Kala Tara: A History of the Asian Youth Movements in Britain

Education Pack

Kala Tara brings together a collection of memories and reflections about experiences of South Asians in 1970s and early 1980s Britain. It provides evidence of the way many young South Asians, supported by others from a variety of cultural backgrounds, tried to resolve what was a major conflict in their lives: racism.

All the interviews were carried out with people who ended up as active anti-racists in the 1970s and 1980s. The aim of the research was to explore their experiences of migration or of living as the children of early migrants including their experience of school. It looks at why they decided to get involved and campaign and how this has affected and influenced their outlook on society.

This education pack provides material, which can be used in the following ways:

History - to explore the experience of migration

PSHE and Citizenship – to discuss issues of racism, the importance of standing up against injustice and the impact of even small actions of support on people’s lives and sense of self, to debate appropriate methods of campaigning

English - to explore biography and autobiography as well as encourage language development. Resources to encourage creative writing.
Activity and discussion ideas

History and Citizenship

Key Stage 1 & 2 Unit 5: Living in a diverse world
Key Stage 3: Unit 4, Britain, a diverse society
Key Stage 4 - Unit 3: Challenging racism and discrimination
Key Stage 3 - Unit 3: Human Rights

Understanding experiences of migration to the UK

1. Why did Tariq think of England as a place of enormous wealth and power? And what does Anwar mean by the ex-colonies? (Arriving and Early living) Use Additional Sources 1 and 2 to discuss the historical relationship between Britain and South Asia, in order to give a context to the understanding of migrations to Britain during the 1970s and 1980s

2. List some of the reasons why the interviewees came to Britain. Use Additional Source 3 to explore the economic context to why migrants travelled to Britain in the 1970s. (written sections on Arriving and Early Living will widen understanding from the dvd)

3. Mark the countries from which South Asian migrants travelled to Britain? (use written extracts for this from Arriving and Early living)

4. From the extracts you have been presented with consider what life was like for young people who arrived here and the adjustments that they had to make. How did they cope. (read Arriving, Early Living, Schooling and the Formation of the Asian Youth Movements)

5. Find out about your own family’s experiences of 1970s Britain? What are the differences and similarities between their experiences and those of the migrants in these oral histories.
Challenging racism

6. What kinds of racism did these migrants experience? Consider which experiences are examples of institutional racism and which are examples of racial prejudice.

Additional Source 4 provides definitions of these terms.

[read Schooling, Formation of the Asian Youth Movements, Immigration Laws]

7. Explore when and why UK immigration laws were introduced. Which parties introduced these laws?

Useful links: http://www.cre.gov.uk/diversity/migrationtimeline.html#2000

8. Use Anwar Ditta’s story to explore issues of Human and Civil Rights:
   a. Which key elements of the European Convention on Human Rights and the 2001 UK Human Rights Act would help Anwar Ditta if she was fighting to bring her children over today?
   b. You have studied a summary of the 1989 UN Convention on the rights of the child and made notes on it.
   c. An Asian woman comes to you for advice. She has been told by the government that her children in Bangladesh cannot join her in Britain as they do not believe they are hers. She has come to you for advice and for some hope. So you need to give her positive answers. Prepare a detailed report on the advice you have given her for your files.
   d. Consider how this case may be dealt with differently today as a result of changes in legislation and forms of evidence.

9. One of the slogans that the Asian Youth movements used was ‘self defence is no offence’. What did they mean and why did they feel so convinced that they were justified in using the force that they did. Do you think they were justified? This concept formed the basis of defence in the case of the Bradford 12. Find out what this slogan means in law. What is meant by community self defence? Why does the law permit self defence?
[read or screen sections on The formation of the Asian Youth Movements and The Bradford 12]

10. The Asian Youth Movement campaigned on issues of racism, workers rights and international injustices. What are the human or civil rights issues that are important to you. What would you campaign about. Think about the methods that the AYMs used to campaign. What methods would you use to campaign?
English

Using the five senses in descriptive writing

DVD sections Arriving/Early Living

After watching the first two sections of the DVD, consider the kinds of things that make up first memories of migration?

