BLACK WOMAN, WHITE SCOTLAND

(A Comment on the Position of Black Women with particular reference to Scotland)

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Since the paper by Miles/Muirhead[1] in the *Scottish Government Yearbook 1986*, Scottish thinking has in general shifted from a stance of total complacency about racism to one that accepts, be that grudgingly or willingly, that racism is not a problem confined to areas of high black[2] populations eg: Birmingham, London. This has resulted in measures adopted by local authorities and the voluntary sector, ranging from implementing equal opportunities policies and commissioning studies[3] on the needs of minority ethnic groups to spasmodic attempts at racism awareness/multi-cultural/anti-racist training programmes for personnel and fieldstaff.

Despite all this, 'awareness-raising' has yet to occur across the board nor has it radically affected existing policies. This paper does not wish to enter into a 'numbers debate'; it is immaterial if there was none, one or one hundred blacks per square mile, as the issue of equality within policies and general combatting of racism still exists. We do not intend to reiterate historical reasons for racism in Scotland; these have been well documented elsewhere. Instead it is our intention to comment on our own perceptions of the position of black women in Scotland today, and to investigate further how the triple oppressions of race, gender and class determine the lives of black women. We have chosen the areas of employment and service provision as examples though this is by no means an exhaustive list of categories. Before commenting on these areas, a section on the general position of black women and their relationship with the women's movement has to be included and understood for the rest of the paper to be in context.

It is also important to add, that whilst we refer to the triple oppression in the paper, race, gender and class cannot be tagged to each other mechanically for, as concrete social relations, they are enmeshed in each other and the particular intersections involved produce specific effects. The need for the study of the intersection of these divisions has been recognised by other black feminists.[4]

Not just a question of visibility

When documenting black experiences and black history, the black man is commonly used to represent the entire black population. The black woman continues to be invisible. This invisibility occurs not just through patriarchy but through racism. The women's movement as we know it today is often used to represent all women. The truth of the matter indicates differently. Radical feminist Adrienne Rich, in attempting to eulogize the role of white women, asserts:

"...It is important for white feminists to remember that – despite lack of constitutional citizenship, educational deprivation, economic bondage to men, laws and customs forbiding women to speak in public or to disobey fathers, husbands, and brothers – our white foresisters have, in Lillian Smith's words, repeatedly been 'disloyal to civilisation' and have 'smelled death in the word "segregation" ', often defying patriarchy for the frist time, not on their own behalf but for the sake of black men, women, and children. We have a strong anti-racist female tradition despite all efforts by the white patriarchy to polarize its creature-objects, creating dichotomies of privilege and caste, skin colour, and age and condition of servitude."[5]

There is little historical evidence to support Rich's claim that white women as a collective group are part of an anti-racist tradition. In fact, white women anti-slavery advocates, motivated by religious sentiment, chose to work to free the slave. However, this moral reform did not extend to an attack on racism. The status of black women continued to be lower than white women in the racial hierarchy. This was well-illustrated when well-known American women's rights advocate Elizabeth Cady-Stanton expressed anger that inferior 'niggers' should be granted the vote while 'superior' white women remain disenfranchised.[6]

The reason for mentioning the above is not to advocate divisions within the women's movement but simply to show the reasons behind the growth of a black feminist movement and to illustrate how history affects the shape of the women's movement today.

Bell Hooks, the black American feminist, states:

"In much literature written by white women on the 'woman question' from the nineteenth century to the present day, authors will refer to 'white men' but use the word women, when they really mean 'white woman'. Concurrently the term 'blacks' is often made synonymous with black men."[7].

By natural extension, when we use the term 'Scottish', to whom are we referring - a white Scotland or multi-racial Scotland? It is a matter of the

speaker's perception of what is the norm. Who do we therefore mean when we use the term 'woman'? Today, the political struggle for equality in Scotland has produced women's committees, women-only events, women officers within trade unions, women representatives on committees and so on, but how many of these represent the voices of black Scottish women? We quote the Scottish Black Women's Group, who in 1986, stated:

".. There is no platform in Scotland at present that provides us with a base from which to express our point of view. There is much need to bring a political dimension into an area that is plagued by pseudo-cultural and quasi-sociological interpretations, that have led to inappropriate measures eg: 'racism-awareness training' and 'cultural evenings' for ethnic minorities which have done little to allow black women and the black community to define for themselves a course of action.."[8]

It is still the case today that the onus is on the black woman to put her identity on the personal and political agenda. But surely the reverse should be true if authorities, institutions operate equal opportunities policies as most now do.

