

soundings issue 12 summer 1999

The sharp edge of Stephen's city

Nick Jeffrey

Following the murder of Stephen Lawrence six years ago at a bus stop in South East London, his family's long campaign for justice has been a milestone in the battle against racism in Britain.

Nick Jeffrey, who taught school and coached football in the area over the period of the campaign, reports from the band of estates in South East London where racism is still a large part of youth culture.

I cycled slowly along the South Circular, past the sign 'Welcome to Greenwich - the Millennium Borough', then up the hill to Eltham Churchyard where I had seen, shortly after Stephen Lawrence was murdered, a graffiti 'WATCH OUT COONS, your now ENTERING ELTHAM'.

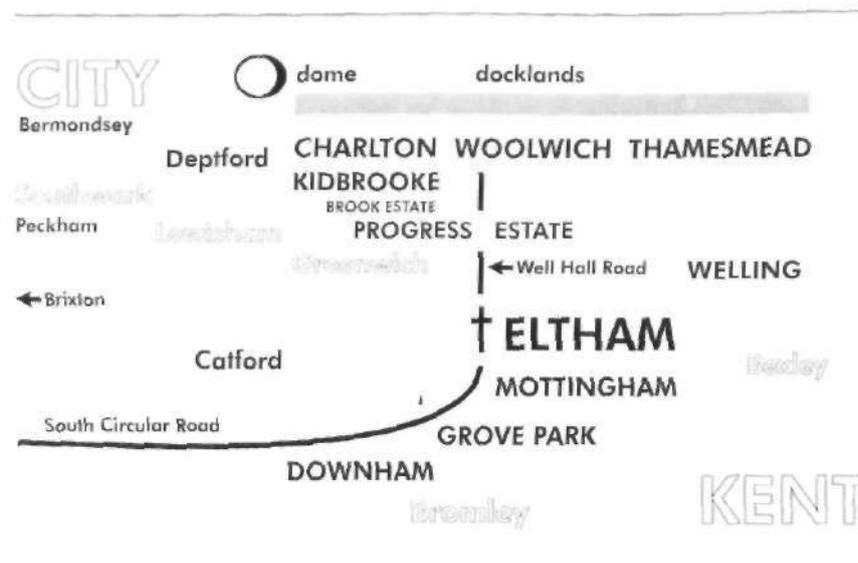
I remember such Jim Crow signs cursing entry to many American towns warning adult male 'negroes' not to be caught on the streets after sunset. In Eltham centre, mid-day or midnight, you see no black faces on the street. The Well Hall Road McDonalds opposite the churchyard has been a known hangout for racist youth, as was the Wimpy Bar before. It was on the wall of the church's graveyard that Derek Beackon's British National Party rally was cornered by anti-fascists, but from where they thundered their message of hate. That was 1991 and within two years three black boys had died in Greenwich of knife wounds - Rolan Adams, from a Thamesmead gang, then Rohit Duggal in Well Hall Road, the same road that Stephen died in. Seven other boys, four white,

survived knife attacks in that period in Eltham, each incident with connections to the five main suspects in the Lawrence case, or to their alleged young racist associates. ' It is that white flesh that even now is seen as providing legitimacy to the claim of one of the investigating officers into Stephen's murder, Detective Sergeant John Davidson, that it was' ... not a racist attack. It was pure bloody minded thuggery'.

Police video surveillance a year and a half later showed four of the five suspects in the Lawrence case in Gary Dohson's flat, demonstrating how to plunge knives into black boys.' Here's Neil Acourt 'I reckon every nigger should be chopped up Mate and they should be left with nothing but fucking stumps'; followed by Luke Knight: 'D'ya remember that Enoch Powell - that geezer, he knew ...' ; and later on David Norris: 'If I was going to kill myself do you know what I'd do. I'd go and kill every black cunt, every Paki, every copper, every mug that I know, I'm tellin ya ...'He and Neil's younger brother Jamie, inside at the time of the surveillance for another knifing, remain the prime suspects for Stephen's murder.