Think about memories which make use of different senses when travelling to unfamiliar places.

Creative writing and conflict

Using your own experiences as well as those that you have heard about in these oral histories write a short story which explores a young person or group of people standing up to an experience of racism or prejudice.

Biography

DVD section Immigration Laws
or extracts from Anwar Ditta and Ruth Bundy interviews.

Compare and contrast the language, style and content of Anwar Ditta’s story and the way in which solicitor Ruth Bundy recounts her experiences of working on Anwar Ditta’s immigration case.
**Time Line of the formation of Asian Youth Movements in the 1970s and early 1980s**

1976 Gurdip Singh Chaggar murdered by racists. **Southall Youth Movement** formed
1976 **Asian Youth Organisation**, (AYO) Bolton and AYO Blackburn formed
1977 Indian Progressive Youth Association (IPYA) formed in Bradford
1978 IPYA is renamed **Asian Youth Movement, Bradford**
1978 **Asian Action Group** formed in Haringey
1979 **Asian Youth Movement, Leicester** formed
1979 **Asian Youth Movement, Manchester** formed.
1980 Altab Ali is murdered in Brick Lane. **Bangladeshi Youth Movement Against Racism** and other organisations formed in the East End of London.
1981 **United Black Youth League** formed in Bradford
1981 12 Asian youth in Bradford (Bradford 12) arrested on charges of conspiracy and terrorism
1981 Asian Youth in Birmingham begin to organise. Later they become **Birmingham Asian Youth Movement**
1982 Bradford 12 acquitted
1982 **Asian Youth Movement, Sheffield**, formed
1982 Youth organise in other cities including Watford and Luton.
Use the image below to discuss Britain’s relationship to India, China and other parts of the world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

a. What kind of relationship between Britain and India is presented in the advertisement? How is this achieved?

b. How does the image refer to both Britain’s economic power and military power?

c. How is Britain’s rule of other nations presented as natural and just?
This source enables a contrasting perception about British colonial rule.

I want to have the key of my house, and not merely one stranger turned out of it. Self-government is our goal; we want a control over our administrative machinery. We don't want to become clerks and remain [clerks]. At present, we are clerks and willing instruments of our own oppression in the hands of an alien government, and that government is ruling over us not by its innate strength but by keeping us in ignorance and blindness to the perception of this fact. Professor Seeley shares this view. Every Englishman knows that they are a mere handful in this country and it is the business of every one of them to befool you in believing that you are weak and they are strong. This is politics. We have been deceived by such policy so long. What the new party wants you to do is to realize the fact that your future rests entirely in your own hands. If you mean to be free, you can be free; if you do not mean to be free, you will fall and be forever fallen. So many of you need not like arms; but if you have not the power of active resistance, have you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this foreign government to rule over you? This is boycott and this is what is meant when we say, boycott is a political weapon. We shall not give them assistance to collect revenue and keep peace. We shall not assist them in fighting beyond the frontiers or outside India with Indian blood and money. We shall not assist them in carrying on the administration of justice. We shall have our own courts, and when time comes we shall not pay taxes.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) Address to the Indian National Congress, 1907
'The UK wool textile industry was short of labour for much of the post war period. Several commentators saw a direct relationship between the industry’s labour shortages and attempts to recruit workers from further afield. Such attempts were many and varied: my respondents pointed out that the industry had relied on workers from Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean countries, and displaced persons as well as on Asian migrants. They also mentioned recruitment of Irish women and of women elsewhere in the UK, particularly from the coalfields of the North East and South Yorkshire. Many of these attempts to widen the area of recruitment involved advertising, personal visits to other areas and the provision of hostels or free transport. All these alternatives had been tried by some ... firms, yet none seemed to have considered a more obvious response to labour shortages: wage increases.'

