

EQUALITY MATTERS



SELF ORGANISED GROUPS

Issue 2
October 2015

Welcome to Issue 2 **EQUALITY MATTERS**, the quarterly newsletter for **you**, about **you** and that we want you to contribute to.

In this Issue you can catch up on news including the TUC national demonstration on Sunday, 4 October in Manchester against austerity, international trade unionist, various equality events and the new Suffragettes movie. Check out 'Who Are You?'

Your articles and comments are welcome.

Sonia Stewart
Branch Equality Officer

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BRANCH NEWS

TUC Demonstration – Sunday, 4 October, Manchester

On a sunny day in Manchester on 4 October, the TUC national demonstration, 'Yes to Workers' Rights NO to Austerity' attracted a reported 85,000 trade unionists from all over the UK. The march was preceded by a rally on Oxford Road and included speakers from the TUC, UNISON and the National Union of Students, speaking out against the government's austerity measures and attacks from the unfair Trade Union Bill.

A peaceful Manchester UNISON Branch, with Branch banner, was well represented and members supporting workers' rights were proud to wear the event t-shirts handed out on the day.



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We can.....

Thinking about the film Suffragette, I was taken back to my first job with the Council. I was a Care Assistant at a residential care home. In my care group was a frail but sharp old - very old - woman. She was 104 when I first met her. Her name was Elizabeth Dean. She had been part of the Suffragette Movement with the Pankhursts and active in community, trade union and party politics all her life.

Elizabeth taught me the subtleties and contradictions that sit within a Self Organised Group. She explained that all women were welcome to join the Women's Social & Political Union - it was a women's movement, driven by the political demand of Votes for Women. But within that, money and class mattered.

For women from wealthier families the drive was political representation, the right to higher education - women could study but couldn't be awarded a degree, the right to petition for divorce, and the right of inheritance - the right to own land and property passed down their line. These things matter, very much. I've very much benefited from their demands, I went to university on a full grant while being a (divorced) single parent of four children.

For poorer women, the drive was slightly different. Elizabeth told me that poorer women wanted political representation too, but they also wanted the right to work, to have pay parity with men, to escape domestic violence, and to have access to contraception and abortion.

These things occupy me when I think about what the Tories are doing under the guise of austerity. They are waging a class war against us and look how they are rolling our rights back, rights that those brave women, from across the classes, fought for and won for us. We have members struggling with debt, with domestic violence, with poor mental health, with poor physical health, with carer responsibilities, with the loss of Tax Credits. What can we do?

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We can encourage people to join our union, to make our voice louder and our strength in numbers. We can stand as stewards, and have a recognised visibility in our workplaces. We can join in community campaigns. We can challenge right wing backwardness everywhere we are. The Tories are using racism as the vehicle to drive through austerity. We need to stand together, Black and White and all the shades of humanity in between, against every racist attack. I asked Elizabeth what sort of activity those Suffragette women did. ", she said, "Oh mostly, we just fought with the police" she said. Then she paused. She went on "we fought the police because they were protecting the status quo. We had to fight, to organise, to make our demands heard".

We can organise, like the Suffragettes.
We can fight, like the Suffragettes.

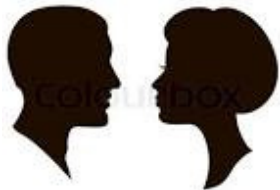
We have a chance right now, through and with our union, through the community and political movements that are developing, to challenge what the Tories are doing. By coming together and organising.

We have to fight to save public services. Because our members need them.
We have to fight to save jobs. Because our members need them.
We have to fight on wages. Because our members need them.

I'm going to the Tory party conference protest. I will be part of our Branch delegation. Join me, make our demands heard. No to Austerity!

Lesley Lancelott, Chair, UNISON Manchester Branch Women's SOG

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Black Members

Black History Month Event, 1 October 2015



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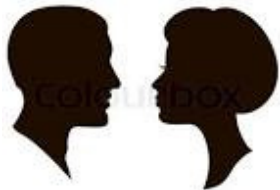
This second strengthening links event, was held within the community following positive feedback from the 2014 event. All guest speakers and performer were very well received by the audience and Prajyoti Madhusadan, Artistic Director of the Pushpanjali Dance Company gave a stunning performance of Indian Classical Dance. Information relating to the Race Relations Act, in line with the event theme, was on display, in addition to information regarding UNISON nationally and locally, to raise awareness of the union's aims, activities and benefits to members, as well as membership packs and feedback from last year's event.