South from the Dome and along the edges of inner London are vast low-rise all-white council estates. Yards from the bus stop where Stephen was stabbed, a mixed race family had their home petrol bombed twice last year. Along these routes are a string of mixed-sex comprehensive schools, including the first two purpose-built in this country, for the postwar influx of tenants from slum clearances. The GCSE exam results published for that string of schools in Greenwich and Lewisham are among the lowest in the country for attaining five grades A to C; at 10 per cent they are half the 20 per cent which is cited by Ann Power as the average for the 13 similar riot estates she studied.³ Truancy rates are high. Bullying and gang violence have been major issues. The drift between boys' and girls' results is among the highest in England. Half of the English education authorities where boys' achievements is 25 per cent or

1. Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (henceforth 'Inquiry'): 'Closing Submissions of Counsel, William Panton, representing the London Borough of Greenwich', 7.9.98, *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry; report by Sir William Macpherson*, 2.99CM 4262-1 (henceforth the Report), pp38-39.
2. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry-Appendices, 2.99.CM 4262-11 (Revised) (henceforth the Appendices), Appendix 10.
3. Anne Power & Rebecca Tunstall, *Dangerous Disorder: Riots and violent disturbances in thirteen areas of Britain 1991-92*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York 1997.



less on the exam measure are those directly to the west and north of Greenwich - a real south and east London belt of young male failure, black and mainly white. With one exception - in Plymouth ' the other half of such authorities are all in the north of England. The disaffection of white boys, the rise of youth gangs, and the resurgence in racially motivated violence stretches along these routes. It does not stop at the oft-pilloried Tudor gates of Eltham. It is seamless from Thamesmead, Stanley Kubrick's 'setting for his self-banned *Clockwork Orange*, down through the grim outer parts of Lewisham into Bromley.

The Downham Estate, at the southern end of this stretch, is one of England's biggest. Here from May to October 1996 no buses ran after six. Companies withdrew all six routes, serving 30,000 people, because of muggings, hijackings and assaults on drivers - especially black drivers. These were the work of gangs of white boys aged eleven to fifteen.⁴ In February last year Allison Moore, a young black teacher at a primary school in Catford, was attacked and seriously hurt while working late at school, being cursed as 'black bitch' by four white boys aged about sixteen. Children from that school go on to attend secondary schools in Downham, and that is where Allison lived. In

4. *News Shopper-Lewisham and Catford*, 15.5.96 &. 22.5.'

March her home was invaded by one balaclava-ed man, while another painted swastikas and 'NF' outside. She had also received death threats. The NF denied involvement, though they had focused on her school in 1994 election leaflets. Near this house (from which Allison has now moved), a new black-led self-build co-operative housing project suffered four arson attacks in four years, with the loss of two houses, which they rebuilt. 'NF' was daubed on buildings.

Here along these same bus routes from Downham up to Eltham, six years back, young black children were regularly set upon while awaiting a bus home. Events following the murder of Stephen had a galvanising effect along these routes. Suddenly black dads and we teachers guarding bus stops were backed up by police. Road tax crackdowns were suddenly and effectively turned on the racists. Troublesome, dangerous tenants were moved with haste by Lewisham. Greenwich followed suit. By 1994 violence had become such an issue that industrial action by teachers was threatened as a last resort if the most violent kids were not excluded.

In the 1990s gangs of white schoolboys aged 11 to 16 grew up across the area - excluded, truanting, or even working within schools. They established a gang culture in Thamesmead to the east, in Eltham along Well Hall Road, but especially in the south in Mottingham and Downham, all linked across borough boundaries. In that culture it was normal to be racist - adults referred to it as normal teenage male expression. At their then Mecca - Millwall Football Club - the gangs were ranked. (Charlton Football Club, who had no local ground over that period, did not provide such a focus for the gangs.) Boys were arrested repeatedly for hijacking, joyriding, torching and for 'porking' Asian-owned shops. Isolated Asian families suffered harassment from teen and younger boys through these areas.' Lee told me, 'we just go and do another job and get nicked again. I hen our case, when it next comes up, is just put off again, so's the next one can be what they say - "taken into account"'. By 1996 certain boys in Downham were targetted and given curfews and area exclusion orders as conditions of police bail. They were geographically excluded from within 500 metres of their secondary school, and some of them from Grove Park Station, which they had captured, hijacking a train. These curfews and exclusions were a first in England and were a local initiative. Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw was invited to see, and was followed by

Soundings

Michael Howard himself. Those gangs peaked and broke in 1996. But according to police, in January last year they had resurfaced as local nuisance groups. The following month, on the gangs' home patch, Allison Moore was attacked.

Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA) has kept regular statistics of racial victims over those six years. Greenwich Police have joined a Joint Racial Incidents Unit with Greenwich Council and provide their own statistics based on recorded incidents (changed since the April 1998 audit to count victims as well as incidents). There have been some differences in the sources and statistical methods for recording the attacks, but all the figures show an unacceptably high, and continuing, level of attacks. GACARA recorded 1013 for 1996. Attacks resulting in bodily harm had, according to both sources, decreased since the 1993 murder - until 1997. Night attacks on property have increased since 1996 and arson has become an increasing concern. Catford Police statistics for neighbouring Downham show similar trends. And there remain unsolved murders. Only one boy was convicted for the murder of Rolan Adams, although he was attacked by a gang. A strawberry blond boy mentioned by witnesses to Stephen's murder has never been identified. Of the five accused of Stephen's murder, three were acquitted. Prime suspects Jamie Acourt and David Norris have not been tried. The Crown Prosecution Services withdrew charges on them citing inconsistent identifications. Stephen's friend Duwayne Brookes, who was with him that night at the bus stop, was discredited as a prime witness by police actions and the CPS. Why so remains a question. It was at Duwayne that "What?... What, nigger." was shouted that night. He escaped, but remains a victim. The picture that emerges is one of widespread incidences of racism and racist attacks, coupled with an inadequate response by the authorities. The Inquiry, set up to investigate the policing of the murder, found incompetence, and considered alleged corruption through the Norris criminal links; they found, rather than individual racist officers, institutionalised racism in the Met.

An imperial context

The pretty mock-Tudor estate where Stephen Lawrence died was purchased by the Royal Arsenal Co-op in 1925 and renamed the Progress Estate. It had been built for Arsenal munitions workers in 1915 by the War Ministry, and had a garden

The sharp edge of Stephen's city

city lay-out of 1200 houses, designed by Sir Frank Baines, architect of many popular LCC estates. There is a history in the area of heavy industry, of work in the docks, on the railways and in military-related industries - and of highly-organised working-class institutions. The Arsenal once employed 80,000. These other estates from the interwar period housed the families of workers from skilled trades such as building and print, as well as heavy industry and transport. The 'deserving' tenants, from clearances up in Bermondsey, were all white. The job losses for these communities have been massive. The closure of the AEI electrical engineering works in 1968, a sudden loss of 8000 jobs, was a portent, followed by closure of docks and of engineering industries. This blighted an area built for the industries of an imperial power to house the necessary labour power, later expanded to cater for the demands of a politically strong labour force - even after reproduction of that labour power ceased to be an economic necessity.

Thirty years back, when extra funds were allocated by Wilson's Labour government for Education Priority Areas, two-storey estates with gardens didn't feature in their designated areas of social need. In fact, such housing was used as a measure of prosperity and achievement. How wrong they always were. Male unemployment has remained high across these estates to the south, keeping steady at over 20 per cent for a generation. Dads no longer had jobs with apprentice openings for boys. Male expectations collapsed and the scope for boys narrowed. Those bus hijackers were not, as some professors of education have proclaimed from on high, the illiterate and innumerate. The boys in the top gangs were, in my experience, bright kids who often entered secondary school with some achievements and initial interest. The girls fare better - work harder - and have attained more skills, from IT to personal communication and presentation. The restructuring of the local economy has been harder for boys to cope with. They are afraid. They feel bottom of the heap, yet still need the male display which frightens others.