However, it is not just a question of visibility. Hazel V Carby states:

"..In arguing that most theory does not begin to adequately account for the experience of black women, we also have to acknowledge that it is not a simple question of their absence, consequently the task is not one of rendering visibility.."[9]

Indeed if visibility was the solution, the problem would cease to exist. As Usha Brown[10], a black feminist activist from Glasgow, cynically reminds us, black women are very much in vogue. There are studies, films, novels, stories and plays about us, but very little support for radical action that black women take. We are needed to provide our experiences, to prove that passive acceptance of oppression is part of our culture, and that black men are more oppressive. She adds that black women are caught in a Catch 22 position. She writes:

"...Our opportunity for liberation lies in coming to the West – we either do not take advantage of it and continue to suffer, and whose fault is that? Or we do, but lose our ethnic appeal and are no longer black and still continue to suffer and whose fault is that?.."[11]

This scenario exists as our oppression is often seen to be a result of our religions, cultures, ethnic patterns and history. Presupposing this is the case, in challenging it we run the risk of exposing ourselves and our communities to further discrimination by those who capitalise on negative aspects of any minority groups. This same group are also of the opinion that

problems exist because of the presence of blacks and not because of racism and prejudice.

To therefore state that the needs of black women are not met due to their invisibility would be misleading for black women are visible, but in areas and guises acceptable to a society operating within a racist framework.

Communality or Camouflage

There has tended to be a constant highlighting of the communality between the 'woman' and the 'black' – both of whom are up against sexist and racist structures. We feel this has alienated attention from the specificity of the oppression and contributions of black women. To begin with, we are both black and women; secondly, black feminists have been and are still demanding that the existence of racism must be acknowledged as a structuring feature of relationships with white women. Sojourner Truth, US black feminist pointed to the ways in which 'womanhood' was denied the black woman:

"...That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages and lifted me over ditches, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and I have borne thirteen children and seen most sold off to slavery, and when I cried with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?..."[12]

The dehumanisation of black womanhood during the years of slavery whether indentured or otherwise has influenced the power position and images of black women today whether they be in the Third World or in the West.

Concepts often advocated by the women's movement as sources of oppression can and do become problematic when applied to black women, in particular the concepts of 'the family' and 'patriarchy'. In the comprehensive study of feminist theory *Women's Oppression Today* by Michele Barrett[13], the contemporary family (effectively under capitalism) is cited as a source of oppression. We would not deny that the family can and is a source of oppression but it has also served as a refuge for political and cultural resistance to racism. For many black Scottish women, the family unit is often the only security in the face of negative and often hostile experiences that face most black people in Britain. In addition, language isolation has meant for some that they are often most secure within the

home and contact with outside communities may be virtually non-existent, as is their take-up of certain provisions and local authority services such as provision for their children, cervical smear tests and so forth. The family has also been, for many, the only sources informing them of existing facilities, and is the forum to give black women the confidence to use these facilities.

For many white Scots particularly from the Highlands and Islands, the idea of individualism is a historically alien concept. How much more alien then for the black Scottish woman, particularly first generation Scots whose roots lie in countries where familial, caste, tribal or national interests are often dominant? For us, struggles out of poverty, from racism, from isolation, from a Eurocentric culture define our priorities and also represent the major sources of our oppression.

White feminists have also emphasized 'patriarchy' as a cause of their oppression. The matter is not so simple – racism both individual and institutional ensures that black men do not have the same relations to patriarchal/capitalist hierarchies as white men in Scotland. In the words of the Combahee River Collective:

"...We struggle together with black men against racism, while we also struggle with black men about sexism..."[14]

In addition to addressing themselves to the white feminist analysis of roots of oppression, black women must also address themselves to the role of the state in defining their position in society and its relationship to black people (see final section of paper).

Special attention for 'ethnic minorities'

The British state waives its concerns for black people into an extensive and intricate network of bodies like the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Community Relations Council (CRC). From the state's point of view it is money well spent providing essential agencies for the promotion of good 'race relations'[15] For these organisations, who face cuts in their funding, the reality is often the opposite.

