Heroines & Heroes of the Labour Movement
According to research the CWU has commissioned from the Office of National Statistics, in September 2014, black and minority ethnic workers made up 14% of the workforce in the post and courier sector, and 14.9% in the telecommunications sector. We do not currently have the position in financial services.

These figures represent a higher proportion of the workforce than the position of BAME workers in the general workforce, which stands at 10.9%. It is then extra important that the CWU has an effective policy and practice against racism, and for proportionality in representation.

BAME members of the CWU make a unique contribution to the union, allowing us to understand the importance of our multicultural workplaces and society. One of the decisive struggles in my own evolution as an activist was the Grunwick strike. This heroic fight, led by Jayaben Desai, made a fundamental difference to my comprehension of what trade unions can be, and what it is to be a principled militant. It was a proud day for our union when CWU Annual Conference posthumously awarded her national honorary membership.

My best wishes to all involved in making a success of BAME Day.

Billy Hayes
General Secretary

Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to the CWU Annual Conference 2015. For the first time ever, our Union has dedicated a day of Conference to encouraging and prioritising BAME issues, in the hope that we can reach out to more BAME members, inspiring them to become a more active part of our Union.

BAME Day will be exciting. We have a number of initiatives planned and we hope that it is as engaging as possible for you.

This booklet has been specially designed as part of BAME Day. I previously commissioned a Women Heroines of the Labour Movement booklet which was really well received and we thought we would produce a BAME version, with a special focus on our own Trade Union, as well as our friends in some of the other Unions.

It is important that we celebrate our own people’s achievements and this booklet goes some way to helping us to achieve this.

BAME Day dovetails really well with the work that the CWU are doing on Proportionality and Representation, and which I am involved in, along with our General Secretary and Trish Lavelle. We are committed to the long haul and already we have seen a really positive change in the landscape as the branches grow more supportive of the need to ensure our structures are reflective of the members we seek to serve.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to those Branches who have been able to bring along BAME delegates/visitors to Conference, as this is what the day is all about.

I really hope you enjoy BAME day.

Linda Roy
Assistant Secretary / Equal Opportunities
AMARJITE SINGH

Former Wales TUC President, Chair of the Race Advisory Committee & Branch Secretary of South East Wales Amal

Amarjite’s grandfather was from Lahore, India (now Pakistan) he travelled from Bombay to Liverpool in 1948. AJ’s father followed in 1951 and then his mother in 1959. His grandfather and father worked as peddlars in the Carmarthenshire area – at the time Carmarthen homed one of the largest Sikh communities in Wales. AJ was born in Swansea in 1962 but spent most of his childhood living in Llanelli; the family relocated to Cardiff during the early 70s. His father passed away during this time, which left his mother with 5 children to raise.

AJ studied in Cardiff and left higher education with 5 GCSEs at the age of 15. He was successful in qualifying to study an apprenticeship in the construction industry as a roofer & tiler. After completing his apprenticeship, he worked for Cardiff Bus as a Mechanic’s Labourer. He also served three years in the Royal Artillery Reserves in the British Army; at the time he was the first Sikh to serve in Wales.

Amarjite joined Royal Mail in 1987 and became active in the CWU in 1999. He was elected as Branch Secretary in 2007 and held a number of positions before becoming Branch Secretary. Although he always voted Labour, he did not become active in the Labour Party until 2002. He held a number of positions in his own union and the trade union movement. These positions included CWU National Race Advisory Committee (Chair), TUC/ Race Relations Committee, TUC/ Joint Consultative Committee, Wales TUC Executive & General Council member of the Wales TUC, Treasurer of Cardiff Trades Council, Treasurers of Wales Unite Against Fascism and BAME Labour (Black and Minority Ethnic) and was also elected on behalf of the union to attend National and International Conferences.

AJ was elected as President of the Wales TUC in 2012 and served until 2013. He is the first ever CWU activist to be elected to the position and the second ever BAME.

