

# Coventry Against Racism

## ***Our AIMS***

1. Support and promote a **National Assembly Against Racism [N.A.A.R.]** and **Unite Against Fascism [U.A.F.]**.
2. To be vigilant and co-operate with other organisations to give support and defend individuals or organisations suffering racial discrimination or harassment, at work or in the neighbourhood.
3. Disseminate information on local and national issues concerning racism.
4. Support national campaigns against racial legislation and seek its repeal.
5. Seek to promote educational material, books, pamphlets, videos and films that expose and defeat racist ideology.
6. Organise meetings, debates and discussions, and participate in festivals and other events that celebrate multi-cultural society.
7. Support the prosecution of individuals and organisations that promote racist ideology in society.



Music stirs the emotions. While racism divides us, music can be used to unite us and give us strength. Our music is living testimony to the fact that cultures can and do mix.

Throughout history music has played a positive role in uniting people. The leaders of the 1789 French revolution set up music schools to train musicians for the new army, The National Guard. They encouraged composers to write revolutionary songs. Be-

tween 1789 and 1801 1,300 were written and the most famous, The Marseillaise, is still the French national anthem. In 1959 the famous jazz musicians Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Laine set up 'Stars for Inter-Racial Friendship' in London's Notting Hill. They wanted to combat the White Defence League, a racist organisation modelled on the American Ku Klux Klan. The Stars were quickly supported by Lonnie Donnegan and Tommy Steel.

LMHR was set up in 2002 in response to the rising levels of racism and the electoral successes of the British National Party. We use the energy of our music scene to celebrate diversity and involve people in anti-racist and anti-fascist activity. We feel it is vital to give people, especially youth, the opportunity to express themselves and reinforce the multi-cultural message that music can provide. We also urge people to use their vote against fascist candidates in elections. LMHR has mobilised to prevent the BNP capitalising on its few successes. This is in the tradition of Rock against Racism which, with the Anti-Nazi League, was largely responsible for defeating the National Front (a predecessor of the BNP) in the late 1970's and early 1980's. LMHR recognises that music alone cannot defeat fascism and is therefore working hand in hand with Unite Against Fascism, a broad based alliance which is sponsored by all of the major Trade Unions. We have a number of educational packages, including DVD's and lesson plans, for use in schools.

There have been over a thousand LMHR events around the country, from national gigs at Victoria Park, London, and the Britannia Stadium Stoke, which were attended by tens of thousands, to small gigs above pubs, and poetry and cultural shows. We have continued to make international links and events have been organised in Europe where the far right are gaining a foothold. A superb concert was held in Budapest, Hungary, in August. We have had the support of major artists whatever the venue size, and their commitment to spreading the anti-racist message has been inspirational. Take a bow Hard Fi, Babyshambles, Akala, The View, Basement Jaxx, Bashy, Estelle, and many more...

Coventry has a wonderful tradition of anti-racism and was at the heart of Rock Against Racism with the Specials and The Selector. Once again Coventry is rising to the challenge. We have held several gigs in the City, with The Neville Staple Band headlining at the Kasbah, and the Earlsdon Club played host to 32 bands over a weekend, culminating in a great show by the Beat (see [www.musicagainstracism.co.uk](http://www.musicagainstracism.co.uk) )

Whatever your tastes in music please join us in resisting the BNP and enjoying ourselves at the same time. Our Music, Our Future.

Contact: [www.lovemusichateracism.com](http://www.lovemusichateracism.com) for a local contact.

I / We wish to apply for /renew membership of Coventry Against Racism - C.A.R.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Return to:- **Coventry Against Racism**  
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Unit 15, Arches Industrial Estate  
Spoon End  
COVENTRY. CV1 3JQ

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# THE ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM AND SOME ANSWERS



The dictionary definition of violence is an unjust or unwarranted exertion of force or power. This helps in recognising racism for what it is: a violent act carried out by individuals, groups or an arm of the state. This violence is committed in order to physically or emotionally hurt, humiliate, and denigrate a fellow citizen, or a community or their property. One of the root of racism lies, therefore in the reasons why human beings perpetrate violence.

There is no scientific evidence that people inherit a genetic tendency towards being violent. Instead people learn from growing up in their families, their peer groups and their communities, that aggression, racist behaviour and racist violence is acceptable or even encouraged. Arguably education through schools, colleges, universities and the arts provides an excellent opportunity to help children and young people unlearn racist behaviour which can distort their whole development.

