University of Bristol

Department of Historical Studies

Best undergraduate dissertations of 2019

Luke Parry-Billings

'One and the Same': Anti-Apartheid and Black British Anti-Racist Politics in the 1980s

University of
BRISTOL

'One and the Same': Anti-Apartheid and Black British Anti-Racist Politics in the 1980s

Contents

Abbreviations

AAM - Anti-Apartheid Movement

BEM - Black and Ethnic Minorities Committee

BBSC - Black British Sports Standing Conference against Apartheid

SPAFZ - St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone, Bristol

WISC - West Indian Standing Conference

Introduction

In 1985, in the wake of racial tensions in Bristol, the Afro-Caribbean community of St Paul's voted to establish the St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone (SPAFZ) boycott campaign. A year later, following the campaign's success in removing all South African goods from St Paul's shops, Jagun Akinshegun, SPAFZ's chairman, remarked: 'As a black man in Britain, I don't view my struggle as separate from the struggle of the people of South Africa. They're one and the same.'[1] By equating the struggle of black South Africans with his own 'as a black man in Britain', Akinshegun highlighted the significance of the politics of race in apartheid South Africa in informing black Britons' understandings of their own struggles at home. Akinshegun's remark, and the St Paul's campaign, contradict common misconceptions of the anti-apartheid movement in Britain, which have previously marginalised black British contributions and overlooked anti-apartheid's relationship with domestic anti-racist politics. For example, in 1999, at a symposium celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), for many the 'official' anti-apartheid movement in Britain, there was no direct mention of parallel domestic anti-racist activities. The only speaker to allude to Britain's black communities was Stuart Hall, who noted the 'inexplicable distance' that persisted between these communities and the AAM.[2] Similarly, in 2003, at an African Studies Workshop at St Anthony's College, Oxford, an audience member remarked that ethnic minorities, especially Afro-Caribbean communities, expressed little interest in the apartheid

[1] BRO/41242/IM/H/25, 'St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone Newsletter', undated.
[2] S.Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', in AAM Archive Committee, *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective* (London, 2000), pp.50-55.

struggle.[3] This dissertation seeks to counter these misconceptions by tracing the ways in which anti-apartheid became an important part of a broader black British anti-racist politics in the 1980s.

Wider Social and Political Context

The significance that apartheid South Africa assumed among Britain's black communities was firmly located within a wider political context entering the 1980s. The proliferation of race riots, starting with the Bristol riots in 1980 and followed by 'uprisings' across Britain, drew attention to the deep racial divisions in British society. Increasing demands for black representation were emerging, with the Black Sections campaign within the Labour Party playing a key role in the election of the first black Parliamentary Members in 1987. Within this context of mobilisation against disenfranchisement and discrimination, Hall remarked that 'expressions of African solidarity and identity became integral' to a wider 'politics of black resistance'.[4] As such, black Britons' political consciousness became increasingly informed by the parallel struggles and ideologies of Pan-Africanism, decolonisation, black freedom movements in the United States, and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

Alongside these developments, the escalation of the struggle inside South Africa and the internationalisation of anti-apartheid sentiment meant that 'South African politics became uniquely part of the political landscape of Britain.'[5] In particular, the Thatcher Government's policy of 'constructive engagement', which promoted dialogue with the

---

[3] 'Perspectives on the International Anti-Apartheid Struggle: Solidarity and Social Movements', African Studies, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Workshop, 31 May 2003.
[4] Stuart Hall, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p.44.
[5] E.Williams, *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p.4.

Pretoria regime and refused to impose economic sanctions against South Africa, became a loaded political issue. Meanwhile a predominantly white, middle-class AAM's increasingly pivotal role in the global anti-apartheid movement further highlighted the importance of 'questions of race and racialisation' in Britain in the 1980s.[6]

Literature

In the 1970s and 1980s, these questions dominated British race relations studies. [7] Works such as Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1987)[8] exemplified a typical approach*,* which focused on illuminating the state's role in the racialisation of ideas of citizenship, nationality and rights. As such, these works demonstrated how processes of racialisation rendered ideas of 'blackness' incompatible with 'Britishness'. A growing literature on postcolonial black Britain has since emerged marking a decisive shift from the 'racialization thesis.'[9] This literature is driven by two interlinked imperatives. Firstly, it aims to reverse the tendency of race relations studies to represent black people as 'objects rather than subjects'.[10] Secondly, it has sought towards 'dismantling some of the artificial historiographical partitions' that have separated metropolitan race politics from 'histories of Empire, decolonization, and transnational anti-racist movements.'[11] For example, Bill Schwarz traced how West Indian migrants' political consciences were informed by African decolonisation,

---

[6] S.Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', p.52.
[7] K.Hammond-Perry, 'Black Britain and the Politics of Race in the 20th Century', *History Compass*, 12(8)),p.651.
[8] P.Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1987).
[9] R.Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.10-16.
[10] P.Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, p.11.
[11] K.Hammond-Perry, 'Black Britain', p.651.

and black freedom movements in the United States.[12] Similarly, Marc Matera and Rob Waters highlighted the significance of relationships between anti-racist, anti-colonialist and leftist thought in shaping black political sensibilities in the twentieth century. [13]

This emerging body of literature has been subject to several shortcomings, however. Firstly, by employing a 'transnational' perspective, it has been argued that the distinctive features of national and local movements have been lost. The salient point that has arisen from these debates is the need to place local and global perspectives in dialogue, in order 'to exceed the narrowness of nationalist thinking without losing sight of the specificity of local factors'.[14] Secondly, there has been a predominant focus on the interwar years.[15] Thirdly, the examination of black British transnational solidarities has been overwhelmingly oriented towards the United States. Whilst one cannot discount the impact of the US black freedom movements on black British struggles, this imbalance risks overemphasising the axis between Britain and the United States. Gilroy supported this view arguing that discussions of South Africa are 'more important than ever' because they demonstrate that 'conversations about overthrowing the racial order do not have to be dominated by…the export of [African-American] perspectives on racial difference to everybody else'.[16] Consequently,

[12] B.Schwarz, *West Indian Intellectuals* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp.1-12.
[13] M.Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: Univeristy of California Press, 2015); R.Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).
[14] L.Evans, '*The Black Atlantic*: Exploring Gilroy's Legacy', *Atlantic Studies,* 6(2), p.19.
[15] K.Hammond-Perry, 'Black Britain', pp.654-55.
[16] Johannesburg Review of Books, 'Imagination is Everything: Paul Gilroy speaks to the JRB', https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2018/04/04/imagination-is-everything-paul-gilroy-chats-to-the-jrb-about-race-land-and-south-africas-role-in-overthrowing-the-racial-order/ [accessed 13 February 2019]

accounting for black Britons' relationship with the apartheid struggle in South Africa may help towards a critical reconfiguration of historical black Britain.

Lastly, there exists a well-established body of scholarship on anti-apartheid in Britain. However, whilst much attention has been given to the AAM, the neglect of black British anti-apartheid activism is apparent. For example, Roger Fieldhouse's *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: The Merlin Press, 2005) touched only briefly on black British contributions to anti-apartheid efforts, centring this discussion around the AAM's relationship with black communities, and its 'inability to attract widespread black support'. Fieldhouse attributed this to a 'clash of cultures' between black communities, who often favoured direct action and campaigning simultaneously against domestic racism, and a predominantly white, middle-class AAM, who prioritised an 'image of respectability' and a single-issue focus.[17] However, limiting black British solidarity with South Africa to analyses of black communities' relationship with the AAM threatens to hide the contribution of black Britons, and distort the nature and significance of anti-apartheid among black British communities. Elizabeth Williams' *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015) served as an important corrective to these shortcomings. Stressing the strong ideological affinities between pan-Africanism and black anti-apartheid activism, Williams illuminated the 'often hidden contribution of black Britons' to the anti-apartheid fight, demonstrating how this took dynamic forms. Williams also examined the overlap of black British domestic and international concerns, noting that 'anti-

---

[17] R.Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: Merlin Press, 2005), pp.345-51.

apartheid activism was often subsumed within local and national anti-racist campaigns.'[18] In doing so, Williams' work was praised for drawing attention to a 'thoroughly under-researched facet of British social, cultural and political history.'[19] However, it was also criticised for an 'over-emphasis on the retrieval of the historical "facts" of black solidarity', leaving analysis of 'its broader trajectories of black and anti-racist cultural politics' relatively undeveloped.[20] This dissertation seeks to further trace these trajectories of anti-apartheid within a broader black British anti-racist politics, thereby deepening our understanding of the historical significance of black British solidarity with South Africa.