The Trade Union movement provided him with skills and education, from Basic Reps training to an Employment Law Diploma. This helped him fullfil the positions that he held. During his own time he has been active in the Sikh community and held a number of positions in the Sikh Temple (Gurdwara).

Amarjite is deeply proud of the fact that he is a grandson and son of migrants that have contributed positively to British society.

MICHÈLE EMERSON

former CWU Equal Opportunities Officer

Michèle was elected to the CWU’s NEC back in 1993 and her rise in the Union structures was made all the more remarkable given that she was one of the very first female engineer apprentices to be taken on by BT. Her entry into a hostile male dominated environment was a true baptism of fire, and no doubt helped to mould her views over the years to come.

Michèle was the first woman to be elected Officer of the Overseas Telegraph Branch and prior to being elected on to the NEC she sat on the Women’s Advisory Committee for a number of years (1986-1993) and the then EMAC (Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee) from 1991 to 1993.

She became Assistant Secretary, responsible for Equal Opportunities in 2002 and one of her many virtues was that she was a ‘no nonsense’ person, her understanding in equality grounded through her own tough experiences in the workplace.

Michèle’s expertise in equality saw her negotiate policies around issues linked to attendance patterns, maternity and paternity pay and bullying and harassment but to name a few. She was very well informed around equality legislation and she was an accredited tutor for the CWU involved in the design and delivery of the Union’s education programme for a number of years. Her passion for equality was clear to see and this included support for all the strands. She was also keen to play her role in external causes and was pivotal in coordinating the support that the Abortion Rights Campaign enjoys to this day.

There was more than a visionary aspect to her work, as she organised Race Advisory Committee teams to travel up to see BAME members in areas where there were low levels of union engagement with these under-represented groups.

Michèle was a keen supporter and member of the Labour Party. She was also a member of Searchlight and was an avid anti-racism campaigner, joining anti-BNP demos around the country to support the then anti-nazi league and more recently UAF. Human Rights issues were also close to her heart and this was evidenced by the fact she was a member of Amnesty International for many years.
LORD BILL MORRIS

The First Black Trade Union General Secretary in Britain, was born on 19th October 1938 in Bombay, Jamaica.

He came to the UK aged 16 to join his recently widowed mother. In Birmingham he worked with an engineering company where he attended a day release course in engineering. In 1957 he married a young Jamaican woman, Minetta. They had two sons - Clyde and Garry, and he has two grandchildren - Una and Rohan. Minetta died in 1990 of breast cancer.

In 1958 Bill joined the T&G and five years later he was elected a shop steward. Throughout his time with the T&G he worked his way up from being a shop steward to becoming General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (now Unite) in 1991. In that election he made it clear that he was not the black candidate but the candidate who was black.

In 1964, as Shop steward at Hardy Spencers, he was involved in his first major industrial dispute, challenging management over the need to provide workers with protective gloves. The successful outcome of that dispute set him on the path to taking on other fights, many of which he won. In his 30 years in the trade union movement he is well known for speaking out for the rights of minorities and for civil liberties in general. He retired from trade union life in 2003.

Bill has served in a number of positions including membership of the Employment Appeals Tribunal, TUC General Council and ACAS. He has served as a member of the Commission for Racial Equality and on both the BBC and IBA General Advisory Councils.

He was a non-Executive Director of the Bank of England between 1998 and 2006 and immediately after retirement chaired the Morris Enquiry into the professional standards and workplace practices of the Metropolitan Police.

Since 2005 he has been a member of the Cricket Board for England and Wales and of the Mergers and Take Over Panel and he is Chair of Midland Heart housing association, as well as a member of the Board of Trustees for Performance Birmingham which runs Birmingham’s Symphony and Town Halls.

In October 2002 he was awarded the Order of Jamaica by the Jamaican Government for services to international trade unionism and a year later a Knighthood by Her Majesty the Queen. He took his seat in the House of Lords in 2006, taking the title: Lord Morris of Handsworth.

