

“Whatever Community Is, This Is Not It”: Notting Hill and the Reconstruction of “Race” in Britain after 1958¹

Camilla Schofield, Ph.D, University of East Anglia

camilla.schofield@uea.ac.uk

Ben Jones, Ph.D., University of East Anglia

ABSTRACT

The impact of the 1958 Notting Hill riots tends to figure in histories of the political right, as a galvanizing force for anti-immigrant sentiment—or as radical catalyst in the transnational history of the Black Atlantic. Meanwhile, the generation of black and white social workers and activists who flocked to Notting Hill after the riots have largely been left out of the history of the British left. This article treats Notting Hill after 1958 as an important locale of new progressive thinking and action. It seeks to consider the political work that the idea of “community” did in Notting Hill, allowing us consider how the politics of anti-racism relates in complex ways to the reformulation of progressive politics in postwar Britain. It reveals how black activists came to reappropriate the language of “community” to critique the ameliorative, welfarist approach to anti-racism. It also unearths the forgotten eclectic beginnings of Britain's New Left. By excavating the history of community work and New Left activism “from below,” this article traces the ways in which a motley group of Methodist ministers, Christian Workers, students, social workers, and community leaders tested the limits of liberal paternalism and the “universalism” of the postwar social democratic state.

Just a few weeks after Enoch Powell’s “rivers of blood” speech in Birmingham in 1968, the academic and anti-racist campaigner Dipak Nandy offered a very different picture of the present politics and future possibilities of “race” in postwar Britain. Instead of presenting, like Powell, non-white immigration to urban England as a destructive intrusion into the

¹ The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at the *Journal of British Studies*, and Becky Taylor, Stephen Brooke, Jonathan Toms, Alan Finlayson, Madeline Davis, Tank Green, and Rob Waters for their very helpful comments. They would also like to thank Madeline, Rob, and Tank for sharing their unpublished research with us.

traditional, coherent cultures and kinship networks of white working-class life, Nandy flipped Powell's script. The areas that "most people think when they think of racial tension," he told his audience at the University of Kent, are areas "in which the character of life has changed, dramatically within the last generation."² Nandy would in 1968 take on the role as the first director of the liberal race-equality think tank, the Runnymede Trust. But his involvement in the field of "race relations," like the involvement of so many other campaigners, began in the aftermath of the racist violence and rioting in the late summer of 1958, when for a week crowds of up to four hundred people attacked black residents and their homes in Notting Hill and Nottingham.³ This "racial tension" was, according to Nandy, *made* in the specific historical context of postwar reconstruction and urban change:

It is to these [urban] areas that coloured people have come, and the implausibility of talking about integration is that there is here no community to integrate with or into. Young people are waiting to move out and old people never will, "problem families" and poor families, the Irish, the coloured, jostle one another in the streets, and that is all there is by way of contacts between them . . . [T]he principle feature of life in these areas is the steady denudation of meaningful relationships from the lives of those who inhabit them. Whatever community is, this is not it.⁴

Nandy's analysis of the causes of racial tension here is, in fact, indicative of the dominant way in which progressive campaigners in Britain made sense of racism in their time, and it is

² Dipak Nandy, *Race and Community* (Canterbury, 1968), 9.

³ Dipak Nandy, interview by the Runnymede Oral History Project (2012), www.runnymedetrust.org/histories.

⁴ Nandy, *Race and Community*, 10, 11.

surely familiar to any historian of race in postwar Britain. The “fragmenting community”⁵ was not *produced* by racial difference but was the organizing principle through which racism came to be written into British progressive thought and action after 1958. In other words, alongside the crucially important context of decolonization and global calls for racial justice⁶ ran another defining set of political questions about “community” through which a new politics of race emerged.

During the period under consideration, working-class neighborhoods across the country were being transformed by the urban policies of successive governments, by patterns of in and out-migration, and by shifts in manufacturing and employment. Importantly, these areas were not only reception sites of international migration; they were the subject of urban dispersal, high-rise building, and redevelopment.⁷ Urban projects touched millions of lives. Two and a half

⁵ Ibid., 10. For a discussion of the shifting uses of the term “progressive” in British politics, see Emily Robinson, *The Language of Progressive Politics in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2017).

⁶ There is a rich literature on these global dimensions of black activism in postwar Britain. See, for example, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, “From Resistance to Rebellion,” *Race and Class* 23, no. 2–3 (October 1981): 111–52; Bill Schwarz, “‘Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*’: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-Colonial Britain,” *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (January 2001): 264–85; Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, “Race” and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke, 2013); Robin Kelley and Stephen Tuck, eds., *The Other Special Relationship: Race, Rights, and Riots in Britain and the United States* (Basingstoke, 2015); Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship and the Politics of Race* (Oxford, 2015); Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, 2015).

⁷ Ben Jones, “Slum Clearance, Privatization and Residualization: The Practices and Politics of Council Housing in Mid-Twentieth-Century England,” *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 4 (December 2010); Ben Jones, *The Working Class in Mid-Twentieth Century*

million international migrants came to Britain between the 1950s and the end of the 1970s (predominantly from the Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, and war-torn Europe).⁸ At the same time, more than five million people were relocated out of Britain's city centers via slum clearance and by the New and Expanding Towns schemes.⁹ Immigration and these vast internal migrations both induced profound uncertainty and contestation surrounding who belonged, what made a functioning community, and who had the right to speak for particular communities. As one study put it in 1971, while "nits and nutrition" had been the problem for the urban working class in 1939, now it was "mental instability" due to the "rooting up of whole communities."¹⁰

"Community" as both a fact and a value runs through public debates about "race relations" in postwar Britain.¹¹ The interpretive ambiguities of social change at this time, in terms of what was cause and what was consequence of the "denudation" of modern urban life, would continue to define political divides for decades to come. This article takes as a starting point the that historians cannot fully interrogate progressive approaches to combating racism without also critically interrogating and historically situating the politics of the term "community" within Britain's social democratic project. The study of community—whether in the guise of guild socialism, locality, or religious identification—had emerged as a

England: Community, Identity, and Social Memory (Manchester, 2012).

⁸ Susan Smith, *The Politics of Race and Residence: Citizenship, Segregation and White Supremacy in Britain* (London, 1989).

⁹ See Mark Clapson, *Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns* (Manchester, 1998), 41–53; Jim Yelling, "The Incidence of Slum Clearance in England and Wales, 1955–85," *Urban History* 27, no. 2 (August 2000): 234–54.

¹⁰ "Healthier Bodies, Unhealthier Minds," *Times* (London), 5 October 1971.

¹¹ Nandy, *Race and Community*; John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook* (Oxford, 1967).

preoccupation of British social reformers, sociologists, and liberal political theorists as far back as the late nineteenth century.¹² Leading “pluralists” of the early twentieth century, such as the young Harold Laski and Bertrand Russell, challenged the notion of a singular “public good” and argued that communal (rather than national) feeling and group autonomy should serve as the basis of welfare reform and even democratic citizenship.¹³ With the postwar social democratic state, this (liberal) faith in local autonomy and associational culture as a fundamental counterweight to centralized state power did not simply disappear. Instead, in the postwar and (post)colonial periods, the contested politics of community took on new significance. At a moment when economic migrations, global and domestic planning schemes, mass consumption, and slum clearance programs seemed to threaten the existence of imagined “stable” social worlds, the spirit of “community” came to represent—for many—the very future of British socialism.¹⁴

This article seeks to build on these historical insights to consider the political work that the idea of “community” did after 1958 in Notting Hill. The professional practice of “community development” emerged as an important effort to support bottom-up schemes of postwar social development and civic responsibility—but it also came to define and limit

¹² Sandra den Otter, “‘Thinking in Communities’: Late Nineteenth-Century Liberals, Idealists and the Retrieval of Community,” in E. H. H. Green, ed., *The Age of Transition: British Politics, 1880–1914* (Edinburgh, 1997).

¹³ Marc Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of Reform in the United States and Britain, 1909–1926* (Oxford, 2002); Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England: Liberal Anglican Theories of the State between the Wars* (Oxford, 2004); David Runciman, “Laski and Political Pluralism,” in *Pluralism and the Personality of the State* (Cambridge, 1997), 177–94.

¹⁴ Ben Jackson, *Equality and the British Left: A Study in Progressive Political Thought, 1900–64* (Manchester, 2007).

progressive approaches to anti-racist activism in urban Britain. Exploring Notting Hill as a telling case study of community work and activism, highlights, we argue, vital and under-analyzed aspects of the postwar period. It allows us consider how the politics of anti-racism relates in complex ways to the reformulation of progressive politics in postwar Britain. It also unearths the forgotten eclectic beginnings of Britain's New Left. The emergence of the British New Left—and its critical engagement with concepts of subculture and community—has largely been written as an intellectual history.¹⁵ Yet, as Stuart Hall's recent memoir emphasizes, the Universities and Left Review Club was actively engaged with these ideas through its work in Notting Hill in the aftermath of the riots—alongside black and white social workers and community organizers.¹⁶ In Notting Hill, we see New Leftists on the ground—as the *NLR* put it in 1960—confronted with problems with “the community itself,”

¹⁵ The history of the emergence of the New Left in Britain between the twin crises of Suez and Hungary, and the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1958 is extremely well documented. See Peter Sedgwick, “The Two New Lefts,” *International Socialism* 17 (August 1964); Stuart Hall, “The Life and Times of the First New Left,” *New Left Review* 61 (January–February 2010); Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, 1993); Michael Kenny, *The First New Left: British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London, 1995); Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (London, 1997); Madeline Davis, “The Origins of the British New Left,” in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Basingstoke, 2008), 47–54. As recent works by Madeleine Davis and Celia Hughes have shown, however, New Leftists did not simply abandon their political activities in the wake of the decline of the peace movement in the early 1960s. See Madeline Davis, “‘Among the Ordinary People’: New Left Involvement in Working Class Political Mobilisation, 1956–1968,” *History Workshop Journal* 86 (Summer 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dby018>; Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties Activism and the Liberation of the Self* (Manchester, 2015).

¹⁶ Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands* (London, 2017), 259.

“a community without roots, without morale or hope.”¹⁷

Chris Waters’s now classic analysis of the racialization of national identity discourse in Britain in the 1950s argues that the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots of 1958 were treated by new “race relations” experts as proof of the cultural incompatibility of British and Afro-Caribbean cultures, signaling disillusionment with the ideal of integration and a policy turn towards supporting limited “cultural pluralism” alongside immigration restrictions against black British subjects.¹⁸ While discourses of the threatened (white) nation were clearly written into responses to events in Notting Hill, they were, as Kennetta Hammond Perry has recently illuminated, mediated most explicitly through concerns about housing and the antisocial behavior of young white working-class males. Through this emphasis on social deviance and urban decline, the violence in Notting Hill was presented as an *aberration* from national culture and traditions of tolerance—effacing the long history of white supremacy in the global British world.¹⁹

In this article, we seek to uncover how the racist violence in Notting Hill was framed by activists and community workers as an outgrowth of a failing community—and, with this, failing communitarian values. Social research and political activism were bound together in Notting Hill. We discuss the radical approaches that emerged in this area among community workers, as they sought to traverse (or ignore) the politics of race, gender, and class, and to develop and strengthen “community” from the ground up. In other words, alongside disillusionment and denial, we also see experimentation in response to the racism in Notting Hill. We also explore the way in which community work and the concept of community itself

¹⁷ Stuart Hall, “ULR Club at Notting Hill,” *New Left Review* 1 (January/February, 1960).

¹⁸ Chris Waters, “‘Dark Strangers’ in Our Midst’: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947–1963,” *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 1997): 207–38, at 208.

¹⁹ Perry, *London Is the Place*, 89–128.

was politicized around the boundary of “race” in the late 1960s and 1970s. The postwar concept of “community” was a political idea associated, on the one hand, with the promise of decentralized socialism and, on the other, with (postcolonial) self-government. But it gained its most distinct political expression around the call for black representation and autonomy in the wake of Notting Hill.