Here in Scotland, a position of complacency is being replaced by explanations for the existence of racism, for example, that it is due to the effects of cultural difference. The institutions no longer simply ignore the needs of black people and particularly black women, but regards these needs as 'problems' requiring a solution.

The line of argument most favoured and supported is that of the provision for the needs of black women. Attention is focussed on special needs based on their culture, ethnicity, religion, language. But focussing

attention is not necessarily the same as responding to these needs. These needs cannot be met within the mainstream services, as mainstream provision tends to provide for what is perceived to be the norm group, which is often the white bourgeoisie.

Two steps need to occur. First it is necessary to look at alternatives which may appear as a threat to the established ways of working with black women; and second to challenge and change the stereotype of black women. Professionals and fieldstaff need to be educated about different values and expectations of different cultures. The emphasis should also not be on the needs but rather the rights of black women. But two potential dangers exist in the 'needs' ideology. First, in deciding what these needs are; and second, in that the solutions and responses offered are often made from a white perception of needs based on stereotypical imagery.

SERVICE PROVISION

Recently local authorities and government departments have made tremendous changes and advances in service delivery despite resource constraints which have encouraged service administrators to streamline and restrict facilities. April Carter[16] argues that pressure and campaigns by women has changed, to a degree, the attitudes of institutions both private and public, decision and policy makers, as well as the public as a whole. This has created greater opportunities for some women to attempt entering areas previously dominated and controlled by men. These gains, however, are far from adequate for all women and particularly black and poor women. This section also provides a brief case study of a project we consider to be an example of good practice in the field of service provision.

Social services

Provision of social services to black people is still on the agenda for political debates and comments years after the initial recruitment of black people to work in Britain. Comments include – 'black people are lazy', here to drain the economy and 'sponge' on social services, to 'black people are resourceful, independent with strong family ties who need no outside help or interference'. Political arguments which pose black people and their culture as a threat to the economy and white British values create an uncomfortable atmosphere for administrators and black users of social services. However, there have been serious attempts made by some local authorities to shift emphasis from cultural differences and family inadequacies, as an explanation for poor take-up of services, to analysing the institutions and their accessibility to the black community. This, coupled with an analysis of structural pressures, both economic and political, and the experience of being black in Scotland has helped to challenge misunderstandings and misconceptions of the black community and work towards a service more in tune with the expectations of black

people. It has also to be said that it is often ignored that black people are tax-payers too, and consequently are entitled to the same access to services as any other tax-payers and consumers in this society. Examples of how wrong assumptions and expectations of black people by social workers and educators in their assessment and decision making affects service provision is well-documented.[17]

Within the Scottish context, in our experience, the majority of black women who make use of the social services first come into contact with the department after a crisis, for example, the breakdown of marriage, when social workers, doctors, teachers or the police decide that their children are difficult and need special attention or help. According to SHAKTI Women's Aid (see case study), some women are aware of the various statutory departments such as the Department of Health and Social Security, Social Work, Children's Panels, but none are aware of how these departments operate, the range of services on offer and the relationship between different institutions and departments. Due to lack of information, many black women encountering social services lose out by often agreeing to accept what is offered without question. It must be remembered that these encounters tend to be of a problem-solving nature and as such can sometimes be confrontational. Though departments are now publicising their services in community languages, it is futile doing so if the leaflets do not reach the intended readers or if the intended readers cannot in fact read the language – very often, as in the case of Panjabi, spoken Panjabi is common but few read or write it.[18]

Housing

Housing-related problems are the commonest complaints levied by black people. Since the inception of the Sex Discrimination Act 1976 and the Race Discrimination Act of 1975, blatant discrimination is no longer practised officially. However some practices, regulations and procedures deny black women equal access to better housing.[19] For example, a policy to house black people apart based on the assumption that housing them together creates ghettos results in much hardship for single parents, divorced women and the elderly. This is further substantiated by Shahid Ashrif who writes in Network 21 that:

"...There have been cases drawn to the attention of the Housing Department where single parents with young children have been housed in all white housing estates on the outskirts of Glasgow, far from places of worship or where Asian foods were available. These women have not only suffered isolation from support of the Asian community but have also been subjected to systematic racial harassment..."[20]

The assumption that black people tend to have large families often

results in their being housed in sub-standard houses which are difficult to heat and have previously been rejected by white people. The expectation that black people will take care of their single homeless and the elderly means that many authorities make no provision at all for these groups. The changing nature of black families and the economic and social pressures that have altered kinship patterns are not taken into account. Organisations such as Shelter Scotland echo this sentiment as applicable to the general situation in Scotland.

