

## **NUS Black Students' Conference Report**

### **Delegate – Mabel D. Ogundayo**

This report is to summarise the events of the NUS Black Student's conference between 26<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The conference wanted to provide the opportunity for all types of ethnic minorities, including African, Asian and Caribbean students to come together and learn about the NUS Black Students campaign. The conference also allowed students to engage in debates, discuss other matters relating to Black students and provided important information on how students can get involved with the running of their Higher Education or Further Education unit.

There were also a number of subsections with the NUS Black Students which were; Funding our Future, Higher Education, Further Education, Union Development, Welfare and Student Rights, Society and Citizenship, Womens, LGBT and Disabled. Each of these subsections had their own campaign and an officer who was made account of it.

The day began with Kanja Sesay (NUS Black Students Officer) who gave a very powerful and strong anti-Tory stance speech on the running of society. He spoke about their past and how they had dealt with the Steven Lawrence murder case as well as his fears for the present Stephen Lawrence case. He spoke of how the racism from past societies has also continued into today's society. An example of this was the EDL tower hamlets march on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011, which included 1,000 people who threw missiles at police but yet only 16 arrests were made. He then spoke of campaigns that try to break these boundaries in society. Firstly, Justice for Smiley Culture, which is named after a reggae artist who died of a stab wound during a police raid on his house, this campaign aimed at finding justice for all people who have died in police custody. Secondly is "Viva Palestina" which is a British based Charity which runs a humanitarian aid convoy to the Gaza strip and intends on sending food, medicine, essential goods and services as well as sending the message of peace and highlighting the causes of war.

He was then followed by Pav Akhtar who referred back to Michael Howard's failings of the Lawrence death in 1993 when he failed to order a public inquiry into the death while he was home secretary in a Tory government. He also noted the 1999 McPherson Report that was ordered by Jack Straw into the Lawrence Inquiry. It noted the then police perceptions of the black community and made 70 recommendations. It also led to the Race Relations (Amendments) Act on public institutions to meet targets. The preventative legislation wanted to end discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and create relations. He then spoke of the Equality Act 2010, which covers most inequality by harmonising equality legislation and protecting individual characteristics (?) such as age, faith and gender. As well as the equality and Human Rights Commission, this was established in 2007 with Simon Wolley leading it. This also harmonised disabled, equality and gender commissions.

They were then followed by a number of other speakers, including Dennis Fernandes, Lee Jasper, Sabby Dhalu, Varinder Singh, Shamiul Juarder, Charmaine Elliot, Peter Herbert, Simon Woolley, Linda Bellos, Egle Sanchez, Abi, Shakira Akhtar, Kofi Klu, Samira Anjum, Kanja Ibrahim Sesay and Shanteer Driver. Below are brief overviews on what each speaker spoke on.

DENNIS FERNANDES – Occupy London Stock Exchange

Govt. creating divisions between groups they promote to be cohesive and one

LEE JASPER – Joint Chair of Black Activists Rising Against Cuts

Political diversion

- Hype the media and divert attention from political inadequacies to other news

Stephen Olingens

SABBY DHALU – Unite Against Fascism

Global economic crisis

- Lead to rise in racism
- Minorities undermined

Divide and undermine opposition to the cuts

- Cuts lead to social unrest

Community's scapegoat

British Freedom Party (BFP) – read

- Consists of members of BNP and EDL

VARINDER SINGH – Sikhs against the EDL

SHAMIUL JUARDER – Muslim Safety Forum

s.44 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) – stop and search powers of police officers

- January: European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR): Act did not have the proper safeguards – scrapped

Sch. 7: can be detained up to 9 hours without charge

Home Office: stopped recording stop and search to ease police bureaucracy

Cover-up of institutional racism

Islam phobia – 'pouring' rather than 'drip-drip' effect

- Coming from a political level

Government prevent clear channel's project

CHARMAINE ELLIOT – Black Feminists Group, London

PETER HERBERT – Black Lawyers

United communities

Abdul Nasser, Zionist reading; *Stay in Power* – history of black people

Solution to the problem – confidence – overcome racism

Organised, lawful action, partnerships of equality

“Be large, be in charge, be strong”

SIMON WOOLLEY – Equality and Human Rights Committee

**Operation Black Vote**

Established in 1996

Black politics, magistrates, councillors, cabinet ministers e.g. Helen Grant

simon@operationblackvote

LINDA BELLOS – Black Sections of the Labour Party

**Diversity Solutions**

Class issues

Recognise oppression in all forms

EGLÉ SANCHEZ – Venezuelan Trade Union General Secretary

**President Chavez – Education Policies**

Missions

- Country free from illiteracy
- 20 new universities accommodating to all students worldwide
  - o Receive grant and subsidiaries
- Precedence for Palestinian students
  - o Subsidiaries unheard of in any country

ABI from Middlesex University

Asylum seeker from Uganda

Uganda and Nigeria – homophobia issues

SHAKIRA AKHTAR – Palestine

Human Rights for Palestine

- Lack of electricity and water
  - o Power cuts
- Palestinians highly educated – NOT a right
- Palestinian Solidarity Campaign
- Viva Palestina!

KOFI KLU – Panafriindaba

Vietnam – Black Panther Movement: “seize the time”

Needs to be more than protesting

Support OCCUPY for change

Occupy the Hoods – beginning to build an alternative

SAMAIRA ANJUM and KANJA IBRAHIM SESAY – Movement for Justice

SHANTER DRIVER – By Any Means Necessary

Get involved!

A lot of emphasis was raised on winning black representation in your Student Union and four main campaigning methods were given for individuals who wanted to get involved. Firstly, whilst campaigning, it is important to explain in a sentence what your values were and what you wanted to do and it is essential that your branding matches your message. This can also include having a catchphrase or punch line that people will remember you by. Secondly, it is important to carry out research to understand the current campus climate. This should not take too much time, but it is important to find out about other candidates who are running and if there are any societies who will openly support candidates and most importantly, it is important to read the constitution in order to ensure you do not break any rules and get disqualified. It is also important to be as truthful and sincere as possible, this means ensuring all your different messages are in conjunction with your main message.

Thirdly, is running a campaign and having a campaign team. It is essential that you have a manager to support you and give direction to the campaign. Additionally, you will need five or more volunteers to help run your campaign and societies who will support and promote you. The best way to get societal support is through organising meetings with them, thank them for their time, explain your message and explain how you will help them in return. Lastly, target the right candidates. This should happen last but you should ensure that you get all your voters to vote for you on the same date and that other students apart from your core voters, have been approached closer to the time. This is important as you want voters to remember you. It is also a good idea that you have your volunteers create something "different" to help gain voters. These including singing, dancing, flash mobs and anything else that is constitutional.

### Summary

In summary, the conference was very eye opening experience that provided the opportunity to meet and greet with political and social activists as well as meet other individuals who were just as interested in gaining as much knowledge as I did. There were many strengths of the conference, which include all those stated above, and the conference made it known what weaknesses there are within society that lead to racist ideology. Future conferences should be recommended to others in order to gain this insight.