Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968–1993

Natalie Thomlinson

Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements

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For my mum and dad

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Series Editors' Preface

Around the world, social movements have become legitimate, though contested, actors in local, national and global politics and civil society, yet we still know relatively little about their longer histories and the trajectories of their development. Our series, *Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements*, is a response to what can be described as a recent boom in the research into social movements. We can observe a development from the crisis of labour history in the 1980s to the growth in research on social movements in the 2000s. The rise of historical inquiry into the development of civil society and the roles of strong civil societies as well as non-governmental organizations in stabilizing democratically constituted polities has strengthened the interest in social movements as a constituent element of those societies.

In different parts of the world, social movements continue to have a strong influence on contemporary politics. In Latin America, trade unions, labour parties and various left-of-centre civil society organizations have succeeded in supporting left-of-centre governments. In Europe, peace movements, ecological movements and alliances intent on campaigning against poverty and racial discrimination and discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation have for decades been able to set important political agendas. Elsewhere, including Africa, India and South East Asia, social movements have played significant roles in various forms of community building and community politics. The contemporary political relevance of social movements has undoubtedly contributed to a growing historical interest in the topic.

Contemporary historians are not only beginning to historicize these relatively recent political developments; they are also trying to relate them to a longer history of social movements, including traditional labour organizations, such as working-class parties and trade unions. In the longue durée, we recognize that social movements are by no means a recent phenomenon and are not even an exclusively modern phenomenon, although we realize that the onset of modernity emanating from Europe and North America across the wider world from the eighteenth century onwards marks an important departure point for the development of civil societies and social movements.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the dominance of national history writing over all other forms of history writing led to a thorough

nationalization of the historical sciences. Hence, social movements have been examined traditionally within the framework of the nation state. Only during the last two decades have historians begun to question the validity of such methodological nationalism and to explore the development of social movements in comparative, connective and transnational perspectives – taking into account processes of transfer, reception and adaptation. While our book series does not preclude work that is still being carried out within national frameworks (for, clearly, there is a place for such studies, given the historical importance of the nation state in history), it hopes to encourage comparative and transnational histories on social movements.

At the same time as historians have begun to research the history of those movements, a range of social theorists – from Jürgen Habermas to Pierre Bourdieu, and from Slavoj Žižek to Alain Badiou as well as from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to Miguel Abensour, to name but a few – have attempted to provide philosophical-cum-theoretical frameworks in which to place and contextualize the development of social movements. History has arguably been the most empirical of all the social and human sciences, but it will be necessary for historians to explore further to what extent these social theories can be helpful in guiding and framing the empirical work of the historian in making sense of the historical development of social movements. Hence, the current series is envisioned to make a contribution to the ongoing dialogue between social theory and the history of social movements.

This series is intended to promote innovative historical research on the history of social movements in the modern period since around 1750. We bring together conceptually informed studies that analyse labour movements, new social movements and other forms of protest from early modernity to the present. With this series, we seek to revive, within the context of historiographical developments since the 1970s,– a conversation between historians on the one hand and sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists on the other.

Unlike most of the concepts and theories developed by social scientists, we do not see social movements as directly linked, a priori, to processes of social and cultural change and, therefore, do not adhere to a view that distinguishes between old (labour) and new (middle-class) social movements. Instead, we want to establish the concept 'social movement' as a heuristic device that allows historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to investigate social and political protests in novel settings. Our aim is to historicize notions of social and political

activism in order to highlight different notions of political and social protest – on both left and right.

Hence, we conceive of 'social movements' in the broadest possible sense, encompassing social formations that lie between formal organizations and mere protest events. But, in our understanding of social movements, we also include the processes of social and cultural change more generally:, an approach that evokes nineteenth-century understandings of the term, 'social movement'. We also offer a home for studies that systematically explore the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in which social movements can emerge. We are especially interested in transnational and global perspectives on the history of social movements, and in studies that engage critically and creatively with political, social and sociological theories in order to make historically grounded arguments about these movements. In short, this series offers innovative historical work on social movements, while also helping to historicize the concept of 'social movement'. The series is also intended to revitalize the conversation between historians and historical sociologists in analysing what Charles Tilly has called the 'dynamics of contention'.

Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968–1993 by Natalie Thomlinson tackles an important, yet neglected topic in the history of European feminisms in contemporary history. Thomlinson opens up for critical investigation some of the key assumptions activists made at the time; in doing so, Thomlinson's book is a powerful addition to the scholarly literature on feminism and women's liberation in Britain and Europe since 1968. This book nicely complements Sarah Browne's recent powerful contribution to the women's liberation movement in Scotland as well as, for example, Maud Bracke's equally impressive landmark study on the women's liberation movement in Italy. Through a richly textured and engaging account, that makes use of oral history as well as personal papers and movement publications, Thomlinson is able to bring women's experiences and expectations to life.

But Thomlinson achieves more than simply adding to our empirical knowledge of the history of English feminisms. She also makes an important conceptual intervention. In her highly innovative work, Carolyn Steedman has powerfully exposed the interaction and intersections between gender and class, both autobiographically and historically. Thomlinson now considers the conceptual complications that race had for the 'feminist project' and the idea of the 'universal woman' on which it was based, focusing especially on the interactions and debates between 'black' and 'white' feminists, but also including a discussion of

the status of Jewish feminists within the larger movement. Thomlinson's book therefore encourages us to re-think the status of race, as well as class and gender, in the contents and discourse about the 'social' in social movements. By bringing the history of an important movement in conversation with work on race and society by Paul Gilroy and others, this book, therefore, has wider implications for the contemporary history of social movements in general and for the 'radical black challenge to the English left' in particular.

Not least, Thomlinson's book brings to light a fundamental aspect that is often neglected in studies on the history of social movements: the emotions with which social movement activism has been invested. These were not only the emotions of joy and exhilaration that movement activism sets free. These were also emotions of disappointment about the lack of progress in achieving the ambitious aims as well as anger and disagreements about rifts within the movements. She can therefore show how debates over issues and disappointed expectations are at the very core of the way in which social movements and activism work. She highlights that the power of social movements lies as much in the critical questions they discuss and pose to (global) society as a whole as in the solutions they offer. Her book, then, not only poses questions for historians as well as social and political scientists, it also addresses key concerns of social activism and civic participation today.

Stefan Berger (Bochum) and Holger Nehring (Stirling)

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My long-suffering friends and family back home in Doncaster need thanking for enduring my various historical and feminist obsessions for several decades now. They have played a large role in keeping me

(relatively) sane. My twin sister Becky and our oldest friends Ruth Horswill, Sally Taylor and Jo Berridge – apart from being gratifying living proof that women are funnier than men – have taught me everything I know about the importance of both actual and metaphorical sisterhood. In the rest of the Thomlinson clan, I am fortunate to have such a lovely, large, and indeed, ever-growing family (two nephews, three nieces and a great-niece were born during the course of this research) and in Mick and Janet Thomlinson, I truly could not have wished for more supportive and loving parents. They have always encouraged me in my academic pursuits and ambitions, and have been there for me without question or conditions. This book is therefore dedicated to them, though whether an academic tome on the history of feminism is adequate recompense for all they have given me is perhaps debatable! Finally, this project would have been impossible without the women who participated in this era of activism, and in particular the women who agreed to be interviewed. I hope they feel that I have done them justice in the pages that follow.

I thank the editors of *History* and *Oral History* for their permission to reproduce material from Chapters 1, 4 and 5 that has been previously published as 'Race, emotion and discomposure in oral histories with white feminist activists', *Oral History* 42:1 (2014), pp. 84–94 and 'The colour of feminism: White feminists and "race" in the Women's Liberation Movement', *History* 97 (2012), pp. 453–75.

Abbreviations

ANL	Anti Nazi League
BBWG	Brixton Black Women's Group
BLF	Black Liberation Front
BUFP	Black Unity and Freedom Party
CR	Consciousness Raising
ELBWO	East London Black Women's Organisation
LWLN	London Women's Liberation Newsletter
MWP	Merseyside Women's Paper
NF	National Front
OWAAD	Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
ROC	Remembering Olive Collective
SBS	Southall Black Sisters
SUS	Stop under Suspicion
UBWAG	United Black Women's Action Group
WAI	Women Against Imperialism
WARF	Women Against Racism and Fascism
WINS	Women's Information and Newsletter Service
WIRES	Women's Information and Referral Service (newsletter)
WfH	Wages for Housework
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement

Introduction

'Race' has long been a troublesome issue for feminist politics. Despite white feminism's historically racialised location, the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in England believed itself initially to be not just neutral to these issues, but positively anti-racist. Increasingly during the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the critiques of ethnic minority women proved these assumptions to be not just naive, but positively wrong. The debates and arguments that resulted created a crisis in the white feminist project: the universal woman who had for so long been a familiar figure of white feminist rhetoric and activism could no longer be conjured forth with any confidence. The activism of ethnic minority women was also affected, as a move away from autonomous activism towards often uncomfortable collaborations with white feminists occurred during the 1980s. Both Black[1] and white women were deeply affected by the emotions generated by these debates, with some women dropping out of activism altogether. It is thus clear that these events profoundly shaped the women's movement, and played a part in the disintegration of a coherent national movement by the end of the 1980s. Nevertheless, despite the negative light in which these events have often been viewed, it is clear that these debates also ultimately effected a far greater – if uneven – awareness of racial issues within the women's movement, and made feminism more ethnically diverse. Using a source base of feminist periodicals, oral histories and personal papers, in this monograph I examine both the 'white' and the 'Black' women's movements, and their complex interactions with each other. I also include a case study of Jewish feminism: debates about ethnicity during this period could not always be reduced to a simplistic Black/white binary. Rather than simplistically asserting the racism of white women and the victimhood of Black women, I am interested in

exploring the historical conditions that both made feminism so white, and shaped the concerns of Black women to be very different. Engaging in this sort of reflection will, I hope, enable an understanding of both why the women's movement was so shaken by these debates during this era, and the movement's subsequent trajectory into the twenty-first century.

As we shall see throughout the course of this book, the prime contention of the Black feminist critique was that white English feminists had little concept of the ways in which racism profoundly structured their lives as Black women. Essentially, Black women argued for a holistic vision of social justice, and believed that feminism as practised by white women failed to achieve this. If liberation was to be achieved for all women, then all facets of women's oppression – including race and class as well as sex – had to be taken into account. British Black feminists argued that many of the critiques of patriarchy so long clung to by white feminists could not translate on to the realities of Black women's lives precisely because of the effect that racism had on their lives. So, for example, what was the use of Reclaim the Night marches asking for greater police presence on the street for Black women, given the record of police violence towards the Black community? What was the use of campaigning for access to abortion for Black women when, it was controversially claimed, some Black women were being forcibly sterilised? How can you critique the family when the state denies you the right to a family life?

The Black feminist project of the transformation of feminism's concerns therefore posed questions that struck at its very heart. Debates around race represented an existential crisis for the movement that posed a very fundamental problem: how far can feminism work as a project of liberation for all women? These debates became, in effect, proxy debates about what the terrain of feminism actually was. Could race, class and other markers of difference/categories of oppression truly be subsumed into its project? How far could this terrain be pushed before the project could no longer be described as feminism? Sally Alexander describes these tensions overs terrain well in a recent oral history interview:

> While I always thought of myself as much a radical feminist as – and by radical what I meant was, you know, that the politics of feminism is the politics of sexual difference, that's what it is, you know, and it's around that – it's not good, it's not better than the class politics or race politics, but it's that's what feminism is. It's those issues

> around sexual difference, about what is it that distinguishes women from men and why would women be less equal or have less status or be discriminated against because – and that's all feminism is. So in that sense I'm a radical feminist, I think that's the primary contradiction in feminist politics. It's not the only contradiction in the world but it's a contradiction, it's the tension, it's the political tension, it's what I think of as the nerve end of feminism. Because feminism works along that nerve, you know, what is the difference between the sexes; why are women treated differently from men, should they be treated differently? Feminists themselves disagree about these issues but that's the terrain of feminist politics.[2]

We can thus see why the Black feminist critique was so challenging to white feminists. Yet, in many ways, it is unsurprising that some white feminists were hostile to the Black feminist critique, because the terms of that critique were similar to the critique of feminism from white male leftists during the 1970s: in this version, it was because of feminism's alleged insufficient attention to the material, that it was incapable of becoming a project of liberation for all women. It was the contentiousness of this claim – and the way in which some white feminists perceived it as undermining gender as a basis for a political movement – that partly explains why some white feminists were resistant to Black women's critique, and why these debates around race became so bitter.

The history and historiography of feminism in England

A well-established narrative of feminism pre-1968 in England exists, which starts with Mary Wollstonecraft (sometimes even Mary Astell), and continues with the campaigns for women's education, access to the professions, and of course, the vote. This narrative then sees women's activism take a maternalistic turn in the inter-war years with a focus on issues such as family allowances.[3] What is often less highlighted – at least from the viewpoint of an English scholar – is the extent to which imperialism shaped the women's movement in England, as has been highlighted in the work of Antoinette Burton, Christine Bolt, and Vron Ware.[4] As these authors have demonstrated, those within the English women's movement often depicted themselves as white women helping 'native' women to attain a higher degree of 'civilisation', in order to strengthen their own claim to imperial citizenship. It is important to note there were women who were not complicit in this, such as the late Victorian 'anti-caste' campaigner Catherine Impey. Other women,

such as Dora Marsden, had a more complicated set of beliefs relating to the end of empire.[5] However, as the first chapter of this book will argue, this colonial paradigm still shaped how some white feminists related to Black women in the post-1968 period. Furthermore, feminist birth control campaigners of the early and mid-twentieth century, such as Marie Stopes, often had intimate connections to the eugenics movement, a notoriously racist and classist enterprise. This made the valorisation of such figures by white feminists particularly problematic. And whilst there were few in the WLM who subscribed to eugenicist views, the role of white women in such campaigns cast a long shadow in the debates in the 1970s and '80s over controversial contraceptives such as Depo-Provera, administered disproportionately to Black women. Thus, whilst the particular debates between Black and white feminists in the UK in the period under review in this book were very much the result of the temporal conjunction of a particular kind of radical politics with a period of mass migration, the complicity of earlier generations of white feminists with colonialist projects meant that alliances between Black and white women could never be automatic. Given such a history, it is little wonder that the notion of a universal sisterhood rang particularly hollow in the ears of Black women.

Nevertheless, this history has proved peculiarly difficult to address amongst feminist scholars in England.[6] Most work on the English feminist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century is still very much written in a valedictory mode: suggesting that there may be other, less positive, stories to tell about white English feminists still has the potential to cause considerable controversy. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the anti-feminism prevalent both within public life and the academy. One would never want to disown the very real achievements of earlier generations of feminists, which even today are often overlooked by historians. Nevertheless, given the problematic ways in which race and ethnicity have shaped white women's movements over the centuries, it is clearly necessary to critically interrogate these more troublesome aspects of feminism's past.

The historical scholarship of the English/British women's movement during the post-1968 period is relatively meagre. This can be partly understood in terms of a reluctance to write contemporary history within England, though it is also a result of the still – androcentric nature of the academy. No full-length archivally based history of this 'second-wave' women's movement has yet been written, and published work remains thin on the ground. Much of this writing take the form of chapters for undergraduate textbooks, which inevitably gives a

somewhat superficial overview of the issues at hand, as can be seen in Elizabeth Meehan's contribution to Harold Smith's edited volume *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century*, and Martin Pugh's *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*.[7] Nevertheless, in recent years, more scholarship has been addressed to the movement. Eve Setch, Jeska Rees and Sarah Browne have all written area studies of the movement within the UK for doctoral theses, concentrating respectively on London, Leeds, and Scotland.[8] Running at the same time as my own research has been the 'Sisterhood and After' oral history project at the University of Sussex, an endeavour which has recorded the lives and activism of fifty different women through in-depth (eight hour long) interviews. Several journal articles have resulted from both this project, and the work of Rees, Browne and Setch, and they form the beginnings of a historiographical field. All emphasise the regionalism of the WLM, and this has informed my own research, despite its more overtly national nature.

I have decided to take England – rather than smaller local units, or the UK as a whole – as the focus of my research, as the struggle against English dominance of the UK complicated the nature of ethnic affiliation in Scotland, Wales, and particularly Northern Ireland.[9] Studying race and ethnicity in these more complex Celtic contexts would doubtless have yielded much useful information; but it would also have been impossible to fit into the relatively short length of this book, although at times I contextualise my research with information about women's activism in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, North and South. There is inevitably some slippage between the terms 'British' and 'English,' not least because for many English women, the two terms are interchangeable. Additionally, there are many people within the UK who were born in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and now live in England (and vice versa). Furthermore, the Black community in the UK has generally identified as 'Black British' rather than 'Black English/Scottish/Welsh', a choice generally also made by Black women in the women's movement themselves, and reflected in Heidi Safia Mirza's choice of title in her edited collection *Black British Feminism: A Reader*. Thus, I generally refer to the Black women's movement in a national context as 'Black British' rather than as 'Black English.' These caveats aside, readers should take the events described in this book as referring to England rather than Britain.

The predominant focus of the research of Rees, Brown and Setch has been either implicitly or explicitly on the debates between radical and socialist feminists within the movement. These debates are undoubtedly important, and it would be futile to attempt to understand the British feminist milieu at this time without reference to this. However,

the foregrounding of this issue has had the unfortunate effect of minimising attention to other categories of difference in the movement, such as age, class, and most pertinently in terms of this book, race. Given the centrality of the issue of race to the women's movement during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, extraordinarily little historical attention has been paid to it. The contention of this book is that race is central to understanding the form and trajectory of the feminist movement within England during these years. These challenges presented to white feminists by Black women strengthened feminism ideologically; but the emotionally charged nature of these debates, and inability of some white feminists to deal with the challenge of race constructively, played a key role in the breakdown of the WLM as a coherent national movement.

More writing on the women's movement of this period is to be found within sociology/cultural studies, journalism and memoirs rather than within the historical discipline itself. The continuing influence of the texts and debates of this era have given this recent feminist past a particular salience in social science disciplines, where one is ironically most likely to find a narrative history of the movement from the late 1960s onwards. Sociologists and political scientists such as Vicki Randall, Joni Lovenduski, David Bouchier, and Joyce Gelb have done most of the 'heavy lifting' in terms of reconstructing the British women's movement for an academic audience, although Bouchier and Gelb in particular give a highly partial version of feminism that tends to be white and middle-class.[10] Nevertheless, it is also within these disciplines that issues of race and ethnicity within feminism are more likely to be addressed. Works such as Julia Sudbury's *Other Kinds of Dreams* and Ranu Samantrai's *AlterNatives* have determined the historical paradigm through which we understand the debates of race and ethnicity in the English feminist movement, despite their authors' roots in sociology/cultural studies.[11] More recently, the FEMCIT project – a huge, EU funded project examining the impact of contemporary women's movements in western Europe – has integrated race and ethnicity to be one of its major structuring categories.[12] The writings of sociologists such as Avtar Brah and Kum-Kum Bhavnani have also been influential in shaping our perceptions of race in the women's movement. These authors, along with activists from outside the academy such as Pratibha Parmar and Valerie Amos, have increasingly been given space within the pages of *Feminist Review* since the mid-1980s. Indeed, starting with the seminal 'Many Voices, One Chant' Black feminist special edition of the publication in the 1980s, the commitment that this journal has shown to

publishing multiple feminist viewpoints has helped enormously with reconstructing the history of feminism outside of the white, middle-class mainstream. Primary works, such as *The Heart of the Race* and *Finding a Voice* (which concentrate, respectively, on the experiences of Black and South Asian women in Britain) are also key to understanding how these debates and histories have been shaped, with their emphasis on the separate concerns and relative invisibility of Black women.[13]

The narrative presented by these writers is generally that of a white English feminist movement which was untouched by matters of race and in many ways, chronically insensitive to them, until events such as the founding of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) increasingly put race and the particular problems of Black women on to the agenda in the early 1980s. As Ranu Samantrai writes in *AlterNatives*, 'Around the decade of the 1980s, the Black British feminist movement flourished, achieved some remarkable successes, and fragmented. It lasted only a few years, narrowly speaking about five years, and involved only a few women.'[14] Sudbury's narrative is considerably more subtle, at least recognising a history behind Black women's organising that stretched back to the 1960s. She also is more aware of the difficulties of the blurred lines between women's organisation and 'feminism,' and of the political difficulties that some Black women had with aligning themselves with a specifically feminist label, due to its white associations.

However, as the author of a study with a sociological focus, understandably Sudbury did not conduct a widespread survey of the history of Black women's organisations. Instead, her work concentrates on interviews she conducted in the early 1990s on the contemporary concerns of Black women, and the developments of these concerns from the late 1970s onwards. This essentially reinforces the impression of an intense period of Black feminist activity in the early and mid-1980s given by Samantrai. Neither author is particularly concerned with the interaction between white and Black feminists and the impact that Black women's criticisms of feminism had on the feminist movement as a whole. Heidi Safia Mirza, in her introduction to the *Black British Feminist Reader*, also primarily locates Black women's political activity in the 1980s, with little mention of Black women's activism previous to that decade.[15] The FEMCIT project – also contemporary in focus, and just beginning to publish its work at the time of writing – does not provide more than a cursory history of Black women's activism in the 1970s. Whilst it is true that the 1980s did see an unprecedented level of Black feminist activism, the sociological focus of these works needs supplementing

with a historical one, as such narratives marginalise the activism of Black women in the 1970s. Further contributing to this historical neglect is the fact that there are relatively few documents that attest to this activity that have been preserved in archives. As Julia Sudbury has noted, 'The failure to maintain archives has meant that the records of many black women's organisations which folded during the 1970s or early 1980s were lost, scattered among former members' personal belongings and often eventually discarded.'[16] In practice, this inevitably leads any archive-based work to a focus on London-based organisations. The intensity of Black radical activism in the capital led to a large number of organisations there that in turn produced a large number of documents, increasing their chance of archival survival. These are issues that shall be explored in Chapter 2, which explores Black women's activism in England between the early 1970s and the late 1980s.

The historiography of the women's movement has also been shaped by the extraordinary number of first person accounts that the movement has generated. This is partly due to the importance that the movement placed on recording its own history, to ensure that future generations of feminists did not have to 'reinvent the wheel' as they felt they had done.[17] A number of women active in the WLM have taken pen to paper over the years to give their version of events. Contemporaneous histories were published in the 1980s, including works such as Sheila Rowbotham's *The Past Is Before Us,* and Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell's *Sweet Freedom*. More recently, memoirs have started to appear, such as Lynne Segal's *Making Trouble* and Michèle Robert's *Paper Houses*.[18] Like many in the women's movement itself, these commentators have tended to be white, middle-class and educated; and as Rees has noted, they have also tended to come from the socialist feminist tendency that was generally dominant.[19] Whilst these sources are invaluable to any historian trying to reconstruct a history of the movement, they have also become the dominant narrative through which the history of post-1968 women's activism within England is understood. Therefore, the experiences of working-class feminists, radical feminists, and – most significantly in terms of this book – Black feminists, have largely been written out of these self-proclaimed histories of the women's movement. Furthermore, the debates that exclusions of race and class (amongst others) created at the time have been written from the point of view of these white middle-class authors themselves, which has resulted in self-justifying accounts of these clashes that tend to minimise the very valid claims that Black/radical/ (and/or) working-class feminists had in suggesting that the WLM's practice did not always

live up to its rhetoric of universal sisterhood. Lynne Segal wrote in her memoir of the 'corrosive notes' that identity politics had struck, arguing that 'rival claims of recognition and influence were part of the unravelling of the women's movement in the 1980s'.[20] Other works, such as Robert's *Paper Houses*, barely mention these debates at all.

We can therefore see that the way in which feminist history in England has been told is highly problematic. As such, I have been inspired by the American historiography on the subject which has sought to critically re-examine the place of race within feminist discourse of this era. In contrast to the UK, 'second-wave' feminism has been established as a legitimate subject for historical enquiry in the United States for almost two decades.[21] It is unsurprising, then, that the historiography on race within the movement is much more developed there, something also facilitated by the much earlier development of Black history in the US. Whilst some histories and memoirs from the 1990s concentrated mainly on white, middle-class feminism (for example, Alice Echol's *Daring to be Bad* and Susan Brownmiller's memoir *In our time: A memoir of revolution*), the challenge for a new and more inclusive American feminist historiography has to some extent been met over the last decade. It is clear that whilst American historians were once apt to see a more monolithic, largely white-driven movement which went into terminal decline in the 1980s, historians of the twenty-first century have a broader vision which emphasises the diversity of feminism during this era. Work such as Benita Roth's *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* have provided a more substantial history of the multiracial feminist movement.[22] Such work has also acknowledged that white feminists are also carriers of ethnicity. The trend for looking at the movement 'intersectionally' has been furthered by two highly significant publications of 2008: Anne M. Valk's *Second Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington*, and Stephanie Gilmore's edited collection *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second Wave Feminism in the United States*.[23]

These works attempt to place feminism in a larger pantheon of progressive movements, including welfare organisations, peace movements, progressive church movements such as Church Women United, and – prominent in Valk's work – the reproductive rights movement. These authors thus seek to emphasise the links that were forged between – and the fundamental similarities of – different feminisms in this era, and indeed socially progressive campaigns in general. There are some problematic features of this work. In particular, by downplaying

racial tensions, the works could be seen as the self-justifying words of white feminist women. Nevertheless, with its emphasis on the multiplicity of feminisms, this American historiography is a crucial step forward for our understanding of the history and the impact of the feminist movement. Finally, Winifred Breines has published *The Trouble Between Us,* an important study of the tensions between Black and white American feminists in this era.[24] This book is far less optimistic than the works of Valk or Gilmore; however, in its unflinching analysis of ethnic tensions within feminism, it perhaps most closely resembles my own intentions with this book.

Also particularly significant in terms of influencing my own research is Becky Thompson's article 'Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism.'[25] In this long article, Thompson questions the notion that Black and Chicana feminism was a development of the mid 1970s, a postscript to the main event of radical/liberal/socialist feminism – all, of course, implicitly white. This has the effect of placing multiracial feminism at the centre of the story of feminist activism. This challenge to the ethnocentric chronology of the movement is one that I have taken up in this book. There is a tendency within much writing about the women's movement in England to date its decline to the final, disastrous National Women's Liberation conference in 1978, a chronological scheme that implicitly places the 'classic' period of English feminism to be between the early and mid-1970s.[26] However, as some scholars have noted, equating a lack of national conferences with the end of feminist activism is rather simplistic.[27] In this book, however, I demonstrate that the 'second-wave' women's movement did not simply *extend* into the early1980s, but that, in fact, by focusing on Black women's activism, we can see that the early 1980s was, in fact, as equally a vibrant period of feminism as the early 1970s. By shifting the chronology of the women's movement in this direction, I hope to transform our idea of what the women's movement was, and who was active in it. Nevertheless, I have utilised the well-established date of 1968 as a starting point: although it would be foolish to assume that feminism had been entirely dormant in the decades immediately preceding this famously revolutionary year, it is clear that the late 1960s did genuinely witness a radically new form of women's activism. As Chapter 1 will examine, it was in 1968 that the first women's 'consciousness-raising' groups were formed in London; it was also the year of the Ford's 'equal-pay' strike. And, whilst I am interested in extending and transforming this chronology in this book, I also argue that there was a clear change in the nature of feminist activism

from the mid-1980s onwards, with far fewer local groups in existence, and a huge decline in the number of feminist periodicals. Therefore, the focus of this book lies almost exclusively in this period between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, although I have taken the date of the closure of *Spare Rib* in 1993 as the final end date.

Terminology

Feminism

'Feminism' has long been a controversial term, with a variety of definitions in use. It is also historically contingent, with the connotations – if not the fundamentals – of the term certainly having altered over the years. Nevertheless for heuristic purposes, a static definition can be useful, although, as Karen Offen has argued, definitions that are nonetheless attentive to historical variations are difficult to come by (she, of course, provided her own in her well-known article 'Defining Feminism').[28] The definition I employ in this book is simply that a feminist is a)someone who recognises that women are treated differently to men in a way that is detrimental to them, b) recognises that this oppression is not just individual and contingent but rather, systematically grounded in social structures, and c) recognises that this is unjust.

However, it is of considerable importance to this book to note that 'feminism' was (and is) a term that was refused by some Black women who otherwise satisfy the criteria outlined above, on the grounds that it denoted a white, middle-class movement that oppressed, rather than liberated, Black women. This dilemma has been discussed by Rachel Cohen in relation to the 'Sisterhood and After' project.[29] Yet it was because they satisfied my own criteria for feminism that I include such women in this book, which looks specifically at women-centred activism, rather than just female activists. This created complex terminological problems for me when writing. Essentially, the dilemma runs thus: is it ethical to apply a term to someone who has specifically refused it, even if you yourself believe that they fulfil the criteria that such a labelling supposes? In some cases this would be acceptable. For example, I would have no qualms in terming Enoch Powell racist, even though he himself denied this. But I had to recognise that the dilemma presented by my own research was less straightforward. Essentially, to use the term 'feminist' to describe Black women who had specifically refuted it would be to refuse to recognise their experience of the racist work the term 'feminism' has done, even if such ideological work was (as I argue) largely unwitting.

Given the focus of my research, such a stance would undermine the whole premise of this book, which is to provide a history of the English women's movement that not only includes Black women, but also takes seriously their criticisms of white feminists. Therefore, when the Black women or organisations under discussion specifically refused the term 'feminist', I have not employed it to describe them, using instead the terms 'Black female activist' or 'Black women's organisation'. If the position of the organisation or woman is unclear, I have used my own best judgment; if I am discussing plural women or organisations, I have used the term that the majority of the women or organisations would have used. The downside to this, of course, is that some conceptual clarity is sacrificed; and, on occasion, particular wordings or phrasings can be clumsy. Nevertheless, I feel that such a course of action was the right one. It is for this reason that – although I essentially see myself as a historian of feminism, rather than of simply women's activism – I have used the phrase 'women's movement' rather than 'feminism' in the title of this book.

The definition of the term feminist also created dilemmas when deciding which women's organisations, Black or white, came under the remit of my research. Organisations that proclaimed their feminism, such as Women's Aid or Southall Black Sisters, were easy enough. And of course, organisations which specifically refused the term were dealt with in the way described above. Many smaller, community-based, organisations, however, had no such clear-cut line, and it seemed a moot point whether or not they could be included under the banner of the women's movement.[30] This was often most true of (white) working-class women's organisations, such as Women Against Pit Closures, who were not explicitly feminist in aim, but that nevertheless engendered female solidarity and were feminist in effect if not in intent. This engendered a second dilemma related to the first: is it possible to term a person or organisation feminist if they themselves do not employ the term, but without clear reasons why and not as an obvious political gesture? Caitriona Beaumont has grappled with similar dilemmas in her work on inter-war women's organisations.[31] Eventually, I decided that the very ambivalence of such organisations on the matter signalled – somewhat paradoxically – a lesser involvement in political debate with the feminist movement than was the case with those Black women who specifically contested the term. Although I am still unsure as to whether organisations such as Women Against Pit Closures should be termed 'feminist', or considered part of the women's movement, I thus decided that they were too far removed from the particular debates I was researching to warrant close attention.

Another note is needed on the term 'second wave': this too is controversial. Despite the ubiquity of its usage, the wave metaphor is not a particularly useful one when it comes to thinking about the history of feminism. It imposes an artificial coherence to the messy chronology of feminism and minimises the extent of ideological diversity within – as well as between – 'waves'. It is also based on an American model of feminism that dates the beginning of the 'first wave' of feminism to the 1848 Seneca Falls convention, and its end to the gaining of the vote in 1919. Needless to say, these dates do not map onto an English context particularly well. Nevertheless, given the dominance of the wave as a metaphor in feminist writing, it is difficult to dispense with the term altogether. Nancy Hewitt has suggested thinking of feminist waves as 'radio waves', writing that:

> Radio waves allow us to think of movements of different lengths and frequencies; movements that grow louder or fade out that reach vast audiences across oceans or only a few listeners in a local area; movements that are marked by static interruptions or frequent changes of channels; and movements that are temporarily drowned out by another frequency but then suddenly come in loud and clear.[32]

Karen Offen, by contrast, has thought of different periods of European feminism through the metaphor of volcanic eruptions and lava.[33] Both of these re-workings are to be welcomed in terms of thinking through feminist chronologies in a more nuanced way. However, in this book, I prefer to use terms such as 'feminism during this period', 'feminism during the 1970s/1980s', or 'post-'68 feminism', partly because they are more chronologically precise, but also because it is unclear to what extent Black feminism is conceptualised as being part of 'second' or 'third' wave feminism. Using these more chronologically-rooted terms avoids such confusion.

Race

Although often based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, 'race' has no biological basis outside of the claims of pseudo-science. It is, rather, a discursive formation, and a highly mutable one at that, as David Roediger's work on 'whiteness' in nineteenth-century America has demonstrated.[34] The origins of both 'race' and 'racism' – one cannot exist without the other – are a subject of huge debate. However, despite the various common-sense and a historical ways in which the terms are used, it is clear that they *do* have a history. Two of the most prominent thinkers on the subject, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, have defined

this process thus: 'We define *racial formation* as the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.' They further argue that this was a historically situated project which has to be linked to the evolution of societal hegemony.[35]

This is the starting point for how I, in this book, conceptualise the operation of race within the period under examination. Of course, always present is the danger that writing about 'race' in itself will reify, rather than dismantle, the category. Yet it is clear that 'race' must be addressed when writing history, for it is a concept that profoundly shapes the past (as well as our present). Addressing the discursive categories by which people understand their world is not the same thing as suggesting that such categories have any scientific basis. However, care is certainly needed to ensure that writing about 'Black' and 'white' women does not reinforce false binaries. Additionally, there are several respects in which the terms 'Black' and 'white' are problematic. 'Black' as a political formation including all those who were the colonised rather than colonisers, is a particularly British phenomenon, contingent on the supposedly shared experiences of Afro-Caribbean, African, and Asian immigrants to Britain in the post-Windrush era. One of the main proponents of political blackness in the British context – Sri-Lankan born head of the Institute of Race Relations Ambalavaner Sivanandan – wrote in 1971, apropos the Asian man's experience:

> He too is no less the product of this society, and his experience of second class citizenship is no different from that of the West Indian's. His language, his customs, his social orientation which once were Indian or Pakistani are now as wholly British as those of his Caribbean neighbour. *Black to him is no less the colour of his oppression than to the West Indian – and black power is no less the answer to his ills*.[36] (italics mine)

This shared experience and identity, so the argument went, would lead to a stronger resistance to the white racist state.[37] Despite the widespread use that the term gained during the 1970s and into the 1980s, however, 'Black' as a political formulation came to be particularly critiqued by Asian writers who complain that the term hid their distinct experiences within postcolonial society. Tariq Modood has written:

> Because as a matter of historical and contemporary fact this positive black identity has been espoused by peoples of sub-Saharan African roots, they naturally are thought to be the quintessential or

> exemplary cases of black consciousness and understand black consciousness to be, at its fullest, something only achieved by people of African ethnicity.[38]

As Julia Sudbury has written, Modood further highlights 'the inherent erasure of an Asian presence when writers and politicians slip between Black and Asian to simply 'Black'.[39] Essentially, 'Black' as a term could be (and still can be) useful politically, but also imposed an unreal homogeneity on the incredible diversity of the British immigrant experience. During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, it thus became increasingly contested by Asian activists in Britain.

The term 'white' also imposes homogeneity on the very different experiences of women from all over Europe. Working-class Irish women are in a very different position to middle-class English women, for example (indeed, some Irish women even claimed they were politically Black).[40] And Jewish women can obviously lay claim to a violent history of persecution on ethnic grounds, despite the fact that Jews are generally considered white.[41] In a well-known *Feminist Review* article from 1984, Nira Yuval Davis and Floya Anthias also questioned whether it was possible to place some immigrant women, such as Cypriot Greeks, on a purely 'Black'/white binary, given the complexities of their experiences. They argued for British feminists to use 'ethnicity' rather than 'race' as a way of conceptualising the experiences of immigrant women in Britain.[42] Although the seeming equivalence that Yuval Davis and Anthias seemed to place on the experience of Black and white immigrant women was controversial, they foreshadowed a more nuanced approach to ethnic identity which had clearly gained ascendancy by the 1990s.

Despite the problematic nature of the terms 'Black' and 'white', they were undoubtedly the categories through which feminists in the era under consideration understood their ethnic identities. Indeed, all the African-descent and Asian women I interviewed for this project were still broadly in favour of the use 'Black' as a political term encompassing all ethnic-minority women. Sudbury's work also largely supports these findings, although she does note the ambivalence around identifying as 'Black' felt by Asian women.[43] Indeed, the marginalisation of Asian women in some of the politically 'Black' women's organisations that form the subject of my research has also meant that they are less well represented than Afro-Caribbean or African women in this book. Having consciously limited my research to 'politically Black' organisations and individuals, then, I therefore made the conscious decision to

employ the term 'Black' in the same political sense that such women understand the term to mean. I have thus also capitalised 'Black' in line with contemporaneous usage. Despite my own ambivalence about such usage, I felt that using other, more recent terms such as BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) would be to enforce an anachronistic system of categorisations on women who had specifically refused such identifications. I have made some references to specifically 'Asian' women in this book when the subject in question concerns only them. Otherwise, all references to 'Black' women should be taken to read to include all African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian women.

On occasion, terms such as 'third world' women and 'women of colour' are also used in this book. I also find these terms problematic, and they are again used only when they have been specifically employed by the women or groups under discussion. 'Women of colour' – which was sometimes employed by women on the *Spare Rib* editorial collective – was originally an American term used to describe ethnic minority (particularly Hispanic and Asian) women who were not of Black African descent. Given the very different ethnic make-up of the UK, it is not a term that translates particularly well to a British context. And the term 'third world' was the subject of critique even during the time frame of this book, most famously in Chandra Mohanty's essay 'Under Western Eyes'. In this article, Mohanty critiqued western feminists' unthinking 'third-worldism', which cast women living in vastly different contexts and circumstances as part of an undifferentiated 'third world' through which white women could thereby define their western, 'civilised' selves.[44] Once again, however, the 'third world' was a category through which many feminists at the time understood women from formerly colonised countries. I have thus employed the term where relevant.

Racism

Despite the 'common sense' usage of the term 'racism' as a prejudice formed by one person against another on the basis of their ethnic origin, it became increasingly clear whilst researching this book that the term has been used in many different and contradictory ways. As Ann Laura Stoler has suggested, 'racism' is a discursive formation in a truly Foucauldian mode, in '(1) that it is mobile; (2) that it does not display constant or consistent political interests; and (3) that it lacks thematic unity'. Furthermore, she notes how far contemporary understandings of racism are from this definition.[45]

'Racism' was indeed employed in a variety of different and contradictory ways during the period under discussion by the very women

who are the subject of this book. These contradictory uses in themselves were the cause of debate and resentment, as white and Black women often used different definitions of 'racism' that were not understood by the other.[46] Alastair Bonnett notes that three different definitions of racism were used by the white anti-racists in Britain that he studied. These were 'racism as a manifestation of capitalism', racism as 'the result of an individual's conscious and unconscious colour and cultural prejudices' – i.e. 'common sense' racism, and racism as a 'belief in the existence of superior and inferior biologically defined "races" '.[47] Most significantly, he noted that these definitions were often employed by the same person, not as distinct categories but as different but equal conceptualisations, despite the contradictions present within these usages.[48] Similar tendencies can be found amongst anti-racist feminists during this period. During the earlier part of our period, the 'common-sense' definition of racism as a result of an individual's prejudices seems to have been the most prevalent conceptualisation of the term. I term such usage of racism as a 'liberal' understanding, in that it privileges the thoughts and actions of the individual over the structures of society. 'Racism', as this book will argue, was generally perceived by white feminists in the 1970s to be a force external to them, rather than as a category that structured both society and their own subjectivity. As I shall argue in the final chapter, some white feminists continued to employ this 'liberal' definition in to the 1980s. This was problematic as it hindered their understanding of the critiques levelled at them by Black women, and thus impaired their ability to react usefully to such criticism. This was because such a usage of racism directly contradicted more radical understandings of the term that conceptualised 'race' as a category that profoundly structured society. These conceptualisations, largely developed by Black radicals, ranged from (especially in the 1970s) the heavily Marxist, emphasising the economic functions of race, to, in the 1980s, an approach more centered on cultural discourses around race.[49] Some white feminists accepted this critique, but often, as we shall see, attempting to reconcile these two understandings of racism resulted in confusion and anxiety.

Such radical conceptualisations of race suggested that 'racism', rather than being a personal attribute of prejudiced whites, was instead a system that implicated all white people in its maintenance. In this lies the origins of the concept of 'white privilege': that is, that white people always benefit from being white in a racist society, even if they personally denounce racism. Furthermore, as shall be argued in Chapters 4 and 5, such radical conceptualisations of race generally held that white

people could not help but have at least some racist attitudes and views – even if unconsciously – because this was an inevitable result of growing up as a white person in a profoundly racist society. This was an analysis that influenced the Black feminist critique of the white women's movement in the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, some white feminists found this problematic.[50] Superficially, some were simply offended to be told that they were racist, given the moral approbation that the accusation incurred.[51] However, this radical conceptualisation of racism has also been criticised more rigorously by Omi and Winant, who have written scathingly on the negative effects (as they see it) on the 'inflation' of the concept of racism.[52] A term can have little meaning if it is applied equally to white anti-racist feminists who genuinely – if at times misguidedly – tried to organise against racism, as to members of the National Front. Such a usage does not just result in 'deep pessimism' as Omi and Winant suggest, but essentially denies the agency of both Black and white actors to contest the racist paradigms of white society. The logical conclusion of such a reductive argument is that there is no point in contesting racism – or indeed, any other oppressive paradigm – at all. This is not to argue that no white feminists within the WLM were racist, or that the origins of the movement within a white racist society did not profoundly structure the organisation and aims of the movement. Both of these things are true. Nevertheless, a blanket designation of white feminists as simply 'racist' lacks so much nuance as to be conceptually redundant. Rather, I am interested in the ways that the historical conditions of both English society and the traditions of (white) leftist thought inscribed and limited the ways through which white feminists thought about Black women. Conversely, I am also interested as to how the historical conditions of empire and its legacy of immigration, as well as Black radical thought, shaped the political concerns of Black women and their interactions with the WLM.

Readers may note that I make relatively little use of intersectionality in this book, a concept first coined by the US feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 which refers to the way in which different categories of identity – gender, race, class – impact upon each other, with their effects not necessarily being able to be separated out.[53] So, for example – and most pertinently, in relationship to this book – the sexist oppression that a Black women would undergo is always racialised, and the gender oppression racialised. As this book will demonstrate, Crenshaw simply put a name to an understanding of the way in which racial, gender and class oppression interacted that had been current in feminist circles, and particularly in Black feminist circles, since the

1970s. As the term was not in use during the period the book covers, I do not use it in my analysis, as I thought to do so was to risk anachronism, particularly given the prominent place of the term in recent controversial feminist debates.

The Black and Jewish communities in Britain[54]

There have been records of Black people living in Britain as far back as the Roman era; they have had at least an intermittent presence here ever since. Indeed, the first legal action against Black people was enacted by Elizabeth I in 1596, where she wrote in an open letter sent to the Lord Mayor of London:

> Her Majestie understanding that there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinds of people there are already to manie . . . Her Majesty's pleasure therefore ys that those kinde of people should be sent forth of the lande.[55]

We can thus see that racism in these isles in not a twentieth century phenomenon, but rather, has a long and inglorious history. The tiny population of Black people within Britain grew slowly but steadily during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[56] By the early twentieth century the port cities of London, Liverpool, Bristol and Cardiff had small but significant Black populations in addition to this.[57] These port settlements all saw significant race-related disturbances in 1919, highlighting again the long history of racism within Britain, despite its oft-vaunted self-image as a 'tolerant' nation.[58] It was during the interwar period that the country saw the establishment of the first Black political/pressure group in the form of the League of Coloured Peoples, established in 1931 by Dr Harold Moody, a long-time Black resident of London.[59] Reformist rather than radical in nature, the group continued activities – such as campaigning against the informal colour bar that existed in many organisations in Britain at that time – until 1951. They also published a journal called *The Keys*.[60] More radical activism was seen in the guise of Ras Makonnen and George Padmore, Black students who in 1937 founded the International African Service Bureau.[61] Makonnen was instrumental in helping to organise the fifth 'Pan African Congress' in Manchester in 1945.[62] His radicalism is demonstrated by his rationalisation of the Black-only policy of membership for the Pan-African Federation: 'I was not going to take another group of white people who would want us to say later that had it not been for them, we would

never have gained our independence.'[63] Along with intellectuals and activists such as CLR James and exiled American communist Claudia Jones, such activities remind us of the existence of an – albeit small – tradition of Black radicalism within Britain that predated the Black Power movement by several decades.[64] Indeed, Black radical Darcus Howe is the great-nephew of CLR James, illustrating the connections between these periods of activism.[65] Nevertheless, these earlier radicals failed to gain the political profile or support that the Black radical movement of later years did.

