voluntary sector employees was inadequate or unclear; and third, that they did not adequately engage with BME communities or the support groups that aimed to represent their needs, nor did they adequately promote the function of unions or the benefits they could generate. This lack of communication and engagement had resulted in a fundamental lack of understanding of trade union functions or the benefits they could generate and uncertainty as to their relevance outside of the workplace or in representing BME concerns. Lack of contact had resulted in scepticism and an absence of credibility and trust. Perceptions were often drawn from media sources or from older generations, who might have lived through de-industrialisation, privatisation and racist work practices. This question of perception gaps is a major finding of the study as whether one believes that trade unions are responding to the representational needs of BME workers or not is a mute point; the truth is that the perception of them is clearly problematic. It is important because it highlights a lack of trade union presence even though some indicators show that trade unions do have certain positive effects in areas where BME groups are present, indeed the union wage effect within Yorkshire and the Humber appears to be larger for BME than white British workers. The most positive finding for trade unions was that despite this lack of interaction between them and BME support groups and the emerging gap in representation, such groups did not harbour underlying tensions or antipathy towards unions. In fact, the opposite could be said to be true. Both survey and interview findings suggest that the potential for building alliances with the BME voluntary sector was strong and that the majority of such groups would welcome the opportunity. Some interviewees, who had admitted that they had never previously considered working with trade unions, claimed that it was now an area they would look into and that they felt 'excited by the prospect'.

### **The increasing response of trade unions to racism and social exclusion**

Firstly, the failure of trade unions to represent the broad canvass of groups that constitutes the black and minority ethnic community is a common theme of much of the past. If anything, the role of organised labour in processes of exclusion and segregation through a variety of systems is not unknown. Ambivalent and racist attitudes towards ethnic minorities have been a common feature of trade union attitudes and activities (see Bhavnani and Bhavnani, 1985; Mayhew and Addison, 1983); and ambivalence amongst members and the leadership about race and ethnicity issues – and even racist attitudes – has been a subject of concern and academic study. Trade unions developed during the 20th century a politics of solidarity which was always constrained by established, ethnic understandings of the workforce and by labour market regulatory mechanisms (internal and external) which supported groups of workers vis-à-vis both employers and 'outsiders'. More recently, since the 1970s, there has been the development of an approach to industrial relations increasingly premised on notions of rights, the increasing realities and concerns with racism and social inclusion, and the re-orientation of trade union concerns and priorities, which have meant that trade unions have begun to respond to such issues in a more supportive and strategic manner. In fact, support within migrant communities for unions can be

high in some cases (Modood, 1997), although the perception of unions and their willingness to act has not always been so visible and transparent (Perrett and Martínez Lucio, 2006; Fitzgerald and Sterling, 2004): however, one should not confuse the lack of antipathy or antagonism with trade unions as a mode of support.

Trade unions have begun to champion issues of social rights in terms of ethnicity and race in highly novel ways. Much varies in terms of ability, support, resources, and leadership patterns, but overall we are seeing a greater sensitivity to this issue. This is occurring in a variety of ways. Within the workplace, there have been campaigns to deal with racism and to link up with black and minority ethnic workers. There have been recruitment campaigns and representation of workers when suffering the injustices of racism. Increasingly workplace representatives are being trained to deal with such issues and to broaden the questions they deal with. This has been supplemented with a greater amount of attention being paid to the organisational strategies of firms in terms of recruitment, promotion and training. We are seeing trade unionists – to varying degrees – beginning to participate in equal opportunities committees (EO) and in overseeing developments in employment planning. The public sector is one such example where EO auditing has become a vital part of some of the work of trade unions. The extent of trade union involvement varies but it is not uncommon to find trade unionists ensuring that a more proactive approach to questions of people planning and administration is based on the principles of equality. The report draws attention to such cases of trade union intervention in terms of the workplace and the organisation. In turn, trade unions have attempted to complement such approaches with a greater sensitivity to the community dimension. For example, the development of community-based initiatives within BME communities have begun to emerge. In the USA, for example, some unions have supported – alongside other groups – the development of workers centres that have acted as a point of reference for immigrant workers seeking advice and support on a range of issues (Fine, 2006). In the UK there is much interest in 'The East London Community Organisation' (TELCO) project. The TELCO project focused on minimum wage issues in the East of London bringing together academics, faith based organisations and some trade unions in a campaign to develop a more socially oriented understanding of the living wage. The notion of the living wage took a central element of industrial relations – the wage – and redefined it in terms of a language of dignity.

Then there is the political role of the trade unions in relation to issues of racism in all its forms and general questions of exclusion. Trade unions have developed a greater lobbying role through MPs with regards to equality issues at work and the development of legislation. The trade union movement has supported the introduction of race equality legislation (and other anti-discrimination legislation), although it must be said that this has not always been the case as in the 1970s (Jenkins et al, 2003). There are many that would argue that the ongoing and timeless defence of the welfare state and its development by the organised labour movement has been a major platform for its activity to include all workers in society regardless of their background. More recently, in the tradition of anti-fascist activity, trade unions have developed campaigns against far right organisations such as the British National Party (BNP). A similar concern emerged almost three decades earlier with the rise of the neo-fascist National Front (NF). The role of leafleting, supporting anti-racist organisations (such as Unite Against Fascism - UAF), and in raising the level of debate on the encroaching influence of such parties has become a feature of many localised campaigns. In fact, the TUC has done more in many instances than the mainstream parties in trying to address the rise of such xenophobia within communities. This strategy of addressing racism and xenophobia has also led to a series of unions engaging with education and race-related issues in schools. There are instances where trade unions such as UNISON, amongst others, have developed cultural awareness sessions for local schools in an attempt to raise student and pupil awareness of multi-cultural issues. The deceptions of racism are exposed through a discussion of the realities and richness of cultural and ethnic heritage.



An earlier report conducted on behalf of the TUC and the Working Lives Research Institute (Davis et al, 2006) attempts to broaden the understanding of the different responses trade unions adopt in respect of racism. The document points to the following key strategies:

- Legal strategy
- Black self organisation
- Monitoring and target setting
- Bargaining

These are seen as key dimensions of the trade union response to racism. The report, by Davis *et al* (2006 – full reference given in the appendix), breaks this down further into questions of trade union policies arguing that trade unions must develop in the following areas:

- Unions must acknowledge the reality of racism and internally accept the realities of the problem both externally and internally
- Bargaining systems have to integrate equality issues into the centre of their agendas
- Trade unions must have black activists on leading union committees
- The gender dimension is fundamentally interwoven with questions of race and cannot be separated
- The recruitment of black workers must be a priority
- The role of ethnic monitoring must be institutionalised
- Black workers must be represented and supported through coherent and systematic strategies
- Anti-racist education and training must be a vital part of the learning agenda
- Campaigning against racism must be part of the standard work of trade unions

The message from our colleagues is very clear: the landscape of trade union activity is not simply a question of bolting on anti-racist activity. Anti-racist activity must run through unions in terms of structure, strategy and identity. It must be interwoven with the very purpose of trade union considerations on equality, fairness and justice. For the authors of this report this means the need to map what is being done, explain why it is being done, and to understand the challenges of an integrated approach to dealing with racism and social inclusion. This is not done merely through formal trade union strategy but also by way of trade unionists on the ground responding and using their trade union resources to develop a politics of inclusion for all workers. The report therefore focuses on specific varieties of responses and provides insights into the development of projects and initiatives in particular instances.