“Community” in Context

One starting point for this exploration can be found in the rise of “community studies” after the Second World War. As Christian Topalov has emphasized, what were once regarded as “slums” or “disorganized areas” increasingly came in the 1950s and 1960s to be referred to as “communities”; traditional working-class culture was “discovered” by sociologists at the exact moment when the wholesale destruction of working-class neighborhoods was truly on the cards via slum clearance.²⁰ One of the most influential British examples of this sociological work is Michael Young and Peter Willmott’s classic sociological study *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957), published to much fanfare just a year before the riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham. Lise Butler cogently argues that we cannot understand this work without appreciating Young’s political intent: to pull socialism away from a concentration on the worlds of male work towards an appreciation of a wider sense of “community” that included women, the domestic, and “traditional” ways of life as the *source* of civic values—in East London and globally.²¹ In this context, the predominance of young

²⁰ Christian Topalov, “‘Traditional Working-Class Neighbourhoods’: An Inquiry into the Emergence of a Sociological Model in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Osiris* 18, “Science and the City” (2003): 212–33.

²¹ See Lise Butler, “Michael Young, the Institute of Community Studies, and the Politics of Kinship,” *Twentieth Century British History* 26, no. 2 (June 2015): 203–24, 220–21.

male migration from the Caribbean to Notting Hill was viewed—as has been well documented—in racist terms as a sexual threat but also, in normative sociological terms, as potentially debilitating to communitarian values due to the scarcity of *local* female-centered networks.²² For Young, communitarian values could also only truly take root at a particular social scale. He argued in the Labour Party pamphlet “Small Man, Big World” (1949) that active democracy relied on “solidarity among neighbours.”²³ Young in fact turned to Notting Hill in the early 1970s to pilot the first elected “Neighbourhood Council” as the long-awaited fruition of this 1949 text. Jon Lawrence has strengthened Butler’s reading of postwar community studies as a *political project*, by highlighting the remarkable ways in which Young and Willmott handpicked the voices of their working-class subjects in order to support an idealized picture of communal relations and extended family networks in the East End. This simplified portrait of a “mutualistic communitarianism” rooted in traditional neighborhoods “underpinned their vision of a less centralist version of postwar social

²² As Errol Lawrence has argued, by the 1960s and 1970s, sociological work on racial inequality in Britain often blamed the victim by ‘pathologising’ West Indian family structures rather than focusing on understanding the mechanisms of systemic racism. Errol Lawrence, “In the Abundance of Water the Fool Is Thirsty: Sociology and Black ‘Pathology,’” in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London, 1982). See also Barbara Bush, “Colonial Research and the Social Sciences at the End of Empire: The West Indian Social Survey, 1944–57,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (2013): 451–74; Helen McCarthy, “Pearl Jephcott and the Politics of Gender, Class and Race in Post-War Britain,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 6 (Summer 2018).

²³ Michael Young, “Small Man: Big World: A Discussion of Socialist Democracy,” Labour Party pamphlet, 1949, found in Notting Hill Social Council File, DC/94, Chesworth Papers, Queen Mary Archives, University of London (henceforth QMUL).

democracy.”²⁴

Alongside debates about the health and future of British social democracy, the politics of community must be placed in another, overlapping set of concerns. Michael Banton’s work on East London, *The Coloured Quarter* (1954), is considered a founding text of British “race relations.” As Jordanna Bailkin reveals, Banton completed it after a stint of fieldwork on rural-to-urban migration in Sierra Leone. When Bailkin interviewed Banton in 2008, he insisted that his sociological research in Britain and Sierra Leone “occupied separate intellectual spheres, and that there was little, if any connection between them.”²⁵ But he did recognize that his work in both locations was driven by the central notion of “community studies,” or the desire to study communities in transition.²⁶ According to George Steinmetz, British race-relations research reflected an avowed turn away from anthropological research in the colonies, focused on understanding and “protecting” stationary and discrete ethnic cultures, towards what was seen as the far more modern *sociological* outlook aligned to the challenges of decolonization and nation building and concerned with population movement, urbanization, and the social consequences of capital investment in the developing world.²⁷

As scholars of British colonial and US foreign policy have recently shown, the roots of the community-based “thinking small” approach to modernization and social development—the flip side to global, aspatial, top-down strategies of development—can be

²⁴ Jon Lawrence, “Inventing the ‘Traditional Working Class’: A Re-Analysis of Interview Notes from Young and Willmott’s *Family and Kinship in East London*,” *Historical Journal* 59, no. 2 (June 2016): 567–93, at 593, 579.

²⁵ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (London, 2012), 29.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

²⁷ George Steinmetz, “British Sociology in the Metropole and the Colonies, 1940s–1960s,” *The Palgrave Handbook of Sociology in Britain*, ed. John Scott and John Holmwood (Basingstoke, 2014), 302–37.

found in rural modernization projects in the American South and in colonial Africa and British Bengal prior to and just after the Second World War.²⁸ Aaron Windel has, for instance, recently tracked the Fabian ideas at work in the rural reconstruction of late British Bengal.²⁹ As the radical community worker Majorie Mayo noted in 1975, “The British concocted the term community development out of the attempts to develop ‘basic education’, later ‘mass education’ and social welfare in the colonies.”³⁰ In the 1950s, “community development” began to feature strongly in UN development documents and projects, which borrowed extensively from British literature on Africa and India.³¹ The emphasis of these projects was on supporting self-help, on using local know-how, and on local economic and political engagement and decision-making.³²

²⁸ Aaron Windel, “Cooperatives and the Technocrats, or ‘the Fabian Agony’ Revisited,” in *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building between the Wars*, ed. Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas (London, 2012); Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA, 2015); Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, 2010).

²⁹ Windel, “Cooperatives and the Technocrats.”

³⁰ Marjorie Mayo, “Community Development: A Radical Alternative?,” *The Community Development Reader: History, Themes, Issues*, ed. Gary Craig et al. (Bristol, 2011), 75. .

³¹ James Midgley et al., *Community Participation, Social Development and the State* (London, 1986). See also Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*; and Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*. At the center of the United States federal government’s “War on Poverty” were community development programs modeled on foreign aid.

³² As geographers Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate have argued, in many ways it makes sense to view the development of metropolitan and (post)colonial urban expertise as two parts of one story, through the movement of ideas through professional networks, international institutions, and individual careers. See Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate, “Post-Colonial Careerism and Urban Policy Mobility: Between Britain and Nigeria, 1945–1990,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42, no. 1 (March 2017): 44–57.

T. “Reg” Batten is widely recognized as the founder of the professional practice of “community development” in Britain.³³ The colonial connections in his work are also clear. Batten developed what he called his “non-directive” approach, which emphasized the autonomy and active participation of deprived urban communities, while working as “an avant-garde educationalist” as superintendent in the Education Department in colonial Nigeria in the 1940s.³⁴ As a strategy to overcome the problem of their outsider status—and amidst an emergent nationwide nationalist movement and general strike led by Michael Imoudu in 1945—community workers in Nigeria were to abjure their own power and instead merely provide technical knowledge, working *with* rather than *for* the community.³⁵ This approach, intended to provide an education in political practice, took time; Batten argued for the need to delay political independence. As he wrote in 1948, “We are interested not only in the fact of independence but also in its quality.”³⁶ His vision of fostering “qualitative democratic self-government” in Nigeria through this non-directive method would go on to have a huge impact on social work practices in Britain, particularly via his leadership in the YMCA and a series of influential courses he ran from 1949 to 1972 that trained both

³³ See Gary Craig et al., *The Community Development Reader*.

³⁴ See T. R. Batten, *Communities and Their Development: An Introductory Study with Special Reference to the Tropics* (London, 1957); T. R. Batten and M. Batten, *The Non-Directive Approach to Group and Community Work* (London 1967); see also George Lovell, “T. R. (Reg) Batten and Madge Batten: Non-Directivity and Community Development,” *Encyclopaedia of Informal Education* 2007, <http://infed.org/mobi/t-r-reg-batten-and-madge-batten-non-directivity-and-community-development/>.

³⁵ For the politics of expertise in colonial Africa, see Joseph Hodge, *The Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH, 2007).

³⁶ T. R. Batten, *Problems of African Development*, vol. 2, *Government and People* (Oxford, 1948), 156.

international and domestic community workers at the Institute of Education, University of London.³⁷ By the 1970s, when issues of autonomy and personal self-determination were increasingly counterposed to the centralization of resources and institutional inertia of welfare state provisions and social planning,³⁸ Batten's non-directive approach was embraced as standard practice among a vast number of community development workers (and, interestingly, Methodist missionaries).³⁹ Not surprisingly, this inheritance posed problems for the more radical community workers, many of whom looked to developments in American cities in the 1960s for social-work models seemingly untainted by colonialism.

Yet the international, postcolonial dimensions of community development in Britain cannot be reduced to the reproduction of (colonial) paternalism. As Radhika Natarajan's research has revealed, the Jamaican Edmund N. Burke applied twenty years of social-work experience in Jamaica to develop a small community-leadership program to support democratic practice in Nottingham after the riots there.⁴⁰ Likewise, as is discussed below, in Notting Hill, the Guyanese-born social worker Pansy Jeffrey worked *within* the institutions of

³⁷ Batten's influence lived on internationally too; between 1954 and 1972, he and his wife, Madge Batten, also a social worker, went on numerous consultations to train field workers in Ghana, India, Guyana, Trinidad, Liberia, the United States, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Rhodesia, Finland, and Jamaica. See Lovell, "T. R. (Reg) Batten and Madge Batten."

³⁸ Emily Robinson et al., "Telling Stories about Post-War Britain: Popular Individualism and the 'Crisis' of the 1970s," *Twentieth-Century British History* 28, no. 2 (2017): 268–304.

³⁹ Batten's 1962 text *Training for Community Development* defined the field. and *The Non-Directive Approach to Group and Community Work* (1967), coauthored with Madge Batten, still appears in contemporary community development readers. See, for example, Craig et al., *The Community Development Reader*.

⁴⁰ Natarajan, "Conversations in a Nottingham Welfare Office." See also Radhika Natarajan, "Organizing Community: Commonwealth Citizens and Social Activism in Britain, 1948-1982" (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2013).

the British welfare state, in the Citizens' Advice Bureau, as well as in a number of neighborhood associations, all the while maintaining strong links to the fight for (anti-colonial) socialism in British Guiana (Guyana). In fact, when British troops were sent to British Guiana to depose the elected Peoples Progressive Party in 1953—and imprisoned the party leadership—Jeffrey's husband, Lionel Jeffrey, returned there temporarily to serve as acting secretary of the party. Like his wife, Lionel Jeffrey would go on to be hugely active in anti-racist community work in London for decades, with the two of them co-founding the Community Education Trust in 1974.

Critically, by 1968, community development expertise had begun to shape state investment in Britain's inner cities. That year the Government's Urban Programmes Unit, led by the community development worker Muriel Smith, began a series of state-sponsored projects in twelve urban areas.⁴¹ Launched in the wake of Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech, the unit's explicit agenda was to alleviate racial tensions. At its beginning in 1968, its budget was £7 million; by 1980, this had grown to £165 million. That same year, the 1968 Race Relations Act established the Community Relations Commission, tasked with promoting "harmonious community relations" and with supporting a formal network of local Community Relations Councils across the country. Community development in Britain, unlike that in the United States, emerged at this time, as Akwugo Emejulu has shown, "as an institutional practice of the welfare state"—as an institutional effort to democratize that practice.⁴² We can see this in an influential 1968 study on community work practice, chaired by the doyen of social workers, Dame Eileen Younghusband. Community development, she

⁴¹ Martin Loney, *Community against Government: The British Community Development Project, 1968–78* (London, 1983), 2.