Lord Bill plays an active role in the House, taking the Labour whip and speaking on a variety of social, industrial and political issues.

Since 2005 he has been a member of the Metropolitan Police. He was a non-Executive Director of the BBC and IBA General Advisory Councils. He was a non-Executive Director of the Bank of England between 1998 and 2006 and immediately after retirement chaired the Morris Enquiry into the professional standards and workplace practices of the Metropolitan Police.

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In recognition of her significant achievements, in 1999 she was awarded the MBE for services to trade unions and in 2005 the CBE for services to equal opportunities and in 2006 received an Honorary Doctorate in Law from Staffordshire University. She is a member of the Employment Appeal Tribunal; Editorial Board of Equal Opportunities Review and a Former CRE Commissioner. She has a Master in Business Administration.

In 2010, Gloria won the Hansib Community Awards with this tribute for her distinguished career as a champion of equality. The Voice Newspaper described her on its front page as ‘One in a Million’ on becoming TUC President.

Gloria’s pioneering work has transformed the agenda, structure and culture of the trade union movement. She has promoted the concept of a ‘built-in’ model of equality rather than a ‘bolted-on’ approach to equality. She has been instrumental in ensuring mechanisms in union rules that ensure direct representation for under-represented groups in the decision-making and democracy of trade unions. She has promoted the principles of proportionality, fair representation and self-organisation that have shifted the balance of power in unions with under-represented groups participating in the mainstream of union decision-making and democracy.

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In this era of austerity, under-employment, zero hours contracts and poverty wages there is extreme pressure put on working people to do more for less and with less protections at work. It is arguable that these tough conditions should provide fertile ground for trade unions to organise and recruit new workers.

With young workers, women workers and BAME workers in particular bearing the brunt of the cuts it has never been more important for trade unions to make sure that we are connecting with this part of the workforce, and that crucially we are recruiting and organising these workers.

Over the last 3 years we have embarked on a very ambitious project to ensure that our structures and rules are inclusive and proportional and that any barrier to us being inclusive and proportionate is removed. In other words, we have decided to test whether our paper policies and rules are actually working for us and making a difference on the ground.

However you look at it we have to first accept that right now in 2015 we are simply not proportionate at all levels of union activity. Some areas are better than others, but we still have a long way to go.

What is certain is that proportionality delivers a fairer union for all members. Proportionality is both a guarantee of equality, and our future, in a changing workplace.

Data on representation suggest that there are obstacles to women and black members. Whether these are consciously placed or otherwise is not crucial, what is crucial for us is to address the problems.

The CWU is a very democratic organisation and when we consider proportionality we must also consider how we can achieve an acceptable balance between remaining a strongly membership led union and becoming more inclusive and accessible. These two factors are not mutually exclusive but the concept of members voting for the person that they wish to represent them is a fundamental value of the CWU that should be upheld.

Our work has seen the CWU make clear its stated aims and objectives. These include removing or limiting structural or cultural barriers to involvement in Union activity by our under-represented groups, introducing improved systematic data capture and monitoring of participation and progress at all levels in the Union, providing active support, encouragement and development for new activists particularly from those under-represented groups. The role of our Advisory Committees will be better understood and clearer as will the roles for Branch and Regional Equality positions.

These are just some of our priorities to both make the Union structures reflect its membership and to ensure our under-represented groups feel a positive connection with the CWU.

This booklet shows some of the vital contributions made to the trade union and wider labour movement by BAME people and we hope it will be a source of inspiration to empower a future generation of BAME activists.
This work, which goes back more than 30 years is, itself, built on a black radical tradition that flows from Africa through the Caribbean islands to the United States of America and back to the UK. It draws on the work of great activists such as Web DuBois, Franz Fanon, CLR James, Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, Angela Davis, A. Philip Randolph and many unheralded activists in workplaces and communities through slavery, colonialism and the colour bar.