Ralph Fevre: Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination, Gower 1984
Definitions of Racism

Dictionary definitions:

1. the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others

2. Discrimination or prejudice based on race

American Heritage Dictionary

Prejudice

Noun
1. Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or experience. 2. unjust behaviour formed on such a basis

Verb
1. verb give rise to prejudice in someone; make biased

Oxford English Dictionary

Racial prejudice

Irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race or religion

Institutional racism

"the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin".

Stokely Carmichael, 1960s

"the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin", which "can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.

James Macpherson, Macpherson Report 19
Understanding self defence

Self Defence and the Prevention of Crime
Extracts from http://cps.gov.uk/legal/section13/chapter_t.html

When reviewing cases involving assertions of self-defence or action in the prevention of crime/preservation of property, prosecutors should be aware of the balance to be struck:

- the public interest in promoting a responsible contribution on the part of citizens in preserving law and order; and
- in discouraging vigilantism and the use of violence generally.

The Law and Evidential Sufficiency

Self-defence is available as a defence to crimes committed by use of force.

The basic principles of self-defence are set out in Palmer v R, [1971] A.C 814; see also Archbold 19-41.

"It is both good law and good sense that a man who is attacked may defend himself. It is both good law and good sense that he may do, but only do, what is reasonably necessary."

The common law approach as expressed in Palmer v R and other authorities is also relevant to the application of Section 3 Criminal Law Act 1967 Archbold 19-39, which provides that;

"A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or of persons unlawfully at large."
Pig ignorance or state conspiracy?

11 months of anger, anguish and apprehension exploded into thunderous applause as the verdict for those who dared not believe it, was repeated 20 times... Not Guilty. The Bradford 12 were free. While tumult of victory and rejoicing surge through every black community, the result will send shock waves tremors through the establishment.

And so it should. For a majority white jury of working men and women have, after 6 weeks, listened to 24 police officers on oath; scrutinised ‘confessions’ obtained by them; and despite warnings from Judge Beaumont that the wrong verdict may ‘lead to chaos and confusion in the country’; have thrown out the prosecution case.

It is a massive indictment of West Yorkshire Police that they chose instead to believe 12 young Asians, who claimed that petrol devices had been made as a last resort in case of a rampage by racist skinheads, because they did not feel able to rely on police protection.

But then, the most powerful argument for self-reliant, organised self-defence came from the police themselves. To a spellbound and packed public gallery, 24 police officers to a man, provided a candid and full frontal view of their ignorance of racist attacks, and indeed their own racist attitudes.

What appears to have totally escaped their notice, and what was revealed in court was, if one community was in terror of escalating and organised racist violence. And when on July 11th, in the wake of ten terrifying days of murders and rampage in Walthamstow and Southall, rumours brought hundreds onto the streets — (As they did on that weekend in Luton, Woolwich, Southall, Handsworth, Coventry, Hounslow. In Luton, the rampage did materialise, as it had done in Southall the week before.) — the police, through their thick, race-tinted glasses could see only a public order problem of blackness on the loose.

The skinheads never came. The 38 bottles never used. But when police discovered them a week later, they thought they had cracked a Plot by Political Extremists to Massternind Nationwide Copycat Riots. It was a monumental fantasy whose only merit was that it smugly fitted the collective police view of the cause of the uprisings in last year’s hot summer. For the state, it quickly became the chance of a show trial to criminalise the spirit of defiance proudly flaunted by black youth from Toxteth to Brixton to Southall, and to add legal arsenal to its armoury of CS gas and plastic bullets.

Quite how high the odds were stacked against the 12 youths became apparent when Judge Beaumont in his summing up, sweeping aside any pretence that the burden is on the prosecution to prove the case, told the jury that even if they rejected the prosecution case that riot was the motive, and that petrol bombs are explosive substances, they were entitled, nay duty bound, to convict if they felt petrol bombs were “stockpiles of such weapons may cause chaos and confusion in the country.”

He was telling the jury that the defendants could win the loss if the coin landed smartly on one edge.

Yet justice has prevailed. Not because it is guaranteed but because of a sustained campaign that brought thousands onto the streets chanting “police conspiracy”; because barristers were not afraid to bring politics into the courtroom; and because of a courageous and united stand by the 12 youths. The jury’s brave decision has vindicated everything they said.