⁴² Akwugo Emejulu, *Community Development as Micropolitics: Comparing Theories, Policies and Politics in America and Britain* (Bristol, 2016), 41.

said, was “part of a protest against apathy and complacency against distant and anonymous authority. It is also part of the whole dilemma of how to reconcile the ‘revolution of human dissent’ into the large-scale organization and economic and social planning . . . This boils down to how to give meaning to democracy . . . community work is a means of giving life to local democracy.”⁴³

The “revolution of human dissent”—in the case here, the call for racial justice—was to be “reconciled” into the workings of the social democratic state through community work. At the governmental level, “community relations” meant by 1968 “relations within the community between people of different colour, race, ethnic or national origin.”⁴⁴ Community workers themselves recognized that community development, community work, and self-help were in many cases “mere euphemisms” for “deeply held concerns and anxieties about public expression of racism.”⁴⁵ Good “community relations” came to be viewed, at least at the governmental level, as a liberal means of containing political discontent or, more specifically, reining in both black power and organized racism.⁴⁶

Notting Hill had by 1968 been subject to a decade’s worth of ad hoc, grassroots community development projects instigated by voluntary agencies, social workers, and left-wing activists both inside and (very self-consciously) outside of the Labour Party. This article

⁴³ *Community Work and Social Change: The Report of a Study Group on Training* (1968), 5, as cited in Emejulu, 50.

⁴⁴ Martin McEwan, *Housing, Race and Law: The British Experience* (London 1991), 91.

⁴⁵ Lionel van Reenan and Maggie Pope, “Racism and ACW’s Development,” *Community Work and Racism*, ed. Ashok Ohri, Basil Manning, and Paul Curno (London, 1982), 17.

⁴⁶ This argument relates to the current work of Marc Matera, whose research reveals that the roots of “race relations” spring from an effort to limit and control African radicalism. Matera, “The African Grounds of ‘Race Relations’ in Britain,” paper presented at Modern British Studies Conference, Birmingham, UK, 5 July 2017.

now turns to excavating the history of that community work in the years following the Notting Hill riots of 1958. The campaigns of black and white community workers and New Left activists in Notting Hill point to a shared history of collaboration, division, and debate and a shared concern about the content and workings of social citizenship. It is possible to uncover in the political praxis of activism in Notting Hill distinct efforts to challenge and find solutions to the liberal paternalism and centralization of the social democratic project. It was here, in the inner city, where the limitations of universal social rights were most keenly felt, and where “community development” would be put to the test. Wherever its multiple (ideological and geographic) roots can be found, “community studies” and “community development” were significant companions to the large-scale modernization projects and concomitant social transformations of the postwar world.⁴⁷ In this context, a key set of pressing questions emerged: Who represents “the people”? What makes a community? Who decides how to allocate economic resources? In response to these questions, direct action, self-help, and participatory democracy became the (much debated) watchwords of the day.

“Mere Transit Camps”: Anti-Racism and Tenant Activism, 1958–1960

The white riot against Notting Hill’s Afro-Caribbean community is well recognized as a watershed moment in the history of “race” in Britain.⁴⁸ As a consequence, political support for restrictions on New Commonwealth immigration found a foothold in public debate, culminating in the 1962 Immigration Act.⁴⁹ The events of Notting Hill in 1958 are also

⁴⁷ Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 4.

⁴⁸ The most perceptive initial sociological and historical analysis was provided by Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London, 1960), 127–46.

⁴⁹ Randall Hansen argues the impact of the riots was in fact ambiguous at the governmental level, as the government did not want to appear to be pandering to racist violence by passing

widely recognized as an important moment in the emergence of organized black British political consciousness. As a Notting Hill resident, Baron Baker, put it: “Before the riots I was British—I was born under the Union Jack . . . But the race riots made me realise who I am and what I am. They turned me into a staunch Jamaican.”⁵⁰ The autumn of 1958 saw the formation of a number of black British organizations. The Afro Asian Club, the Racial Brotherhood Movement, the Association of the Advancement of Coloured People, and the Coloured People’s Progressive Association, for instance, emerged at this time.⁵¹ By the end of the 1958, the Committee for Inter-Racial Unity in West London had been set up, which and included representatives from eighteen Trade Union Branches, six Constituency Labour Parties, and several local black organizations.⁵² As other scholars have shown, anti-racist activism and black organizing in London must be placed within a wider history of what Robin Kelley refers to as the “black globality.”⁵³ Here, the political activities of African and Afro-Caribbean migrants living in Britain in the middle years of the twentieth century are woven into wider Cold War histories of colonial liberation and the African American freedom struggle—activists’ work emphasized this political “simultaneity” across the black Atlantic.⁵⁴

immigration restrictions. See Hanson, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford, 2000); Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in Postwar Era* (Ithaca, 1997)

⁵⁰ Edward Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country: West Indians and the Notting Hill White Riots* (London, 1988), 122.

⁵¹ Glass, *Newcomers*, 196–211.

⁵² Jan O’Malley, *The Politics of Community Action: A Decade of Struggle in Notting Hill* (Nottingham, 1977), 27.

⁵³ Robin D. G. Kelley and Stephen Tuck, introduction to *The Other Special Relationship*, 1–6.

⁵⁴ Schwarz, “Claudia Jones”; Matera, *Black London*; Perry, *London Is the Place*.

But this community organizing in Notting Hill has not been, to any great extent, written into the history of the left in Britain. Benjamin Heinmann's 1972 account in *The Politics of the Powerless*—which depicted as a “total failure” the attempt after the riots by black and white liberal and left intellectuals to mobilize black people at the national level in the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination—has perhaps cast a long shadow.⁵⁵ The Notting Hill riots tend to figure in histories of the political right—and to be read as a galvanizing force for anti-immigrant sentiment—or they are treated as a critical moment in the transnational history of “Black Britain.” Both approaches leave community activism largely disconnected from histories of the British left, with notable recent exceptions found in the work of Kennetta Hammond Perry, Tank Green, and John Davis.⁵⁶

This disconnect is surprising given the degree of activism within Notting Hill following the riots. If Notting Hill became synonymous in public discourse with urban decline, riotous youth, social deprivation, prostitution, and Nandy's “denudation of meaningful relationships,” it also became for over a decade a magnet for a generation of activists.⁵⁷ As Edward Pilkington put it, “Philanthropists flocked to Notting Hill after the

⁵⁵ John Rex, review of *The Politics of the Powerless: A Study of the Campaign against Racial Discrimination*, by Benjamin W. Heineman,” *American Journal of Sociology* 80, no. 5 (March 1975): 1272–75.

⁵⁶ Perry, *London Is the Place*; Tank Green, “Digging at Roots and Tugging at Branches: Christians and ‘Race Relations’ in the Sixties” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2016); John Davis, “Containing Racism? The London Experience, 1957–1968,” in Kelley and Tuck, *The Other Special Relationship*, 128–49. See also Stephen Brooke, “Revisiting Southam Street: Class, Generation, Gender, and Race in the Photography of Roger Mayne,” *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 2 (April 2014): 453–96.

⁵⁷ For early analyses from the New Left and on the activities of the ULR Club in Notting Hill, see editorial, “The Habit of Violence,” *Universities and Left Review* 5 (Autumn 1958); Michael Kullman, “Notting Hill Hustings”; Hall, “ULR Club at Notting Hill.”

riots.”⁵⁸ According to the Trinidad-born Michael de Freitas, who lived in Notting Hill and who would go on to become an influential figure in the British Black Power movement, “all of them were terribly well-intentioned, quite clueless and full of questions. They wanted to do something for the poor, unfortunate residents of Notting Hill and they were desperate to meet us.”⁵⁹ The *Kensington Post* asked, “Will too many do gooders pave the path to Notting HELL?”⁶⁰ Voluntary work was also an aspect of such activity in Notting Hill. “Immigrant welfare,” John Davis persuasively explains, “came to preoccupy the voluntary sector whose future was uncertain in the age of state welfare.”⁶¹ Because the “Beveridgean welfare state was ‘colour blind,’ making no allowance for the disabilities encountered by non-white immigrant groups,” the voluntary sector filled the void; in fact, it was Notting Hill that provided “the main impetus for the expansion of voluntary activity in this field.”⁶²

In early December, alarmed by the riots, the Home Office noted that what was needed was “the creation of groups of people of goodwill who could help to create the atmosphere in which integration could take place.”⁶³ One important force of “goodwill” that emerged in Notting Hill was, as Tank Green’s research has shown, radical Methodism.⁶⁴ A leading Methodist Christian Socialist, Rev. Donald Soper, famously lamented at the Methodist National Conference in July 1958 that he was “in the presence of a dying church”; but in the aftermath of the riots, Soper too found new purpose and even a road to renewal for the

⁵⁸ Pilkington, *Beyond the Mother Country*, 144.

⁵⁹ Michael Abdul Malik, *From Michael de Freitas to Michael X* (London, 1968), 79–80, as quoted in Pilkington, 144.

⁶⁰ Davis, “Containing Racism?,” 128–29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 128–29.

⁶³ As cited in Davis, “Containing Racism?,” 129.

⁶⁴ Tank Green, *Digging at Roots*.

church.⁶⁵ Using as his model the approach of the East Harlem Protestant Parish Group Ministry, Soper sent three young clergymen (one of whom who had spent two years with the East Harlem Ministry) to Notting Hill to build a multiracial congregation. In 1960, David Mason, a minister from the Notting Hill Methodist Church as well as a local Labour county councilor, founded the radical, non-denominational Notting Hill Social Council.⁶⁶ By September 1960, the Migrant Services Division of the West Indies Federation identified seventy-four local groups in London focused on the promotion of better “race relations”; nine of these were focused exclusively on the Notting Hill neighborhood.⁶⁷

A critical development in the history of the British left was the growth of black organizations and institutions in Notting Hill, which Perry tracks in *London Is the Place for Me*. The setting up of the *West Indian Gazette* by the Trinidadian communist Claudia Jones provided, for example, a key political space to make visible and debate black people’s struggles for equality in Britain, connecting them to global movements across the Black Atlantic.⁶⁸ Jones and the editorial team’s response to the racist violence in Notting Hill was to organize an important precursor to the Notting Hill street carnival, which aimed to raise money for a legal defense fund for black people caught in the riots. Reproducing the Trinidadian tradition of carnival, the festival’s costumes, dancing, singing, black women’s beauty contest, and steel band all provided critical opportunities for Afro-Caribbean residents

⁶⁵ Martin Wellings, “Renewal, Reunion, and Revival: Three British Methodist Approaches to ‘Serving the Present Age’ in the 1950s,” *Methodist History* 53, no. 1 (October 2014): 21–39, at 22.

⁶⁶ Green, *Digging at Roots*, 89.

⁶⁷ Davis, “Containing Racism?,” 129.

⁶⁸ Perry, *London Is the Place* (2015); Schwarz, “Claudia Jones”; Marika Sherwood, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London, 1999); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of a Black Communist* (Durham, 2007).

in Notting Hill to share pride in their common Caribbean heritage.⁶⁹ This cultural celebration—this act of “transplant[ing] our folk origins to Britain”—was for Jones always political: as she famously put it, “a people’s art is the genesis of their freedom.”⁷⁰ Cultural celebration was locally also a radical act of survival. Black people continued to face the threat of physical attack in the area. At the time, Notting Hill was a stronghold for Colin Jordan’s White Defence Leagues and Oswald Mosley’s Union Movement. It continued to be, as Raf de Leon of the Coloured People’s Accommodation Bureau put it, a “place of fear.”⁷¹ The racist murder of Kelso Cochrane in the area in 1959, nine months after the white riots, and the lack of any indictment for that murder, further underlined the everyday dangers that people faced.⁷²

Perry emphasizes the unique political perspective and agency of Afro-Caribbean activists in the wake of the riots and their concerns about the broad presence of racism across British society, including within the Metropolitan police. This opened up a fundamental divide between black and white community workers and commentators in Notting Hill. The latter, Perry argues, tended to rely on the “mystique of anti-racism” in their responses to the white riots. This “mystique” rendered “racial conflict” as “the reckless actions of ‘irresponsible youths’” within “a broader context of degenerate conditions characteristic of working-class urban life in particular neighborhoods in Nottingham and West London.”⁷³ Here, “sexual relations (real and imagined) between Black men and White women, housing

⁶⁹ Perry, *London Is the Place*, 133.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ As cited in Green, *Digging at Roots*, 403.