The fight for black self-organisation within the UK trade union movement was never about creating separate structures. It has always been about building the collective strength of unions to tackle institutional racism and thereby enhancing our movements collective ability to stand up for the working class against those who seek to exploit our labour.

I was at the heart of establishing and supporting black members structures in more than a dozen trade unions over the years as the trade union officer for the Labour Party Black Sections (a body which I later had the honour to Chair), the Anti Racist Alliance, as a tutor in trade union education, a race equality officer for PCS and then the TUC.

At the TUC I was the secretary of the Stephen Lawrence Task Force which, amongst other things, changed its rules so that a regular audit of union work on progress towards equality had some teeth.

I am currently the national chair of the UK Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, a sister organisation of the longest standing black trade union body in the USA. The US Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, formed in 1972, and led until recently by my mentor William Lucy, drew major inspiration from the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike of 1968. Lucy was one of the main organisers of that dispute which Dr Martin Luther King Jnr was supporting when he was assassinated.

The fight for black self organisation, and for race equality more generally, is integral to creating a strong and vibrant trade union movement. Without removing the barriers that are used to divide us as workers by empowering those who are currently marginalized the strength of workers will remain weaker than it should be and the rich will get richer and the poor poorer.
WINSTON RICHARDS
Chair of Greater London Combined Branch & Vice Chair of the Race Advisory Committee

The impact this can have on an individual or group tends to cultivate a sense of isolation, fear, a lack of control over those behaviours as well as a feeling of being powerless. These experiences have encountered. I can remember my primary school days where many of us from an ethnic minority background were subjected to name calling and actions which mimicked the behaviour of monkeys. I saw this as insults directed at my family heritage more often than not and actions such as these usually developed into playground fights. I felt I had to protect my parents’ honour. I have also been the victim of humiliation; being hauled off to the headteacher’s office and instructed to apologise for my actions, something I could never do. During those years you tended to do the best with the limited opportunities available and with no role models on which to focus on. It was a case of relying on yourself to do the best in the hope this would deliver the opportunities to better oneself. It became apparent as the years went by that this belief may have been misplaced following a period of time from my early teens, right up to when I became active in the union movement.

My initial involvement with the Union came as a result of workplace bullying and the advice given to me by my rep put a stop to it and set me on a path, which has been a case of relying on myself to do the best with the limited opportunities available and with no role models on which to focus on. It was a case of relying on yourself to do the best in the hope this would deliver the opportunities to better oneself. It became apparent as the years went by that this belief may have been misplaced following a period of time from my early teens, right up to when I became active in the union movement.

ZITA HOLBOURNE
Trade Union & Community Activist, Artist, Poet & Writer

Zita has been a trade union activist for over 20 years and is elected to the PCS Union National Executive Committee and the TUC Race Relations Committee. In 2010 Zita co-founded Black Activists Rising Against Cuts (BARAC) UK, a national campaign responding to the disproportionate impact of cuts on black and minority ethnic workers, service users and communities and deprived communities, campaigning against racism and injustice which she is the National Co-Chair of. She is a founding member of several anti-austerity, justice, human rights & equality campaigns. She is elected to the Action for Southern Africa National Executive Council and the Movement Against Xenophobia National Steering Group.

Zita is a qualified graphic designer and has worked as a freelance graphic designer and make-up artist. Her art is inspired by her quest for equality, freedom, justice and human rights and traditional African and Caribbean art styles. She exhibits at a broad range of political, cultural and community events and curates art exhibitions to challenge discrimination and injustice and showcase young black artists. In 2012 she was commissioned by the TUC to design a poster for the TUC Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust Fundraising Appeal. Her art has been used in a broad range of leaflets, journals, posters and publications as well as for illustrations.

Zita is an award winning poet/spoken word artist, described as a ‘political poet’ and ‘a griot of the struggle’ her poetry has been featured on TV & radio. She has directed poetry performance workshops for children & adults. She is a former resident poet / co-host of the Brothaman Poetry Collective and former resident poet / co-host of Nu Whirled Voices.

