

Community News: Award for Ahmed



Ahmed (on right) with Abdul Rahman, President of the Somaliland Parliament, on a visit to Birmingham, 2006. Photo: Izzy Mohammed

Congratulations to **Ahmed Mirreh** who has been nominated for a regional *Community Champions* award. He has been working with the Somaliland community and *Connecting Histories* to create an archive relating to his community for almost two years. The *Community Champions Fund (CCF)* offers small grants of up to £2,000 to volunteers who want to make a difference to their communities. Ahmed received a grant to create an exhibition and organise a very successful event called *Connecting Diasporas* which brought together members of the Somaliland, Irish, South Asian, African Caribbean and Kurdish communities in the city to share elements of their histories. *Ahmed's Journey* can be seen on our website in *Community Exhibitions*. Information about the CCF is on www.dfes.gov.uk/communitychampions



One of Ahmed's family pictures in the exhibition 'Ahmed's Journey', 1956

Website News: City Trails

New to the website is a history trail exploring the life of Birmingham antislavery campaigner, **Joseph Sturge** (1793-1859) and seven key sites for the antislavery campaigns. Explore the trail online or print the map and trail information to take with you on your walk.

Sturge, a devoted Quaker, came to Birmingham in 1822, and the trail starts at the site of his home in Wheeley's Road and ends in Victoria Square, where the Town Hall provided a prominent stage for a range of his social causes including antislavery. The statue of Sturge at Five Ways is one of the locations on route. Unveiled in 1862, it reflects his wide political and humanitarian interests. Two symbolic angel figures stand guard, one holding a laurel leaf, the other reaching towards the figure of a young slave. Neglected for many years it has recently been repaired and will be rededicated on 24 March.



Detail from the Sturge statue at Five Ways, 2006. Photo: Pete Ashton

The year 2007 marks the 200 year anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in the British Colonies. Sturge would argue that rather than 'celebrating' this date, we should use it to mark an ongoing commitment to social justice in Birmingham and around the world.

For more information on Birmingham, slavery and abolitionist campaigns see *Campaigning for Social Justice* in the *Learning* section of our website. If you would like to develop your own history trail exploring an aspect of Birmingham's history please contact us.

CONNECTING HISTORIES

Website in Focus

Photographic Exhibitions



Bruce Oldfield, 2000. Photo: Robert Taylor [MS 2448]

The **Exhibitions** section on our website includes a number of displays of photographs and documents. Here we feature four from **Photographic Exhibitions**.

Portraits of Black Achievement

A series of photographs by the photographer **Robert Taylor** which he produced for the book *Portraits of Black Achievement: composing successful careers* by **Jacqui MacDonald** from London University's Institute of Education. The book and the images challenge stereotypes of black underachievement by telling the stories of black men and women who have risen to the top in Britain today. They include well known individuals in fields such as politics, medicine, law and the arts.

From Cathay to Pershore Street

These photographs, by **Terry Lo**, portray the everyday life of the Chinese community in Birmingham. Lo was born in Hong Kong and came to the UK in 1991 to study at the University of Wolverhampton.



Mah Jong, 1995. Photo: Terry Lo [MS 2512]



Sharing Food, 1976. Photo: Nick Hedges [MS 2478]

In this exhibition Terry Lo tried to include all aspects of Chinese life including culture and home life, as well as highlight some of the issues faced by the community.

Religion in the West Midlands

An exhibition of photographs illustrating a range of faiths in the region which were produced by **Nick Hedges** for an exhibition *I'm a Believer - Religion in the West Midlands*, in 1976-77. Hedges has been involved in documentary photography for over thirty years, with a particular emphasis on working for charities and other agencies of change such as Shelter. Many of these photographs in *Religion in the West Midlands* were taken in the Wolverhampton area. For more information on Nick Hedges and his archive go to *Collections* and follow the link to *More Collections*.



Lee "Scratch" Perry & Jenni Francis, 1987. Photo: Pogus Caesar/OOM Gallery

Musik Kinda Sweet

Photographs of black musicians, from the exhibition *Muzik Kinda Sweet* by the Birmingham film-maker, photographer and artist **Pogus Caesar**. For the past twenty years Caesar has been a television producer and director, working with a host of high profile celebrities. This has given him access to legendary musicians in the worlds of Jazz, Soul and Reggae. Stevie Wonder, Cameo and late Jamaican artistes like Augustus Pablo, Dennis Brown and Junior Delgado are some of the musicians featured in this exhibition. For more information on Pogus Caesar and his archive go to *Collections* and follow the link to *More Collections*.

CONNECTING HISTORIES

Featured Collection



TUC demonstration against racism, London, 1994 [MS 2141/Digital Images]
Photographs are reproduced here courtesy of Shirley Joshi

Indian Workers Association

The first Indian Workers Associations were local organisations founded before the Second World War. They were mainly concerned with campaigning for India's Independence. During the 1950s, many of these local organisations were revived when larger numbers of Indian migrants came to Britain in search of work or to join family members already living here. Local branches were centralised in 1959, and the national organisation became known as the Indian Workers Association (Great Britain).