The keynote speaker, Geoff Thompson, MBE FRSA DL, and Executive Chair of Youth Charter, whose topic was 'Sport and the Impact of Race Relations in Britain', took the audience on a 50 year timeline journey from a personal and professional perspective, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Race Relations Act and social, cultural and political impact sport played during that time. He also addressed the 22 year Manchester and Moss Side experience of the Youth Charter, with social and cultural challenges faced by young people, who through inequality, limited life chances and tragedy have seen a legacy become a global movement and opportunity for all, now reflected in a sport for development and peace movement. A very clear message is the ongoing challenges and barriers faced by young people and wider community within the current culture and climate in race, religion, immigration and potential disaffection and extremism now being seen.

There is a need to see unionism re-engage with communities through social and cultural engagement of young people, to equip and empower them to a greater sense of worth, belief, activism and leadership. Inspired by global icons of the African Diaspora whose struggle and sacrifice made it possible for us to continue to fight with a knowledge, wisdom, experience and spirit, to continue the journey of belief, hope and purpose.

Roy Walters BEM, former Ward Councillor and Lord Mayor of Manchester, as well as life member of UNISON, spoke in a personal capacity on the 'Likely Impact of the Race Relations Act' linking the theme into his experiences, including when he worked as a bus conductor in the 1960's, overcoming barriers and his determination to succeed. Not resting on his laurels, he has also encouraged, motivated and supported others to succeed along the way.

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Black Members

Rena Wood, Assistant Branch Secretary, Manchester UNISON Branch updated everyone on some of UNISON's key activities and the TUC national demonstration against austerity in Manchester on Sunday, 4 October. Damian Daley, Black Members' SOG Chair raised awareness of the group's aims, objectives and support offered to members.

The topic of Dr Dawn Edge, Senior Lecturer from the University of Manchester was 'Black Mental Health: Getting Our Act Together'. Dawn talked about her work with people of African Caribbean heritage and health professionals to develop and test a new form of 'talking therapy' for people diagnosed with schizophrenia and their families. She is also in the process of developing an online, 'e-learning' educational programme to inform the families of people affected by psychosis and schizophrenia.

Adolphus Mike, 'Support 4 Progress – History and Going Forward', raised awareness of the Support for Progress (S4P) initiative in Moss Side that provides 1:1 counselling, training and group support. He also informed the audience that he is starting up a S4P library and welcomes donations of books. If anyone has books to donate and/or would like to volunteer to assist with the work being carried out, Adolphus may be contacted on 07931144515.

Evaluation: Over 90% of attendees agreed that the event met their interests and needs, with the most effective form of marketing being the event flyer (53%), followed by word of mouth (33%). Almost 70% of those who returned their evaluation form would attend future UNISON events. Some general comments were:

- "The meeting was informative and engaging"
- "I would like to be kept informed with what I have heard today"
- "The presenter of the event was very professional"
- "Enjoyable"
- "The speakers spoke of their experiences in work places, sports etc, which was very interesting"

Sonia Stewart, Branch Equality Officer



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Disabilities

Disabled Members' SOG

The officer who agreed to launch the Disabled Members' SOG has recently gone on secondment, so if you're interested in getting this group started please contact Sonia Stewart as soon as possible. Support will be available to launch and develop this group, if you require it.

Suffragette Movie

"Suffragette" is the story of the Pankhurst Women, founders of the Women's Social Political Union. Activists whose militant tactics made the Pankhursts' crucial contributors to women's suffrage and Manchester's radical heritage. The Suffragettes fought for, and won the vote for women, nearly 100 years ago.



The film will premiere in Manchester on 9 October at the Odeon, Printworks, before going on general release from 12 October.

Dr Helen Pankhurst, great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst is expected to attend the screening and together with Stella Duffy, writer, theatre maker and Women's Equality Party Campaigner, will answer questions on the Pankhursts, the Suffragettes and the 'legacy' of women's suffrage in relation to the wider women's movement and contemporary struggles to tackle gender inequality and injustice.



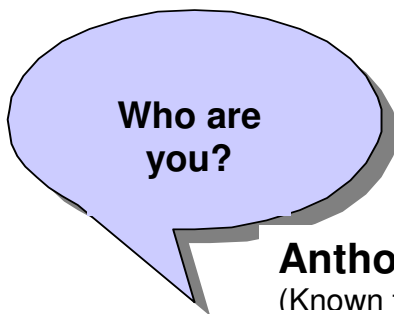
For further information, go to
<http://bit.ly/1KHcuVR>

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Anthony Gilfillan
(Known to most as Tony)



Do you have a role within the union eg steward/convenor?

Historically I have been a steward and whilst no longer in that role, I still look to utilise the skills and experience gained during that period of my working life.

If yes, what do you like about your role?

Whilst in the role, I believed the basic principals as stated by Unison, where in keeping with my own value system.

What are your interests away from work?

My primary interest involves the care, management and competition, related to 3 horses, which I and my wife are blessed to own.

Who is your role model and why?