⁷² On Cochrane’s murder, see the outstanding piece of investigative journalism by Mark Olden, *Murder in Notting Hill* (London, 2011).

⁷³ Perry, *London Is the Place*, 108.

shortages, and employment” were the root *causes* of the violence.⁷⁴ Rather than recognize the pervasive presence of “common-sense” racism and the limits of equal citizenship across British society and state institutions, white activists focused on emphasizing tolerance and liberalism as distinctly British national traditions. In such a telling, the cause of the violence was not racism in British society but rather the consequences of a fractured community, social deprivation, and moral decline.

Rev. Soper’s opening remarks for The Migrant in the Community conference hosted by the Notting Hill Social Council in 1962 began with the assertion that “the real problem was not the colour question but the economic one.”⁷⁵ Soper’s focus was, like that of many other community workers, on social deprivation in the area, but his explanation of racial violence did not rely on an act of willful amnesia. Instead, he insisted to an audience of academics, activists, social workers, and clergymen that any discussion of the migrant in Notting Hill had to start with “the sorry story of slavery” and the “emotional background of slavery.”⁷⁶ West Indians, he explained, were “the residual legatees of European paganism and exploitation.” It was now time, he argued, to “impress upon the community the need for extension of the Welfare State, particularly in the field of housing,” as a critical step in

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Speakers at this conference included Dr. Kenneth Little, a leading “race relations” anthropologist from the Department of Social Anthropology at Edinburgh University; Pansy Jeffrey; and David Pitt, from the London County Council and leader of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination. Pearl Jephcott was also in attendance. “The Migrant in the Community, 27 September 1962, at the Notting Hill Methodist Church,” Pansy Jeffrey Papers, GB 0074 LMA/4462/P, London Metropolitan Archives (henceforth LMA).

⁷⁶ Donald Soper, “The Migrant in the Community, 27 September 1962 at the Notting Hill Methodist Church,” Pansy Jeffrey Papers, GB 0074 LMA/4462/P, LMA.

embracing the “immense opportunity . . . to create a community spirit.”⁷⁷ While Perry’s critique offers an important interpretative framework to understand many of the contemporary responses to the riots, it does not treat these responses as political acts in themselves. To be sure, the myth of tolerance failed to recognize deep structural inequalities, pervasive racist beliefs, and everyday experiences of racial violence in Notting Hill. But it was also a constructive liberal discourse that sought to produce white working-class identification with an anti-racist ideal.⁷⁸ In the end of the period under consideration, this welfarist vision of solving racism—by fighting deprivation and emphasizing an imagined tradition of tolerance—proved increasingly untenable. Even more, failures to directly combat racism in the area would prove the undoing of any “community spirit” across race.

Yet, in the late 1950s, Notting Hill was recognized as both a site of social conflict and a potential “constituency of change.”⁷⁹ Confronting those questions proved a rallying point for activists on the left. Such efforts escape easy political definition. Because the local Labour Party and its candidate, George Rogers, stood in 1959 on a platform of immigration restrictions, the politics of anti-racism (in opposition to Oswald Mosley’s 1959 fascist campaign in the area) could not be contained by local party political divides. As Hall put it the first publication of the *New Left Review* in 1960, “Notting Hill is for the moment *beyond* Party politics.”⁸⁰

An uncertain, incipient politics can be seen, for instance, in the work of a central

⁷⁷ Soper, “Migrant in the Community.”

⁷⁸ For recent work on the political work of liberal discourses, see Caroline Shaw, *Britannia’s Embrace: Modern Humanitarianism and the Imperial Origins of Refugee Relief* (Oxford, 2015).

⁷⁹ Hall, “Life and Times of the First New Left.”

⁸⁰ Hall, “ULR Club at Notting Hill.”

figure in community work in the area, the longstanding Labour London county councilor for North Kensington, Donald Chesworth, a self-described “World Federalist.” Chesworth’s socialist internationalism and anti-racism were miles away from the racist restrictionism of the local Labour MP. His commitment to an international vision of social welfare stood in contrast to understandings of social welfare that we see among many Labour voters and articulated across the political spectrum at this time, in which social welfare was less a human right than a political victory won from the government by the “English people” through sacrifices in the world wars.⁸¹ Later, Chesworth became what could be described as a sort of postcolonial missionary, working—after Notting Hill—to build an agricultural school in Tanzania with Bishop Trevor Huddleston, setting the minimum wage in Mauritius as an advisor to the International Labour Organisation, and visiting and raising funds for Bengalis during their war of independence as the chairman of the War on Want.⁸² In Notting Hill, in the immediate aftermath of the riots, Chesworth worked alongside the Austrian sociologist Richard Hauser and the Pan-Africanist Amy Ashwood Garvey, originally from Jamaica, on a project aimed at mitigating racial tension. The fruits of their collaboration can be discerned from a Special Branch report:

HAUSER, supported by CHESWORTH, immediately contacted the Coloured Workers’ Welfare Society (now the N.A.A.C.P.)—the first coloured organisation set

⁸¹ Alice Ritscherle, “Opting Out of Utopia: Race and Working-Class Political Culture in Britain during the Age of Decolonization, 1948–68” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2004).

⁸² For a discussion of the imperial legacies of British internationalism, see Anna Bocking-Welch, “Imperial Legacies and Internationalist Discourses: British Involvement in the United Nations Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1960–1970,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40, no. 5 (December 2012): 879–96.

up in the area—and suggested a scheme for training voluntary welfare workers, both black and white, for work in the area. The first “class” was held by HAUSER on 29th September, 1958 at the Afro-Centre, 1, Bassett Road, W.10—the address of Amy Ashwood GARVY [*sic*] (president of the N.A.A.C.P) who was co-operating with HAUSER in the scheme. About 40 persons, predominantly coloured, attended the course . . . The first class was deemed to have been fully trained by the middle of March 1959.⁸³

Chesworth, Hauser, and Garvey were soon joined by a group of younger radicals from outside the district, led by George Clarke, activist for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). By the summer of 1959, Special Branch reported on the activities of volunteers from “THE UNIVERSITIES AND LEFT REVIEW CLUB, (another Left wing organisation not previously mentioned in these reports) . . . In ‘Peace News’ of 3rd July it was stated that members of the Club had offered to help the people living in Notting Hill.”⁸⁴

Activists associated with the early New Left arrived in Notting Hill in 1959. While the Labour Party was, according to Tony Benn, “completely missing young people” at the time, the London Left/ULR Club at the Partisan Café in Carlisle Street, Soho attracted “five or six hundred” to its weekly meetings and was, by 1960, part of a wider network of thirty to forty Left Clubs scattered across the country.⁸⁵ Hall looked back at these clubs in 2010 as a

⁸³ “Racial Tension,” report no. 1, 28 May 1959, 14, Metropolitan Police Special Branch, HO 325/9, The National Archives of the UK (henceforth TNA).

⁸⁴ “Racial Tension,” report no. 3, 21 July 1959, 8, Metropolitan Police Special Branch, HO 325/9, TNA.

⁸⁵ Benn quoted in David Kynaston, *Modernity Britain: Opening the Box, 1957–1959* (London, 2013); see also Cal Winslow, “Edward Thompson and the Making of the New Left,” in *E. P. Thompson and the Making of the New Left*, ed. Cal Winslow (New York,

response to the Labour Party's limitations, remembering the "lack of tight organizational structure, the loose conception of leadership, the flat hierarchies, the absence of membership, rules, regulations or 'line' . . . [and] emphasis on self-organization and participatory politics."⁸⁶ To him, the clubs signified a "new kind of socialist entity: not a party but a 'movement of ideas.'"⁸⁷

Alongside political mobilization around the CND, in an effort to solve what Hall called the "question of agency" and "develop a new political practice," New Leftists went out into the city.⁸⁸ They followed the path of young liberal reformers before them—university students had, for example, manned East London's Toynbee Hall with its "World Settlement Movement" for generations—but now they had new political purpose that would, in the 1960s and 1970s, become radical community work.⁸⁹ In the first edition of the *New Left Review*, Stuart Hall described what the ULR Club found in the neighborhood of Notting Hill in 1960:

The area is teeming with young people . . . During the hottest month of the year—August—when more West Indians and youngsters were on the street than at any other time, many Youth Clubs closed. The area is full of young married couples—but there are practically no crèches where working mothers can leave their children . . . A prosperity state? And Notting Hill in the centre of the largest city on earth? Without a community sense—that is to say, a spirit of common responsibility, a life

2014).

⁸⁶ Hall, "The Life and Times of the First New Left."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ On this earlier history, see Kate Bradley, *Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: Charities and the Working Classes in London, 1918–1979* (Manchester, 2009).

of shared experiences, community provisions, a sense of being able to affect directly the life, growth and renewal of the area, an expanding physical horizon—Notting Hill had no human resources with which to combat the special problems of a multi-racial population.⁹⁰

In Chesworth's unpublished book manuscript "The Anatomy of Notting Hill," written in the early 1960s, he insisted that the source of many of the district's problems, described by Hall above, came down to dislocation and poor housing conditions.⁹¹ For Chesworth, the root cause of many of the social tensions of Notting Hill lay in an exploitative landlordism of the sort epitomized by the soon to be notorious Perec Rachman. The 1957 Rent Act removed rent controls from unfurnished accommodation rated at more than £40 per annum. Below that level, rent increases were limited to twice their gross annual value, but if the tenancy changed in any way, the property became decontrolled and rents could be increased.⁹² In Notting Hill, Rachman and his associates became experts in utilizing the terms of the act to increase their profits, capitalizing upon and in some instances exacerbating hostility between white and black residents to achieve their aims⁹³—and using an "infrastructure of local black landlords

⁹⁰ Hall, "ULR Club at Notting Hill."

⁹¹ D. P. Chesworth, "Anatomy of Notting Hill," unpublished manuscript, DC/46, Chesworth papers, QMUL.

⁹² See John Davis, "Rents and Race in 1960s London: New Light on Rachmanism," *Twentieth Century British History* 12, no. 1 (January 2001): 74–75; Alan G. V. Simmonds, "Raising Rachman: The Origins of the Rent Act, 1957," *Historical Journal* 45, no. 4, (December 2002): 843–68.

⁹³As a Special Branch report into Rachman's activities in 1957–58 noted: "It is known that during the last two years a number of white tenants have been given sums of money ranging from £10 to £150 to vacate their premises, let to them as unfurnished accommodation, after which a few bits of furniture have been installed and the rents considerably increased."

and street thugs.”⁹⁴ The 1957 Rent Act had, Chesworth argued, destabilized social life in Notting Hill, resulting in “very important social effects”: “The working out of the Rent Act and the spiralling of rents in many districts has meant that hosts of long established families have been compelled to move from their traditional communities. The new-comers have little sense of belonging, there is little neighbourliness and hardly any community participation. Indeed many areas have become mere transit camps, all of which has in areas such as Notting Hill, been an important contribution to community malaise and breakdown.”⁹⁵

Chesworth argued that the solution to this culture of transience was communally owned housing. Chesworth’s words on “neighbourliness” tie housing policy directly to the future of communitarian values, to the very basis of the social democratic experiment. Notting Hill, as an extreme case of modern transience and in-and-out migration, became a sort of laboratory for how to develop that “spirit of common responsibility.” Mobilizing around the problem of rent then became one important focus of community activism. Chesworth was the first to attempt to organize Rachman’s tenants, and as a consequence, his flat at 59 Cambridge Gardens became a hub of activity.⁹⁶ This was, Hall remembers, the ULR’s “first experience of local community politics.”⁹⁷

Chesworth’s personal orbit encompassed a variety of individuals contributing to community activism in the Notting Hill. Chesworth shared the flat with a young Quaker man, Peter Reed, and they were soon joined by Keith Lye. Lye had “recently returned from

“Report on: Naturalisation, Perec Rachman,” 22 January 1959, NA MEPO 2/9999, Metropolitan Police Special Branch, 14.