Finally the regulations and procedures are often complicated, even for the most fluent of English speakers. For black women, lack of information in simplified jargon-free format, or in mother tongue languages creates further problems. The attitude of staff when conveying information and advice can be off-putting to black people especially when they are treated as ignorant clients who should be grateful for being in this country and beneficiaries of the 'welfare state' meant really for the 'real' British.

Quoting Shahid Ashrif again: "...black people ought to be housed in accordance with their needs and if these be cultural/religious, these ought to be considered seriously.."[21] The whole issue of housing black families and in particular black women needs to be discussed within all housing departments taking into account the requirements of black families, recognising how factors like racial harassment, security and isolation play an important part when determining allocation policies and the awarding of points.

Health

Health services for women in Scotland are improving particularly for those who know how to take advantage of what is now available. Recent campaigns to promote breast and cervical cancer screening through Well Women clinics, women's groups and doctors' surgeries have increased the numbers of women going forward for screening. However, during a recent screening session organised by West Lothian District Council in Spring 1988, not a single black woman came forward. To understand this, we need to examine the manner and nature of publicity, the times of the sessions, the location, access and eligibility for screening. Obviously, it is also important to find out from black women why they did not attend the clinics. Times and dates of these sessions are arranged by organisers and health board staff who carry out the screening. Organisers are given a choice between morning or afternoon sessions and women are invited to book for a specific time. Locations are often held within towns thus making it difficult for women who live in more rural villages with little or no direct and regular transport. In the case of West Lothian, although publicity was carried out through leaflets, posters and local press, five black women we spoke to said they had not heard of the special screening sessions. They added that they would not have gone anyway unless they knew of other

black women who would accompany them. This makes sense when we realise that suggestions for such screening sessions often originate within women's groups. The majority of black women are not part of established women's groups started by such organisations as Community Education, Churches and the National Housewives' Registers. Black women – even the most articulate, academic women – express concern at attending all white women's groups, as experience dictates they are often alienated, patronised and sometimes rejected.

In a similar screening session at the Roundabout International Centre, Edinburgh, fifteen black women came forward for screening. The session was publicised through black women's groups and through centres dealing with black people. The sessions were open to black women only and the times coincided with other women's activities at the Centre. A similar session is currently being arranged in West Lothian in consultation with black women and community workers.[22] These sessions should be preferably staffed by both black and white health workers. We have chosen recent cancer screening campaigns as examples but we do not expect it to be different in other services offered by the Health Board.

Contraception, maternity and depression are other areas of concern to black women. Communication and the relationship between patient and doctor are vital to ensure correct diagnosis. The inability of medical staff to speak community languages coupled with a black patient's inability to speak fluent English often result in a confusing, intimidating consultation session, with the patient leaving unsatisfied, and the staff harassed. Diagnosis of someone suffering from post-natal 'blues' can be magnified to 'post-natal depression' and so on. The use of interpreters are increasing but there should be further training of medical staff in language awareness and communication skills.

Regarding childbirth, women complain that they are not allowed to practice their traditional rites because hospital routines do not take such needs into account.[23] Questions are not asked as to why the number of black women who attend ante-natal clinics do not take-up Parentcraft classes offered by hospitals to assist labour. Another area of concern is depression. Depression in black women is often assumed to be linked to cultural deficiencies rather than to problems that cause depression in all people such as marital problems economic and social pressures, isolation and loneliness. In addition, counsellors are mostly white and cannot understand the added problems caused by racism.

Recommendations for good practice service delivery

1. Challenging the 'open door' policy: This policy operates on the basis that the door is open and the onus is on the individual to make use of the facilities. Questions should be asked if the atmosphere behind

the door is welcoming to the black community and relevant to their needs. This policy also assumes that the client is familiar with the range of services on offer. Such policy ignores potential communication barriers and assumes the environment is 'racism-free'. Administrators of services have a responsibility to find out why black women do not use services and to create avenues for them to gain access. For example, it is a step in the right direction to have women-only sessions at public swimming pools, but there should also be female life-guards on duty.

2. Increasing language awareness among staff: The provision of better information in community languages is important because it indicates that the service offered is for all. Knowledge of one's rights to services helps a great deal.