### So why this report?

It is important in the light of recent renewal of the TUC within the region, and the increasing activity around new industrial relations issues, that cases are developed which outline some of the ways in which trade union activists and officials are dealing with questions of racism. The report forms part of an ongoing concern with engaging, involving and empowering BME workers as well as increasing the level of trade union representation. The cases in this report do not represent the totality of possibilities when it comes to dealing with racism and social exclusion or strategies to improve representation. However, the objectives of the report are as follows:

- To highlight the diversity and richness of trade union responses, especially as such strategies are not always transparent.
- To assist in the development of good practices, vital for any process of learning and development within the trade union movement.
- To aid the labour movement in sharing information about the wide variety of strategies that already exists. This is a vital role for the TUC particularly with respect to newly engaged areas.
- To highlight strategies that contribute to a strong labour movement response, seminal given the plethora of potential pitfalls.
- To contribute to the discussion on how responding to social exclusion in all its manifestations is important.
- To predict and respond to the challenges to the labour movement in developing such strategies in terms of organisational structures, competing union cultures, and limited resourcing.

The authors are aware of the fact that trade unions have much to do in the area of racism and the representation of BME workers. Some might argue that the five innovative cases selected for this report are not representative of reality. However, they are real cases and show what is happening and what may happen more often given the right support. The report attempts to highlight that the problem is that trade unions are not learning from their own cases of good practice: the challenge is for the labour movement to build upon such cases.

## Case study 1: 'Food for thought': A traditional approach to BME representation in food production

### Introduction and background

This case was based within the food production industry in Yorkshire which has, for many years, relied heavily upon minority ethnic labour particularly within Bradford, Kirklees and Leeds. It is based on the activities of the BFAWU. Much of the empirical data for this study was derived from interviews with the regional secretary and the lead regional organiser from a small union that has represented this sector for over a century. Strategies pursued in three different ongoing cases were discussed, Craft Bakers Ltd<sup>5</sup>, Cake Production Ltd and Custardbake Ltd. Almost 95 per cent of employees at Craft Bakers Ltd, bakers of a wide range of breads, pastries and desserts, were believed to be Iraqi-Kurds. There were ongoing issues of low pay, poor working conditions, language barriers, no training and health and safety issues; the union was pursuing recognition. Almost 100 per cent of the workforce at Cake Production Ltd, producers of high quality cakes, desserts and biscuits, was South Asian, predominantly Pakistani. The union had cooperative relations with management at most of their sites however, Cake Production Ltd had recently taken over another company with negligible union membership and no experience of trade unions. Custardbake Ltd, producers of custard and pastry products, had recently employed a large number of new migrant workers through an employment agency, the legality of which was allegedly questionable. Wages were low, conditions were poor, union membership was almost non-existent and the company was strongly opposed to any form of union intervention.

In respect of these three cases, and across much of this industry, there has been a continued dependence upon traditional workplace based organising campaigns. What makes this case innovative are the additions and variations to traditional tactics in response to the ethnic composition of the workforce.

### "A campaign's a campaign irrespective of race"

From the very outset of the first meeting with the regional secretary it was made clear that recruitment campaigns were "all the same irrespective of whether the workforce is black or white". According to Wrench and Virdee (1996: 265) this "position of incorporation", often referred to as the colour-blind or an all equal approach, was adopted by the TUC throughout much of the 1960s and was subsequently criticised for not taking into account the fact that minority groups were not on a level playing field in the first place and so equality in union organisation and representation would maintain the gap between white and minority groups. It was subsequently suggested that unions, therefore, should implement special provisions when recruiting and representing minorities. This criticism is, however, misleading and cannot be attributed to this case where the overall recruitment strategy did incorporate 'special provisions' for minority groups, and not only was the regionally based trade unionists organising around class distinctions they were also organising around ethnic identities.

<sup>5</sup>All company names have been changed for confidentiality reasons

The reason for this disparity appeared to be the regional secretary's long experience of working with minority groups within this sector and region. Prior to commencing employment as a full time union official, the regional secretary was employed for 18 years within a large bakery in West Yorkshire where he acted as shop steward for a workforce comprising around 60 per cent South Asian workers and 40 per cent white British workers. Furthermore, because of the high number of minorities working within the sector within this region, such special provisions had become the norm. In fact, in respect of developing a strong and coherent approach to BME organisation and representation, this union's strategy was more developed than many.

The regional secretary believed that the profile of the UK labour movement overall could be improved considerably through coordinated communication with BME communities outside of the workplace. However, he felt that with little overarching supervision or coordination, individual trade unions rarely worked well together, particularly where one has more funds 'to throw at projects' than the other and so takes ownership irrespective of whose idea it was. Furthermore, he felt that the costs associated with organising beyond the workplace were too high for an individual union to bear in comparison to the benefits generated in the form of increased membership. He explained how, from around ten years ago, he had consulted the Racial Equality Council and community leaders in a predominantly South Asian area of Leeds and how he had held branch meetings in halls next to mosques with little, if any, impact on membership. He argued that a sustained and co-ordinated approach was needed. Limited time and resources was a contributing factor as this statement by the regional secretary illustrates:

"It's resources, we are a small trade union. We are not the GMB, USDAW or T&G you know, we are only 28,000 members and it comes down to resources, money and time ... It is perhaps something that we would like to do more of (engage with community leaders) we just don't have the resources to follow through."

As a result of such difficulties, the union moved back towards workplace organising but with a renewed vision of the traditional organising model.

### "Oh, that strategy!" Innovative workplace approaches to BME campaigns

The organising approach often adopted by the regional secretary can be described as an updated variation on the traditional workplace based organising model. The first step would be to gather information on the composition of the workforce and to identify themes to organise around. This was undertaken by existing members, if already recruited, or by 'hanging around' at the end of shifts when not. A request to management would then be made to discuss a potential union presence or recognition. The regional secretary acknowledged that building a relationship with management could potentially generate benefits for the union. If management were amenable to their request the regional secretary would recruit the services of two South Asian colleagues, shop stewards from another company within the sector, and the campaign would be located within the workplace canteen gaining access to employees during their breaks. The use of South Asian colleagues not only overcame language barriers but also illustrated that the face of the UK labour movement was not just white and that issues more specific to South Asian workers were being considered. Where management were not amenable to a union presence a campaign would be instigated at the company's gates. Again, the regional secretary or lead organiser would be accompanied by their South Asian colleagues in such instances. Furthermore, flyers and information would be translated and distributed in the four main languages used at the workplace; the lack of any centralised translation service and pressures on resources meant that further translations would be impractical.



The regional secretary firmly believed that the success and momentum of a campaign was often dependant upon the right shop steward being recruited. He did not believe that this was achieved just through like-for-like recruitment but rather by appointing the individual that commanded the most respect and influence within the workplace, irrespective of ethnicity. Frequently, though not exclusively, where a workplace had a large minority workforce, the most influential individuals would share similar ethnic characteristics. When the regional secretary was first appointed to the role of branch secretary in 1991, he had no minority ethnic shop stewards and found that when they were put forward for the role, they were not elected. They then made a major effort to appoint a number of South Asian stewards, many of whom have gone on to become members of negotiating committees and delegates at black worker conferences. As in the traditional model of workplace organisation, these individuals were appointed as they were seen as best able to represent the needs of their colleagues and stimulate interest in the union. Not only did they achieve this, they also removed language barriers the union would have otherwise faced, removed the stereotype of trade unions being solely white organisations, started to re-align internal BME representation within the union and gave a South Asian face to the labour movement for others to relate to.

Although the union continues to organise around class it is evident that ethnic identity also plays a considerable role within organising activity. For example, one organisation had voluntarily reviewed its policy on extended holidays after the regional secretary argued that it could constitute indirect discrimination as it disproportionately affected South Asian workers travelling for religious reasons. At another workplace, the union had successfully campaigned for a prayer room, and an overarching strategy was to push forward the learning agenda in the workplace, particularly in respect of English as a Second Language courses. This workplace example is therefore a good starting point for discussing different types of responses, the remaining four cases shall show how this can be complimented in a variety of ways.