World War Two saw the stationing of many Black servicemen, both from the colonies and the United States, on British soil. This was the largest presence of Black people that Britain had ever seen, and much consternation in official circles was caused by this.[66] However, the permanent Black population of Britain only took on its much larger, modern guise in the post-war era, with the *Empire Windrush* famously bringing in the first large-scale shipment of migrants from the Commonwealth (in this case, four hundred and ninety-two Jamaicans).[67] This movement was enabled by the 1948 Nationality Act, which conferred British subjecthood on all members of the Commonwealth, and was further encouraged by the labour shortage in post-war Britain, although it was never true that new Commonwealth immigration was state-sponsored. Indeed, despite the individual overseas recruiting efforts by independent bodies such as London Transport, politicians showed concerns about post-war migration from the colonies almost from its onset: George Isaacs, the Minister of Labour told the House of Commons after the *Windrush* docked that ' I hope no encouragement is given to others to follow their example'.[68] Numbers of migrants from the West Indies increased dramatically in the mid 1950s, so that by 1958, there were approximately 125,000 West Indians, and 55,000 immigrants from the Indian subcontinent.[69] These migrants settled in a variety of locations across the British Isles. London absorbed the largest number of these immigrants, and areas of the city had become what we would now term 'multicultural' by the late 1950s, particularly in Brixton and North Kensington. However, despite the London-centric nature of the story of Black Britain that is often told, immigrants moved to all corners of the British Isles. The oldest Black communities in Britain – those of London, Cardiff, Bristol and Liverpool – grew, but other cities which had never had large Black communities before quickly acquired them. The West Midlands in particular received a large amount of migrants, as did Manchester. Asian workers who had worked in the textile industry at home unsurprisingly flocked to the textile towns of West Yorkshire

(particularly Bradford) and east Lancashire.[70] However, immigrants did not necessarily find that a warm welcome awaited them. Racial tensions quickly arose, and Nottingham and North Kensington witnessed race riots in the summer of 1958; the murder of West Indian carpenter Kelso Cochrane on the streets of London in the next year illustrated all too well that the tensions were not a one-off but part of a pattern of escalating white-on-Black violence.

By the early 1960s, politicians saw immigration as an area in which political capital could be gained. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed in 1962 by the Conservative government, restricting immigration to Britain to those who had employment vouchers. And in 1964, Conservative Peter Griffiths unexpectedly (and infamously) won the seat for Smethwick from sitting Labour MP Patrick Gordon Walker by exploiting the slogan 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour'.[71] In response to this increasingly hostile climate, several organisations were established during the late 1950s and early 1960s by immigrant groups to campaign against discrimination. These included the Indian Worker's Association, set up in 1958, which campaigned for better working conditions for Indian labourers within Britain, and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), founded in 1965. Significantly, given the lasting influence of American Black politics upon British Black politics, the group was initiated when Martin Luther King met a group of immigrant leaders in London in December 1964.[72] Despite this, as Rosalind Wild notes, they had little grass-roots support and attracted mainly the support of white liberals. Nevertheless, they had a reasonably high profile for a short time period in the mid-1960s, and held some influence with the Labour government.[73] The report of sociologist Benjamin Heinemann into the group in 1972 is also revealing. 'CARD was founded' he wrote, 'to speak for a social and political movement that did not exist.'[74] His use of the past tense is significant, for such a movement certainly did exist by 1972, indicating the compressed timespan in which British Black Power became a force within radical politics in Britain.[75]

As this radical Black movement was growing, legislation which affected the lives of Black people both domestically and in the Commonwealth continued apace. More restrictive immigration legislation was enacted in 1968, precipitated by the Kenyan Asian crisis. These events prompted Conservative MP Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech: several days later, East End dockers marched in support of Powell after he was sacked from Heath's shadow cabinet. This episode is often highlighted in histories of the Black population in Britain as a 'turning

point' that marked an escalation towards ever more violent racism in the 1970s, although in reality it was a continuation of, rather than a break with, previous popular attitudes towards race. The 1971 Immigration Act (enacted 1973) virtually ended all primary immigration by restricting entry to those who had come to do specific jobs for specific periods. Nevertheless, dependents of those already here were still allowed to move permanently to the UK, and as a result Britain's Black population grew substantially during the 1970s, and became increasingly British born as migrants themselves had children.[76] This shift to the second generation was significant: these children of immigrants arguably had greater expectations of the country that was after all their home, and when these expectations were frustrated, they became increasingly militant. An increasing emphasis on a 'Black' identity – as distinct from a Jamaican, or West Indian, or Ghanaian identity – became important, undoubtedly partly influenced by the American Black Power movement. Nevertheless, a distinctly *British* Black identity became increasingly visible from the 1980s onwards, an identity that – as we have seen – was appropriated at times by Asians as a political statement. This formation of a post-immigrant *British* identity had repercussions on the construction of feminism as a national project for white women, as I shall argue in Chapter 1. By the 1980s, this was increasingly implausible and led to the interrogation of the 'universal' (in practice, white) feminist subject by Black women in the 1980s that this book explores.

The 1970s were also the decade that saw both the rise and fall of the National Front, and an increase in racial violence: Peter Fryer estimates that thirty-one Black people in Britain were murdered by racists between 1976 and 1981.[77] This period also witnessed sustained economic problems which adversely affected the Black population: one study in 1977 found that Britain's ethnic minority population 'show up in highly disproportionate terms in all unfavourable social statistics.' The most damning of these statistics were employment ones: by the early 1990s unemployment rates were running at 28.8 per cent for those of Pakistani origin, 27 per cent for those of African origin, and 18 per cent for those of Afro-Caribbean origin.[78] 1981 saw the outbreak of serious unrest in Britain inner-cities, deemed 'riots' by white politicians, and 'uprisings' by the Black community. The most well-known of these disturbances took place in Brixton, but other mainly Black areas, such as Toxteth in Liverpool and Handsworth in Birmingham, also witnessed serious civil unrest. Though the causes for these riots were numerous, racist policing – in particular, excessive use of 'stop and search' powers – was considered to be the primary immediate factor

in their incitement, a verdict that was upheld even in official channels through the Scarman Report. Rioting in London again broke out in October 1985 in Brixton, swiftly followed by the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham. It is against this backdrop of racist legislation and policing, economic deprivation, and civil unrest, then, that the political movements this book discusses must be contextualised.

The history of the Jewish community in Britain is somewhat different. The community had enjoyed a continuous presence in the country since Cromwell's readmittance of the Jews in 1656, and became particularly well established from the 1880s onwards, when many Ashkenazi immigrants fled pogroms in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, they faced substantial prejudice in Britain: the first piece of immigration legislation in the UK – the 1905 Aliens Act – was almost entirely directed towards migrant Jews. Widespread anti-Semitism was a fact of life in Britain until at least the end of World War Two.[79] However, by the 1950s, New Commonwealth migrants began to bear the brunt of such racism; simultaneously, the Jewish community moved out of inner-city areas (most notably London's East End), and became largely suburban. By the 1980s, the community was particularly concentrated in London, with an estimated 70 per cent of British Jews living there (around 200,000 people).[80] Other significant centres of Jewish population in Britain include Leeds, Newcastle, and particularly Manchester. Like the Black community then, the Jewish community was heavily urbanised, and had a particularly significant presence in the capital. Given the metropolitan bias of the women's movement, this is a fact of some significance in comprehending the importance that relationships between Black and Jewish feminists had in the movement. However, unlike the Black community during the period this book explores, the Jewish community was relatively affluent and assimilated. Nevertheless, the persistence of anti-Semitic attitudes within the women's movement was brought to light by controversies surrounding the Middle East. These debates, as Chapter 3 explores, exposed some of the tensions that were at the heart of ethnic identity politics.

A note on sources

For this book, I interviewed fifteen women, from three different localities – London, Liverpool and Cambridge. Although this book is not intended to simply be a comparison of three different city case-studies, for practical purposes it was more efficient to limit the amount of places in which I carried out oral histories. Limiting the number of places

I focused on allowed me to triangulate interviewees' claims with each other more easily, and to understand better the dynamics and histories of activism in particular localities. I therefore deliberately picked these locations due to their dissimilarities to one another. London is by far the largest, and most multicultural, of the three cities; Liverpool is a medium sized (post)- industrial city in the North of England that has suffered great economic hardship over the last forty years and has a long-established Black community; and Cambridge is a small university city that is largely – though not exclusively – white. Six of my interviewees were Black: Stella Dadzie, Yvonne Field, Cathy Jones*, Bola C.*, Joy Njeje, and Adithi*, who was the only Asian woman I interviewed. Stella's father was Ghanaian, and the other four women were of Afro-Caribbean descent. Four of the women I interviewed were of white Jewish descent, and these were Miriam Levy*, Shelley Spivak*, Gail Chester, and Adele Cohen*. I interviewed an Irish woman, Bridget Cullen*, who would define herself as politically Black though of white skin (I have not included her as Black for the purpose of my analysis). Finally, another four women – Emma Hipkin*, Mandy Vere, Julie Callaghan and Valerie Hall* – were of white English descent. In order to supplement these histories and to ensure I was drawing from a more representative sample of women, I also drew extensively from three recently undertaken oral history projects. Two of these were oral history projects that have recently taken place in London that focus on the Black women's movement of this era. The 'Do You Remember Olive Morris?' project (undertaken by the Remembering Olive Collective, and archived at Lambeth Archives), and 'The Heart of the Race' project (undertaken by the Black Cultural Archives and housed there) have proved invaluable, allowing me to draw on the memories of more than forty Black women involved in women-centred activism during the period.[81] The third was the Sisterhood and After project, an oral history project consisting of 60 life interviews with prominent feminists undertaken jointly by the University of Sussex and the British Library between 2010 and 2013.

All of the women that I myself interviewed were over fifty, with many in their sixties, and three in their seventies. All but two had some higher education – some at prestigious institutions – although one of these women, Mandy Vere, never finished her degree. Two of the respondents had taught in universities – Shelley Spivak and Emma Hipkin – and a third woman – Bridget Cullen – held a doctorate. My sample was thus hardly representative of the level of education that most women of their generation enjoyed: it was, however, typical of the high levels of education seen within the women's movement. Occupations

varied from bookshop workers to poets (of which I had two), 'third sector' employees to academics, and even one rabbi. Their professions were thus diverse, but none were manual, although at least eight of the sample could be considered to be from working-class backgrounds. My informants were religiously diverse and came from backgrounds that included several denominations of Christianity, different branches of Judaism, and one Hindu, although to my regret I did not interview any Sikh or Muslim women. Unsurprisingly, all of my interviewees explicitly identified with the left of the political spectrum. Despite these caveats I felt that – with the help of the Black women's oral history projects – I had largely managed to construct a sample of women who came from a multitude of different backgrounds, and had a variety of different experiences and perspectives on the issue of race relations in the women's movement.

Undoubtedly my interviews, as well as the project more broadly, were complicated by the matter of race. The most obvious question that I thought Black interviewees would potentially raise was 'what on earth does a white middle-class academic think she knows about Black women's experiences in England?' It is, of course, a valid point. I could educate myself about the realities of life for Black women in England during the period under consideration; I could read everything I could get my hands on about the Black women's movement; but I could never truly *know* what the experience subjectively felt like. There were times when it felt intensely uncomfortable to be doing this research as a white woman, and on several occasions my motivations were indeed questioned, though usually in a non-hostile manner. Yet, there is a sense in which white women studying ethnic 'others' *should* feel uncomfortable. Given the long and inglorious history of white women studying Black women within a paradigm of imperialist discourses whose ultimate aim was to shore up white supremacy, if you're not uncomfortable, then you're probably doing it wrong. Nevertheless, inspired by Donna Haraway's concept of situated knowledges, I felt that this problem was not insurmountable.[82] It is inevitable that, in some sense, this research was shaped by my position as a white woman, but I believed, despite the questions that this might raise, it was better to undertake this research whilst attempting to be as aware as possible of the ways in which my own social/ethnic location shaped by interpretation, than to simply not do it at all. Much of this was because I felt a strong political motivation to undertake the project, to bring to attention the activism of women both Black and white during this period, as well as the racialised nature of even the most radical of movements.

Writing women's liberation history can be made more difficult because of the lack of traditional archival sources.[83] Because of their opposition to formal organisations and hierarchies, those involved in the white WLM have not generally left behind the archival sources, such as constitutions and minutes, that are associated with most political movements. Accessing personal papers of various feminists would appear to be the obvious choice given such an absence: however, in practice this has also proved to be highly problematic. Because of the short time frame, relatively few such collections are in existence; furthermore, many of those that have been collected are, in practice, inaccessible to archival researchers. Interestingly, the problem I faced when researching Black women's groups was slightly different. Black women seem to have been more comfortable having structured organisations than white feminists were. OWAAD, for example – though it never had a president or elected officers – had both a constitution and several different subcommittees, all of which had meetings at which minutes were made. These have been preserved in various personal papers – most notably those of Stella Dadzie and Jan McKenley – in the Black Cultural Archives in Kennington, South London. Such documents are extremely useful for any researcher attempting to grasp the size and structure of an organisation, as well as its political underpinnings and campaigning priorities.

Because of the existence of these documents, it is ironically in some respects easier to grasp the dimensions and aims of the Black women's movement, than it is of the better-documented WLM. Nevertheless, too optimistic a picture must not be painted: as Julia Sudbury found in her own research into the Black women's movement, 'Materials by and about black women and especially black women organising are not easily accessible', also noting that the journals and newsletters produced by such organisations are 'often buried in obscure locations'. This is true: the Women's Library, perhaps surprisingly, does not hold any collections or periodicals by or about Black women, in common with most major university libraries. This illustrates a stark truth about the politics of archival funding: whilst the amount of money from the public purse dedicated to preserving white women's history is small enough, that devoted to chronicling the lives of Black women is almost non-existent. Without the holdings of the Black Cultural Archives – an organisation that at the time of research existed on a shoestring budget, open to researchers for only five hours a week – this research would have been impossible.[84]

For both Black and white women, the most important printed archival materials utilised for this research were undoubtedly periodicals and

local newsletters. For this research I was largely reliant on the holdings of the (unfunded) Feminist Library in Southwark, run entirely by volunteers, and again, only open for a few hours a week. Unlike the Women's Library, the Feminist Library holds most newsletters published by Black (including Asian) women during this period, and has a vast collection of local newsletters that constitute a veritable treasure-trove of information for any historian of feminism. The library also holds a substantial number of periodicals which had a national circulation, such as *Spare Rib, Red Rag, Outwrite, Mukti, Catcall, Scarlet Woman, Socialist Woman,*the *Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRES),* and *Trouble and Strife*, and several more publications which were more ephemeral in their existence.

There is a key place for the use of periodicals in feminist research.[85] Much feminist theory – at least in England – remained unpublished during this time, and thus periodical publication thrived. Periodicals were undoubtedly the most significant internal arena for feminist debate, particularly in the period between the late 1970s through to the mid-1980s when national conferences were in abeyance and the number of small, self-published feminist journals was at its height. Although often containing a miscellany of viewpoints and styles rather than a single ideological 'line', these periodicals both reflected and drove forward feminist debate; and there was much debate to be had. Importantly, the rapid turnover of periodicals gives the researcher a sense of just how quickly feminist theory developed during this era in a much more nuanced way than published books can, taking as the latter often did several years from inception to publication. Periodicals also have the advantage of letting us see the response of readers, which we can perhaps take to be the 'wider feminist community'. This gives us a sense of the reception of certain theoretical pieces, the liveliness of debates, and the reciprocity between those who produced these periodicals, and their readers (although with smaller publications there was a great deal of overlap between those two groups). Undoubtedly the most important of these periodicals was *Spare Rib*, which was unique in being available in newsagents throughout the country. As such, it has something of a privileged place both in English feminist history and in this book. *Spare Rib* certainly conceived of itself as representing the movement at a national level, and the weight of that burden became increasingly apparent during the 1980s, when arguments over the representativeness of both *Spare Rib* contents and it editorial collective, in terms of race, class, region and sexuality threatened to tear the collective apart. For this reason, I examined the magazine in depth, along with two other

national publications: these were the *Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRES)*, a publication that acted as a sort of national newsletter, and *Outwrite*, a feminist newspaper established in the 1980s with a specifically internationalist bent.

In addition to this work with national publications, I also examined a random selection of local feminist newsletters and magazines from around the country. To supplement my oral histories, I also specifically examined feminist newsletters from the three cities that my interviewees came from. In London I examined in their entirety both *Shrew* and the newsletter of the London Women's Liberation Workshop (LWLW), and its successors. This publication started life as the *Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter* in 1971, before becoming the *Women's Information and Newsletter Service* (*WINS*) newsletter in 1975 upon the collapse of the LWLW, briefly becoming known as *A Woman's Place Newsletter* finally changing name again to the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* (*LWLN*) in 1978, a name the publication kept until petering out in the mid-1980s.[86] For Liverpool and Cambridge, I looked at both the *Merseyside Women's Paper (MWP)* and the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group (although newsletter is a misleading term for what at times was a fairly substantial publication) in full.[87] I also examined the newsletter of several small Black women's groups in London, in particular *Speak Out!* (produced by the Brixton Black Women's Group), *FOWAAD* (produced by OWAAD), and *We Are Here: Black Women's Newsletter* – although none of these ventures were very long-lasting. Unfortunately, neither Cambridge nor Liverpool had any Black women's newsletters that were accessible in archives; I gained the impression that any newsletters produced by Black women in these cities were in any case rather ephemeral. Given the different racial demographics of each city, it is perhaps not surprising that whilst race was the subject of much discussion – indeed controversy – in both the *LWLN* and the *MWP* (which both had Black contributors), it barely featured at all in the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group.

These local newsletters and journals give unparalleled insights into the day-to-day life of activist women. Such material often included information about the particular group (and often the women's centre that was associated with it), opinion pieces about the latest feminist theories or controversies, listings of events and conferences, reviews of feminist books, plays etc., and last but certainly not least, dynamic letters pages in which, generally, various arguments were played out. As one interviewee – Valerie Hall – fondly reminisced, 'I think within groups of radical women, those publications were extremely important,

and to me they were like the Facebook of the day.'[88] Nevertheless the controversies that were played out in these newsletters – indeed that were played out in Sylvia's fondly remembered *Merseyside Women's Paper* – were often bitter, and would give any researcher ample evidence as to the extent of discord within the women's movement, particularly towards the later 1970s and into the 1980s. Indeed, reading them was often a rather depressing experience, illustrating all-too-well to anyone with starry-eyed notions of a warm and fuzzy sisterhood that feminists, as much as anyone else, could indulge in petty arguments, guilt-tripping, rivalry, power-struggles, egomania and – just sometimes – sheer plain nastiness.

A brief note is needed on archival ethics at this point. Rees was the first to note a problem that will remain with historians of the English women's movement for some time to come: this is that many of these periodicals in the later 1970s and 1980s labelled themselves 'women-only'. Whilst, as she notes, this was unproblematic at the time of research, it does create a question about whether such material can be distributed to mixed-sex academic audiences and potentially beyond, particularly given that most of the writers of these periodicals are still alive. Her conclusion that such restrictions both limit genuine scholarly endeavour, and in a legal context are 'pretty toothless' – as they would go against European regulations – is one that I agree with; and I have followed her lead on the publication of such material.[89] I also had similar quandaries with periodicals marked 'Black women only', to which I ultimately decided the same argument applied.[90] However, such restrictions have made me more mindful of the ethical considerations regarding the publication of such material in a public arena. Much of this material is sensitive and concerns the traumatic experiences of some women in the arenas of race, sex and violence (of course, all three can overlap); as noted, most of the authors of these pieces are still alive. I have thus been very careful to only quote sensitive material when I feel it is truly necessary, and not gratuitously or at length.

Chapter overview

Chapter 1 addresses the activism and writings of white women in the WLM between about 1968 and 1980. During this period I argue that whilst white feminists were aware of race and imperialism, they generally constructed these as issues external to the feminist movement, rather than as systems that they too were implicated in. As such, white feminists found it difficult to conceive of themselves as racist.

Their methods of organising also tended to limit feminism to a rather exclusive middle-class world of leftist intellectuals, and it was from the experience of such women that early English feminist theory was founded. It was difficult for Black women outside of these networks to become involved in the movement, and therefore the WLM did not reflect their experiences. The second chapter explores Black women's activism from the early 1970s onwards into the mid-1980s. It argues that Black women's activism in the early 1970s has been overlooked by other commentators who have focused on the 1980s; that Black women's activism had its roots in Black radicalism rather than feminism; and that this activism was always more firmly rooted in local communities than (white) WLM activism was. In Chapter 3, I explore the Jewish feminist movement in England during the 1970s and 1980s as a way of demonstrating the complex nature of ethnic affiliation in the English women's movement. By focusing on the anti-Semitism that these Jewish women felt was present in the English feminist movement – particularly regarding a long-running debate over the *Spare Rib* editorial line towards Israel – I demonstrate that issues of race and ethnicity cannot be reduced to a Black/white binary. Chapter 4 examines the effect that the rise of the National Front in the late 1970s had on white feminist activism around race through examining the work of the group Women Against Racism and Fascism. I also examine a second group of white feminist anti-racists in this era, Women Against Imperialism. I argue that such activism often ironically revealed the extent of the 'whiteness' of women's liberation, and demonstrated sparse contact with the Black communities they were working on behalf of. Nevertheless, the activism of these two groups marked an increasing awareness of the politics of race within the women's movement. The final chapter explores the consequences of the increasing levels of interaction between Black and white feminists in the 1980s. I analyse the reasons behind the formation of a Black feminist critique that deemed white feminists as 'racist', and why white feminists reacted in various ways to this accusation. I also examine several multi-racial feminist collectives, exploring the dynamics and tensions in such activism. I conclude by reflecting both on the apparent decline of a coherent feminist movement since the mid-1980s, and on the meaning and impact of these debates for the movement both in the past and today.

Finally, it is essential to the ongoing intellectual and political viability of feminism that we critically examine its genealogy, particularly in light of ongoing concerns about the diversity – or rather, lack of it – within the movement. It is simply not enough to blame the failure of feminism

to attract a mass audience solely on media representations, or the particular conditions of late capitalist society, or the ignorance of others. All these things have indeed had a significant negative impact; but feminists themselves have also largely failed to widen the constituency of the movement outside a core of white, middle-class, educated women. Understanding the historical location of feminism, and the WLM in particular, as profoundly racialised and classed – even as many individual feminists protested against such values – is vital in comprehending why these exclusions have happened. Antoinette Burton has written that 'Feminism must produce a discourse that interrogates its own histories, particularly if it aspires to be something more than politics as usual.'[91] This book is motivated by the same belief.

1
The (White) Women's Liberation Movement, c. 1968–1975

Introduction

The introduction has outlined the problematic history of colonialism for white feminists: this chapter will explore its legacy in the early stages of the WLM. The contention of this chapter is that the WLM during these years was overwhelmingly 'white' not only in its personnel, but also in its praxis. This is not to suggest that there were no Black women present at in the movement; there were, and to deny this is to engage in another sort of silencing of the history of Black women.[1] Nevertheless, as is evident in Black activists' own critique of the movement, they were few in number.[2] Precisely *why* the WLM was so white, however, is the question that this chapter seeks to answer. I argue that the reasons for this lie in the exclusivity of the activist networks that constituted the WLM (an exclusivity that functioned in terms of class and age as well as race), which in turn influenced the creation of feminist theory. As was well established in the critiques of the 1980s, white, middle-class women were implicitly the subject of much of this theory, despite its aspirations to universality. By exploring the WLM's discourse on the family and on sexuality, I will demonstrate precisely how these theories functioned to exclude most Black women from feminism. I further examine how a focus on (white) working-class women diverted attention away from Black women within the movement. I also argue that feminism during this period developed a distinctive emotional culture that was based on providing a refuge of unconditional support and love for women in a hostile patriarchal society. Although this ideal was not always achieved, and cannot be deemed a 'white' emotional modality, such a culture was ill-equipped to engage in auto-critique.[3] This had significant repercussions when bitter debates around identity politics occurred in the 1980s,

as will be explored in later chapters. Furthermore, the ways in which immigrant and racial 'others' were understood by the WLM were often framed through older paradigms of liberal internationalism and Marxist imperialism that were inadequate for dealing with the contemporary reality of a society of mass immigration. Although many white feminists during this period were well aware of racism in England, they were unable to translate this awareness into practice, and generally failed to reflect on their own racially marked identities. There was also a degree of condescension towards Black women present, with white feminists often viewing women from ethnic minority backgrounds as in need of rescue from their own 'backwards' and patriarchal cultures. In this way, some white feminists were clearly acting within the matrix of colonialism, although they would have been horrified to have been so described. To understand what happened within the women's movement in the late 1970s and 1980s, then, we must first understand how whiteness structured the WLM.

The road to Ruskin: the beginnings of the WLM

As has been well documented, women's liberation in Britain originated in several places. Leftist discontent with the position of women had been growing for some time, as evidenced by the publication of Juliet Mitchell's seminal essay, 'Women: The Longest Revolution' in 1966.[4] More broadly, the year 1968 saw not only the fiftieth anniversary of the vote – which occasioned much newspaper comment on women's position – but also saw industrial militancy by working-class women. Most famously, Rose Boland led a strike for equal pay for the women machinists at the Ford factory in Dagenham, a strike that spread to their sister workers in the Ford factory at Halewood in Merseyside.[5] Less well known now, but attracting almost as much media attention at the time, were the actions of Lil Bilocca and other fishermen's wives on behalf of the trawlermen of Hull.[6] Out of this working-class women's activism came the formation of the National Joint Action Campaign for Women's Equal Rights (NJACWER), which, according to Sheila Rowbotham, was largely formed from older trade union women and men from the Labour and Communist Party.[7] Although it proved to be a short-lived group, it was important in helping to establish the legitimacy of left-wing women organising for women's rights on a national scale. At the same time, the first Women's Liberation groups were being set up in London, influenced by expat American women and their reports of the burgeoning movement back home.[8] These groups were much more middle-class in

origin and were generally frequented by women with extensive links to the left. Many of these early adherents to the WLM had backgrounds in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, the significance of which will be discussed later. By 1969, five such groups existed in London, in Tufnell Park, Belsize Lane, Notting Hill, Peckham Rye and Islington.[9] Although definitive information is hard to come by, it also seems that some groups were formed in and around universities such as Warwick and Nottingham by this point.[10] The first action of women to gain significant media attention was a demonstration staged against Miss World in London in 1969. This was repeated to greater effect in 1970, when groups of feminists threw flour bombs and stormed the stage whilst the show was broadcast live.[11] Unfortunately, the media coverage of this event helped to cement an image of feminists as sexless harridans; it also reflected a feminist concern with the sexual objectification of women's bodies that may not have been shared with Black/working-class women who were perhaps more preoccupied with the day to day process of survival. Significantly, it seems to have been the middle-class women who were involved in these smaller, consciousness-raising groups, rather than working-class women involved in industrial disputes, who largely attended the first Women's Liberation conference in Britain, held at Ruskin College in Oxford in March 1970.[12] Having originated in Sheila Rowbotham's suggestion at a History Workshop conference that the next workshop should be on women, the conference's remit quickly became more general: it was so well attended that it had to be moved from Ruskin to the Oxford Union to allow everyone to get in.[13]

Whilst Black and working-class women were certainly present at Ruskin, the conference seems to have been overwhelmingly attended by white, middle-class (or middle-class through education), university-educated women, certainly if the accounts in *Once a Feminist* are anything to go by.[14] According to a report in *The Times*, most of the delegates were 'young women, many of them students with long flowing hair, trousers and maxi-coats', although 'here and there were middle-aged mothers and housewives from council estates.'[15] The agenda of the conference was diverse, but largely centred around issues of the nuclear family, childcare, and equal pay, along with more niche concerns such as women prisoners.[16] Race was not on the list of topics under discussion. This set a pattern that was to be repeated over the next decade, in which the dominant preoccupations of the movement reflected the white middle-class women who formed the majority of its adherents. Despite the attempts of these women to reach out to women

in their local communities through initiatives such as childcare campaigns and the establishment of women's centres, it seems they were largely unsuccessful. One journalist in a 1971 article entitled 'Pockets of Resistance' gave details of over forty local WLM groups (no Black women's group was included), the vast majority of which apologetically confirmed that they were middle-class in make-up. One disgruntled woman from Doncaster was quoted briefly, claiming that a WLM group had been set up in the town two years ago but had disintegrated. She voiced the opinion that 'I came to the decision that the W.L. movement is a middle-class one voicing middle-class ideas and with little, or no, understanding of the working-class.'[17] Indeed, the article found few groups in smaller industrial towns without universities, suggesting that the WLM struggled to find a foothold there in its early years. This was an impression also confirmed by my interviewees. The emergent WLM, then, appeared to be largely unsuccessful at attracting non-middle-class women to the movement.

There were several reasons why this was, but understanding the structure of the movement through using the work of social movement theorists offers some convincing insights as to why the make-up of the WLM was as it was. Alberto Melucci has sought to explain new social movements within the context of how the 'collective identity' of a movement comes into being, suggesting that it is created in 'submerged networks' of small groups of people connected to each other in their everyday lives.[18] The recognition of 'collective injustice' is dependent on social identification amongst those in the 'submerged networks', which helps explain why those involved in the early days of the WLM tended to be from fairly similar social backgrounds. Carol Mueller has applied this theory to the American women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, where she convincingly demonstrates the importance of early meetings and conferences to the development of the collective identity and theoretical orientation of feminism. This was enabled by the relatively small numbers of women involved, most of whom were white and knew each other mainly through Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the civil rights movement.[19] Such a framework can usefully be applied to the movement in England as well. As one interviewee, Emma Hipkin, remarked of her experience at the Ruskin Conference, 'I already knew quite a lot of the people, the women who were involved with that, through the kind of left networks.'[20] And Juliet Mitchell recalled of her early feminist friendships that 'We all went back, you see, to some sort of connection, university, or some sort of study group, or personal friendship.'[21]

This latter quote is taken from *Once A Feminist*, and it is striking that every single one of Wandor's seventeen interviewees reported previous connections with the left prior to their involvement in feminism. Although I would argue this situation changed very quickly with the intense media coverage given to feminism in the early 1970s, Wandor's book reveals an important truth. Women who were involved at the very start of this new period of feminist activity did indeed tend to be from a narrow range of political and social backgrounds, backgrounds that tended to be educated and 'New' rather than 'Old' left, and hence backgrounds that were also, by extension, largely white and middle-class, or middle-class by education.[22] Furthermore, it would have been difficult initially to find out about the fledgling movement outside of these networks. Indeed, Barbara Caine has written disparagingly of 'the charmed circle of Ruskin', suggesting that the stories of women who came to the movement later (she explicitly names Black women, along with others) 'wait to be told'.[23] That the Ruskin conference originated in Sheila Rowbotham's suggestion that there should be a workshop on women's history in itself points to the academic, rather than grassroots, genesis of the WLM. The conference was advertised in small circulation papers such as *Socialist Woman*: those who organised it apparently viewed their primary constituency as being located in the narrow world of the left.[24]

Compounding this, the small group meetings that many feminists favoured were hardly conducive for reaching out to a wider social base. As many groups quickly declared themselves 'closed', the practicalities of finding a group were complicated and increased the need of a would-be feminist to know 'the right people'.[25] Inevitably some groups were cliquey and failed to include new members; and the intimate revelations involved in consciousness-raising (CR) could perhaps put off as many women as it attracted.[26] (These latter variables are particularly difficult to know because it is generally the testimonies of those who stayed within these small groups – rather than those who came only once – which survives). Other groups were hampered by certain women dominating conversation. Several systems were devised to combat this, from not allowing people to be interrupted, to elaborate innovations such as the disc system, which gave women twenty discs, representing twenty opportunities to speak.[27] However, it is not clear that these innovations were consistently implemented or truly prevented more talkative or articulate women from dominating the group, and American feminist Jo Freeman's famous essay, 'The tyranny of structurelessness' – which argued that the lack of structure in such groups merely allowed an informal and unaccountable hierarchy to develop – was reprinted many

times in England. Such conditions clearly favoured articulate and confident women who were likely to be from educated and middle-class backgrounds, and as such, CR groups could present an intimidating prospect.[28] Certainly, contemporaneous reports suggest that it was a largely white affair: Sue Bruley comments on the lack of Black women in her Clapham group, and one white woman reflected in *Spare Rib* that 'I don't know how far CR can go in bringing all women together regardless of say, age, colour or class. For instance, in my group we were roughly the same age, all white, all had higher education and similar work situations.'[29]

The class and race exclusivity of the WLM was thus heightened by the way that many of the women first involved in the feminist movement met, although such exclusion operated as much along lines of class as race. Sarah Browne observes that the WLM group in St Andrews was largely student led and had few connections with the local townspeople.[30] One working-class woman from Liverpool humorously wrote in *Spare Rib* of her first contact with a feminist that 'We knew she was a feminist or something because she talked posh, [and] didn't wear any bras.'[31] Perhaps demonstrating Melucci's argument that 'movements in complex societies are hidden networks of groups, meeting points and circuits of solidarity',[32] another interviewee for this project – Gail Chester, a Jewish woman from London – described her difficulties in trying to find a group in London after having left university in Cambridge, where she had first been involved in Women's Liberation:

> It was actually very, very hard actually – very hard – to find my way in, in London, because I'd essentially come from a small town, and London was huge, and I didn't . . . I somehow or other did not find my way to the Women's Liberation Workshop, which would have been the obvious place [. . .] And I was very upset and very lost – I'd been to this national conference in Acton and you'd have thought I would have somehow managed to find my way in more, but I just . . . it was very hard.[33]

Similarly, London- and Liverpool-based feminist Jo Stanley recalled in a brief memoir that she had initially come into contact with the movement in London through her connections with the underground press and counter-cultural scene, and in Liverpool through her connections with the university. In both places she recalled the meetings being composed exclusively of white, middle-class, 'well-heeled, intellectual,

women.'[34] Another woman in Cambridge commented in the city's feminist newsletter that:

> Joining a Woman's Liberation group may not be as easy as we tend to assume. The idea that a woman need just go along to the next meeting and will then be a part of the group will only work if the woman is very confident, extraverted [sic] and has a definite idea of what she wants to do in the group . . . [35]

One group she found to be welcoming, but of another she wrote:

> I spoke up when I felt I had something to contribute but often I felt I was intruding on the usual hard-core members with their in-talking and political debates. Much of this I am sure left many new women bewildered, and few returned more than once during the time I attended. No effort was made to get to know new people. *I felt an outsider and never returned*.[36] (italics mine)

None of these experiences suggest that the WLM in its early years was particularly accessible or approachable, despite the overtures of many groups to women in their local communities.[37] For women living in Black communities, the majority of whom were economically marginalised and would have been even further removed from these networks, such exclusion could only have been heightened.[38] Prominent feminist academic Barbara Taylor recently remembered in an interview:

> But, but I wanted it to be cosy, and I, and I wanted, I liked being among my own kind, white, middle-class, educated women. [. . .] You know, I mean, I certainly wasn't, I mean I didn't feel myself to be racist in the sense of having, when I say part of the problem, I mean I think, it never, it never crossed my mind that, I think in the sense that, that, that these women should not be as much a part of the movement. But I think I wanted them to be part of the movement on my terms.[39]

An interesting parallel in a North American context is found in the words of Malaysian-American feminist academic Shirley Geok-lin Lim, who bitterly criticised the account of the early years of the American 'second-wave' that Sara Evans gave in *Personal Politics*. She argued that the white women who were involved had social networks and

capital to which only they belonged: 'By social capital I mean the old-girls networks, the same-o, same-o circles, telephone trees, college connections.' She continued, 'The condition that makes possible the intimacy and mutuality so celebrated as core values in Evans's history is exclusivity.'[40] And this exclusivity was also seen in the English feminist movement, and was one of the reasons why the WLM was so white, even in relatively multicultural cities such as London and Liverpool.

This exclusivity has implications for the basis of feminist theorising within the WLM. Women within the WLM attempted to root their theorising in and from their own experiences, a tradition that spoke not only to the Chinese revolutionary tactic of 'speaking bitterness', but also to an academic tradition of empiricism within the Anglophone world. This latter tradition was significant in the light of the university careers of many of the WLM's most prominent theorists, especially given the particular relationship between feminism and sociology that was exemplified in the work of women such as Ann Oakley and Hannah Gavron. The link between consciousness-raising and theorising is illustrated by one woman's description of a CR session:

> When the point in the evening is reached at which every woman has spoken her story, then it is time to examine the stories and see what can be learned from them. How does this line up with the other discussions, other topics, with other fragments of our lives? What is the link between each woman's story and the general oppression of women? What does this mean for women in the Third World? What does it mean for my mother? Outward, from ourselves, exploring the connexions which lead, inevitably, back to ourselves.[41]

Thus the process of consciousness-raising was directly implicated in the supposed universality of the WLM's theorising on the roots of women's oppression. As the above quotation demonstrates, too much was taken for granted in this process, and too little attention was paid to the experiences of oppression which divided as well as united women. And this elision between the very particular experience of a group of generally highly-educated white women in mid-twentieth century England, with the experience of all women the world over, was at the heart of the tensions between Black and white feminists. Significantly, there seems to have been little equivalent CR activity in Black women's groups, which, as Chapter 2 explores, were far more rooted in community activism.

The emotional culture of the WLM

The exclusivity and small group structure of the WLM produced a particular emotional culture that made the movement – despite its much vaunted reflexivity – fundamentally ill-prepared for the critique made of it by Black women in the 1980s. Scholars of social movements have, in recent years, put renewed emphasis on the roles of emotions in the formation, maintenance and breakdown of the groupings that they study.[42] Such an approach is particularly productive in the case of movements like feminism, in which there is little obvious material advantage to be gained by participation. It follows that the benefits that accrued to participants can thus be conceptualised as psychological, allowing the participant a greater level of psychic comfort or well-being than was previously the case. Feminism of this period had a distinctive emotional culture that, as Margaretta Jolly has argued, was based on an ethic of mutual care.[43] Although, as Jolly also argued, feminism could not always sustain such an ethic, these intense emotional ties were part of the lifeblood of the movement. Coming to feminism itself was often the occasion for intense emotion. Catherine Hall recalled: 'It was like a Christian conversion, suddenly we found these friendships. They completely changed my life.'[44] Similarly, feminist author Zoe Fairbairns has described 'plunging' into the movement 'as if it were a cult'.[45] Another woman, Janet Ree remembered:

> I absolutely loved being in the women's movement. I've so many friends – friends is almost the wrong word. The quality of relationship that those meetings and grouping produced is indescribably powerful, and far more important than my relationship with a man at that time, without question.[46]

Many accounts, both in published texts and my own interviews for this book, confirm this experience of powerful emotion upon joining the woman's movement. Indeed, such descriptions reoccur so frequently as to be something of a trope within WLM literature – a fact which may encourage those who were active within the movement to tailor their personal reminiscences to fit such a narrative. Nevertheless, I think it is correct to assume that there is least some truth to such statements, even allowing for the nostalgic effects of hindsight. One of the features of many feminists' narratives is the relief to find that what they had considered to be personal 'hang-ups' were in fact part of a wider problem. As Audrey Battersby wrote for *Spare Rib,* 'we never made the links

between politics and our individual feelings of disillusionment and discontent' until she and a friend attended a course run by Juliet Mitchell on 'The Role of Women in Society', and 'then the bells rang and the connections were made and there was that feeling of militancy that I'd never experienced before despite involvement in various left-wing groups'.[47] This account, and others like it, suggest that it may be productive to conceptualise the WLM as an 'emotional refuge' against a hostile patriarchal society (as well as a hostile, patriarchal male left). William Reddy has described emotional 'refuges' to be:

> A relationship, ritual or organisation (whether formal or informal) that provides safe release from prevailing emotional norms and allows relaxation of emotional effort with or without ideological justification, which may shore up or threaten the existing emotional regime.[48]

Although the WLM is not precisely congruent with this – perhaps unsurprisingly, as Reddy is a historian of revolutionary France – it certainly had a very different emotional style to the traditional left.[49] An ethic of care, mutual support, listening to others and a refusal of hierarchies allowed the WLM to be a refuge from the traditional left. The pro-woman line formulated by The Redstockings in the US was influential:

> We also reject the idea that women consent to or are to blame for their own oppression. Women's submission is not the result of brainwashing, stupidity or mental illness but of continual, daily pressure from men. We do not need to change ourselves, but to change men . . . We will not ask what is 'revolutionary' or 'reformist', only what is good for women.[50]

Such an ethos reached its apogee in the 'woman-centered-woman' – a feminist whose primary emotional energies were directed into relationships with women, whether sexual or not. The WLM, like social movements before and since, could often become the dominant setting for an activist's friendships, relationships and time commitments.[51] As Sue Bruley has commented on consciousness-raising groups: 'It was through CR that women sought to reinvent themselves as well as their world. Women developed a new identity, new friends and a supportive sisterhood.'[52] Radical feminist and co-founder of Onlywomen Press, Lynn Alderson, also invoked the primary importance of these WLM

relationships: 'For lots of us the women's movement was home really, it was where we came from, where we made ourselves, and, you know, had our family.'[53] It is clear that for some feminists, participation in the movement was the central focus of their lives.[54] The emotional ties and commitments participation effected are thus unsurprising. Quite simply, the political analysis that WLM provided – and the intense relationships that were a part of it – allowed women who were a part of it to feel better about being women, and thus themselves. Activist Rose Brennan remembered that 'the women in my group gave me my voice back. They helped me to see that not only were my 'problems' legitimate but they weren't even my problems, they were society's'.[55] Similarly, an interviewee for this project, Miriam Levy, remembered of herself as an undergraduate 'I feel probably I was so locked in thinking there was something wrong with me that I couldn't actually get the point then that it wasn't me that was the problem.'[56] Remembering her first forays into feminism later in the interview, she said 'I just got something, that it wasn't me.'[57]

Thus, after millennia of misogyny – as it was seen – the WLM (particularly in its more radical and cultural forms) rejoiced in celebrating women. Their lives, experiences and qualities were all valorised; but it could also mean that women were beyond criticism. A focus on the ways in which women were victimised by patriarchy failed to allow for an auto-critique of feminism to occur.[58] This celebratory emphasis seen in the early days of WLM thus set the foundations for extreme cognitive dissonance for white feminists when accusations of racism became widespread in the 1980s, as Chapter 5 will explore.

Anti-imperialism and the WLM

Many of the early participants in the WLM were introduced to radical political activity through anti-imperialist movements: Sheila Rowbotham, amongst others, has claimed that there were many such links for many English feminists.[59] The struggle against imperialism was one that many feminists in Britain saw themselves as being involved in. Concern with the struggles of those who were invariably termed 'International Women', subjected to the brutality and force of imperialist power, were commonplace during this era, a concern that was deeply influenced by the ongoing war in Vietnam and the involvement of many English feminists in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. Along with Black Liberation, anti-imperialism also provided analogies between the oppression of women and of others. This is well articulated

in an article in the December 1970 edition of London-based feminist periodical *Shrew*, which argued:

> How are national liberation struggles related to women's liberation? An obvious response was that all women are sisters and wherever they're fighting we're behind them, but we found that most of us who joined in the action very definitely supported the liberation movement of the oppressed national group as such, not just the women involved in that struggle. In fact, a much deeper source of identification was unearthed when we began making an analogy between our own oppression as women and that of people oppressed as nations.[60]

Significantly, this was in a special double issue of *Shrew* entitled 'Women's Liberation and National Liberation'. In *Socialist Woman*, a feminist magazine run by the women's section of the International Marxist Group, such concern was particularly evident. This is perhaps unsurprising given the importance of imperialism within Marxist theory. Countries that were deemed to be particularly interesting were the communist countries of China, Vietnam, and Cuba. Possessing the twin virtues of being both socialist and struggling against imperialism made them, it seems, practically irresistible to the pens of leftist women wishing to demonstrate international sisterhood.[61]

Against this anti-imperialist backdrop, it is unsurprising that some English feminists found inspiration from Black liberation. This was made more pronounced by the significant influence of the American feminism upon the English WLM: the links between the Civil Rights movement and the women's movement in the former country have been well documented.[62] However, for some English feminists, the links between the Black movement and women's liberation went beyond the purely theoretical: a number of them had more personal and activist relationships with Black politics. Janet Hadley, one of Michelene Wandor's interviewees in *Once A Feminist* recalled – despite being white – both going to listen to CLR James, and being involved through her Caribbean boyfriend in trying to start up the Black Panthers in the UK.[63] *Spare Rib* of November 1973 carried an interview with photographer and jazz aficionado Valerie Wilmer, who claimed that she had come to women's liberation through Black liberation.[64] And Janet Hadley reflected in 1990 that because of her experience of Black Power, 'when I first came across the notion of women's oppression, I felt I already had a whole box of concepts that I could relate it to. I could say, 'oh yes, it's

just like with Black people, women feel inferior, they're taught to feel inferior by society.'[65]

Rhetorically this analogy worked well, and certainly it is unsurprising that the WLM found inspiration from the Black movement. Yet the parallels drawn between Black nationalism and anti-imperialist struggles on the one hand, and (white) English women on the other, were deeply problematic. In failing to articulate the racial privilege of the speaker as a white women, such assertions – or at least, the more simplistic of these assertions – could be viewed as patronising and worse, untrue. Several questionable assumptions lay behind these statements. Firstly, that there was a genuine equivalence between the nature of racist and sexist oppression.[66] Secondly, that because of this, white women could understand and empathise with the suffering and pain behind the Black struggle. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly in relation to this book, it implicitly absolved white women from the charge of racism.