3. Accessibility: Large imposing offices very often with no disabled or pushchair access are by their aura intimidating. These are often in busy city centres daunting to people who live on the outskirts where many housing estates are situated, or to people from rural areas. Access can be improved by holding local surgeries, or workshops or by sending representatives to rural areas and to places where black people meet, such as Gurdwaras (Sikh temples).

4. Eligibility for services: The whole area of criteria and eligibility needs to be examined with an anti-racist perspective, for example, the criteria for the allocation of daycare places within social services.

5. Recruitment of black workers has to be a priority to create a multi-racial workforce. These workers should not be employed to deal only with black issues but should be integrated into all aspects of service provision. It is often assumed wrongly that being black means understanding universally all other black people. Matching of black staff and black users should depend on whether staff and user desire it and share a common tradition. It is necessary to recognise the diversity of black people.

6. Training of present staff should continue. It is often easier to continue to depend on the Interpreting Service, goodwill among black volunteers or to pass the 'case' on to organisations such as CRC, CRE, Shakti. All this amounts to is an abdication of responsibility. Training should not be of a reflective, navel-gazing nature, but should allow workers to decide which good practice models to adopt.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, but represents, in our opinion, key areas. Changes are often slow to come about because of disbelief and resentment by service providers that their own institutions

designed to help the vulnerable can fail black people, due to racism and discrimination. The following case study of a black women's refuge is an indication that improvements can be made when policy makers take positive action.

Case Study: Shakti Women's Aid

Shakti is a refuge for black women and their children (if any) who wish to escape domestic violence from husbands, partners or families. The need for a separate refuge was recognised because other refuges and statutory institutions were not equipped to give appropriate support and shelter for black women. Shakti was started by a group of black women supported by Edinburgh Women's Aid in 1985. The project was funded in 1986 by Edinburgh District Council.

Shakti refuge became operational in 1987. The project is run by a collective of women backed by a support group who share the aims and objectives of the project. They employ two full-time staff and have a team of volunteers. Since the refuge became operational, the demand for spaces has been regrettably high.[24]

Within a short time of starting, Shakti realised that it was impossible to remain a single issue project given the nature of the problems that women brought to them. Issues such as racism, health education, housing, welfare benefits and coping with and understanding the system were major problems that were identified. Shakti, with the help of the rich and varied experiences of women from different backgrounds, has embarked on a programme of publicity, education and consciousness-raising, liaison with statutory and voluntary agencies such as social work, police, schools and housing departments. Also Shakti liaises with women's groups all over Britain.

Finally, Shakti disproves the assumptions and expectations society holds for black women. Pramila Sachidharan argues that "...Separate refuges have allowed black women space to define their own terms in fighting racism and sexism, which would not have been possible in the mainstream women's aid movement..."[25] Shakti offers such a space to black women in Scotland and enables them to counteract socialisation which through male ridicule and aggression has intimidated women.

The challenge to all policy makers is to take positive action and introduce new ways of working with black women and the black community.

EMPLOYMENT

"The bulk of writings on women's employment falls into three

categories: political, educational books and pamphlets, theoretical writings and empirical case studies. Of the wide variety of 'educational' material available, much of it is devised for women trade unionists and activists: material on employment legislation, legislation on women's place in the workforce and on women in trade unions. The more academic writings about women's paid work have veered between theoretical analyses and empirical case studies.."[26]

Statistics on black women in mainstream employment in Scotland, in fact statistics on black women on any category, is virtually non-existent. Monitering is often based on ethnic or gender origins, and there is no mechanism to allow for cross-referencing. When we approached the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Glasgow, requesting information and statistics, we were sent a publication titled *Women and Men in Scotland*, a statistical profile published in 1985 representing the latest figures for Scotland. This digest of statistics was prepared to depict the relative position of women and men in Scottish society. This did not breakdown to ethnic groups. We were also informed that the EOC did not deal with matters on 'race' or 'colour', as this was the responsibility of the CRE. The CRE informed us that it was already an up-hill struggle for them in their attempts to get employers to monitor ethnically. They were unable to help beyond that. There is little or no collaboration between the two organisations. This raises the indeterminable question of the position of black women within statistical studies.