⁹⁴ Hall, *Familiar Stranger*, 259.

⁹⁵ All quotations from Chesworth, “Anatomy of Notting Hill.”

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Hall, *Familiar Stranger*, 259.

working as a geographer and surveyor in East Africa and having saved a little capital, determined to spend a few months helping out in Notting Hill. Peter [Reed] had spent his National Service in the Army during the Mau Mau troubles, which had led him firmly into the pacifist camp.”⁹⁸ After his work in Notting Hill, Lye would go on to be heavily involved in the anti-apartheid movement in the UK as deputy director of the Africa Bureau. Lye’s and Reed’s decisions to be involved, in any capacity, with the issues facing Notting Hill underline the relationship between white anti-racist activism in Britain and politics of decolonization. Even more, this anti-racist activism might be framed in light of what Nicholas Owen refers to as the political “redundancy” or unclear role of white anti-imperialists in THE processes of decolonization.⁹⁹ In Notting Hill, Chesworth also developed a lifelong friendship and working relationship with Huddleston, who had recently returned from serving as Anglican bishop of Sophiatown, South Africa, and was working in the area with a youth group. Pansy Jeffrey, the Guyanese social worker and nurse, who was also close friends with the Guyanese-born radical black publishers Eric and Jessica Huntley, would work closely with Chesworth over the years, including on the Notting Hill Social Council. Jeffrey was appointed by the mayor of Kensington in 1959 to work for the Citizens’ Advice Bureau after the riots, where, she remembered, “it soon became the norm that any black or Asian face would be directed to her regardless of their problem.”¹⁰⁰ Another flatmate at Cambridge Gardens was Alexio Zihute, a student from Southern Rhodesia. Zihute, eighteen years old at

⁹⁸ Chesworth, “Anatomy of Notting Hill.”

⁹⁹ Nicholas Owen, “Four Straws in the Wind: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, January–February 1960,” in *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization*, ed. L. J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell (Basingstoke, 2013).

¹⁰⁰ Pansy Jeffrey, interview by Nuala Sanderson (7 May 1997) as cited in Sanderson, “The Impact of the Struggle for Racial Equality on British Racialised Relations from 1958 to 1968” (PhD diss., University of Southampton, 1999), 125

the time, shared a room with a student from Zanzibar and another from Southwest Africa.¹⁰¹ As Zihute remembers, people constantly knocked on their door, twenty-four hours a day, for help. “Somebody had been kicked out of a flat. Somebody had nowhere to go. Somebody’s father was being rough with him. The Irish, the West Indians, they all would knock on the door.”¹⁰²

Michael de Freitas was another figure operating in these circles who moved between a criminal sphere and community activism. Zihute, the son of a chief whose tribe had raised funds to send him to college, tried to avoid the streets occupied by gangs in Notting Hill and remembers being afraid of de Freitas when he visited the Cambridge Gardens flat, because he carried a gun.¹⁰³ Chesworth recalled his first meeting with de Freitas: “One Sunday . . . they brought along someone who looked like a cross between a pirate and a gangster, bearded, with a ring in one ear, at least slightly charismatic, who told an extraordinary story of having worked as a rent collector for Rachman.”¹⁰⁴ In 2012, Hall recalled meeting de Freitas:

I got to know a man called “Michael X,” yes? Michael de Freitas, who came to the offices one day, and he said, “I see your people are on my manor.” I said, “What do you mean?” “People from your Club are down my way, trying to organise. I can’t remember anybody asking permission.” I said, “I beg your pardon!” “Well,” he said, “I more or less run things down there,” which he did!¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Alexio Zihute, interview by Camilla Schofield, 6 March, 2015.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Shirley Green, *Rachman* (London, 1979), 99.

¹⁰⁵ Stuart Hall, interview by Paul Thompson for the Pioneers of Social Research project, 6 March 2012, West Hampstead, 43–44.

De Freitas meant that he was part of Notting Hill's new criminal underground; Hall knew that he was probably involved in local prostitution as well as the eviction of black tenants who could not pay their rent.¹⁰⁶ De Freitas started his political life as the ULR's inside man: "He introduced us into places in Notting Hill to which we'd previously had no access, and activists from the ULR Club went to stay with some of 'his' people, who, we discovered, kept huge Alsatian dogs, although whether on duty as agents of protection or intimidation remained a mystery."¹⁰⁷ At the West London Rent Tribunal on 27 May 1959, de Freitas and two others had their rents reduced, significantly enhancing the credibility of the campaign.¹⁰⁸

In the ensuing months, more than two hundred other applications were successfully brought. However, as the ULR group began to formally organize tribunal applicants, their outsider status and political naiveté were painfully exposed. Following a public meeting in December 1959, the Powis and Colville Resident's Association was set up with the aim of fighting for better housing in the area and getting private squares opened up for public use. As Jan O'Malley notes, "From the start the association was determinedly multi-racial . . . however very few black people attended the first meeting, allegedly because of threats of eviction if they attended."¹⁰⁹

In subsequent elections to the association's committee, former communist and local trade unionist Bill Richardson was elected chairman, while Lloyd Hunte was elected secretary.¹¹⁰ The allegation of intimidation keeping tenants away from the meeting led to a

¹⁰⁶ Hall, *Familiar Stranger*, 259

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ See reports in *Daily Telegraph* (London) and *Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1959, in 'Race Relations in the Years after the Notting Hill Riots,' Folder 8: Press Reports, 1959-1961, HLG 117/122/8, TNA.

¹⁰⁹ O'Malley, *Politics of Community Action*, 29-30.

¹¹⁰ Green, *Rachman*, 132.

decision to canvass all the houses associated with Rachman. De Freitas provided a list of over one hundred Rachman-owned houses. Soon after, Lloyd Hunte reported that there was a plan to evict all the current tenants and convert the houses into unfurnished flats so as to avoid the limited security provided by the law to furnished tenants. The association decided to counter this plan with a mass application to the rent tribunal for the security of all the tenants. The success of the plan came to depend on the leadership and connections of de Freitas. Within a month, twenty tenants had applied to the tribunal, but one by one, these applications were withdrawn, presumably under pressure from Rachman or his agents. Then Rachel Powell, the ULR Club's secretary, discovered the keys to a large number of Rachman-owned properties in the basement of Lloyd Hunte's father, Vernon Hunte, a former policeman in colonial Trinidad.¹¹¹ Both father and son—along with de Freitas— were still working for Rachman to ensure that the association did not truly challenge Rachman's interests.¹¹² In March 1960, Hunte Jr and de Freitas were excluded from the association, but the damage had been done.

Members of the ULR Club, realizing how deeply involved they had been in aiding Rachman, and newly conscious of their outsider status, withdrew. This time in Notting Hill signaled, for Hall, his “first political lesson in black diasporic politics.”¹¹³ Notting Hill was, he explains, a place where an “underground, diasporic ‘colony life’ was beginning to flourish . . . a black expressive culture”; but it also represented a “volatile, complex moment in the birth of new racial politics in Britain”—when the “more respectable” generation of black residents in Britain of the immediate postwar years, students, anti-colonial intellectuals, and middle-class professionals, gave way to “a very different social and political milieu.”¹¹⁴ Hall

¹¹¹ Ibid., 130.

¹¹² Ibid., 133.

¹¹³ Hall, *Familiar Stranger*, 260.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

was, like other leading black activists in Notting Hill, such as Claudia Jones, Pansy Jeffrey, and Amy Ashwood Garvey, an outsider by social class. In explaining why Garvey's Association of the Advancement of Coloured People was short lived, Jeffrey simply explained, "Her politics belonged to the thirties."¹¹⁵

Hall continued to contribute to national campaigns for racial equality at the national level, editing the *New Left Review* until 1962 and from there becoming the driving force behind the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.¹¹⁶ Other players in the story persisted in their grassroots work in Notting Hill, albeit in a changing context. Chesworth helped to set up the Social Council with Rev. David Mason from the Notting Hill Methodist Church in late 1960, leaving Britain in the early 1960s to pursue social development work in Mauritius and Tanzania before returning in the 1970s to work with the Bengali community in Tower Hamlets as the warden of Toynbee Hall.¹¹⁷ Zihute, meanwhile, went on to gain a postgraduate degree in international economics under Gunnar Myrdal at the University of Stockholm in the 1960s, becoming an urban planner with the Commonwealth in Lagos and working for a short period to oversee land redistribution in newly independent Zimbabwe.¹¹⁸ Back in Notting Hill, the committee that had worked to organize Cochrane's funeral, including Claudia Jones, Frances Ezzrecco, and Amy Ashwood Garvey, would go on to

¹¹⁵ Sanderson, "The Impact of the Struggle," 109.

¹¹⁶ Note that some people at CCCS did engage in community activism—see, for example, the interviews by Kieran Connell with Chas Critcher (20 February 2015) and Trevor Fisher and Brian Homer (27 March 2015).

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/history/research/projects/ccs/interviews/audio-interviews.aspx>.

¹¹⁷ See Minutes of the Notting Hill Social Council, January to November 1964, DC/94, Chesworth Papers, QMUL.

¹¹⁸ Zihute, interview by Camilla Schofield.

consult and pressure the Home Office to provide better police patrols in the area.¹¹⁹ Jones died in 1964, but her work as an activist would come to influence radical black British activism for decades to come. Pansy Jeffrey spent the next forty years working for the people of Notting Hill, setting up the West Indian Mothers' Club in 1960, founding the Pepper Pot Club for elderly people of Caribbean descent in 1980, and serving on or founding dozens of other local and national committees dedicated to improving the lives of working-class black people in the area. During the early to mid-1960s, it was the work of organizations such as these that took up the baton of social action in North Kensington—with “social work” remaking itself into “community development” as the decade wore on.¹²⁰

Becoming a Neighbor: Social Work, Community Development and the New Left

The immediate aftermath of the Notting Hill riots saw a variety of attempts to understand and build “community” in the area. From the early 1960s to the 1970s, Notting Hill remained a sort of living laboratory for community workers, who continued to focus on the need to break down the divide between “us and them.” It was at this time and in this sense that community development could take on a radical political meaning. Even more, it was at this time in Notting Hill when the constructive relationship between formal social work and New Left activism was most visible.¹²¹ While, as Lise Butler has shown, “community studies” was a

¹¹⁹ Perry, *London Is the Place*, 136.

¹²⁰ Reflecting the global dimensions of community work, Chesworth would go on to join Huddleston in building an agricultural school in rural Tanzania and leading the international War on Want charity. ‘Africa i’ File, DC/48, Chesworth papers, QMUL.

¹²¹ Even more, these social workers highlight women’s largely forgotten intellectual contributions to the British New Left prior to the Women’s Liberation Movement. Similarly, Perry notes that “Black women overwhelming dominated the leadership of the [Inter-Racial Friendship Coordinating Council] and undoubtedly played important roles in shaping the

concept that was deeply tied to debates about the future of British socialism, likewise we cannot fully understand the history of the New Left in Britain without turning to the archives of community workers in Notting Hill and other neighborhoods across the country. There we see efforts to develop a “new political practice.”¹²²

The first experiments in community development in the district emerged out of the North Kensington Family Study survey of the early 1960s. The study committee included leading figures in the social-work profession such as social psychologist Marie Jahoda and Dame Eileen Youngusband. Youngusband had recently published her influential report on the profession that endorsed “community development” approaches alongside case and group work.¹²³ With a grant from the City Parochial Foundation, the committee employed Pearl Jephcott to survey the district of “Notting Dale” between May 1962 and November 1963.¹²⁴ Concentrating on twenty multi-occupancy houses, Jephcott collected data through ethnographic methods and via the analysis of information on housing conditions and welfare provision. She found both of these inadequate and placed particular focus on the need to “involve the local residents in the plans for action.”¹²⁵ Jephcott could point to the success of three small “self-help” programs initiated as part of the survey: new modern paper-sack refuse bins for multi-occupied houses, a Christmas parcels scheme for pensioners, and

direction and content of the organization’s early activities.” Perry, 138.