What, then, allowed white feminists in England to make these conceptual links between their experience and the experience of the colonised the world over? Firstly, as will be further explored in Chapter 4, in the post-war period, the British left's understanding of immigration was shaped by classical Marxist thought on imperialism. Until the early 1980s, 'imperialism' was the main intellectual language which the left had to analyse the fate of immigrants, as well as oppressed colonial populations around the world. In this reading, racism was collapsed into imperialism, and the problems that Black women faced were posed as an extension of capitalist oppression. Yet this failed to address the cultural dimensions of racism, and, through placing contemporary domestic problems in a paradigm of imperialism, placed Black women outside the national group that was the implicit addressee of feminism. Secondly an older paradigm of feminist internationalism, and the immediate context of the post-war period, helps us to understand the complexities of how white British women related to ethnic 'others'. For example, Mica Nava, married to a Black Mexican and the daughter of European refugees, and herself one of the first women to be involved in the WLM, has argues that women were far more receptive and welcoming to racial 'others' over the course of the twentieth century.[67] Her work is useful in pointing to the complexities of the relationships between white women and 'racial others' in the post-war period. It is significant that the vast majority of the mixed-race relationships that Nava addresses were white women's relationships with Black men. Therefore white women sympathetic to the problems of migrants were far less likely to have intimate relationships with migrant women. They were thus less likely to have a

grasp of the problems facing migrant women, or even to see them as a visible group, as compared to migrant men. Additionally, neither were those white women who also became involved in political activism of the migrant community likely to have come into much contact with migrant women through this route, as these organisations tended to be heavily male dominated. As Janet Hadley remembered:

> My experience as a white women in a Black Power context had been one of learning to be extremely respectful and careful towards Black women, because very often the whole question of Black men and white women was a fairly explosive issue. *I didn't really have any close relationships with Black women at that time*.[68] (Italics mine)

Nava's extensive analysis of the work of female sociologists (such as Ruth Glass, Sheila Kitzinger, Sheila Patterson and Joan Maizels) on immigrant communities in the 1950s and '60s is also significant, for it provides a vivid illustration of liberal and left–wing thought on these issues during a period that was intellectually formative for many of the women who later became involved in the WLM.[69]

That it was women rather than men who wrote these books – and women were a tiny minority in the world of sociology at this time – is, Nava argues, deeply significant. Whilst being unable to agree with her that this is simply a result of 'instinctive extensivity', the concern with immigrants in these works parallels an older tradition within feminism, that of internationalism. Organisations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the British Commonwealth League were still very much active during this period.[70] The latter's motto aimed 'to secure the liberties, status and opportunities between women and men and to promote mutual understanding throughout the Commonwealth countries', and very definite links to feminism were also demonstrated by the fact that the league's 'President of Honour' was none other than veteran suffragette Dame Margaret Corbett Ashby.[71] Another demonstration of how important internationalism was for those still interested in women's rights post war is seen in the life of Nan Berger, Joan Maizel's writing partner. A communist and a feminist, she describes vividly in both published articles and unpublished memoirs her trips to South Africa and China in the early 1960s.[72] Interestingly, though she principally portrayed her interest in these countries in light of her concern with social justice rather than feminism, her writings show that she was extensively concerned with the position of women

in these countries, and indeed displayed a tendency to view social justice in light of the position of women rather than men.

Such feminist internationalism may not have had a *direct* influence on feminists active in the WLM in the 1970s and 80s: however, it was crucial in creating the dominant paradigm for how sympathetic liberals and left-wingers viewed New Commonwealth migrants. Alongside the failure of leftist theory to deal adequately with the modern phenomenon of mass migration, this was a crucial discursive restraint on the ability of white feminists to deal adequately with 'race'. Women such as Nan Berger were active in similar leftist circles, in organisations such as the Communist Party and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), as the generation younger than them who came to form the main bulk of the early WLM. Because of this earlier emphasis on internationalism, it was easy for progressive thinkers to view female immigrants to England as simply another group of 'International Women'. Such thought could accommodate deep sympathy for migrants whilst simultaneously posing them as fundamentally not part of the national group. This goes some way to explaining how white feminists in the earlier days of the WLM were sympathetic towards the needs of migrants, and yet were fundamentally unable truly to integrate the need of ethnic minority women into their feminist agenda. It is significant, for example, that while the socialist-feminist periodical *Red Rag* only printed one piece about the position of ethnic minority women within Britain during its eight year run, it did nonetheless run many pieces on 'International Women'. Similarly, *Shrew* printed a sympathetic and well-researched piece entitled 'Black women and work', which was reprinted in *The Body Politic*, and also ran an interview with Black women's activist Gerlin Bean.[73] Nevertheless, these pieces were written by white women, and there was very little sense of Black women being either involved in the production of *Shrew,* or of them ever being anything more than a peripheral interest to its producers.

It is important to note that the internationalist paradigm that feminists at this period had inherited was not inherently 'neutral' to ethnic others. Sympathy for the lives of ethnic minority women was sometimes deeply imbued with colonialist assumptions about the 'backward' lives such women led, and the western desire to 'rescue' them. Antoinette Burton has convincingly demonstrated the centrality of the 'Indian Woman' to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century British feminists as the means through which they could take part in the civilising mission of empire, and traces of such attitudes remained.[74] Witness the

description of Indian women in Southall from an early edition of *Spare Rib* in an article entitled 'Women Alone'. Writing of one widow, the article states:

> She has every reason to be despondent. Because of the restrictions her culture places upon her she is not free to come and go socially as she pleases. Even a trip to the cinema with a girlfriend is frowned upon [...] She becomes a social outcast. After all, the Indian male reared on the promised delights of female virginity in marriage would emphatically not consider spending his wedding with a woman whose hymen has already been broken by another. No wonder the future for both widowed and divorced women in this context is inevitably bleak.[75]

Later in the piece, the discussion turns to the language skills of these women:

> At this point Nerys Williams, 26, comes to the rescue. [...] She's helped countless Asian women through the traumas of their newfound and invariably unwelcome independence. She explains, 'The problems that these women encounter when widowed or deserted are in no way similar to those experienced by their Western counterparts. Their situation is intensely aggravated by their lack of English and their total passivity and reluctance to act positively [...] They are completely lost and helpless.'[76]

These examples are worth quoting at length because they illustrate the existence of a tradition within the English women's movement of depicting ethnic minority women – and particularly Indian women – as passive and helpless victims of their own cultures in need of rescue. Sociologist Nirmal Puwar has written of the 'melodramatic framing'of Asian women, stating that:

> The body of the subaltern female [...] is the text upon which a whole array of academic fantasies and anxieties are written. The benevolence of charity, the calling for salvation, the guilt of class and racial privilege, the excitement of exotica as well as metropolitan hybridity, the longing for revolutionary change and the search for ethical love, all hover around the haloes of these objects (subjects?).[77]

It should be noted that, as Vron Ware has illustrated with her exploration of the life of Victorian anti-racist campaigner, Catherine Impey,

this was far from the only historical tradition within English women's activism.[78] However, it is telling that the phrase 'comes to the rescue' is used in this *Spare Rib* article. Whilst the context has clearly shifted to a post-colonial one by the 1970s, what is striking about this article is the extent to which these white women are still acting within such maternalistic relations. One does not have to be a particularly acute literary critic to understand the 'civilising' subtext of the piece, and *Spare Rib's* other early forays into discussing ethnic 'others' often betrayed a similar attitude.[79]

Despite the presence of such rhetoric, however many women in the WLM were acutely aware of their inability to attract Black women to the movement, or to forge meaningful connections with Black women's groups. Such sentiments are expressed in a working paper of the Arsenal Women's Liberation Group, entitled 'The Women's Movement: Realities and Prospects'. This paper stated (in note form) that 'WL [Women's Liberation] represents a wider change in consciousness among young women'. Whilst they believed it was 'not too difficult for these women to relate to the movement as it is now', it was problematic for women 'outside this particular social experience, e.g. West Indian women, women in shitty jobs with no chance of changing them, older women'. A few sentences later, the writers asks sceptically: 'Do we accept that we can only have a diffuse effect in spreading ideas or do we think that women will actually become involved in the movement? Even if they did, do we have any clear idea what we would do if there were suddenly thousands of women on the streets?'[80] It is clear that this group had a well-developed sense of who was 'in' the WLM or had the potential to be: that is, white, middle-class women. Although this analysis was in some senses a realistic appraisal of political realities for the WLM, it also ran the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy by othering those outside the social experience of the group.

All these factors partly explain the paradox of the ethnocentrism of white feminists who had nevertheless been involved in mixed race relationships and/or race-based politics. It must also be remembered that mass migration from the Commonwealth was a post-war phenomenon: in the early 1970s, few white feminists schooled in the 1940s and 1950s would have grown up with Black immigrant peers.[81] Additionally, immigrant communities were more ghettoised in the earlier phases of migration than latterly.[82] Such physical separation between white and Black communities arguably added to the sense of migrants and their concerns as something 'foreign' to white English women. It is no coincidence that it was a generation of ethnic minority women who

had largely grown up in Britain that pushed for greater inclusion in the feminist project in the 1980s.

The WLM and working-class women

All this is not to say that the movement was concerned only with helping white, middle-class women. Indeed, the socialist orientation of many women in the movement made class an issue of great importance. However, such discussions were almost always controlled by white, middle-class women, and as such, the problems of working-class women were almost always discussed from a rather removed standpoint. In other words, such discussions were rarely conducted by those with actual experience of the issues at hand. As such, this discourse was inevitably framed within a paradigm of what middle-class women could do to help working-class women. This had important implications for the relationship between white feminists and Black women, as it generated a structure of engagement between a white middle-class 'core' of feminists and 'outsiders' to the movement that later framed the way through which white feminists related to Black feminists, when, in the 1980s, anxieties about the composition of the movement shifted from the axis of class towards the axis of race.

This way of relating to working-class women could sometimes result in perceptions of the role of middle-class women in the WLM that were simultaneously vanguardist and maternalistic, as evidenced by the socialist-feminists who took on jobs at Lesneys toy factory in East London in a doomed attempt to form a fifth column.[83] They failed, although it is a mark of the self-reflexivity of the WLM that the reasons for this failure were picked over heavily, with the class differences between the women being heavily cited. Further underscoring the sense of insiders and outsiders to the movement was the assertion made by Barbara Taylor in a *Red Rag* article entitled 'Who are we?':

> In trying to assess the possibilities of a common strategy for women, we have had to confront the differences of educational background, work situation, earnings, and cultural assumptions which exist between ourselves and working-class women, differences which have sometimes produced a sense of class guilt within the movement.[84]

Again, there is very much a sense of an educated white vanguard behind this. Black and ethnic minority women are not specifically mentioned, but the 'educational background, work situation, [and] earnings' that

Taylor writes of are opportunities which would have largely been only available to white women at the time. This makes her implicit feminist subject very much one of a specific ethnic background (i.e. white) as well as of a specific class background. Although the author is clearly aware that the interests of white middle-class women in the feminist movement did not necessarily coincide with the interests of other women, it is revealing of the preoccupations of the left throughout this period that class is mentioned as an axis of difference, but that race is not.

The 'night-cleaners' campaign – an attempt in the early 1970s to help to unionise night-cleaners in London – is perhaps the most obvious example of such a tendency. The women who were night-cleaners were often from the poorest sections of the working-class, and more than half were Black.[85] Although it is important to recognise that working-class women – most notably May Hobbs – were involved in the campaign, it was largely run by middle-class women from WLM. A rather avant-garde film of the campaign (complete with voiceovers about the importance of self-defined sexuality) elicited a scathing review from the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation group, who felt that the film was unlikely to reach its target audience of working-class women and further complained about 'the condescension implicit in . . . the way they [the night cleaners] were repeatedly cut-off in mid-sentence' during the film.[86] The shortcomings of this middle-class missionary approach were also perceived in hindsight by Sally Alexander:

> There is a strong tradition of co-operation between middle-class feminists and the working class in the history of the labour movement [. . .] Because of the cleaners' isolation, they need help in maintaining contact with each other. Lack of time prevents them from attending every meeting, and keeping up with the bookwork. However, our role can only be very limited and we were never quite sure what those limits were.
>
> The CAG [Cleaners Action Group] indulged in self-criticism in several counts. Perhaps our most serious failing, however, was that we never managed to develop leadership and direction among the women themselves. We should have raised the money to support one or two cleaners while they worked on the campaign for a few months.[87]

It would be wrong then, to infer that white, middle-class in the WLM were unaware of the sometimes problematic nature of the relationship between middle-class and working-class women in politics. Nonetheless,

Alexander – who invokes the names of Annie Besant, Sylvia Pankhurst and Eleanor Marx in the piece – valorises this tradition as much as she criticises it. It is also typical of the WLM at the time that whilst the potentially problematic nature of this class relationship was perceived, the racial dimension of either the exploitation of the night cleaners, or the relationship between white feminists and Black women, was not commented upon. Although Black women constituted over half of the night-cleaning workforce, there appeared to be few Black women involved in the campaign (and indeed, a racist remark from one of the white night-cleaners was printed without editorial comment in a sympathetic piece on the campaign in *Shrew*).[88] It is ironic that one of the few campaigns that the WLM embarked upon that genuinely benefitted Black women overlooked the racial element of the exploitation that these women suffered. Brixton Black Women's Group writing in 1978, however, were less equivocal and chalked up the relative success of the night-cleaners campaign as a victory for Black women, despite the lack of attention paid by white feminists to their presence at the time.[89]

Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and Nira Yuval Davis, amongst others, have pointed to the glorification of the white working-class in English leftist thought during this period, a glorification which they contend had racist results in its exclusive conception of Englishness and its failure to address racism within the white working-class itself.[90] A similar process can be seen in the WLM during this period, at least in its socialist feminist strand. As we can see from these campaigns, the (white) working-class woman was idealised as the true revolutionary, who, with her double burden of sex and class, was uniquely well placed to bring about the transformation of society.[91] The struggles of women's trade unions were valorised by middle-class radicals such as Sheila Rowbotham, and events such as the strikes at Fords and the women's take-over at the shoe factory in Fakenham were placed in a long and glorious tradition of female left-wing radicalism in England. Interviews with older women who had a long history of organising within left-wing and feminist movements were a common feature of feminist magazines.[92] Indeed, 'the importance of history within the British Women's Liberation Movement' as Barbara Caine has argued, 'can hardly be overestimated.'[93] The romanticisation of the history of the industrial struggle of the working-classes in Britain, however, was at the expense of a more inclusive notion of national identity. In the preface to *The Empire Strikes Back* in the subsequent decade, Paul Gilroy decried 'the narrowness of the English left whose version of the "national-popular"continues to deny the role of blacks and black struggles in the making and remaking of the working class.'[94] Yet it was

precisely this tradition that socialist-feminists in the WLM relied on for rhetorical power: history was problematically used as a way of creating an idea of a homogenous English female working-class that could be appealed to. It was this implicitly white conception of the imagined mass audience that the Women's Liberation Movement was addressing that was one of the factors that foreclosed the possibility of Black women as being understood as subjects of feminism in the 1970s. But then, white feminists had few other discursive strategies available to them at the time: as Jodi Burkett's new work on the left and race in the 1960s demonstrates, the left had comprehensively failed to understand the challenge that mass immigration had presented them with during the 1960s.[95] We can understand the project of Black and anti-racist feminism during the later part of our period, then, as precisely an attempt to develop an alternative discourse that was capable of including Black Britons in its scheme of both the country's past and its imagined future. Socialist feminists schooled in a Marxist language of class were also clearly more familiar with class as a category of analysis (as opposed to race), and it is thus unsurprising that class was privileged in socialist-feminist analyses. A focus upon class in the early days of WLM, then, had the effect of minimising other points of difference between women, pushing Black women to the edge of the field of vision where their problems became blurred, distorted or simply not seen.

Working-class (white) women and Black women also became subjects of study for white middle-class women, rather than comrades-in-arms. One working-class feminist ironically reminisced:

> I'd never heard of working-class culture until I found the women's movement. I wondered what it was. I wasn't going to ask though – most of my life in the East End and I didn't know what working-class culture was! No matter, there were plenty of middle-class women who were experts on the subject (me, I was the subject. Or object).[96]

Demonstrating the similarity between the paradigm within which white middle-class feminists viewed both classed and racial others, this relationship between producers and objects of knowledge was also reproduced in work written by white women on Black women. This is most explicit in work focused on 'third-world' women, where white women often – even if inadvertently – utilised colonialist discourses that emphasised the 'primitive' nature of these societies, producing narratives that 'othered' Black and 'third world' women.[97] As evidenced by the articles produced at *Spare Rib*, some writing by white feminists on ethnic

minority women in England reproduced these tendencies. This does not necessarily negate all of the work or analysis of white women in the WLM at this point. It is unhelpful, as Antoinette Burton has suggested, to 'expect feminists of the past to have been able to transcend the imaginative or ideological limitations of their own historical experiences',[98] and it is difficult to imagine how middle-class white feminists could have made more meaningful alliances with other women at this point without the critique that was developed of the WLM during the later 1970s and early 1980s. It is clearly necessary, however, to illuminate the power relations implicit in such a situation. As such, middle-class white feminists during this period can be linked to a maternalist tradition from older feminisms, women such as Josephine Butler and Eleanor Rathbone whose good works were also a form of social control.

Although the socialism of many of the women in the WLM was distinctly different to the politics of such maternalist feminists, the disparity between the women who controlled the campaigns, and the women who were the subject of them, remained. One socialist woman who had worked in a factory concluded 'Maybe the WLM as it is can only hope to be a servicing organisation for working-class women, agitating for facilities which will benefit them, but without their active participation.'[99] Whilst race is clearly not explicitly addressed in this analysis, such a standpoint does nevertheless imply that some white, middle-class feminists, despite the WLM's rhetoric of universality and inclusion, possessed assumptions about the political capabilities of other women that fed exclusion, in the process limiting possibilities for building a broader and more inclusive movement. Unsurprisingly, the implicitly white, middle-class standpoint of feminist theory was deeply problematic for the praxis of the movement. As prominent Black feminist Hazel Carby was to famously ask in the early 1980s, 'what exactly do you mean when you say WE?'[100]

It is also important to note briefly the debates between radical and socialist feminists that dominated much of the intellectual discussion in feminist circles during the 1970s, and the impact this had on white feminist engagement with race. Briefly, socialist feminists identified capitalism as working in conjunction with patriarchy to produce women's oppression (and indeed, working towards an understanding of how the two worked together to produce this oppression was the question that structured the socialist feminist intellectual project during the 1970s), whilst radical feminists identified patriarchy – i.e. men's dominance of women – as the oldest and most fundamental of all oppressions and the primary force in the oppression of women. This

could – although certainly not always – result in a political praxis that emphasised maintaining a separateness from men, and in its most extreme form of revolutionary feminism, advocated political lesbianism as a solution to women's oppression, and a necessary pre-cursor to feminist revolution.[101] Unsurprisingly, many both within and outside the feminist movement found this an alienating and extremist ideology that failed to take into account the complexities of many women's relationship with men. Radical feminism, at least in its cruder forms, could, by posing men as *the* oppressor, flatten out differences between women and fail to take into account the way in which women themselves could have certain other privileges, for example in terms of class and race. Despite this, radical feminist theorising about the nature of patriarchy, and particularly male violence towards women, was extremely influential, not least within socialist feminism, and it was partly this analysis that resulted in the huge feminist campaigns against rape and domestic violence (with the accompanying setting-up of refuges and Reclaim The Night marches) that the late 1970s witnessed. Whilst, as Eve Setch has argued, it is easy to overstate the extent to which this stopped individual feminists working together on the ground – and, indeed, the extent to which individual feminists identified as definitively radical or socialist in the first place – nevertheless, this preoccupation dominated feminist debate so much that it arguably prevented white feminists from engaging with other categories of difference, such as race.[102] This is important to note for it partly explains why, as the final chapter explores, although socialist feminism was, through its understanding of the multiple cause of women's oppression, theoretically more amenable to the challenges of Black feminism, a more thoroughgoing intellectual engagement with this critique was not seen until the 1980s.

The family

The area in which the embeddedness of this white middle-class standpoint became most obvious was the WLM's analysis of the family, which was heavily critiqued by Black feminists in the 1980s. The family and related 'problems' – such as childcare – were one of the defining issues for the early WLM, as recently noted by Stephen Brooke.[103] Marriage and motherhood within the nuclear family was taken as a universal within the mainstream of the WLM, reflecting the near universality of marriage for white English women in the post-war period.[104] However the sociological focus of the period on 'companionate marriage,' in which men and women adopted different roles (of homemakers and breadwinner respectively) within an allegedly egalitarian setting disguised myriad

family forms within England.[105] Most strikingly, this was a setup that was only common within white families. Black women were considerably more likely to be in a single-parent setting; Asian women were more likely to be in an extended family structure, and both were also more likely to be working outside the home than white women.[106] Additionally, the much-criticised concept of an everlasting monogamous marriage founded on romance was again something specific to western culture. Indeed, the post-war era, as Claire Langhamer's work has shown, saw increasing emphasis on romantic love and sexual satisfaction within marriage, a shift also documented in the sociology of the period, particularly in the famous community studies of Michael Young and Peter Willmott.[107]

This discursive focus on the nuclear family, then, functioned as one of the main mechanisms through which white feminists unwittingly defined feminism as a white movement. A prime example can be seen in the May 1971 edition of *Shrew*. Edited by the Belsize Lane Women's Liberation Group, they decided to choose the subject of 'the family' as the theme for their issue. Revealingly, their rationale behind this decision was that:

> We're writing about the family because we are all in one. You can't spend much time in Women's lib without realizing that the institution of the family is responsible for many (all?) of our hang ups. The family is a structured refuge from all our insecurities, and everything in our society militates against changing it: 1. Women and children are economically and emotionally dependent on the family. 2. Houses are built to encourage the isolation of one family from another. 3. There is no way to bring up children other than in the context of a small family. 4. Our society conditions us to expect that we shall only be truly fulfilled through marriage and a family of our own. 5. We are conditioned to feel that a relationship is a failure if it doesn't live happily ever after. 6. We are brought up to accept unquestioningly the concept of the nuclear family.[108]

Despite the rather sweeping nature of these assumptions, during the early to mid-1970s, a critique of the nuclear family became one of the major foci of feminist theorising. Works on the subject abounded, including Lee Comer's *Myth of Motherhood* (1972) and *Wedlocked Women* (1974), and Ann Oakley's 1974 publications *The Sociology of Housework* and *Housewife*, the latter essentially being a popular feminist polemic based on the academic research of the former. These in turn had been

preceded by the classic 1960s works *The Feminine Mystique* (American, but widely read by English feminists), and Hannah Gavron's proto-feminist work *The Captive Wife*. These issues were also a major topic of conversation in CR groups, and were written extensively about in feminist periodicals. For example, the *Red Rag* articles 'The backbone of capitalism' (the backbone is implied to be the nuclear family) and 'The state the family is in' both make explicit the link that feminists, and particularly socialist feminists, saw between the nuclear family, patriarchy and capitalism. And the 'Peckham Rye' paper on 'Women in the Family – written by the members of the Peckham Rye 'One o' Clock Club', and first presented at the Ruskin conference – seems to have been one of the most frequently quoted and reprinted essays in the whole movement. This underlines the extent to which the WLM saw the nuclear family as an intrinsic part of women's oppression.[109] Indeed, as we have seen, for theorists such as Christine Delphy and Selma James – neither of whom were English, but both of whom had extensive influence on the English women's movement – the housewife was the most oppressed of all workers, and thus should be considered as the most potentially revolutionary section of the population.[110] Certainly the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group had the family – in particular, the issue of childcare – at the centre of its campaigns in the early and mid-1970s. Its newsletter reveals extensive involvement with the Cambridge Nursery Action Group (NAG – presumably the acronym was intended to be sardonic), and the discussion of a 'Women and Children' discussion group.[111] These concerns are also echoed in feminist fiction, where, as seen in classics such as Andrea Newsom's *The Cage*, Marilyn French's *The Women's Room,* and Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, amongst others, the ultimate feminist narrative is that of the educated middle-class white women, frustrated (and often trapped in the home), who comes to a feminist awakening and eventually leaves her unsatisfactory situation. This was a narrative that was echoed by one (white) interviewee for this book, Merseyside-based Valerie Hall:

> I recognised I was kind of enslaved by being female and I picked up books, you know, read some of the key feminist theoretical books, you know, and began to believe that sisters can do it for themselves, and decided to put that into action. So I moved out of what was – because I'd married someone really who was a senior person working in Lever brothers and er on a good salary and I was living in 1969 on the Wirral in a very nice house, with a comfortable income. I decided to move away from that, and I separated from my husband and came

> over to Liverpool, and moved into a terraced house in the Dingle and took on a very different kind of take on life. Never, ever regretted it.[112]

To what extent this re-telling of her life by Valerie was influenced by these standard feminist tropes, and to what extent the tropes themselves became tropes precisely because of the ubiquity of stories like Sylvia's, is, of course, unknowable. Whichever is the case these readings of the family were however, contested in high profile ways by Black feminists in the 1980s. Many Black feminists characterised the nuclear family not just as an oppressive institution, but also as a refuge from the racist state. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar in their well-known *Feminist Review* article, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', argued that:

> In identifying the institution of the family as a source of oppression for women, white feminists have again revealed their cultural and racial myopia, because for Asian women in particular, the British state through its immigration legislation has done all it can to destroy the Asian family by separating husbands from wives, wives from husbands and parents from children.[113]

It is easy to caricature this line of argument, which was considerably more subtle than simple support of the traditional family, and – as Randall and Lovenduski have noted – never enjoyed full support within the Black feminist movement in any case.[114] Prominent Black feminist Hazel Carby, along with Amos and Parmar, agreed that Black families could also be oppressive. However, whereas Carby argued the family also had to be understood as a site of resistance to white oppression, Amos and Parmar laid greater stress on the crude stereotypes of Black families that were often employed by white academics, namely those of the 'passive' Asian woman and the 'strong, dominant', Black woman.[115]

As this argument demonstrates, the power of this Black feminist critique of the white feminist critique of the family opened up a discursive space that could challenge the forms of labour that Black women were involved in; labour that, as Amina Mama noted, was often low-paid and exploitative.[116] It was further argued that Black male unemployment was structured into a racist economic system, and that therefore, in Carby's words, 'ideologies of black female domesticity and motherhood have been constructed, through their employment (or chattel position) as domestics and surrogate mothers to white families rather than in relation to their own families'.[117] However, this critique also allowed Black feminists who were critical of the sexual radicalism of white feminists to

articulate a more culturally conservative vision of women's role influenced by the evangelical Christian tradition that many African and Afro-Caribbean women were rooted in. Whilst these voices were rarely the ones that were heard in activist publications or more mainstream academic feminist journals, they nevertheless, as Valentina Alexander has suggested, made up a large percentage of the 'footsoldiers' of the Black women's movement.[118] This culturally conservative, evangelically-inflected activism was evident in both my interviews with Bola and Joy. Indeed, they both justified their feminism in specifically biblical terms, with Joy stating to me in interview that:

> Christianity would say, men should be the head of the house, butalso then the bible tells you to treat your wife as you treat yourself, as Christ is the head of the Church and loves the church, so that's saying really, we are equal, women. So in my mind, that's where I'm at.[119]

Ultimately, the disregard for the other meanings that family life could hold for Black women made it more difficult for them to identify with a WLM that held a critique of the family as one of the main pillars of its existence. The portrait of a stereotypical white nuclear family alienated both Black women in its ethnic specificity; and working-class women, in its lack of recognition of the more complex meanings of housewifery to this group in the post-war era.[120] Perhaps more than any other aspect of feminist theory, this rather crude and reductionist approach to the family alienated women outside of white, intellectual feminist circles from a WLM who failed to realise that for many less privileged women, family could be a rare source of support and comfort in otherwise difficult lives.

Sex, sexuality and the body in the WLM

Of course, it is something of a media-generated myth that women in the WLM were obsessed with sex. Drier subjects such as the relationship between Marx and feminism, women and labour, and, of course, the family, often took precedence. Nevertheless, sex and sexuality were significant foci of feminist theorising. This was an interest that aroused significant criticism from more traditional leftists, who believed such preoccupations were bourgeois deflections from the true business of class struggle.[121] This critique was also echoed by some in the Black women's movement, reflecting their origins in the far left. Of my interviewees, Stella Dadzie was particularly antagonistic to feminist theorising around sex, which she termed a 'luxury', mere 'lifestyle

politics' (these views were also reflected in *The Heart of the Race*, which she co-authored). She articulated the negative view of the WLM that this focus had engendered amongst some radical Black women:

> most of us carried this stereotype of white feminism around – if you thought of it as a kind of entity – as something that was the domain of middle-class white women who quite often dabbled in sexual politics, because they had the luxury to do so.[122]

There is undoubtedly truth to the accusation that working-class women, both Black and white, did not have the time to 'indulge' in sexual politics – or indeed, feminist politics in general – and were more interested in survival issues (though it is worth noting such accusations also feed into older misogynist tropes casting rich white women as pleasure-seeking ladies of leisure). These critiques are well established and there is little to be gained by rehearsing them in this book. However, the focus on sexuality and the body maintained the white, middle-class and youthful nature of the WLM in other significant ways that are useful to explore.

Certainly, the coverage of sex seen in the periodicals of the WLM was forthright, even shocking, compared to other women's magazines of the time. *Spare Rib* in its early years hosted many features on sex and the female body that may have helped to sell it to the adventurous reader, but perhaps deterred others. 'The liberated orgasm . . . Make a New Year resolution to have one!' proclaimed the front cover of the January 1973 edition underneath the picture of a nude (white, good-looking) woman reclining back on a bed, apparently in the throes of ecstasy. It was far from the only such feature. 'Masturbation – no longer a refuge' claimed another piece.[123] Indeed, masturbation was a key focus of feminist discussions of sex, with many tips for the uninitiated. However, the recommendation that such activities should be attempted when women had a 'spare' evening, with no-one in the house and plenty of time to relax, could be out of reach for working-class women – both Black and white – with busy lives and overcrowded houses.[124] Additionally, the bodies represented in these pieces were all those of young, white women who appeared to have the time and money to keep themselves fit, healthy and good looking. Black, disabled, or even slightly overweight women were absent. Such discussion on sex was not limited to *Spare Rib*. More academic periodicals with smaller circulations also discussed the subject, though often from a more detached and theoretical standpoint. Perhaps surprisingly given that he came to prominence in the inter-war period,

Wilhelm Reich was still a touchstone for leftist feminists who wanted to understand the connections between sexual repression and repressive societies.[125] Nevertheless, such theorising was clearly connected to a feminist sense of the personal-as-political, and was written with a lively engagement not always evidenced in other spheres of socialist-feminist theorising. Even the militantly socialist (and militantly serious) *Red Rag* found time to print 'Wot No Orgasm?', in which Irene Fick declared that 'Surely an orgasm is related to one's attitude to oneself, one's self-esteem, self-assertiveness, freedom, commitment, integrity, confidence in one's capacities and in one's choices?'[126] Such discourse was also a primary feature of consciousness-raising groups, and featured in the programmes of many feminist conferences. Campbell and Coote recalled a sexuality workshop in the 1971 conference where 'Everything was open to question: marriage, monogamy, heterosexuality, lesbianism, bodies, babies . . . nothing was sacred or fixed.'[127]

This emphasis on sexual adventure and openness, however, made for a discourse that was difficult for women who were heavily invested in more conservative articulations of sexuality to participate in. The influence of evangelical Christianity in the African and Afro-Caribbean communities made for heavy taboos on promiscuity, masturbation and particularly lesbianism. And, of course, these were taboos that were also shared by many white women. Geoffrey Gorer's 1969 survey *Sex and Marriage in England Today* suggested that two in three women had been a virgin until their wedding night, a figure that hardly suggests wildly progressive sexual attitudes amongst the majority of the English population.[128] This is also substantiated by surveys on British attitudes towards homosexuality at the time.[129] Sociologist Beverley Skeggs has also placed a strong emphasis on the importance of 'respectability' for working-class women, a concept that was shaped largely by notions of sexual propriety for young women and by appropriate care for the family (especially in mothering) for older women.[130] These identifications (amongst others) led these women, in Skeggs' words, to 'not recognize themselves as the subject "woman" of most feminist discourse.'[131] Crucially, she also argues that white working-class and Black women alike have been constructed as sites of 'deviant' sexuality, making this emphasis on respectability all the more important for both groups.[132] Furthermore, in their recent study of sexual relations in mid-twentieth century Britain, Kate Fisher and Simon Szreter have emphasised the importance of 'innocence' for women in regards to sex.[133]

Given Skeggs', Szreter's and Fisher's work, it is therefore worth asking whether either Black or white working-class women were able to

participate in the free and frank discourse around women's sexuality so valued by the WLM without significant risk to this 'respectability'. Insulated by their relative economic and cultural capital, this was a risk not run by the white middle-class women who made up the majority of the WLM. At a time when marriage was the surest route to economic security for most white women, working-class women in particular often lacked the capital to be able to challenge such attitudes significantly. This was perhaps particularly true of attitudes towards homosexuality. As Skeggs recorded, 'lesbianism is represented by both association with pathological class and race contagion and/or as bourgeois individualistic self-expression. Neither of which are designed to include or endear themselves to working-class women whose desire is for respectability.'[134] Whilst Skeggs is using 'race contagion' in association with lesbianism to signify a white identification of lesbianism with Black womanhood, she fails to mention that this identification was inverted by some Black nationalists and/or evangelists, who portrayed homosexuality as a white 'disease'.[135] In both cases, however, it is clear that the increasing emphasis placed on lesbianism within feminist discourse made it more difficult for both Black and working-class white women to identify with the WLM.

Related to this open discourse on sex was an emphasis on exploring the female body with a new frankness. Articles on the body and women's health were again a staple of feminist periodicals, a trend that reached its apogee with publication of the British edition of women's health classic *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1978. Self-examination sessions were popular amongst local groups, and many accounts exist of these practices: cliché that it has since become, many a feminist did indeed use a hand mirror and a speculum to look at her genitals and cervix. Unsurprisingly, this was not always a comfortable experience: one Cambridge woman who ran such a workshop found the group she was working with to be deeply embarrassed at undressing and displaying the intimate parts of their bodies in public (though her counter-intuitive theory that it was the undressing rather than nudity per se that was the sticking point, and that therefore in future, all participants should be naked from the beginning of the session, seems questionable).[136] In a broader historical frame, this is unsurprising given the discomfort with their bodies displayed by Szreter and Fisher's interviewees, which also suggests that older women would have found these practices even more alienating.[137] Breasts were also a subject of some discussion.[138] Once again, the women participating in these naked show-and-tells were overwhelmingly young, middle-class and white, a factor unlikely to encourage

many Black women to join. This is not to say that no Black women joined in these groups.[139] Nevertheless, the partner of prominent Black feminist Olive Morris remembered the controversy that such practices aroused:

> [...] she [Olive] said it would be a good idea if women sort of [...] should use a mirror and or a speculum and look at their genitalia just to see how they were formed, and apparently this was dismissed by some of the women in there as being not political and so forth.[140]

Stella Dadzie was once again critical of this tendency from a similarly leftist perspective, recounting with some bemusement her experience visiting (with Gerlin Bean) a Black feminist group in Chicago, in which the women present discussed the colour of their nipples.[141] Her account makes it clear that she had not encountered such discussion in London, and she emphasises her surprise that – at least in her reading of the incident – the Black British women's movement was more radical than its American counterpart, precisely because it had little truck with such politics. Sexual and bodily politics were never, then, given the same privileged position in the Black women's movement as in the white WLM, at least in the 1970s (as we shall see, this became a site of debate in the 1980s for Black women). As such, a focus on these matters, however, inadvertently, helped to maintain the whiteness of the WLM.

Conclusion

The ideological assumptions that formed the political training of those in the WLM – and the exclusivity of the political networks in which they were formed – helps us to understand why Black women did not take part in significant numbers. The relative exclusivity of WLM organising, and the theories that it developed, implicitly defined its whiteness at the same time that feminists ironically proclaimed the global nature of sisterhood. Additionally, white feminists understood Black women through outdated paradigms of feminist internationalism and/or Marxist imperialism, which in turn placed Black women on the periphery of what was largely understood to be a national feminist movement. These factors, alongside the complex legacy of the historically racialised location of the women's movement, sometimes led to attitudes on the part of white feminists that were imbued with colonialist assumptions about the 'backwardness' of Black women. These features of the WLM were present at the beginning of the movement

and to some extent shaped it, and this meant that white feminists were ill-equipped to deal with the challenge of race that was presented to them in the later 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, this is still a considerably more complex picture than accounts which portray white feminists as either unaware of ethnic minority women, or as simply racist, have allowed for. Without understanding the nuances of white feminist thinking on race at this point, we will be unable to understand the specificities of the critiques that were levelled against such thought. In order to grasp the origins of these critiques more fully, an exploration of the origins and aims of the Black women's movement will form the focus of the next chapter.

2
Black Women's Activism, c. 1970–1990

Introduction

Black British women's activism was a highly distinctive social movement that drew from several different radical traditions. Although, as this chapter will examine, it increasingly drew on aspects of feminism by the 1980s, the movement's origins in Black radicalism meant that the Black women's movement was in some respects very different to its white cousin. It was more rooted in community politics than was the (white) WLM, with this emphasis on practical activism being one of the most distinctive features of its praxis. The movement also placed a greater stress on the interactions of other oppressions – particularly race and class – with gender, than many white feminists did. Despite tensions with Black men, Black women activists were usually more willing to work with men from their communities than white feminists were with (white) men in the radical left community. Black women's politics was therefore rooted both in the politics of the immigrant communities in which most of those involved lived, and increasingly, within and against the politics of the largely white WLM. Black women reacted both against the sexism of some of the men and rhetoric of the Black radical movement within Britain, and against the racism displayed by some white women in the WLM. Indeed, it is this emphasis on interacting oppressions that is often seen as the Black women's movement's most distinctive contribution to radical thought.[1]

As this period progressed, Black female activists drew increasingly from white feminist theory, and interacted more frequently with white feminists. In particular, the emphasis on Marxist analysis and anti-imperialism amongst Black women allowed for a common discourse to be shared with (white) socialist feminists. By this point, many activist

Black women felt comfortable terming themselves 'feminist', and the changing nature of their concerns reflected this. However, this transition was not without significant pain: as will be examined later in the chapter, the fourth conference of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent in 1982 was dominated by debates over whether OWAAD was or was not a feminist organisation (the theme of the conference was 'Black feminism'). 'Feminist' was a deeply loaded term for Black women involved in these political groups, for it was often taken to represent only white women. Far from being a positive politics by and for women, declaring oneself 'feminist' could represent acquiescence with the white oppressor. As outlined in the introduction to this book I therefore use the term cautiously in the chapter, and only for women who would have used it to describe themselves. Indeed, a specifically 'feminist' politics never entirely superseded older forms of Black women's organisation. This chapter thus seeks to answer the question, how, when, and why did a distinctively British Black feminism arise?

Black women organising in the early 1970s: influences and practice

Scholars often take the establishment of the Brixton Black Women's Group in 1973 as their starting point for the growth of Black British women's activism.[2] However, it is clear that Black women's activism developed out of the Black left at the same time as white feminism developed out of the white left.[3] As Becky Thompson and Kimberley Springer have noted in an American context, there was a *parallel* development of Black women's activism alongside white feminism, contradicting the received notion that Black feminism was merely reactive to the racism of white feminism.[4] Whilst it would be a mistake to transplant simplistically the American model for Black women's activism to a domestic context, the American historiography nevertheless has much to teach English historians of feminism. The recent decentering of 'second wave' American feminism away from the white movement in this historiography has opened up new and fruitful ways for historians to conceptualise the movement, throwing into relief the ethnocentricity with which white academics have approached the subject previously. This chapter argues that a focus on the Black women's movement alters our understandings of the diverse forms of feminist activism in the early 1970s. Furthermore, the vitality of the Black women's movement in the 1980s does not merely extend the traditional chronology of the women's movement which places its end in the late 1970s, but shifts

our conception of when the most vibrant phase of the women's activism was away from the early 1970s, towards the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The first Black women's groups in England were intimately connected with Black Power. Black Power is well known in its American incarnation, but it is less widely known that England itself had a small but significant Black Power movement.[5] Stokely Carmichael's visit to London in June 1967 seems to have single-handedly inspired the formation of the Black Panther Movement in Britain,[6] and organisations such as the Black Liberation Front (BLF) and the Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP) quickly followed. According to Julia Sudbury, London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham had branches of at least one of these three groups.[7] The significance of this for the growth of the Black women's movement lay both in their radical gender politics and personnel. Whilst not explicitly feminist, the politics of the Black movement, like most leftist politics, did pay at least lip service to the equality of women.[8] Furthermore, in Britain, the Black Panther Movement – after the departure of founder Obi Egbuna – actually had a woman leader in Althea Jones-Lecointe.[9] Perhaps most famous for being a defendant in the Mangrove Nine trial, Jones-Lecointe was a hard-line Marxist who slipped into relative obscurity as a doctor after the end of the Panthers; Wild notes that it is impossible to find any trace of information about her in the archive.[10] Significantly, although Jones-Lecointe did not term herself a feminist, neither did she brook any chauvinism.[11] One of Wild's interviewees remembered that 'Althea wasn't backward in coming forward . . . in opening a discussion on what she felt was disrespectful behaviour on your part.'[12] This has led Wild to claim that 'sexism was regarded as equivalent to racism' within the Panthers, although the clear primacy of the Black/class struggle within the group suggests that this is an exaggeration.[13] Indeed, it is clear that Black women started organising autonomously not just because of the inspiration of the Black movement but, also in part, because of its sexism.[14]

It is clear that many of the women who were involved in Black women's organising in London (if not in other British cities) in the 1970s had also been involved in these groups. Stella Dadzie was highly involved in Black liberation politics, selling journals such as *The Black Liberator*, and Gerlin Bean was a member of the Black Unity and Freedom Party (BUFP).[15] Bean was instrumental in setting up Brixton Black Women's Group (BBWG), and Dadzie was instrumental both in the founding of Haringey-based United Black Women's Action Group (UBWAG), and OWAAD.[16] BBWG activist Olive Morris was also a keen Black Panther in her later teens.[17] It is more difficult to find records for women outside London, but the timing of the establishment

of organisations such as Liverpool Black Sisters in 1973, and the Manchester Black Women's Co-operative in the same year, suggests that these were also established by women with links to radical organisations, which were known to exist in both of these cities.[18] We also know that Manchester Black Women's Co-operative was co-founded by well-known radical Black activist Kath Locke – sister-in-law to prominent local activist Ron Phillips – and counted Black radical Olive Morris as a member during her time at university in Manchester. This strengthens the argument for a connection between Black Power and Black women's autonomous activism in the provinces as well as London.[19] Thus, rather than coming out of white feminism, Black women's activism traced its roots more obviously to Black liberation politics. This again supports an analysis that suggests that Black women's activism should not be seen as imitative of white feminism, but as a phenomenon rooted in a very different history, with a very different dynamic in terms of its political focus and modus operandi.

In smaller numbers, some Black women also organised with white feminists: several of the interviewees from 'The Heart of the Race' and 'Do you remember Olive Morris?' oral history projects were involved in white women's liberation groups. Indeed, this presence is manifestly evident in the video footage from the Ruskin Conference, which shows the presence of several Black women, including Gerlin Bean.[20] Nevertheless, it is telling that despite Bean's initial foray into the world of the largely white WLM, she decided to set up her own autonomous Black women's group after the event, apparently due to her perception of their different needs and political aims.[21] It seems likely that this was the Black Women's Action Committee, developed as a caucus within the BUFP, of which Bean was a member. They created a pamphlet entitled 'Black Women Speak Out' in 1970, which illustrates the existence of Black activism that specifically centred around women occurring simultaneously with the birth of the largely white WLM.

The concerns demonstrated in the pamphlet were different to the four demands generated by Ruskin, but still operated within a framework of women's rights. This document outlined the oppression of Black women within a Black radical leftist framework, stating that:

> Black women suffer in three ways! 1. We are poor. 2. We are Black. 3. We are women.
>
> We are poor because the wealth of our countries has been exploited and seized by the white Western/Imperialists [sic] who exploit us mercilessly. We are poorly paid in the jobs we do more so than even white women, we are at the very bottom of the economic scale.