## Case study 2 – The Platform of Learning: From the textiles shop-floor to the community

Leather Mill Plc was a leather mill and tannery, and a Community organised union environment, which produced high quality leather for many of the worlds leading brands of luxury leather goods and fashion accessories. Based in a major Northern town, they had operated since 1975, until recently the workforce was almost exclusively white British. Leather Mill Plc witnessed an influx of Iraqi-Kurd workers in 2002. At the time of research, interviewees estimated there to be between 14 and 18 Iraqi workers, furthermore a second migration 'influx' in 2005 had added around eight Polish employees to the workforce. It became apparent to management and union officials alike that the lack of English skills possessed by these new workers had created real health and safety concerns. One senior shop steward explained why these difficulties had emerged:

"They had to use razor sharp knives to cut the hide you see ... Obviously these new workers weren't understanding what you were telling them, they were just nodding, saying 'yes, yes, yes', but in reality it wasn't sinking in ... nor could they understand safety signs or the notice boards".

Although strained at times, a good relationship had developed between management and the trade union<sup>6</sup>, and so the two parties pursued ways to improve conditions and health and safety for the migrant workers. The deputy general secretary of the union was a strong advocate of the learning agenda and community strategies; furthermore, the senior shop steward at the workplace had experience of working with a local college that offered workplace based courses. This union expertise, with management support, led to the introduction of a 13 week ESOL course taught within the workplace. All migrant workers attended the course and, according to the senior shop steward and the training manager, accident levels immediately began to fall and morale and attendance rose, along with the level of communication on the shop-floor. Furthermore, all joined the trade union. Subsequently a 'Dignity at Work' course was introduced for all employees designed to eradicate bullying in the workplace whereby management and the union identified an unexpected desire for learning not only by the migrant workers but also by many of the white British workers, most of whom had very few academic qualifications. This, according to the deputy general secretary, opened the door to more adventurous workplace learning plans, namely a permanent workplace based learning centre.

### The union and the workplace learning centre

After securing management's commitment to a learning centre, the union approached the regional TUC's Learning Services division for advice on training providers and securing funding for the project. The union's commitment and hard work came to fruition in April 2003 when one of the most applauded workplace learning centres in the UK was established. Funding was given, initially for two years, by the DfES for courses up to and including level two and 12 computers were provided. The intention was to further expand upon ESOL classes and introduce computer classes and numeracy and literacy courses through Learndirect's 'Skills for Life'. Management contributed by providing a room for the learning centre. According to the new centre manager the centre could support over 400 courses (predominantly Learndirect) which could be undertaken either in the learning centre or from home. Courses were

<sup>6</sup>A union well known for its community approaches

<sup>7</sup>Including Computer Literacy and IT (CLAIT) and the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)



available on-line and the learning centre would provide employees with books or CD ROMS to take away – the centre manager was on hand to take phone enquiries from individuals undertaking courses from home. The cost of specific courses were covered by the learning centre, however, costs for other non-work related courses or above level two courses were discounted substantially for employees.

Not only were the courses and facilities available they were also promoted and attempts made to remove barriers to participation. Learning reps were seen as the key link between the shop-floor and the learning centre and were viewed as of seminal importance to its success. This was particularly the case in respect of migrant workers who according to a learning representative exhibited less understanding of union functions and benefits and required greater levels of support. In respect of ownership, the centre was very much seen as independent of management, which according to employees and union officials alike was very important and contributed to its success. The centre was viewed as a union initiative developed for the workers. Although impossible to quantify financially, all interviewees – management, employees and union officials – claimed that the learning centre was a considerable success. In April 2005, around three quarters of the workforce had undertaken a course through the learning centre, the workplace was a safer place and accidents had decreased, attendance levels of migrant workers had improved, communication with migrant workers was better and union membership of migrant workers had increased. One migrant employee summarised how he felt about the union:

“Morale has definitely improved, particularly amongst the Iraqi workers ... originally I thought unions just helped when you get sacked, when you need a cheap solicitor. I wasn't really aware that they could help with learning ... the view we have of the union has improved greatly, they are taking the initiative, doing something different and that is encouraging people to join”.

### **The union and community learning**

At the time of research the learning centre had acquired an extension on their funding, however, it was apparent that continued funding was dependant upon the demand for the courses offered through the learning centre and therefore the centre manager and the union would have to address the issue of sustainability. As a means of raising the demand for courses, as well as hopefully increasing union membership, some innovative approaches were devised in line with the union's wider approach to going beyond the workplace and in raising the profile of the union.

The first strategy, only recently implemented at the time of research, was called 'Family and Friends'. As the name suggests, family and close friends of workers employed by the company were offered specific courses either to be undertaken within the learning centre or at home. Although slow initially, there had been a subsequent take-up of such courses. Three other key initiatives had been planned but not implemented at the time of research designed firstly, to change the overall functions of the learning centre; secondly to extend the influence of the learning centre to the wider business estate where the company was located, and finally, to extend their influence to the wider community which would incorporate a predominantly South Asian community nearby.

Firstly, the centre manager wanted to expand the function undertaken by the learning centre so that it incorporated a test centre, encouraging individuals from the local area to favour their learning centre instead of having to travel to colleges a distance away for examination; this would also lower costs and bring in additional funding. Secondly, through a variety of means the centre manager and regional and

national union officials wanted to develop and expand the role of the centre out to the wider business estate, which incorporated mainly manufacturing businesses. To achieve these goals the centre manager and regional organiser wanted to organise an open day so that managers from other businesses could look around the learning centre and discuss what gains there could be for their workforce. They wanted to forge alliances with other trade unions that represented workers at other companies in the estate so that their members could be provided with training. It was also claimed that they wanted to develop a 'virtual learning centre' online whereby the centre manager and course tutors could provide support via email and the telephone; hence if they could encourage other companies in the estate to buy a few computers, their employees could receive training without having to visit the actual learning centre. The third and final planned initiative was to expand the services provided by the learning centre into local communities, one of which was predominantly South Asian. According to the centre manager, individuals from local communities had been phoning him to enquire as to how they could enrol on courses. Unfortunately, he had to turn them away as, at that time, such an initiative had not been implemented or risk assessments undertaken.

This case illustrates how the learning agenda can alter employees', especially new migrants', perceptions of trade unions and act as an effective workplace recruitment tool. Furthermore, although in its infancy at the time of fieldwork, this case highlights some innovative initiatives in respect of sustainability and expanding the influence of the learning centre, and so the union, beyond the confines of the workplace and potentially out into minority ethnic communities.

### Case study 3: Linking up with new networks: Building a bridge from council to community

Increasingly, there is growing interest in the development of black and minority ethnic communities establishing networks that link workers up in the workplace and in the community. This case illustrates the development of a BME network inside a local council and in the community. It involves trade unions such as UNISON working through a coalition approach.

The local council was located in a de-industrialised area in South Yorkshire. It once had a strong manufacturing and steel tradition. The town has been subjected to all the consequences of an un-coordinated restructuring. Within the local council, the Labour Party has been a dominant player. However, in the past few years BME employees found themselves increasingly isolated within an environment dominated by white employees and trade union culture, which has in the main been focused on a white workforce within the workplace and a view of trade unionism very much influenced by the politics and identity of the region's industrial heritage. There has been an array of learning and re-training strategies developed in the wake of restructuring within the town and its facilities. The local steel union has been very proactive in raising funding and developing centres (see Mackenzie et al, 2006; Stuart and Perrett, 2006). However, centres often focused on the union's members as well as their families. They have also been 'tucked away' in hard to locate spaces – within office complexes. In this respect, the lack of co-ordination between the local trade unions and the lack of a union led strategic view of the region meant that such initiatives were not developed around a broader view of the workforce. This was compounded by the failure of the local council to address the specific needs of local black and minority ethnic workers.