Methodology

One reason for the distortion of black British anti-apartheid activism has been an over-reliance on the AAM archive. However, amidst over 6000 boxes of records, the AAM archive still proves useful. In particular, Annual Reports help explore the independent solidarity initiatives of black organisations including the West Indian Standing Conference (WISC) and the Black British Sports Standing Conference against Apartheid (BBSC).[21] The records of the Black and Ethnic Minority Committee (BEM), which was set up in 1988 to mobilise black support, offer critical insights into the fault lines between the AAM and black British communities.[22] The records' coverage of the Black Sections Campaign's attention to Southern African issues also helps highlight the value of anti-apartheid in anti-racist campaigns.[23] Nevertheless,

[18] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity*, p.10.
[19] T.Carter, review of E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity, African Studies Quarterly,* 17(2017), p.159.
[20] R.Skinner, review of E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle*, *Cercles*, 6(2016).
[21] Bod.MSS.AAM.13, 'AAM *Annual Reports*'.
[22] Bod.MSS.AAM.103-8, 'Black and Ethnic Minorities Committee, 1987-93'.
[23] Bod.MSS.AAM.856, 'Background on the Labour Party & Southern Africa'.

the AAM archive remains insufficient for this dissertation. Moreover, the methodological challenge of excavating black British solidarities with South Africa is complicated by the lack of any single anti-apartheid body representing black activists. It thus becomes critical to examine a broad selection of cultural, social and political phenomena.

The black press and music are both critical resources in this respect. Starting with the black press, this dissertation draws foremost from the *Caribbean Times*, Britain's oldest Black weekly newspaper, and the *African Times*, established in 1984. Both publications were produced by *Hansib*, one of the pioneering publishers of Britain's black communities in the 1970s and 1980s. The value of the black press has often been neglected in anti-apartheid studies. However, these publications have been well-recognised in recent studies on black internationalisms. Kathleen Wilson locates newspapers' value as 'central instruments in the social production of information: both representing and verifying local experience, [refracting] world events into socially meaningful categories and hierarchies of importance.'[24] Furthermore, Kenetta Hammond-Perry cites the role of the media in revealing how international developments 'informed how black Britons framed their marginal citizenship status.'[25]Likewise, with respect to black British music, scholars such as Paul Gilroy have traced how the musical forms of the 'Black Atlantic' were central sites of political intervention, which spoke to wider debates around the Black experience[26]. Therefore, by reflecting understandings of the significance of apartheid South Africa

---

[24] K.Wilson, *Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1717-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.40.
[25] K.Hammond-Perry, 'Black Britain', p.659.
[26] P.Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp.81-2.

to black British communities, the black press and black British music offer the dialogue between the local and the global that this dissertation demands.

Lastly, it is critical that the overarching argument of this dissertation stands neither as evidence of undifferentiated black experiences nor of a lack of internal divisions in black British solidarity. As such, records from the SPAFZ campaign will also be drawn upon to further explore how anti-apartheid became a key medium through which local racial issues were understood and opposed.[27] Although recognising that 'black' became a term that encapsulated Asian ethnic minorities at this time, this dissertation's use of the term 'black' will predominantly refer to people of Afro-Caribbean and African descent. Its analysis will be split into three strands.

Chapter 1 explores black British expressions of solidarity with black South Africans. It reveals how conceptions of black identity, histories of oppression, and cultural expression converged to articulate a shared experience of oppression. This chapter emphasises how black British solidarity with black South Africans often operated within a wider 'pan-African' framework, in which apartheid was positioned as an integral element of a wider black liberation. In doing so, it shall be argued that black British discourse revealed how many black Britons felt that apartheid South Africa was interrelated to their own struggles against racial injustice.

Chapter 2 explores how, within this understanding of the intimate relationship between the systemic racism of apartheid and the racialised social structures of Britain, anti-apartheid functioned as a site of protest through which black Britons

---

[27] BRO/41242/IM/H/25, St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone, Bristol, 1985-86.

articulated wide-ranging critiques of British society. In particular, the connection of apartheid issues to the Thatcher Government's lack of commitment to racial equality, as well as debates over citizenship and policing will be addressed. These critiques demonstrate how anti-apartheid was used to highlight the inherent contradictions in the 'mystique of British anti-racism.'[28]

Chapter 3 builds on the ways in which anti-apartheid became a vehicle through which black Britons challenged domestic race politics. This is evidenced by the manoeuvrings of the BEM, the Black Sections campaign, the actions of local councils and the boycotts enacted by local black communities. This chapter thus reinforces how anti-apartheid became a significant medium through which black Britons articulated their concerns and beckoned changes in race relations at home.

Consequently, this dissertation reveals the significance of the anti-apartheid struggle to black British communities' understandings of race, racism and anti-racism, both at a local and global level. It also evidences the multifaceted purpose of black British anti-apartheid activism as an expression of opposition to apartheid South Africa, racism as a wider phenomenon and black Britons' own experiences of racial injustice. This analysis seeks to build upon emerging literature examining the ways in which domestic anti-racist politics have been informed by international developments. In particular, this dissertation will trace how anti-apartheid assumed an important role within a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s. In doing so, it aims to uncover the voices of groups, who have so far been

---

[28] K.Hammond-Perry, *London is the Place for Me* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.11.

marginalised from a transnational movement, which is of critical value to understandings of British social, cultural and political history.

Chapter 1: Expressions of Solidarity

'The Parallel applies in Angola, it applies in Namibia and in South Africa, but the Parallel also applies in Britain when…racists say that black people…can only go so far and no further.'[29]

To understand the significance of apartheid among black British communities, it is informative to first explore black British expressions of solidarity with black South Africans. In doing so, this section will argue that the common thread between these notions of solidarity was the articulation of a shared experience of oppression. This was reflected in the location of apartheid both within a wider 'Pan-African' struggle for 'black' Liberation and the personal struggles of black British communities.

Ronald Walters' study of Afrocentric movements asserts the 'dominant influence of African identity, history & culture in the transnational relations of black people in the African Diaspora.'[30] Adopting Walters' perspective, this chapter firstly examines the ways in which apartheid South Africa was linked to histories of oppression. Conceptions of black identity will subsequently be probed to better understand how perceived parallels between black British and South African experiences were expressed. Finally, the section will address the role of music as a crucial medium through which these perceptions of a common struggle against oppression were reflected. This analysis thus seeks to demonstrate how black British discourse brought together conceptions of black identity, histories of oppression and cultural

---

[29] B.R.O.T.H.E.R., 'Beyond the 16th Parallel', released by 4th & Broadway (1989).
[30] R.Walters, *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), p.196.

expression to articulate a shared experience of oppression. By firmly placing the anti-apartheid struggle within a wider struggle for black liberation, black British activists articulated that apartheid was not an 'alien' concept but rather fundamentally interconnected to their own experiences of racial oppression.