Initially, the IWA focused on welfare activities, helping members with passport applications and completing housing and income tax forms but, during the 1960s, the organisation became more involved in political campaigns, particularly in opposing racism and fascism in Britain, uniting with other black organisations and any group with similar aims. The IWA also supported national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles in other countries - particularly in India - and participated in the struggles of the British working class.



Jagmohan Joshi addressing group before the 1962 Act.
Photo: Evening Despatch Birmingham [MS 2141/Digital Images]

Major campaigns focused on discrimination and social exclusion facing Indian and other black and Asian migrants in Britain through poor housing conditions; employment inequalities; the operation of a 'colour bar' in employment and education, as well as in shops, public houses, and other leisure facilities; and the restrictions of immigration legislation introduced during the 1960s and 1970s. The Indian Workers Association supported industrial disputes involving black and Asian workers at workplaces in the Midlands and expressed solidarity with the Trade Union movement, although it also campaigned against racial discrimination within trade unions.



Demonstration against state brutality, 3rd June 1979
[MS 2141/Digital Images]

Birmingham City Archives holds papers of the IWA kept by two of the organisation's major figures during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; **Jagmohan Joshi** and **Avtar Jouhl**. These papers consist of records of the national organisation and the Birmingham branch, including minutes; agendas; reports; constitutions; circulars; press statements; financial papers; campaign and casework material; correspondence; publications; membership records; press cuttings; flyers and printed ephemera. There is also a small amount of material relating to the activities of other local branches of the IWA, including those at Bedford, Bradford, Coventry, Derby, Huddersfield, Leamington Spa, Leicester, London, Nottingham and Wolverhampton.

Indian Workers Association continued

Papers also include records of other campaigning organisations that the Indian Workers Association had links with, such as the Black Peoples Alliance, the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF), the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL), the Co-ordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination, and the Association of Indian Communists.



Demonstrators outside 10 Downing Street. March against state brutality, 3rd June 1979 [MS 2141/Digital Images]

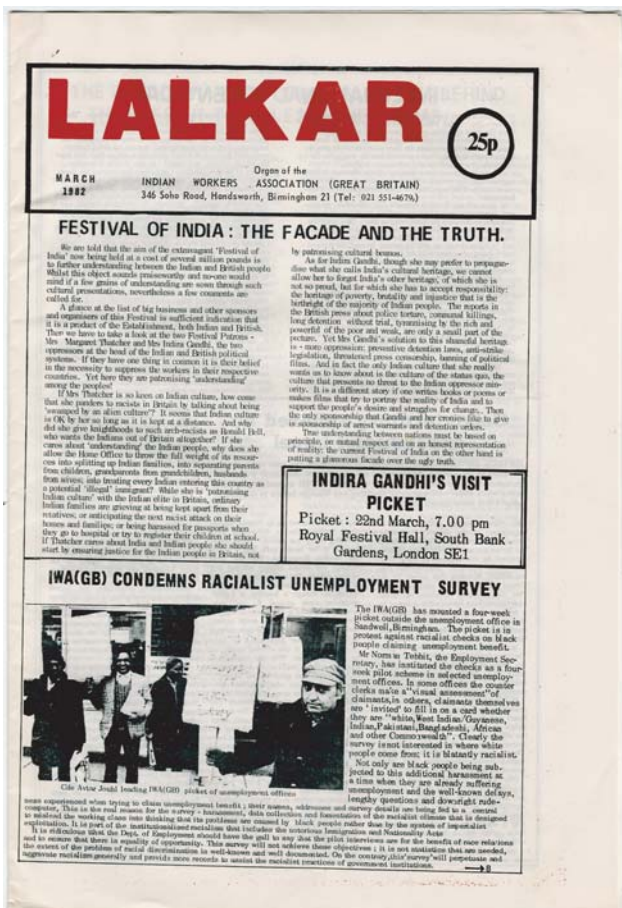
The IWA continues to run a welfare and advice centre at the Shaheed Udham Singh Welfare Centre, 346 Soho Road, Birmingham, and remains active in the struggle for social justice. Translation of the Punjabi material in the papers of the organisation has been carried out by staff at the Centre as part of the cataloguing process.

The archive of the Indian Workers Association has formed the basis of one of *Connecting Histories'* online learning packages. *20th Century Campaigns* in the *Campaigning for Social Justice* package features information about the IWA's anti-racist campaigning and their welfare and cultural activities, placing the organisation and its history in the context of other campaigns in the same period. This material can be found in the *Learning* section of our website.



Black Peoples Alliance Protest March, 1960s. Photo: Birmingham Post and Mail [MS 2141/Digital Images]

The collection [MS 2141] is available at Birmingham City Archives on Floor 7 of Central Library [0121 303 4217] and a catalogue of the archive will soon be available on www.connectinghistories.org.uk



Lalkar, March 1982. Lalkar, a bi-lingual publication in Punjabi and English, was primarily a political journal [MS 2141]

The papers deposited by Avtar Jouhl also include a substantial set of papers providing evidence of his trade union activities as a TGWU shop steward at foundries in Smethwick and Birmingham, as a lecturer in Trade Union Studies at Hall Green College (later South Birmingham College), and as a member of TUC Race Relations and NATFHE committees during the 1980s and 1990s. The papers also include a transcript of interviews that Jouhl recorded for the Birmingham Black Oral History project that provides a great deal of information about his life and his political career.