External political factors contributed to a need to focus on and address the needs of such workers. In the wake of the 9-11 events, behaviour towards Muslim workers was at times racist and discriminatory from various sources. These developments created an awareness amongst specific members of the HR department of the council and key employees, predominantly British Pakistani or of Pakistani origin, that there was a need to establish some kind of voice mechanism for the needs of such workers. In the main, the trade unions were not opposed to such possibilities although internal levels of interest varied. The union had developed a black workers section that had begun to raise such issues. The trade union supported this initiative, and we discuss this later. One of the main catalysts for the development of a more focused strategy of BME support was the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, prompted by institutional racism within the police force in the wake of the murder of a black youth in London. This began a more detailed process of auditing equality issues within the public sector. Various initiatives were developed, but the development of a black workers' network was central. Such networks are becoming an integral part of public sector equality strategies (Bhavnani, et al, 2005).

#### Networks and activities

Such a network was developed with the support of a range of local white-collar workers, local councillors of Pakistani origin, and various local bodies. This was aimed at developing a range of activities such as training and mentoring within the relevant workforce, and created a structure that allowed concerns and issues to be raised. The trade unions supported this development. At the heart was a series of cultural and consciousness-raising campaigns. The Positive Images campaign was focused on highlighting the work of BME workers in a range of council departments and of supporting them. There were also activities focused on increasing recruitment of local youths from BME communities. The HR department was a major supporter and strategic ally of such a development. In this respect, one could argue it was the outcome of a partnership of a variety of players.

The network was linked into a broader town-wide BME network that assisted BME community groups to seek funding and to raise their profile. Increasingly, such a community wide network covered a range of issues and included a range of players. Perrett and Martinez Lucio (2006) point to the range of activities such networks actually develop and the extent to which these overlap with traditional trade union roles and strategies. Respondents to a questionnaire, in the form of voluntary sector groups in the region generally, were asked to outline the objectives of the organisation that they worked for. Responses were wide and varied and covered a range of BME support interests, detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - BME group organisational objectives

Company objectives	Freq	Company objectives	Freq
<b>Employment related</b>		<b>Community advice</b>	
Assist with education/training	17	General BME/community advice	4
Assist with employment	11	Community/resource centre	3
		Promote recreational activities	3
		Use of arts, music or dance	2
		Drop-in/social inclusion	2
<b>Community needs and cohesion</b>		Provide housing services	2
Bring communities together/cohesion	9	Prevent school exclusion	1
Promote social and economic welfare	9	To prevent criminal offending	1
Promote culture/religion	8	Environmental and geographical issues	1
Raise awareness of needs	5	Domestic violence	1
Promote relations between faith groups	5	BME business advice	1
Assist in integration into community	5		
		<b>Health issues</b>	
		Assist in health issues	11
		Issues surrounding depression	1
		Social and psychological support	1
<b>Group identities</b>		<b>Network and VCS support</b>	
Working with disabilities	9	Capacity building/support for (BME) VCS	7
Work with women	7	Promote and support available services	6
Work with the elderly	6	Initiate and fund community projects	3
Work with youth	5		
Work with travellers	1		

Total number of code-able objectives 138\*

\* Respondents frequently gave more than one code-able objective

Source: Perrett and Martinez Lucio, 2006

As illustrated in Table 1, many of the organisational and political objectives of respondents corresponded closely to trade union activities and agendas, raising the potential for joint projects and the development of alliances as well as the competition for traditional trade union roles. The local network under discussion had a similar portfolio to that outline above.

This local government workplace network therefore linked to a broader dynamic in terms of community politics. The main public sector union in the area subsequently became involved with the group and its networks and at the time of fieldwork played an active role in representing BME interests and advising



the council BME workers' group. The local Labour Party played a link through local councillors and individuals who in turn linked to national level TUC and government forums. The role of South Asian councillors is a vital factor in providing links between groups and public institutions. However, trade union activists worked within these networks but understood and respected their autonomy. This development of workplace networks for disadvantaged workers due to discrimination and their links to broader community networks is rarely studied within industrial relations. Holgate (2005) has been one of the few academics to study such linkages around workplace issues and the development of mobilisation strategies. The development of such internal and external networks is significant. Nevertheless, they raise some issues. Many of these initiatives can be independent of trade unionism for a variety of reasons: the level of access to social capital in BME communities, failure to realise the significant nature of such developments, and the lack of interest of trade unions generally.

## Case study 4 – Reaching beyond the workplace into the disorganised labour market: The case of Polish workers

Since EU enlargement incorporated the new A8 countries from Central and Eastern Europe in May 2004, immigration from these countries to the UK has exceeded expectations. The estimated figure for 2005 (ONS 2006 – See IPS survey) was 80,000. An estimated 49,000 of these were Polish citizens, this represents almost three times the 2004 prediction of 17,000. Polish migration into Yorkshire and the Humber has increased consistently over the last three years as has Polish employment within the region. Many of these jobs however will be within the worst paid and poorly organised sectors and will result in exploitation, lack of security and no access to union rights. This case study therefore highlights the efforts made by local trade unionists, primarily from AMICUS, to offer a variety of support and advice, beyond the narrowly defined confines of traditional employment advice, to Polish workers. This has been done through organising alliances with other institutions, including faith based groups, and delivering surgeries within the community. This formed part of a wider drive to develop and maintain relations with this new vulnerable community of workers.

### Not such an unlikely alliance

The success of this case can largely be attributed to the regional branch and, in particular, the regional training official and a regional organiser who were responding to, what they saw to be, the concentration of Polish workers within low paid, hard to organise sectors such as food production. For these regional officials, the development of this new campaign was about much more than just recruiting Polish workers, it was about a new long term approach based upon the assumptions that it was increasingly difficult to organise around these kind of workplaces. New Polish workers would often be employed by agencies and frequently be moved between different workplaces, furthermore they had little knowledge or experience of UK unions. Moreover, it was felt that new migrants needed advice on many different issues, not just employment, and that it was ethically right to represent vulnerable workers irrespective of union membership.

According to the regional training official and local trade union activists, their initial attempt to 'get into the community', by handing out leaflets was 'completely unsuccessful'. The tendency to rely on leaflets without a follow up strategy is a common problem in the trade union movement on such issues. This changed however as they developed a relationship with two English speaking Polish colleagues who advised them that many workers could be reached through local centres in the Polish Catholic Church, of which there were three within the city. This had formed the embryo of a hub for parts of the Polish community. Social clubs were connected to the Church and social events were often organised by the Church. The regional officials attended the Polish social club on a Saturday evening and discussed issues of community support with a variety of individuals. The officials subsequently decided to organise a community based advice and guidance drop-in event for Polish citizens. The local church allowed advertisements to be hung on the walls in the social club and assisted in distributing over 500 leaflets, translated into Polish.

### The event – Start of an ongoing dialogue

The drop-in event was held within the community at a nearby, union run, resource centre. Representatives from the union were present as were Polish speaking advisors and translators. Furthermore, a number of other organisations had been invited and had stalls at the event; these included the Citizen's Advice Bureau, local housing trusts, Thompson's solicitors, an insurance company,



CV writing advisors to name but a few. Polish food was provided for free as many had come straight from work. The regional organiser was clear that this was not a union organising event around employment issues but an opportunity for the union to make its presence known and offer a wide range of advice to a new migrant group that really needed it. He stated that:

“We’re not trying to sell them something. We’re not going in with the hard sell, ‘join us’ ... It’s more about building the trust up so they get to know who we are, we get to know who they are and then we can really start addressing the problems that migrant workers face ... if we just try and sign people up and then forget about them then I think, at best we’ll get nothing and at worst we’ll get a bad name within the community and then that’s it”.