Housing sons and daughters near their parents in pursuit of sustaining communities, suggested by many sociologists, was for a long time policy in Greenwich, as in Bermondsey. Large parts of those areas thus remained white, and for blacks became no-go areas. A generation back, West Indian families living to the west, in areas such as Peckham or Brixton, began sending children out to what were seen as safe suburban schools, away from the influence of aspiring yardies and gangstas and the attentions

Soundings

of police. They next wanted to move out into these suburbs, where the only significant ethnic minority presence was Asian shopkeepers around the older Woolwich town centre. Simon de Banya operates the Black Information Network's website BLINK, where Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign items can be viewed. Simon says, 'Greenwich for black people is the racist capital of London ... Eltham is seen by many blacks as a fortress Eltham, and some suggest that it could be seen as a front line beyond which a white Kent is the retreat ... we know of racist families from Greenwich and Lewisham who have bought houses in some of those towns and moved out. These are not just deprived families from those estates, but well-off people, involved in racism, and there's nothing to stop them getting mortgages.' The reputation of Eltham has suffered - it is regarded as racist, supposedly breeding racists, now harbouring them.

Eltham was given nationalist kudos - and young racists a certain legitimacy - by the proximity and volume of the BNP 'bookshop' in nearby Bexley. Five of England's largest pubs, from Downham to Thamesmead, have been the habitual meeting places of the BNP and NF, each one closed for violence. The Yorkshire Grey at Eltham Green, once host to Blood and Honour, and Combat 18, is now yet another McDonalds. The NF logo, however, remains the graffiti of choice - it has more punch and is easier to scratch into a textbook. In 1990 'NF' was painted 3 feet high at the Orchards Youth Club next to the estate. Neal Acourt was excluded for that, along with David Norris.⁵ (The only suspect who was actually accused of direct contacts with racist or fascist movements was Gary Dobson, and that was put to part two of the Inquiry, without the accused being present.⁶)

Routes of racism and roots of racism

'Wall of silence' ... much of it [information] was not anonymous and the bulk of it came from within the local population ...'

*Michael Mansfield, QC for the
Lawrence Family, on leads to the killers*

The Maeperson Inquiry revealed that 26 different people from within the area gave evidence implicating the five main suspects in the case within two weeks. Fourteen of those residents were known to the police. Three were police. If

these were followed up, the evidence has gone missing. The five were named by nine different sources, three of those with more than adequate evidence and reason for arrest within 24 hours.' They were observed but not arrested until two weeks later. They were even photographed removing probable forensic evidence but this was not followed up. The 'wall of silence' appears to have been a police construct, aimed at deflecting accusations of racism from the police and onto the 'community' of Eltham. The police officers wanted it both ways - that it wasn't a racist crime, and that it was a crime supported by a racist community. They have now been exposed, unable to maintain either position. Nevertheless there still remain key witnesses, such as 'K' , whose friend 'Grant' went to the police, was first ignored, and then later would not testify.⁸ This young and curious skin went to the Acourts' house shortly after the murder and observed four of the gang cleaning up. 'B', who witnessed the murder from the bus, was dismissed as a 'Walter Mitty'. Others did feel intimidated by the gang and their family connections. But an entirely silent community? After 88 witnesses and 10,992 pages, we now know the answer is no.

One of the five main suspects, Norris, lived away from the estate, in a large walled house out near Bromley. His father Clifford was for years known to all local police for drug and gun running and intimidation of witnesses. The Acourts and Norris were connected through relatives named Stuart." These roots in the infamous Southeast London criminal diaspora make the families atypical of local estate gangs. They all went to the same youth football clubs - which in South East London usually involve patents as well. Three attended the ex-ILEA flagship school Crown Woods at Eltham. Norris was excluded from Cooper's School in Bromley in 1989 for uncontrollable disruptive behaviour and attended a special school.¹⁰ Neal Acoult's and Gary

5. 'Inquiry', transcripts of hearings, Michael Mansfield QC, 29.6.98.
6. 'Inquiry', Part Two, submission of *Searchlight*, from September, 1998,p.3., refuted in *Searchlight*, October 1998, p3. (Part Two of the Inquiry took evidence beyond the Stephen Lawrence case, locally and nationally.)
7. Report, chapters 13 ek 33, *passim*. Appendices, Appendix 5, transcript of evidence o\ day 2, Michael Mansfield QC, 24.3.98.
8. 'Inquiry', Final Submissions with regard to Part 1 on behalf of Mr & Mrs Lawrence, Michael Mansfield QC, pp21-22, appendix 1, p33, appendix 2, pp40-46.
9. Loc.eu, p24-; inquiry', transcript ot hearings, Michael Mansfield QC, 29.6.98.
10. Local,. 30.6.98.

