

Activism and Campaigning

Clenched Fists: movements of resistance to and activism against racism, political violence and inequality

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

At this moment in 1970s 'Black' was a politically inclusive term that connected communities. African-Caribbean, African, South East Asian and Turkish activists made alliances through solidarity to protest, demonstrate and resist injustices. Britain saw major cultural and political shifts, with police brutality, SUS 'stop and search' laws, and struggles in the labour market, education and housing that affected many migrant, and white working class communities. Britain also witnessed the rise of the National Front and an increase in violent racist attacks and demonstrations, to which the police and authorities seemed indifferent. Between 1977-79 the Bogle-L'Ouverture Bookshop was targeted by racist and fascist groups, with abusive graffiti daubed on the windows and doors, and racist literature and excrement pushed through the letterbox. Other bookshops were also targeted including, across London: New Beacon Books, Headstart, Grassroots, The Other Bookshop and Centerprise, and in Nottingham, Manchester and Birmingham. The Huntleys joined forces with other bookshops, and formed the "Bookshop Joint Action" group to raise awareness of the attacks through producing leaflets, holding public meetings and picketing the Home Office.

For further background on activism against racism, political violence and equality, visit nocolourbar.org/resources.

ACTIVITY ONE

- What action would you suggest to prevent the attacks?
- Who would you go to, to get help and support?
- How else might you express your feelings about the treatment received?

ACTIVITY TWO

- What does this poster tell you most about the problem people faced?
- Create a poster about your campaign. (Using paper, markers, stickers).
- What topic or issue do you wish to take action about?
Think about what you want people to know:
- How might you get support from your community?

RESEARCH

Pupils should conduct research into an issue that the Black community is facing and share their ideas about how about to go about taking collective action. As a group decide which issue has the most merit and plan a campaign of how to communicate a collective voice about the subject; who to reach, how to reach the people they want to tell their story to and when this can happen.

REFLECTION

Looking at one of the stories that was shown in the *No Colour Bar* digital exhibition provides the pupils with background into the way community action was conducted in the 1970s. **Visit:** www.nocolourbar.org/digital

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING WORK

Pupils to share their work through presentation to the class. They could use other archives' materials which tell the story of the issue being faced and produce a campaign to create their own version of the same story. Through this exercise, pupils will be able to explore the using words, images and art to communicate their message. Through the discussion, pupils should be more able to understand more reasons for activism and campaigning. It is anticipated that an understanding of how people receive difficult messages may be explored in further follow up exercises. A discussion should take place at the end of each session to provide pupils with the tools and confidence to investigate the themes on their own.

For useful links please visit: www.nocolourbar.org

No Colour Bar: Black British Art in Action 1960-1990 is a collaborative project between The Friends of the Huntley Archives at the LMA, the City of London: London Metropolitan Archives, and the Guildhall Art Gallery, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