¹²² Hall, “Life and Times of the First New Left.”

¹²³ Eileen Youngusband, *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services* (London, 1959); see, for example, para. 638.

¹²⁴ That is, Central North Kensington. See Pearl Jephcott, *A Troubled Area: Notes on Notting Hill* (London, 1964), 11. On Jephcott’s innovative methods, see John Goodwin and Henrietta O’Connor, “Pearl Jephcott: The Legacy of a Forgotten Sociological Research Pioneer,” *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (February 2015).

¹²⁵ Jephcott, *A Troubled Area*, 140.

outdoor play-groups for infants.¹²⁶ As Jephcott concluded, “The history of the two play groups . . . pointed to certain essentials in these early experiments in self-help. Some person from outside was needed to focus vague ideas, to initiate cooperative action, and to take the ultimate responsibility for a matter like handling money. It was also plainly desirable that, in this society where people move about so much, this key person should remain with the group for some time.”¹²⁷

From 1965, one such key person was the community development worker Ilys Booker. With a background in adult education in her native Canada, Booker arrived in North Kensington with fifteen years of experience working with community groups on London council estates and with Danilo Dolci in southern Sicily. Drawing on these experiences, she was keen to emphasize the differences between community development and other forms of social work: “This new kind of worker is not referring to family or personal problems; nor has the worker been sent by the Authorities (as the community would see it) . . . Instead, the new kind of social worker comes into the community and becomes a resident and neighbor; talks to people about the neighbourhood, listens to what people say about it and asks questions of a different kind.”¹²⁸

She found Jephcott’s report a useful way in. “She asked in what way the area was troubled . . . When the problem was identified, she had to help people discover the structure of their community. The tendency was to see all power as outside the neighborhood, i.e., in the town hall, in the southern part of the borough. Nearly all her work was carried out in

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 122–30.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁸ Ilys Booker, “Welfare Provisions and Citizens Participation—Plenary Session V,” Sixth Meeting of the British National Conference on Social Welfare, LMA/4196/10/002, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA.

dialogue in the streets and shops, at the school gates and in the launderette . . . The basic problem was that people did not believe they could do anything.”¹²⁹ In the Social Council, Rev. Mason, Pansy Jeffrey, and others also sought to become “neighbours” in the area and give residents a sense of the power of local problem-solving by holding open monthly meetings.

Tracking the theoretical foundations of the welfare state, Jose Harris notes that “inculcating citizenship [was] the ultimate goal of social welfare” as far back as the late nineteenth century.¹³⁰ Importantly, this liberal education in citizenship was not just a matter of stimulating “active citizen-participation” but was also an ideological process—involving the encouragement of “ethical imperatives” and “individual altruism.”¹³¹ In a youth worker’s 1969 report for the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, we see something of the *ideological* tensions at work in trying to become “a neighbor” to a (white, teenage) group. The youth worker, as he put it, “must maintain his own identity while being acceptable to young people. Some . . . members of the community may well identify the worker with the young people and he may find himself defending some of their attitudes while not himself agreeing with them.”¹³² He then recounted a conversation with the white teens on “black people” and his feelings about it:

I’d been to a conference on race and came back to the café in jacket and tie, briefcase,

¹²⁹ Ilys Booker, “Consultation on Community Development.” Scottish Churches’ House, Dunblane, 20 February 1968, LMA/4196/10/004/01, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA.

¹³⁰ Jose Harris, “Political Thought and the Welfare State, 1870–1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy,” *Past and Present* 135, no. 1(May 1992): 116–41.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³² “Working with Groups—Some Observations,” Report for the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, August 1969, LMA/4462/P/01/030, Pansy Jeffrey Papers, LMA

the lot.

Where you bin?

Conference.

Telling m bout us again?

Not really. Was about race.

*What, the blacks. What they always aving conferences about them for. Send em all
ome.*

What about us then? What about all the poor people round ere—your own people.

Well, we have conferences about them too.

Bloody blacks. What's so special about them.

Taking over the country they are.

Oh that's bloody ridiculous.

*...S'alright for you. Ent any down where you live. Hunoreds of em round ere. Take all
the houses.*

*Look, my next door neighbour comes from Barbados . . . Areas like this have always
had a housing shortage. The black people didn't cause it.*

Black bastards. Powell said it right.

The youth worker then reflected on the conversation: "A deep sorrow. Depression beyond words. We never crack this one. We set the café alight sometimes with discussions. Everyone joins in. Walk in the door, what's on the agenda tonight lads. Politics, religion, sex, everything. Terrific. Excitement. Laughter. Jim terrified we're going to tear the place down. Then this. A sullen silence. Them against me. I will not hate my fellow men and I nearly hate you for hating black people. What is it, where is it, how can it be reached, undone? Deep

despair.”¹³³ The young people’s “sullen silence” signaled a key political moment in the history of British social reform and in the history of the British left. White aggression *within* the community would dog the construction of a “community spirit”—and the community worker’s “neighbourly” place within in it—throughout the 1960s and beyond.

By the second half of 1966, while Booker was engaged what she called the “slow and painful”¹³⁴ work of becoming “a neighbour,” two other groups of outsiders arrived in Notting Hill with two distinct approaches to social change—and two understandings of their role within it. One group was the Young Christian Workers (YCW) who carried out what they described in their internal campaign literature as “a very PERSONAL CAMPAIGN” starting in July 1966 in Notting Hill.¹³⁵ YCW was a radical Roman Catholic lay organization with a global missionary reach, with cells from Soweto to Detroit to Singapore.¹³⁶ Their Notting Hill campaign included five “Inquiries,” which involved the group engaging with short quotations from the Bible or a Christian text and a set of “Actions” that each Young Christian Worker was expected to accomplish in preparation for the next Inquiry. Doug Rossinow has charted the influence of the social gospel tradition OF Christian liberalism within the American New Left, which he argues provided groups such as the YMCA-YWCA “with a straightforward defense of political liberalism, with adult models of responsible dissidence, and with an

¹³³ “Working with Groups—Some Observations.”

¹³⁴ Booker, “Consultation on Community Development.” The development of the project from its inception up to 1969 is recorded in Roger Milton and Elizabeth Morrison, *A Community Project in Notting Dale* (London, 1972).

¹³⁵ “Immigration: Westminster Regional Campaign,” July 1966, LMA/4462/P/01/030, Pansy Jeffrey Papers, LMA.

¹³⁶ Stuart C. Bate, “The YCW Moves into Soweto and Other Black Townships: 1952 to 1965,” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 43, no. 3 (2017): 1–25.

institutional base for protest activity.”¹³⁷ The prevalence of Christian community workers in British cities points to a parallel story. Notting Hill’s multiracial Methodist Church, like the YCW, emphasized the concept of *koinonia* of the early Church, which they understood as a radical form of Christian fellowship “with all possible barriers broken down between people” —including the walls of the church. To this end, their Methodist Team Ministry supported close fellowship through a network of “house churches” that were particularly popular among congregants from West Africa and the Caribbean, with evening worship, Bible study, and sometimes political discussion in individuals’ homes.¹³⁸ At the heart of the New Left was, as Rossinow argues, an existential “search for authenticity”; this was seen as essential to developing a *culture* of democracy and an imagined third way between communism and anti-communism.¹³⁹ This “search for authenticity” can be seen too in YCWs’ insistence that their Christian values had to be made real: “We must do something or cease to call ourselves Christian . . . we must help our new neighbours . . . and indeed seek their help.”¹⁴⁰ The first Inquiry asked, “What is our attitude towards coloured people? What are our reasons for this attitude?” They turned to 1 John (Epistle) 3:18: “My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”¹⁴¹ For the fourth Inquiry, YCWs were to attend a social event run by a black organization and were then asked to discuss as a group, “Did we enjoy the Social Event? Did they accept us? How did we accept them? . . . [C]ompare your ideas and attitudes now, are they any different from the time when you started the

¹³⁷ Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York, 1998), 85.

¹³⁸ Green, *Digging at Roots*, 93, 117.

¹³⁹ Rossinow, *Politics of Authenticity*, 4.

¹⁴⁰ “Immigration: Westminster Regional Campaign.”

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

campaign?” Christian radicals like the YCWs and members of the Methodist Team Ministry recognized that, in order to combat racism, they themselves required radical transformation.

The other group that emerged in Notting Hill in 1966, the Community Workshop, framed their intervention in the language of social research but also with an emphasis on “action.” Establishing themselves in a house on St. Ervans Road, the driving force behind the Community Workshop was one-time nuclear disarmament activist George Clark. As Clark told a meeting of the Notting Hill Social Council, “The Community Workshop recognized a distinction between social amelioration, into which category statutory welfare provision and most social agencies fitted, and social reconstruction, which was the aim of the Community Workshop. This was based upon what people in the neighbourhood could do for themselves . . . The research work of the group would not be subject to merely formal definitions; they were interested in exploring new forms of action research.”¹⁴²

Clark had been involved in housing activism in Notting Hill six years earlier as the secretary of the Universities and Left Review group. He had recently returned from the United States, where he had been inspired by the wave of community organizing there in the mid-1960s.¹⁴³ His return to London signaled a renewed attempt by the New Left to engage in urban politics. The Community Workshop movement grew out of both the failures of the CND and the renewed interest in community organizing generated by the War on Poverty programs in the United States.¹⁴⁴ Local action, they believed, could stimulate a new

¹⁴² Notting Hill Social Council Minutes, 4 July 1966, LMA/4462/P/01, Pansy Jeffrey Papers, LMA?

¹⁴³ Jan O’ Malley, interview by Dave Welsh for the *Britain at Work Project: Voices from the Workplace, 1945–1995*, 18 September 2011, <http://www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork/resources/audio.php>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

international activism. As Jan O'Malley explains, "How we presented it was that we were trying to open up democratic control and decisions that affected people and to help organize people who needed to resist bad conditions in the hope that by getting more confidence in controlling the most immediate things in their everyday life, people would then have more confidence to challenge international issues."¹⁴⁵ The cooperation of this group of younger, middle-class activists with social workers and Christians working in the area was to result in the most ambitious program of social research and social action seen thus far in North Kensington: the Summer Project of 1967.

The Summer Project and the Limits of White Radicalism

The Community Workshop decided to build a coalition with established groups in order to organize a massive housing survey. To this end, the organizing committee was made up of some by-now familiar names: Rev. David Mason and Donald Chesworth of the Social Council were chair and vice-chair, and Pansy Jeffrey and Ilys Booker were members, as were Mason's fellow Methodist ministers Norwyn Denny and Geoffrey Ainger. Notting Hill Adventure Playground leader Pat Smythe joined Mike Rustin, John O'Malley, and George Clark from the Workshop, while the working group included the local Labour councilor and future MP Bruce Douglas Mann.¹⁴⁶ As one Workshop member, Michael Rustin, observed, "The idea for the Summer Project arose initially in March amongst members of the Notting Hill Community Workshop. It evoked for them the inspiration of the legendary SNCC Mississippi Summer Projects, and had promise of giving an enormous impetus to their work

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Notting Hill Housing Service, acknowledgements, *Initial Housing Survey Notting Hill Summer Project 1967: Interim Report* (London, 1969).

in Notting Hill and to the whole concept of direct community action in England.”¹⁴⁷

According to the *Times*, this coalition amounted to two hundred students and “an astonishingly varied group of professionals, political party workers, and rival voluntary agencies.”¹⁴⁸ The Project had three programs: the setting up of a housing register, the establishment of two emergency play areas, and the establishment of three neighborhood centers, in Golborne, Colville and Powis, and Lancaster Road. In all, over six thousand households were surveyed by hundreds of mainly student volunteers. The data was crunched by a group from the University of Sussex’s Social Research Unit led by John Dearlove and presented in eye-watering statistical detail in an “interim” report in 1969. The headline findings found that one-sixth of households in the survey area were overcrowded, that there had been significant in-migration from other parts of London and the southeast, and that households headed by Afro-Caribbean, Irish, and African tenants were significantly more likely to be overcrowded than other households. It found that “for a West Indian or African in Notting Hill,” it was “virtually impossible to get better accommodation than a three room flat,” and most lived in one or two rooms, paying as much as £8 per week for one room. Meanwhile, white residents in the area could get a five-room flat for as little as £4.¹⁴⁹ According to the *Times*, the research revealed that “overt signs of a tolerance born of necessity since the race riots that disrupted Notting Hill 10 years ago” were “only skin deep.”¹⁵⁰

Disagreements about the approach to the project among those working on it reveal

¹⁴⁷ Rustin, “Community Organising,” 196.