As April Carter states in her book *The Politics of Women's Rights*:

"..Women have suffered particularly from the cumulative effects of 'Thatcherism' and from unemployment. Black women have come out worse in this, since they have to contest both racism and sexism, and in addition the majority of them are the poorest sector of society. They have therefore been particularly vulnerable to unemployment – for example the unemployment rate for all women under 25 between 1980 and 1981 rose by 58% but for black women, it rose by 64%..."[27]

There are no more recent statistics, and the figures above represent Britain as a whole. Research is being updated currently, but we are unable to quote from it as materials are very much in first draft stages. The situation is changing, through pressure from women's committees and women's officers within government, but the pace of this change has been modest. There is still no requirement to monitor equality of access to employment in many areas. Where there has been monitoring, such as the civil service and within local government, the information is not easily obtainable or easy to decipher, and may be published for some but not all government departments.

Again the figures do not breakdown to show the number of black women. It is also important to add that statistics can be biased, depending on how and where the survey was carried out. For example, surveys based on heads of households may well under-record households headed by black women or are likely to miss the poorer households. Bias in representation and response has therefore to be considered.

Potential Obstacles facing Black Women in Employment

D J Smith states that "...Women are already discriminated against as women, and this tends to restrict them to more junior and less well-paid jobs: they are therefore not regarded as a threat, and there is less need for employers to discriminate against them on the ground of colour as well in order to keep them in a subordinate position..."[28] We would be wary of accepting these comments uncritically as some authors have done.[29] It cannot be denied that black women face dual discrimination. Moreover, some employers are now women, predominantly white women, and racial discrimination can be a bigger obstacle than sexual discrimination for black women gaining employment – as for instance, black mothers often face greater obstacles with regard to childminding than do white mothers.[30] A report on working mothers and childminding in 'ethnic minority communities'[31] confirmed that Asian and West Indian women face a particular disadvantage in this sphere. The study presented a number of other factors. Firstly, black women are less able to get access to the day-care provision they most desired than white mothers. Secondly, they had less access to subsidized or free services ie: day nurseries and nursery schools. Thirdly, they had greater difficulty finding childminders near their home; and finally, some white minders refused to take black children.

The whole area of black single parenthood whether through divorce or otherwise, has not been studied. The number of black single parents is on the increase. The issues of having good childminding provision, being kept informed of employment opportunities, crossing the language barrier, become all the more vital for black women in this category.

In our discussions with Scottish black community workers and black women seeking jobs in professional areas, we found that age, family circumstances and education affect the type of jobs women aspire to or are channelled into. The internal gender divisions of each ethnic group will also affect the participation of men and women of the group in the labour market. In Scotland, the majority of Afro-Caribbean men are professionals, most coming as students in the last decade or post World War Two. Afro-Caribbean women continue to be employed as service workers – in particular auxilliaries within the National Health Service. Older Asian women, particularly the Chinese women over the age of 30, tend to be employed in the family catering industry such as take-aways and supermarkets. The younger women seek jobs outside family businesses in

the financial sector such as banking. It is often felt that parental influence and some career guidance staff often channel the young women to work within their community because of racism and discrimination in mainstream employment.[32] This ideology is further substantiated by research carried out by the Training, Education and Employment for Minorities Project (TEEM)[33] which highlights not only the constraints on black teenagers in seeking the employment of their choice, but as expressed by TEEM researcher Abdou Said Bakar, 'protective channelling' into safe jobs often occurs. Though this is often done with the best intentions, it sidesteps two issues, one that young blacks are not allowed for whatever reason to gain equal access to mainstream employment, and two, a recognition by employers of the factors preventing access, one of which is racism. It is right at this point to raise the question of the effectiveness of equal opportunities policies. Equal opportunities is about changing the environment so that black people can be employed equally; it should also be about ensuring the current workplace environment is ready to accept black workers.

The continuing assumptions about black women, in particular 'Asian female domesticity' and cultural constraints have affected black women's ability in gaining employment. It is often ignored that black women like any other have always borne the multiplicity of roles, as carers, mothers, consumers, providers, objects of desire and abuse. They too tend to be at the bottom of the pay and power scales, employees not employers, and unpaid sowers, reapers and breadmakers, not recognised to be breadwinners. As Pratibha Parmer suggests: "what is new about their situation in Britain is that they have not worked in an industrial situation. It was the experience of working outside the home in a non-agrarian industrial capitalist enterprise that was different rather than the experience of working to subsidize the family.."[34]