And so, 12 young Asians spent 3 months in jail and a further 3 months on virtual house arrest. A South African style ban smashed a nascent black organisation, the UBVL. Pig ignorance was forced out in the open, even if some like Judge Beaumont feared it may “weaken race relations” and a white jury has decided that self-defence, in the face of such ignorance, is no offence.

The trial raises pressing questions: why had Yorkshire Police not noticed widespread terror in the Asian community or even the much-publicised Home Office report? Will there be an inquiry, let alone show trials, against those whose actions led to widespread rumours of skinhead attacks on the weekend of July 11th, not only in Bradford, but in every major city where large black communities live? Or will the press don the race-tinted glasses so favoured by those in power, and focus only on whether this decision is a licence for vigilante groups to wreak “terror” on “the bobby’? We have a legal verdict. A proud and defiant black community now awaits the political verdict from society. Meanwhile the only licence we need is survival.
Bradford 12’s words in court

Extracts from statements made from the dock

Sабir Huseein:
I am concerned generally about questions like skinheads and racial attacks. I do believe that if they attack us we have to defend ourselves. Everyday life is inescapable...

Tarig Ali:
Everything you have heard so far about the charges against us is about a human reaction – our action in defence of our people... The threat of fascist terror affects everyone of you and not just black people... But there is a reign of terror now for black people. The institutions that subjugate them, and the highest authority in this country has approved of this terror...
The only reason I was raided in the first place was because of my political association. They carried out a political interrogation before anything else... then the bail conditions... not to attend any political activities. After our arrest, 800 people came together in a meeting for our defence. The community understood that this was a political trial... There whole case against me amounts to nothing but a political prosecution. It is aimed at my political views. It is nothing but to get me off the streets, and that I fought for my people... I am not a terrorist but a victim of terror.

Jayess Amin and Ismaq Kazi did not make statements in court.

Self Defence is No Offence!
24-page pamphlet to be produced jointly by LOP and Bradford 12 campaign. Reprinting LOP coverage of trial, with interviews etc. 80p copy. Please send orders to Bradford 12 campaign at above address including large stamped addressed envelope.

The campaign still needs Money!!
Please send donations to:
Bradford 12 Defence Fund, Box JK, 59 Cookridge St, Leeds 2.
Black Women for Wages for Housework (U.S.A.) organised a picket outside the British Consulate in Los Angeles on April 26th to mark the first day of the Bradford 12 trial. As well as drawing attention to police harassment of the Black Community in Britain and the framing of the Bradford 12 for organising and defending their community against racist attacks, the picket focussed on the similar experiences of the Black community in the U.S.A. There too, Black people have borne the brunt of the government's economic policies of cuts in jobs, services and most importantly, in Welfare. They have had to fight harassment by the police, bias in the courts, racist attacks on their homes and families, and against immigration laws designed to keep out as many people as possible. The picket raised the most recent example in Los Angeles of police harassment carried to its extreme - the case of Delois Young, a young Black woman who was shot, and her unborn baby killed, by police who claimed to be looking for drugs.

Representatives at the picket included the Feminist Women’s Health Centre, The Older Women’s League, individual Asian and women and men, and the Los Angeles Wages for Housework Campaign. After some insistence, a deputation with Margaret Prescod-Roberts of Black Women for Wages for Housework as a spokesperson, spoke to the Vice-Consul. Although he said he didn’t know much about the Bradford 12 case, he was forced to admit that there was a lot of criticism in Britain of police relations with ‘ethnic minorities’ and that there may need to be some re-examination of police practice.

The major Los Angeles news-station made hourly broadcasts of the conversation between Margaret Prescod-Roberts and the Vice Consul; other press coverage included an article in a local daily paper.

This picket, led by Black women, left the British government in no doubt that what happens here is of direct concern to people in the U.S.A., and that we refuse to be divided from each other nation by nation, race by race, sex by sex.