The event ran over four hours during the evening. The range of advice given was wide and included how to register children at school, how to register with a doctor, how to get an MOT for a car, how to open a bank account, access to housing, immigration forms and benefit issues, minimum wage and workplace health and safety, advice and guidance on writing and structuring CVs, how to vote in locals elections and how to campaign against the far right. Attempts were made to address all issues that were raised. Almost 200 individuals attended over the course of one evening, over three times more than had been expected. Symbolically the event represented more than just a short-term attempt to raise membership, rather it was the start of a long term dialogue and an opportunity to audit the social and institutional needs of the community.

### **The future – Continued contact and alliances**

The drop-in community event merely represented the start of an ongoing campaign in respect of Polish workers. However, its success had attracted the attention of trade unionists from other regions across the UK. The implementation of both short and medium terms plans were already underway within the Yorkshire and Humber region. Maintaining contact and a presence with the Polish community was seen as critical and so a series of small drop-in surgeries, again in the resource centre, were being organised particularly around CV writing and assistance. Leaflets were being developed, translated and distributed through the social club, free advice was being given if requested and time was being spent gathering information about Polish employment, the food production industry, specific employers, and Polish temporary employment agencies operating within the area. A further seven large events, similar to the one presented above, were being planned in towns across the region. The regional training official justified such events and the act of giving free advice without membership as follows:

“It’s not like they’ve worked in a factory for years without joining and are then coming to the union for advice at the first sign of trouble ... It’s very different. They’ve not been in the country six months and they’ve had little contact with unions ... If we say ‘we’re going to shut you out as well because you haven’t joined the union, we’re going to close our door to you’ there’s a real danger that we’ll create a bad name for ourselves within the community”.

Three key longer term strategies were also being developed. First, Polish speaking activists from the actual community of Polish workers were sought. Second, funds were being sought to appoint a full time, Polish speaking, community project worker to remove some of the pressure from other regional officials. And third, there was an attempt to develop their learning agenda, particularly through ESOL, into the community and use it as a platform for other community advice and support projects.

This case study illustrates the importance of consulting and communicating with groups that differ from union’s ‘normal, grass-roots’ membership. Simple solutions may exist that the union may not have thought of because of limited contact with such groups. We see the importance of new social actors within industrial relations and within the business of social support more generally; in this case, specific religious organisations played a coordinating role and was, both geographically and socially, the potential hub of the community. This is an emerging role in a range of struggles for the defence of vulnerable workers as in the much published TELCO case in East London (see Wills, 2001; Evans et al, 2005; Sokol et al, 2006). The insecure and hard to organise nature of new migrant work means that a community approach is a viable alternative and the need for a wide variety of support and advice, beyond the confines of employment, means that the networked union, allied with a range of other institutions is advantageous.

## Case study 5 – Cultural and inclusion strategies in a multi-cultural workplace: South Asian trade unionists and new forms of union action

Often, the debate on trade unions and BME workers is based on assumption of what trade unions can do for them. The idea is of a predominantly white organisation graciously acting on behalf of the BME workers. Yet, this ignores the role of black and minority ethnic workers and organisations in terms of how they play a vital role in the tapestry of people's lives both as workers and as citizens. Our initial report (Report 1) showed how many BME voluntary sector groups covered a range of employment and social activities normally considered to be the domain of trade unions. Indeed, there is a tendency to ignore how South Asian or Black African and Black Caribbean trade unionists have played a vital part in the labour movement.

This case engages with the question of how South Asian workers, in particular, in a bus company's T&GWU plant went from being marginalised and discriminated against to becoming key players and leaders developing highly innovative and sensitive inclusion strategies. Many of these strategies are mindful of race issues and attempt to create a common bond within the workforce and within the community through workplace, community and cultural strategies. In this case, it is not so much a particular initiative that is highlighted, but the way a trade union branch can evolve a complex and rich history regarding ethnicity, and a set of interventions in terms of different ethnic groups and leaders.

However, it was not always like this. The branch minutes from the 1960s record how various trade unionists and activists had supported placing limits on the number of Asian bus drivers. The systematic exclusion of non-white drivers was a major characteristic of the industry but with labour market shortages in the 1960s began to recruit from South-East Asia and the Caribbean. This brought new problems of workplace racism and discrimination. In the 1970s there was a high profile scandal involving non-white drivers having to pay local managers their first few months of salaries as part of their recruitment. This was highlighted in the press, illustrating the way in which local BME workers were treated. Over time, major changes began to occur. Increasing levels of BME workers and a growing interest in the trade union led to a new constituency of South-East Asian activists. The role of the scandal of recruitment-payments discredited key individuals and gave rise to a new set of activists who had begun to receive training and support from the trade union regionally, and through various bodies in the city dedicated to supporting the labour movement and its development. The new body of trade unionists, which involved Asian and white British activists, began to expand the facilities of the trade union and its services. This led to the emergence of local community activism and trade union change within the local area. A generation of trade unionists therefore emerged that were able to link questions of discrimination and race-related issues with a broader view of the role of the trade union and the nature of the services it delivered. There were links into Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim communities through union members that were organisers within local and faith-based organisations. These links allow the union branch to assist networks of individuals in need of employment advice, and in turn call on community support when they were in dispute. This broadening of the diversity and equality agenda was presented – as in the textiles case above – in terms of a deepening of trade union roles and an increasing sensitivity to the broader needs of the workforce.

The case is an example of equality as a positive sum ('everybody gains') issue within the workforce. The development of the learning centre, which encouraged learning and personal development, has led to a use of information technology for educational and personal needs. A range of services developed, led by the branch, which benefited all workers such as a saving and loans scheme. This managed to portray the trade union in a different light. This union branch's renewal around inclusion strategies was highlighted in the development of a cultural strategy, which had three dimensions. The first was an

inclusive set of events and meetings which included all workers and which highlighted diversity issues. The annual branch dinner included a wide set of cultural activities, which made it a much more engaging event for all involved. The purpose of these events such as the annual dinner was to make it possible for union members and workers to socialise and celebrate together: this attempt to link different groups was an espoused objective. It was not just another 'night out'. The development of mutual support and cover at work around the time of Christian and Muslim religious holidays was achievable by building on these cultural events and creating respect across the communities. Secondly, activities around charities and relief funds such as the 2005 Pakistani earthquake were a focus of much activity bringing workers together. Thirdly, the branch has been active in supporting a range of local campaigns and welfare issues, seeing this as a central feature of its work. This community dimension is unusual in many branches but, in this case, it formed part of the rubric of equality politics and a more dynamic view of what a branch is. The ability to work with the local Muslim community, amongst others, allows the branch activist's experience to help in a range of matters. Furthermore, the activists have built an in-depth understanding of the legislation being invited to speak at trade union meetings in many other local firms.

Responses to discrimination and disadvantage, in general, necessitate an ability to reach out beyond workplaces into local labour markets and local networks. The ability to provide mutual support and share resources at key times is a vital aspect of a trade union's work. In part, reaching out to the local community is achievable due to the experience of negotiating and mobilising trade unionists. On the other hand, as in the case of a recent dispute in this company, the branch had the networks and links to be able to raise its profile and to communicate with a wider public about its concerns and grievances. There have been similar instances in the past as with a dispute in the West Midlands in the 1980s when Sikh drivers were able to count on considerable community support when they were not paid. In this case, networks allowed the trade union to outflank the company in explaining workplace issues to the local community.

