

Black Members in UNISON WALES

UNISON CYMRU/WALES BLACK MEMBERS NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2020

International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

Each year, UNISON Cymru Wales Black Members Group organises an event to mark the United Nations International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

It's always a moving, powerful and colourful occasion with tributes, rousing speeches and song and fabulous food.

There's a focus to modern slavery and how we as a trade union can help to combat this stain on humanity.

This year the Covid pandemic meant the meeting was online. To give you a flavour of what was covered, chair Kebba Manneh's speech has been edited to produce this report, accompanied by photographs from previous years. We want to be back next year and we'd like you to join us!



My name is Kebba Manneh – I'm chair of both UNISON National Black Members' Committee (NBMC), and UNISON Cymru Wales Black Members. On behalf of the UNISON NBMC, and the entire UNISON family, we pay heartfelt tributes to our brothers and sisters who gave their lives in their collective struggle for freedom. Let us observe a minute's silence in their honour and remember their bravery.

Can I ask that we now observe a minute's silence to remember all those who have died as a result of COVID-19 in the UK, and across the world?

Why commemorate the abolition of the slave trade on 23 August?

It was on 23 August 1791, in Santo Domingo – now called Haiti and the Dominican Republic saw the beginning of an uprising by the enslaved Africans. This uprising subsequently played a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The UN adopted 23 August symbolically to be commemorated each and every year as the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

The Cymru/Wales Region Black Members Group (RBMG) works to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in UNISON, the wider trade union movement and in society.

UNISON **BLACK MEMBERS**
EQUALITY

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Britain's wealth was built on the slave trade



In 1562 the British Government commissioned and encouraged John Hawkins and Francis Drake to engage in the Slave Trade. According to Professor David Richardson, British ships carried 3.4 million or more enslaved Africans to the Americas. These enslaved Black people were sold and bought at market as a commodity of capital to be consumed at pleasure guaranteed by the banks of the day.

Hence the origins of an infamous saying by the bank managers at the time that for as long as you are in the Black then you shall always be in

credit, meaning for as long as you have Black people as enslaved people then you shall always be in credit. This inevitably gave birth to the ideology of the free market and the ability to buy and then sell people at profit as you so desire. Racism is the by-product of slavery and colonial prosperity, and today, we now know that the wealth of our cities such as London, Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, Cardiff, to name just a few are built on the back of the slave trade.

For some, these facts can be difficult to hear and accept but the key to change is through education and therefore it is about time these historical truths are taught in our schools and colleges to address systematic, institutional and structural racism so that those who do not know, those who wish to ignore or deny the truth, can fully understand why and how Black people are present in all corners of the United Kingdom. William Wilberforce said “you may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.”

Given that racism was created and promoted by Britain, the present British Government has a moral obligation to apologise and make relevant, achievable reparations that are on par with the damages incurred by Black people during the Slave Trade, given that slave owners continued to receive compensation for loss of property (enslaved Africans) as recently as 2015.



Racism is ingrained in society

The far-reaching impact and implications of racism is evident within the systematic and structural designs of the economy, health, education, employment, courts, police services, prison, universities and politics. Racism is systematically ingrained in our collective consciousness to sustain the status quo as White privilege over Black people. Racism is a pandemic and requires the same diligence, investment and urgency for a cure which governments are employing in order to develop a cure for Covid-19.

Millions of people today are trapped in modern slavery

It is a sad fact that although slavery was outlawed internationally, millions of people are still living in conditions of slavery worldwide. Wherever, whenever, and whatever form slavery occurs, we in the UNISON family unreservedly condemn it and we are committed to eliminating it.

Stephen Chapman – Welsh Government Anti-Slavery Coordinator who has been working with UNISON for more than 10 years, then gave an inspiring speech on modern day slavery within Welsh communities.

Anti-Slavery Training Awareness

I am proud to announce a pilot project between Welsh Government, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO), and Aneurin Bevan UNISON Health Branch. Together, we have developed an online Anti-Slavery Training Awareness session and we are pleased to launch it on this platform today.



Jasmin Ahmed from BAWSO then presented the online training. If you would like us to provide this training in your branches, workplaces, and regions, can you please contact us at ABBUnison.Office@wales.nhs.uk or 01633 431766.

We must challenge racism wherever it exists

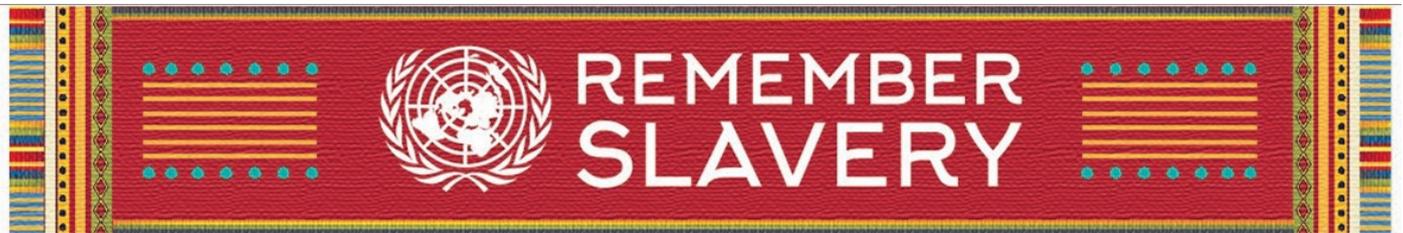


Today we remember our ancient ancestors, reflect on modern day slavery, and our moral collective responsibility to stop it happening in our communities. One of the ways we can do this is to recognise and call out racism and any form of slavery that continues to perpetuate in our society today. The human suffering caused by racism and slavery are amongst the most dishonourable and abhorrent acts and chapters in our collective history. It remains absolutely vital that we recognise

the achievements of the abolition movement and ensure that the impact of slavery is not forgotten.

Thank you to Jasmin and Stephen and all those who have worked behind the scene to make today possible.

#BlackLivesMatter



Join UNISON and get involved with the Black Members' SOG

Black members in UNISON work to improve equality in the workplace and challenge racism and discrimination. They have many of the same concerns as other members regarding access to employment, pay, promotion and training. However, racist discrimination can deepen the impact of problems faced in the workplace.

For more information, please get in touch with one of the contacts below, we always provide a warm welcome for new members.

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