Soundings

Dobson's GCSEs approached at Crown Woods, Jamie transferred from there, joining Luke Knight at their local Kidbrooke School for a fresh beginning to his own GCSE's in January 1991. In June he was said to have threatened a black boy named Dean Holgate with the replica Smith and Wesson handgun behind the gym. In September he was in a fight with a black boy named Sean Kolutis. After five days exclusion white and black gangs fought outside the school gates. The next day Jamie was excluded again for carrying a monkey wrench, and the next month permanently expelled. " The Acourts and associates, finished with schooling, styled themselves The Krays. Many referred to them as The Untouchables. Although popular among whites in school, they were deeply unpopular on the estate. Why did no-one ever pick up, identify and deal with this two-to-three-year build-up of hate and violence, which peaked in Stephen's death?

The five have been portrayed in the media as either vicious and angry, as when escaping the Inquiry, or as arrogant and disdainful (within the Inquiry), or as skins. Not the full story. They affect a slick clubbish image. They dress well and can look good. Neal Acourt expressed on the Police surveillance video a distaste for skinheads, and disappointment with the BNP for depending on skins: '... all these straight bods, they wanna vote for them mate, but they see all these fuckin yobbo fucking skinheads and they think, "who wants to vote for them?"'.¹² Today they attend local clubs and pubs, and Jamie, always the decent footballer, plays on Southeast London pitches.

The Lawrence family lived in nearby Woolwich. After the murder Stephen's mother went with her sister Cheryl Sloley to the local Sainsburys. Recognised by a white woman in the car-park, Cheryl was told, 'If he hadn't been here, he would still be alive'. To Doreen Lawrence this meant 'if he wasn't in this country, he would still be alive'. Five years on, there was a silence in court following the telling of this story.

The cast bronze plaque set in the paving where Stephen died has been subjected to many atrocities - with swift response from Greenwich's anti graffiti unit. From the plaque a pretty white-walled path passes under the Tudor-style terrace leading to a village green which could grace a travel brochure. For

11. *loc. cit.* 29.6.98.

Christmas 1997 the walls proclaimed 'EEDL - the Eltham English Defence League'. Fright is fact. Planning Professor Peter Hall told me before the Lawrence inquiry that such 'hatred and complicit silence would fly in the face of Alice Coleman's theories of good estate environment leading to good social behaviour'.

Roger Hewitt and his field researchers from the Institute of Education at London University found 'wall-to-wall racism' among youth while interviewing following the murders of Rolan Adams and of Rohit Duggal. On the night of the murder, while Stephen lay bleeding, four youth cruised up and down Well Hall Road, laughing loudly from their battered red Astra." Five years later we learned that days passed before these lads were traced, and that some were among those implicated in the Adams murder. How they knew on the night what had happened remains a question.

Perhaps there are literal Routes of Racism along these bus lines and along this bush telegraph of graffiti messages. That is the title of the booklet Hewitt did for the Greenwich Racial Equality Unit.¹⁴ Hewitt transforms this into a search for roots. Such routes provide actual connections, effective only where there are already roots of racism, which he argues is a social construct. He and colleagues looked at tags, listened to jokes, listened at clubs and schools, asked about families, estates, and football. They argue that the social construct of racism is learned, reinforced by experiences and by some stories and myths.

Football plays an important part in this culture of racism. Youth football is big and was once white. Following the 1981 Brixton riots, more inner-city clubs were formed and boys in them had to travel out for competition and for pitches. I managed Tulse Hill, a Brixton and Peckham club. When we travelled to Greenwich, racial abuse was common on and off the Sunday pitches. I recall boys of the same age as the Acourts trying at age ten to attack visiting players. Later the Acourts' club, Samuel Montague, began to attract racists. They expelled Neil Acourt in 1991 for a post-match knife threat allegedly against a black boy from Red Lion, a Peckham and Deptford club.¹⁵

12. Appendices, Appendix 10.

13. Report, sections 11.35,16.18,38.13, & ch 20 *passim*.

14. Roger Hewitt, *Routes of Racism: the social basis of racist action*, Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent, 1996.