This case is curious because it shows how a proactive response and a broad view of the issue of equality lead to enhanced trade union structures and services. It takes the trade union away from simply serving everyday issues and places them in a strategic position where it can influence a greater set of issues affecting the workforce. What is also curious about this case is how it is conscious of its history and how it has evolved. The new trade union activists show a pride in the way the branch has moved on. They value their history as well and maintain the minutes of the branches going back to the early 20th century: what is more they used them to point out some of the practices of the past as illustrated earlier. The question of equality in this case is not one of specific initiatives and services. The question of equality is, in this case, to be at the heart of union renewal and more vigorous and networked approach to workplace activism. The new approach to inclusion is about ensuring BME workers are treated fairly, but within a framework where the union enhances facilities and support mechanisms for all workers. This strategy of linking equality into a broader set of issues such as health and safety, learning, and working conditions marks out this case. Equality is in the words of the branch officers about unity: the link between the two means that the union can link traditional and new areas of its work. This is based on real acts of mutual support and focused services.



## Discussion: Sharing information or reinventing the wheel?

This report has illustrated how trade unions are developing innovative ways to organise and represent the needs of vulnerable minority groups and are addressing issues relating to social exclusion. This discussion section highlights the wider lessons that can be learnt from these case studies and locates the issues in terms of social exclusion, union communication and coordination and the challenges trade unions might potentially face.

### What do the cases tell us?

The five innovative cases presented within this report remind us of the need to understand the variety and diversity of activities required in terms of social inclusion, anti-racist activism and representation strategies. They inform us that there is a need for new and more focused approaches to exclusion and BME representation. There are many strategies available such as leadership training programmes and legal resourcing for example, but the cases highlighted in this report illustrate how wide new forms of activism must be. Learning, representation, cultural engagement, communication, and strategic alliances show us that the work of tackling racism is very broad indeed. Much of the shift in dealing with questions of racism and social exclusion require a refinement and support of what trade unions already do. In many respects, it is a question of extending the work of, for example, trade unions in learning and education to a range of questions such as language and cultural awareness (see also Martínez Lucio and Perrett, 2007 forthcoming). The links between these strategies is vital – and the way they can be combined may be as important as developing them.

Different circumstances require different approaches, yet an awareness of such approaches is vital for an effective strategy. In some cases, trade unions may feel that it will be through the development of a learning centre and employment/career advice that the needs of a specific group of workers can be addressed. Initiatives may require working with parallel bodies in the community or even in the workplace through BME networks as in local government. In some cases, for example, new migrants might need to be given basic language skills or informed of employment rights or bureaucratic procedures in respect of the labour market. Officials or activists from one union might find such methods of representation new and daunting and instead prefer to pursue tried and tested strategies fearing repercussions or the unknown. It is therefore vitally important that union officials are aware of successful strategies developed by other unions so that the labour movement as a whole can benefit from this knowledge and so that different sections of the labour movement do not have to continue reinventing the wheel. This requires a dialogue within the trade union movement and between different unions, branches and geographic locations. There is now an extraordinary body of examples of successful cases/strategies which may not be representative of the whole labour movement's approach but which will serve to alert trade unionists of the lessons to be learnt from the efforts of their colleagues. This also confirms the importance of regional TUC bodies and their role in coordinating and communicating with their affiliates.

The report has illustrated dedicated trade unionists doing their daily work well and in a manner sensitive to the broader needs of the workforce. In this respect, the cases described in this report are not 'heroic' but simply activists doing their jobs well and implementing strategies that are compatible with the environment in which they seek to organise or the workforce they aim to represent. However, the need to develop such strategies in a context of clearly highlighted principles of inclusion and justice – not something new to the labour movement – is essential if they are not to become mere cases of projects with limited funds that end up 'on the shelf'.

### What challenges do such strategies bring?

The development of more proactive strategies in terms of racism and social exclusion bring forth a series of challenges to the trade union movement. The first is the question of racism itself. As Davis et al (2006) point out it requires a fundamental internal audit of the values, attitudes and beliefs of trade unionists as members and activists, let alone employees. The role of equal opportunities training and awareness is becoming steadily established within trade unions (see the TUC Equal Opportunities Audits, 2003 and 2005; see also the Stephen Lawrence Task Group report, 1999). It also requires the acceptance that exclusion is direct and indirect and can emerge from the behaviour and customs of an organisation even if they are not explicitly racist. In addition, it can emerge from a lack of interest in proactively dealing with the problems and in developing positive action programmes (Bhavnani et al, 2005). Hence, the very landscaping of the issue requires that distinct dimensions of trade union work – communicating, learning and education, branch activity, campaigning, and others – is integrated, or at the very least sensitised to the question of social exclusion and racism. This suggests two sets of challenges that can be described as internal and external; these are described below:

#### The Internal Challenge: Organisational

The internal challenge is that such developments and the need to share good practice requires resources and time. In a context of trade union change this provides the organisation with a major hurdle. Prioritising is a feature of modern organisational life and setting resources against priorities is a vital decision. However, with such an interest in the question of learning it is clear that how organisations learn is as important as how their members do. This requires a culture of openness and discussion throughout the labour movement. The role of reflecting on change and its implications is related to dissemination and communication. This calls into question the way in which trade union strategies and campaigns are studied, disseminated and catalogued for the purpose of further access and analysis. There is no doubt that the role of the Internet may be a vital development for this (Martínez Lucio and Walker, 2005). The ability to store, archive and access the work of trade unionists is becoming easier but it still requires educational and support structures to create a climate where individuals seek examples and refinements in terms of what they do. In addition, it also means different unions working together collaboratively as is the case with the regional TUC's Racial Awareness and Equality Forum.

#### The External Challenge: Where is the community and where to locate?

The other dynamic relates to the fact that building alliances with exposed and vulnerable groups and the organisations that currently represent them is a major pre-requisite for such strategies of inclusion. In all the cases, the challenge of working with the community was a vital ingredient of the trade union's work but was also difficult due to the failure of a systematic or continued community presence in the past. Furthermore, much effort was required on the part of the unions to identify themes of common interest, outside of workplace representation, to themselves, minority communities and the respective networks. In the first case, the question of linking with local communities on a consistent basis was a challenge. In the second, the question of if and where to locate a training centre within the South Asian community was telling of a failure to have a labour movement with clear worker centres. In the third case, the BME networks between the local council and the local community had a very strong dynamic that often was stronger than that of the trade unions. In the fourth case, the trade union's information strategy and community guidance surgeries for Polish workers met the problem of where to locate and how to advertise. The fifth and final case brought the fact that workers' associations in the local Asian community were not present in the way they had been before leading to networks based on what trade unionists could find through their personal networks: although in this case strong local ties were able to over-ride such problems.



Put bluntly, the lack of an overarching community strategy and focus meant that many of these initiatives were locked in a dilemma when they wanted to further their cause. The need for a community strategy and a politics of place is essential for the development of a social inclusion strategy that connects and moves forward. For a discussion of such issues, the work of Jane Wills and her colleagues from Queen Mary University of London is essential when talking about the living wage campaigns and TELCO in East London (see Wills, 2001; Evans et al, 2005; Sokol et al, 2006).

One final concern is that in some cases the dependency on external funding and short-term project work results in many initiatives being constrained and short lived. The question of funding is an important issue for the labour movement as seen with the Union Learning Fund for example. As highlighted in the first report in this series, the lack of funds available to the voluntary sector not only created competition between organisations and made alliances and partnership projects unlikely, it also resulted in organisations changing their fundamental objectives and the work they undertook for reasons of sustainability. These are difficulties that trade unions will increasingly face when they rely upon inconsistent state funding or employer will. In this respect, this takes us full circle to the question of resources and priorities within trade unions.