> We are Black and are discriminated against in every walk of life. Racism has taken on a life of its own and we have become its victims.
>
> WE ARE POOR, WE ARE BLACK AND WE ARE WOMEN . . . being all three in western/capitalist society means that all the shit from whitemen [sic] whitewoman [sic] and Black men fall [sic] on our head.[22]

The emphasis on the intersecting nature of Black women's oppression is notable, anticipating its prominence in Black women's political thought later in this period. The pamphlet then went on to discuss issues such as their exploitation as workers for the NHS, women's right to contraception, and the pressure on Black women to conform to white ideals around beauty. Nor was this activity unknown to white feminists, even if it was marginalised within WLM politics: the well-known feminist anthology *The Body Politic* (published in 1972) published a contribution from the Black Women's Action Committee entitled 'The Black Woman'. The ambivalence from Black women towards white feminists is evident even in this early piece:

> The precondition for the black woman generally fighting on a general women's platform is a commitment by white women, both in word and deed, to struggle for the freedom of the black woman from racism. This is why the black woman's liberation is first and foremost concerned with getting rid of this oppressive system, capitalism/imperialism, which breeds both forms of oppression and exploitation, namely racism and male chauvinism. For the black woman, therefore, class liberation before sex liberation.[23]

This emphasis on the primacy of class politics – rather than the expected Black or women's politics – is a result of the heavily Marxist orientation of the BUFP. Nevertheless, although this clearly marks the group as being outside of the mainstream of the WLM, the fact that women within these groups were arguing for women's rights makes it possible for us to place the group in a larger constellation of women-centered/feminist activities. For example, the demands made for the right of women 'to take control of her own body: this right is hers and no-one elses' are clearly feminist in origin.[24] More generally, the existence of this material at all illustrates the largely overlooked involvement of a small but committed band of Black activists in women–focused politics at this point.

The growth of Black women's autonomous organising and activism in the community

After the BUFP women's caucus apparently stopped meeting, the most significant event of this wave of activity in the early 1970s was the formation of BBWG in 1973.[25] Initially starting off as a Black women's study group – Gail Lewis claimed that it was formed out of women from the *Race Today* collective and the radical Black Brixton-based bookshop, Sabarr – the group quickly evolved and included many women who had been involved in the Black Power movement, such as Gerlin Bean and Olive Morris.[26] Their origins are eloquently described in the first paragraph of the first issue of their journal, *Speak Out*:

> The Black Women's Group began in late 1973 mainly with women who were involved in the black movements in the late 60s and early 70s. Since then many other women have joined the group. Over the years we have attempted to study and analyse the situation of black women in Britain and the third world because such an analysis has been long overdue.[27]

Gail Lewis suggests that the BBWG always had a wider role than simply that of a study group, however: it 'saw itself very much as part of a community based organisation, campaigning on a number of issues.'[28] BBWG wrote of their activities that:

> We are a small group and consequently our ability to initiate and sustain activities is limited. We meet regularly as a study group and with the support of the group, individual sisters are involved in various activities in their communities – activities such as West Indian Parents Action Groups, educational, cultural and recreational programmes for young black people. Through the Sabarr Bookshop Collective we are able to keep in contact with schools and other institutions with whom we discuss educational material available in the bookshop for their use. We are also in contact with other black women's groups in London and Manchester and we hold joint meetings in order to exchange and discuss our ideas.[29]

This gives an excellent illustration of the base in radical community activism of Black women in the 1970s, their links with institutions such as radical bookshops, and the way that they initiated links with other groups such as those in Manchester. Supporting this idea of the

community-based concerns of Black women's groups, UBWAG wrote in a *Spare Rib* article in 1979 of their priorities: 'Top of this list were, and still are, housing, education and employment, and police mistreatment of Black Youth. So we decided to do something about the pressures on us and our children.'[30] As this suggests, the setting up of supplementary schools,[31] immigration campaigns against increasingly racist legislation, and protests against the Stop Under Suspicion (SUS) laws, formed a large part of the activities of these groups. Campaigns were formed around individuals such as Tony Anderson, a young Black man arrested and beaten up by police after protesting having been called 'sunshine' by the police.[32] However, the concerns were also juxtaposed with more pragmatic ones, and not all groups were as nakedly political. Indeed, Yvonne Field – a Black youth worker from London who was an interviewee for this project – remembered of BBWG that:

> I remember going along to a couple of meetings that were held there, and thinking oh my god, these women are really scary, I think partly because I was much younger – I was twenty-three, and er [...] for me, they were sort of much more politicised than I was at the time, so I found them a scary group of women (laughs), decided that I'm not sure, that you know [...] maybe what I would have found easier was if they'd had a young women's group, y'know, sort of for under twenty-fives or something.[33]

Although because of this Yvonne never became particularly involved in BBWG, she was nevertheless committed to less overtly politicised forms of Black women's organising (and was also willing to label herself as feminist). She was, for example, an enthusiastic member of Aurat Obaa (literally meaning 'woman to woman'), a group for Black women social workers in London; and it is probable that like Yvonne, many other Black women were more comfortable with practically-focused activism that was still progressive but less overtly political. Indeed, it is precisely this kind of activism that Julia Sudbury delineates so well in *Other Kinds of Dreams*. Paddington Black Women's Group, formed in April 1979, described itself as helping to 'collect information to help deal with the pressures created by bad housing, poor education, unemployment, police harassment and health problems' but also added in its self-description that it hoped to form cricket, netball, rounders and basketball teams, adding that 'For the children and male members of our families, we plan outings, socials, parties, dances and concerts.'[34] From the testimony given in the interviews of Joy, Adithi and Bola,

the Cambridge Black Women's group seems to have been another such group. Whilst Bola and Aditihi were both happy to call themselves feminist, Joy was more equivocal.[35] Bola further suggested that the group as a whole 'didn't like to label itself' as feminist, even if individuals did.[36] However, unlike the politicised rejection of the term as a protest against the biases of white feminism, this refusal to label themselves seems to have been a way of avoiding an overt politicisation that may have alienated new members and the community they hoped to serve. The activities of the group included providing many child-based activities (crèches and Saturday Schools), craft classes, and (perhaps more politically) talks and discussions around Black women's books.[37] Nevertheless, this was far from true from all women's groups. Although Liverpool Black Sisters, for example, ran similar childcare activities, and were involved in other aspects of 'cultural feminism' – they ran a Black women's filmmakers course for a short time, for example – they were always overtly political, perhaps a result of their location in the radicalised Liverpool of the 1970s and 1980s.[38] New Black women's groups with both more and less overtly political agendas were set up throughout the 1980s, both in London, and nationally, and particularly – although it is outside the remit of this book – in Scotland.[39]

Black women's centres were also set up for the exclusive use of Black women, and characteristically juxtaposed the political with the practical, thus appealing to both more and less overtly politicised Black women. The first such centre in the UK was founded in Brixton in July 1979. Named Mary Seacole House – though more commonly referred to as the Brixton Black Women's Centre – it was funded by local government and was the result of campaigning by BBWG and the Mary Seacole craft group to have such a centre established. Situated on Stockwell Green, it claimed its mission was 'to give support and help to Black Women in the Community in different ways. We will be dealing with some of the specific problems we face as Black Women, such as racism, sexism and class oppression. In addition we will be running a craft workshop and a playgroup.'[40] Likewise, UBWAG also established a centre for Black women in Haringey along similar lines, emphasising both the discrimination faced by Black women in the local community, but also running ventures such as (again) craft workshops.[41] Other London communities followed suit, with Peckham and Southall also gaining Black women's centres in the 1980s. Liverpool Black Women's Group also gained its own premises in the spring of 1985.[42] Additionally, *Heart of the Race* also notes the existence of groups with possibly autonomous premises, such as the Wolverhampton Black Women's Co-op Centre.[43]

The practical services offered by these centres were at the heart of their attempt to be of use to, and thus be appealing to, local Black communities. As the works of Sudbury and Hill-Collins suggest, Black women's activism was defined by a distinctive ethos that emphasised the necessity of practical activism alongside political organising. Childcare, as we have seen with the Cambridge and Liverpool groups, was high on the list of services offered. For example, the Haringey Black Women's Centre ran a play-scheme in 1986, writing in the newsletter *United We Stand*, that 'The aim of the summer scheme was to provide a cultural environment which these children would feel confident in.'[44] Such summer schools are an excellent example of Black women's political praxis in that they addressed concerns that pertained to race, class and gender. They addressed issues of sex discrimination because they helped women (who were generally in sole charge of providing care for their children), issues of economic discrimination (because Black women were often unable to afford to pay much for childcare because of their disadvantaged economic position), and issues of racial discrimination (because such childcare was often not in a familiar cultural environment as it reflected the backgrounds of the white caregivers). The success and popularity of such provision is illustrated by the fact that the services still provided by Black women's organisations in Liverpool and Sheffield primarily revolve around childcare.[45]

More overtly feminist was work around domestic violence: Southall Black Sisters became well known for the work they did opposing violence against women in their community, and refuges for specifically Black women were set up across the country in the late 1970s and 1980s. These included Brent Asian Women's Refuge, and Amadudu Black women's refuge in Liverpool.[46] There were also campaigns that moved beyond community organising, focusing more specifically on women's issues such as health – particularly around reproductive issues – and on issues surrounding women's employment, particularly in the NHS. This last issue was mentioned in the Black Women's Action Committee 1970 pamphlet *Black Women Speak Out,* and again in a later OWAAD booklet of the same name. It was widely felt that Black women were being exploited by the NHS as workers, particularly as they were disproportionately in the State-Enrolled rather than State-Registered grade: this meant that they were in a less-qualified position which had lower pay and status. The NHS was also felt to be racist in its administration of fertility drugs such as Depo-Provera, a focus of major campaigning from almost all Black women's groups. Depo-Provera was a contraceptive

injection that was supposed to provide protection against pregnancy for three months. However, there were concerns about the long-term impact it had on fertility, and the drug's adverse side-effects such as irregular or heavy bleeding, weight-gain, and depression.[47] It was widely administered to Black and particularly Asian women during this period. This was seen to be the result of racist doctors in the NHS who deliberately wished to limit the fertility of Black women by not explaining fully the functions of the drug and the complications that it could cause.[48] Indeed, the campaign against Depo-Provera was one of the few in which white women were involved, there being an official home for the campaign at the women's centre on 374 Gray's Inn Road.[49] The existence of local Black women's health projects – for example, the Greenwich Black women's health project, and the Black women's health project in Liverpool – does, however, point to the fact that even overtly political campaigns were still grounded in practical and community-based organising.[50]

Other campaigns that also encompassed aspects of both local community organising and national political campaigning included the protests against virginity testing on Asian women on entering the country, and the campaigns against the deportation of individual women. The campaign against virginity testing, in particular, became a well-known liberal cause célèbre which attracted support from white feminists. Broken by Melanie Phillips (ironically, given her subsequent drift to the hard right) in the *Guardian* in February 1979, the scandal concerned the physical examinations of Asian women who were coming over to meet fiancés by immigration officers at Heathrow, based on the simplistic assumption that all Asian women would be virgins before marriage. In July 1979, OWAAD organised a sit-in at Heathrow Airport, soon joined by the newly formed Asian Women's group, AWAZ.[51] The early and mid-1980s also saw a rush of deportation cases against which protests were organised. Halimat Babamba, Mabel Achinuhu and Nazira Begum, amongst others, were women who were all saved from deportation in part thanks to the tireless campaigning efforts of Black women's groups. OWAAD established 'The Friends of Nazira Begum Committee' in 1980, supporting her appeal against deportation after her husband's desertion.[52] Such deportation campaigns were often locally focused, but attracted nationwide support. Although Mabel Achinihu was from Merseyside (the campaign against her deportation was organised by Liverpool Black Sisters), and Babamba was from Leeds, their cases were reported in a variety of feminist media across the country. This

illustrates the similar nature of the political goals of the groups, and the existence of at least some connections between them facilitated by the radical press.[53]

Such activities were aided by an explosion of local government funding provided by left wing councils in the early 1980s, fuelling their growth.[54] This funding in many ways ensured the survival and growth of Black women's activism, and secured its base in funded community projects. This was particularly true in London, where nearly three hundred of the four hundred or so women's groups that received funding from the Greater London Council between 1982 and 1985 were specifically Black or other ethnic minority women's groups.[55] However, such funding was not without its drawbacks. There were arguments about whether radical groups should really be taking money from the state, as many feared this would prove detrimental to their independence: as one (white) feminist wrote, 'clearly the patriarchy is not paying for its own overthrow.'[56] Such debates were divisive in many cases: South London-based activists Olive Gallimore and Gail Lewis remembered of BBWG that such discussions were 'fierce and went on for a few weeks . . . the cost was that we lost individuals.'[57]

Local authority funding also provided money for groups that were less explicitly political, provoking the Scottish Black Women's Group – who were explicitly feminist – to comment scathingly that 'We were not into sari-tying sessions, not part of the chapati brigade.'[58] This group may have been based in Edinburgh, but they reflected sentiments that were felt south of the border; namely, that such activities were felt by many on the Black and anti-racist left at the time to be part of an apolitical agenda of multiculturalism that masked the reality of white power in a racist society. Furthermore, many Black feminists believed that the white champions of multiculturalism often deferred to patriarchal male 'leaders' of communities to the detriment of women.[59] It is unlikely however, that this analysis was shared by groups such as Narl Kallyan Shango (an Edinburgh-based Bangladeshi women's welfare group), who interpreted their work, which included providing dressmaking classes and religious instruction, to be 'very much focused on skills the women wanted or needed themselves', and to be a 'softly-softly' approach to feminism.[60] Much of this 'softly-softly' approach was rooted in the desire of some Black women not to upset men in the Black community, who, as we shall see, were often perceived as allies in the fight against racism rather than as patriarchal oppressors. This desire was nevertheless contested by other Black women's activists – significantly, those activists more willing to label themselves feminists, such

as Southall Black Sisters – and this, as we shall explore, made for a complex relationship between the activism of Black women and the activism of Black men.

Asian women and feminism

'Asian' is obviously a capacious term; I am using it as shorthand for those from the Indian subcontinent. Most Asians in Britain come from one of four distinct areas from the subcontinent; Mirpur and Azad Kashmir in Pakistan, Bengal or Bangladesh, and Gujarat and Punjab in what is present-day India: though many Gujarati came not directly from India but East Africa after their expulsion by various political regimes, notably those of Idi Amin in Uganda and Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, in the 1960s and 1970s.[61] Judging from the names of activists, the majority of Asian women active in the feminist movement at this point were Sikhs and Hindus from Gujarati and Punjabi communities, rather than Muslim women from Pakistani and Bengali communities. This is unsurprising given that Gujarati and Punjabi communities seen as a whole were more affluent, and along with that had greater access to higher education.[62] Thus, like the white feminist movement, Asian feminists at this point were also largely middle-class and educated.

The ethno-religious demographic composition of the movement was also significant that the relatively small number of Muslim women meant that many issues that many people associate with Asian women and feminism today (which would probably be more correctly term issues about Islam and feminism) – most notably the veil – were not particularly visible or even discussed: these are debates that have arisen in the last twenty years with the apparent rise of fundamentalist Islam and the growing population of an educated and English-speaking population of Muslim women. More generally, it is also important to note that the Asian women's movement of this era was strongly secular; so issues pertaining to the thorny intersection of religion and feminism were not only not debated – they were not up for debate. Religion and its associated practices were understood by many Asian feminists at this point as uncomplicatedly, instruments of patriarchal oppression, an analysis that only changed (and then only partially) after the end date of this book.[63]

Like other groups of feminists, Asian feminists were also largely based in urban settings, with their numbers being particularly strong in London, and indeed, it is difficult to make any history of Asian feminism in Britain non London-centric. There is very little in the way of an archival record of the activism of Asian feminists from anywhere

in the UK. The only Asian feminist group that has any sort of public narrative available, and that has published material about itself, is the well-known activist group Southall Black Sisters, based in Southall, West London from 1979 and still going strong today. Many prominent Asian feminists were involved in activism with this group at some point. Complicating this research further is the way in which politicised Asian groups self-described as Black: on a practical level this makes it very difficult to decipher to what extent groups with Black in their title, such as Birmingham and Liverpool Black Sisters, were composed of African or Asian descent women. Likewise, it is difficult to ascertain the ethnic background of women who contributed to feminist publications anonymously, which was quite common.

The 1970s saw in many ways what we might call the coming-of-age of radical Asian activism in Britain. Whilst there had been Asian involvement within Black power politics for some time – and the Indian Workers Association had long pursued a radical agenda for Asian workers within the country – it was during the 1970s, that radical Asian activism, and particularly the activism of Asian women, became increasingly visible.[64] Several prominent industrial disputes highlighted the exploitation of working-class Asian women. The first of these disputes was at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester in 1974, when forty Asian women were sacked without warning. In response, all 1100 Asian workers at the factory walked out and remained on strike for fourteen weeks. The white trade union shop stewards refused to support the strike, which led to the issue becoming something of a crusade in both the Black and white left; the strike was certainly known about in feminist circles.[65] The next prominent industrial action by Asian women, at Grunwick photo-processing plant in North-West London in between 1976 and 1978, was far larger, and has remained famous as a watershed moment in the history of both trade union activism and Asian women's history. The strike initially protested poor pay and working conditions, which lead to the strikes joining the union APEX in the first few days of the strike. However, the Grunwick management refused to recognise a union in the workplace, and it was this principle of the right to union recognition, that led to the strike becoming a leftist cause célèbre. The strikers were led by Jayaben Desai, who was in many ways an unlikely leader of an industrial dispute. A middle-aged immigrant from the East African Asian diaspora, she was a devout Hindu, and had not been involved in activism before: indeed, she had not even been a member of a trade union until after the strike started. Yet, under her leadership, the Grunwick strike amassed the largest mobilisation of workers ever seen in

British trade union history until that point; at the height of the strike, buses of fellow trade unionists and sympathisers brought in from across the country meant there was up to 20,000 people on the picket line, some of who were white socialist feminists who had been following the strike carefully and who were very supportive of the strike.[66]

Although the Grunwick strike eventually foundered to a halt 18 months after it begun, the scale of the strike meant that it was, without doubt, a watershed moment in terms of the visibility of Asian women in radical movements. It garnered huge coverage in both the mainstream and radical left press. Yet, whilst there were often claims in the feminist press that the action taken by the striking workers led them to question women's role and oppression, it is difficult to actually find evidence of this in interviews with the women themselves. Overwhelmingly, the strike seems to have been interpreted as a labour struggle around the Grunwick workers right to organise in a union. Additionally, the strikers and their supporters (excepting feminists) were far more likely to identify their oppression as a racial rather than a gendered phenomenon. Desai was promoted to the figure of feminist icon, and yet in the interviews that exist with her, she was clearly deeply equivocal about the feminist movement, claiming that she had no truck with what she labelled as 'extremist feminist' ideas.[67] Nevertheless, it is clear that she was an extremely influential figure to Asian feminists, as evidenced by her prominence in publications by and for Asian feminists.

However, it was not until the later 1970s that we see Asian women organising as Asians. The late 1970s saw the formation of the first specifically Asian feminist group, Awaz, which translates as 'voice'. Awaz was London based and explicitly feminist; one of their founder members, Amrit Wilson remembered that:

> I think the group meant a lot to all of us because it was for us and about us – which was something we had never done before. It meant that you put yourself first – your dreams and hopes and collective experiences – and that political action came out of that.[68]

Awaz was only small in size; in one interview, Wilson estimated the group as having about five or six members, mostly of young women in the later teens and their early twenties. However, they were important, and their existence was known about; they were written about in the feminist press, and became particularly well known through their campaigns against virginity testing at Heathrow Airport. Illustrating the connections between Asian and Black feminists, Wilson also

remembered that one of the group's first activities was a joint demonstration with Brixton Black Women's Groups about police brutality. Nevertheless, perhaps unsurprisingly give their small membership they were a short-lived group, and had ceased activism by the early 1980s, although several of their members continued to be active with feminist politics.[69]

However, perhaps of greater long-term significance to the growth of Asian feminism was the growth of radicalism amongst Asian youth more broadly in the 1970s. A particularly important event was the 1976, racially-motivated murder of teenager Gurdip Singh Chaggar outside the Dominion theatre in Southall, which prompted the formation of the Southall Youth Movement, a radical organisation of mostly male Asian youth in Southall.[70] This group was influenced by Black power, and was dedicated to organising against racism from a leftist anti-imperialist perspective. The success of the Southall movement in mobilising local youngsters inspired the formation of other Asian Youth Movements or AYMs across the country, particularly in places with large Asian populations such as Bradford. There was no central organisation of AYMs, but the groups who took on the title understood themselves as being part of the same political movement.[71] The growth of the Asian Youth Movements was furthered by two specific events. One was the police killing of white anti-racist protestor Blair Peach in Southall in April 1979, where he had been on a huge demonstration against the National Front. The second, and now less remembered, of these events was the 1981 trial of the so-called Bradford 12. In this year famed for riots in ethnic minority communities across the country, a stash of petrol bombs in Bradford were found in a police raid, and 12 young men were charged with making explosives with the intent to endanger life and property. There was a huge campaign for their acquittal across the radical left and in Asian communities, and in 1982 the 12 defendants were indeed found innocent.[72] It is within this context of the radicalisation and mobilisation of Asian youth that we have to understand the development of the Asian women's movement; and, as we shall see, its primary constituency was radicalised young Asian women who could not find a space in the male-dominated world of Asian anti-racist activism.

What was it about Southall specifically that allowed it to become such a hotbed for feminist activity (and indeed radical activity more broadly)? In 2003, Rahila Gupta of Southall Black Sisters reflected upon the diverse religious and racial groups in Southall, suggesting that:

> Mixed communities, such as those of Southall, allow secular traditions to flourish and provide more breathing space for women.

> We have seen how little space there is for negotiating freedoms in more tightly knit communities, like the East End of London or Yorkshire and the Midlands, where the structure of the community allows it to police the morality of its women collectively in a way that would be unimaginable in Southall.[73]

Thus it was the plurality of cultures in Southall, and the anonymity offered by city life, that allowed activism to flourish there. Indeed, feminism more broadly has often been a movement of urban women: the metropolis as a space has historically presented freedoms to women unavailable to those living in more provincial or rural areas, although, as Rahila Gupta suggests through writing of the conservative Bengali community in the East End, being situated in a city itself is not enough to guarantee what she calls 'breathing space'.[74]

One of these young Asian women from Southall was Pragna Patel. A young Hindu from the Gujarati community of nearby Northolt, Patel was at college in the North-West studying social work when she became aware of the activist mêlée in Southall when back home during the holidays. Having felt isolated as one of the few non-whites at her college, and wanting to find a space to campaign against the racism that the Asian community experienced, Patel remembered:

> 1979 was the year of Blair Peach, and the anti-racist riots and Rock Against Racism and the Anti-Nazi Leagues, yeah, and all that was going on. So by then I was waking up to all of that, you know, of the kind of consciousness, and feeling really, wanting to be a part of it. And I remember ringing up the Southall Youth Movement that had organized with the Anti-Nazi League, the demonstrations against the National Front in Southall, saying, could they let me know, because I'd like to be involved in some way. Now this is Southall Youth Movement, it's full of black young men, they weren't going to let me know anything, because they're sexist as hell. But anyway, I didn't know that at the time, and I'm ringing, trying to find out a way of getting into. So I, my, I was beginning to awaken up to a new kind of consciousness that was being created, and anti-racist activities and campaigns that were happening.[75]

As Patel suggests here, the Southall Youth Movement was far too macho, male-dominated and sexist, to be a comfortable home for women. Importantly, this is an analysis supported by even some of the men who were involved in the groups. Often meeting in spaces such as pubs which many Asian women would have gone into, the Asian Youth

Movement often only paid lip service to women's rights at best, and at worst, as the writer and former youth movement activist Harwant Bains has argued, simply reinforced the patriarchal values of the male elders of their communities. The following quote is typical of the text as a whole:

> Any girl who tries to take an active part in the running of SYM is popularly regarded as 'loose', with the consequence that those who do try to get involved very quickly leave. When the leadership is challenged about its attitude to women, they simply reply they were brought up that way and they are too old to change![76]

Birmingham Black Sisters sardonically called the Asian Youth Movement the Asian 'Young Men's Association'.[77] In reaction to this lack of political space, a group of young women in their late teens and early twenties formed Southall Black Sisters.[78] Here we see the extent to which this space for Asian feminists was claimed in reaction to both the racism of the feminist movement, and the sexism of the radical Black and anti-racist movement.

Patel remembered that when she first met the group, it was deeply involved in anti-racist activism, and in conducting campaigns in defence of those who had been arrested at anti-racist demonstrations in Southall. Southall Black Sisters (SBS) also joined Awaz at the anti-virginity testing campaigns at Heathrow. Well-known Asian feminist academic Avtar Brah had also been part of the group during this first phase of its existence, remembering that:

> We had all been involved in anti-racist work and through that we had learnt of our shared experiences of colonialism and racism. We began to discuss the specificity of our experience as Black women. [...] Our aim was to devise effective strategies for working within our own communities – for challenging the specific configuration of patriarchal relations in these communities as well as in society at large – while actively opposing the racism to which all Black people, men and women, are subjected.[79]

This stage of the group's activism, however, was relatively short lived. When Patel, after moving away, came back to Southall in 1982, she discovered that the group was largely in abeyance. Committed to activism and desperately wanting to keep SBS going so that a feminist group for Asian women in the area existed, she managed to attract new people in and, crucially, applied for and received Greater London Council

funding.[80] The early and mid-1980s were a time in which a Labour-dominated GLC, led by Ken Livingstone, gave out unparalleled amounts of grant money to local community organisations, many of which had started their lives as radical political groups in the 1970s. The money that Patel managed to secure allowed Southall Black Sisters to employ three workers (one of which was herself), and set up the Southall Black Women's Centre as a place where this office was situated, and where local women could drop in.[81] This funding marked a step-change in what Southall Black Sisters became as an organisation, marking a shift towards them providing advice and support for local Asian women (particularly those who were victims of domestic violence).

In this new phase of activism, SBS continued its work on campaigns against immigration laws, but also began to focus more strongly on the issues of forced marriages and domestic violence within the Asian community. In 1984, SBS garnered even more attention for their demonstration in memory of a Southall woman Krishna Sharma, who had hanged herself after suffering from years of domestic violence and abuse. SBS publicly shamed the Sharma family by gathering outside their family house with placards that stated 'They say it's suicide: We say it's murder.'[82] Similarly, around this time, Birmingham Black Sisters campaigned on behalf of Iqbal Begum, an Asian women who had been convicted of murdering her abusive husband without adequate legal representation or interpreters provided (she spoke no English, and when entering a plea had said 'galti' – Urdu for 'mistake', mistaken for 'guilty' by the judge and jury).[83] This focus on domestic violence grew throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, with several other prominent campaigns instigated to free Asian women who had fought back against their abusers (the most prominent of which was Kiranjit Ahluwalia), and the formation of multiple refuges for Asian women who had suffered domestic abuse in cities across the country – perhaps the most concrete achievement of Asian feminists in this period.[84]

These campaigns of the 1980s marked more broadly across the Asian women's movement a shift away from anti-racist activism towards a politics that was more explicitly feminist in orientation. This shift brought with it a move towards a more subjective theoretical style that made Asian women's activism more recognisably akin to the personal-as-political politics of the Women's Liberation Movement. Radical Black and anti-racist activism in the 1970s was firmly rooted in a Marxist tradition that emphasised structure over the individual, with a consequent focus on economic and legal structures that oppressed ethnic minorities. Thus the anti-racist activism that many Asian women were involved in

at this point was framed through the language of smashing the racist state. Most feminist activism, however, sprang from a rather different New Left that, whilst it still understood structure as important, took the individual's subjective experience of oppression as the starting place for political awakening and analysis. This shift towards this mode of analysis is particularly noticeable in the textual productions of Asian feminism at this time, particularly in the short-lived British Asian feminist periodical *Mukti*. Published in the mid-1980s and supported by a grant from the Greater London Council, *Mukti* contained many pieces from British-Asian women discussing the struggles of their own lives in a style that feels reminiscent of the consciousness-raising sessions more associated with white feminists of the early 1970s, focusing on issues such as relationships, sex, the body and family life.

Given this, it is small wonder that Asian feminists worried about how their critiques of their own communities would be received. Indeed, these tensions had been present for some time: the reception of Amrit Wilson's seminal 1978 work, *Finding A Voice: Asian Women in Britain Today* represents a case in point. This book – brought out by feminist publishers Virago – was an instant success, and went through many printings and several editions. Wilson was a middle-class scientist turned campaigner, who had moved from her native Delhi to London in the early 1960s to do a PhD, and subsequently married an Englishman.[85] The book is a journalistic account of the many difficulties facing female Asian migrants to Britain, based on Wilson's original research and interviews with many such women. In presenting an almost unrelentingly negative view of Asian women's lives, however, the work was criticised by some Asian feminists. Well-known Asian feminist Pratibha Parmar noted that:

> [the] interviews and subjective accounts are presented without any explicit political and economic framework. The significance of this absence is brought out by the fact that a common response to the book was, 'I had to put it down, half way through reading, because it made me cry.'
>
> While not denying the reality of the hardships and isolation of a lot of Asian women's lives as brought out in the book, it is important to be careful about providing further fodder for the liberal racist whose reading of the book can all too easily reinforce ideas of Asian men being more sexist than white men and Asian families being particularly barbaric and tyrannical.[86]

Significantly, Parmar suggested that 'social workers, academics, community workers and white feminists' were amongst the book's applauding audience.[87] Here, there is very much a sense that Parmar believes that Wilson is telling white liberals in positions of power what they want to hear; and Parmar, like many other Black feminists, was critical of the ways in which feminist critiques of the family could be used against migrant women, both in terms of migration laws, and because, as Hazel Carby famously argued, they might instead have found the Black family to be a refuge from the racist state.

It is also useful to be alert to the moment of production of the text and pay attention to the class relationships between Wilson and her interviewees. Discussions of ethnic diversity in the feminist movement both past and present often fail to take into account the ways in which the Black and Asian women's movements were also stratified by class. Yet, as with white feminists, Black and Asian women's groups were largely composed of women who were more privileged than average, fuelling a representational dynamic in which the problems of working-class ethnic-minority women were refracted through the different experiences and worldviews of the ethnic-minority middle-class women who had taken on the task of giving them voice. As a middle-class, English-speaking and highly-educated woman, Wilson led a life far more privileged than those of her interviewees, and there is a problematic sense in which Wilson failed to allow her interviewees to occupy any position other than that of the downtrodden poor woman. There is little nuance evident in how Amrit Wilson understood how 'ordinary Asian women' may have indeed experienced these oppressions, and yet nevertheless managed to lead complex and varied lives in which they were more than simply victims.

Revealingly, SBS, for their part, stood firmly by the interpretations favoured by Amrit Wilson. Writing of Parmar's critique of Wilson, Gita Sahgal commented that 'We found it very hard to connect with the approved positions of established black feminist theory', further stating of Parmar's critique that 'In practice, this meant that raising questions about Asian family life outside black women only forums was frowned upon.'[88] This gives a vivid sense in this particular debate of the policing within the Black women's movement of what could and couldn't be said about Asian families in various different arenas, and also of the self-censorship that some Asian women practiced in this regard. There was a very real sense in which Asian feminist activism in Britain was fundamentally shaped by the spectre of the invisible white feminist in

the room: as Gita Sahgal has written: 'Our agendas were structured by the threat of the bogey of the liberal racist.'[89]

This also leads to more difficult questions of whether was there a way in which Asian women could critique their communities without either alienating their supporters, or being accused of simply wanting to become westernised. As Wilson remembered of Awaz:

> I think a lot of politicised people may reject religion from a Marxist or even a rational point of view and yet choose to remain very Indian in their way, partly because they prefer it that way and partly to resist the effect of colonialism and racism which usually negate our culture . . . In Awaz we did try to analyse everything. So for example, we did not feel that people should not drink or smoke for moral reasons. But we were also very conscious of the Asian community. We did not want to alienate them or separate ourselves in any way. So on various occasions we did not drink or smoke. We wanted the support and trust of the older women in our communities because on a practical as well as an emotional level our struggles were often identical to theirs.[90]

Whilst in some respects it is easy to place the activism of women in groups such as Southall Black Sisters or Awaz inside a western intellectual framework of secularism and universal human rights for all regardless of cultural or religious differences, such an interpretation also risks failing to understand the many ways they also used that same western intellectual framework to criticise the postcolonial state. The image that SBS give of their counter protests against a march of Muslim fundamentalists protesting Salman Rushdie *Satanic verses* in May 1989 is one that most aptly sums up their defiantly oppositional politics which had so few natural allies: 'We had to look one way and shout slogans opposing fundamentalism, another way denouncing the racist police and a third way shouting anti-NF slogans . . . That picket was a physical symbol of the kind of contradiction which constantly arises in the course of our work.'[91]

Black women and men

Black men had both inspired and helped Black women in their struggles; but conversely, Black women had also encountered sexism and misunderstanding from Black men. Black women were often accused of splitting the Black movement, which further complicated this relationship.[92]

One woman wrote, 'As Black women we were sometimes ambivalent in our contact with Black men. We had to fight the tendency towards subduing ourselves within a mixed group without then being seen as dividers of the community.'[93] From the very beginning, the Black women's movement was always much more open to working with men than the white women's movement was, though this was more true of the Afro/Caribbean women's movement than of Asian feminists who, as we have seen, had a more difficult relationship with the men of their community. Many took the position that the effects of imperialism and capitalism necessarily meant that Black men were unable to oppress Black women in the way that white men oppressed women. As Hazel Carby wrote in her famous 1982 essay 'White woman listen!', 'How . . . can it be argued that black male dominance existed in the same forms as white male dominance? Systems of slavery, colonialism, imperialism, have systematically denied positions in the white male hierarchy to black men and have used specific forms of terror to oppress them.' These sentiments were largely agreed with in the Black women's movement, as shown by Sudbury. As one of her interviewees remembered, 'the issue of sexism from white men was very different from the issue of sexism from black men, because black men don't have the power that white men have.'[94]

It is thus unsurprising that were so many areas of collaboration between men and women in the Black radical community. As noted previously, many of the campaigns that Black women were involved in were mixed-sex campaigns, and some, such as the 'Scrap SUS' campaigns, also primarily benefitted men.

Putting men at the centre of some campaigns was a feature that distinguished the way in which Black women organised. Unsurprisingly, this was a form of activism that in some respects placed Black women at an angle to the traditionally 'women-centered' activities of the Women's Liberation Movement. Yet Black women were able to position this activism as 'feminist' through claiming it to be activism that was, as Gail Lewis has put it, under the 'banner of the maternal'. As she remembered:

> So all of the campaigns, I mean the ways in which women led the education campaigns in the black communities, the ways in which they led often, the anti-policing campaigns, the anti-racist, the campaigns against racist policing of young people and the ways in which they did that often in the voice of the maternal as our children, my son voice, you know, can't be subjected to this, you know, that kind of voice. That at some moment I think within a sort of,

> the predominant voice of feminism in the seventies, early eighties, somehow couldn't quite incorporate a notion of mobilising in the image or in the name of the maternal as being sufficiently feminist. Because, of course, because of the ways in which the movement also needed profoundly to take on board and undermine and make completely redundant the ways in which women's maternal capacities positioned them as second class, as subordinate to men.[95]

This, again, was an issue that fundamentally questioned the terrain of feminism. Furthermore, Black men were often an active supportive presence in the Black women's movement: as Sudbury noted, 'From their inception, black men as partners, brothers, and elders were present, organising sound systems, caring for children while women held meetings, acting as drivers, decorators and sponsors for funding applications.'[96]

Nevertheless, tensions between radical Black men and women were often extremely visible. Some strands of Black radicalism held extremely conservative notions of gender, influenced by Black American Afrocentric thought. As one woman remembered in *The Heart of the Race*:

> There was this romantic image of African womanhood around at the time [1970s], and although a lot of us were beginning to take on the idea that Black women were strong and had a role to play in the struggle, many of us still hadn't reached the stage where we could challenge the idea that we should walk three paces behind the men.[97]

Although it is difficult to gauge the extent to which a macho culture took hold in British Black radicalism, it is clear that it did exist to at least a limited extent. As Olive Gallimore remembered, 'Black men, those so-called political men, saw Black feminism as divisive, in the sense that it was splitting the movement and those of us who had a long and continuing relationship with Black men weren't communicating with them on that political level.'[98] It was difficult to gain recognition for the legitimacy of women-only space. Stella Dadzie remembered that they were inspired to set up a women-only organisation for the women involved in African liberation struggles, who had discovered to their cost that it was difficult to get the men in the organisation to take women's issues seriously:

> [...] there was a general assumption, which underpinned a lot of liberation movements at the time, that once the nationalist struggle

> had been won, then they'd get around to women's issues. [. . .] It was the women from Eritrea and Ethiopia, women – Zanu women, people who were involved in those struggles in Africa that were saying 'don't go there, you need your own independent thing because otherwise the brothers will take over.' And that's how OWAAD came about. And I don't think if I'm honest, if I look back that I'd even begun to grapple with feminist politics at that time, it was a kind of natural reaction I think that any thinking woman would have had in a context where you see things happening around that affected women, and you could see the way women were patronised or exploited within those organisations – not necessarily cynically – it was just the way it worked, basic assumptions about men in power, with the female roles of the time.[99]

There were several flash points between Black women and men. A particularly intense confrontation took place in Manchester, between members of the Black Women's Co-operative and the community charity George Jackson House Trust (GJHT), of which they were a part. Wanting to restructure the Co-op, Black women called a general meeting for women in the community. This was opposed by several men (and some women) involved in the trust, and the Black Women's Co-operative was suspended from the GJHT for this action. The reasons for the opposition to such a meeting are unclear, but the suspension of the women was interpreted by the Co-operative as an anti-democratic, elitist and anti-woman move. Incensed that men would deign to interfere in the running of the Co-operative, the women then occupied George Jackson House, writing in a flyer that they sent to Black women's groups across the country that

> WE ARE NOW OCCUPYING IT. WE CALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT TO GET THE CO-OPERATIVE IN THE HANDS OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND NOT IN THE HANDS OF A SELECT FEW. IT SHOULD BE RUN AND CONTROLLED BY BLACK WOMEN WITHOUT INTERFERENCE AND INTIMIDATION FROM RON PHILLIPS AND ANY OTHER MEN WHO SUPPORT THIS ACTION.[100] (capitals original)

They were supported by OWAAD in their occupation, and it is recorded in the minutes of OWAAD meetings that several women from London went up to support their struggle.[101] The occupation was also covered in the first issue of the OWAAD newsletter *FOWAAD*, which reprinted the statement that 'As an organising body and political organisation, it was

to be shaped and controlled by Black women. Never was it conceived that the men of the GJHT would dictate the ideology and activity of the Co-op.'[102]

Similarly, the Brixton Defence Campaign (initiated to defend youths on trial after the 1981 riots), on which men and women worked together, caused some rifts. Despite the fact that BBWG provided the physical space for the campaign to meet, Gail Lewis remembered:

> We still had to fight to be heard. I remember there was a big row on the coach on the way back from Liverpool [the campaign had significant links with the city], between the women and men and that created quite a big rift between us. Some of the sharpest contradictions that arose, arose in relation to Black men, rather than in relation to white women.[103]

She further remembered that there were insinuations about lesbianism.[104] This tells us much about the isolation that Black feminists faced, and such isolation clearly put tremendous strain on the women involved in such political activities. With so few allies, it is understandable that many Black feminist organisations struggled into the 1990s. There was a constant tension for Black women between wider community and specifically women's politics. Nevertheless, it also helps us to understand why it was that Black feminists were the first to analyse the intersection of race, class and gender. Debates around how precisely these interacted were one of several issues, alongside Afro-Asian unity and sexuality, that both split the movement and transformed its praxis, as the next part of this chapter will explore. Yet, having been pushed to the margins of left activism, they were also in the perfect structural position to make new and exciting connections in political theory.

The beginnings of OWAAD and Afro-Asian unity

OWAAD was perhaps the most well-known and important of the many British Black women's groups, or at least as Ranu Samantrai has written, 'the most suggestively iconic.'[105] Founded in 1978, it was originally set up by a group of women who intended to form a women's caucus in the African Student's Union (ASU).[106] Realising, as Stella Dadzie relates, that this would make them subject to the control of the men in the ASU, they decided to set up their own organisation, at first called the Organisation of Women of Africa and African Descent. Having grown out of the ASU, their focus was initially on the liberation struggles of

Africa, particularly in countries such as Eritrea and Zimbabwe. However, the organisation changed dramatically over the course of its first year when – after a challenge from Asian women – they changed their name to the Organisation of Women of African and *Asian* Descent, and began to focus more heavily on domestic rather than international concerns, though they remained committed to an anti-imperialist analysis.[107] This change in itself prompted a large scale desertion of African women from the organisation, who felt that their concerns were no longer being addressed.[108] OWAAD were an umbrella organisation for Black women's groups, and so it would be a mistake to generalise too widely about its activities, but campaigns surrounding racist attacks, immigration, and Depo-Provera, were at the core of their activism, reflecting the concerns of local Black women's groups.[109] They also produced a newsletter, *FOWAAD*, which aimed to serve as a link between the groups around the country (although in practice it tended to be very London-centric), and provide opinion pieces, reviews, and information about campaigns. The group held their first conference in London on 18 March 1979, at the Abeng Centre in Brixton. It was the occasion for similar emotions of euphoria that many white feminists experienced in finding the WLM. One woman claimed that 'I'd never realised that there were so many Black women who were articulate, organised and aware of what was going on. I was on a high for weeks afterwards.'[110]

The list of workshops at this conference is revealing as to the pre-occupations of the Black women's movement at the time: sessions were held on health, education, British law, anti-imperialism and employment.[111] The conference papers were collected in a booklet entitled 'Black Women in Britain Speak Out' (not to be confused with the journal of the BBWG, or the BUFP pamphlet, which also both shared this name), which was published soon after the conference.[112] Although OWAAD declared itself to be an anti-sexist organisation, and the conference papers produced were women-focused, there was little in them that employed a specifically feminist analysis. It is clear that OWAAD deliberately shied away from the term in its early days in an effort not to alienate Black women who associated the term with white women.

The second conference of OWAAD in 1980, entitled 'Black Women Fighting Back' attracted more than six hundred women.[113] It was again held in London (this time in another centre of Afro-Caribbean settlement, Tottenham), but despite the growing numbers, cracks in the organisation soon started to show. It quickly became evident that OWAAD was too big an umbrella for the multitude of different opinions held by its member groups. Whilst there were many areas of contention,

issues around Afro-Asian unity, lesbianism, and whether or not the organisation was explicitly feminist came particularly to the fore. All were painful areas of debate.