15. 'Inquiry', transcripts of hearings, 29.6.98.

Soundings

Acourt's brother, Norris, and Knight all left as well. I often thought that the skill of our black boys was seen as a threat to some white boys and their dads, a threat beyond the football pitch. This seemed particularly so on the sensitive subject of school district team selection. The cultures of racism are particularly embedded in the Sunday leagues, where parents are also part of the club. Brian Clarke, Secretary of the London Youth Football Association, told me, '... even from the FA's 1991 survey, *SO* per cent of youth football was Sunday. This has surely increased since, with the decline in school football and the declining popularity of youth clubs in general. We seem to have less open racism now than in the past, but maybe it's disguised. We do take up more disciplinary actions on racism than before, and have adopted anti-racism in our charter for quality.' The Bexley and District Youth football league is England's biggest and most powerful Sunday league: it stretches as far west as Brixton, and has 8000 players, 480 teams. Brian Miller, Chairman of that league, told me, 'Club representatives will raise objection even now to applications from inner city [i.e. Brixton and Peckham clubs] ... Now with so many ethnics, it is no longer such a surprise to see two or three black players in many teams. Certainly things appear better, but it's still the parents who are the problem I think.'

Years back you could hear 'black cunt', with no apology offered for racism; now 'black cunt' will be justified as being no different from calling a player, say, an 'Irish cunt', and will be defended as not at all racist. Hiding behind words is the current state of multi-culturalism on the pitches. *From* 1988 I managed school and District football in the area, selecting mixed teams from all Greenwich and Lewisham secondary schools. I had to confront skin dads loud with racial abuse from the touchlines. I once thought that these beliefs were merely handed down by adults. But my view changed while working eleven years in these schools. The parents of racist boys are not necessarily racist themselves, but in many cases are anguished about it. I recall those who came to talk about it.

There are roots to the racism which are not grafted on, but are nurtured in a culture owned by these youth, created by them and based in their own experiences, including an overwhelming sense *of* being discriminated against. The boys feel bottom *of* the heap. They experience conditions which they perceive as racism against themselves and their families. They see this in

school and in sport, in music and dress and other cultural symbols, in their family's housing and the job marker, even in policing. They see it in reference to their imagined community. Enoch Powell's notorious Rivers of Blood speech of 1968 - '... their homes and neighbourhoods changed beyond recognition, their plans and prospects for the future defeated...' - has been quoted by singer Billy Bragg as 'putting a knife in the hands of Stephen Lawrence's killers'.

Outside the Eltham dole in 1994 was a large graffiti, 'hang the Catford 27' - an allusion to the alleged rape of two white girls behind the old Catford McDonalds, at the time a rendezvous for wannabee young yardies and gangstas. The police did not prosecute anyone for this offence. The white boys took their own message from this. This incident is a likely source for David Norris's videoed display: 'I would go down Catford and places like that, I'm telling ya, I'd take two sub machine guns and I'm telling ya, I'd take one of them, skin the black cunt alive mate, torture him, set him alight ... I'd blow their two legs and arms off and say "Go on you can swim home now"'.¹⁶

In 1992 in Kidbrooke next to Eltham, a white boy - a former classmate of Jamie Acourt's but not racist - went out to buy his mum some cigarettes. One of the black boys from the Kidbrooke School confrontations with Jamie Acourt was on the street with a gang. The white boy was beaten up. The attacker wasn't punished, and another story of non-punishment of black boys spread. That story didn't say that the next day the victim played for me in goal - with swollen black eyes and lips - for Inner London Schoolboys against Essex in the county finals. Most of the goalkeeper's team mates were black and they nominated him man of the match.

Black boys are perceived by white boys as getting away with more in schools, the last place injustices should be tolerated. Some white boys think that black boys avoid being excluded for actions which would bring exclusion for them. Stories of sexual assaults in schools, by groups of black boys, on girls and even on female teachers, abound, usually as examples of non-punishment. Teachers are seen as being afraid of certain black lads or as being without the backup of authority should they attempt to discipline them. Racism is fertilised through the policy dog being regarded as having bite in

16. *Appendices*, Appendix 10.