## Summary and conclusion

The five cases presented in this report represent innovative union responses in respect of the difficulties associated with social exclusion and the organisation and representation of black and minority ethnic workers. Table 2 presented on the next page outlines a number of structural and strategic elements of each of the five case studies presented within this report. To summarise, case study one resembled a traditional workplace organising approach, within the food production industry, adapted by the union to take into consideration the ethnic composition of the workforce. The union organised around both class and ethnic identity and illustrated that it had changed in line with the potential membership base of the area. In addressing new concerns, the union was still effective in representing the employment needs of the workforce and interest in membership continued to rise. Case study two illustrates how important the learning agenda can be for a union both inside and outside of the workplace, particularly in respect of new migrant workers. Learning can help shake the perception some have of trade unions as organisations that only offer a service when something is wrong or when collective industrial action is required. Moreover, learning can also act as a credible route into the community. Case study three documents a union's involvement in a council led 'black workers representative committee'. It shows how trade union activists can work with workplace and community networks, respecting their autonomy and adding value to their work. The fourth case outlines a community approach and illustrates the growing importance of alliances with new actors. Providing access to information and linking with other institutions, the union is able to provide an image of being socially concerned and strategic in outlook. Finally, the fifth case shows us how a union can develop cultural and charity oriented work which bring a workforce together. It also shows how such strategies in terms of community links help enhance the union and create mutual support with the local workforce.

There is no doubt that trade unions are facing an increasing challenge from organised racism. The question of social exclusion is not just a legacy of the past that will one day be overcome; it is being renewed through new forms of racism and new xenophobia. This brings the need for an anti-racist campaign that is also about ensuring social inclusion strategies are systematically developed by trade unions. The fact that there are examples of this need to be highlighted. They show the union in a new light – as a pivot of the way society works against racism from below and from within and around the workplace. The question of learning, benchmarking and creating a space for the discussion of such initiatives is now vital for the trade union movement if initiatives are not be forgotten and left 'on the shelf'. The work of activists and officers is very broad in this area but we need to record, study and disseminate this work if there is to be a genuine engagement with the social inclusion agenda. It is also necessary to use such initiatives for the aim of raising profiles. Trade unions face challenges in terms of communication strategies. Moreover, the structure of the labour movement and inter-union relations need rethinking if 'good practice' is to be shared. Issues such as racism and social inclusion require a variety of practices and strategies: these are out there but those developing them need support, information and the ability to take these experiences into the mainstream of union activity. The struggle against racism is about principles but it is also about organisation. In the end, the cases in this report are one set of features of how unions respond and deal with racism: how they are linked together will be the challenge of the coming years in what is a society where equality is not yet as established as we think it is.

**Table 2 – A summary of case study strategic dimensions**

Case study	Strategic Dimensions
<p><b>1) Food production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit ethnic composition of workforce</li> <li>• Flyers translated into respective languages</li> <li>• Use external South Asian organisers</li> <li>• Improved internal representation by appointing South Asian union officials</li> <li>• Appoint stewards who command respect – often share ethnic characteristics with the workforce</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ethnic variations on a traditional approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus campaign around ethnic identity</li> <li>• Break-down language barriers</li> <li>• Provide a South Asian Face to the union</li> <li>• Show the union to be in touch with Asian issues</li> <li>• Union not a white man’s club</li> <li>• Encourage involvement and workplace activism – shop-floor ownership of any campaign</li> </ul>
<p><b>2) Leathermill Plc</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of ESOL courses</li> <li>• Learning reps used as a direct support link between union and migrant workers</li> <li>• Discrimination and anti-bullying courses</li> <li>• Establish union led workplace learning centre – Overall union learning agenda</li> <li>• Plans to expand into industrial and (South Asian) residential communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>The union learning agenda</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially H &amp; S reasons, however, learning became a union vehicle for social inclusion</li> <li>• Union visible to migrant workers and seen to be active on the shop-floor</li> <li>• Union seen as addressing social exclusion</li> <li>• Showed the union to be about more than just workplace grievances</li> <li>• Showed the union to be more than just a workplace organisation. Potential to make learning agenda sustainable</li> </ul>
<p><b>3) From council to community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported council initiatives and development of black workers network</li> <li>• Development of a partnership with the council</li> <li>• Become part of a town wide network of BME interests</li> </ul>	<p><b>Union alliances with BME networks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect council policy on black workers</li> <li>• Link to council and decision making bodies</li> <li>• Create dialogue with BME VCS</li> <li>• Illustrate involvement beyond employment</li> <li>• Raise union profile, illustrate an interest in minority issues, become a strategic partner</li> </ul>
<p><b>4) Connecting with Polish workers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with members from community</li> <li>• Links through Church and social club</li> <li>• Event organised in the community</li> <li>• Brought together new social actors to offer advice on issues other than employment</li> <li>• Maintain contact, regular small events</li> <li>• Offer free advice without membership</li> </ul>	<p><b>New migrant workers, unions and the community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight initiatives not known to union</li> <li>• Campaign credibility through links with ‘hubs’ of the community</li> <li>• Alleviate sectoral organising difficulties</li> <li>• Networked union coordinating wider social assistance needed by many new migrants</li> <li>• Developing profile and dialogue</li> <li>• Social inclusion and educating about unionism</li> </ul>
<p><b>5) On the Buses – equality and unity with diversity?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union developing focused branch level support on issues such as equality law</li> <li>• Local activists use cultural strategies and social activities to cement links between the workforce</li> <li>• Union develops links with communities through the multi-racial aspects of its workforce.</li> </ul>	<p><b>South Asian activist and inclusion strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade union branch becomes the hub of local networks and community links</li> <li>• Trade union activists appear visible to the workforce</li> <li>• Trade union appears engaged in social and community issues</li> <li>• Trade union develops legitimacy within the workforce and in relation to management</li> </ul>

## Appendix - Contents

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## A1) Using the report as a training tool for local trade union officials

*This report can be used as a training tool. There are many ways that this can be done. The main way would be to use the cases as the basis of group work: the following is a proposed timetable for a one day training session.*

### VERSION ONE

- 10.00 Open discussion about racism and discrimination
- 11.00 Use the audit list (see Appendix A3) in groups to check whether your organisation has developed a proper equal opportunities strategy
- 12.00 Discussion and short outline of equal opportunities and anti-racist union strategy. Use the lists on pages 11-12 from Davis et al (2006), see also Appendix A2.
- 13.00 Lunch
- 13.30 Group work discussion of cases – one or two cases per group
- 14.30 Tea/Coffee
- 15.00 Feedback from groups on each of the cases – 20 minutes each
- 16.30 Final feedback on the variety of ways to tackle racism and summary of need to work across different strategies
- 17.00 END

### VERSION TWO

*You may vary this approach and use the second half of the day as a stand-alone session:*

- 13.00 Discussion and short outline of equal opportunities and anti-racist union strategy. Use the list on pages 11-12 from Davis et al (2006), see also Appendix A2.
- 14.00 Tea/Coffee
- 14.30 Group work discussion of cases – one or two cases per group
- 15.30 Feedback from groups on each of the cases – 15 minutes each
- 16.30 Final feedback on the variety of ways to tackle racism and final summary of need to work across different strategies
- 17.00 END