¹⁴⁸ “Notting Hill Tolerance Only Skin Deep,” *Times* (London), 29 April, 1968.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

tensions within the New Left at this time—particularly on how to counter racism.¹⁵¹ For starters, Rustin saw “an important dialogue” taking place at the pre-project conference, between Michael de Freitas – then known as Michael Abdul Malik – and Stuart Hall. Malik (de Freitas) had become increasingly political in the 1960s, especially after he met and travelled with Malcolm X on his UK speaking tour in 1965. Hall and Malik (de Freitas) seemed to embody, for Rustin, two versions of “alternative politics (and identities) in relation to the West Indian in Britain,” with Hall signaling a path of potential accommodation with white activists and Malik (de Freitas) representing the emerging voice of black power radicalism.¹⁵² Hall noted at the conference that racist “solutions” and scapegoating emerge when communities are not able to solve their own social problems; he hoped the Summer Project—unlike ULR activism in the area years before—would produce a “creative community approach.”¹⁵³ In this spirit, Richard Hauser proposed organizing on a street-by-street basis and mobilizing around what people were “angry enough . . . to take action on.”¹⁵⁴ However, George Clark argued against this strategy, “on the grounds that they were all sitting on a racial powder keg in Notting Hill and to organize a project in this way would be tantamount to setting a match to it.”¹⁵⁵ As Tank Green has compellingly shown, the Summer Project took Clark’s approach; student volunteers undertaking the housing survey were discouraged from arguing with white residents who blamed the ills of the neighborhood on

¹⁵¹ Notting Hill Housing Service, *Initial Housing Survey*.

¹⁵² Michael Abdul Malik would go on in 1969 to lead a short-lived Black Power commune in North London called “Black House.” John Williams, *Michael X: A Life in Black and White* (London, 2008).

¹⁵³ Green, *Digging at Roots*, 199–200.

¹⁵⁴ O’Malley, *Politics of Community Action*, 50.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

black people.¹⁵⁶ Rustin surmised: “There was a degree of fear that an active stand on behalf of the West Indians would alienate the rest of the community.”¹⁵⁷ The project, Malik and others argued, was simply not radical enough. Green outlines its limitations: “Not only was there general anxiety in respect of the white, middle-class students from outside the community crossing social boundaries in order to deal with local working-class people of all racialised identities, but there was also fear that a ‘racial incident’ would be provoked either by Caribbean residents in order to embarrass the project, or by white residents if they were asked to give voice to their opinions as to what should be acted upon.”¹⁵⁸

Clark argued that the collection of information on housing discrimination itself would work to counter racism, dispelling the myth that black people “take all the¹⁵⁹ houses.” To this, Patricia Philo, a black reporter for the *Kensington Post*, responded, “Black people in North Kensington . . . do not need statistics to know that they are not getting a fair deal. They meet and talk to each other, and they know they almost never come across anyone who has got a council house or a white collar supervisory job—and they know lots of their friends who pay as much if not more than then English for rotten houses or mortgages and can’t get the kind of job for which they are qualified.”¹⁶⁰

As O’Malley lamented, “In May it was seen as a weapon of community struggle. By November it was seen as a specialist housing research body giving individual advice to tenants and landlords, with no relation to community struggle.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Green, *Digging at Roots*, 203.

¹⁵⁷ As cited in *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Green, *Digging at Roots*, 203.

¹⁵⁹ “Working with Groups—Some Observations.”

¹⁶⁰ Patricia Philo, “Notting Hill Today,” *Kensington Post*, 24 November 1967, as cited in Green, *Digging at Roots*, 202–3.

¹⁶¹ O’Malley, *Politics of Community Action*, 49.

Critically, data (even vast amounts of it) could not sufficiently give voice to the experience of racism. The black radical Lee Ackbar insisted at a teach-in to mark the end of the Summer Project that white liberals needed to stop speaking for black people; Roy Sawh, who would the following year run as a Black Power candidate in the local by-election, similarly called for an end to white intervention in black lives.¹⁶² The Summer Project's findings were used by local groups and MPs to pressure successive governments into reforming the Rent Acts to protect furnished tenants, but the Project fundamentally failed to produce Hall's "creative community approach."¹⁶³

By the end of the Summer Project, the bitterness between Clark and others in the Community Workshop had hardened into open conflict. In the Golborne ward, community action centered on the Social Rights Committee, which was dominated by Clark. In part, this Committee fulfilled a social welfare function similar to that of the Booker's experiment in community development: they organized a playgroup, provided camping holidays for local children, and arranged Christmas parcels for pensioners. However, they also had innovative ideas about local democracy, and in 1971, with the help of influential advocates such as Chesworth and Michael Young, they established Britain's first elected Neighbourhood Council.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, with limited resources, the Golborne Neighbourhood Council (GNC) was dependent on the largesse of established and much more powerful representative bodies like the Conservative-controlled Borough Council in order to get anything done. Further, the

¹⁶² Green, *Digging at Roots*, 200.

¹⁶³ See *Hansard*, Commons, vol. 783 cc1835–44, 15 May 1969. Notting Hill Housing Service, *The Rent Acts and the Housing Market in North Kensington: Memorandum of Evidence to the Francis Committee* (London, 1970).

¹⁶⁴ *The Golborne*, no. 62 (22 October 1971); no. 65 (12 November 1971); no. 79 (3 March 1972). *The New Golborne* no. 2 (14 April 1972), Kensington Central Library. See also Pryce vs. Golborne Neighbourhood Council, 1973, Race Relations Board, CK 2/1133, TNA.

very novelty of the GNC and its schizophrenic stance of sometimes criticizing and sometimes cooperating with the Borough Council left local people struggling to tell the two organizations apart. The judgment of Jan O'Malley, one of Clark's former comrades in the Community Workshop, was scathing: "Such is the logic of institutionalization and incorporation of initially radical initiative by the authorities."¹⁶⁵ Against the GNC approach, another force of local community activism continued in the guise of the Notting Hill People's Association. This group was consistently more oppositional to the local state, seen, for instance, in their use of targeted squatting to call attention to property speculation and to put pressure on the Council and the GLC to compulsorily purchase properties.¹⁶⁶ Their approach signaled an increasingly tendency, found also within radical black organizations, to see participation with the local state as essentially counter-revolutionary.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ O'Malley, *Politics of Community Action*, 53. See also Sean Baine, "The Political Community," in *Community Work: One*, ed. David Jones and Margaret Mayo (London, 1974). While the GNC collapsed amid acrimony in early 1973, its institutional legacy was the North Kensington Housing Action Centre, funded by the Grove Community Trust, the Community Relations Commission, Shelter, and other charitable sources. See *New Golborne* no. 42, 23 February 1972, and no. 43, 2 March 1973; West London Fair Housing Group, *The Housing Action Centre in North Kensington, First Annual Report* (April 1972), 3–4, [Kensington Central Library](#).

¹⁶⁶ In May 1971, for instance, the People's Association helped Merle Major, a West Indian mother, and her children to squat in an empty council property in protest at years of inaction in the face of poor management and harassment from her landlord at 62 St. Ervan's Road. In July, the council put a compulsory purchase order on the St. Ervan's Road property, the first time it had used such powers. O'Malley, *Politics of Community Action*, 109–11.

¹⁶⁷ In fact, during the early 1970s, one arm of the state, the Metropolitan police, proved most adept at unifying the interests of black and white community workers—or at very least, against the police, white community workers could see themselves as on the right side of "us versus them." Three community observers were, for instance, arrested and jailed following a

It is clear that during the 1960s and early 1970s, the *practice* of community development underwent radical shifts. This was achieved by the determined work of several generations of New Leftists such as Stuart Hall, George Clark, and Jan O'Malley, radical Christians like Rev. David Mason, Labour Party stalwarts such as Donald Chesworth, and social workers like Ilys Booker and Pansy Jeffrey. Importantly, however, these individuals remained divided on how to confront the issue of racism in Notting Hill. As was well recognized by all Notting Hill's community workers by the 1970s, there were *multiple* communities in Notting Hill, sharing the same space but experiencing "the hidden hand of the market" and "the very visible hand of the state" in unequal ways on the basis of race.¹⁶⁸ The question of *which* "community" Notting Hill's community organizations were to represent remained a vexed one.

Black Power and the "Essence of Community"

While the postwar concept of "community" was always in a sense a political idea tied to the promise of decentralized socialism and (postcolonial) self-government, it gained its most

police raid at the Metro Youth Club in September of 1971. The pages of *People's News* contain a number of reports of police harassment of both white and black residents. As Rob Waters has argued, while the Mangrove trial was a signal moment in the consolidation of "Blackness" as a political identity in Britain, the support the defendants received from allies on the Left and in the counter-culture revealed a network of affinities that at times transcended the boundaries of race. *People's News*, vol. 1, no. 42, 10 November 1970; vol. 2, no. 21, 8 June 1970; vol. 2, no. 42, 9 November 1970; vol. 3, no. 17, 3 May 1971; vol. 3, no. 18, 10 May 1971; vol. 3, no. 32, August 1971; vol. 3, no. 35, 20 September 1971, Kensington Central Library. Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964–85* (Oakland, 2018), chap.3.

¹⁶⁸ H. Blagg and N. Derricourt, "Why We Need to Reconstruct a Theory of the State for Community Work," in *Community Work and the State: Towards a Radical Practice*, ed. G. Craig, N. Derricourt, and M. Loney (London, 1982), 20.

distinct political expression around calls for greater black representation. In the summer of 1968, a new community newspaper, *Spectre*, hit the streets of North Kensington. It was produced by the Inter-Racial Council for Kensington and Chelsea (IRC), which had been established two years earlier to “foster understanding and goodwill among all citizens of the borough” through education, challenging discrimination and promoting the development of community projects.¹⁶⁹ According to the council’s executive secretary, the Trinidadian social worker James Cummings, there was no shortage of community projects, but most were fundamentally flawed. He noted that “something is lacking in Notting Hill, though it has been worked over heavily by social workers.” He then offered a familiar criticism: “People come and try to help the community, and set up social services of one kind or another . . . They mean well, and they do good, mostly. But they’ve no roots in the neighbourhood. Others do not regard the black man as a self-respecting individual.”¹⁷⁰

Six months later, *Spectre*’s editors returned to Cummings’s theme, framing the argument in striking terms:

In our field we must boost our resolve to tackle with greater force this cancer of Racism we seek to remove from our society . . . We believe we know our enemies, Ignorance, Intolerance, Greed, Complacency and Laziness, but we need also to examine with care the “Bugs” who creep into our ranks claiming loudly to be interested in race relations and expressing eagerness to “help” . . . All these “Bugs” can be found exploiting the situation by posing as “experienced” and “involved” when they apply for the well-paid jobs in the various statutory agencies. Part of our

¹⁶⁹ *Spectre*, no. 1, July 1968, Kensington Central Library.