The ideal of Afro-Asian unity was contingent on the recognition of the validity of the concept of political 'Blackness' outlined in the introduction. That is to say, regardless of skin tone, all immigrants from the 'third world' to Britain should consider themselves victims of the same imperialism, colonialism and racism. Their differences were largely irrelevant in the face of the overwhelming racism of the British state, and therefore, all immigrant groups should unite under the banner of political 'Blackness'. Ironically, Afro-Asian unity had been felt to be one of the main achievements of the first OWAAD conference. The editorial of the pamphlet 'Black women speak out' noted that 'perhaps the greatest achievement of all was the bringing together of Asian, Indo- and Afro-Caribbean and African Sisters and Black sisters born and brought up here, to discuss some of the many issues which unite us.'[114] Despite the initial African basis of the organisation, it has been claimed that nearly fifty per cent of those who attended OWAAD's first conference in 1979 were Asian.[115] However, the honeymoon period was not to last. Despite the common experience of racism, it appears that in practice that the gap in experience between Afro-Caribbean, African and Asian women was too large a chasm to bridge. Furthermore, due to the origins of OWAAD, most of the leading lights of the organisation were still African or Afro-Caribbean. Quite simply, the issues were different. Unsurprisingly, Afro-Caribbean women – who formed the largest ethnic contingent in OWAAD – wanted to focus on issues that were affecting the Black community such as SUS laws and education, as well as on their own particular travails as women in those specific communities. Asian women, on the other hand, were more concerned with issues surrounding forced marriages and conservative cultural/religious practices that meant that South Asian families were often strongly patriarchal in character. There was also the language barrier: English was the first language of those from the West Indies, but often only the second or third of women from African and particularly Asian communities, if it was spoken at all.[116]

By 1981, OWAAD's hand had been forced into producing a paper on 'Afro-Asian Unity', and on 14 February 1981, a day's workshop was held on the issue. Southall Black Sisters (SBS) – a predominantly Asian group that nevertheless included African and Afro-Caribbean women – circulated a paper agreeing fundamentally with the statement given by OWAAD, but also noting that:

> [...] as a group who have attempted to put this principle into practice, we feel that it completely ignores differences we have found it essential to take into account at all levels of organisation. The most obvious being our cultural difference, whilst we are both oppressed as women, the specific nature of that oppression takes different forms.[117]

They went on to describe the difficulties that putting Afro-Asian unity into practice had resulted in during the attempt to set up a woman's refuge in Southall. Some of the group had felt that the very strong lifestyle differences between Asian and Afro-Caribbean women in terms of religion, issues of caste and even food, meant that the setting up of a specifically Asian refuge in Southall was, in this case, justified. However, others in the group felt that this was reneging on the principle of Afro-Asian unity, and that these cultural differences could be overcome within the refuge.[118] The striking thing about this example, however, is the fact that SBS was a mixed group at all. Many of the groups affiliated to OWAAD were exclusively Afro-Caribbean/African or Asian (if not by dogma, then by default). By December 1981, despite the day event on Afro-Asian unity that had been held earlier in the year, OWAAD had a meeting in which Afro-Asian unity was the primary topic of discussion. Tellingly, there were so few Asian women present that it was at first debated whether to leave the discussion until the next meeting. Nevertheless, the discussion continued and it was recorded in the notes:

> Are the criticisms levelled at OWAAD, e.g. failure to take Afro-Asian unity seriously, all valid (take the newsletter, conference, day-school, and countless discussion) – doesn't our real failure lie in our inability to translate this into practice? How feasible is it, in practice, to organize jointly given that a group based in a predominantly Asian community will inevitably take up predominantly Asian issues, and a group based in a predominantly Afro-Caribbean community will do likewise?[119]

Once again, the tensions at the heart of Afro-Asian unity were exposed. Perhaps the East London Black Women's Organisation (ELBWO) were more honest about their limitations when they wrote that:

> [...] we would state that we are an Afro-Caribbean group. We are not in any way an anti-Asian group. We're not into pigmentation politics

> or the politics of division but we feel that in terms of the way that we want to organize we must exclude Asians from the group. We do support Asian groups on all kinds of issues and we always go out when the community organizes against racial harassment or if a particular Asian is being harassed or has been attacked.[120]

It is unclear how far these issues were salient outside London, where smaller ethnic minority communities, and indeed, smaller numbers of feminist activists, may have forced more co-operation between Asians, Afro-Caribbean, and African women. Certainly, in Liverpool the Black community was seen to include the city's long-established Chinese and mixed-race populations.[121] In the London-centric OWAAD, however, Afro-Asian unity was one of the main reasons for the demise of the organisation in 1982. In an editorial from *Speak Out* (later re-published in *Feminist Review* 17) which provided a long post-mortem on OWAAD, the issue of Afro-Asian unity was analysed thus:

> the unwitting exclusivity of OWAAD's focus, which resulted from the numerical strength of Caribbean sisters in the organisation, became symbolic of our inability to grasp the fact that recognition of cultural differences can be a political strength which help us to transcend the divisions which our colonial and neo-colonial masters (and mistresses) and their agents attempt to foist on us.[122]

It was thus apparent that the failure of the attempt at Afro-Asian unity was held to be in large part responsible for the downfall of OWAAD. The failure of their utopian vision of political harmony between different ethnic minorities was not just demoralising in and of itself: it had also split the organisation and made the possibility of a broad coalition of ethnic minority feminists seem impossible. And without that coalition, many felt that the struggle against racism could not be won.

OWAAD, Black women and feminism

The issue of the relationship of Black women to feminism also caused much discussion and division, both in OWAAD and the larger Black women's movement. Opinions amongst the OWAAD member groups were diverse. The emphasis of some groups (such as BBWG) on socialist and anti-imperialist feminism, both aligned them to some of the more specifically white feminist groups who worked against imperialism – such as Women Against Imperialism – and distanced them from

those with a more cultural or radical feminist analysis. BBWG explicitly tied their anti-imperialism into their socialism, writing that:

> As Black women we are strongly influenced by the knowledge that our countries of origin, the so-called 'Third World', having been actively underdeveloped by colonialism (a part of capitalism) is even now being raped and pillaged under the stranglehold of imperialism (yet another, and to us very relevant, aspect of capitalism). Thus, a few industrialized countries grow more and more wealthy and powerful at our expense, while our people die of starvation and our own countries fall ever deeper into dependence and poverty.[123]

They further distanced themselves from the radical feminist arm of the WLM by writing that: 'The black woman's movement in Britain, should like those women who either belong to a women's movement or the arm of a party in third world countries, form part of the total struggle for liberation. This is quite different from women who wish to create change for women, in isolation to men.'[124] Such socialist and anti-imperialist thought was a constant within Black feminism, although by the mid-1980s it was no longer enjoying the prominence it had during the OWAAD era.

In contrast to BBWG, ELBWO refused to call themselves feminists. One of their members specifically condemned what they felt to be in the first OWAAD conference 'The exclusion of men and the anti-man feeling which I identify as coming from a white feminist perspective.' She further went on to state that:

> We decided that in our women's group [ELBWO] we would deal with the way that we saw to resolve those two political problems by stating that we are not a feminist group and thereby avoiding those association and implication [sic] that we are anti-men and by practically allowing men to affiliate to our group. We have what we consider a controlled relationship with men.[125]

These tensions came to a head when OWAAD's final conference was held on the specific theme of 'Black Feminism'. Unsurprisingly, this 'brought angry criticism from newer members, who did not understand the history behind the theme, and/or were 'hostile to feminism,' and therefore saw its choice as 'a retrogressive step', according to a long editorial in *Speak Out* dissecting the demise of OWAAD.[126] This speaks to a contradiction in the fundamental purpose of OWAAD that was

reflected in the travails of other Black women's groups. Were these groups Black women's organisations or feminist organisations? Gerlin Bean remembered:

> [...] we had a lot of arguments and, you know, because all of us have contradictions, so we had lots of differences and from wherever we were coming, we were coming with different ideologies, and different beliefs, and different things on the way things should be done. Or even when we read and we were discussing whether we were a part of the Feminist Movement, or it was ... Black Nationalist, or we were socialist or we were whatever 'ist', the 'isms'. So we were always having those kind of discussions and conflicts.[127]

This was echoed by an interviewee in *The Heart of the Race*, who said:

> I think if you're a Black woman, you've got to begin with racism. It's not a choice, it's a necessity. There are a few Black women around now, who don't want to deal with that reality and prefer sitting around talking about their sexual preferences or concentrating on strictly women's issues like male violence. But the majority of Black women would see those kinds of things as 'luxury' issues.

As this passage suggests, related to the controversy over feminism was the controversy over lesbianism in the movement. At the 1981 OWAAD conference, a request for there to be space for a lesbian workshop ended in acrimony. Activist Femi Otitoju remembered, after the request for a Black lesbian-only space was made at the conference 'Well, you should have heard them, Mash 'em up, get them out, all of this kinda stuff, I'm thinking ooh, dear oh dear, what's going on?'[128] This account has been supported by many others: both Valerie Mason John and Julia Sudbury in their accounts of the Black feminist movement in Britain have argued that OWAAD's inability to deal with lesbianism was one of the primary reasons for its disintegration.[129] This was due to the disparate influences of evangelical Christianity and hard leftist thought on Black women's activism. The former disapproved of lesbianism as ungodly, and the latter, whilst not necessarily disapproving of it, saw a focus on sexuality as a bourgeois diversion from core economic issues.[130] As *Speak Out's* long post-mortem on the demise of OWAAD argued, the issues around sexuality had been present since the first conference, but the question of how women could 'waste time' discussing such issues was constantly posed.[131]

These issues had also been germane to Brixton Black Women's Group, who had to address similar issues: they were torn when a Black lesbian group asked to use the Black Women's Centre in Brixton, which the group had helped to set up. Their worries centred on the response from their local community. As Valerie Mason John and Ann Khambatta wrote, 'they were concerned that a lesbian group on the premises would add to the hostility it was already experiencing as a Black women's centre'. This particular case has generated conflicting accounts. Some remembered the group were allowed to use the centre after all, after a member of BBWG had suggested 'This is crap. Are they not our sisters?'[132] Others suggest that the group had to move to A Women's Place, a GLC-funded feminist centre in central London largely dominated by white women.[133] Nevertheless, the issues around lesbianism rumbled on and were significant enough for there to be a Black lesbian round table discussion reprinted in the special *Feminist Review* edition of autumn 1984, 'Many Voices, One Chant: Black Feminists Speak Out.' Again, the moment at the 1981 OWAAD conference where Black lesbians were refused space was mentioned. By October 1985, however, there was a visible enough lesbian presence within Black feminism for the first Black lesbian conference to take place. This event again took place in London; there were reported to be more than 200 women present.[134]

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the Black women's movement by the mid-1980s, beset by these difficulties, became split between those willing to label themselves as 'feminist' – which, significantly, often implied a sympathy with lesbian politics – and those unable to agree with such a label. The latter seemingly shied away from national organising, retreating into the community-based organisations where they had always been most firmly based.[135] May 1984 saw the appearance of the first specifically feminist Black women's conference. Given the name 'We Are Here', it was once again held in London (in the building of the University of London Union) and attracted many women from across the country. Workshop titles included Culture, Black Feminism, Health, Family, Class/Caste, Working in White WLM, Our Differences, Mixed Race, Making Links, Sexuality, and Black Lesbians. The introduction in the pack handed out to those attending stated that:

> This is the first conference that we have come together as Black feminists, to start a process of defining what Black Feminism means to us. Space should be given to every woman to speak and raise questions, valuing each woman's experience and knowledge so that we

> can move forward. Disagreement between us is part of the challenge and process of defining ourselves.[136]

Much of the rhetoric and content of the conference was remarkably similar to that employed by white feminists at the time. There was little discussion in the conference of anti-imperialism or community-based projects, and it is striking how both of these phenomena – so crucial in earlier discussions of Black women organising in Britain – were absent from the conference programme. Instead, the concentration on issues such as 'culture' and 'sexuality', marked a turn towards concerns recognised as more specifically 'feminist'. For example, the introduction to the culture workshop was described thus:

> It is essential to understand that culture is a very political issue for Black women. Culture is everything about us, the way we look, our speech, our dress, our music, our hair. Culture is our heritage and determines our identity.[137]

The turn towards a discussion of representations of the body in this passage suggests a changing emphasis in the priorities of Black feminists. This is reinforced by the fact that the 'Our Differences' workshop which concentrated on differences of race, culture, class, religion and sexuality, in fact – according to the printed report back – began with a discussion on dress. It did later move on to a discussion of the perennial problems of Afro-Asian unity, noting that 'differences have not been discussed and major arguments have resulted.' There was a suggestion that 'a fragile unity' had been built, but it is not at all clear that significant progress had been made on this vexing issue.[138] The report back from the sexuality workshop is also interesting for the parallels with white feminism that it brings into focus. Comments included 'I am not encouraged to think of myself as a sexual being. I'm always portrayed as a wife and mother' and also that 'Women have not thought of themselves as having sexual needs. It always has to be linked with romance. Romantic love is always seen as being between men and women – ending in marriage and family.'[139] Once again, this paralleled white feminist thought on the subject.[140] Nevertheless, these comments were framed very much within the specific experience of Black women, with the author further adding that 'Sexuality has been defined for us mainly by a white heterosexual society. White women are regarded as beautiful, while black women's sexuality, if mentioned, is only mentioned in terms of the exotic. Racism and sexism defines images of beautiful women which are "non-black".'[141]

Furthermore, the existence of a workshop on 'working with the white WLM' suggests that whilst relationships with white feminists were not necessarily a picture of harmony, the notion that Black and white feminists were pursuing an essentially similar project was gaining ground. This is mirrored in the content of the *We Are Here* newsletter, founded after the conference. (The first issue of the newsletter, in fact, was largely dedicated to the report backs from the workshops at the conference). This newsletter specifically concentrated on issues of feminist politics, rather than wider issues affecting the Black community per se. Though there were dissenting voices as to coverage, issues such as sexuality, incest and health were covered in a manner that often paralleled the way in which white feminists covered these issues. Striking also in this newsletter was the attention it paid to subjective experience as well as to 'objective' political analysis, a shift that can increasingly be seen in Black women's publications from the mid-1980s onwards. This increasing interest in personal experience again marks a parallel with white feminism, evoking the earlier (white) feminist slogan of the personal being political. Also in common with 'whiter' feminist publications, there was significant attention given to lesbian issues in the newsletter, issues which earlier publications such as *FOWAAD* and BBWG's *Speak Out* never gave much space to. And the fifth edition of *We Are Here,* published in March 1985 proclaimed that 'The theme of this issue is HEALTH which should be…IN OUR OWN HANDS!!!' a proclamation that could have been straight out of any 1970s edition of *Spare Rib*.[142]

The tone of much Black women's writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, on the other hand, was often dismissive of the white feminist project. Certainly, working with white feminists was never an issue that was given much attention within conferences, though there were individuals who did so. But this seems to represent a shift that was happening more generally within feminism. By 1982, the *Spare Rib* editorial collective had been thoroughly overhauled to ensure that at least half the members were always 'Women of Colour' (an American term that the collective began to use instead of Black).[143] 1984 saw the publication of the landmark special Black feminist edition of *Feminist Review* 'Many Voices, One Chant'. As this suggests, this was a movement that was increasingly seeing itself in print, both through the periodical press and in books. *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* – the first book about Black women to be written *by* Black women – was published by Virago in 1985, though its endorsement of feminism was less emphatic than either the writers of 'Many Voices, One Chant', or the writers featured in the anthology *Charting the Journey: Writing by*

Black and Third World Women. Published in 1988, this latter book laid an explicit claim to feminism.[144] Again, it is significant that a book that was comfortable with labelling itself feminist also talked of the influence of the WLM and of working with white feminists, though it emphasised the sometimes problematic nature of such work.[145] Though the alliances were often uneasy, there was increasing emphasis, in both Black and white feminist worlds, on working together, as shall be discussed further in the final chapter of this book.

Womanism and American influences

Another strand in Black women's activist ideology also emerged in the mid-1980s with the increasing visibility of 'womanism' (also sometimes spelt womynism). A term coined by the American writer Alice Walker, it was supposed to invoke the experiences of Black women in the United States. Of its relationship to feminism, Walker herself said of the term that 'Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.'[146] As a term, womanism always had more currency in the United States than Britain.[147] However, some Black women in England did feel it provided a solution to the dilemma of using the term 'feminism'. One writer in the periodical *We Are Here* wrote:

> A realistic review of the relevance of 'feminism' to Black womyn is long overdue, and some of us are saying goodbye to 'Black Feminism' because for us it has never been a reality. 'Feminism' is a product of white upper middle class women and did not develope [sic] out of our own experience. Black Womynism is not alien to our culture and traditions.[148]

The term was also used by Camden Black Sisters, with one of its members, Valentina Alexander, writing of the 'twin revolutions of Black Womanism and White Feminism.'[149] Another woman wrote 'The term black feminist . . . doesn't or [n]ever will fit comfortably – "Womynist"is definitely more me.'[150] Perhaps most notably, Julia Sudbury, who has provided one of the few accounts of Black British feminism during this period – and was involved in the movement herself from the late 1980s onwards – explicitly identified with the term in her work.[151]

However, it is clear that the term 'womanism' was itself contested. Prominent Black feminist Shaila Shah, who was on the editorial board of internationalist feminist paper *Outwrite* and co-edited the 1982 feminist anthology *No Turning Back*, wrote into *We Are Here* saying:

> I was bemused and disturbed to read what appears to be the current debate amongst some black women i.e. should we call ourselves feminists? My instant response is, why not? After years of asserting our feminist ideology and politics, and developing a Black feminism that is based on our experience of oppression, surely we need to concentrate on furthering the development of our ideology and making feminism available to more black women, rather than regressing by invisibilising ourselves and our politics and calling ourselves 'women' instead![152]

This was an analysis later shared by Helen (charles) [brackets original], who, whilst acknowledging the contributions and benefits of womanism, ultimately rejected its usage *instead* of feminism. She argued that it was necessary to preserve the term feminism for strategic purposes and, further, to demonstrate that feminism was not a 'strict and impenetrable concept' but 'one which is pervious to change'.[153] That by the 1990s it seemed so much more possible for Black women to employ 'feminism' as a term also suggests that relationships between black and white feminists were improving. The changing acceptability of the term 'feminist' is itself an excellent marker of the changing relationships of Black women activists to white feminists, signifying how damaged relationships were at times with white feminists, but also, ultimately, the flexibility of the term feminism itself, and the ability of activists to remake concepts to make them useful to themselves.

As the debate over the use of the term 'womanism' suggests, Black British feminism – as noted by Christine Bolt – was deeply influenced by both American Black feminism and American Black radicalism.[154] This cultural exchange is something that is true more widely of the interactions of the Black communities in the two countries (and indeed, the wider Black diaspora), as has been argued by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*. Anthropologist Jacqueline Nassy Brown has also written convincingly about the reception of American Black power ideas into the Liverpool Black community, further suggesting that 'exchange' is something of a misleading term for a process that was in reality more of a one way street from the States to the UK.[155] This cultural 'exchange', or more accurately 'reception', of Black American radicalism, was evident from the beginning of Black women's activism in England. This is additionally unsurprising when we consider the Caribbean roots of many of those involved in these first years of activism, many of whom would have relatives in the United States, and some of whom may have been

influenced by the activism of American born Claudia Jones during her time in London.

A text that demonstrates these influences very clearly is The Black Women's Action Committee's pamphlet 'Speak Out'. Written at the height of the American and British Black radical movements in the early 1970s, the pamphlet's introduction finished with, 'We Salute Erika Huggins, Joan Bird, Frances Carter, Joan Smith, Loretta Lockes, Margaret Hudgins, Maud Frances, Angela Davis, Madame Binh, Leila Khaled', finishing with, 'Free Kathleen Cleaver.'[156] These were all well-known Black and Asian women struggling against oppression in many different countries (although perhaps Angela Davis is the only name on the list that is still widely recognised). As such, this list in itself demonstrates the internationalism of their outlook. Many of the women whose oral histories have been used for this project talked of the influence of the Black Panther movement in its American incarnation, with several specifically remembering reading George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*.[157] Likewise, one of the most famous supporters of the Soledad brothers, Angela Davis, was a particularly important figure for many Black women's activists in the UK as well as the US. As one interviewee for the Remembering Olive Morris project remembered, 'one of the people that was a real mentor for me was Angela Davis, [she] was a real, kind of, someone that I really wanted to model myself on.'[158] An anonymous woman in *The Heart of the Race* remembered that 'Angela Davis was such an inspiration to Black women at the time. She seemed to have liberated herself mentally and fought in her own right, showing us all a lead. Angela was a very positive development, where Black women's image was concerned.'[159]

Of similar importance were the novels and plays by Black American feminists. Stella Dadzie remembered that:

> Those books spoke to our experience rather than of it, but they were closely enough related to our experience for us to be able to identify [...] And if I look at the women that I know now, who I knew from OWAAD days, when I go into their houses, our bookshelves are all the same, y'know, you'll always see the same books on them, [...] There's that triple influence, you know, white feminism, Black nationalism, and, American, African-American texts.[160]

Yvonne Field also remembered that:

> [...] it was just wonderful see it sort of – to get this literature from the States, [...] I mean we got it here, so it was great. Really, really good.[161]

This was also echoed in the memories of the women interviewed from the Cambridge Black Women's Group. Bola particularly remembered going with other Black women to see Toni Morrison when she came to town.[162] Widely consumed works included Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and the choreopoem/play *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf* by Ntozake Shange. Suggestive of the reasons why these works were so popular, one reviewer wrote of Shange's work that 'as it's told from a black perspective, I read her poems, written in the dialect of my culture, and felt 'That's me; those are my experiences; I've felt the same things'.[163] Audre Lorde, whose influential biography *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name* was also widely read, provided a new terminology for Black lesbians.[164] And demonstrating the diversity of the cultural output of Black feminism, Bernice Johnson Reagon was influential both with her essay 'Coalition politics: turning the century', and her musical output with the vocal group, 'Sweet Honey in the Rock'. There are records of the latter being played in environments as diverse as Olive Morris's funeral, and the office of the mainly white *London Women's Liberation Newsletter*, where a Black woman volunteering recorded the transformative experience of playing it in the office, writing in the periodical *We Are Here* of how it lessened her alienation from her environment.[165] These cultural products seemed to have been received extremely positively in an environment where Black women's voices were rarely heard. The sheer quantity of these works that were reviewed by Black women's periodicals in England (and indeed, 'whiter' periodicals, such as *Spare Rib*), is revealing in itself.

However, these works were not digested uncritically. Amina Mama noted that there was a 'growing body, of Black American literature currently forming a significant reference point for feminists in this country', but that also this was to 'a greater extent than is merited by the historical similarities that do exist between Black women in the US and Britain.'[166] Despite being influenced by Black American feminism, Black British activism was not simply an imitation of it. For example, bell hooks' seminal 1981 work *Ain't I a Woman? Black women and feminism* was widely read but not necessarily received without criticism. One reviewer in *Speak Out* wrote:

> Bell Hooks' [sic] fails to take her definition of feminism and use it to analyse the life of black women. She seems to see feminism as a vanguard for the liberation of all oppressed peoples. This point is too sweeping since it conveys to the reader that the philosophy of feminism is a panacea for all types of oppression. To some extent this is at odds with the socialist world view of political struggle.[167]

In such a climate, it is perhaps no wonder that the explicitly socialist world-view of Angela Davis found such favour amongst Black British feminists of this generation. The same issue of *Speak Out* also carried a review of her book *Sex, Race and Class*, of which the anonymous reviewer (quite possibly the same woman who reviewed bell hooks), approvingly wrote 'Her book – that both sexism and racism is deeply rooted in class oppression – lays the blame squarely where it belongs, in the lap of capitalism.'[168] Stella Dadzie also remembered vividly a trip that she took to the United States with Gerlin Bean in the late 1970s, where, as we saw in the previous chapter, upon visiting a Black women's group in Chicago, they were amazed at its lack of radicalism and focus on cultural politics. Despite the influence of American politics then, a direct comparison also highlights the differences between the Black American and the Black British women's movement. This underlines the rootedness of Black British women's activism in Black socialist thought, and the autonomy and unique nature of its praxis. In addition to the Black Power movement, Black British women's activism was influenced by both Black American women's activism and the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK; but it was neither derivative or imitative of any of these movements.

Conclusion

The Black women's movement in England was a vibrant and multi-faceted phenomenon that encompassed many different points of view and shades of political opinion. Its origins can be traced as far back as 1970, and although influenced by Black Power, the (white) WLM and the American Black women's movement, it developed its own distinctive praxis that emphasised the intersections of oppression, and focused on practical solutions to some of the worst problems faced by Black women. This chapter has sought to demonstrate both the wide range of Black women's activism during this period, and also the considerable axes of division within it. Splits on the issues of feminism, Afro-Asian unity and sexuality were very damaging to the movement, as evidenced by the painful demise of OWAAD. Despite this division and transformation, a shared commitment to improving the lives of Black women, and the involvement of many of the same women across the years and groups, makes it possible for us to speak of a coherent 'Black women's movement' in a meaningful sense during this period. Nevertheless, the debates around feminism and sexuality in particular resulted in a transformation of Black women-centered political praxis. A specifically

feminist Black women's movement existed in 1985 in a way that simply could not be said of 1975, despite the existence of Black women's autonomous organising by the mid-1970s. However, it is important to remain aware of the plurality of Black women's activism throughout this period: as a movement, it contained a variety of viewpoints rather than a commitment to a specific political ideology and practice. Finally, the increasing willingness of Black women activists to term themselves 'feminist' during the 1980s can superficially mask the very real tensions that were still present with white feminists. These debates are the subject of the final chapter.

3
Jewish Feminism in England, c. 1974–1990

Introduction

Debates surrounding 'race' within the feminist movement during the later twentieth century encompassed more than the complex issue of white racism and Black oppression. Although this issue attracted the most attention, many different ethnic groups staked their claim to be considered within the constellation of difference, making their own assertions of a distinctive group identity and oppression.[1] Unlike the Black women's movement, Jewish feminism in England very clearly grew directly out of the WLM. For those Jewish feminists who saw Jewish feminism as an ideal site to organise against racist and sexist oppression, the feminist notion of the personal as political dictated that understanding how their own Jewish identity had shaped their life could form a basis from which to act politically. This movement was largely, although not entirely, secular. As this chapter will illustrate, for some individual Jewish feminists in England, the movement led to an exploration of religious Judaism; but unlike in the US, there was no significant movement to reform religious practices.[2] This chapter will explore the increasing salience of a Jewish identity for Jewish feminists from the mid-1970s onwards, a progression which paralleled the increasing prominence of 'race' within feminism. However, the collapsing of the discrimination that non-Black ethnic groups faced with the overwhelming racism that Black women experienced was often controversial. Nowhere were these claims more controversial than within Jewish feminism. Representing both white privilege and ethnic 'otherness', Jewish feminism became the catalyst for a seismic debate in the movement over the competing claims of different identity groups in the hierarchy of oppression. Jewish feminists constantly had to maintain in tension the identity of being both oppressed and oppressor. This was a tension which contributed greatly

to the uniqueness of Jewish feminist organising; but it also arguably led to the ultimately unsustainable nature of Jewish feminism as a distinct movement.[3] This chapter will explore these intra-ethnic tensions, in particular, addressing the debates between Black and Jewish feminists, which became particularly heated in the arguments around Zionism that were played out in the feminist periodical press. Both inside and outside of the white 'mainstream' of the WLM, Jewish feminism makes for a uniquely illuminating case study in terms of how race relations and identity politics functioned within the women's movement.

Origins of Jewish feminism

The Jewish community in England had been growing steadily more affluent since the post-war era, with a higher percentage of professionals, and university education, than average.[4] It is thus unsurprising that there were significant numbers of Jewish women within the WLM – largely a movement of the educated metropolitan middle-classes – from its inception. However, such Jewish women were rarely in the movement specifically as Jews. As Jenny Bourne – a Jewish woman who worked for the Institute of Race Relations – wrote in her deeply critical analysis of Jewish feminism, 'Homelands of the Mind: Jewish Feminism and Identity Politics':

> During the 1960s and 1970s Jews formed the backbone of the women's movement – certainly in the USA and UK. But we were not there as Jews. We were feminists who just happened to be Jews. Our Jewishness went unarticulated and unsung . . . In Britain, when we began in an organised way to oppose racism and fascism from the mid 1970s, a large proportion were Jewish women. But our Jewishness was not discussed; we just sensed it when we learned one another's surnames or noticed how many of us were called Miriam or Ruth [. . .][5]

Gail Chester also remembered in interview:

> I kept bumping into other Jewish women around the movement who like, oh it doesn't matter, it's irrelevant being Jewish . . . Also, lots of women that I met who I only discovered years later had been Jewish, that were Jewish but I hadn't known at the time, and it was just really horribly isolating . . . There wasn't that sense of Jewish feminism as a place to be consciously.[6]

Yet this was to change significantly: Jewish feminism, as we shall see, flourished in England in the 1980s.

Understanding why Jewish identity had become so important at this point to women who had previously defined themselves as within the white mainstream of WLM can only be understood in the context of the increasing importance of ethnic identity politics during this period in both feminist politics and the wider left. However, it must be remembered that Jewish feminist politics within England were, like Black women's politics, also firmly embedded within the politics of their wider community. There was perceived to be an increasing threat of anti-Semitism, both within the movement and in society at large, which certainly occasioned moments of intense ethnic identification for some Jewish feminists. Furthermore, the Jewish community, having reached a peak of around 450,000 in the 1950s, had begun to dramatically decline in numbers, due to both emigration to Israel and to Jews 'marrying out' of the faith.[7] This arguably provided the structural conditions for the flourishing of Jewish feminism within England. It also provoked serious anxiety within Anglo-Jewry, illustrated by the fact that Jonathan Sacks, on becoming Chief Rabbi in 1991, saw saving the community from extinction as 'the greatest challenge of my Chief Rabbinate'.[8]

Jewish feminism can thus be viewed as part of the larger Jewish community's fight against assimilation in the later twentieth century. As one Jewish feminist, Harriet Wistrich, wrote, 'If we don't assert difference then we accept the dominant norm. If I reject my Jewish identity, I accept a British Christian one and I accept it by implication, not only for myself, but for all Jews and all non-British people.'[9] It is significant that although she was writing this within the context of Jewish feminism, the sentiment echoes those of Jonathan Sacks: the fear of Jewish extinction was one that united many politically disparate elements of the community. Yet the mainstream Jewish community was often seen as socially and economically conservative – certainly by many Jewish feminists at least – and as a source of potential alienation rather than belonging. Erica Burman, an academic psychologist who was involved in the Jewish feminist movement, noted, 'Since 1945 at least, the mainstream expressions of Jewishness have tended to be either structured around religion or, as its substitute, Zionist identifications.'[10] Such conservatism was seen to be epitomised by *The Jewish Chronicle*, a widely-read London-based Jewish newspaper that had served the Jewish community since the 1840s, which was often pilloried in the leftist Jewish press, and viewed as a source of embarrassment to progressive Jews.[11]

The Jewish community, despite its history as an immigrant community, was not particularly noted for its good relationships with New Commonwealth migrants. The Jewish Labour MP (and latterly-disgraced peer), Greville Janner, felt concerned enough to write an article about the situation for *Patterns of Prejudice*, the Institute of Jewish Affairs' in-house journal. In this article, he addressed the separate issues of the non-admittance of anti-Semitic Black nationalist Louis Farrakhan into the UK, and Lord Jakobovits' ill-advised comments on the allegedly work-shy nature of Commonwealth migrants. Janner unsurprisingly felt that neither of these events were making for happy relations between the two communities.[12] Further suggesting a desire on behalf of the mainstream Jewish community to distinguish themselves from new migrants, Jewish representatives in Manchester during the 1980s refused to be on the race subcommittee of the council.[13] Certainly, the way that the debates around Zionism and anti-Zionism played out in the 1980s in the feminist movement point to a troubled relationship between Jews and other ethnic minority communities.

Jewish feminism must be understood in the context of a leftist critique from *within* the Jewish community of both religion and Zionism. This was not necessarily a new phenomenon: Jewish radicalism has a long history. It is worth remembering that Zionism itself was seen as an assault on the values of many traditional East European Jews in its early years – the kibbutz ideal and the replacement of Yiddish with Hebrew were, after all, profoundly radical ventures. But after the tragedy of the holocaust, Zionism became widely supported within the Jewish community.[14] Hence, for the era under consideration, as Jewish historian David Cesarani has argued, 'for Jews who were leftist and non-affiliated in any Jewish sense, anti-Zionism forced them to re-evaluate their sense of self, often leading them to explore the Jewish community'.[15] Similarly, Erica Burman noted in 1994 that 'In British Jewish feminist and socialist circles, one of the key current debates concerns what a secular Jewish identity looks like'.[16] Such debates can also be clearly seen in Jewish socialist activist Steve Cohen's 1984 booklet *That's Funny, You Don't Look Anti-Semitic*, which was both a searing critique of anti-Semitism past and present in the British left, and an attempt to construct precisely this secular identity. The profits from his book went to the Jewish feminist magazine *Shifra*, illustrating links between male-left Jewish activism and Jewish feminist activism.

It is clear, then, that this search for a secular Jewish identity was one of the reasons for the growth of Jewish feminism. Nevertheless, this

search took many different forms – some of which in fact relied on quite traditional invocations of Jewish heritage – and did not necessarily lend itself to radicalism. Nor was it typical of the whole movement: whilst a non-religious, non-Zionist identity was clearly important to many Jewish feminists, the picture is complicated by the fact that there were women in the movement who were religious, and/or Zionist. The multifaceted nature of Jewish feminism can be demonstrated by examining the first incarnation of Jewish feminism in England post-1968.

Jewish feminism during the 1970s

Although the Jewish feminist movement is commonly placed within the 1980s, its presence in the WLM can be traced back to the early 1970s.[17] Apart from obvious historical precedents for Jewish feminism – such as the activities of the Jewish League for Woman Suffrage – an awareness of the marginal position of Jewish women in the WLM was in evidence as early as 1974.[18] In this year, a Jewish Lesbian Feminist group was set up in London, a fact which certainly complicates any notions of identity politics being firmly a product of the 1980s. The group was short-lived and indeed consisted of only four women. At least one of these women – Shelley Spivak – was American, which, due to the greater visibility of the American Jewish community, may explain the greater ethnic consciousness of these women. (Certainly, the American *Ms* magazine was running articles on Jewish feminist women by this date.)[19] Shelley was an American radical feminist who had grown up in a Jewish immigrant community in Brooklyn, and who had moved to England in 1972 after a brief academic career. Explaining her reasons for joining the group, Shelley said:

> I've never not been Jewish, in the sense of culturally Jewish, I didn't know anything about Judaism or anything like that but I've never been without a historical sense of any of that. So at some point, I can't remember when, it must have been around '74, several of us decided that it was important to get together, as Jewish feminists, Jewish lesbians at that point and meet.[20]

It is probable that the feeling of otherness that occasioned the group was heightened by the fact that the group was a lesbian one. Indeed, given that it is a concept often attributed to the 1980s, it is interesting that it was the intersection of these identities that underpinned the group.[21] Clearly demonstrating the centrality of lesbian politics as well as Jewish

identity to these women was the exclusion of one young feminist, Gail Chester, from the group:

> I wanted to join the group, but I wasn't able to call myself a lesbian. And they wouldn't let me join the group. And I was really upset and pissed off about that, because I really wanted to be in a group of Jewish women – Jewish feminists.[22]

We should thus be wary of imposing a false unity between all Jewish feminists at this point. Indeed, Gail's experience points to the exclusions created by feminism as well as its inclusions, a theme that became more pronounced throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In sharp contrast to the proliferating groups of women of varying backgrounds, ethnicities and sexualities seen in the early 1980s, however, the claim of a need for autonomous spaces for women outside of a straight, gentile white norm was treated with derision by some feminists. The group incurred public criticism for being perceived as 'exclusive', after advertising in the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* and *Shrew*. This criticism was, in Shelley's view, anti-Semitic:

> So we put a note in the newsletter, which precipitated an extraordinary outburst of anti-Semitic shit, of several sorts. There was the elitist crap stuff, there was the 'you're being exclusive' stuff, there was the Jewish capitalist conspiracy stuff – I'd grown up with the Jewish communist conspiracy of which I was quite fond – there was really nasty stuff, quite a bit of it coming [...] from the non-Jewish partners of some in the movement, who felt excluded.[23]

A later article in *Spare Rib* reported that the accusations had centred around accusations of ghettoism.[24] Gail remembered criticisms which were along the line of 'how much more kind of narrow could you be, like Jewish lesbian feminist, y'know, why not black vegetarian'.[25] In this she was almost certainly remembering one particular article from the London newsletter which asked: 'Anyone interested in forming a catholic, vegetarian, lesbian group? Anyone interested in forming a black, bisexual, unmarried mums group? Anyone interested in forming a 7th Day Adventist, omnivorous, celibates group? Anyone interested in forming a zen Buddhist, curry sandwiches and do it in the road group?'[26]

However, Gail also remembered feeling a certain degree of sympathy with the detractors, informed by her experience of rejection by the group, complicating the idea that the criticisms were necessarily

straightforwardly anti-Semitic.[27] Indeed, one of the writers of these allegedly anti-Semitic screeds to the newsletter appeared to be herself Jewish, writing 'Dear sisters… 19 years in a Jewish household showed me, if nothing else, that "Jewish" identified and "feminist" are incompatible'.[28] Whilst it would be possible to attribute this last remark to internalised anti-Semitism, it is clear the criticisms this group received could be attributed to a complex range of causes, including – but not limited to – anti-Jewish sentiment. It also seems likely that the intense antipathy to religion that was common in feminist circles at this time informed this negative reaction. Most significantly, such negativity demonstrates how little currency or even legitimacy identity politics had in the women's movement in its early years. The reaction of confused hostility the group provoked underlined the extent to which the notion of a 'universal sisterhood' was still deeply important to the self-image of the movement in the early years of the WLM.

In the event, according to Shelley, the first incarnation of the London Jewish Lesbian group lasted only a few meetings:

> I think we managed to meet as a group, I dunno, not many times, a few times. And then we split internally, because some of us were trundling off after looking for the goddess, and some of us were saying fuck all that for a lark, it's a political situation. So the group didn't hold together, but it was partly pulled apart by this external, really quite nasty, stuff that I don't think any of us expected.[29]

It is thus apparent that the group was also impeded by the lack of a coherent sense of purpose or ideology, a feature of Jewish feminism (at least in England) that its critics alleged was repeated in the 1980s.

After the disintegration of the Jewish lesbian group, there seems to have been little in the way of visible Jewish feminist activity until the late 1970s. This was concurrent with the rise of a more visibly defined identity politics within different sections of the feminist movement. A significant occasion was the occurrence of a 'Jewish women' workshop at the Birmingham National Women's Liberation conference of 1978, which Gail remembered being attended by about sixty women.[30] One woman writing in the *Manchester Women's Liberation Newsletter* remembered it enthusiastically, writing that. 'I went along feeling very hostile, because Judaism is to me the essence of patriarchy', but came away feeling that:

> It can only be positive… to integrate our cultural heritage, and the lessons history has taught us. Jewish women have a particular

> understanding, for instance, of a form of fascism that is anti-Semitism. Yet in most cases we keep quiet, we deny our upbringing, we feel guilt and defensive. There was a feeling of incredible relief, a general acceptance of what had been suggested, almost 'Why hasn't anybody said this before?' In contrast to my earlier feelings I was very moved – the group was very warm and amazingly supportive.[31]

This suggests how Jewish women who had never explicitly identified themselves as Jewish before were able to move conceptually towards a position where they believed that organising specifically as 'Jewish Feminists' was politically viable. Suggesting the importance of this workshop, it was discussed in the *Spare Rib* article 'Being Jewish: Anti-Semitism and Jewish Women'. This was the first article in *Spare Rib* which explored the lives of Jewish women; it was written by Roszika Parker, a Jewish woman on the editorial collective. The article was the product of 'long talks' that she had had with six Jewish women (including Gail and Shelley, as well as well-known feminist writer Michelene Wandor), about their experiences – past and present – of being female and Jewish. Although the women interviewed were all part of the WLM, little space was devoted to their experiences inside the feminist movement, and there was nothing to give the impression that a specifically 'Jewish feminist' movement existed within England at the time. The article started with the assertion that: 'Anti-Semitism has surfaced recently without its usual camouflage of jokes and apparently harmless generalizations. There's graffiti reading "Yid Out"and over two hundred Jewish graves were desecrated in a North London cemetery last summer.'[32] The article then turned to a general exploration of the problems that they, as Jewish women, had faced both within their communities and within wider society. There was also a critique, although not an extensive one, of the anti-Semitism that they had faced in left-groups, coupled with the observation that anti-Semitism was rarely seen as a priority for feminists in anti-racist groups.[33] As a whole, the article focused on anti-Semitism rather than Jewish culture per se. Jewish identity – to the extent that the article addressed it – was instead framed within a paradigm of difference from the white English mainstream norm, suggesting that 'In their specific ways all our parents saw themselves as members of an 'out group' (whose existence made others feel 'in'), and we grew up with a sense of isolation. How our parents negotiated their situation shaped our sense of outsiderness.'[34]

Despite the article's lack of focus on Jewish women's experiences within the feminist movement, however, in interview both Gail and Shelley remembered its writing and publication, underlining the

significance of the article to the development of the Jewish feminist movement in England. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider that after the workshop for Jewish feminists at the national conference in 1978, the article marked only the second time there had been significant discussion of Jewish women within a feminist public space. The article ended with an advert for both a Jewish consciousness raising group and a Jewish women's group in London, which supports Gail's attribution of the formation of the London Jewish Feminist Group to the piece.[35] After a 'false start' with the 1974 Jewish Lesbian Feminist group, then, Jewish feminism within England in the late 1970s had begun to establish a more solid presence within the women's movement.

By the January of 1982, Jewish feminists were in a position to hold their first national conference, held in London. Held in Michael Sobell House, in Brent, Gail and Shelley both remembered the day being bitterly cold and snowy which greatly delayed events; nevertheless, both remembered the day with great positivity, with Jewish feminists from across the country attending.[36] Exploration of identity seemed to be the hallmark of this conference, as suggested by the programme advertised in the *LWLN:*

> The first half of the day will be spent in block workshops, looking at 'Jewish identity'; some of the questions we'd like to look at: does our identity come from culture, religion, parents? Would we identify as Jewish if there wasn't anti-Semitism? Are we ignored as Jewish in the WLM? Do we deal with racial, class and cultural differences between Jewish women? In the afternoon there will be topic workshops on a range of different subjects including anti-Semitism, class and money, the Holocaust, racism, Jewish lesbians, Israel and Zionism, daughters of refugees, older women.[37] (underlining original)

The existential concern about what the content of 'being Jewish' actually was echoed both a long Jewish tradition that asked the same question, and mirrored the concerns about identity that were current within the wider women's movement.[38] The programme outlined for the first national Jewish Lesbian Conference, held in London a year later in May 1983, displays similar concerns. The day started with 'Cultural Affinity group meetings' advertised as 'A chance for women to meet as Black, Sephardi, Spanish/Ladino, Middle-Eastern, working class Ashkenazi, Jewish lesbians' and finished with a block workshop on 'Jewish Lesbian identity'.[39] Whilst Miriam Metz remembered this event as a happy day in *Generations of Memories*, she suggested that, after

the initial happiness at coming together, splits around identity came to dominate subsequent conferences.[40] Such a diversity of identifications within what was already a small group of women was ultimately unsustainable, as an exploration of Jewish feminism in the 1980s will underline.

Growth, diversity and contested identities

During the 1980s, the Jewish feminist movement grew rapidly to become a more powerful and recognised presence. The extent of Jewish feminist activity outside of London is unclear: the capital, for obvious demographic reasons, was the site of the majority of Jewish feminist activity. Nevertheless, women wrote in to feminist periodicals from all over the country and identified themselves specifically as Jewish feminists. York and Nottingham certainly had Jewish feminist groups, and there were also attempts to establish Jewish feminist groups in both Cambridge and Liverpool, though it is unclear whether they were successful.[41] Jewish Women's Aid grew out of a telephone helpline for Jewish victims of domestic violence that was started in Leeds in the early 1980s, which would indicate the presence of active Jewish feminists in that city at least.[42] Perhaps surprisingly, there were no apparent records of any Jewish feminist groups in Manchester during this period, though it seems likely that a city with both an active Jewish and feminist population would have seen such activism. The 1980s also saw the establishment of a short-lived Jewish feminist periodical, *Shifra*. Despite this activism, Jewish feminism never became a lasting movement within England. This was partly because there were marked differences between women as to what the purpose and orientation of Jewish feminist activity should be. For example, Gail – who was from an Orthodox background but had rejected religion – revealed in her interview testimony that she hoped that Jewish feminism could be a place for her to feel at home with women from similar backgrounds to her own. For her, then, Jewish feminism was a cultural rather than a religious identification. However, she did not always find that this was the reality of the group for her:

> It was not unproblematic, shall we say. I mean, I loved it, I liked it very much in terms of there was a place that you could talk, that you could be yourself, except for the fact that actually, I couldn't really be myself, because it was absolutely stuffed full of all these Jewish women who had been brought up non-religious and secular, and

> knowing nothing, who were all desperate to reclaim their Jewishness. So it was like, we were running in a completely opposite direction, and I developed this, strong kind of anti-religious politics and the patriarchal nature of all religions, not just Judaism and I couldn't be doing with it. I just could not be doing with the way that they were all rushing back to a religion that I had just spent my whole life trying to extricate myself from.[43]

Writing somewhat later than this in *Shifra* in a piece significantly entitled 'Why I am not a Jewish Feminist', Dena Attar remembered a similar feeling. Attar, who had been brought up in a strict Sephardic household and who had renounced religion in her twenties, wrote that she had no desire to 'reclaim' her Jewish identity simply because she felt it to be so embedded in her. She claimed that she found such women who did 'self-conscious and artificial', suggesting that 'there is a difference between asserting who we are and trying to recreate who we no longer are'.[44] Both of these testimonies critically suggest that for some women, becoming involved in Jewish feminism was an act of rediscovery of an identity that had been lost in generations of secularism; a rediscovery that women such as Gail and Dena Attar found both inauthentic and questionable in terms of feminist politics.