## A2) Ten things you should know about BME representation

1. TUC rule changes at the 2001 congress committed the TUC and affiliated unions to promote equality in all aspects of work.
2. Where unions in Yorkshire and the Humber do represent BME workers they have a large positive effect on wages (Labour Force Survey, August 2005).
3. Though we often group together all minority groups and give them a name such as BME (black and minority ethnic), it is important to remember that this is not a homogeneous group and that different ethnic groups may have very different needs.
4. The largest minority ethnic group within Yorkshire and the Humber is Pakistani. The ethnic groups least likely to join a trade union are Pakistani and Bangladeshi. *How can unions reverse this trend?*
5. According to the Department of Work and Pensions latest research (Djan Tackey et al, 2006) only a relatively small proportion of working-age Pakistanis, but especially Bangladeshis, were born in Britain, furthermore Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have the lowest level of English language proficiency of all the major ethnic minority groups – *Should the union learning agenda therefore incorporate ESOL classes?*
6. The Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force first progress report (Autumn, 2004) shows that ethnic minorities were twice as likely as the overall population to be unemployed, they earned on average less per week than the white population, and many were concentrated in lower grade employment.
7. The 'business case' for unions - Immigration made up over 50 per cent of the UK population growth throughout the 1990s and it is estimated<sup>8</sup> that ethnic minorities are set to account for 'more than 50 per cent of the growth in working age population over coming years' – *That's a lot of potential members!*
8. 'Black [can be] an important organising rallying call within the union movement'<sup>9</sup>. Campaigns around race issues may subsequently foster a greater sense of collective class conscious.
9. Minority groups are still underrepresented within the structures of trade unions. This provides a lack of role models for others further perpetuating the problem, and portrays the labour movement as unable to represent or understand BME issues.
10. BME workers are often located in hard to organise workplaces. *Does this justify a coordinated union response within the community? Could trades councils or voluntary sector organisations facilitate?*

<sup>8</sup>The Ethnic Minority Employment Task Force

<sup>9</sup>Healy et al 2004: 118



### A3) Equal opportunity audit – A checklist of practices

Please read through the checklist below and tick the different schemes your organisation undertakes. There are no right or wrong answers or points system, however it may give you an idea of additional schemes your organisation could potentially utilise.

Title	Yes	No
<b>Collective bargaining</b>		
Use of surveys to identify black members' priorities and inform the bargaining agenda		
Guidelines or advice produced for negotiators on issues relevant to black members		
Monitoring the impact of guidelines, relevant to black members, on collective bargaining		
Provide training relevant to black members to paid officials		
Provide bargaining training related to black members to lay representatives		
<b>Union services</b>		
Monitoring services for how they impact on BME members		
Monitor number of discrimination cases taken to tribunal		
<b>Rules</b>		
National rules on (general) equality		
National rules relating to women and black members		
<b>Membership</b>		
Keep statistics on the number of black members		
Keep records on ethnic origin of shop stewards		
Keep records of black branch officers		
Keep records of black conference delegates		
Keep records on black national executive committee members		
Keep equality statistics on senior full-time black officials		
Aims or targets for black members		
Made specific efforts to recruit women and black members		
<b>Employment/election of equality officers</b>		
National equalities officer with specific areas of responsibility		
Regional/group/sectoral equalities officers		
Specific person at branch level with responsibility for women and black members		
<b>Structures</b>		
National equality bodies for women, black and young members		
Have a national general equality committee		
Reserved seats on national executives		
Reserved seats at union conferences		
Reserved seats at delegations to the TUC		
Hold regular national conferences/seminars for women and black members		
<b>The union as employer</b>		
Proportion of unions that have undertaken an equality audit		
Have an equal opportunities policy		
Used positive action in recruitment procedures for black workers		
<b>Education and training</b>		
Monitoring participation by ethnicity on union or union sponsored training		
Encourage women and black members to attend union training		
Take steps to make sure courses are accessible to black members		
<b>Publicity/materials/publications</b>		
Offer some publicity materials in languages other than English		
<b>Campaigns</b>		
Planning to run campaigns (i.e. anti BNP) that specifically affect black members		

\*Table derived from topics covered by TUC equal opportunity audits

### A4) Useful web addresses

- ACAS.....<http://www.acas.org.uk>
- Citizens Advice Bureau .....<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>
- Commission for Racial Equality.....<http://www.cre.gov.uk>
- Consortium Of Ethnic Minority Organisations.....<http://www.coemo.co.uk>
- Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations .....<http://www.cemvo.org.uk>
- Equal Opportunities Commission.....<http://www.eoc.org.uk>
- Ethnic Minority Employment Taskforce .....<http://www.emetaskforce.gov.uk>
- Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber .....<http://www.goyh.gov.uk>
- Leeds BME strategy group (Via).....<http://www.leedsinitiative.org>
- Low Pay Commission.....<http://www.lowpay.gov.uk>
- National Assembly Against Racism.....<http://www.naar.org.uk>
- National Association for Voluntary and Community Action .....<http://www.navca.org.uk>
- Regional Forum's BME Information Service .....<http://www.bme.org.uk>
- Searchlight Magazine.....<http://www.searchlightmagazine.com>
- The Social Exclusion Unit.....<http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk>
- Unite Against Fascism .....<http://www.uaf.org.uk>

Racial Equality Councils – Check the internet for your nearest office  
 Trades councils – Check the internet for your nearest trades council

## A5) Practical recommendations from report No 1

The practical recommendations offered below were given by interviewees from black and minority ethnic community support organisations (Report 1 – Perrett and Martínez Lucio, 2006). They are replicated here for reference only – please see Report 1 for full details.

### The learning agenda

- Union Learning Fund (ULF) – Funding skills for migrant labour
- Learning hubs within the workplace and community better promoted and exploited
- Union reps better trained in diversity and BME issues
- Offer a CV and employment interview training service within the community
- Integrate ESOL, citizenship and employment training into learning agenda

### Marketing the union

- Make better use of BME networks and communication channels
- Clearly promote what trade unions do and the benefits they can generate
- Increase presence in communities, i.e. meetings in cultural and religious centres
- Gain trust through association with other community groups
- Telephone enquiry line
- Advertise on flyers (job centres, libraries, community advice centres, letter boxes)

### Internal representation

- Recruit more BME organisers and officials at all levels of the union – Union must be seen to be able to represent the interests of BME workers
- Recruit through identity rather than class

### Communication with BME support groups

- Meet with and talk openly to community groups
- Initial communication and dissemination through larger umbrella organisations and networks such as the Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO), Racial Equalities Councils, the Commission for Racial Equality, 'Connecting Communities' funded projects, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the Regional Forum's BME information network and GOYH, the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS and CVS') to name just a few

### Joint projects with BME support groups

- Joint projects between unions and support groups with similar interests
- Offer financial support or resources in terms of shared projects or human resources
- Become less centralised – Appoint a dedicated officer to each respective community
- Out-post workers in community advice centres (half/one day a week)
- Offer an initial service free of charge to non-members
- Offer training to BME community groups – how to give advice, updates on changes in the law (raises union profile)
- Part fund a voluntary post within the community

## A6) TUC reports of potential interest

Davis, M, McKenzie, R. and Sullivan, R. (2006) *Working Against Racism: The role of trade unions in Britain* London: TUC.

Fitzgerald, I. Stirling, J. (2004), *Black Minority Ethnic Groups Views of Trade Unions*, Northumbria University, Trades Union Congress. 2004.

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**For earlier reports please contact national TUC (publications) – 020 76364030**

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Follow links from [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) or go to [www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions\\_info\\_yandh.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions_info_yandh.cfm)

Regional Equality & Diversity Fora include Racial Awareness, Women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender ([lgbt@tuc.org.uk](mailto:lgbt@tuc.org.uk)), Retired Members, Disability, and Youth. Please note, these fora are open to all trade union members and officials - for further details please contact Chris Beastall on 0113 242 9696 or at the above address.

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