The location of the apartheid struggle within wider histories of oppression was an important means through which black Britons emphasised that apartheid South Africa was not extraneous to their own struggles. For example, the labelling of apartheid South Africa as the 'last bastion of racism'[31] and 'the last colony'[32] was one way in which black Britons firmly placed the anti-apartheid struggle within a wider anti-colonial and anti-racist perspective. Meanwhile, a persistent emphasis on recognising the history of South Africa further reiterated apartheid's significance as an integral element of wider struggles. For example, Black Sections newsletters insisted that 'we cannot limit arbitrarily the…responsibility of colonialism in South Africa to its post-1948 apartheid form,'[33] given that black South African struggles 'began more than 300 years ago' with European imperialism and slavery.[34] Indeed, as *African Times* remarked, for Britain's black communities, the need to recognise these histories was ever more pertinent because of Britain's role in 'handing over power to the white minority through the Act of Union in 1910 and the granting of a republic in 1961.'[35] By firmly placing the anti-apartheid struggle within wider struggles against colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and racism, it can be argued

---

[31] 'Remembering Sharpeville', *Caribbean Times*, 28 March 1985.
[32] Bod.MSS.AAM.2376, 'Black Focus on "The Future role of Black solidarity', Leaflet, April 1992.
[33] Bod.MSS.AAM.1454, Black Sections Newsletter, *Four Black* Tribunes, 'Letter to the Editor', April 1984.
[34] Bod.MSS.AAM.107, Black Sections Newsletter, *Four Black Tribunes*, 'Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa: Draft Declaration', October 1987.
[35] 'How Thatcher backs Apartheid', *African Times* (London), 2 October 1984.

that black British discourse sought to oppose the perception of apartheid as an aberration. This critically reveals how black Britons understood apartheid South Africa as part of 'broader diasporic and transnational struggles against the vestiges of European imperialism and ideologies of White supremacy'.[36] The Black Agenda, the founding Black Sections policy document published in 1988, clearly exemplified this perspective. After citing 'imperialism, capitalism, colonialism and white racism' as the 'interlinked enemies of the Azanian people', the Agenda asserted that 'those who benefit…in Azania…are the same people who profit from racism in Britain and the oppression of Black people worldwide.'[37] Similarly, *Caribbean Times* refused to present apartheid as an alien concept by comparing apartheid to the 'Tory Colour-Bar Immigrants Bill' and 'Jim Crow.'[38] As such, apartheid was positioned as an integral element of a much wider black liberation. Implicit within the linkages of apartheid to these broader histories of oppression, however, was also a more specific understanding amongst black Britons that the struggles of black South Africans were intimately tied to their own.

In black British discourse, the prominent use of conceptions of black identity to express solidarity with black South Africans was also rooted in understandings of a mutual struggle against wider power structures of oppression. This is evidenced in the common intertwining of the language of kinship, and black Liberation, with black British activists often referring to 'brothers and sisters in South Africa.'[39] Critically, these ties of affiliation with black South Africans were perceived to be intimately

---

[36] K.Hammond-Perry, *London is the Place for Me,* p.23.
[37] Bod.MSS.AAM.107, Black Sections Newsletter, *Four Black Tribunes,* 'Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa: Draft Declaration', October 1987.
[38] Thatcher and Apartheid', *Caribbean Times,* December 1978, p.4.
[39] Bod.MSS.AAM.104, [BEM], Leaflet, 'Black Solidarity: Smash apartheid now!', March 1990.

connected to mutual black struggles. For example, *African Times* stated: 'there can be no real freedom in Africa as long as our brothers and sisters are still treated by the white minority as hewers of wood and drawers of water.'[40] Similarly, the Black Agenda emphasised its regard for the 'Black people of Azania as flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone', adding that their solidarity was 'based on the historical ties of a people sharing a common heritage and destiny of Black Liberation.'[41] It is clear that within this assertion of a wider 'Pan-African' struggle, these statements implicitly asserted a more specific connection between black British and black South African experiences. It is important to note, however, that these sentiments were not evidence of undifferentiated black experiences. As Robin Kelley and Tiffany Patterson argued, 'neither the fact of blackness nor shared experiences under racism…makes for community or even a common identity.' Yet, it was 'precisely out of the historic struggle to resist domination that a conception of "authentic identity" emerged'.[42]

Black British critiques of black sportspersons who obstructed the sporting boycotts further evidence how conceptions of 'blackness' remained intimately bound to conceptions of shared histories of oppression. For example, *Caribbean Times* vehemently condemned the 1983 West Indian rebel tourists as 'callous traitors' for having 'conveniently forgotten their history' as 'descendants of slavery'.[43] As such, it was clear that black Britons located the West Indian rebels' obligation to not go on the tour in conceptions of their 'blackness', which remained intimately bound to

---

[40] 'Looking back at 1984', *African Times,* 10 January 1985.
[41] Bod.MSS.AAM.856, 'The Black Agenda 1988', p.39.
[42] T.R.Patterson & R.D.G.Kelley 'Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World', *African Studies Review,* 43(1), p.19.
[43] 'Blood money', *Caribbean Times*, 27 February 1983.

perceptions of a common struggle. Furthermore, the intertwining of conceptions of 'blackness' and histories of oppression was often explicitly expressed by black British activists. For example, in 1982, Paul Stephenson, BBSC's chairman, located black British solidarity within the context that: 'We, as Black people, are facing daily in our lives, white racism', and, consequently, 'support your cause because it has become ours too.'[44] These sentiments were echoed in Akinshegun's aforementioned statement: 'As a black man in Britain I don't view my struggle as separate from the struggle of the people of South Africa. They're one and the same.'[45] It is thus clear that conceptions of black identity were often facilitated by conceptions of a mutual black struggle, which, when expressed, revealed that many black Britons associated the struggles of black South Africans with their own. In these cases, as Hall noted: 'Black is not a question of pigmentation.' [46] Rather, it was contingent upon an understanding of apartheid South Africa both as an integral element of a wider black Liberation, and as interconnected to the past and present struggles of black Britons.

Music assumed a central role in reflecting this sense of a common black struggle. Journalist Onyekachi Wambu recalled how 'the politics of race in Britain and South Africa was a constant theme' of black British music during the 1970s and 1980s.[47] It can again be argued that these cultural expressions went beyond mere support for black South Africans, instead evoking a wider connective cultural politics. This can be seen in the song 'Handsworth Revolution' (1986), in which roots-reggae band Steel Pulse compared the black oppression faced in the streets of Handsworth to the

---

[44] Bod.MSS.AAM.1429, 'Paul Stephenson speech to United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid', New York, 1 May 1982.
[45] Bod.MSS.AAM.2203, 'St.Paul's: Apartheid on the Run', *Anti-Apartheid News,* June 1986, p.4.
[46] S.Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in L.Back, & J.Solomos (eds.), *Theories of Race and Racism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.149.
[47] Interview with Onyekachi Wambu, in E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.129.

townships of South Africa, adding: 'One Black Represent All…They are brothers and sisters in South Africa'.[48] In a similar vein, in a tradition where deejays acted as vernacular intellectuals, [49] dub-poet Benjamin Zephaniah recalled going 'on the mike on the sound system' and asserting 'we are not free until our family are free, we will fight for freedom here, and we will fight for freedom in South Africa!'[50] Both Steel Pulse and Zephaniah's joining of the freedom of black South Africans and black Britons links back to this shared perspective of apartheid South Africa as an integral element of black liberation. Indeed, this was not an aberration of black British cultural politics, given that it is already well-established by scholars such as Gilroy that music was a 'principal site of social and political intervention'.[51] Furthermore, Matera traced how during the interwar years, music was an 'ever-present part of…anticolonial activity' and many artists understood their work to be 'part of the larger political project of black freedom'.[52] Similarly, it was clear that the intertwining of the politics of race in Britain and South Africa was located both in this 'larger political project', and within the more specific struggles of black British communities. In 1989, a collaboration of rap groups named 'B.R.O.T.H.E.R' released a song called 'Beyond the 16th Parallel', which arguably best traces this perspective. The song begins with the inclusion of a speech by Bernie Grant MP, who cites the 16th parallel as the 'line drawn by white people through Angola', which 'blacks can't cross.' However, it further articulates that 'the Parallel also applies in Britain when racists say that black people, especially the youth can only go so far and no further.' [53] As such,

---

[48] Steel Pulse, 'Handsworth Revolution', on the album *Handsworth Revolution*, released by Island Records (1978).
[49] W.Henry, *What the Deejay said: A Critique from the Street!* (London: Nu-Beyond Limited: 2006), pp.20-33.
[50] Interview with Benjamin Zephaniah, in E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* pp.130-131.
[51] P.Gilroy, *Black Atlantic,* pp.81-82.
[52] M.Matera, *Black London,* p.224.
[53] B.R.O.T.H.E.R., 'Beyond the 16th Parallel', released by 4th & Broadway (1989).

