

Black Activists Rising Against the Cuts (BARAC) UK Briefing Paper. The first cut is the deepest...

Black Activists Rising Against the Cuts: BARAC.

1. We are a coalition of black, public and voluntary sector workers, trade unionists, community organisations, service users and concerned individuals whose aim is to create a critical mass of opposition to the Government plans to cut vital services and sack thousands of public sector workers, including many black workers, across the country. BARAC has been formed to help coordinate and lead a broad based campaign involving black trade unionists, the black voluntary sector and the wider black community in opposing these devastating cuts and highlighting the massive [disproportionate economic impact on black communities and black workers](#).
2. We use the term black in a political context to include all visible minority ethnic communities who have a shared history and experience of race discrimination based on their ethnicity.
3. The campaign was formed as a joint initiative of Lee Jasper, political adviser to the [1990 Trust](#) and Zita Holbourne, National Executive member of the Public and Commercial Services Union ([PCS](#)) who jointly chair the organisation. Since our launch in July 2010 *we have grown incredibly and are in the process of establishing regional BARAC structures in Manchester, London, Bristol, Bedford and Birmingham, with strong expressions of interest from places such as Leicester and Leeds.*
4. Our goal is to establish a BARAC structure in major black communities across the UK, forging alliances between faith groups, voluntary and community sector organisations, public sector workers, trade unionists and the wider black community.
5. The Comprehensive [Spending Review cuts](#) announced by UK Chancellor George Osborne on the 20th October 2010 heralded the age of austerity as massive reductions in public spending were announced in an attempt to cut the nation's budget deficit.

What we believe.

6. In simple terms we do not believe that the poor, the elderly and most vulnerable members of our society should be made to pay for the reckless behaviour of irresponsible bankers who are responsible for plunging the country into a [£4.8 trillion fiscal debt crisis](#). The debt is not ours. We believe that the Con-Dem budget cuts are ideologically driven and constitute a vicious attack on the poor and vulnerable. We believe that these cuts will have a disproportionate effect on all sections of our communities with a particular emphasis on:
 - Black women
 - Children
 - Young people
 - Elderly

- Vulnerable groups

7. We believe that the future education and employment opportunities of all our children are being sacrificed and that this government's actions amount to gross economic vandalism. The current financial crisis is being used to give cover to a Government that wishes to significantly reduce the size of the welfare state, drive down wages and terms and conditions and attack those who are [dependent on welfare benefit support](#).
8. The consequences of this approach will be to launch deprived communities into a vicious cycle of increased levels of unemployment, poverty, crime and racism. These cuts represent the literal death of hope and opportunity for poor communities nationwide. We believe that the poorest of these communities could potentially see large scale civil disturbance as a result of the Government's brutal economic policy. [African, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani descent communities along with other minority ethnic groups are among the most acutely deprived communities in Britain](#).
9. We believe that it is vital for black trade unionists, the black voluntary sector, statutory and voluntary sector service users along with faith groups, to come together in a broad based campaigning alliance with the purpose of opposing these cuts and highlighting the brutal consequences of increased racism and further economic exclusion of black communities.
10. We believe that these cuts are unnecessary and there are alternative ways of paying off the nation's debt:
 - Increasing tax on the super wealthy
 - Collecting unpaid taxes. Over [£120 billion a year lost because of tax evasion, avoidance and uncollected taxes](#).
 - The introduction of a [Robin Hood tax](#) on financial transactions
 - Cancelling the [Trident nuclear programme](#)
 - Ending the [wars in Iraq and Afghanistan](#)
11. These alternatives could pay off the current debt and allow for significant investment in manufacturing jobs and public services, decent houses and free universal access to higher education for poor communities. All these things are possible.

2000 – 2010: British melancholia and the post McPherson & 7/7 backlashes; the attack on race equality and multiculturalism.

12. As we have seen the slow decline of the global economic, military and political influence of Britain we have also seen a growing sense of insecurity and melancholia, particularly from white British males whose confidence about their place and status in the world has become increasingly fragile. The press agenda is aimed at convincing people that, 'The lack of jobs is as a result of Eastern European migration, crime is caused by black youths, terrorism is the fault of Muslims and housing shortages are the fault of asylum seekers and immigrants'.