A number of people and animals, of varying ages and from points in time in my own history, have contributed to those principles and values I aspire to live up to.

What is your day role?

Early Help Advisor, Directorate for Children and Families

What's your ideal job and why?

My ideal job is any role that involves improving how professionals and agencies perceive and deliver services, to those who are in need of support.

How long have you been a UNISON member?

30 years.

What does UNISON mean to you?

It still remains one of the few opportunities for the voice of a single individual, to be heard by those in positions of power, by being part of a collective.

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Who are
you?

Jane Wilcox



What is your day role?

I'm an Assistant Branch Secretary in the Manchester Branch.

What's your ideal job and why?

I'd quite like my own vineyard and winemaking business somewhere beautiful - for obvious reasons.

How long have you been a UNISON member?

UNISON and NALGO together, is coming up to 27 years.

What does UNISON mean to you?

Without unions we'd have no rights, no justice, no power and no dignity at work. We don't just get handed those things, we have to fight to get them and to keep them.

What do you like about your role?

The team is great, the work is varied and there's so much to learn. I loved my previous jobs in galleries and libraries for just the same reasons.

What are your interests away from work?

I'm a culture vulture. I love going to galleries and the theatre so I'm lucky I live in Manchester where I'm spoilt for choice.

Who is your role model and why?

I meet role models every day - decent, hard working and unsung. I feel lucky to work with and for them.

Who are you? - Update

Issue 1, **EQUALITY MATTERS** brought you news of Viola Robinson's counselling course. Here is Viola's update. "I have completed Counselling Skills which is level 3. I have enrolled for Level 5 Therapeutic Counselling which should give me the accreditation I need to practice. I start on 17th September." **Well done Viola**

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International News

Meeting with Nicaraguan Trade Unionist Flor de Maria Avellan, 18 September 2015, Arena Point

The meeting was Chaired by David Owen, Chair of the Regional International Relations Committee.

Flor de Maria Avellan, is a Nicaraguan trade unionist with the CTCF Trade union, beneficiary and supporter of the ALBA (Venezuelan and Cuban led cooperation) funded social programme for women and mainly works with street vendors between the ages of 16 and 35 (women make up 48% of the union). They used to be called Informal workers but as there's nothing informal about work, are now referred to as the 'Self Employed Workers Union'. In her opening speech Flor said "We do not want to talk about the past, but we want to be positive. We lack a lot of things, but we are not poor."



l-r Dave Spooner, Director, Global Labour Institute, David Owen (seated), Flor de Maria Avellan (far right, with interpreter)

Her union, founded in 2002, brings together men, women and young families. Members reclaimed the concept they're workers, which was not easy as they were not looked at in the same way as salaried people, but thought, why can't we form a union as people do in the public sector? In 2002 they were in a critical situation, having to live with the neo liberal government in Nicaragua. 5,000 people from all over Nicaragua were brought together and had a big march in June 2003. "The government was stupid and didn't realise what they were dealing with" she said. Pressure was kept up until the Sandinista government came back to power. The present government, listens to the will of the people and gave them political space and the will to make life easier.

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The people attend 'Cabinets of Community and Life' monthly meetings in districts, which deal with social and political issues and their views are taken into account when the Ministry makes decisions. Now there is very much hope, support from the government and solidarity. Education of members is important and there is a need to raise awareness and teach people, so leaders can develop. However, there's a problem with drug trafficking, affecting young people. It's a shared responsibility, not just for the police, and the government is developing a strategy around this. The people face many challenges, but know they're not alone.

The Chief of Police in Nicaragua is female and very respected. A 50/50 law has been passed by the government whereby women have to be represented 50/50. There's support and encouragement for women to develop their skills, via a socio political model of trade unionism and ensuring women can see what has been achieved. There is also complete trade union freedom in Nicaragua, with no penalty for going on strike.

Events

1-31 October 2015: Tour Black History Month (discover stories of Black and Commonwealth service personnel from the First World War onwards)

13 October 2015: An Open Evening With Greater Manchester Deaf Forum, 7pm-9pm at Manchester Deaf Centre, Crawford House, Booth Street East, Manchester M13 9GH.

16-18 October 2015: Pan African Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University Great Hall, Brooks Building. For more information: contact@pac45foundation.com

17 October 2015: Deshwari Mela, Albert Square and Town Hall, 2pm-9pm.

Disability History Month: 22 November 2015 to 22 December 2015 at venues across Manchester. The 2015 theme is 'Portrayal of Disability: Then and Now' and events will include an exhibition at Central Library. More information can be found at www.ukdhm.org

Deadline

The deadline for comments and articles to be submitted for Issue 3 of this Newsletter is **Friday, 4 December 2015**. Comments and articles should be emailed to s.stewart1@manchester.gov.uk