B.R.O.T.H.E.R constructs the 'Parallel' as a symbolic barrier stopping the progress of all black people, consequently tying the systemic racism of South Africa to the wider struggle against black liberation and the racialised social structures of Britain. In doing so, 'Beyond the 16th parallel' exemplified the consistent thread of black British expressions of solidarity with black South Africans, which were based on an understanding of the variegated black experiences in Britain and South Africa as fundamentally interconnected.

In conclusion, an exploration of black British expressions of solidarity with black South Africans demonstrates how conceptions of histories of oppression, black identity and cultural expression were brought together to articulate a shared experience of oppression. In particular, there existed a persistent refusal to present apartheid as an alien concept. Rather, black British discourse elaborated that apartheid South Africa was intrinsically connected to their own past and present struggles. Along with rooting apartheid South Africa within wider histories of oppression, the ways in which conceptions of black identity were evoked further revealed this understanding of the parallels between black British and black South African experiences. Music also became a critical site for transmitting understandings of apartheid's intimate significance to black British communities. Together, these devices served to highlight a profound connection between the politics of black Britain and South Africa. Recognising the pervasiveness of this perspective is thus crucial to tracing the ways in which anti-apartheid assumed an important role in a broader black British anti-racist politics.

Chapter 2: Anti-Apartheid and the 'Mystique of British Anti-Racism'

'Miss Budd's case is only the tip of what should be seen as the deep festering

disease of racism in Britain.'[54]

This chapter will further explore the trajectories of anti-apartheid within a broader

black British anti-racist politics. It will focus on how anti-apartheid functioned as a site

of protest through which black Britons articulated wide-ranging critiques of British

society, which drew attention to inherent contradictions in the 'mystique of British

anti-racism.' The 'mystique of British anti-racism' refers to the collective myths that

have allowed Britain to 'represent itself as a paragon of racial liberalism, tolerance,

and benevolence towards people of African descent.'[55] Although this relationship

manifested in many ways, this chapter will examine two critical ways in which

apartheid issues became an important reference point for black British anti-racist

politics. Firstly, it will look at how black Britons connected the Thatcher

Government's South African policy to governmental commitment to racial equality at

home. Secondly, it will examine the parallels that black Britons drew between the

early 1980s riots and policing in Britain, and systemic violence in apartheid South

Africa, in order to reframe conversations about domestic race relations. The

argument is twofold. Firstly, this chapter reinforces the argument that black British

communities perceived the forms of racism in Britain and South Africa to be

fundamentally interconnected. Secondly, it argues that anti-apartheid sentiments

consequently assumed a multifaceted purpose. They expressed opposition to the

---

[54] 'Afrikaan's Budd', *Caribbean Times*, 10 May 1984.
[55] K.Hammond-Perry, *London is the Place for Me*, p.11.

systemic racism of apartheid South Africa, and racism as a wider phenomenon. However, they also became a means through which black Britons simultaneously framed and debated the domestic politics of race and citizenship. In doing so, black Britons emphasised that 'the questions of race and racialisation'[56] so apparent in South Africa were just as important in Britain.

The ways in which black Britons used the Thatcher Government's South African policy to highlight the inherent contradictions in the government's 'anti-racist' stance offer a good starting point for this argument. In the 1980s, the Thatcher Government's policy of 'constructive engagement' with South Africa, which promoted 'dialogue' with Pretoria whilst refusing to impose economic sanctions, was a particularly divisive issue.[57] Notably, the state visit of South Africa's President P.W. Botha to Britain in 1984 was a critical conjuncture, which exemplified the importance black British communities attached to this policy. Botha's visit received 'excellent publicity in London's black press' and ignited a significant response from 'the WISC, the Black Standing Conference against Apartheid…and many other local black organisations.'[58] Paul Boateng even claimed that 'never before has there been such unity amongst the black community…on an issue'.[59] Importantly, protests to Botha's visit concentrated on how this perceived appeasement of the Pretoria regime evidenced a lack of governmental commitment to racial equality. In an open letter to Thatcher, the *Caribbean Times'* editor embodied this view, noting how black British communities were 'proud of our political system…based on equality of opportunity'

---

[56] S.Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', p.52.
[57] D.Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, pp.33-77.
[58] E.Williams, 'Anti-Apartheid: The Black British Response', *South African Historical Journal*, 64(2013), p.703
[59] London against Racism: No links with Apartheid South Africa', *Caribbean Times,* 7 June 1984.

but 'when invitations are extended to racist regimes…then this commitment is questioned.'[60] Similarly, an *African Times*' article stated that Botha was visiting England 'under Thatcher's own brand of racism.'[61] Whilst a Foreign Office reply to WISC's denunciations that the visit 'in no way represents a weakening of the government's consistent resolve to promote racial equality' in Britain was equally telling.[62] Conversely, black Britons vehemently protested that Botha's visit demonstrated the very lack of this 'resolve', and represented far deeper problems of racism in Britain.

The controversy over South African runner Zola Budd's granting of citizenship in 1984 was another key conjuncture, where the Thatcher Government's South African policy was used to highlight similar contradictions in the government's 'anti-racist' posture. The Budd case ignited considerable attention among black British communities with the front-page of the *African Times'* first issue reading 'Apartheid Race: Zola Budd leads'.[63] It was argued that the granting of Budd's citizenship within 10 days of her application was as an appeasement of Pretoria; *Caribbean Times* highlighted that Thatcher was blatantly 'letting South African sports persons into international sport through the backdoor', in order to circumvent the sports boycott.[64] However, critically, within this understanding of the Thatcher Government's persistent propping of apartheid, Budd's citizenship was again used to forge a dialogue over institutional racism and black British citizenship. *Caribbean Times* argued that Budd's citizenship revealed the deep institutional racism of Home Office

---

[60] 'March Against Botha: An open letter to the PM', *Caribbean Times,* 7 June 1984.
[61] 'Appreciation from the ANC', *African Times,* 15 June 1984.
[62] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.182.
[63] 'Apartheid Race: Zola Budd leads', *African Times,* 13 April 1984.
[64] 'Zola Budd', *Caribbean Times,* 19 April 1984.

policy, where there was 'one rule if you are South African and white' and 'another rule if you are black and born in Britain.'[65] In other words, black British criticisms emphasised the significance of the South African's citizenship to debates over the politics of race and citizenship in Britain. Furthermore, Gilroy focused on Budd's citizenship in his landmark study *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, remarking that it exemplified efforts 'to establish the common identity of…the Old Commonwealth', and to thereby exclude black Britons from this identity.[66] Opposition to Budd's citizenship was therefore another key case through which the politics of race in Britain and South Africa became intertwined, as the South African runner's citizenship was used to draw attention to a racialised political regime in Britain and its marginalisation of black Britons.

