



# HAS THE ANTI-NA HAS THE ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE GOT IT RIGHT ON RACISM?

*The following flyer is a part of the Olive Morris Collection. In it, she demonstrates a crucial aspect of her activism: while she worked in solidarity with people from other social change movements, she did so critically. It is through this critical engagement around racism, sexism and classism that she envisioned a different kind of future. Olive wrote this particular statement together with Mike McColgan. Punctuation and spelling from the original document have been retained.*

It is good that so many white individuals and groups are now joining the struggle against racism and fascism. At the same time, it is doubtful whether the Anti-Nazi League is capable of translating their enthusiasm into a long-term and effective commitment to combat racism wherever it manifests itself. (The large rallies and “carnivals” of this summer should not raise false hopes; after all, CND and the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign attracted even larger numbers, only to collapse almost overnight. This is because in practice the ANL exhibits a very limited grasp of the true nature and extreme of racism in Britain.

They fail to see – or if they do see it, they don’t point it out – that the National Front is a symptom, and not the cause, of the racist ideology and practices which characterise every sector of British society today, including the working class. Consequently, the ANL devotes little or no attention to the institutional breeding grounds of fascism and racism: the police, schools, local government – even the trade unions. No-one would wish to deny the valuable support which people in the ANL have given to the Bengali people in East London in their struggle against the National Front and police terror. On the whole, however, the ANL has not taken up the issues which affect black people’s lives daily. In Brixton, for instance, and in most areas where black people live, it is not the National Front but the police who are the principal, “legal” and most brutal agents of racism. And not far behind are the many racist officials in Lambeth Council, the Employment Exchange and Social Services.

It’s no wonder, then that so few black people or independent black organisations are actively involved with the ANL. Hand in hand with the failure of the ANL and the British left in general to understand the roots of racism – especially the effect of imperialism on the consciousness of the British working class – has gone a long-standing chauvinist and arrogant attitude towards the struggles of black people, whether in the Third World or here in Britain. Hiding for many years behind the empty slogan of “Black and White, Unite and Fight!” they have frequently described the reaction of black people to the racist oppression they suffer in this country as racism in reverse, and the differences between the various defenders of black people’s interests, they feel they have the right to ask black activists, “Where were you lot?” (meaning the black community) whenever they take on the National Front on the streets. Today, the ANL is insulting the intelligence of black people and trivialising the struggles which they have waged continuously (with precious

little support from the left) against racism and fascism by jumping on the bandwagon of “carnival” and reggae music – implying that this is the only way black people can be reached and mobilised politically.

Obviously, in a leaflet like this, it is impossible to make detailed criticisms of the ANL, or to offer ready-made solutions. The above remarks are intended simply to stimulate discussion within the ANL and all other progressive and democratic groups who are genuinely committed to the struggle against racism. At the same time, we would be glad to discuss the issue with those who feel that the struggle goes beyond the more or less extreme variants of “Front-bashing” offered by the ANL. The Ad-Hoc Committee was set up after the weekend of the Notting Hill Carnival, when the police not only flexed their para-military muscles at the Carnival itself, but also systematically terrorised and assaulted black youth at a number of tube stations in South London. We believe that, to be fully effective, an anti-racist campaign must be equipped to deal with this and other blatant moves towards fascism, and not simply concentrate on one aspect of the struggle, which is all the National Front represents.

Contact: Brixton AD-Hoc Committee against Police Repression,  
2 Talma Road SW2