One such Jewish feminist was Harriet Wistrich, who described her background as assimilated, being non-religious, non-kosher and non-Zionist, with little involvement in Jewish community affairs. Indeed, Wistrich further wrote that 'In many ways, my assimilation into the dominant British culture is quite far gone – it is not merely fairly easy for me to pass, I'm not even sure exactly how and where I am different from it.'[45] Nevertheless, she gave an indication as the importance of Jewish feminism to her when she wrote that:

> I am no longer secretly embarrassed about being Jewish as I was for many years. I enjoy learning and connecting with Jewish history and Jewish culture. I have, I believe, a good understanding and perspective on anti-Semitism. I have also found that coming to terms with my Jewish identity gives me that perspective on the insidious nature of British racism and nationalism.[46]

This 'rediscovery' of Judaism was demonstrated particularly strongly in Miriam Metz's interview for *Generations of Memories*. Discussing the emotional impact that the return to the Jewish culture and rituals of her childhood had had on her, she claimed that 'I'm incredibly moved by

the things in Jewish ritual and Jewish experience; they move me to tears . . . there isn't anything in 'feminist culture' that has that impact on me.'[47] This once again reminds us of the importance of emotions in motivating women to become part of (and stay in) social groups and movements. Similar emotions came to the forefront for Shelley Spivak when she began to discover religion. In a moving moment in our interview, she recounted crying without quite understanding why when she was moved by the beauty of the female rabbi's singing at the first synagogue service she attended.[48] Perhaps it is not surprising that some Jewish women (re)turned to their Jewish heritage during a period when the feminist movement was beset by infighting, and as argued elsewhere in this book, generated little in the way of positive emotion for white women.

For some women involved with Jewish feminism, 'Jewishness' was perceived in essentialistic terms, as a quality innate to all Jews: it was also sometimes conceptualised as a quality that had been repressed by anti-Semitic gentile society. As Leeds-based feminist Sheila Saunders wrote in 1985: 'Some years ago this radical assimilated Jewish feminist lived in ignorant bliss. Sharing my life with a non-Jewish feminist seemed no cause for concern, irrelevant even.' But then, 'Suddenly through external pressure and internal combustion my Jewishness escaped. A Jewish political consciousness flowed within me making me aware in a way that I had not been before.'[49] Saunders was also a radical lesbian feminist, which, given the essentialism of some radical feminism, perhaps encouraged its adherents to conceive of other categories of identities in a similarly essentialist fashion.

For a minority of women active in the Jewish feminist movement, their involvement led to an increasing engagement with religion, reflecting a more open attitude to religion and/or spirituality in the women's movement as a whole by the 1980s. Most strikingly, for Shelley Spivak and Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah, both radical lesbian feminists from non-religious Jewish backgrounds, their involvement with Jewish feminism culminated in rabbinical training and their ordination as the first openly lesbian rabbis in Britain (an event that even Spivak described as 'deeply implausible').[50] The rediscovery of religious Judaism for many feminists cannot be read in traditional terms of a return to orthodox religious belief/faith, but rather should be seen as both an act of rediscovery of Jewish heritage, and as a political intervention within a conservative religious establishment. Nevertheless, the involvement of feminists in religious affairs did have wider ramifications. Gail and Shelley both discussed a reform women's group 'The half-empty bookcase', which in

the late 1980s and early 1990s held a series of conferences. Through merging with several other groups, this organisation evolved into the Jewish Women's Network in 1993.[51] Whilst these were not overtly political groups, they were obviously influenced by feminism, and indeed probably contained a number of women who had been active in the WLM and the Jewish feminist movement of the 1980s. Ironically then, a movement which had started with a firmly secular base saw its greatest influence in the 1990s in the world of religious Judaism.

These wildly diverse meanings attached to Jewish feminism point to some of the main faultlines within it, namely the clash between the secular and the religious, those who were brought up traditionally, and those who had been largely assimilated. Arguably, the very instability of this new Jewish identity made it a difficult basis to organise around. Erica Burman argued that the non-appearance of a jewish feminist anthology that had been proposed in the 1980s, alongside the fact that Jewish feminist conferences never became regularly occurring events, was 'indicative of the ways debates on the complexities and difficulties in defining identities and reformulating what we mean by political activity have entered Jewish feminism'.[52] She thus concluded that 'Jewish feminism, insofar as it exists, may be a necessary fiction in the maintenance of a collectivity that unites not only Jewish women but provides a basis for broader organisation.'[53] Yet the futile task of trying to explore and understand an identity that was essentially a fiction may have impeded Jewish feminists from moving into a programme of political action that united Jewish women with women from other minority groups against racism.[54]

These struggles around identity are certainly suggested by the fate of *Shifra*. *Shifra* is of central significance to any historian trying to understand Jewish feminism within England. Although it only ran to four issues (the last two of which were combined in a double issue), it revealed many of the preoccupations of Jewish feminists within England at the time. It was published by a collective of ten women and was national in scope; the first issue was published in December 1984. The editorial declared:

> Welcome to *Shifra*. We have come together as Jewish Feminists to produce a magazine which will provide Jewish women with a forum to understand our experiences in all their diversity. Exploring our experience of oppression is a form of resistance. *Shifra* is part of an ongoing resistance movement. Through articles, sharing personal experiences, history and poetry, we challenge the privileges of men

> over women, non-Jew over Jew, white over Black, heterosexual over Lesbian.[55]

Clearly *Shifra* was initially aiming to make this connection between the Jewish experience of oppression and the oppression of others. Nevertheless, as a periodical it was intensely focused on the cultural rather than the straightforwardly political. Many of the articles were based on the history of Jewish women and the experience of being Jewish in a gentile world. There was a clear desire to celebrate Jewish heritage, and in particular the contributions of women to that heritage, but it was not always clear to what end. Indeed, there appears to have been a wide gulf between the editorial collective's idea of what the magazine should be, and the readership's idea. As the collective complained:

> One problem we will always have is the difficult decision making about the balance of our material, for example between contemporary and historical pieces. In this issue we have published many personal heritage articles, mainly because this represents the highest proportion of the material that is written for *Shifra*... We on *Shifra* feel that there is a political vacuum when it comes to the written word. We receive joyful letters and plenty of yuchos, or kudos for the assimilated, on the miracle of existence of *Shifra* but practically no discussion about the important and often controversial discussions of the magazine itself.[56]

These 'personal heritage articles' included the memories of refugee women from the holocaust, memoirs of mothers and grandmothers, as well as more personal life stories. There was also some content on religious issues, such as the tradition of sitting shiva and Elizabeth Sarah's account of decision to become a rabbi, 'Knowing no Bounds... Or What's a Nice Jewish Lesbian Like Me Doing Holding the Sefer Torah?'[57] There was little on organising against anti-Semitism or anti-racism, although there was content on experiencing anti-Semitism. Perhaps most surprisingly, there was very little on Israel and Zionism, although this probably represents a reluctance on behalf of the contributors to engage with controversy. Indeed, despite the editorial collective's claim to 'controversial' content, this is a claim that only makes sense in relation to the Jewish community as a whole, rather than the magazine's feminist readership itself. In the case of the latter, rather than being controversial, *Shifra* was decidedly preaching to the choir.

Shifra's feminist content was not particularly radical by the standards of the time. The magazine appears to have been widely-read: the second issue had letters from as far afield as France and the United States (from where Andrea Dworkin had written to say she enjoyed it), but ultimately had difficulty in soliciting enough contributions. As the collective complained in what turned out to be the last issue of the magazine: 'Why has it been over a year since the last issue of *Shifra*? You may well ask! . . . *Shifra* readers in future must find a more active role than the passive consumers of the present.'[58] Although, like many feminist periodicals of the era, a lack of necessary resources in terms of time, money and willing writers were implicated in the downfall of the title, it also foundered due to a lack of clear purpose. In this sense, it mirrored the Jewish feminist movement in England as a whole by this point.

This focus on heritage as opposed to the more nakedly political can be seen elsewhere within Jewish feminism. The central place that history had for Jewish feminists is further demonstrated by the existence of the Jewish Women's History Group which published the booklet 'You'd prefer me not to mention it'. This examined the refugee backgrounds of the families of the four women who wrote it, and the impact that this made on them growing up. The blurb on the back read 'that only when you know where you have come from, can you freely decide where to go next' a statement that again illustrates the central place of history to Jewish feminism, and indeed to identity politics more generally.[59] Indeed, as one of the women – known only by her first name, Caroline – wrote in the booklet, 'being in the Jewish Feminist Group and the Jewish History Group has been for me an exploration, a constant effort to grasp at the elusive idea of a Jewish identity.'[60] Another such text produced by Jewish feminists that was intimately concerned with history was the more substantial book *Generations of Memory: Voices of Jewish Women*. Produced in 1989 by the Jewish Women in London Group, this text once again fed into the larger existential question of what Jewish identity was. Writing of their reasons for turning to history, the collective wrote in their introduction:

> [. . .] we were redefining our identity as Jewish feminists, bringing together a positive sense of ourselves as Jews and as women. In coming to terms with our identities, we had also to reconsider the lives of our own mothers, and this led us, as Jewish women, towards exploring our own history, a history which has only begun to be written.[61]

But as within the S*hifra* collective, these concerns did not go without critical comment. *Generations of Memory* itself attracted opprobrium from Julia Bard, a stalwart of the Jewish socialist group and a dedicated Jewish feminist who had contributed to *A Word in Edgeways*. She attacked *Generations of Memory*'s lack of political purpose as regards the mainstream Jewish community, writing that: 'The women who speak in *Generations of Memories* similarly do not move beyond the dilemma of identifying as Jewish yet feeling uncomfortable and out of place in the Jewish community.'[62] Yet Bard's focus on Jewish feminism as a means to effect change in gender relations within the Jewish community, rather than as a means to fight against anti-Semitism in the WLM, points again to the diversity of the movement's aims.

What, then, was Jewish feminism *for*? The relative affluence of the Jewish community rendered the existence of 'Jewish Feminism' as a movement controversial even amongst Jewish feminists themselves. Some of the harshest critiques of Jewish feminism came from other Jewish feminists who could not identify with the need for a specifically 'Jewish' feminism. In common with some gentile women within the WLM, some Jewish feminists felt that Jewish women had no claim on any 'special' oppression. As we have seen, Dena Attar wrote a piece in *Shifra* itself, 'Why I am not a Jewish Feminist'.[63] More savagely, Lynne Segal – born of Jewish parents in Australia before coming to Britain in 1970 – wrote of 'the hyperbolic rhetoric of victimhood' of Jewish feminism in her memoir, *Making Trouble*.[64] She argued of Jewish women's reaction to anti-Semitism that:

> [...] such identification has become as problematic as it is compelling. As others have noted, the perfect enemy is the one whose threat exists primarily in fantasy. Just as anti-Semitism, with its irrational fantasy of the Jewish menace, has served so well in the past to instill a sense of unity in western communities, the reverse is also true.[65]

Segal also quoted Jenny Bourne in this memoir. As a leftist woman with a Jewish heritage, Bourne enraged the Jewish feminist community in 1987 with her scathing critique of Jewish feminism, 'Homelands of the Mind'. This article argued that Jewish feminism was a form of apolitical cultural politics, the main purpose of which was to allow Jewish women to 'seek out their identity'.[66] As such, she argued that it had no place within a leftist milieu, as it had no analysis of the relations of production in which, she insinuated, Jews were generally the oppressor.

The invocation of the apartheid-era 'homelands' of South Africa in the title is revealing as to Bourne's opinion on both Jewish feminism and identity politics more widely. Her accusation that Jews were property-owning exploiters of the proletariat was both bizarre and anti-Semitic: she wrote that 'Nowhere in all the discussion of anti-Semitism . . . is there any appreciation of how ideas, however bigoted, are shaped by material experience.'[67] Furthermore, she argued the anti-Semitism they were complaining of was 'somewhat ethereal', and that Jewish women were claiming a Black identity and falsely claiming an oppression equal to those of 'third world' women.[68]

Bourne's essay prompted the publication of the booklet *A Word in Edgeways*. Written by Jewish feminists in London after sixty Jewish women attended a meeting called to discuss Bourne's work, it was a thirty page rebuttal of her claims that itself revealed much about the purpose and nature of Jewish feminism. Claiming that her attack mirrored the ways in which Jewish feminists felt they had been 'systematically silenced' in the WLM more generally, unsurprisingly many of the women writing felt forced into a defence of Jewish feminism.[69] Several prominent women within the Jewish feminist movement in England wrote in *A Word in Edgeways*, including Erica Burman, Francesca Klug and Gail Chester. Francesca Klug defended Jewish feminist politics on the grounds that 'For many of us, Jewish feminist politics was the route through which we explored the role of anti-Semitism in our lives.'[70] Gail wrote a rebuttal to Bourne's assumptions concerning the genesis of Jewish feminism that were similar to her interview testimony, writing that: 'I joined the Jewish Feminist Group at the start because I wanted to look at where I came from in the company of other women I rather naively imagined came from the same place . . . I am hardly coming from a perspective "whose main purpose is to s*eek out* [my] identity" or which "had allowed [my] Jewishness to get buried as Jenny Bourne would have it." '[71] Ironically, Gail's own standpoint of critiquing, rather than rediscovering or glorifying, Jewish heritage was not dissimilar to Jenny Bourne's critique of Jewish feminism, although it was couched in much more sympathetic terms. This again highlights some of the internal contradictions within Jewish feminism by the late 1980s, when both Bourne's essay and the response were written. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the perceived anti-Semitism of some feminists – and in particular, controversies over Israel – allowed for a common cause for Jewish feminists to organise around, despite their differences.

Controversies: The Arab-Israeli war, anti-Semitism, and Black-Jewish relations

Internal debates within Jewish feminism were not the only important influence on the Jewish feminist movement within England. The shift towards identity politics within both feminism and the wider left during the later 1970s allowed for the growth of Jewish feminism. Yet the search for a non-religious, non-Zionist identity was made particularly salient by the wholesale condemnation of Israel by the feminist movement and the wider left in 1982, apropos of the war in Lebanon. Whilst, as we have seen, there had been some Jewish feminist activity before this point, it was undoubtedly the debates surrounding this event that galvanised Jewish feminism, causing many who had previously identified as feminists who happened to be Jews, into 'Jewish feminists'. For although many Jewish feminists within England agreed with the substance of the criticisms made against Israel, many felt that the manner in which the criticisms were made was deeply anti-Semitic. As one Jewish woman, Asphodel Long, claimed:

> I was a universalist. I believed that as a woman I have no country. Being Jewish was what I was born into; it is my tribe, my heritage. I was never *not* Jewish. But during the major part of my life this tribal affinity was not important. It became important because of anti-Semitism associated with Israel: *I was driven back into my Jewishness by my sisters in the Women's Movement. The pro-Palestinian propaganda was an acceptable cover for anti-Semitism.*[72] (italics mine)

These reasons for a return to Jewishness were echoed by Miriam Metz in *Generations of Memories*.[73] Furthermore Miriam Levy – a London-born Jewish women, who was a youth worker, and active in women's groups in London and Birmingham during this period – recalled 'I just remember we felt so victimised around the Zionism and anti-Zionism stuff.'[74] Thus anti-Semitism within the movement encouraged Jewish feminists into expressing an identity that was both critical of mainstream Zionism, but positively, recognisably Jewish, the latter of which had not been a particular focus of the movement before this controversy.

The focus of these debates was undoubtedly *Spare Rib* magazine's attitude towards Israel and Zionism, which was – to say the least – deeply controversial. Shelley Spivak recalled it as the time when '*Spare Rib* went berserk . . . was just insufferable'.[75] The catalyst for this debate

was an interview conducted by Roisin Boyd with a Lebanese woman, a Palestinian woman and an Israeli anti-Zionist woman entitled 'Women Speak Out Against Zionism', with the provocative sub-title 'if a woman calls herself feminist, she should consciously call herself anti-Zionist.'[76] The article was staunchly anti-Zionist, anti-Israeli and arguably anti-Semitic, and included the gratuitously offensive statement that the 'Jewish people should thank Hitler because without him the Jewish state would never have been created.'[77] However, the main focus of the anger of Jewish feminists was the fact that none of the letters from Jewish women which criticised the article were published. This was explained by the *Spare Rib* collective to be as a result of the fact that:

> After numerous and exhausting discussions we have decided (not unanimously) not to publish any of the letters we received. As a collective we are united in a pro-Palestinian position; we are concerned about Palestinian oppression and support their struggle for self-determination and independence. We are not an anti-Zionist collective although individually many of the collective define themselves as such and some SR workers have been threatened on the streets for wearing pro-Palestinian badges.[78]

Whilst the decision was not unanimous, it was clear from another article published in which various members of the collective aired their personal views that the majority of women on the collective were strongly anti-Zionist.[79] Roisin Boyd – the author of the article which had caused so much offence – wrote that 'I felt that Zionist letters should not be published in response to the article. Letters which did not mention the consequences of Zionist politics in the Middle East were, I felt, an insult to all the Palestinian women and men who had suffered and died as a result of US-backed Zionist policies.'[80] However, given that many of the Jewish feminists writing in often strongly criticised Israel themselves, they concluded that the main motivation behind the non-publication of the letters was not anti-Zionism, but anti-Semitism. As six Jewish feminists wrote, when the issue was finally addressed in the letters page, 'We know that many of these letters were written by Jewish feminists, Jewish feminists *from a variety of political positions'*(italics original).[81] One woman, Madge Dresser, wrote in the following issue:

> Dear *Spare Rib* Collective
>
> I have just read your editorial (SR 130) and am a bit confused as one of the Jewish women whose letters you refused to publish. I can't be

> the only socialist-feminist who wrote to you who is *not* indifferent to the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people, but who is also torn by a concern to ensure the survival of the Jewish people. Like you I do not have easy answers to the problems of Palestine's and Israel's future existence.[82] (italics original)

Indeed, it is striking just how few Jewish feminist writings in England argue uncomplicatedly in favour of Zionism, doubtless because of their overwhelmingly leftist orientation. As Miriam remembered, 'On the whole, I think, we were pretty much critical of Israel, but scared of others criticizing it. I don't remember people being staunchly Zionist.'[83] Gail recounted a history of lifelong opposition to Zionism in her interview.[84] Despite this, a common cause of resentment was the apparent requirement that, as Jews, they were supposed to identify as anti-Zionist before they could claim a feminist identity: Gail, Shelley and Miriam all remembered this in interview. As Shelley remembered, 'No, I was not going to say I am not a Zionist but' and then say the rest of what I was going to say, they had no right to ask.[85] Erica Burman expressed a similar sentiment in her piece for *A Word in Edgeways*, when she wrote that:

> Well, I've nearly reached the end of this piece, and I haven't yet really talked about Israel. As I wrote this last sentence, I felt overcome with guilt and doubt. Surely this is the point at which I should be making all the appropriate disclaimers and caveats, and proclaiming my anti-Zionist credentials? But I want to resist this temptation. I don't see why I should be pressed into making statements as a condition for asserting my identity as a Jewish feminist.[86]

This was resented because there was clearly not the same pressure for gentile feminists to identify as such. Several women, including Burman herself, noted the paradox of the fact that asking Jewish feminists to prove their credentials by asserting their anti-Zionism was in itself anti-Semitic in defining them by their Jewishness.[87]

Of course, distinguishing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism was difficult at points. There were writers on *Spare Rib* who were anti-Zionist but certainly not anti-Semitic. Sue O'Sullivan wrote a long piece in the *LWLN* explaining her sympathies with both sides.[88] However, *Spare Rib* also published some pieces and letters which contained innuendoes about Zionist control of the press and Zionist lobbies that essentially read like updated versions of the longstanding idea of a Jewish world

conspiracy: one letter writer wrote of 'the enormous influence of the Zionists and the pro-Israeli media'.[89] Another wrote 'just because we're women in collective struggle doesn't mean we have to sit back and tolerate that reactionary crap that some Jewish "feminists" have been coming out with'.[90] Most strikingly, 'Women for Palestine' wrote a long letter published in issue 135 which claimed that the magazine had 'totally *capitulated to Zionist pressure*' (italics mine).[91] Another interviewee, Adele Cohen – a Danish born, Liverpool-based psychotherapist, and herself a Holocaust survivor – remembered that she stopped buying the magazine.[92] And one written by the editorial collective exploring their different views on the matter, entitled 'Sisterhood . . . is plain sailing', contained several statements that were implicitly anti-Semitic. One anonymous woman on the collective wrote of 'the pressure to devote most of my energy on a single group that can insist on our devotion due to the *great power* that they have' (italics mine).[93] All this certainly strengthened the claim of Jewish women that the magazine indeed had an anti-Semitic element.

One of the most sensitive aspects of the whole debate, however, was the fact that it was mostly the 'Women of Colour' on the *Spare Rib* collective who were the most strongly anti-Zionist, and who were responsible for most of what was considered the anti-Semitic content and censorship of the publications.[94] This is revealing of the poor relationship between the Black and Jewish communities, but is also symptomatic of many of the tensions within identity politics more generally. Could a group that was white, and not economically marginalised, claim to be oppressed without causing considerable resentment?[95] As one of the Black women on the *Spare Rib* collective wrote 'I am amazed that you Zionist women feel that I have the power to silence you. Define my power. Do I really have that amount of power?'[96] The comment itself had anti-Semitic overtones, and yet the passage as a whole seemed to be a clumsy attempt to articulate the powerlessness and lack of status of many Black women in England, as opposed to the relatively privileged position of many Jewish feminists. Additionally, the 'Women of Colour' on the *Spare Rib* collective clearly felt victimised over the accusations of anti-Semitism that were heaped upon them. In response, they turned the accusation on its head, claiming that the white feminists were being racist by ignoring their political analysis. One of the Black women on the collective wrote pointedly 'Try challenging your own racism rather than lecturing Black and Third World women on what your view of racism is'.[97]

The debate over Israel and Jewish feminism in *Spare Rib* escalated and eventually became a vehicle for much larger tensions and problems between Black and white feminists (whether Jewish or not) at this point. Relationships between Black and white women on the collective deteriorated to the extent that the Women of Colour decided to meet separately for a period.[98] This is a damning indictment of the failure of the collective to address successfully issues of race and ethnicity. What is clear is that at this point and to the Black women on *Spare Rib*, the identity of these Jewish women as 'white' was far more salient than their identity as a fellow ethnic minority. This was a sentiment shared by other ethnic minority women: one woman wrote into *LWLN* stating, 'I am extremely angry as an Arab woman, at the London Jewish Feminist Group trying to get in on the Anti-Racist debate. You are white, I am not.'[99]

Clearly, Jewish feminists' claim to oppression was contested by other women who pointed to the largely white and middle-class nature of the Jewish movement. However, this is not to claim that the concerns of Jewish feminists were invalid. Manifestly there was anti-Semitism within elements of the movement; but it is difficult to see how the politics of such women could be anything but marginalised in a feminist world view that was largely socialist and anti-imperialist. Few women wanted to appear to be taking part in the ranking of oppressions. Yet it is difficult to see how – when decisions had to be made at the grassroots level about where to allocate resources, time and money – this could translate into reality.

Nevertheless, it is unsurprising that Jewish feminists felt angry that their whiteness apparently blinded others in the women's movement to the very real existence of anti-Semitism. Certainly, this was felt by the London Jewish Feminist Group, who wrote into *LWLN* claiming that:

> We really object to anti-Semitism being defined as a white woman's issue. We are not saying, and have never said, that our oppression is worse than or above any other oppression in the world. As Jewish Feminists, when we talk about racism, we are dismissed as 'white women.' When we say we experience anti-Semitism we are dismissed as Zionist even if we are not.[100]

As this quote suggests, Jewish feminists themselves were not insensible to the problems of women who were often privileged in many respects taking on the mantle of the oppressed. Miriam also remembered '[when] we started to look at anti-Jewish stuff in the women's

movement, that was much harder, because it looked like we were the articulate ones, we were the ones who had got this country [Israel] that was so oppressive.'[101]

The controversy was mirrored in other feminist periodicals. As Juliet Pope noted, it was in fact *Outwrite* – a newspaper newly set up in 1982 dedicated to championing anti-racist and anti-imperialist issues – that initiated extensive coverage within the feminist press of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[102] Its first two issues in 1982 featured prominent news stories on the plight of Palestinian women. However, as with *Spare Rib*, some of the coverage slipped into anti-Semitism. The coverage of the Middle-East conflict in *Outwrite* was extensive, and the paper – which explicitly declared itself to be anti-Zionist – was vehemently anti-Israel. One editorial stated:

> Right from the outset, the policy of the *Outwrite* collective has been consistently to combat through the paper and in any practical way possible, racism in ALL its forms, imperialism and sexism. We also have a policy of anti-Zionism and of combating anti-Semitism wherever and whenever it appears . . . in as much as we will never publish any letter that tries to defend apartheid or suggest that it has an 'acceptable face', we have decided not to publish any Zionist or pro-Zionist letters . . . The collective reiterate their utter and complete condemnation of Zionism and the genocide it is perpetrating.[103]

Outwrite regularly printed allegations against Israel that were inflammatory and unfounded, with claims that Israel ultimately sought the destruction of Palestinians: an allegation that Palestinian schoolgirls were gassed was printed and elaborated on for several issues.[104] Unsurprisingly, the debate caused by the editorial policies of these two papers spilled over into other parts of the feminist press. *WIRES* printed articles and letters over the course of 1982–1984 which covered similar ideological ground, although it is notable that between issues 135–55 the magazine printed a greater range of articles and letters by Jewish women than did the other periodicals under discussion.[105]

Inevitably, the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* also had extensive coverage of the debate. In the spring and summer of 1983, at least a third of each issue was taken up by heated arguments about what precisely constituted anti-Semitism and how it differed from anti-Zionism. This also reflected its location in the capital, the city where the majority of Jewish feminists lived. Further illustrating the shared readership of the periodicals was the petition against the letters policy

of *Spare Rib* attached to the front cover of issue 315 of *LWLN*. Feeling victimised by what they felt to be increasing anti-Semitism in the movement, on 28 April, the London Jewish Feminist Group held a meeting at A Woman's Place – where the newsletter was based – to discuss anti-Semitism within the women's movement. This meeting was picketed by the pressure group Women For Palestine, causing deep controversy. The Women's Place Collective claimed that this picket violated the principle of the space, writing that the place was for all women 'unless we feel they are in opposition to the aims of the WL', and that 'Picketing is part of the institution of male left politics and protest.'[106] It is significant that the group invoked as much censure for allegedly using 'male tactics' as for their alleged anti-Semitism. Indeed one of the running complaints against Women For Palestine was that they were not, in fact, a feminist group and nor did they pretend to be: it is possible that this effected greater sympathy for the Jewish Feminist Group. In consequence of the picketed 28 April meeting, an open meeting at A Woman's Place was called on 10 July 1983 to discuss the Newsletter's policy for and against racist and anti-Semitic letters. This meeting again became deeply heated, and generated many letters from women on both sides of the controversy.[107]

Although the letter written by the London Jewish Feminist Group to protest the picket of the 28 April meeting was reprinted in several local newsletters, the issue had less salience for local feminist periodicals outside of London, particularly those with small Jewish communities.[108] None of the women interviewed in Liverpool or Cambridge recalled debates around periodical conflicts, even though they remembered the issue being discussed more generally. The issue did not receive any coverage in the *Merseyside Women's Paper*, and neither does this seem to be an isolated case. In Manchester – home to the largest Jewish community in the country outside London – the main feminist newsletter, *Manchester Women's Liberation Newsletter*, also failed to carry anything of significance on the debate. Whilst the reprinted letter from *LWLN* concerning the picketed meeting was reprinted in the periodical, it is significant that this attracted no comment in the next issue of the newsletter. Nor was there any coverage in the Leeds-based feminist press besides a reprinting of the original letter.

The sometimes difficult relationship between Black and Jewish women was explored in *Yours in Struggle*, an American book written by a white gentile woman (Minnie Bruce Pratt), a white Jewish woman (Elly Bulkin) and a Black gentile woman (Barbara Smith). Whilst it was American, the work certainly had a transatlantic reach. Both Shelley

and Miriam remembered it vividly (unprompted) as being of great importance to them, and Jenny Bourne discussed it extensively in her (albeit deeply critical) analysis of Jewish feminism, 'Homelands of The Mind', calling it 'a book which is regarded on both sides of the Atlantic as something of a pioneering work.'[109] Demonstrating its reach, it was also recommended in the 'further reading' section of *Generations of Memories*.[110] The book itself explores these tensions between what many Jewish feminists in America felt was the anti-Semitism of Black women in the movement, and on the other hand what many Black feminists felt to be the unacknowledged privilege of most white Jewish women in the movement. Barbara Smith wrote:

> Jewish women's perception of Black and other women of color's indifference to or active participation in anti-Semitism and Third World women's sense that major segments of the Jewish feminist movement had failed to acknowledge the weight of their white-skin privilege and capacity for racism, have inevitably escalated suspicion and anger between us.[111]

It is perhaps revealing that there were no similar works published in England, although this was also a result of the much smaller Black and Jewish communities here. The closest thing to such collaborative work in England came in the form of a group of nine Black and Jewish women that met in London in the late 1980s for two years. Although they intended to produce a pamphlet, this did not happen due to the members' lack of time. They did, however, write a long article on their efforts for *Trouble and Strife*.[112] Although meetings were often 'emotionally charged', they also concluded that, 'Despite our disagreements we still felt ourselves to be natural allies. A society which subjects us to racism, albeit in a variety of forms, had given us, ironically, enough strength to consider that we had common ground.' It was this coalition of minorities that was considered by Elly Bulkin in *Yours in Struggle* as the most promising political prospect for Jewish feminism.[113] In *Generations of Memories*, Miriam Metz also linked the oppression of Jewish cultures with wider racist oppression. She opined that the 'notion of having one universal feminist culture I see as ultimately racist because it fails to recognise where different women are coming from – black women, Third World women, and so on.'[114] But, from the evidence of her interview in the book, it seemed that she had done little to actually forge connections with Black women on this shared basis. Similarly, none of my Jewish interviewees could recall any close relationships with Black

feminists at the time. Miriam talked specifically about how difficult this relationship was, commenting that:

> I don't remember any instances of Black feminist groups and Jewish feminist groups operating [together]... we had an anti-fascist day every year in Amsterdam [Miriam spent some time in the Netherlands in the late 1980s] and Black people would march alongside white Jewish people, and I couldn't believe it, that you could actually make that alliance. Now I'm much more aware of the possibilities, and can see it as a very natural alliance in some ways. But back then, I don't think I would had expected any Black person at all to have been interested in my issues, to have come to our aid as white Jewish women around what was going on, I wouldn't have expected it.[115]

When I asked Shelley about these issues, she also commented ruefully about the links between Jewish and Muslim feminists, 'Who knew – who knew any Muslim women? Y'know, seriously.'[116] She was aware of the lack of contact – both past and present – between Jewish women and women from other ethnic minorities, and was unhappy about it. Yet she also felt unsure about how to make any meaningful contact. Apropos of making alliances with one specific group, Southall Black Sisters, she commented:

> I've been saying for years that the women I'm involved with ought to make some sort of contact with Southall Black Sisters – that we are in principle natural allies – but it keeps not happening. I haven't had the courage to do anything about it. I think I'd need to spend a lot of time on trying to figure out what our common issues were, to what extent it might be possible. In principle it ought to be possible, I mean you're quite right. On the third hand – by now – the Jewish community is on the whole a lot more affluent than the Afro-Caribbean Community. The Jewish community seen grandly is, is more conservative. I don't know how we would be – let's say I called Southall Black Sisters out of the Blue to say 'I'm a Rabbi, I'd like to talk to you' – meh [shrugs shoulders] – y'know, what are you going to say?[117]

Although this comment in the context of the interview was present-focused, it was clearly the result of long-standing and unresolved tensions that were symptomatic of wider problems in Black-Jewish relations in England during the 1970s and 1980s as well as today.[118]

The re-emergence of tensions between Black and Jewish women in *Spare Rib* in the late 1980s and early 1990s suggests that these issues were never truly resolved.[119] In 1987, that magazine chose to print a (very) edited version of Jenny's Bourne's 'Homelands of the Mind' entitled 'Jewish Feminism and the Struggle for Identity.' *Outwrite* also approved of Jenny Bourne's article, writing of her 'well-argued effort in exposing the reactionary position of Jewish feminists who prioritise personal identity in order to avoid political analysis of the 'Israeli state'.[120] The persistence of such comment was probably the result of the continuing crisis in the Middle East throughout the 1980s. Immediately before its closure in 1993, *Spare Rib* continued to court such controversy by printing letters from Jewish feminists to which the editorial team themselves provided robust – some might say inflammatory – replies. In response to protests over the magazine's refusal to publicise a new Jewish women's club in London without the club confirming it was anti-Zionist, the collective wrote that 'we feel it is incumbent on all Jewish people to denounce Zionism and the state of Israel – in order to make sure that you do 'distinguish between Jews and Zionists'.[121] The enduring nature of these controversies ultimately speaks to the failure of identity politics to overcome some of the more entrenched divisions between different groups of feminists. This provides us with an insight as to why a coherent feminist movement began to seem impossible in the late 1980s and early 1990s: without a mechanism to resolve the bitterness of its rifts, a coherent national movement became impossible. That anti-Semitism was at the heart of one of the deepest controversies around race in the movement is revealing as to both the significance of Jewish feminism at this time, and the complexities of debate around ethnicity in the feminist movement.

Conclusion

The Jewish feminist movement in England was a movement that usefully illustrates the centrality of ethnicity and race to the women's movement at this time and the complex dynamics of identity politics. Despite their valid claims of ethnic discrimination, the 'whiteness' of Jewish women was perceived by many fellow feminists to complicate their claims to oppression. This at times placed them at the centre of debates around ethnicity in the wider women's movement. Jewish feminists themselves were a highly disparate group of individuals with very different reasons for immersing themselves in the world of Jewish feminism. However, an overarching, uniting purpose to Jewish feminism

over the course of the 1970s and 1980s – apart from uniting against the anti-Semitic fallout of the *Spare Rib* affair – is conspicuous by its absence. There were a number of individuals who were clearly committed to the notion of 'Jewish feminism' as a political position from which to organise against anti-Semitism and racism based on the historical oppression suffered by the Jewish people. However, the evidence suggests that most women in the movement were more interested in exploring often forgotten Jewish roots and exploring what a Jewish feminist identity was on a largely personal level. One did not necessarily preclude the other, but neither did an exploration of personal identity necessarily lead to overt political action on the basis of that identity. Given the relatively small size of the domestic Jewish feminist community, such diversity of expectation did little to strengthen the movement. Summing up the difficulties of defining the movement and its dissipation in the early 1990s, Erica Burman wrote 'What is "Jewish"feminism then? Does it exist? Does it matter? The short answer appears to be, sometimes it has existed, sometimes it does exist and right now maybe it does not and perhaps this does not matter.'[122] Like many identity-based feminist groups of the 1970 and 1980s, Jewish feminism had a short-lived and fragmented existence; but nevertheless, it revealed much about the politics of race in the women's movement.

4

White Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist and Anti-Imperialist Feminism, c. 1976–1980

Introduction

Despite the overwhelming whiteness of the WLM's organisational mores and theoretical biases, over the course of the 1970s an increasing number of white feminists were – like their fellow travellers in the broader left – involved in anti-racist, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist campaigns. This was largely the result of the increasing profile of the National Front in English electoral politics. This provoked much comment and concern across the radical left, a concern which found its most well-known expression in the popularity of the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism. Anti-racism and anti-fascism – and the two terms were often used interchangeably, despite their different connotations – thus achieved a huge prominence in radical politics, including within white feminist groups. This was the first time that such politics had achieved significant attention within white feminist groupings;[1] the increasing attention paid to race also provided excellent conditions for a renewed interest in imperialism within feminist politics. However, the extent to which this engagement with the politics of anti-racism and anti-imperialism ironically revealed the whiteness of WLM makes such activism particularly illuminating to study.

This chapter will concentrate on two of the largest groups that were involved in such politics, namely the Women Against Racism and Fascism network (WARF), and Women Against Imperialism (WAI). Despite their concern with anti-racism/fascism, feminists involved in WARF and similar campaigns were largely – if not entirely – preoccupied with the implications of fascism for white, rather than Black, women. This was largely because they acted within a post-1968 activist paradigm that emphasised organising around one's own oppression and the consequent autonomy of 'individual' struggles.[2] Thus, critiques of fascism in

the late 1970s necessarily (given the logic of this autonomous struggle paradigm) focused on its sexual rather than its racial politics. Indeed, this is why WARF were much more comfortable discussing fascism rather than racism; a hierarchical gender order was a clear characteristic of fascist thought in a way that it was not for racist thought. For white feminists who wanted to campaign primarily around their own oppression in a way that nevertheless gave support to the Black community, fascism, rather than racism, was the obvious bogeyman for them to attack. Yet this ironically resulted in a relative lack ofattention for the (much greater) concerns of Black women regarding racism as fascism; and this both curtailed the effectiveness of such activism, and was arguably racist in itself.

Anti-racist feminists also spent considerable time critiquing the politics of other, male-dominated anti-fascist groupings, such as the Anti-Nazi League. This critique hinged on two main arguments: firstly, that the English left was paying insufficient attention to the gender politics of the National Front, and secondly, that the anti-fascist milieu itself was often sexist. However, despite this critique, feminist anti-racist groups such as WARF were not immune from criticism themselves, both from those involved in the anti-racist struggle, and from some white feminists who viewed the anti-racist struggle as a diversion from feminist activism. This latter accusation held true for feminists involved in anti-imperialist groups such as WAI. This chapter will examine these various aspects of white anti-racist/anti-fascist and anti-imperialist feminist activism during the late 1970s, which have been unjustly overlooked by chroniclers of feminism.[3] Examining this activism illustrates that there was a critical white feminist interaction with race politics – albeit a flawed one – before the 1980s, the period in which this interaction is classically placed. Indeed, the historical significance of this activism lies in the fact that they were amongst the last groups to operate within a post-1968 'autonomous struggle' paradigm which, as Roth has argued in an American context, ultimately restricted rather than enabled coalition work across the left.[4] The transition to a paradigm that emphasised the necessity of Black and white women working together in the 1980s – and the difficulties that this transition entailed – can thus only be understood in the context of this earlier anti-racist involvement.

The National Front and leftist responses

The National Front (NF) was formed in 1967, and gained increasingly in popularity over the 1970s in an England where racial tensions

appeared ever more evident, and in which mainstream political parties were no longer prepared openly to voice racist sentiments. It was not until the later 1970s, however, that specifically feminist resistance to the NF gained a significant foothold within radical activism. This occurred as part of a larger leftist movement against racism and fascism, rather than as a phenomenon within feminism alone. Indeed, it is clear that the women involved in these groups had significant links with the (male) left, and that without these links, this activism would not have occurred within the WLM at this point. Although anti-racist activism had been a part of the radical left for some time – the anti-NF demonstration at Red Lion Square in which student protestor Kevin Gately was killed happened in 1974 – it became a much larger phenomenon due to the increasing success that the NF were enjoying at the polls. This became particularly marked from 1976 on, when, as Nigel Copsey has argued, press sensationalism around the arrival of Malawian Asians fuelled popular racism.[5] From having fielded just fifty candidates in the February 1974 general election,[6] the Front went on to field a massive three hundred and three candidates in the 1979 general elections.[7] They also received 119,000 votes at the May 1977 Greater London Council Election between these two events.[8] Many ad-hoc local pressure groups and 'defence committees' (to use the language of the time) were founded, and in time they attempted to join together for the purposes of a national campaign. A 'Northern Committee' of anti-fascist committees from the North West, Yorkshire and the Midlands was founded in 1976, with London establishing its own 'All London Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee' in May 1977, comprising of twenty three separate anti-fascist committees.[9] The London branches of WARF were affiliated to this group. Undoubtedly the most well-known and largest grouping, however, was the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), primarily formed in 1977 by activists affiliated to the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), although they enjoyed support from a range of quarters, including from some Labour MPs. The ANL was instrumental in organising Rock Against Racism, a series of musical concerts across the country variously termed 'Carnival against Racism' or 'Carnival Against the Nazis' in the summer of 1978. Two rallies in London, at Victoria Park in April and Brockwell Park in September, were attended by 80,000 and 100,000 people respectively.[10] Perhaps because of the dynamic nature of its activism, the ANL was well supported for a pressure group that had its origins in the far left: historian of the ANL Dave Renton suggests that between 1977 and 1979, there were around 250 ANL branches which had between 40,000 and 50,000 members.[11]

Protests and demonstrations by both the ANL and other groups were commonplace, and in London there were several violent confrontations during counter-demonstrations to the National Front, most notably in Lewisham in August 1977 and Southall in April 1979, where ANL activist Blair Peach was killed by a policeman.

Despite the high numbers they attracted to the cause however, the approach of the ANL was controversial. Often, their attention to racism was perceived as an opportunistic smokescreen for recruitment to the SWP.[12] Furthermore, their comparatively high profile meant that they often effectively usurped older anti-racist and fascist committees.[13] Most significantly, their political analysis of racism was often found to be lacking by radicals, both Black and white, a critique most famously articulated by Paul Gilroy in *There Ain't No Black in The Union Jack*. In particular, he critiqued the ANL's designation of the Front as 'sham patriots' writing that 'The National Front and similar groups become seen, not as one end of a continuum of political sentiment, but as an embarrassing excrescence on the otherwise unblemished feature of British democracy.'[14] An analysis that situated racism in far-right groups such as the Front, rather than as an everyday phenomenon supported by the state, was thus argued by many Black commentators to be politically naive. Although the ANL were seen to be the main perpetrators of this school of thought, it was a problem that bedevilled the white anti-racist movement as a whole. As Brixton Black Women's Group claimed in their analysis of the All London Anti-Fascist Anti-Racist Committee, 'For them racism is embodied in the National Front, which is regarded as a cancer that contaminates the non-racist. Therefore, if it goes, racism will also disappear . . . [They] have failed to understand the true nature of racism in Britain.'[15]

It was also clear that analysis of the gendered dimensions of the Front's policies was profoundly lacking in the analyses put forward by most male anti-fascists. Issues such as women's reproductive rights were ignored and instead, analyses focused almost exclusively on race and its place in the system of capitalist exploitation – when analyses were proffered at all. The ANL in particular took a deliberately populist approach which rarely went beyond comparisons of the National Front to the Nazi party, hence the name Anti-Nazi League – it was felt that invoking Britain's victory over fascism in World War Two would be the only approach that had mass appeal.[16] Whether or not this was true is debatable, but inevitably this was a tactic that allowed for little subtlety or nuance in examining the rise of the Front. Few from the Socialist Workers' Party from which the ANL sprang had any interest in examining

the gendered dimensions of fascism anyway; they were a group largely constituted of men rarely noted for their feminist sensitivities.[17] The choice of popular heroes recruited by the ANL to broaden its appeal and spread its message is also testament to this: whilst the recruitment of legendary football manager Brian Clough to the cause was deeply symbolic in an age when British sport was still riddled with racism, he was also the epitome of the macho sportsman, and indeed was no doubt chosen for his ability to represent a particular sort of working-class masculine sensibility. There was no equivalent female figure.

Significantly, the nature of the way in which the ANL in particular chose to confront fascism was also deeply imbued with machismo, consisting of direct action involving often violent confrontation with the Front. Street fighting and hand-to-hand combat were sanctioned methods of dealing with the fascists, and were expounded in a manner of self-important and slightly deluded machismo.[18] This was the subject of significant feminist critique, as it was clear that these were methods that made it difficult for women or indeed, any but the most physically courageous of men, to take part. One unaligned Feminist Anti-Racism Group in Hackney and Islington wrote that, 'One of the reasons for having the sub-group was that a lot of us were unhappy about the macho-confrontationist, boot-boy politics of Lewisham and we wanted to work out less alienating ways of dealing with the Front.'[19] It also offended the non-violent sensibilities held by many, if not all, feminists. In this we see a link to the determinedly pacifistic views on how to combat fascism seen in the work of interwar feminists – most obviously in Virginia Woolf's work *Three Guineas* – a connection that will be explored further in this chapter.

On a more mundane level, participation within anti-fascist activities was often circumscribed by the refusal of the men organising to engage with the realities of women's lives. One writer from the periodical *Socialist Woman* noted with irritation on the planning of an anti-NF march by the All London Anti-Fascist Anti-Racist-Committee that 'Several women with children were unable to come as it had never occurred to the planning group that childcare was a relevant issue.' An attempt at the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism conference in June 1978 by feminists to give fifty per cent of the conference agenda over to sexism was shouted down and ended in turmoil.[20] Perhaps more significantly, men involved in many anti-fascist campaigns were actively accused of sexism on a personal level. Dave Renton, in his history of the ANL – *When We Touched The Sky* – recalls, for example, seeing signs for the WARF contingent on a demo bearing the legend 'Women this

way'. At this point, a man from Militant was alleged to ask whether 'he could have one'.[21] The anecdote may be apocryphal, but it is suggestive about the tone of many men in these organisations. If Renton is to be believed, such gestures were not taken lightly by the feminists who were victims of them. Unsurprisingly, such events fuelled a specifically feminist strand of anti-fascist activity. Nevertheless, the attention that was paid by these feminist groups to the sexist behaviour of male anti-fascists sometimes appeared to displace the main agenda of defeating the National Front, and was presumably one reason why they failed to gain wider support from Black women's groups. It is to an examination of the politics of these white women's groups that we now turn.