Thatcher's perceived status as 'one of apartheid's most dependable allies'[67] and 'the most diehard appeaser of Pretoria'[68] extended to other issues, most notably the government's refusal to adopt economic sanctions. A WISC statement condemned America and Britain for their refusal to impose economic sanctions, arguing that 'the choices made by these white nations are an illustration of their contempt for black people.'[69] This reinforces the consistent thread of black British opposition to the Thatcher Government's South African policy. In particular, black Britons insisted that this policy had an inherent significance to understanding the deep problems of racism within Britain. Linking back, *Caribbean Times*' remark that 'Miss Budd's case is only the tip of…the deep festering disease of racism in Britain' epitomised this

---

[65] 'Zola Budd', *Caribbean Times,* 19 April 1984.
[66] P.Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, pp.70-73.
[67] 'Apartheid's gruesome commemoration', *Caribbean Times,* 4 April 1984.
[68] 'Blow to Reagan and Thatcher', *African Times,* 16 October 1986.
[69] 'WISC Folder B', 'Press Statements', in E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.181

perspective.[70] Given the apparent weight of this perspective, Williams' argument that 'anti-apartheid activism was often subsumed within local and national anti-racist campaigns' arguably misinterprets the dynamic relationship between anti-apartheid and anti-racist politics.[71] Rather it appears that anti-apartheid activism often played an active role in anti-racist politics, by '[informing] how [black British communities] framed their marginal citizenship status'.[72] Instead, the Thatcher Government's policy towards apartheid South Africa became a vehicle through which black Britons analysed, understood and opposed Britain's racialised social structures. By arguing that the Thatcher Government was complicit in the racist policies of South Africa, black Britons drew attention to the contradictions in the Thatcher Government's 'anti-racist' stance, as part of a wider critique of the 'mystique of British anti-racism.'

The frequent parallels drawn between policing, riots and racist violence in Britain and South Africa further highlight how apartheid South Africa became an important reference point for black critiques of British society. As with the Budd case, the prominence of South African politics in the British political landscape meant that these issues could often be tangibly linked with South Africa. This was evidenced when a 24-hour vigil organised by WISC, following the 1976 Soweto uprisings, had to be aborted due to tensions after a policeman remarked: 'Bloody right…If I was a policeman in South Africa I would do the same to any of you lot!' Subsequently, WISC inevitably questioned: 'how many more British policemen…would like to behave as their colleagues do in South Africa?'[73] In this case, evidence of the deep

---

[70] 'Afrikaan's Budd', *Caribbean Times*, 10 May 1984.
[71] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.10.
[72] K.Hammond-Perry, 'Black Britain', p.651.
[73] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity*, pp.173-74.

institutional racism within the British police, and the link with South Africa, was apparent.

However, black Britons also drew more implicit parallels between the racist violence of the apartheid regime, and the policing and riots in Britain. In the 1980s, the proliferation of race riots underscored the widespread acrimony, especially amongst black British youth, against racially-biased policing, epitomised by the disproportionate use of the 'Sus laws.'[74] Within this context, the Black Agenda argued that 'the heroic Soweto uprisings in 1976…were a clear parallel with the mass uprisings of Black youth in this country' and had 'inspired black youth in Britain from St. Paul's, Handsworth and Leicester to Brixton, Tottenham and Southall.'[75] Likewise, comparisons of policing in Britain and South Africa were common in popular cultural representations, as with Steel Pulse's song 'Handsworth Revolution', which joined critiques of racialised policing both in Handsworth's streets and the South African townships.[76] The significance of these comparisons was manifold. At one level, the drawing of parallels with apartheid South Africa was a way of reframing the riots as a legitimate strategy of retaliation against racial injustice. In a context where 'explanations of the conflict had to compete with analyses which located its origins in the…violent behaviour of youth and in the particular urban communities from which they came'[77], it can be argued that drawing these parallels subverted these often racialised interpretations. As opposed to an egregious act of public disorder by 'violent' black youths, these comparisons with black South Africans' struggles asserted that the riots were rather a 'manifestation of that

[74] P.Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, p.123.
[75] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.223.
[76] Steel Pulse, 'Handsworth Revolution'.
[77] P.Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack,* p.98.

sentiment to establish, through their own violent struggle, the right to a place in society'.[78] At another level, these parallels again formed part of this critique of the inherent contradictions in the 'mystique of British anti-racism.' Events such as the Sharpeville Massacre, Soweto uprisings, and the apartheid regime as a phenomenon, had been met in Britain by what Stuart Hall labelled 'liberal shock horror.'[79] By comparing South Africa with Britain, black Britons thereby criticised the inexplicable blindness of British society in recognising its own racial divisions and the depth of racism within many of its institutions. Unsurprisingly, the police were often singled out when it came to these comparisons. However, as Williams noted, 'in Britain, white policemen were viewed as part of a broader system of white oppression.'[80] As such, the drawing of parallels between apartheid South Africa and Britain, in relation to policing and racist violence, also formed part of this more wide-ranging critique of the 'mystique of British anti-racism.'

It is critical to stress that these critiques were not merely a calculated political strategy, especially with respect to critiques of policing in Britain in the 1980s. Rather they derived from a genuine consensus that the experiences of black South Africans, in many ways, mirrored black British communities' own experiences. Black radical Lee Jasper supported this, recalling that the struggles in the South African townships 'resonated with our own experience of policing in largely poor black working-class areas of Liverpool, Manchester, Handsworth, Brixton.' As such, apartheid became a 'universal metaphor for black experience', which 'viscerally affected' many Black Britons.[81] Similarly, Linda Bellos cited the Sharpeville massacre as a formative event

---

[78] R.Wild, 'Black Power in Britain, 1955-1976', PhD Dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2008, p.164
[79] S.Hall, 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', p.53.
[80] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.129.
[81] E.Williams, 'The Black British Response', p.695.

in moulding her political consciousness[82] whilst Gilroy's recollection of 'the rioters in Notting Hill in 1976 chanting "Soweto, Soweto"' further serves as a powerful image of these sentiments.[83] Clearly, apartheid was genuinely understood to have had a significant heuristic quality to the black experience in Britain. Within this understanding, the parallels that were drawn between Britain and South Africa were not merely a calculated political strategy or rhetoric device, but rather derived from this perspective that the apartheid struggle had an inherent significance to understandings of black Britons' own experiences.

The prominence of South African politics in the British political landscape in the 1970s and 1980s therefore provided a critical site of protest through which black Britons articulated wide-ranging critiques of British society. This prominence meant that domestic issues were often tangibly intertwined with South African politics. For example, the granting of British citizenship to Zola Budd within ten days, and Botha's state visit, were cases where the connections between South African politics and institutional racism, debates over race and citizenship, and the government's lack of commitment to racial equality were particularly evident. However, more implicit connections were also made, as evidenced by the comparisons drawn between the racist violence of South Africa, and the policing and riots in Britain. Critically, these parallels were not simply a political tactic or rhetorical device but rather derived from a fundamental understanding of the interconnections between the politics of race in Britain and South Africa. It was within this understanding that black Britons utilised

---

[82] ORAL/1/4, Interview with Linda Bellos.
[83] Johannesburg Review of Books, 'Imagination is Everything: Paul Gilroy speaks to the JRB', https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2018/04/04/imagination-is-everything-paul-gilroy-chats-to-the-jrb-about-race-land-and-south-africas-role-in-overthrowing-the-racial-order/ [accessed 13 February 2019]

apartheid South Africa as a reference point to penetrate, and subvert, wide-ranging debates over race, racism and anti-racism in British society. In doing so, black Britons simultaneously expressed opposition to apartheid South Africa, racism as a wider phenomenon, and the racism prevalent in British society. Moreover, black Britons insisted that the particular issues explored above were representative of far deeper problems of racism within British society, and thereby formed part of a more wide-ranging critique of the 'mystique of British anti-racism'. In this way, black Britons again opposed the perception of apartheid as an aberration, in turn underscoring that 'the questions of race and racialisation'[84] so apparent in apartheid South Africa were just as important in Britain.

---

[84] S.Hall, 'AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', p.51.