Awards include:
• Finalist & one of 5 people’s choice poets in the Manofloz Xtreme Spoken Word contest 2011.
• Positive Role Model for Race award at the National Diversity Awards 2012
• Afro News top 12 African and Caribbean women of the year, 2013
• Nominated in the Eight Women Awards 2014.

Zita is a freelance writer, writing for national and specialist journals and blogs about the issues she is passionate about campaigning on.

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MANNY BLAKE
former CWU NEC Member,
former Chair of the Race Advisory Committee & Labour Party Councillor (Bexley)

He became a Committee member in 1976 and held various branch positions, including that of Treasurer and Editor. Manny became Branch Secretary of the London City Branch in 1986 until 1992. In 1986 Manny took his Branch out on strike and worked with our sister Branch LNCI and John Moynihan during this period. He held the NEC position until he retired in 2006.

Manny became Chair of the Ethnic Minorities Advisory Committee (EMAC) - the forerunner to the Race Advisory Committee (RAC) – on inception and held the position until 1992 when he became a member of the NEC.

Manny held many positions within the former NCU and CWU, a selection of which are below:

- TUC Race Relations Committee 1992-2006
- Industrial Tribunal panel sex/race member 1992-2009
- Labour Party member 1970 to date
- Delegate to Labour Party Black Socialist Society from its inception
- Delegate to United National Association 1994-1996
- Delegate to Amnesty International 1996
- Delegate to TUC Black Worker’s Conference 1992-2006
- Chair to TUC Black Worker’s Conference 1997
- Delegate to various TUC and Labour Party Conferences
- Delegate to STUC Black Worker’s Conference 1997-1998
- Delegate to the Black Workers for Justice Conference, Atlanta, Georgia – October 1998
- Bexley Councillor and cabinet member for Housing & Social Inclusion 2002-2006
- Manny was honoured with a union gold badge in 2006 and also a honorary membership of the CWU.

Manny continues to support the Labour Party locally and in 2008 & 2012, while he was on holiday in Las Vegas with his wife, they helped the local democratic party in their campaign to get President Obama elected. He now, happily, spends most of his time looking after his 3 grandchildren.

MANNY JOINED THE GPO (BT) IN 1963 AS A TTA-3 APPRENTICE AND JOINED THE UNION AT HIS INDUCTION.

SAM WINES
UNISON South East
Regional Education Officer

In addition she became a union lay tutor and employment tribunal panel member sitting in West Croydon. She was first elected to the national Ethnic Minority Advisory Committee in the early 90’s fighting and campaigning against racism in the workplace and society, culminating in a European project on behalf of the CWU working with UNI (Union Networks International) looking at rise of racism and xenophobia throughout Europe and involved extensive European travel culminating in presenting the findings to the General Council at a conference in Stockholm.

In 2003 she left BT and worked as a TUC tutor for a year before becoming a ULF (Union Learning Fund) Project Manager for the TSSA/RMT/ASLEF looking in particular at improving adult literacy and numeracy amongst members in Network Rail and South West Trains which ultimately led to the implementation of Learning Agreements and a Learning Centre at Basingstoke station, which allowed members paid time off to learn and improve their IT and basic skills and provided ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) to members who in particular had jobs that were safety specific.
The lifesaving work of ACLT charity has been supported by the CWU for many years. We very much appreciate all of your help to raise awareness and to encourage participation on the UK donor registries. The ACLT congratulates you on the BAME Day initiative and long may your successes continue.

BEV DE-GALE, OBE
ACLT Cofounder
Director of Operations

The CWU has always been at the heart of promoting international solidarity and everyone at Embargoed! has been indebted to the CWU for the wonderful support you have given to Turkish Cypriots in their fight to end their isolation in Cyprus. At Embargoed! we profile trade unionism in a positive light and encourage all Turkish workers to join a Union. Congratulations on your BAME Day initiative and we wish you a very successful 2015 Annual Conference.

FEVZI HUSSEIN
Group Chair