Alongside this, racism has other root causes. Firstly British culture includes a history of slavery, colonialism and imperialism. As part of this white superiority was exported as a dominant divide and rule force which set different ethnic groups against each other with white people at the top. Despite the era of colonial imperialism closing after World War II, this experience of how people from different groups with different ethnicity should be treated remains alive.

Secondly racism is rooted in economic forces which profited from slavery and later through supplies of cheap labour. The justification for this exploitation was to stereotype and dehumanise people of different ethnicity. These stereotypes can be found in the attitudes of people who perpetrate racist violence as well as the institutional racism of public bodies.

Thirdly a new theme has emerged, that of cultural racism which is more about cultural and ethnic difference. If groups do not give up their cultural heritage and become absorbed into the majority culture then they are vilified and discriminated against. The double bind is that the prejudice and discrimination which individuals and groups have experienced leads them to take shelter behind protective and sometime rigid community boundaries. This allows the victim to be portrayed as the perpetrator of separateness.

More recently faith has emerged as a new vehicle on which to carry and disguise racist violence and prejudice. Faith belief is now being used as a way of demonising and alienating whole communities of devout believers who are Muslims. Organisations such as the BNP and English Defence League have quickly exploited these new opportunities. Underneath Islamophobic banners, the usual hate-filled racist abuse is chanted.

So what's to be done to combat racist violence and ideology? A report published by the Joseph Rowntree Trust in 2005 gave useful suggestions about the way forward and underlined the importance of:

- antiracist activists and watchdogs
- the role played by schools, colleges, universities, arts and sports
- good honest and open communication between communities
- Education, aimed at improving knowledge.
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One way of looking at these examples of what works best is that they involve the mass of ordinary people: they reach beyond what civic, government and community leaders do. This may be the best way of combating racist violence and ideology on the ground in all its forms.



## REFUGEES CAUGHT IN TRAP OF POVERTY AND OPPRESSION

The United Kingdom is a signatory to the UN Convention of Human Rights. In 1941 the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill led the process of developing a set of human rights principles, now known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was agreed that never again would the world fail to provide refuge to those escaping atrocities. The principles of human freedom needed to be outlined.

This process began with refugees securing immediate status. In Britain, asylum seekers had benefits, access to healthcare and the right to work. From the 1970s to 1990s the number of applicants increased greatly. Particular parts of the country, such as inner London and the ports at Felixstowe and Dover received the most asylum applications. By and large as now, applicants were from Iraq, Afghanistan or Darfur. In response the government established a new position on immigration, predicated on a good idea: that the national duty to provide refuge to those fleeing persecution should be undertaken by the whole of the Country and the 2000 Dispersal Policy was created, locating asylum seekers around the country.

However in a response to racist commentary all rights to benefits were removed. Alternative measures were established to allow access to public funds. The National Asylum Support System was established – the NASS. But NASS is a misnomer as it leaves refugees and asylum seekers in a cashless situation whilst their application is processed.

The problem with this current situation – allegedly designed to decrease numbers – is that the practical application of NASS is much stricter and crueler on those seeking asylum. In the mid to late 90s an overwhelming number of failed asylum seekers were left without status; no real attempt was made to remove them. People whose cases had been insufficiently dealt with went underground awaiting more evidence to make a fresh claim. In the meantime these people experienced prolonged periods of destitution. The Home Office have identified a number of countries for removal, but due to policy restrictions they have been unable to remove individuals. Access to essential welfare (other than the NHS) is barred, leaving people destitute and desperate.

It is not known how many of the 100,000 refused cases are still in the UK. These are known as ‘legacy’ cases and involve asylum claims lodged before March 2007. Not all of this ‘unresolved’ group will be destitute but many are likely to be. There are also many asylum seekers who lodged claims after March 2007 whose claims have been refused and who are currently destitute.

What is certain though is that this group is huge and growing. In response Coventry Refugee Centre established the Hope Fund Coventry, to provide a practical response to destitution. This was created in partnership with Peace House, CTRIC (Churches Together with Refugees in the Community), Friends, the Bishop of Coventry, and the Mayor of Coventry. Alongside the Hope Project in Birmingham, the Boaz Trust in Manchester, Carriers of Hope, students and individuals, we work to relieve hardship and distress among refugee and asylum seeker communities in and around the City of Coventry.

*“The time has come for a clear and respectful warning to those who hold or seek power over the most vulnerable people in this land. Britain hates bullies and finds them no more attractive in red, blue or striped clothing. Do not underestimate the ocean of common decency in the oldest democracy on Earth. We will be watching.”*