Chapter 3: The Multifaceted Purpose of Anti-Apartheid Initiatives

'Brent South today, Soweto tomorrow'[85]

Chapter 3 builds on the ways in which anti-apartheid became a vehicle through which black Britons simultaneously expressed opposition to apartheid South Africa and articulated the concerns of black British communities over metropolitan race relations. This section focuses specifically on the role of anti-apartheid initiatives and demonstrates that although these initiatives took diverse forms, there nevertheless remained a persistent tendency for anti-apartheid activities to be linked to domestic anti-racist politics. The BEM's consistent calls for the AAM to adopt a more explicit anti-racist stance offer a good starting point for this argument. Subsequently, three additional areas of anti-apartheid initiatives will be presented. Firstly, the marked attention that the Black Sections campaign placed on South African issues will be examined as evidence of the perceived significance of anti-apartheid to domestic anti-racist politics. Secondly, Black councillors' prominence in promoting anti-apartheid initiatives at the local level will show how these initiatives were perceived to be an effective way to beckon local councils to reinforce their commitment to improving race relations. Lastly, this section will explore the significance of the marked uptake and effectiveness of boycotts in reinforcing how apartheid South Africa provided a critical site of protest around which black British communities mobilised. In doing so, this section further demonstrates that black Britons strongly identified with the struggles of black South Africans in apartheid South Africa. Moreover, initiatives of solidarity with black South Africans became a particularly

---

[85] Bod.MSS.AAM 107, Black Sections Newsletter, 'Brent South today, Soweto tomorrow', *Four Black Tribunes*, Autumn 1987.

important resource, which informed and became intimately tied to a parallel anti-racist politics. Consequently, the ultimate argument that anti-apartheid assumed an integral role in a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s is reinforced.

The BEM's attempts to encourage the AAM to adopt a more explicit anti-racist stance is significant in developing this argument. After publicly criticising the *Immigration Act* in 1969, the AAM chose to distance itself from British anti-racist politics.[86] In strict contrast, the BEM stressed from its very beginnings the need for anti-apartheid and anti-racist politics to be interlinked. In 1987, the Working Party Report, which aimed to investigate the AAM's failures with black British communities, and eventually led to the BEM's establishment, stressed the need for the organisation to 'actively work to be…profoundly anti-racist in both theory and practice'.[87] Moreover, the BEM consistently criticised the AAM for presenting 'anti-racist activities…as a separate and almost discrete piece of activity.'[88] Critically, these calls to adopt an anti-racist stance were not solely about attracting black British support. Certainly, as Fieldhouse argued, black Britons felt that liberal organisations had not made common cause with their own positional struggles.[89] However, the perceived significance of this 'anti-racist' perspective was rather based on the perceived need to recognise the interconnection between the politics of race in Britain and South Africa. A future BEM member epitomised this perspective in *Anti-Apartheid News* in 1986, noting: 'Some have argued that to involve more black

---

[86] H.Thörn, *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.95.
[87] Bod.MSS.AAM 103, 'Report of the Working Party on the Black and Ethnic Minorities Community', 3 July 1987.
[88] Bod.MSS.AAM 104, 'Draft Paper for BEM Meeting on Future of AAM', 11 November 1993.
[89] D.Fieldhouse, *Anti-Apartheid*, p.148.

people in our campaigns the AAM…has to take up these other issues that affect them in Britain.' However, it was argued that this perspective 'patronised' black Britons. Rather the issue with the AAM's 'anti-racist' stance, or lack of it, was that 'no-one who is opposed to apartheid and racism in Southern Africa can ignore the racism within the society in which they live.'[90]

Furthermore, the BEM also adopted this perspective in practice. For example, as one of its main campaigning focuses, the BEM sought to challenge racism within the media, linking the 'gross misrepresentations of black people both in South Africa and Britain'.[91] Amongst other efforts, they also organised for Mandela to visit the family of Stephen Lawrence, a black British teenager who was murdered in a racially motivated attack in 1993.[92] Despite this, the BEM's success in encouraging the AAM to adopt this 'anti-racist perspective' was relatively limited, with the most notable success being AAM's sporadic collaborations with the Anti-Racist Alliance from 1991. Ultimately, the predominantly white, middle-class AAM often demonstrated what Skinner labelled an 'inexplicable blindness when it came to the relationship between systemic racism in South Africa and the racialised social structures of Britain.'[93] In stark contrast, it is informative that Hall recognised the BEM as 'marking a distinct moment in the history of the [AAM]', in which anti-apartheid was 'articulated with the politics of anti-racism.'[94] The BEM's activities can thus be argued to be representative of the significant fault lines in perspective between the AAM and black British communities. Most importantly, the AAM's stubborn persistence on a single-

---

[90] Bod.MSS.AAM 2203, 'Tackling Racism at Home', *Anti-Apartheid News*, May 1986.
[91] Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'Call to Action: Black Solidarity', *Anti-Apartheid News,* June 1990.
[92] Bod.MSS.AAM 104, 'Black Solidarity Committee (formerly BEM) minutes & papers', 3 June 1993.
[93] R.Skinner, *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid*, p.276.
[94] Interview with Stuart Hall, in E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.164.

issue focus, which represented a limited perspective of anti-apartheid as the struggle for a representative, multi-racial democracy in South Africa, clashed with black British communities' fundamental understanding of anti-apartheid as an integral part of a wider fight against racism, which was very much linked to black struggles at home in Britain.

The importance which the campaign for Black Sections within the Labour Party attached to Southern African issues further reveals the relationship between anti-apartheid and anti-racist politics, and the significance of this relationship within a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s. From March 1987, amidst attempts to adopt a clearer policy direction, 'the Black Section National Committee decided Azania [South Africa] was one of two issues [they] should focus major campaigns on.' This was subsequently reflected in the aforementioned *Black Agenda* in 1988, where South Africa was the one 'international' issue cited as a 'central [issue] of concern to our communities', alongside jobs, policing, immigration, education and the inner cities.[95] The importance which the Black Sections campaign attached to anti-apartheid was therefore irrevocably marked. Moreover, the Black Sections' emphasis on the apartheid struggle can again be argued to have been the result of this genuine understanding of anti-apartheid and anti-racist politics as 'one and the same.' Furthering this, the Black Agenda stated that their 'struggle for Black self-organisation is intertwined with the fight for genuine self-determination and national independence in the Black world.'[96] As such, when Black Sections activists urged for South African sanctions and disinvestment, it was clearly perceived that

---

[95] Bod.MSS.AAM 856, 'The Black Agenda 1988', pp.36-46.
[96] Bod.MSS.AAM 856, 'The Black Agenda 1988', p.39.

these efforts were simultaneously an integral part of the specific struggle for black self-organisation within the Labour Party, and the wider anti-racist struggle in Britain. Consequently, the anti-apartheid struggle significantly impacted how Black Sections activists perceived and enacted their campaign for self-organisation. This is reinforced by the 'the high profile'[97] that the first elected black MP's gave to the anti-apartheid struggle in June 1987. Most notably, Paul Boateng explicitly connected his election victory as MP for Brent South to the wider struggle in South Africa when he exclaimed in his victory speech: 'Brent South today, Soweto tomorrow'.[98] In doing so, Boateng's speech embodied the instrumental value that anti-apartheid politics played in informing one of the most important anti-racist campaigns of the 1980s, thereby reinforcing anti-apartheid's importance within a broader black British politics during the 1980s.

Anti-apartheid initiatives in local councils, and the role of black councillors in promoting these, further demonstrate how anti-apartheid became an important vehicle for effecting changes in race relations in Britain. The capacity of apartheid issues to be tangibly linked to local concerns was again demonstrated by debates over local council disinvestment in South Africa. For example, in 1985, when it emerged that Lambeth Council had invested 'millions of pounds of workers' pension funds in South Africa',[99] black councillors including Linda Bellos (leader of Lambeth Council, 1986-1988) led successful protests by Lambeth's black communities calling for disinvestment. Critically, these protests argued that investing in a company, which profits from apartheid, was unacceptable in a multiracial borough like

---

[97] Bod.MSS.AAM 13, AAM *Annual Report,* September 1986 to October 1987.
[98] Bod.MSS.AAM 107, Black Sections Newsletter, 'Brent South today, Soweto tomorrow', *Four Black Tribunes*, Autumn 1987.
[99] 'Lambeth's South African Connection', *Caribbean Times,* 4 July 1985.