13. Diversity and multiculturalism are equated to ethnic separatism and extremism, institutional racism is seen as a malicious anti-white concept and the routine denial of racism is commonplace. Black communities and their representative organisations have seen a significant downgrading of their relationships with the Con-Dem Government. As a result we have seen the abolition of the Commission for Racial Equality, the closure of race equality councils, the undermining of many of the recommendations of the [McPherson report](#), and a subsequent explosion of increased levels of [institutional racism](#) and [Islamophobia](#).
14. Black workers have endured increasing rates of disciplinaries, dismissals, lower rates of promotion and endured higher rates of racism in the workplace. Black staff associations throughout Government have been politically targeted, undermined, their leadership's attacked, smeared with unsubstantiated allegations and their funding slashed. This has been a politically conscious and sustained attempt to silence those voices that challenge institutional racism.
15. The last decade has seen rates of stop and search increase massively. We have seen the harvesting of black men's DNA on an [unprecedented scale resulting in 75% of all adult black males](#) being registered on the national database and witnessed a huge disproportionate increase in the number of black people locked up in prison.
16. African, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani descent communities already suffer [high levels of unemployment](#), low pay and high rates of child poverty, increased rates of homelessness and crime alongside very high rates of physical and [mental illness](#). These high rates of crime and mental illness occur as a direct result of poverty and discrimination faced by black communities.
17. [Educational failure](#), particularly for Caribbean descent boys and the ongoing process of the continued criminalisation of their communities are about to combine in a descending vortex of higher poverty, youth and adult unemployment. Although more black students participate in higher education, there has been an increase in black graduate unemployment. [Colleges and Universities have singularly failed to adopt and implement race equality policies](#).
18. [Increased university fees](#) and the vicious abolition of the [Education Maintenance Award](#) will result in thousands of black students being unable to take higher education courses. This is one of the most regressive policies ensuring, as it will, that the route to greater social mobility is effectively closed to thousands of black youth.
19. The Government has a duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Race Relations \(amendment\) Act 2000](#) to ensure that all new policies are subject to robust Race Equality Impact Assessments assessing potential disproportionate impact of any policy change on black and minority ethnic communities.
20. The Treasury has failed to conduct any such meaningful assessments. The Con-Dem coalition has given a green light to statutory and local authorities to ignore the law and institute these cuts without due regard to their duty to promote good race relations, avoid racist outcomes and mitigate any disproportionate impact on black communities.

21. The Equality and Human Rights Commission as the regulator for the Equality Act has a mandate to protect black communities from state and societal racism. The EHRC has [challenged the Government's failure to adhere to Equality Act 2010](#). The EHRC is considering taking legal action on behalf of black communities against a Government that has demonstrated a blatant disregard for race equality and the law.
22. Black workers will be made redundant in significant numbers. Most black workers in the public sector are in the lower pay grades and those are the areas that will bear the brunt of Government cuts.
23. We would estimate that out of the combined public and private sector cuts, out of the 1 million jobs likely to be lost, around 250,000 to 350,000 black workers will lose their jobs.
24. Of great significance is the fact that the vast majority of those affected in the public sector will be black women.
25. The effect on black families will be huge and we can expect to see dramatic increases in black unemployment and a consequent increase in the level of [child poverty](#) which is already at 50% for African and Caribbean children, whilst Bangladeshi child poverty is above 70%.
26. Cuts to youth services, sports facilities, community centres, nurseries, after school projects, legal and debt advice projects, public health advice projects, libraries, the maintenance of parks, housing repairs and cultural events will all leave communities bereft of any significant social support infrastructure.
27. One of the most insidious affects of the Spending Review is the huge cut to the investment programme for social housing and the cap on housing benefit. We can predict thousands of black and [ethnic minority families being forced to move out](#) of parts of London and other metropolitan areas. The rich and the poor will be separated by income and geography with thousands of poor black families caught in this benefit bear trap being forced to leave their communities, their local schools, jobs, friends and families.
28. We urgently need to come together to determine how best we can protect our communities;
 - a. How should we challenge a Government that is in the business of promoting the conditions that will lead to increases in racism?
 - a. What will the future look like for black and anti racist organisations?
 - a. How will the black independent political challenge to the reality of institutional racism and the defence of our communities be articulated and by whom?
 - a. How will the much articulated historical call to national unity among black

organisations best be facilitated?

Such questions will be paramount if we are to develop a mature, sustainable and effective overtly political strategy.

The way forward.

29. In an effort to address these and a range of other issues, BARAC will, alongside the 1990 Trust, form the Black Liaison Group whose remit will be to provide a confidential arena to discuss these and a range of other issues. The facilitation and exchange of information, exploration of synergies, sharing of scarce resources and the development of co-ordinated action in defence of black communities, will be the key to planning discussions and actions that are now urgent.
30. We are urging local activists to establish local BARAC organising committees across the UK. This should be an inclusive approach that seeks to bring together the widest possible coalition of affected communities and concerned organisations. We can provide advice and help as well as speakers and local trade union contacts for community meetings.
31. We are asking that people join the [BARAC Facebook page](#) and distribute information about BARAC to local contacts and help publicise BARAC to local communities.
32. It is important that local communities assess what the likely impact of the cuts will be for them by producing a local BARAC briefing paper.
33. We are asking local communities to organise a BARAC meeting in their area.
34. There is now a national demonstration being called by the [TUC for the 26th March 2011](#) and we are asking activists to help mobilise black communities to attend this critically important demonstration.

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