Aid agencies and development education researchers have for a long time supported the illusion that Third World women who are involved in subsistence work, do not really 'work'. As a result, black women's experience as workers attained in the so-called Third World are often marginalised, as are the qualifications they obtain. A stark example is that of an experienced teacher of 28 years experience, trained with a British University, who was not given recognition when settling in Britain and ended her working career as a catering assistant and cleaner (one of the author's parents). This was not because of incorrect paper qualifications, but that teaching in a foreign country and the methodologies used there are unrecognised. Black women due to their lack of appropriate qualifications, and often due to the inequality of the education system, have not always been best prepared for the labour market. We argue that 'on-the-job training' must return as common provision by employers in order to assist the redressing of the current imbalance. This, of course, applies not only to black women, but is generally applicable for all people who have been

discriminated against because of gender, race, class and disability.

On the other hand, many employers can claim that black women have entered semi-professional and professional jobs, such as the authors of this paper. On closer examination, these women have more often than not, ended up in race-related fields, such as multi-cultural education, community relations councils, or projects sponsored to work with multi-racial communities. Women in this category are often used to provide anti-racist training, and to lend credibility by acting as token blacks on committees and other forums. Their opinions are requested on draft policy papers, to assist in areas unrelated to their job descriptions, and many are over-worked and underpaid for the amount of work and advice offered. Other black women beaver away at the grassroots level for the community again without status, recognition or financial remuneration. We would perhaps understandably adopt a more cynical view of this but would like to add that there have also been genuine attempts made by policy makers and management to include the black woman's perspective.

Images, labelling, assumptions and false expectations have been most influential in shaping the attitude of employers to the black community and black women. Usha Brown argues that the assumption that black girls will marry young or enter family businesses is not only damaging but misleading. It ignores the fact that there is a large number of black working class families who do not have family businesses or corner shops. Women in these situations do not have real choices. The economic pressures that affect most for example, high-mortgage repayment, high rents, increasing cost of living, result in women going into the 'informal' economy as a result of the recession (homeworking is an example), or remaining wageless due to the absence of access to mainstream employment either because of imappropriate or lack of qualifications, language barriers, institutionalised racism, lack of good childcare provision or a combination of all these factors. Others enter part or full-time employment in service industries where they remain invisible; as cleaners they enter offices after dark, as cooks they remain in the kitchens, and as seamstresses, they stay at home.

Another question to be answered must be that of the number of black youngsters who enter further education. Universities in Scotland have a large black population made up of overseas students which often misleads and allows the educational establishments to ignore the growing black Scottish population. If black youngsters are not entering further education colleges, skills training centres, we need to find out the reasons.

Recommendations for Equality in Employment

Most of these recommendations have been suggested by the Scottish Ethnic Minorities Research Unit (SEMRU) report[35] and many are expressed by the minority ethnic communities. In addition, we would add,

that policy makers and employers committed to equality and change must first shake off what has for so long been regarded as the common-sense image of black women (in particular Asian women) that the reasons for their low position/numbers in the labour force and low participation in trade unions are due to language difficulties and cultural constraints. Black women are aware that there is an unspoken assumption that they are dumb and inferior because they cannot speak English. Without entering another field of debate, we merely wish to state that more awareness of language as a specific form of oppression is required.

1. Active recruitment of black people, especially women. These should include personnel with bi-lingual skills. Employment of black staff is particularly crucial to the fields of health, social work and education. Employment of black women should not be limited to jobs such as hospital auxilliaries, cleaners, administrative officers, and junior clerks.

2. Training of current staff, particularly senior and middle management to the insidious workings of institutionised racism and discrimination.

3. A review of evaluation procedures and criteria for acceptance onto training schemes, and jobs in general. Systematic ethnic monitoring will also show up gender differences.

4. Better information exchange between potential employers and the black community. Information about loans and grants available to allow self-employment, business enterprise schemes, and better use of the Careers Advisory Service. On-the-job training should be a considered option. The establishment of training centres for women, with active recruitment of black women.

5. Improved childcare facilities for all women. Making sure information of the full range of options is accessible for black women. Leaflets should be produced to cover community languages.

6. Making sure the equal opportunities policies are not farcical. Challenging the 'open door' policy. (see recommendation 1 in the Service Delivery section). Advertising of jobs should not be via 'word of mouth' as this would discriminate unintentionally against the black community. Jobs should be advertised in minority ethnic press and magazines.

Radical or Cosmetic Change?