Lambeth.[100] In this context, it was clear that protests for South African disinvestment served a double purpose- both as an act of solidarity with black South Africans, and as a way of promoting equitable race relations in a multiracial Lambeth.

Further analysis highlights that local anti-apartheid initiatives assumed an important role as a vehicle for change in black politics during the 1980s. AAM annual reports consistently praised black councillors' role 'at the forefront of promoting anti-apartheid policies by councils'.[101] For example, in February 1985, Paul Boateng chaired a conference of local authorities, in which he urged that by 'doing everything in their power to break apartheid', local councils 'could only serve to the general good for ethnic minority communities in Britain.'[102] In response, many councils that were home to significant ethnic minority communities adopted 'Anti-Apartheid Declarations', set up formal bodies to address the apartheid issue, or renamed local sites after South African activists.[103] Such actions suggest that anti-apartheid took on a particular prominence, and a distinctive purpose, in multiracial boroughs where race was already a salient issue. Furthering this, 'Anti-Apartheid Declarations' often located anti-apartheid initiatives within a commitment to race relations at home, recognising that 'contributing locally to international efforts to seek an end to apartheid assists this general duty.'[104] In a similar vein, in 1984, Hackney Council's leader presented the renaming of Morley House to Mandela House as a 'symbol of the council's intention to promote good race relations'.[105] Thus it is apparent that

---

[100] Bod.MSS.AAM 13, AAM *Annual Report*, September 1985 to October 1986, p.20.
[101] Bod.MSS.AAM 13, AAM *Annual Report*, September 1984 to October 1985', p.21.
[102] 'Local Authority Action against Apartheid',*African Times,* 29 March 1985.
[103] R.Skinner, 'Every Bite Buys a Bullet: Sanctions, Boycotts and Solidarity in Transnational Anti-Apartheid Activism', *Moving the* Social, 57(2017), p.110.
[104] Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'Hackney Anti-Apartheid Declaration', in *Anti-Apartheid News* Folder, undated.
[105] 'Morley to Mandela House', *African Times,* 27 April 1984.

anti-apartheid initiatives were perceived as an important way, in which black British communities induced local councils to reinforce their commitment to improving race relations, both locally and globally. Skinner supports this argument, noting that anti-apartheid 'supported the creation and maintenance of allegiances…and values within particular communities.'[106] In this context, anti-apartheid initiatives in local councils addressed wider values over racism, and opposition to apartheid South Africa. However, they also addressed more local issues over race relations, and became vehicle through which black Britons beckoned local councils to reinforce their commitment to improving race relations at home.

Lastly, the marked uptake and effectiveness of boycotts within black British communities reinforces that anti-apartheid functioned as an important site of protest in a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s. Significantly, boycott campaigns were one of the few AAM-led campaigns, where the AAM could consistently note 'successes… working with local black communities', including those in St Paul's and Brixton.[107] It can be argued that these successes were linked to boycott's inherent capacity to connect local and global issues. Notably, these campaigns protested the tangible presence of South African products in British stores. For example, boycott leaders claimed that South African products were an especial affront to black Britons. Brent Council leader Merle Amory exemplified this perspective in 1986, when stressing that Tesco's policy on South African goods 'in a multi-racial borough like Brent…is deeply offensive to most people.[108] As such, boycotts were one way, in which global political issues were tied to local claims over

---

[106] R.Skinner, 'Every Bite Buys a Bullet', p.112.
[107] Bod.MSS.AAM 13, AAM *Annual Report*, September 1985 to October 1986, p.20.
[108] 'Tesco moves a tiny little bit', *African Times,* 25 September 1986.

space, representation and power. Skinner supports this, noting how boycotts '[traced] the line between the realities of racism in Britain and questions of global justice, democracy and rights.'[109] Consequently, the purpose of boycotts was manifold, as they simultaneously expressed opposition to apartheid South Africa, racism as a wider phenomenon, and black Britons' own local experiences of racial injustice. Akinshegun, SPAFZ's chairman, evidenced this perspective when stating: 'We are working towards the advancement of people in struggle all over the world, and of people in Britain in struggle too.'[110]

Furthermore, the marked uptake of boycott campaigns by local black organisations underscores the importance of anti-apartheid as a vehicle through which black British communities articulated their concerns. For example, groups, such as the Black Parent's Movement in Haringey and the Liverpool 8, expanded their remit beyond protesting specifically local issues, such as policing and education, by also enacting boycotts against apartheid South Africa.[111] Meanwhile, the effectiveness of many of these campaigns serves as a final pertinent piece of evidence of the perceived importance of anti-apartheid within black British communities. By 1989, despite nationwide boycotts, it is notable that the only two branches Tesco's had removed all South African goods from were found in the black communities of Brixton and St Paul's. As Skinner notes, one can therefore infer that boycotts were most effective 'where race was already a salient issue in local politics', given that Brixton and St Paul's were key sites of the race riots in the early 1980s.[112] In summary, the uptake and effectiveness of boycotts by black British communities

---

[109] R.Skinner, 'Every Bite Buys a Bullet', p.118.
[110] BRO/41242/IM/H/25, 'St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone Newsletter', undated.
[111] E.Williams, *Black British Solidarity,* p.129.
[112] R.Skinner, 'Every Bite Buys a Bullet', p.115.

further highlights how anti-apartheid became a significant conduit of advocacy through which black British communities simultaneously expressed their opposition to apartheid South Africa and the local concerns of their own communities.

To conclude, by exploring the different anti-apartheid initiatives adopted by black British communities, this section has shed further light on the significance of anti-apartheid as a means through which black Britons articulated their concerns and beckoned changes in race relations in Britain. More specifically, the BEM's insistence on the need for the AAM to adopt an 'anti-racist' perspective was representative of a fundamental disconnection in perspective between black activists and a predominantly white, middle-class AAM over the significance of the relationship between anti-apartheid and anti-racist politics. Furthermore, the importance attached to apartheid South Africa in the Black Sections Campaign, and the prominence of black councillors in the anti-apartheid fight at a local level, similarly evidence the multi-faceted purpose of anti-apartheid initiatives, both as expressions of solidarity with black South Africans and as an important strategy of a broader black British anti-racist politics. Lastly, the success of boycott campaigns serves as pertinent evidence that this perspective over the loaded importance of anti-apartheid initiatives was prevalent among Britain's black communities. Throughout, this chapter has emphasised the persistent tendency for black British anti-apartheid initiatives to be intimately linked to the realities of racism in Britain. In doing so, it has underscored the elasticity and significance of anti-apartheid as both a heuristic device and strategy of a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s.

Conclusion

'As a black man in Britain, I don't view my struggle as separate from the struggle of the people of South Africa. They're one and the same.'[113]

This dissertation has explored the significance of apartheid South Africa among black British communities. Throughout, it has revealed the extent to which black Britons associated the struggle of black South Africans to their own. Its purpose has been two-fold. Firstly, it has highlighted how the prominence of South African politics in the British political landscape during the 1980s enabled anti-apartheid issues to be tangibly linked to race relations in Britain. Thus, the anti-apartheid struggle became an important resource in informing black British understandings of race, racism and anti-racism. Secondly, this dissertation explored how through these understandings, anti-apartheid assumed an instrumental value in the activities of a parallel domestic anti-racist politics. Consequently, anti-apartheid played an important role in a broader black British anti-racist politics during the 1980s – a role which has previously been overlooked.