¹⁷⁰ “A Matter of Opinion.” *Spectre*, no. 1, July 1968, Kensington Central Library.

resolve must be to expose and exterminate these parasites.¹⁷¹

Here, the persistence of white paternalism has been added almost explicitly to William Beveridge's list of social evils.¹⁷² These "Bugs" were the white liberals who were not from the community but chose to speak for it; here the divide between the social object and the "do-gooder" had been politicized by race. The editorial's argument reflects a particular moment of radicalization, as Black Power discourse began to question the often uneasy alliances built between black and white community activists, as well as the paternalism intrinsic to community work.¹⁷³ While the call to "exterminate the bugs" was indicative of a heightened Black Power consciousness, it also spoke of frustrations at the outside interventions of "well-meaning" middle-class professionals involved in social work and left politics.

Since the Second World War, middle-class black professionals like Pansy Jeffrey and Amy Ashwood Garvey had been tasked with *representing* the "immigrant perspective" at

¹⁷¹ "Race Relations, 1969." *Spectre*, no. 6, January 1969, 1. Kensington Central Library

¹⁷² For a discussion of the place of paternalism in the social democratic project, see Samuel Beer, *British Politics in a Collectivist Age* (New York, 1965) and Jon Lawrence, "Paternalism, Class, and the British Path to Modernity," in *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain*, ed. Simon Gunn and James Vernon (Berkeley, 2011).

¹⁷³ On the rise of black radicalism and the influence of African-American liberation in Britain, see Ambalavaner Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger? Writings on Black Resistance* (London, 1982); Anne-Marie Angelo, "The Black Panthers in London, 1967–1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic," *Radical History Review* 103 (Winter 2009): 17–35; R. E. R. Bunce and Paul Field, "Obi B. Egbuna, C. L. R. James and the Birth of the Black Power Movement in Britain," *Twentieth Century British History* 22, no. 3 (September 2011): 391–414; Rob Waters, "Black Power on the Telly: America, Television, and Race in 1960s and 1970s Britain." *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 4 (2015).

both the local and national level. But by the late 1960s, this very limited form of representation was being challenged by black radicals. The IRC had itself recently undergone a radical transformation, from a white-led, integrationist, “strictly non-political committee” to, in 1968, a radical black-led organization.¹⁷⁴ The catalyst for this transformation was a large public meeting held by the IRC with the mayor of Kensington in February 1968. Frank Bailey, a Guyanese-born trade unionist turned mental health social worker, was one of only three black people on the board of the IRC. At a large public meeting, he broke from his “strictly non-political” script and outlined the various ways that black people experienced institutional racism, from police harassment to the discriminatory practices of local employers. The mayor opposed Bailey’s use of the term “black” and even threatened to leave. Black Power supporters heckled from the audience, calling both Bailey and Cummings “Uncle Toms.”¹⁷⁵ A founding member of the Universal Coloured People’s Association, Indian-born Ajoy Ghose, told the Notting Hill audience, “Integration means giving up our rights and cultures for the brutal western society. If we follow that, they will rule us again.”¹⁷⁶ In the months that followed, a number of board members stepped down, and the IRC emerged as a radical voice in Notting Hill; as Green argues, the IRC effectively “decolonised from within.”¹⁷⁷

The Guyanese-born Mike Philips offered a compelling account of the rise of black-controlled community groups and institutions. In it, Philips presented an alternative picture of “community.” He saw black churches as an early model of black autonomy in Britain,

¹⁷⁴ “We Will Sponsor a ‘Race Forum,’” *Kensington Post*, 3 September 1965, as cited in Green, *Digging at Roots*, 145.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 147–48.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 150.

describing them as “the essence of community” with their “network of beliefs, habits, and customs” and their shared recognition of the “charismatic leadership of a man or a woman.”¹⁷⁸ Critiquing the word “separatist” as a label that treats black autonomy and authority as a threat,¹⁷⁹ Philips reframed its emergence in the context of limitations of New Left community organizing in Notting Hill. As he put it, the role that most of the community workers tried to adopt, “that is, ‘a source of information and expertise, a stimulator, a catalyst and an encourager,’ soon came to be seen . . . from the other side as a function of their status as a part of the authority structure.”¹⁸⁰ Social research was viewed as a tool of (colonial) control.¹⁸¹ Even more, most community workers in Britain were, he explained, “young, white and middle class”; this meant that “in most cases it was actually impossible for them to recognize what ‘identity’ might mean to a group of middle-aged West Indians and Asians.”¹⁸² Philips's personal memory as a young black activist in the area is telling:

I went to work during the early 1970s for a black-run hostel in Notting Hill, and one of my most distinct memories is to do with hearing about one white community worker who was always spoken of in terms of deep resentment and suspicion. Like

¹⁷⁸ Mike Philips, “Separatism or Black Control?” in Ohri, Manning and Curno, *Community Work and Racism*, (1982) 103–20, at 111–12.

¹⁷⁹ “There is not, as far as I am aware, any black grouping which calls itself ‘separatist’ . . . If, for instance, the institutions under discussion happened to be one of the several Polish centres or indeed one of the Irish centres, it is hardly likely that the word ‘separatist’ would be employed.” See Philips, “Separatism or Black Control?,” 103.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁸¹ Rob Waters, “From Race Relations Sociology to Black Cultural Studies: Reading the Politics of ‘Evidence’ through the History of Race,” paper presented at *Modern British Studies Conference*, Birmingham, UK, 5 July 2017.

¹⁸² Philips, “Separatism or Black Control?,” 105.

my co-workers I eyed him (“the imperialist”) across the table at meetings with distrust. Meeting him ten years later at a social occasion I was mildly astonished to find that he himself had not the slightest idea of how we had regarded him, and to find that he saw himself as having been on our side and totally identified with our interests. This is merely one example of a common phenomenon, in which community workers, with the best intentions, failed to see that their goals were far removed from the goals which the “active” elements in the black communities saw as desirable.¹⁸³

Despite the shifting strategies of New Left community workers, the focus of both “the middle-class reformer” and the “working-class activist” remained, he argued, on working “to ‘integrate’ black communities into the structure of the local (working-class) community around them” and “curing blacks” supposed social and cultural isolation: “The local communities were to be brought, by engaging in ‘radicalising’ activities such as rent strikes, squatting, tenants’ rights campaigns, and so on, to realise their common position, and in a wave of solidarity move towards attacking their conditions by applying various kinds of pressure to the authorities and agencies that controlled them . . . [But] none of these activities or the way that they were structured reached the root of the feelings of the black community about their position.”¹⁸⁴ Further, Philips explained, black people’s problems, such as systemic racism in the educational system, often “transcended the ‘local community’ framework.”¹⁸⁵ “Community” came to be defined around the “root of the feelings . . . about their position,”¹⁸⁶ beyond any one locality.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 106.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 108.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

A forty-five minute Radio Four broadcast in April 1969, narrated by Stuart Hall, compiled by the Pakistan-born Dilip Hiro, and produced by the socialist documentary-maker Charles Parker, presented the rise of Black Power as one transatlantic story, with the recorded voices of people “in the noisy ghettos of Harlem and Washington D.C., and in the ‘colonies’ of Birmingham and Wolverhampton.”¹⁸⁷ As one immigrant explained in the broadcast, the experience of living in Britain produced a new understanding of history: “I was born in Jamaica, Manchester. You hear about slavery but you didn’t sort of put it together and put yourself within, you know, you wouldn’t think it happened to people who you’re sort of descended from. You know, you hear about slavery and thought it was about some other people that I don’t know about. But coming to this country you get to realise that you’re part of slavery.”¹⁸⁸ Hall, nearly three decades later, noted that this “recovery of lost histories” was “an enormous act of...imaginary political re-identification, re-territorialisation and re-identification without which a counter-politics could not have been constructed.”¹⁸⁹ It was central to building a new sense of community and speaking “the language of that which is home in the genuine sense.”¹⁹⁰

As another voice on the Radio Four broadcast put it, the struggle of Black Power involved “rebuilding and re-defining our culture which has been taken from us and destroyed since the days of slavery.”¹⁹¹ A voice recorded by Hiro added further, “Black people must work for equality and not betterment. Because working for betterment, you have do-gooders

¹⁸⁷ “We Lived across the River,” Radio4 broadcast, 1 April 1969, MS 4000/2/129, Indian Workers Association Papers, Birmingham Library.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Stuart Hall, ‘Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,’ in Anthony D. King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis, 1997), pp. 52-53

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ ‘We Lived across the River.’

in the struggle, who are assuming what is good or a bit better for the black man. They can only think of his betterment, but they will always dread the thought of his equality.”¹⁹² “You know,” another voice offered, “we’re not going to stay in the back any longer.”¹⁹³ Here, the limits of a welfarist approach to anti-racism—focused on ameliorating social problems—are made clear; here “community” has become more than a unit of deprivation and social need.

Conclusion

The “discovery” of “traditional” working-class communities via the selective anthropology of Young and Willmott was intimately tied to a *political* project that sought to shift thinking on the Left away from the masculine realm of the shop-floor toward the sorts of networks and potential solidarities that might be found in London’s streets and neighborhoods. As others have ably demonstrated, it is hardly surprising that this mythic “community” should have been discovered by sociologists and “developed” by social workers at precisely the moment that urban neighborhoods were being materially and culturally transformed by slum clearance and in-and-out migration. The story we tell above is, however, far less well known. In excavating the history of community work and New Left activism “from below,” we have traced the ways in which a motley group of Methodist ministers, Christian Workers, students, social workers, and community leaders tested the limits of liberal paternalism and the “universalism” of the postwar social democratic state.

While common material inequalities provided a collective basis for social action, these were experienced to different degrees and were felt differently depending on class, gender, and race. In Notting Hill, black Britons faced racism, manifest in physical violence in

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

1958 and after, but also in what the legal scholar Iyiola Solanke calls the “covert racial violence” of everyday life, in civil society, and at the hands of state institutions.¹⁹⁴ Around a set of discourses and practices variously termed “community development” and “community action,” a set of effective albeit fragile alliances formed that resulted in campaigns for safe play spaces and better housing and against evictions and police harassment.

As this article has highlighted, the road from 1958 was often paved with liberal intentions, marshaled by a cohort of middle-class, usually white “do-gooders.” By the time that Black Power emerged in the late 1960s, many black citizens and community workers felt that the practice of community development (itself a product of British colonialism) was in need of decolonization. This meant confronting the paternalism of liberal anti-racism and community workers as much as the inequities that structured everyday racism. As Hall elaborated in his 1969 Radio Four collaboration with Dilip Hiro, “The other battle to be waged is with white paternalism in the form of integrative policies which deny black people equal status, but see them only as “social problems.”¹⁹⁵ The history of black community organizing into the 1970s and 1980s lies beyond the purview of this study; nevertheless, by the late 1960s, black activists had reappropriated the language of “community” to critique the ameliorative, welfarist approach to anti-racism. Notting Hill, as we have argued in this article, provides a powerful telling case of the politics of community activism and of the idea of “community” itself.

As can be seen in the words and activities of black and white community workers, “Notting Hill” was both a shorthand for a postcolonial encounter¹⁹⁶ and a forcing house in

¹⁹⁴ Iyiola Solanke, *Making Anti-Racial Discrimination Law: A Comparative History of Social Action and Anti-Racial Discrimination Law* (London, 2009), 80.

¹⁹⁵ “We Lived across the River.”

¹⁹⁶ John Rex, *Race, Colonialism and the City* (London, 1973).

which the unstable terms “community” and “race” were imbued with a colonial inheritance *and* a future-oriented, social-democratic meaning. While Notting Hill, 1958, will, we are sure, continue to serve as a signifier of racist violence, this article demonstrates that it was also an important site of cross-cultural progressive activism, as significant to the histories of the Left, community development, and social action as to the reconstruction of “race” in postwar Britain.