Women Against Racism and Fascism

Evidence of some increasing awareness of the threat posed by the National Front within the WLM can indeed be traced back as far as 1974. The newsletter of the London Women's Liberation Workshop records two women known only by their first names of Mel and Cath writing in to advertise an anti-NF march, warning that 'Ignoring organised bodies like the NF is suicidal . . . We see our fight against fascism in all its forms as vital to the existence of an autonomous women's movement.'[22] A fortnight later they wrote in again, re-iterating their plea, and claiming to be in the process of writing a leaflet addressing the conundrum of the Front's appeal to white women.[23] It is unclear whether this leaflet was ever written – exhaustive searches have failed to turn it up – but it is striking that the threat of the NF was posed in terms of the danger it posed to the (white) WLM, rather than ethnic minority women. Indeed, the letter writers did not even use the word 'racism' in their missives to the newsletter. Although this attempt to rally feminists against the NF appears to have been largely fleeting, this conceptualisation of the NF threat foreshadowed analyses by WARF in the later 1970s. It was not until the later part of that decade that specifically feminist resistance to the NF gained a significant foothold with radical activism.

The feminist groups that are the subject of this chapter were very much part of the larger left anti-fascist milieu. Although WARF and WAI were undoubtedly the largest of the groupings, there were many smaller local groups that were unaligned to either of these two, as a special edition of socialist-feminist periodical *Scarlet Women* on 'The roots of fascism' made clear. Contributors sent in descriptions of groups from all over the country.[24] Some of these groups were affiliated to 'Women Against the Nazis' – one of the many offshoots of the ANL – but it

seems that Women Against the Nazis were never incorporated in to the 'mainstream' feminist anti-fascist movement (if indeed the movement was large enough to have a 'mainstream'). One unaligned group, which met fortnightly in Hackney as a sub-group of the Hackney-Islington-Socialist Feminists, gave a useful summary of their activities, writing that they had started the previous year as a study group, attempting first 'to define fascism through some historical and economic perspective', before turning to study histories of the National Front and other right wing groups in Britain.[25] Significantly, they finished this account by stating that 'We have now started to look at the question of women and fascism, using as our starting point the paper from the Women and Fascism study group at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies', a group whose work we shall later be examining in more depth.[26]

The intellectual focus of the Hackney group should be noted: this was representative of many other feminist anti-fascist groups. An account of the formation of the London WARF group in the periodical *Socialist Woman* recorded that it had been founded in response to the perceived sexism of an anti-NF march in April 1977:

> for many women there was only a qualified sense of unity with the other groups present. Women as a group were not informed of the strategy of the demonstration and neither were our interests raised at the planning stage [...] Given that all fascist movements and right-wing ideology generally sees it as one of its major aims the strengthening of the family, thereby rendering women a consistent target of such movements, a refusal to see women as a political grouping is sexist and fails to confront one of the major ways in which the growth of the right-wing is expressed.[27]

In complaining that the left failed to see the threat that fascism posed for women as well as ethnic minorities, however, this account suggests that WARFviewed 'women' as 'white women' – a constant cause of consternation for Black feminists. Certainly, the motivations apparent here stem from a desire to draw attention to the patriarchal and misogynistic nature of fascist politics, and the effects that this would have on white women, rather than to address the effects of Front politics on Black women or indeed, the racism of women in the WLM itself. WARF noted that its aim was to 'initiate and co-ordinate women's involvement in general anti-fascist and anti-racist work', and were pleased with the initial fruits of their activist labour, noting that they had formed

a three-hundred strong 'women's contingent' at the anti-NF march in Lewisham in August 1977.[28] They further noted of this march that it was 'the first time that women marched together in such numbers on a demonstration that was not specifically feminist',[29] suggesting that these feminists perceived their gestures towards coalition work with a broader left as a novel innovation.[30] This clearly points to the increasing popularity of coalition politics to at least some within the WLM at this point, despite the debates on political lesbianism and separatism that the end of the 1970s witnessed.[31]

WARF was short-lived but very active in its short lifespan. *LWLN* records it meeting fortnightly in Camden Women's Centre, and latterly the LSE students' union, throughout the summer and autumn of 1977. Furthermore, although it started in the capital, it was not merely a metropolitan phenomenon but soon grew to have strong links across the country, as surviving documents and the biographical account of the group by Vron Ware have made clear.[32] Whilst it is difficult to ascertain exactly why WARF did not survive as a national alliance, it seems to have burnt brightly before fading away. In 1978 alone the network held a national conference and a regional conference in Birmingham, whilst the Manchester group wrote a long article for an anti-racist pamphlet, *Taking Racism Personally*.[33] Ware gives us an insight into the Birmingham group's activities, writing that 'we wrote leaflets, held jumble sales, film shows, public meetings, street stalls and graffiti paint-outs, and commissioned a spectacular multi-racial women's banner.'[34] Ware also charted the rapid decline of her Birmingham group in 1979, locating its failure in its inability to make racism a relevant issue for white women. She further suggests that this was why an analysis of specifically fascism rather than simply racism came to be favoured by white women.[35] Fascism clearly contained sexual politics that were detrimental to the interests of white women as well as Black women, and indeed, as Ware suggests, this is where the majority of the analytical efforts of the women involved in these groups went.

The feminist critique of fascism

As I have argued, crucial to our understanding of the feminist critique of the National Front was the contention that many leftists had failed truly to understand the nature of fascism through too exclusive a focus on the politics of class and race. This was clearly a continuation of a feminist tradition that had been prominent in the 1930s, as explored by Julie Gottlieb.[36] Indeed, it is notable that the focus of feminist

anti-fascists from the 1930s on the sexist, rather than racist, nature of fascism is in fact very similar to the framework used by women in the anti-fascist movement forty years later. Concerns around the curtailment of women's reproductive rights and employment rights articulated by feminist anti-fascists during the 1930s were remarkably similar to the critiques employed during the 1970s by groups such as WARF. The concerns of the National Conference of Labour Women in 1932 that 'Fascism exalts all those human qualities which react more strongly against the welfare of women in family, social, industrial and professional life' had hardly altered in this new period of feminist anti-fascism in the 1970s.[37] The invocation of the Nazi threat in many of these late 1970s anti-fascist campaigns clearly meant that the shadow of history loomed larger than in most feminist campaigns of the era. Simply the use of the term 'fascism' was itself a nod to the struggles of the 1930s: the far right of the 1970s rarely used the term to describe themselves. Women in these anti-fascist groups consciously looked to the past and the words of their feminist foremothers. Despite the very different world that they lived in – and the very different nature of the threats posed by Nazism and the NF respectively – women such as Virginia Woolf and Winifred Holtby had decisively set the paradigm within which feminist anti-fascists of the 1970s operated. This was, however, problematic. Woolf et al existed in an era before mass immigration from the Commonwealth. Furthermore, even these writers from the 1930s could be charged with a failure to address adequately the implications of fascism for Jewish women in Britain. But although this model was flawed even in its own day, it is unsurprising that it was adopted by anti-fascist feminists in the 1970s given that they operated within a paradigm that emphasised organising around one's *own* struggles.

The most extended statement of this 1970s critique is to be found in a booklet entitled *Breeders for Race and Nation*, which was produced by the 'Women and Fascism Study Group' based in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. CCCS had by this point developed a reputation for its attention to race and gender, and was a natural home for concerns about fascism to flourish.[38] *Breeders for Race and Nation* also became well-known through a much edited version that was published in *Red Rag*.[39] The 'Women and Fascism' study group consisted of five feminists linked both with the centre and with WARF.[40] They summed up their concerns in their introduction:

> In most studies of fascism, the position of women and the sexual politics of fascism are only given an occasional mention. This is not

> an academic question, for this also happens in the anti-fascist movement. Autonomous women's groups like Women Against Racism and Fascism have remained marginal, the the [sic] feminist principle – 'the personal is political – has yet to make an impact on anti-fascist propaganda. Yet fascism does address women *as women* or rather as wives and mothers – breeders for race and nation – and aims to win support on that basis. Fascism also addresses men – it sees itself as virility personified and regards liberalism as 'feminine.[41]

Sexual politics, they argued, were also at the heart of fascism, for it was a system that fetishised patriarchal authority: in the conclusion, the authors claimed 'Anti-fascist strategy which leaves untouched the sexual power relation at the heart of fascism can never succeed.'[42] (The Cambridge WARF group similarly claimed that they 'wanted to challenge the idea, which is basic to the hierarchical structure of fascism, of the central family unit complete with kitchen sink and attached housewife', and that 'sexism is an integral part of the oppression used by fascists'.)[43] Psychoanalytical models for the appeal of fascism – such as those proposed by renegade Freudian Wilhelm Reich, who when writing in the Nazi era largely explained fascism's appeal in terms of sexual repression – were also credited by the authors of *Breeders for Race and Nation* with much explanatory power.[44] The most significant attention in the booklet was paid to contemporary Italian radical Maria-Antoinetta Macciocchi, interwar feminist Winifred Holtby, and most particularly Virginia Woolf, with her analysis of fascism in her 1938 feminist tract *Three Guineas* being particularly influential. In her analysis, fascism is sited in the need for males to dominate and conquer both women and each other. The link she makes between masculinity and fascism is illustrated in a very famous passage towards the end of *Three Guineas*, where Woolf writes that:

> [. . .] another picture has imposed itself upon the foreground. It is the figure of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility, the perfect type of which all the others are imperfect adumbrations. He is a man certainly. His eyes are glazed; his eyes glare. His body, which is braced in an unnatural position, is tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon a sword. He is called in German and Italian Führer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies – men, women and children.[45]

Significantly, this passage is quoted in *Breeders for Race and Nation*.[46] *Three Guineas*, in particular, was a deeply significant piece of work for these women. Woolf, as has been attested to by many commentators of second-wave feminism, was already something of an icon to the movement: it thus unsurprising that her work addressing fascism struck a chord with women who believed themselves to be part of the same anti-Nazi struggle. *Three Guineas* was quoted extensively throughout the thirty page booklet, and in some ways the authors consciously echoed it, with a strikingly similar use made of photography – photographs that were then captioned with quotes from *Three Guineas*. Furthermore, when the authors looked at Holtby's work, they analysed a theme that Woolf also addressed through quoting the following passage from Holtby's work:

> I hate war. I think military values pernicious. I believe that the world would be healthier if all military pageants were abolished. Yet I cannot hear a band playing in the street, or see the kilts of a Highland regiment, without a lift of the heart and an instinctive homage of the sense.[47]

This psychologically acute insight into the appeal of fascism for white women, however, was not matched by the authors of *Breeders for Race and Nation* themselves, who largely failed to analyse the appeal of the National Front to white women in contemporary Britain beyond its idealisation of motherhood. The following quote is typical of the text as a whole:

> Without actually alleviating women's real position the NF offers an imaginary resolution of women's problems in its glorification of motherhood, with its vital role of 'the building of a strong race and nation.' The call for a return to traditional sex roles may appeal to women who, in the absence of any effective means to change their position of subordination, may see the glorification of motherhood and traditional femininity as the only source of their power and status.[48]

Because of this focus on the family, reproduction was a particularly prominent focus for those in WARF and other similar groups. The National Front campaigned on a platform of outlawing abortion for white women and had a profoundly conservative view of gender in which white women would remain in the home, produce children for

the propagation of the Aryan race and submit to the authority of the male head of the household. This was obviously resonant of Hitler and Mussolini's policies towards women. The writers of *Breeders for Race and Nation* were anxious to make the connection, looking at Macchiocchi's analysis of life for Italian women under Mussolini in order to explore what life would be like under the National Front.[49] This further strengthened an analysis by feminist anti-fascists that emphasised the threat that the National Front would pose to women's new found rights. As to be expected, the Front's reproductive politics and emphasis on family and motherhood were also one of the main targets of feminist critique. The authors used this to suggest that the women's movement was essential to fighting the Front, arguing:

> The issues which feminism has defined as central are also at the centre of fascist sexual politics. While fascism focuses on the family and motherhood – 'women as breeders for race and nation', the women's movement offers an alternative. Whereas fascism fixes women in a subordinate place in the social order, the aim of feminism is to create the conditions of true equality for women. In opposition to social practices and beliefs which insist that women's place is in the home, with the kids, at the sink, or in the bed, feminists focus on the struggle to create a society in which a woman's right to choose' is a real and practical possibility.[50]

Likewise, a booklet written for the anti-racist magazine *Searchlight* by Vron Ware – entitled *Women and The National Front* – had similar concerns:

> IN THE last few years much has been written about fascism and the National Front, and how their policies would affect black people, Jews, trade unions and so on. So far, little attention has been paid to fascist policies on women. The aim of this pamphlet is firstly to show how the National Front's attitude to women follows classic racist/fascist lines; that is, that women should mainly be confined to domestic life, bearing and bringing up children from the state.[51]

The very first issue addressed is fascism's attack on women's reproductive rights, as in *Breeders For Race and Nation*. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that they were both productions of women in Birmingham, and that the writers almost certainly collaborated together in the Birmingham WARF group. It appears that these groups felt the

most effective way of getting other white women to oppose the NF would be by drawing attention to such issues, it being assumed that fertility issues would be close to women's hearts. However, this focus on mothering again had the effect of placing white women centre-stage as victims of the Front. Black women, far from 'bearing and bringing up children from the state' would be marginalised, sterilised, even deported or killed, under the Front. Whilst both booklets did at least acknowledge this fact, it was not a focus of either, obscuring the racist policies of the Front in favour of their sexist ones.[52] This focus on white women was made even more explicit in an anonymous article written for short-lived feminist magazine *Hunky Dory*, when the author suggested that the National Front would 'bombard':

> racially 'pure' women . . . with almost unbearable pressure to make a career of being a breeding machine. Such an idea cannot co-exist with widely available contraception and liberal abortion laws, and there's no prizes for guessing which would be sacrificed.[53]

This focus on reproductive rights of white rather than Black women again raised questions of on whose behalf white women in groups such as WARF should be agitating for. Furthermore, these texts largely failed to expand their analysis of racism to sites outside of the National Front, such as the state or the individual. Despite the condemnation of the ANL's discourse of the NF's sham patriotism seen in *Breeders for Race and Nation*, the booklet nevertheless failed to fully address the implication of the modern British state – as opposed to the 1930s German/Italian one – in the creation and maintenance of racism.[54] They also, as Anna Zajicek has noted of white feminists in Canada, failed to reflect on their own racially-marked identities and on the possibility that they may too be racist or implicated in the maintenance of white privilege.[55]

Perhaps most notably, whilst Ware's *Women and the National Front* did examine women in contemporary British fascist movements, *Breeders for Race and Nation* failed to analyse the racism of the white women who actively supported the NF. Rather, the authors analysed the distinctive ways in which the Front attempted to use race to appeal to white women voters in general. It is undoubtedly true that the Front's valorisation of motherhood must have been part of its appeal for white women, and yet the relative neglect of the more straightforwardly racist appeal of the party – and the complicity of white women with this – was a serious oversight of the authors. This neglect was embedded in a deeply rooted cultural construction of white women as passive and

'innocent', as discussed by Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack. They have suggested that contemporary feminism has an emotional attachment to innocence linked to colonial representations of white, innocent femininity.[56] Significantly given the importance of history in this debate, this neglect also resonates with the 1930s feminist construction of women as victims of fascism, as seen in Holtby and Woolf's writings.

Nevertheless, the authors of *Breeders for Race and Nation* hint towards the end of the text that their analysis was less than sufficient, writing that although WARF groups had been initially founded in some cities as a response to the rise of the NF, 'more serious attention is now being paid to anti-racist activity, in localities and in opposition to changes in immigration and nationality laws which further the oppression of black women.' They further added that 'The shift in the practice of WARF groups is in part a response to the issues raised by the black women's movement, some of which have been taken up throughout the WLM.'[57] In fact, it is difficult to find evidence that WARF groups actually survived this transition; certainly, their presence on the national stage by the early 1980s had all but disappeared, matching Ware's account of the fate of the Birmingham group. As she wrote, 'We could never quite answer the question, what exactly had racism got to do with white women?'[58] This was an inherent problem for WLM women, whose political starting point was, as we have seen, their own personal oppression. Thus, rather than forming coalitions with Black radicals, they tended to concentrate on the ways in which they as white women could support the Black community, due to their belief in the autonomous nature of the Black struggle. This made some feminists question how much WARF could really achieve. One woman was doubtful about WARF's value, opining that 'as a white woman, I am also well aware that I can only offer support to the black struggle from the outside'.[59] Yet, by concentrating on how whites could support, rather than work with, Blacks, anti-fascist campaigning could run the risk of failing to engage with the Black community, due to the segregated nature of the politics that such a starting point led to. Ruth Frankenberg recalled of her time as a student anti-fascist in Cambridge that:

> I saw racism as entirely external to me, a characteristic of extremists or of the British State, but not a part of what made me, or shaped my activism. Ironically, however, and exemplifying the extent to which racism constructed my outlook, I barely noticed, much less questioned, the reality that the All-Cambridge Campaign was almost entirely white in its membership.[60]

This led to the ignominious position where white people decided what constituted racism and what should be done to fight it. The failure of such campaigning to consult the Black community on these essential points could in itself – as Frankenberg argues – be constituted as racist. A method of organising that had been initiated in an attempt to be sensitive to the autonomy of the Black community ironically led to their marginalisation within anti-racist and anti-fascist politics. This made integrated activism between Black and white women at times difficult to achieve as the transition away from the 'autonomous struggle' paradigm took place, as the final chapter will explore.

New approaches to anti-racism

The limitations of white feminist anti-fascism within the autonomous struggle paradigm led to an exploration by activists of other ways through which white women could engage in the struggle. A shift away from a focus on the individual's own oppression to the part that the individual played in perpetuating oppression led these activists to a key innovation in anti-racist activism: this was the anti-racist consciousness-raising group, which, as Ware suggests was a novel activity for the women in these groups.[61] My interviews with Miriam and Adele suggested that such an approach to anti-racism also came from the co-counselling movement that was prominent in politicised therapeutic circles at the time: Miriam in particular recalled 'working on her racism' in co-counselling sessions.[62] However, small group CR work was also clearly indebted to the feminist consciousness-raising activities that were so significant in the early years of WLM, and made these groups a format that many white feminists were comfortable with. Four women in an anti-racist CR group in America wrote in 1979 that:

> We feel that using consciousness-raising to explore our racism is particularly useful and appropriate. It is a feminist form based upon the ways women have always talked and listened to each other. The CR format encourages personal sharing, risk taking and involvement, which are essential for getting at how each of us is racist in a daily way; and it encourages the 'personal' changes that makes political transformation and action possible.[63]

It was this exploration of personal experiences of racism and being racist that allowed white women to make a transition from the 'autonomous struggle' paradigm of supporting Blacks, to being able to become part

of that struggle themselves through working on their *own* racism. Crucially, this was still a politics that allowed women to start from the personal, making it amenable to those used to using their own oppression as their political starting point. However, unlike the CR groups of the early WLM, anti-racist groups offered few crumbs of comfort to those seeking an emotional refuge from a society that promoted a highly restrictive and oppressive mode of femininity. On the contrary, anti-racist CR groups were soul-searching affairs that took the individual on an agonising quest for the racism inside themselves. Such groups were predicated on the assumption that white women – even those who were dedicated anti-racists – inevitably held racist attitudes and assumptions, due to the nature of the society that they were a part of. Once found – so the theory went – such attitudes could be rooted out. This was essential for women to become better activists (and people), for what could be more contradictory than a racist anti-racist? Thus, the anti-racist CR group quickly began to be seen as a necessary pre-cursor to anti-racist activism.

Significantly in terms of the longer-term impact of WARF, the first of these groups was founded by their Manchester branch in 1978, operating in an area in the south-east of the city – Longsight and Levenshulme – that was very racially diverse. Happily for the historian, they wrote a long paper outlining their activities for the *Peace News* pamphlet, *Taking Racism Personally*, a sixteen page document in which various anti-racist groups (not just feminist oriented) documented racism within the white community, 'including among professed anti-racists.'[64] The links with the wider left are significant, suggesting the continuing importance of intellectual developments there for at least socialist-feminists. The introduction stated that 'we are slowly realising how deeply rooted racism is in our society, in our movement, in ourselves'.[65] This was the key insight for the Manchester group, who entitled their contribution 'Eight white women uncover their own racism'. They wrote that they started the anti-racist group several months after the Manchester WARF was formed in autumn 1977, after some of the group had 'become very uneasy about our own racist feelings'.[66] Following this was a detailed description of the anti-racist CR group's activities, giving an unparalleled insight into the practical operation, political ideology and emotional impact of such groups. The aim of the group was to enable a supportive space in which white women could root out their own racist emotions without being made to feel guilty. Meeting for eleven weeks, the group was all white, as 'black women do not have to help us sort out our own mess': it was also felt that it

would be painful for them to hear racist emotions being expressed.[67] The group used techniques such as working in pairs (taking it in turns to talk and listen), word association games with pictures, and the 'four point technique.' This latter technique was apparently suggested by a woman in London who had been involved in similar groups, perhaps (though this is speculation) as part of co-counselling. Such connections illustrate that these approaches existed on a national rather than local scale, though the Manchester group clearly felt that their own utilisation of these techniques was novel enough to write a paper evangelising about it. The 'four-point' technique involved the women undergoing it to first imagine 'a time when she felt oppressed herself', and then to 'think or fantasise about a time when she felt the pain of racism.' The most challenging stage was the third in which the women had to 'think of a time when she had been racist herself', before finally going through the previous incidents and fantasising 'about how she would react, in the same situation, now that she is in full possession of her power.'[68] The powerful emotions – or 'freak-outs' – these techniques provoked were a central feature of the group. One woman recalled:

> The negative feelings about black people, which were already very near the surface, assailed me full front during our first meeting. A word association game brought up an enormous amount of resentment in me against black people. I went off with somebody and further probing on her part took me into a pit of fear, the worst fear that I remember ever having experienced. I yelled and howled till I was hoarse, then cried bitter tears. This shook me incredibly – I never had any idea that there was anything like this fear lying at the bottom of my racist feelings.[69]

Another remembered:

> When she started screaming (in another room) I simply wanted to hush her, stop it happening. It made me feel sick, and I think I would have actually been sick if there hadn't been others with me I could tell how scared I felt. I didn't know I could trust the others to cope with it. It was a bit like discovering an evil spirit in the room when you've been playing with the supernatural – you don't believe in it until it starts working, and then you get afraid because it *does* work. In time I got used to women shouting and crying, found that I could trust the others to cope, discovered to my joy that I could not only

> cope blt [sic] also ask the focus questions that I thought would be helpful.'[70]

It is striking that the emotional support of the Manchester group was seen as a necessary component of its success, preventing women from feeling 'bad' about themselves at the end of the process. Certainly, the whole process once again underscores the centrality of emotions to feminist activism. However, such emotional performances – and there was a significant performative aspect to such displays – raise several questions for the historian. How necessary was it for women to actually be seen to perform these emotions to be considered genuinely purged of racism?[71] To what extent did such a process encourage women to admit to feelings of racism that were greater than they actually possessed? Did such an emotional style put off other women from joining in such groups, thereby limiting the reach of anti-racism? (one interviewee for this project suggested that this was the case).[72] Although 'emotional regimes' are often conceptualised as restricting emotional expression, an example such as Manchester anti-racist CR group emphasises that emotional regimes can also put an onus on expressing emotions in a theatrical or violent manner, which may require just as much mental control on the part of the individual as the repression of emotions would.[73]

The focus of the group on the individual also raised political questions that became increasingly pertinent over the course of the 1980s. Was such an individual focus actually rather self-indulgent, deflecting attention away from the daily realities of racism endured by the Black community onto the agonies endured by anti-racist white women? Although the Manchester group were keen to emphasise that guilt was not a productive emotion, it is difficult to see how such a process could avoid its inculcation. Furthermore, such an individual focus could lead to the idea that the solution to racism was to be found in the self, rather than in a challenge to racist institutions. And although the Manchester group were keen to integrate awareness of individual racism with a critique of the way in which society was structured by racism – writing that 'the fight against racism has to go on in ourselves, in our work and our communities, and at the level of institutionalised racism' – for others, as Ware suggests, 'the question to uncover personal racism was frequently elevated to a supposedly political end in itself.'[74] It is worth wondering whether this was an inevitable consequence of the method of working set by the Manchester group, despite their protestations. Nevertheless, the shift away from a paradigm of organising around

one's own oppression was vital in allowing the transition towards a more coalition-based paradigm in the 1980s which stressed the necessity of Black/white feminist integration.

Women Against Imperialism

Women Against Imperialism were a group of white feminists who had organised around issues of imperialism and racism since the late 1970s. However, unlike WARF, WAI focused on the much wider issue of imperialism – very much framed in a Marxist context – rather than domestic racism or far right activity. These interests are clearly in line with the anti-imperialist interests of some of the earliest members of the WLM, and it is probable – though difficult to prove – that many of the women involved in WAI had previous interests and activist involvement in anti-imperialism (this was certainly the case for one woman, Janet Hadley).[75] The exact date of the formation of WAI is unclear. Stella Dadzie's archives hold papers suggesting that the group evolved in autumn 1978 out of a series of day-long 'educationals' around racism and imperialism run in London.[76] However, references to the group appear as early as June 1976 in the London newsletter, where 'Women Against Imperialism', were advertised as a group who wished to discuss 'the relationship between patriarchy, imperialism, racism and fascism'. This group was formed a fortnight previously at the Manchester socialist feminist conference of that year.[77] Most likely, the earlier group disbanded but eventually reformed, probably with some new personnel. The group was clearly as much a product of the wider left as of feminism, especially given their Marxist analysis of imperialism. One discussion paper of the group from 1978 claimed that:

> [...] one sector of women in this country suffer most from the capitalist system – the women who emigrate from the third world to find jobs here in the West. Colonial chauvinism and racism inherited from the Imperialist history of this country are kept alive to maintain this sector of the population in economic insecurity. Immigrants as a whole fill the gaps in Britain's economy; they do the jobs that no-one else will do and they are among the lowest paid workers all over Britain. Racism and chauvinism have become almost inbred in the British people as a whole as a result of their colonial and imperialist history, and this had helped Imperialism divide the working class here along racial lines, using racism to keep workers fighting each other instead of the capitalist system which oppresses and exploits both.[78]

The pamphlet finished saying 'only when capitalism as a world system is destroyed can women the world over end their oppression.'[79] Once again, we see the importance of the wider left's concerns with race being brought to bear on feminism. Such an imperialist analysis was clearly Marxist in origin. Imperialism was the central discursive concept through which Marxists framed race, although the experience of nineteenth century empire did not provide an adequate parallel for understanding the mass immigration of the twentieth. However, the language of imperialism was able to express concern with both the fate of recent immigrants, as well as oppressed colonial populations around the world. Significantly, it was also a language that was shared by many Black radicals in Britain at this time, who were generally Marxist-oriented. Although WAI was still a largely white group, it had more significant connections with Black radicals – or at least Black radical thought – than did WARF: that some of their papers can be found in the archives of Stella Dadzie is in itself significant. The analysis on display is remarkably similar to – perhaps even indebted to – that of Brixton Black Women's Group during the same period. In one of their first statements, WAI outlined four areas in which they thought an analysis that came from the perspective of imperialism could enrich a socialist feminist analysis 'beyond more obvious areas such as racism, immigration, police power (e.g. SUS laws, Prevention of Terrorism Act), national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles throughout the 3rd world.'[80] These four areas were reproduction, the family, the economy and women's solidarity. On the first issue of reproduction, they suggested that demands for abortion and contraceptives would have to be seen in a new light given the control of reproduction in 'third world' countries; on the second issue of the family, they suggested that they look at 'the various structures and forms the family takes in Britain as a result of immigration.' Their economic analysis was again heavily Marxist. They asked:

> What are our demands as women in the workforce in relation to women in Third world countries and immigrant women in this country? How are demands subject to fluctuations and changes in the British economy, e.g. introduction of technology? What are the implications for women here and elsewhere when contradictions in the British economy (falling profits) are displaced onto Third world countries and underdeveloped countries (e.g. women sector industries such as textiles)?[81]

Discussing female solidarity, the group ominously foreshadowed developments of the 1980s when they asked 'How would an understanding

of the connection between feminism and imperialism help to develop ideas on solidarity between women given that this is not necessarily progressive?'[82] Unlike some other feminist groups, then, WAI appeared to have understood that the roots of white feminism lay partly in colonialism; yet, despite highlighting this connection, they realised it could be problematic for feminists.

As noted, unlike WARF, members of WAI did not spend time specifically focusing on the threat of the National Front, although it is likely that there was a good deal of crossover in personnel between the two groups. The educationals from which the second incarnation of WAI were formed were organised at the behest of various socialist-feminists working on issues around racism and imperialism, who felt that 'many issues (such as national liberation struggles, racism, immigration controls and imperialism) had been neglected or totally ignored as a whole by the Women's Movement in Britain'.[83] WARF were one of the leading groups in setting up these events, along with the group Women and Ireland.[84] Held in a Methodist church hall in West London, Janet Hadley remembered these educationals as offering 'some hope for making some kind of meaningful alliances with Black women and supporting them', although whether WAI ever truly achieved this is questionable.[85] Hadley herself wrote a paper on Depo-Provera for the event, which raised the issue of the contraceptive drug's use on Black women both domestically and internationally. Concern around the use of Depo-Provera, as discussed in Chapter 2, perhaps proved such a rallying point for women working on these issues (both Black and white) because it combined concerns that were both domestic and international. The domestic focus made the problem more immediate and allowed for coalition with Black feminists; but the exploitation of 'third world' women helped white socialist feminists frame the issue within a familiar paradigm of Marxist imperialism, enabling their support for the cause.

WAI seems to have enjoyed the support of fewer activists than WARF: the references made to it in the feminist press outside London are noticeably fewer, and unlike WARF, it did not leave behind any publications. WARF's concern with the effect of the National Front on white women – a concern that WAI largely did not share – perhaps allowed for it to mobilise support more immediately. Perhaps WAI's rather heavily Marxist intellectual emphasis put off women who were less immediately familiar with that analysis. One woman, who was present at these educationals, wrote 'Reading through these contributions two-and-a half decades later it is difficult not to be struck by how overwhelmingly abstract the theoretical papers were and how they contained few, if any,

references to individuals or groups of women on the ground, whether in Ireland or India.'[86] However, WAI ultimately lasted for a longer period of time than WARF, and was still active into the early and mid-1980s. The contents of the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* during this period indicates that they were an active and well known presence on at least the capital's feminist scene. Part of their extended lifespan (compared with other feminist organisations) was undoubtedly due to the range of concerns that 'imperialism' could encompass as a category. The organisation was something of a shapeshifter, and by the 1980s became heavily involved in issues around Ireland. There had always been close links between the Women and Ireland group and WAI, as described by one woman – a member of the former group – in her unpublished doctoral research. Additionally, the analysis of the Troubles as an imperialist war prosecuted by the British on a native population was a fashionable one at the time: what such an analysis lacked in nuance, it made up for in the power of its simplicity.

In accordance with this pro-republican line, WAI supported several pickets of Armagh women's jail that took place from 1979 on International Women's Day in protest of the degrading treatment that the female political prisoners received there. These events revealed that WAI had a northern Irish presence, as *Spare Rib* noted that it was the Andersontown (a suburb of Belfast) branch of the organisation that was organising these events, though it is unclear whether WAI had a significant presence outside of London and Ulster.[87] By the early 1980s the picketing had reached huge heights – in 1980, only one year after the first picket, over four hundred women attended – and latterly it became something of a feminist carnival, attracting groups that did not have any apparent connection with Ireland or imperialism at all.[88] *Merseyside Women's Paper* (Liverpool Women in Ireland group had sent a delegation) reported in 1985 that:

> A delegation of 120 women including black women's groups, miners' women's support groups, Women and Ireland, Labour Women for Ireland, trade unions and the London Armagh Women's group, went to Northern Ireland protest against 28 months of strip searching and to demonstrate solidarity and sympathy with sisters inside the prison during International Women's Day [...] the Miners wives were given a standing ovation and called back for an encore of picket line songs [...] Women's strength, solidarity and sisterhood can and will triumph over repression in Ireland and elsewhere.[89]

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Ireland was something of a cause célèbre for the British left by this point. Events organised by Women and Ireland such as picketing Brixton jail for its treatment of Irish prisoners, were activities that women in WAI were happy to support, but this was perhaps at the expense of a more meaningful interaction with Black (rather than white) activists over imperialism. Certainly, Bridget Cullen in her interview testimony suggested that despite the opportunity such a protest gave to make links with the Black community (particularly given Brixton's Black population), such links were not made.[90] She also analysed this lack of joint action within the logic of the autonomous struggle paradigm, recounting that:

> Do you wait to be asked to join up with them, when they are going through a heavily separatist kind of phase? Because remember, you've got to look at what was happening in America at that time, when you had Black power and all the rest of it emerging [...] people knew all this very well, and so they wouldn't put their foot in it by writing to, phoning or just turning up on the picket line on a Black demonstration or whatever [...] that was difficult, for all of us.[91]

Nevertheless, as the 1980s progressed and coalitions between Black and white women became frequent, increasingly Black and Irish women did support each other, particularly as both groups were seen to be particularly vulnerable to police violence.[92] Certainly, the *We Are Here* newsletter collective wrote a letter in support of the Irish women who complained to *Spare Rib* in the mid-1980s over the printing of an anti-Irish cartoon, writing 'We shall be supporting the Irish women in any action they wish to take. Firstly because of the anti-Irish racism that exists in *Spare Rib* and secondly because of the wider implications of this editing. We refuse to let an unaccountable collective define ours or any other women's oppression.'[93] However, the prominence that the issue gained in anti-imperialist circles was viewed ruefully by some Black activists, who felt it took away attention from their own cause. As one Black woman commented of the National Socialist feminist conference of 1980: 'For many, the conflict in Northern Ireland seemed to be the only tangible example of Imperialist domination they knew of, and they seemed oblivious of the fact that Imperialism operated right here in Britain, affecting the lives of every Black man, woman and child in a very real way.'[94] Such feelings clearly parallel the resentment felt towards Jewish feminists by some Black activists explored in the last chapter. This once more points to the tense dynamics created

in identity politics when a group that was white (and enjoyed white-skin privilege) claimed that they too had been the victims of ethnic discrimination.

The 1980 National Socialist Feminist conference which saw this controversy represented the high water mark of the visibility of such anti-imperialist activity in the WLM.[95] The conference theme was 'Women's Oppression and Imperialism', and the event was well attended: the report in *Spare Rib* stated that at least a thousand women were present.[96] This is worth noting given that this was far in excess of the number of women who had attended Ruskin, illustrating that feminism was still very much a movement that could mobilise a large number of women into the 1980s. It also suggests the purchase that issues of race and imperialism had for the movement. In the same *Spare Rib* report, the planning committee explained of the conference's origins:

> A wide range of political opinions was [sic] represented but the uniting factor was the need to examine why British feminism has not addressed itself, analytically or practically, to issues which are of relevance to working class, Black, Irish and other colonial minority women and the consequent lack of involvement in socialist feminism by these women.[97]

It is revealing that British feminism was implicitly assumed to be white and middle-class in this statement. Illustrating the analytical role that the category imperialism played for such feminists, Sue O'Sullivan wrote in the report back that 'Anti-imperialism isn't only about supporting the struggles of women and oppressed people in other countries. It's also about the struggle of black and other minority group women within the imperialist countries and about our own liberation as relatively privileged white women in this society.'[98] The three 'block workshops' at the conference reflected these preoccupations, being on the themes of 'What are the differences and similarities between the lives of women in developed capitalist countries and underdeveloped countries?', 'Imperialism and women's oppression worldwide', and 'The political implications for socialist feminism'. Once again, there was also extensive discussion of reproductive rights and the family in many workshops.[99] Nevertheless, despite the presence of Black women, much of the attention of the conference was focused on Ireland after a group of Republican women from the north were detained at the airport under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.[100] Black women were understandably frustrated by this.[101] Indeed, the reports by Black women of the conference as a whole

seem to have been largely negative, with a workshop report back stating that:

> Black women were dissatisfied about the way in which white women discussed racism and especially in the way they were excluded from workshops by the use of 'we' etc, in discussion of racist attitudes. There were questions over the possibility of any joint work as long as these attitudes persisted and women refused to analyse the racism within themselves.[102]

This refusal to 'analyse the racism within themselves' is particularly interesting given the Manchester WARF's group's attempt the year before to do exactly that: it thus suggests that anti-racist CR had yet to spread significantly in the movement by this point. This dissatisfaction was mirrored in a later report in *FOWAAD*, which began with the statement that 'Once again the annual Socialist Feminist Conference has taken place, with many Black women going away feeling as if nothing much had changed.'[103] The newsletter also reprinted a statement that had been read to conference by Black women, which complained that white women present had claimed that 'imperialism is merely a manifestation of patriarchy' and that 'The answer to racism is to stop defining ourselves in terms of skin colour.'[104] These claims suggest the presence of both a radical feminist analysis of imperialism at the conference, and, conversely, a 'liberal' or 'colour-blind' analysis of racism that, as Frankenberg has suggested, was politically naive and evaded the power relations between Black and white women.[105] The presence of such attitudes even at a conference specifically about imperialism demonstrates the uneven uptake of anti-racism in the movement, and the many different discourses that existed at this point about what exactly the relationship was between racism and feminism. Yet, over the course of the 1980s, the dominant discourse around racism in WLM did shift away from an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist paradigm towards a more introspective approach that was focused largely on the racism of the WLM itself, and indeed, individual white feminists. This shift will be the subject of the final chapter.

Radical feminist critiques of anti-fascist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist activity

It is important to record that, despite the activities of WARF and WAI, white feminists did not speak with one mind on the issue of

anti-racism/fascism/imperialism: in fact, the opposition that some of this activity provoked from within the WLM itself is remarkable from the vantage point of a later feminist insistence on intersectionality. Whilst the socialist feminists who made up the core of this activism tended to regard the world as a complex mix of class, race and sex oppression, radical feminists generally tended to view the oppression of women as the fundamental oppression, and focused very exclusively on patriarchy.

For some white radical feminists, activism against the National Front (and racism more generally) was considered to be a diversion away from the real task at hand, which was, of course, smashing the patriarchy. Radical feminist Marlene Packwood wrote a piece for feminist magazine *Catcall* denouncing WARF, claiming that:

> It is almost as though sexism and the oppression of women were dealt with and now there were more important things to be getting on with. Any analysis of racism and fascism these women formulated is geared to going out to fight in the 'larger struggle'; once again women take a subordinate position.[106]

This was echoed in the *Hunky-Dory* article 'Shadow on our Future', in which the author wrote: 'Nor do I want to oppose the Front solely on the grounds that it is racist, but as a woman, because they are anti-women. WHY isn't the movement stressing this aspect?'[107]

Furthermore, some feminists, influenced by American feminist Shulamith Firestone's analysis of race, actively claimed that racism was secondary to – and could only be understood in terms of – the sexual division. Firestone contended that:

> Racism is a sexual phenomenon. Like sexism in the individual's psyche, we can fully only understand racism only in terms of the power hierarchies of the family: in the Biblical sense, the races are no more than the various parents and siblings of the Family of Man: and as in development of sexual classes, the physiological distinction of race became important culturally only due to the unequal distribution of power. Thus, *racism is sexism extended*.[108] (italics original)

In denying that racism had a separate dynamic to sexism, Firestone's analysis trivialised racism, and implicitly absolved white women of responsibility for it. As an analysis, it simply could not explain the vast power inequality between Blacks and whites, and gave little in the

way of practical solutions. Her views were taken to their logical conclusion by a radical feminist interpretation of racism that suggested that women could not be held responsible for racism, and did not benefit from it, as it was solely the work of patriarchal male imperialists. As Indian feminist Madhu Kishwar complained in *Scarlet Woman*, 'I think another alarming tendency within at least certain trends of feminist thinking in the West is to disown racism, to disown imperialism. We've nothing to do with it. Men created it, so, well, it's their problem.'[109] Whilst it is difficult to find published academic feminist tomes that specifically argue this, it is clear that there were some grassroots feminists in England and beyond who took this viewpoint. For example, Marlene Packwood, whilst interviewing Adrienne Rich for *Spare Rib,* stated, 'As women, we have advantages which aren't benefits because we never had any control over how we got them in the first place, because men had the power to go out and rape other countries.'[110] Such a perspective, as Julia Sudbury has argued, 'exonerate[d] [white feminists] from any active involvement in the continuation of racialised oppression'.[111] Demonstrating the influence of Firestone's theories, one woman wrote into the *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* in 1978 complaining:

> I don't know a Feminist that doesn't think racialism is tied in with sexism, but I am very concerned about a new competition between the two. WHY do women have to stress the importance of anti-racialism activity OVER anti-sexist activity. Women ARE being murdered because they are women. I was shocked when I read about the black lad being murdered, but why was I any more shocked than when I read each week of a woman or child who has died in a sex murder . . . and most of those don't get in the paper (not untle [sic] the fifth in an area).[112]

For these women, the gains made by feminism were so precarious that the waters were not to be muddied by consorting with male anti-fascists: it is also worth noting that there is no sense that Black and ethnic minority women are part of the constituency that these women were addressing. This sense of precariousness was linked to a perception that feminism has been marginalised within the activist left throughout the 1970s. A suggestion in 1976 that the theme for International Women's Day the next year should be 'Many Races, One Sisterhood' was met with an angry rebuttal by women at the Essex Road Women's Centre in London, who wrote into the London newsletter to say:

> Our immediate reaction to this theme was that it was cashing in on racism as topic of the year in an effort to draw in the labour movement. Sexism isn't a palatable issue with the labour movement, so linking it with race seems a way to make it more acceptable. This theme does not take sexism seriously, and it is merely a token gesture towards racism. There are marches against racism and there should be women's contingents on them. There is never a march against sexism.[113]

The notion that racism was a 'trendy' issue was a criticism that recurred frequently, from both white and Black women.[114] The perception that activism against racism threatened the WLM, however, owed more to the perceived fragility of the movement, rather than an actual decrease in feminist activism. Depending on the perspective of the commentator, feminists either felt that feminism had become too focused on critiques of patriarchy, or, alternatively, that the radical insights into the nature of women's oppression had been lost.[115] Such a movement was not in an ideal position to broaden its concerns and reformulate its activism. It is also ironic that critics of feminist anti-racist activism perceived the feminists involved in these groups to be so in thrall to the male left, when in fact – as I have demonstrated – they were extremely concerned with forwarding a feminist analysis of fascism. This suggests both a lack of communication between radical feminists and feminists who were involved in anti-racist activism, but also speaks to the failure of a feminist analysis of fascism and racism to gain much popularity either within or outside of feminism. Given the white-centred nature of these anti-racist/fascist campaigns and the logic of the autonomous struggle activist model, it is unsurprising to find that there were apparently few links between campaigns like WARF and Black feminist groups. It is difficult to think of any more obvious opportunity for coalition work than that presented by the fight against the National Front and indeed racism more generally, but, for all these reasons, it was an opportunity that was not taken.

Conclusion

The failure of groups such as WARF and WAI to form broad coalitions with Black women underlines the extent to which white feminists during this period had real difficulties in formulating theories and praxis that could include women from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. This was mirrored in the left more broadly, and indeed,

reflected a society in which white and Black populations were not well-integrated. The activism of WARF and WAI generally suggested that they located racism and imperialism as something that existed within specific sites, rather than as systems that they too were implicated in. Nevertheless, the existence and activities of these groups were important. Although they were in some respects flawed, it was these groups who helped to place the issue of race in (white) feminist consciousness in the 1970s. It is inconceivable that the race debates within feminism during the 1980s would have occurred in the same way without them. It is also worth noting that the women involved in WAI and WARF were from socialist feminist backgrounds, and that, as this chapter has made clear, these debates occurred within the wider left, underscoring the continuing importance of the left in shaping English feminism. Despite the efforts of some radical feminists, on the whole the WLM did not exist in splendid isolation. In particular, the work of the Manchester WARF group – whose anti-racist CR activities were an important precursor to the increasingly introspective nature of anti-racist activity within white feminism – owed much to intellectual currents within wider left and therapeutic circles. These developments allowed anti-racist feminists to break through the older activist paradigm of organising around one's own oppression: the influence of these new ways of examining racism will be explored in the next chapter.

5

Critique and Coalitions: Black and White Feminists Working Together in the 1980s

Introduction

Debates over race and ethnicity within the women's movement grew ever more complex through the 1980s. An increasing level of interaction between Black and white women within the women's movement resulted in these issues assuming a much greater importance within feminist discourse of this period. Therefore, this chapter moves away from examining how different ethnic groups within the women's movement functioned separately, and towards a consideration of how instead they interacted and attempted to move beyond the problems explored in the preceding chapters of this book. The early and mid-1980s saw a blossoming of Black feminism, mixed race collectives and renewed activism on the part of anti-racist feminists. This is not to say, however, that all white feminists responded to the critiques that were mounted of them; many reacted defensively, or simply ignored them.