This dissertation situates its findings within an emerging body of scholarship, which has begun to reveal how the local struggles of black British communities have been influenced by the global struggles of anti-colonialism and transnational anti-racist movements. Moreover, it has sought to contribute to this body by moving beyond the tendency to focus on the inter-war years and the influence of black freedom movements in the United States. Instead, my dissertation has traced the often-

---

[113] BRO/41242/IM/H/25, 'St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone Newsletter', undated.

neglected axis between black Britons and black South Africans – an axis which significantly impacted how black Britons both framed and opposed their marginal citizenship status. In doing so, this analysis thus adds to, and reorients, existing race relations studies.

Indeed, the engagement of black British communities with the anti-apartheid struggle yields fruitful ground for further studies of transnational race politics. Additional attention to how anti-apartheid activities were aligned to the positionality of different black British groups could help deepen our understanding of black British politics during this period. For example, investigating the interaction of African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian perspectives on anti-apartheid issues would help further probe the dynamics, full range of actors, and historical significance of black British solidarity with South Africa.

To conclude, it is useful to return to the success of boycotts in black British communities. The capacity of boycotts to connect both local and global concerns, through the tangible presence of South African products in British corner-shops, arguably best represents how black Britons foremost identified and interacted with the struggles of black South Africans, and the anti-apartheid movement. More specifically, the anti-apartheid struggle resonated most with black Britons where connections between the systemic racism of apartheid South Africa, the racialised social structure of Britain and wider debates around the black experience, were most apparent. This once again highlights the significance of apartheid South Africa as an abhorrent manifestation of wider power structures of oppression, through which

black Britons understood and reacted to their own experiences of racial injustice and

disenfranchisement.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

AAM Archives 1956-98: Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House University of Oxford:

Bod.MSS.AAM.13, AAM *Annual Report*, October 1983 to September 1983.

Bod.MSS.AAM.13, AAM *Annual Report*, September 1984 to October 1985.

Bod.MSS.AAM.13, AAM *Annual Report*, September 1985 to October 1986.

Bod.MSS.AAM.13, AAM *Annual Report,* September 1986 to October 1987.

Bod.MSS.AAM.103, 'Report of the Working Party on the Black and Ethnic Minorities Community', 3 July 1987.

Bod.MSS.AAM.104, 'Black Solidarity Committee (formerly BEM) minutes & papers', 1988-93, Leaflet 'Black Solidarity: Smash apartheid now!', March 1990.

Bod.MSS.AAM 104, 'Black Solidarity Committee (formerly BEM) minutes & papers', 3 June 1993.

Bod.MSS.AAM.104, 'Draft Paper for BEM Meeting on Future of AAM', 11 November 1993.

Bod.MSS.AAM.105, 'Report to the Executive Committee on the "Call to Action! Black Solidarity Seminar"', March 1990.

Bod.MSS.AAM.107, Black Sections Newsletter, 'Brent South today, Soweto tomorrow', *Four Black Tribunes*, Autumn 1987.

Bod.MSS.AAM.107, Black Sections Newsletter, *Four Black Tribunes,* 'Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa: Draft Declaration', October 1987.

Bod.MSS.AAM.856, 'The Black Agenda, 1988'.

Bod.MSS.AAM.1429, 'Paul Stephenson speech to United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid', New York, 1 May 1982.

Bod.MSS.AAM.1454, Black Sections Newsletter, *Four Black* Tribunes, 'Letter to the Editor', April 1984.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2203, 'St Paul's: Apartheid on the Run', *Anti-Apartheid News*, June 1986.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2203, 'Tackling Racism at Home', *Anti-Apartheid News*, May 1986.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'Anti-Racist Rappers', *Anti-Apartheid News*, September 1989.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'Call to Action: Black Solidarity', *Anti-Apartheid News,* June 1990.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'Hackney Anti-Apartheid Declaration', in *Anti-Apartheid News* Folder, undated.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2204, 'The Last Battle?', *Anti-Apartheid News*, July to August 1991.

Bod.MSS.AAM 2376, 'Black Focus on "The Future role of Black solidarity"' Leaflet, April 1992.

Black Cultural Archives, 1 Windrush Square, Brixton, London:

DADZIE 2/4/1, *Black Liberator* (London).

HANSIB/1, *African Times* (London).

HANSIB/2, *Caribbean Times* (London).

ORAL/1/4, Interview with Linda Bellos.

Bristol Archives:

BRO/41242/IM/H/25, St Paul's Apartheid-Free Zone Newsletters, Bristol, undated series.

Other:

B.R.O.T.H.E.R., 'Beyond the 16th Parallel', released by 4th & Broadway (1989).

Steel Pulse, 'Handsworth Revolution', on the album *Handsworth Revolution*, released by Island Records (1978).

Hall, S., 'The AAM and the Race-ing of Britain', in AAM Archive Committee, *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: A 40 Year Perspective* (London, 2000).

'Perspectives on the International Anti-Apartheid Struggle: Solidarity and Social Movements', African Studies, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Workshop, 31 May 2003.

Johannesburg Review of Books, 'Imagination is Everything: Paul Gilroy speaks to the JRB', https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2018/04/04/imagination-is-everything-paul-gilroy-chats-to-the-jrb-about-race-land-and-south-africas-role-in-overthrowing-the-racial-order/ [accessed 13 February 2019]

Secondary Works

Back, L., & Solomos, J., *Theories of Race and Racism* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Carter, T., review of E. Williams, *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), *African Studies Quarterly*, 17(2017).

Dubow, S., 'New Approaches to High Apartheid and Anti-Apartheid,' *South African Historical Journal*, 69(2017).

Evans, L., '*The Black Atlantic*: Exploring Gilroy's Legacy', *Atlantic Studies,* 6(2009).

Fieldhouse, R., *Anti-Apartheid: A History of the Movement in Britain* (London: Merlin Press, 2005).

Gilroy, P., *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Gilroy, P., *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1987).

Goulbourne, H., *Black Politics in Britain* (Avebury: Aldershot, 1990).

Gurney, 'A Great Cause: The Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959-March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(2000).

Hall, S., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan 1978).

Hammond-Perry, K., 'Black Britain and the Politics of Race in the Twentieth Century', *History Compass*, 12(2014).

Hammond-Perry, K., *London is the Place for Me* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Hansen, R., *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Henry, W., *What the Deejay said: A Critique from the Street!* (London: Nu-Beyond Limited: 2006).

Kelley, R.D.G. & Patterson, T.R., 'Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World', *African Studies Review,* 43(2000).

Klotz, A., *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Cornell University Press, 1998)

Lazarus, N., 'Is a Counterculture of Modernity a Theory of Modernity?', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational* Studies, 4().

Matera, M., *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

Owusu, K., *Black British culture and society: A text-reader* (London: Routledge, 2000).

Plummer, B. G. *Rising Wind: Black Americans and US Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Schwarz, B., *West Indian Intellectuals* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Skinner, R., 'Every Bite Buys a Bullet: Sanctions, Boycotts and Solidarity in Transnational Anti-Apartheid Activism', *Moving the Social*, 57(2017).

Skinner, R., review of E. Williams, *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), *Cercles,* 6(2016).

Skinner, R., *The Foundations of Anti-Apartheid: Liberal Humanitarians and Transnational Activists in Britain and the United States*, *c.1919-64* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Stevens, S., 'The External Struggle against Apartheid: New Perspectives', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights,* 7(2016).

Thörn, H., *Anti-Apartheid and the Emergence of a Global Civil Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Thörn, H., 'Solidarity Across Borders: The Transnational Anti-Apartheid Movement,' *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 17(2006).

Von Eschen, P.M., *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-colonialisms, 1937-1957* (New York: Cornell Paperbacks, 1997).

Waters, R., *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

Walters, R., *Pan-Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997).

Wild, R., 'Black Was the Colour of Our Fight: Black Power in Britain, 1955-1976', PhD Dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2008.

Williams, E., 'Anti-Apartheid: The Black British Response', *South African Historical Journal,* 64(2013).

Williams, E., *The Politics of Race in Britain and South Africa: Black British Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

Wilson, K., *Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1717-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).