Soundings

one direction and a blind eye in the other. My student 'Jason' was in a light with 'Dwayne'. 'Jason' got a suspension and parents called in for discussion. 'Dwayne' didn't. 'Jason' was angry. 'That misses Hawkes put that down in the racial incidents book and it wasn't. I mean it was a fight, just that. So why doesn't Dwayne cop it?'. When white boys experience what they feel to be an injustice, they often see it in racial terms. What is wanted is a fair cop. Clothing symbols are also experienced as discrimination. Another of my students, Gary, had his jacket with the Union Jack on it confiscated from school. He told the headteacher: 'What is this' What about those Jamaican flags on jackets? Are you afraid to take those.'⁷ Too often in these cases, there is simply punishment, and the aim of schooling - education - is lost, with more seeds of prejudice sown.

Roger Hewitt reports that past policies in Greenwich were implemented '... in ways that did more to demonstrate the school's anti-racist stance than to assert the underlying principles of justice and fairness'. Many boys move from all-white primary schools to mixed secondary schools whose multicultural programmes are not always well-conceived; and for them it can feel like a further put-down to have a celebration of what they see as foreign cultures, while being denied a Britishness with its imperial history of plunder, pillage, slavery and murder. Royal Navy and Artillery and Arsenal leave powerful and old architectural symbols in Greenwich.

Ian Macdonald QC represented Stephen's friend Duwayne Brookes in the Lawrence Inquiry. Macdonald led the Inquiry into the 1986 murder of Ahmed Iqbal Ullah in a Manchester school playground. In his report, *Murder in the Playground*¹⁷ he argues:

the fundamental error ... of morally based anti-racist policies is that they assume that a complicated set of human relations, made up of many strands, including class, gender, age, size,....race, can be subsumed into a simple white versus black pigeon hole. It is the problem of white versus black that (then) has to be dealt with. The other things are assumed and not dealt with. This simple model assumes that there is

17. Ian Macdonald, *Murder in the Playground- the Bumage report*, Longsite Press, London, 1989, p.348.

uniform access to power by all whites, and a uniform denial of power to all blacks. Clearly this is not the case. We do not believe that an effective anti-racist policy can exist unless the other issues are dealt with, in particular class and gender.

Fin de siecle in justitia?

The Lawrence family soon perceived that it was racist attitudes while Stephen bled that allowed delays in emergency treatment, and that encouraged delays in investigating the suspects, while the police pursued questions about Stephen himself. This was in spite of the fact that Stephen was not into gangs or drugs. He was finishing his A-levels, aiming for a university place in architecture for which he had excelled in work experience. He was a top athlete and an active Methodist. But no cop ever went to ask questions of all those teachers and coaches and ministers who held him in high esteem. Doreen Lawrence emphasised '... he did not distinguish between black and white, he saw people as people'. Following on the Lawrence family campaign, the 'Bad Apple' theory of police racism, the only definition accepted by the Scarman Report following the 1981 Brixton riots, is at last to be supplemented by a recognition of institutionalised racism in the police. This is a major achievement of the Lawrence family and their supporters, although it remains to be seen how the metropolitan police will act to deal with the problem.

In spite of the achievements of the Lawrence campaign, there remain many lesser-known examples of attacks on black people, solved and unsolved. Reports of three similar street deaths of young men in London in the past year were submitted to the second phase of the Inquiry. The black teacher Allison Moore remains injured, and her beating unsolved.

The sign now on the South Circular into Eltham reminds you that it is 'time for GREENWICH 2000'. The Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign have called for the Millennium Commission to support Justice 2000, a campaign which, as Simon de Banya says, aims 'to end the millennium in Greenwich without blood on the hands of this society... there are unsolved murders of black boys, and murders which even when solved remain unprosecuted'. The Millennium Commission, however, says Simon, have stayed clear of this campaign, and they remain distant. Nevertheless, as

Soundings

the Stephen Lawrence Campaign has shown, campaigning can achieve change. As Allison Moore told her children, 'You all know the bullies can not win.' Hundreds overflowed the rally in Downham in her support and against racism. The memories of that meeting will surely focus on 11-year-old Shona Sloley, Stephen Lawrence's cousin, who attends Crofton School in Catford. She read from her letter to Allison, 'think of me. I think of you.' Later in the month, exactly five years after Stephen's murder, a candlelit vigil was held by 300 people over the spot where he died, led by Bishop for Stepney John Sentumu, who was one of the three advisors appointed to the Judicial Inquiry. For the second time in the month a chorus of hundreds singing 'We Shall Overcome' swelled these routes. Neville Lawrence proposed a Stephen Lawrence Educational Trust, 'to open up avenues for other young people to study and achieve'.