"...Over the past ten years, we had seen the appearance of volumes of material documenting our struggles as Black people, and of course we welcomed this for we had relied for too long on the version of our story put forward by white historians and sociologists. And we have seen the women's movement follow suit, documenting 'her story' from every angle except our own. But despite the efforts of Black men and white women to ensure we were no longer 'hidden from history', there was still a gaping silence from Black women..."[36]

These sentiments were expressed in a publication by women in England in 1985. We agreed to contribute to this Yearbook as we felt the voices of black Scottish women still remain unheard. A case in point is the difficulty we had in writing this paper due to the lack and non-existence of information regarding the position of black women in Scotland. Most research carried out on black women has been done south of the border and mainly from a white perspective, be that male or female, middle or working-class. This has allowed an assumption that black women's experiences are uniform and coupled with the popoular view that Scotland has 'good race relations because there is no racism here' has meant that not only is the position of black Scottish women been ignored, it is actually worse. It also raises the question as to why the majority of research has been carried out by white academics. Organisations like the EOC assume they represent all women, but the reality is somewhat different. Most organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, cater for the status quo, (the white population in Scotland) many do not automatically include the black viewpoint. This is further highlighted when we examine the recently published findings of the Low Pay Unit in Edinburgh.[37]

The Unit Report has been welcomed by low-paid workers and campaigners against low pay. Though the report highlights occupations that are poorly- paid, one wonders if workers in take-aways, restaurants or even homeworkers have been considered. It can be argued by the researchers that these areas were included under the general occupations of chefs/cooks, waitresses or shop assistants. In an 'all being equal' situation, this explanation would be acceptable. However, the current perception of the Scottish reader of the report would not extend to black low-paid workers or homeworkers. Therefore these areas do merit a mention to ensure that readers do incorporate them into their sphere of understanding and analysis. Secondly, the report includes an Employment Rights Checklist, but how many black groups know of its existence?

This invisibility of black women and their communities will continue as long as access to decision and policymaking bodies remains unequal. The political arena in Scotland is white, male-dominated, and in general more interested in strategies for obtaining the black/woman vote, but less committed to adopting policies that would either allow the black or white woman an active role within politics, or to policies that represent social change rather than reform. The women's committees and the existence of

women's officers will continue to be farcical as long as their existence is dependent on the whims of the ruling party, their ability to respond to women's demands is limited, and the constraints of having to operate within male-defined structures are not removed. In addition, as we would argue that women do organise differently to men, it must be recognised that black people have different priorities too. It is often assumed that the forum exists for individuals to participate equally and that the black person can join and fit in. This concept of integration has in practice been that of assimilation. It is a sad fact that the first black woman Member of Parliament (MP) in Britain was only elected in the last general election. When, if ever, will Scotland send a black woman MP to Westminster or the Scottish Assembly, should it exist?

One area that is common to all black women and is often specific to the black community is that of Immigration. Pratibha Parmer documents instances of how racist immigration laws affect black women (in particular Asian women from the Indian sub-continent): long periods of separation from husbands and/or dependent children, being subjected to humiliating medical examinations for diseases or strip searches reminiscent of virginity tests at ports of entry all create a great deal of mental stress and tension to women. As Sivanandan puts it "...successive British governments, whether Tory or Labour have used Nationality Laws and Immigration Acts to adjust intake of labour in Britain...".[38] However, primary immigration is now down to a trickle and has been so for many years, and existing control in the main is now affecting families waiting to be reunited. For many black people, two messages are clear; if you want family life, go home; if you want to live in peace, go home. A case of immigration control has become 'induced repatriation'. When approaching Community Relations Council officers, the subject that most worries the first-generation black in Scotland is one of immigration. This is particularly acute for black women who have to depend on husbands for their right to reside in this country. Many of these women often have to put up with brutal treatment rather than face deportation and separation from, or worse, losing their children. These abuses have been further documented elsewhere.[39] We do not have the space to acknowledge fully the extent of damage this form of state control has over black lives. This area merits a paper of its own.

Real change would mean accepting that racism does prevent black women's full participation on equal terms in the political, social, economic and cultural life of Scotland. Instead of taking black women as objects of research or groups in 'need', it is more advisable for politicians and policymakers to uncover class and gender specific mechanisms of racism amongst the white society. Finally, we would ask, when the term 'Scottish' or 'Woman' is used, who do you mean?

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