Efforts to combat racism are also being made by Greenwich Borough. Harcourt Alleyne of the Greenwich Racial Equality Unit told me, 'We would support Roger Hewitt's view that policies based in moral admonition or in guilt and accusation will cut no ice, will more likely bring backlash.' Hewitt's team and Greenwich Council, through schools and youth clubs, are seeking ways to avoid that. They seek to understand how these youth view their own disadvantage and injustice, and they seek a vision of identity that is not the British bulldog. Football, theatre and music are points of entry - plus girls. Hewitt says 'Girls who are not racist could be very critical of the racism ... of what they regarded as the cowardly behaviour of boys ... one area of hope ... lies in discovering what enables these ... girls to stand apart.' Tim O'Shodi of the Downham self-builders explained to me that, 'the kids drawn into racism are without their own hope and desires, and that is what must be opened to them'. The boys are afraid of failure. What is the easy route to avoid being labelled failure? To not try or not be seen to try. This stance is draped around classrooms, even sports pitches. 'Yeh I might've gotta trial at Charlton, but I couldn't be bovered', offered 'Jed', who was my student. A culture is produced from among boys which, by defining their own terms and agenda, edits out failure. This gives them a certain control.

The Greenwich Racial Equality Unit has taken this up. Yazim Patel, employed in the field, explains, 'the programme is now based at Charlton

Athletic FC at the Valley and we are extending it into youth clubs, employing youth workers and coaches. This is part of the FA's 'Kick Racism out of Football campaign'. Millwall, once the main venue of racist thugs in Southeast London, pioneered such efforts in the 1980s. You now can see blacks sitting in the New Den, but rarely at The Valley. Last August Charlton announced that the five Lawrence murder suspects 'would not be welcome' at the Valley. Greenwich and Lewisham Councils have finally passed 'quality controls', which require all clubs to adopt anti-racist policies as a condition for pitch bookings. However, it has to be said that these policies are not going to reach the parts which need reaching. It is Sunday league clubs which are the thriving heart of Southeast London youth culture, and few of these remain as youth clubs: most are now private clubs. Since ILEA was closed, councils have been selling sports grounds. Brian Miller, of the Bexley and District league, reveals, 'lots of these big clubs have now bought into their own grounds, or at least bought long leases, so the council pitch letting policy won't affect them'. This is big territory and the Kick Racism Out campaign has a lot of work to *do* before much ass is kicked.

There is a continuing difficulty in defining the problem. 'Inner-city' is not a term that describes the problems I have been discussing. Who defines a crisis? Only when social relations of production are broken, when control of property and territory is endangered where it matters, to those who matter, will education and youth be considered a crisis by those in power. Isolated, area-based, urban policies don't come anywhere near to addressing the political economy of race, culture and class.

In spite of the problems, though, there are grounds for hope, largely stemming from the campaigning work of black and anti-racist groups. I finish with a quote from Michael Mansfield QC, from his opening speech on behalf of the Lawrence family:

Nearly 50 years ago from now, namely in 1948, in the Southern States of America, there was a black Baptist minister by the name of Dr. Vernon Johns, and his parish was a Baptist church in Dexter, Alabama. Following a series of murders of young black men in that town in 1948 and just before, by gangs of white men, those murders having gone

Soundings

unchecked, with no sanction, and in the face of enormous public disapproval and the risk of violent retribution, he entitled his last sermon, 'It is safe to murder Negroes'. He was detained by the police and forced to leave. He did. His successor was Dr. Martin Luther King, and hence the birth of the Civil Rights movement in the United States of America.