The legacy of these debates – and of identity politics more widely – is a highly contested one. Despite the complexity of the issues at hand, the crisis of the movement that resulted has often been portrayed simplistically as either the result of the racism of white feminists, or the misplaced radicalism of Black women. For example, Sudbury's analysis although in many ways thorough and excellent, overplays the racism of white feminists without seeking to understand what it was that made it difficult for white feminists to always respond adequately to the Black feminist critique.[1] She alleges white feminists made allegations that accused Black women of 'a divisive separatism', 'utilising aggressive male tactics', 'diverting the cause' and 'watering down feminism'.[2] Yet her quotes are dubious and entirely from secondary sources: whilst there is certainly some truth to these accusations, I have yet to come across

them put down so crudely. This is probably because most white feminists' views – whilst often problematic – were generally a great deal more complex than this allows for. She also covers very little of the anti-racist efforts of white feminists beyond anti-racist CR groups, which she is very hostile to. Perhaps surprisingly, Predelli and Halsaa apparently unquestioningly accept her analysis.[3] Conversely, as explored in the introduction, many memoirs of white feminists are largely hostile to identity politics, as are the interviewees in film made by Vanessa Engle, *Angry Wimmin,* one of whom (Al Garthwaite) claimed that she could not think of a single positive thing that identity politics had achieved, a seeming denial of the validity of the Black feminist critique and its positive impact upon feminism.[4] Perhaps the most thoughtful and even-handed treatment to these debates is given by Heidi Safia Mirza in her introduction to *Black British Feminism*.[5] This chapter is an attempt to reconstruct these interactions and debates, coalitions and enmities in a more subtle and nuanced fashion, allowing us to focus on points of engagement between Black and white feminists to a greater extent than has been allowed for in previous examinations. This will demonstrate that, despite the tensions between Black and white feminists, the movement was nevertheless able to salvage something positive from these often bitter debates. This chapter will first consider the critiques made by Black feminists of white feminists, before moving on to the responses made to this critique. I suggest that responding to these critiques was difficult for white women because they were so invested in a liberal discourse of racism that characterised it as a moral fault of the individual. Finally, I move to an examination of multi-racial collectives and coalitions to explore how Black and white feminists worked together day-to-day, and both the successes and tensions that these interactions engendered: I also point to the importance of place in the success of coalition work.

The Black feminist critique

The prime contention of the Black feminist critique was that white English feminists had little concept of the ways in which racism profoundly structured their lives as Black women. Furthermore, this ignorance was compounded by the white domination of most feminist groups, which created an environment in which Black women's concerns were silenced: indeed, these concerns around 'being heard' within the women's movement often attracted as much attention as the substance of the debates themselves. As Stella Dadzie suggested:

> I think there was arrogance in the sense that there was no deference to Black women's experience or a sense that they might have something to contribute . . . an arrogance that was represented in a lack of a presence, you know, there was no attempt to get us involved, or to ask how we felt, or to bring our perspectives to the table.[6]

Essentially, Black women argued for a holistic vision of social justice, and believed that feminism as practised by white women failed to achieve this. If liberation was to be achieved for all women, then all facets of women's oppression – including race and class as well as sex – had to be taken into account. This is well demonstrated by the concerns of Black women organising as seen in Chapter 2. British Black feminists argued that many of the analytic categories so long clung to by white feminists could not translate on to the realities of Black women's lives precisely because of the effect that racism had on their lives. It was for all these reasons that Black feminists came to critique white feminists as 'racist'. As such, British Black feminism demanded not just a space within feminist discourse, but a fundamental transformation of the terms of the debate.

The majority of this written critique stems from the early 1980s onwards, a period that witnessed significant growth in Black women's autonomous organising. The growth of this Black feminist critique was indicative of a generally greater interaction between Black and white feminists during this period, although, as we shall see, such interaction was not universal. Despite the presence of white feminist anti-racist groups during the 1970s, such activism engendered little comment from Black women's groups.[7] The increasingly vehement criticisms of white feminists that were produced during the 1980s were, rather, the product of a greater shift towards feminism on behalf of Black activists. Such tensions were the product of Black and white feminists attempting to find a modus operandi for working together: they had been less present in the 1970s precisely because there was much less contact between the two groups. Marking this shift, the July 1980 issue of OWAAD'S newsletter, *FOWAAD*, contained its first article specifically addressing the relationship between Black and white feminists. A Black woman present at a conference named 'Women In Society' articulated the growing sense of grievance well:

> One point that was raised on many occasions was 'What can a White Middle Class Movement do for Black Working Class Women?" This question was never really answered, only evaded. In the talk given

> by Hilary Wainwright on the 'History of the Women's movement, and the way forward to feminism', we heard of the success of the Movement. The talk was too self-congratulating. When asked what they had achieved, she replied the right for equal pay. As young black women, we have to fight for employment, we cannot afford to waste our time congratulating ourselves on getting equal pay.
>
> The trouble with the women speaking at the conference was that they were too concerned with keeping their middle class status; to them the Working Class and Black people seemed to be a different species. There was no effort being made to bridge the gap . . . NOW I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY OWAAD WAS FORMED [caps original][8]

This quotation underlines the frustration felt by Black women who perceived white feminists as paying lipservice to Black issues without truly incorporating their concerns into their own feminist programme. And the comment 'to them the Working Class and Black people seemed to be a different species' captures neatly the sense of distance and alienation between Black women and white women, and the failure of white feminists to connect with Black women on a meaningful level – a failure which echoes the failure of 1970s anti-racist groups to work with the Black community. The Black feminist newsletter *We are Here* published an article in 1985 claiming that:

> The WLM is racist because it does not take seriously the experiences of non-white women. The WLM does not accept that third world women are subsidising WLM the world over, that third world women have made significant contributions to all progressive movements during colonial and pre-colonial times and that a huge amount of oral literature existed for centuries in non-white societies about women. White women do not need to teach us how to protest![9]

Such views were reflected in the now-iconic 'Many Voices, One Chant' edition of *Feminist Review* in October 1984. As Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar wrote in their featured article 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', 'white, mainstream feminist theory, be it from the socialist feminist or radical feminist perspective, does not speak to the experiences of Black women and where it attempts to do so it is often from a racist perspective and reasoning.'[10] They then went on to discuss critically issues such as the family, sexuality and the feminist peace movement, their conclusion being that:

> For us the way forward lies in defining a feminism which is significantly different to the dominant trends in the women's liberation movement . . . True feminist theory and practice entails an understanding of imperialism and a critical engagement with challenging racism – elements which the current women's movement significantly lacks, but which are intrinsic to Black feminism.[11]

Writing at the height of the Greenham protest, Amos and Parmar wrote scathingly of the feminist campaign against nuclear arms, under the subtitle 'Nuclear Power on the North London Line', asking 'whose standards of life are they fighting to preserve? White middle-class standards undoubtedly.'[12] Other contributions to the issue included Amina Mama's discussion of Black women's labour in Britain, and a 'roundtable' discussion on Black lesbianism.[13] Not all the contributions were as focused on challenging white feminists as Amos and Parmar: it is important to remember that Black feminism had its own concerns and internal dynamics, and did not just exist in opposition to white feminism.[14] Nevertheless, it was this critical dynamic between Black and white feminists that clearly motivated many of the pieces of this landmark issue.

The interacting and sometimes competing influences of Black nationalism, ultra-leftism and mainstream feminism upon Black feminists rendered their critique of the white WLM a multivalent one. This is most notable in *The Heart of the Race,* where the differing views of the many Black women who contributed to the book resulted in the text as a whole presenting a critique of white feminism that was ambivalent and contradictory. The authors of the book perhaps intended it to be so: the book was always conceived as a collective effort, and the multiplicity of voices and diversity of opinion that the book contains is in many respects its strength. Indeed, the ambivalence and conflict within just one (anonymous) woman's mind was made evident in the book thus:

> I'm not dismissing the women's movement. A lot of the gains white women have won have been very relevant to Black women. Black women do have to deal with things like rape and domestic violence, and Black men are as sexist as the next man. But it's a question of where we pitch our level. If you're talking about racism, you're talking about survival issues. Black women have to put everything in that context. Where the women's movement is concerned, there are some women trying to do that, particularly Third World and Irish women. That's because they've got a perspective on things which women who come from a cushioned, middle-class background don't have.[15]

These complexities became particularly evident in the interviews that I carried out for this project. This may be because a long and in-depth spoken interaction is a better medium for these nuances to be teased out than the written polemics that were so central to feminist debate during this era. For example, considering her relationship to the white women's movement, Yvonne Field considered what made it difficult for her to be in white feminist groups:

> So, um, so it was class, it was privilege, it was about actually also not wanting to be in groups necessarily that – where I felt oppressed, or felt that I had to voice – be the token – for Black women and, you know, represent Black women's views.[16]

Thus Yvonne's testimony makes it clear that these difficulties were more complex than simple overt racist hostility from white feminists. The complexity of the Black feminist response to tensions with white feminists can also be seen by the response of Stella Dadzie to a conference paper entitled 'Problems in the relationship between the Black women's movement and the white women's movement'.[17] Dadzie's archive includes a copy of her own handwritten response on the back of a document that was presumably a handout of the main points of the paper. The points made by the speaker were summarised on the handout as follows :

1 The White Women's Movement is an irrelevant middle-class movement.
2 The White Women's Movement had failed to take up the anti-racist struggle in general and institutionalised racism in particular.
3 The feminist issues which have been taken up by the White Women's Movement have overlooked any racist dimension, e.g. our right to remain fertile and abortion on demand.
4 Many white women have been inactive in fighting racism where they have had an ideal opportunity to be active, e.g. in education and social services.
5 Where white women have taken up an anti-racist position they have failed to be really effective, e.g. The DP [Depo Provera] campaign.
6 The White Women's Movement is inherently racist, e.g. witnessed in a tendency to want to lead us rather than just give support; at the 1977 Women's Liberation Annual Conference as one Black

sister was about to speak a white woman cried, 'Lets not talk about wogs, let's talk about women.'

7 White women are sexually oppressive towards Black women and sexually aggressive towards Black men.[18]

Yet, despite Stella's own powerful critique of white feminists, she angrily contested most of these points, calling them 'incorrect and unfounded'.[19] Most notably, she contested the essentialism of these arguments, writing 'Are we socialists who believe in socialization or what?' As her notes evidence, any fixed belief in the incontestably 'racist' nature of white women was irreconcilable with many Black feminists' leftist beliefs in the importance of socialisation processes. To condemn white feminists as irredeemably racist was furthermore an illogical and depressing base for activism.

This points to the role that socialist feminism had in providing a discursive arena that could be shared by Black and white feminists alike. This is not to claim that all white socialist-feminists were anti-racists; but rather, that the socialism shared by many Black and white feminists alike was inherently antithetical to simplistic racial essentialism, providing a stronger theoretical base for working together. It is unsurprising that one of the most powerful theoretical statements produced jointly by a Black and white woman came from two women who were grounded in the socialist feminist tradition, Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson. They argued in their influential article 'Transforming socialist feminism: The challenge of racism' that:

> An analysis of racism must be central to socialist-feminism . . . an analysis which we all, as socialist-feminists, need to develop is based on the idea of a racially structured, patriarchal capitalism . . . This leads us to examine how 'race', class and gender are structured in relation to one another. How do they combine with and/or cut across one another? How does racism divide gender identity and experience? How is gender experienced through racism? How is class shaped by gender and 'race'? To take these questions on does require a fundamental redrawing of the conceptual categories of socialist-feminism, and it may help us develop a more adequate politics.[20]

It is in such statements that the ambition of Black feminist thought not just to expand but transform the remit of white feminism is most fully realised. Many white feminists – though certainly not all, or even the

majority – were moved to action by such statements. However, developing this 'more adequate politics' was a painful process. Controversies in particular over the National Abortion Campaign and the Reclaim the Night Marches exposed faultlines in the movement. In 1983, for example, the eighth annual conference of the National Abortion Campaign's Conference exposed deep divisions over the direction of the movement. Some women wanted to keep the campaign over the single issue of abortion, and others wished to broaden the campaign to focus on women's reproductive rights more generally. This last focus was particularly due to an increasing awareness that many women – particularly Black and working-class women – were heavily 'encouraged' into using certain contraceptive methods that had adverse effects on fertility. As one paper suggested at the conference 'Policies such as routinely fitting IUDs after an abortion and routinely giving Depo-Provera with rubella vaccinations after childbirth lump us together as passive receivers of contraception "for our own good" . . . We are offered – or denied – particular methods of contraception, abortion or sterilization, depending on who we are. And we are encouraged – or prevented – from having children on the same basis.'[21] This group eventually became the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign. Certainly, the refusal of some white women in the NAC to recognise this Black feminist critique angered sections of the Black feminist community. As Stella Dadzie remembered:

> [. . .] there was an assumption that if Black women wanted to become feminists, that to some extent they had to embrace that line, rather than bring in their own perspectives. And a good example of that was the women's right to choose you know, which was a major campaign and a very worthy one – a woman has a right to choose . . . But in a context where we were trying to draw attention to the behaviour of doctors towards pregnant young Black women – which often involved tying their tubes without their consent, or giving them long-term contraceptives without any concern for the long-term health implications – for Black women it was also about, about a woman's right to choose to have a child.[22]

These issues were clearly felt deeply: the *LWLN* carried an advertisement for an event in June 1984 bearing the accusatory title 'London NAC: Racism in Feminism'.[23] Nevertheless, it would also be possible to pose the defence of the NAC by women outside the capital as a resentment of a metropolitan London agenda, particularly as it was felt that women

in London had easier access to abortion than those elsewhere in the country. It was perhaps telling that the Scottish Abortion Campaign was in the vanguard of opposition to the repeal of the 1967 act; in a country with a high degree of social conservatism (and a lower ethnic minority population), they felt it was harder to get an abortion.[24] The complexities of the issues inevitably meant that they were slow to be resolved, and illustrates the impact on campaigning that these debates had.

Reclaim the Night marches, as Sudbury has suggested, resulted in similar tensions.[25] First instigated in 1977, they were quickly taken up by feminists across the country as a novel way of protesting both the harassment that women faced on the street at night, and also violence against women more generally.[26] They became events of particular pertinence in Leeds, where the recommendations of the police for women not to walk alone at night in response to the spate of murders committed by Peter Sutcliffe were angrily contested by feminists in the city, who instead suggested a curfew for men.[27] However, their decision to march through Chapeltown, a mixed-race area, provoked controversy at the socialist feminist conference in Manchester in January of that year.[28] Whilst the Leeds women who had instigated the march felt that their reasons were understood – Chapeltown had been the scene of many of Sutcliffe's abductions – the prospect of white women marching through Black areas calling for an end to male violence raised the uncomfortable spectre of the myth of the Black rapist whose primary victims were white women.[29] This was not helped by one radical feminist's argument that 'As to racism: any man can be a rapist. The colour of the penis forcing its way into you is irrelevant.'[30]

These debates around Reclaim the Night (RTN) Marches happened across the country. The Hackney march in 1982 was the subject of great controversy, much of which was played out on the *LWLN* letters page. Again, the marchers denied they were being racist, pointing to three murders that had recently happened in the area, and writing 'the march is not against black men, IT IS A PROTEST AGAINST ALL MEN. The most important statistic as far as we are concerned is that 100 per cent of rapists are MEN.'[31] Nevertheless, one white woman wrote in to suggest that, whilst she understood the rationale behind the march, she was not at all certain that this was apparent to the Black community.[32] There was a similar debate in Cambridge in 1984, when a RTN march calling for 'better policing' was organised.[33] Indeed, it was this call for safer streets through better policing that was particularly contentious. It rang hollow for Black women who knew through personal experience that 'more policing' was unlikely to mean 'safer streets' for the Black community,

in light of the record of police harassment and violence against them. Although it is important to note that not all the women involved in these marches were insensible to this problem – in Hackney, the women marching specifically rejected the idea of having more police on the streets as a stated aim of the campaign due to these very issues – the perception that this was the main goal of the RTN marches was a damaging one. As Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson commented:

> Not only is it racist for women to march through Black areas with demands for safer streets for women (which women?) but also, to understate it, we don't know many black women who see police protection as any way of doing this . . . Certainly Cherry Groce and the family of Cynthia Jarrett are unlikely to have any illusions about better policing.[34]

The invocation of Groce and Jarrett was a powerful one, reminding white women that innocent Black women had been killed and injured at the hands of white male policemen.[35] As such, what was essentially a protest against violence against women that in theory could have been a campaign that united Black and white women, instead became a divisive issue due to the insensitive manner in which the RTN marches were carried out by white women. And again, rather than overt discrimination, it was this insensitivity, a failure to think through the ramifications of their actions, that led to the accusation of racism that was levelled at white women.

White feminist responses

The complexity of these issues were mirrored in the response of white feminists. It is important to note that the increasing anti-racist activity that the movement witnessed was uneven. Far from all white women embraced these critiques. Some simply ignored them; others reacted with hostility. Ruth Frankenberg noted in an article for *Trouble and Strife* entitled 'White Racism: more than a moral issue' that the 'predominant response' to the Black feminist critique 'has been one of uncomfortable silence'.[36] Nevertheless, this critique did draw more pro-active responses from some white feminists. By the early 1980s the anti-racist initiatives of WARF were complemented – and increasingly replaced – by many local CR groups made up of white women who wished to examine their own racism, and by myriad local anti-racist initiatives and conferences. Many of these can be found in the pages of the *LWLN* and *WIRES*. Due to

the shift away from the activist model of autonomous struggle explored in the previous chapter, it is useful to make a distinction between initiatives from the late 1970s and those that originated in the 1980s. Jenny Bourne, a worker at the Institute of Race Relations, also argued that two distinct phases could be seen in white feminist anti-racist organising, dating them from between 1977–1979, and from 1980 onwards.[37] This is overly simplistic – there was some cross-over both in terms of time and personnel between the two phases – but there was certainly a perceived lull by the early 1980s in the activities of the groups formed in the late 1970s. Black feminist Jan McKenley wrote in *Spare Rib* in November 1980 that:

> For the last 6 months or so I've been feeling left out in the cold, passé, on the shelf. I've found myself muttering very unsisterly thoughts about how everything is Irish these days and wondering what happened to dialogue with Black women and the commitment to anti-Racism which was so strong two years back . . . I'm beginning to feel invisible again within the WLM . . . You know a lot of the arguments too. I'm not going to drag them up but how about taking them out of the 1978 file and looking at them again because I'm very much 1980/81 and I'm very visible.[38]

A woman writing in response to her article several issues later also agreed with her on the waning of commitment to anti-racist activity in the WLM, writing 'I agree totally that racism became a trendy issue when two or three years ago it reached a focal point in the women's liberation movement and left politics. It carries the remnants of that revival today.'[39] This mirrors the trajectory of groups such as the Anti-Nazi League.[40] By the early 1980s, the intellectual emphasis of anti-racist activism in the WLM began to shift away from the theorising of white feminists in left anti-racist groups, and move towards an engagement with Black women's critique of the white feminist movement. As Bourne noted, 'the question that is being posed for women has undergone change, from 'how do we fight racism as women' to 'why is the women's movement so white?'[41]

These events have yet to receive much scholarly attention – perhaps because of their ephemeral nature – but it is also clear that historians of feminism have yet to thoroughly examine sources such as newsletters for evidence of anti-racist activity. For example, in December 1983, the *LWLN* advertised a regular meeting group for 'white, gentile, non-Irish women' looking to discuss their racism and anti-Semitism. The

group was so well attended in it's initial meetings that it decided to split into three different groups.[42] A few months later, a 'Women's Action Group against anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Irish racism', was formed, also in London. In a later announcement in the *LWLN*, it recorded that it had held seven monthly meetings, during which time between thirty and forty women had attended, and had managed to organise a benefit for the women's anti-deportation centre, a series of meetings around racism, discos, and an awareness training day workshop.[43] And again, such activism spread beyond metropolitan centres: a local Women's Liberation Conference held in Bolton in May 1982 produced a resolution that 'The WLM should fight racism' and that this should be a separate demand from the others.[44]

However, even with the growing consciousness around racism of white feminists, such meetings and events were often far from easy. In Sheffield, a one day conference on race and class held in July 1982 was reported in *Spare Rib* thus by a white woman who attended:

> One group of white women saw their anti-racism taking the form of supporting Black women on pickets etc, doings *for* Black women. But they seemed unwilling to talk about their own racism. Another group of white women wanted to talk about their own racism and wanted Black women to tell them how not to be racist. And the third group wanted to work out a way of facing their own racism and fighting it, and listening to Black women. The conference was dominated by white middle-class women, despite the presence of working class Black and white women.[45]

The Black woman who authored the second half of the report wrote that 'I did not get a feeling . . . of a real solidarity from white middle class feminists for either Black or working class women.'[46] That such a conference was held in Sheffield, one of England's less racially diverse cities, is itself revealing as to the importance that these issues had acquired in the movement. The tensions that the event occasioned is also suggestive of the sometimes destructive politics of feminist conferences themselves, as noted by Rees.[47]

Such events placed the onus on white feminists to respond to Black feminist criticism, and to prove themselves to be anti-racist women. As one white interviewee, Liverpool-based Mandy Vere remembered:

> I think [. . .] the white women's movement was, quite rightly, seen as, however un-awarely, being racist . . . I certainly wasn't aware, when

> I was sitting in a room of ten women, and they were all white, or there was only one Black woman, that there was anything wrong with that. You know at the time . . . it wasn't until we were challenged by Black women that, you know, we started to see that we'd been making assumptions, and things like that.[48]

Again, Mandy's testimony points to the power of un-awareness and insensitivity in the formation of this accusation of racism against white women. However, when some white women became more aware of the privilege that their whiteness brought them in a racialised society, it produced powerful results. Both in my interview sample and in the feminist periodical press, a common theme running through the stories of white anti-racist feminists who related their 'coming to consciousness' around these issues was their move between anger at being accused of racism, to an acceptance of their place in the white power structure and their need to fight that structure. Such discourses were influenced both by the practice of consciousness-raising so popular in the feminist movement in the 1970s, and the confessional tendencies of this later anti-racist movement in Britain which, as Alastair Bonnett has argued, placed an onus on the confession of being guilty of racism.[49] One woman who had been interviewed for a job at *Spare Rib*, but was turned down because of her lack of anti-racist awareness, wrote into the magazine saying:

> I recently had the interesting experience (!!) of being interviewed by you, and being eventually turned down for the job on the grounds that I had racist views which I had never acknowledged. At the time, I was disappointed, angry and totally denied the allegation – but on reflection (and a discussion with one member of the collective), I have realized that in fact, like most people brought up in our society I *am* racist! The fact that I have never acknowledged this ever to myself is totally mind-blowing and has opened up a whole new level of consciousness and avenue of thought to me.[50] (italics original)

Another woman wrote in to say that 'I think very many "liberal" whites are terrified of finding the racism in themselves but really that is where we must begin if we truly want to eliminate racism from all our lives.'[51] One woman wrote in the *LWLN* that 'Yes I do have obvious racist tendencies and am horrified about them. But I'm really trying to sort them out.'[52] The level of internal conflict that such sources betray are fascinating. A central question of these debates is how white feminists reconciled (or failed to reconcile) a conception of themselves as good,

or moral, with the idea that they too could be racist. Ruth Frankenberg suggests a solution to this conundrum by writing that:

> We recognise that in addressing the issue of white feminist racism, we may appear to be taking a 'holier than thou' stance in relation to other white feminists. It is precisely this ideological construction of racism as primarily a moral issue that we want to break away from. Racism is far more than a moral issue, it is a systematic form of oppression involving, to name but a few areas: racist state and legal practices, racist media stereotypes and representations, and a racist education system.[53]

Nevertheless, as her co-author Janet Martens noted in the same article 'many white women's first and honest response to criticism is "what, me racist?" '[54] Martens here identified the crux of the problem with anti-racist discourse during this period. White anti-racist feminists were being asked to reconcile two contradictory ideas or narratives. The first of these ideas was that, as good activist and moral people, they should be not racist: indeed, the idea of being racist was abhorrent to them, and 'racism' was one of the primary categories through which their activist identities were constructed against. We can see this older language in use in the activist discourse of groups ANL. Such an understanding drew on a liberal understanding of racism as an individual flaw.[55] However, anti-racist feminists during this period defined themselves as white women who listened to Black women and took their critiques seriously: and, during this period, this critique required that they take seriously the idea that, as white women, they were, in fact, inevitably racist. This idea of racism drew on a radical understanding of racism as not just a personal flaw, but rather as a way of structuring society that inevitably shaped a white person's consciousness. Nevertheless, for women who had come to understand being 'racist' as a defining evil, making a transition to this more radical understanding of racism was a deeply painful process, and not wholly successful. 'Racism', as we shall see, continued to be discussed in terms that deeply personalised it, making it a moral issue that determined the worth of a white feminist. Such understandings also relied on a relatively more sophisticated political education than the 1970s ideal of the personal as political demanded. Thus, whilst such identity politics strengthened feminist politics ideologically, the relatively intellectual nature of the debates may have alienated many women who lacked the necessary conceptual tools to take part in them.[56]

The loadedness of this discussion took a deep toll on some white feminists' sense of themselves. As one white activist from Liverpool reflected in the mid-1980s: 'When I first got involved with the Women's Movement, it made me feel better about myself. Now it makes me feel worse.'[57] Significantly, she added that she would be abandoning activism for the forseeable future. This suggests that there was a fundamental shift in the emotional culture of feminism, from a culture that provided a sense of personal wellbeing and empowerment to a more introspective and self-critical one. This is not to say that such a shift was 'wrong': undoubtedly, white feminism was in need of a greater autocritique than it had engaged in its early years. However, the unforgiving critique that this shift effected made the psychological benefits of being part of the movement more questionable. It is unsurprising that feminist activism declined during the mid-1980s if indeed, it did simply make women 'feel worse' about themselves. As Emma Hipkin noted: 'people took terribly hard positions and er, there wasn't much space for generosity around because there was so much anger and er, you know, a lot of bitterness, um . . . So it was difficult.'[58]

The oral histories for this book revealed the feelings of internal conflict that these debates aroused. Whilst some white feminists assented eventually to the idea of themselves as racist, this was clearly at the cost of some psychic conflict; and these conflicts seep out in the narratives they recount. Others angrily refuted the accusation. I suggest that a closer reading of these oral histories offer us an insight into the psychic operation of these ideologies, which helps us to understand the power that the debates had in the movement and how, in turn, these debates influenced the direction of the movement. The testimonies of four white women interviewed for this project – Bridget Cullen, Miriam Levy, Adele Cohen, and Valerie Hall – will now be examined.

Case studies

Bridget Cullen

> BC A few times I caught myself out saying oh – to a Black person, you know, I'm married to a Black person [. . .] I found myself a couple of times saying to Black people, oh, oh god, I do know how you feel about this, I'm Irish and – and they just stare at you and you know very well they – 'no sweetheart, you don't know'. You can quote this. 'No, you have no idea. Opening your mouth, it gives you crucial seconds of an entry, but for us there is the first recognition, which

> is of colour, and we're excluded immediately', and so you think to yourself, why in the hell did I say that? I feel like a total shit.
>
> NT So did that – that made you feel . . . ?
>
> BC Awful. [. . .] and [. . .], when you're in a political world – which was small, but it was vibrant, and when it was all a living thing – and these artefacts were being destroyed and made – remade, how do you practically go about it? If you disable yourself to such a degree you'll do what some did and say, oh to – for hell's sake, I couldn't be doing with all of that, it means I'll never do anything – do you dismiss it totally? No you can't. And so you just hang on in there, and come on, you do the best you can, you know. And don't tell me that you don't have to do some of that in your life as well.[59]

Bridget was an Irish woman who had lived in London since the 1960s, where she had been involved in many radical struggles. Here, she gives a vivid and honest account of her struggles around these areas. There is a clear contradiction running through the narrative, in which her sense of herself as a woman who understands racism is undermined by accusations of being racist herself. Being married to a Black man is clearly a way in which Bridget understands herself to hold moral authority, as is – as discussed elsewhere in the interview – the fact that she is Irish. Yet she is painfully aware that Black women did not necessarily see it this way.[60] There is a struggle between her recognition of the experience of Black women as one which is more difficult than that of Irish women ('No, you have no idea') with the way that this critique made her feel ('I feel like a total shit'). She then balances the difficulties of internalising this critique with her sense that, nevertheless, it was vital to address the issues raised. The passage ends with what might read either sympathetically as honesty, or unsympathetically as self-justification ('you do the best you can, you know'), with a direct challenge to the interviewer's ability to make sense of such problems – 'And don't tell me that you don't have to do some of that in your life as well'. We are left with a powerful sense of the internal conflict that these challenges posed for Bridget, as well as the feeling that these conflicts have been left unresolved for her – a lack of resolution further underlined by Bridget's slip into the present tense. Clearly, the interview as a process here does not result in much sense of composure, with a self-justifying and coherent account of her response to these issues, but rather becomes a forum in which the subject relives the turmoil and complexity of these debates.

Miriam Levy

Miriam was a white Jewish woman whose mother had arrived in Britain on the Kindertransport: the rest of her maternal family were murdered in the Holocaust. Miriam was involved heavily in Jewish feminism (as discussed in Chapter 3), but also in anti-racist efforts. There was a clear conflict between her need to assert her experience of anti-Semitism, and her wish for such an assertion not to detract from the racism that Blacks experienced: she felt strongly that experiencing anti-Semitism did not absolve Jews of racism. However, whilst involved in the anti-racist side of her activism, her identity as 'white' rather than 'Jewish' took precedence. Miriam talked at length of the pained relationship she had with her Asian co-worker 'L–' whilst working as a youth worker in the West Midlands, and how she eventually came to an anti-racist consciousness:

> I only worked with young white women, and L had only worked with young Asian women, and C in Telford had worked with young white women and . . . so we were all going to do this massive project, and I remember one day, L – we got together with our supervisor who was a white Jewish woman – J – [and] L said 'your racism is really doing me in, I can't put my work with yours because I need a context for Asian women that is different to yours'.[61]

At this point, the painfulness of memories of being called racist interrupt Miriam's narrative, opening up the contradictory feelings that her anti-racist activism opened up. Miriam is honest in articulating the anger she initially felt about being called racist:

> And I remember being really pissed . . . we got so angry with her, 'What do you mean?' and it felt like that this was part of what was happening in the women's movement, that Black women just kept telling us that we were shits, and that y'know, they were gonna . . . make us pay . . . and . . . um . . . I just felt, I took it very personally, 'What do you mean, how can y'know . . . I've been working on my racism!', and, er, really ridiculous stuff that I would have said! But, y'know, 'I don't understand, why do you have to take your work separately?!' Y'know, she – and she felt like she wanted to do something very separate.[62]

The emotive language in this account suggests an ongoing conflict about the realities of how this accusation made her feel, as do her hesitations.

Indeed, the lack of fluency is suggestive of the contradictory feelings that these memories aroused, preventing Miriam from forming a smooth and coherent narrative. The fact that Miriam decided to retell the story of being told that 'we were shits' hints at the fact that Miriam – whether consciously or unconsciously – may have felt herself to have been mistreated. Yet Miriam also distances herself from her past 'bad', racist self by calling her words 'really ridiculous', illustrating the self-loathing that reflecting on this topic induced in her. She went on to add that:

> And that was very painful, but again it boosted my understanding of what racism meant, that we were all sisters, but actually there was other stuff going on, and um . . . and . . . and . . . it felt – it did feel like at times, I mean early on, before I really understood it, it felt like they were ruining the solidarity, y'know, we've got this movement, and they were ruining it. But, I mean . . . my learning was at their expense, and er, I'm still obviously learning, but it was amazing to see how, for example [. . .] In my office in County Hall, I had a postcard, I think it was Virginia Woolf, that 'As a woman I have no country' [. . .] I think that was her and it was on the wall, and I remember some Black women coming in to see me, and one of them taking great offence to this post card and saying, 'As a Black woman, I have a country', 'I have a country' and I remember thinking, 'why are you being so divisive?' And gradually I could see that what I took for granted as feminism, it wasn't the whole picture.[63]

Likewise, in this passage, a whole raft of contradictory feelings surface. She recalls her resentment of Black feminists ('it felt like they were ruining the solidarity'), but this is alongside an appreciation of their achievements and the learning process for her. Yet it is difficult not to feel that her description of the postcard incident as 'amazing' is somewhat forced. Did Miriam really feel it was 'amazing' to be called racist? As an attempt to 'put a positive spin' – or bring a psychic resolution to the narrative – it fails. Once again, we are left with a feeling that Miriam – whilst undoubtedly committed to anti-racism – has not fully resolved these conflicts within her. Like Bridget, she was unable to process a composed narrative of her role in these debates that was firmly in the past, an issue that had been resolved both for themselves and in the wider movement years ago. Instead, I was presented with contradictory and chaotic accounts, demonstrating the extent to which the issue is still a 'live' one.

Discomposure results in these narratives because white anti-racist feminists such as Bridget and Miriam were being asked to reconcile two

contradictory ideas of racism. Caught in between these two dialogues, it is not surprising that some of the interviews at this point broke down, caused anguish for the interviewees, and resulted in a process of profound discomposure. I want to emphasise that it was because Miriam and Bridget were so engaged with anti-racist thought that this discomposure resulted, rather than because of resistance to anti-racism. As we shall see, the white women who engaged less with this discourse presented far smoother narratives. As it is, the internal conflict that these debates produced for both Bridget and Miriam does go some way to suggesting why anti-racism was only partially successful within the movement. By failing to move away from implication of moral failure in the individual that the accusation of racism still effected – despite the best efforts of activists such as Ruth Frankenberg – anti-racism either resulted all too easily in emotional 'burnout' (a common phenomenon amongst participants in social movements) or provoked a defensive reaction, as the next case study will demonstrate.

Adele Cohen

Adele Cohen was a Danish-Jewish woman who had escaped the holocaust as a baby in Copenhagen, and had lived in Liverpool since 1960. Adele was dismissive of Black feminism and the need for separatism:

> I had been on other, y'know, racism awareness workshops or whatever and – er, well maybe I should just talk about that because I remember going to one and we all had to – there were men and women – but we all had to confess how racist we were. And it was . . . you can imagine, it was a total different atmosphere, it was like oh you're, we're all racist, let's just, let's talk about that and so on. And I was totally against that, I was the only one who spoke up against that and said I thought it was terrible what they were doing. And er, I don't agree with that kind of method at all, and er, no-one supported me at the time but later on people came to – 'oh yes', you know 'I agree with you' or whatever. I wrote a long letter to all the participants in this thing, saying how I would have done it, if you have to make people, have to make people aware of racism, this is not the way to do it, to criticize and to get their back up. So, er that was a terrible – it was a whole weekend, I nearly went back home, but I didn't, I stayed, but I spoke up against it.[64]

It is difficult to recapture in this account the passion in Adele's voice as she recounted this tale, which attested even more so than her actual

words to the emotional reaction this accusation produced within her.[65] Adele very clearly reacted against the accusation that she was racist with demonstrable vigour. She further recounted:

> I didn't feel it was so welcoming, the Black [group] [...] There's, these groups, when it first started it was all great, but then some people became – and it always happens – there's some extreme people in the groups and then they – so they start separating y'know and that's not what it's about [...] I wanted to make it the co-counselling way where everyone talked about how they felt, and how y'know. But they didn't – they didn't want to know. They didn't run it in that kind of way.[66]

In this extract, Adele (who was deeply involved in the co-counselling movement) expresses her disapproval of separatism, labelling it as the work of 'extreme people.' She also seems to express the opinion that she – despite being a white woman – would know best how to run the Black group, which she had attended several times in an unspecified capacity.[67] Adele expressed offence that the group would not follow her suggestions, seemingly unaware of the dynamic of a white woman telling a Black group what to do. This is certainly revealing as to the far from universal uptake anti-racism enjoyed in the movement. Adele's narrative is also smoother and more coherent than either Miriam's or Bridget's. Because she did not have the same level of engagement with these debates – instead largely dismissing them – she was less internally conflicted about the issues raised, and was thus able to generate a greater degree of composure. This can be seen to an even more striking extent in Sylvia's narrative.

Valerie Hall

Valerie was a white feminist activist in Liverpool who had some involvement in Black community politics. Nevertheless, despite her commitment to helping the Black community, she did not take the view that race itself structured the way that the feminist movement operated. Similarly, she did not entertain the idea that she herself could be racist. Furthermore, her claim to have helped 'set up' a Black women's health project was a claim which a Black interviewee from Liverpool, Cathy Jones, specifically refuted.[68] Despite her membership of the Communist Party, Valerie evinced what could be called a classically 'liberal' attitude to race relations:

> I must say that's always been my attitude, that um, that y'know there is a difference with skin colour, obviously, but to me, the skin colour doesn't make the difference, we're all sisters together, and the important thing is that we join together, and work together, and that we recognise those differences, and from those differences, the different needs, and that we all work together collectively on that. So in that sense, I don't believe in separatism. And that also goes, actually, for men working with women in the women's movement too.[69]

She further added that:

> [...] the problem with some of the – with some of the Black activists is they, they you know, they thought the only way they could gain – because of the way they had been treated – the only way they could gain was to actually separate themselves. Declare UDI if you like, and do it themselves, you know. And I can perfectly understand that they would want to do that, but I think – you know, the downside of that is that you alienate those people from other groups that really want to come alongside you and be part of all that force as well.[70]

It is clear Valerie blamed the arguments and splits around race in the movement over what she perceived to be the unreasonable separatist behaviour of Black activists, thus absolving white activists of any blame for racism themselves. Her use of the phrase 'UDI' (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) is surprising given the term's contemporaneous use by the white supremacist government of Ian Smith in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and her application of it to Black activists could thus be considered offensive.[71] Furthermore, in stating that 'the skin colour doesn't make the difference, we're all sisters together' she plays into what Frankenberg has called a 'color-blind' discourse, in which a liberal formulation of race as something that 'didn't matter' ironically evades the asymmetric power-relations between Black and white women.[72] Distancing herself from these issues allowed Valerie to process a more composed narrative with less evidence of contradictory emotions and distress.

The difficulties of these processes were also witnessed, of course, by many Black feminists. Whilst these processes and interactions were rather fraught, some progress was made. What is striking about all these case studies is that it is clear that all the women saw 'working together' as key to improving relations between – and the lives of – Black and white

women. This was a significant departure from the more autonomous impulses of the Black women's movement in the 1970s, an autonomy that white feminists engaged with racial politics at the time (as we have seen) felt it appropriate to respect. Multi-racial feminist ventures became increasingly common over the course of the 1980s: I want to suggest in this chapter that, despite the bitter battles waged in print between some Black and white feminists, these relationships were grounded in everyday interactions in various feminist projects that could be rather more prosaic. Whilst such quotidian relationships could produce bitter division, conversely the everyday nature of these interactions could also produce more complex relationships. A Manichean view of the world could be difficult to sustain when faced with the complexities of real-life individuals. Such relationships could be marked both by anger at racism/accusations of racism, but also by recognition of the problems of Black women, the anti-racist attempts of some white women – and even friendship.

Working together, working apart

Over the course of the 1980s, working in multi-racial collectives became increasingly perceived by feminists both Black and white as a way of breaking out of the impasse that some of these debates had left the movement in. As Pratibha Parmar stated in 1986, 'there comes a point where you've done enough of building within your own groups and when it's necessary for survival to actually step out of your 'isms', (and this is what it has got reduced to) to make links'.[73] This reflected an increasing emphasis on anti-racist activism within the wider English left at this point, as has been documented by Alastair Bonnett and Paul Gilroy (who critiqued heavily the form this activism often took).[74] Much of this work was funded by radical leftist councils, and, as such, were local authority ventures. Others, however, were independent, particularly the ventures of the feminist press.

However, unsurprisingly, the success of these collectives varied widely. The issues surrounding Black and white women working together were significant enough for the cover of *Spare Rib* in July 1986 to ask the imposing question 'Black and White Women – Can we work together?', underneath a picture of a white woman and Black woman with their backs turned to each other – but also smiling. The iconography of this cover appeared to be intentionally ambiguous, mirroring the content of the article devoted to the question inside. Two multi-racial collectives were interviewed inside the magazine itself – Sheba Feminist Publishers

and Camden Council's Women's Unit – and two other collectives were written about from the perspective of their members, these organisations being the Third World Women's Working Group and Birmingham Women's Workshop. The experiences of these four groups were vastly different, and none found working together to be completely unproblematic. Thinking about the experiences of these collectives helps us to understand more fully the antagonisms between Black and white feminists during this period. These were antagonisms which were not just based on theoretical differences, but grounded in the day-to-day to realities of trying to make collectives like these work. It also points to the very practical problems that many collectives in this period experienced when they became multi-racial. The assumption that Black women could be easily absorbed into the structures of what had been previously all white ventures proved to be naïve: the accumulation of experience and years of having a certain way of doing things meant that in reality, white women often retained power in these collectives, because they had set the terms.[75] White feminists rarely worked with Black collectives, but Black women often worked with white collectives, because they correctly perceived the advantage of pursuing the access to the resources – and indeed numerical strength – of feminist institutions that were largely white. As well-known Black feminist Linda Bellos wrote in a conference paper from May 1984, entitled 'Advice to white collectives wishing to employ Black workers':

> As a political principle I find no advantages to black people to leave the majority of resources and privileges to white people. It is on this basis that I choose to join mixed (black and white) collectives when I wish to, but even where all the women are concerned, including me, are committed to having a mixed race collective, the process of dealing with racism hasn't ended, in a sense it's only just begun.[76]

Local authority funding, as we have seen, was instrumental in sustaining feminist politics in the 1980s. Many provided grants to local ventures, and some developed 'Women's Units' designed to deal with local women's issues, the most well-known being the GLC Women's Unit, headed by Valerie Wise (daughter of Labour MP Audrey Wise). Particularly in more ethnically diverse cities, these units became increasingly aware of 'race' and the importance of having a racially diverse committee. The Women's Unit at Camden Council were one such committee. In the 1986 *Spare Rib* article focusing on multi-racial collectives, they were cautiously positive about their achievement in having transformed

the women's group from an all-white collective into one that, by 1984, was 50 per cent Black.[77] Jude Watson, who was one of the white women originally appointed when the unit was first set up, narrated the reasons for the changes as following:

> In 1984 when we decided to change our work priorities we realized that all the consultation work that the Women's Committee had previously been involved in had been mostly with white, middle class women. Things like public meetings, working groups and so on had mainly involved women who already identified with the Women's Liberation Movement and therefore a lot of women who got involved already had access to the Council. The whole question of accountability and consultation had to be looked at afresh.[78]

Nevertheless, despite being positive overall about the experience of working in the Camden Unit – particularly as regards its non-hierarchical structure, which was perceived to make it easier forBlack women to join the unit, as they were not subordinate to the white women – the Black women at Camden were pessimistic about relationships between Black and white women. Black women's comments included 'In the issues I have been involved in white women have not responded', 'I think a lot of black women have given up talking to the white women's movement', and 'there is still a terrible lack of communication and change'.[79] It was clear that they did not believe that the work they were doing in local government, as important as they felt it to be, was a panacea to the problems of the women's movement. Yet despair did not reign; the fact that they were doing these jobs at all underlines a basic optimism. This was evinced by two Black women workers at the unit: Leena ('There absolutely has to be some sort of bridge between black and white feminists, whether it happens as a movement, an organisation or as individuals'), and Monica, who even more strikingly stated:

> When I think of my own background in Cardiff where black people lived alongside white people for many years and where black and white people have married and set up home together, and fought racism together, I find it difficult to be pessimistic about the possibilities of building solidarity between us.[80]

These complexities became particularly evident in my interviews with women from Cambridge, a small city where, by sheer virtue of the population size, Black and white feminists were in frequent contact with

each other in local feminist ventures that were largely funded by the city council. The ways in which racism was experienced in diverse, subtle ways were expanded on by my interviewees. Discussing the feminist milieu in Cambridge, Jamaican-born Bola – who evinced a moderate leftist rather than radical politics, and was committed to working in multi-racial collectives – remembered:

> [...] there was a covert racism there, and sometimes it's – to me it hurt more than the overt one, because you know what's coming, but when you don't know what's coming, you know, as I usually say, if you stand in an ant's nest, well you cannot see your hands down there [...] But until it bit you – that's the time you know that you standing in the nest [...].[81]

She then went on to say, when I specifically asked her about the (council-funded) Cambridge Women's Resources Centre, where she worked and was a trustee for thirty years:

> [...] the argument around the racism, the sexism, that would come up when you're in a meeting talking, where a Black woman would take maybe a longer time to explain what they're trying to say and where maybe a white woman who can just explain themself clearly, you know, would be just feeling frustrated, or you're going to the meeting, but you feel like no-one is listening to you and things like that. So, those little subtle things were around it, you can't pinpoint any and say this one a) Mary – Mary did this, or Martha did this, or, or Jane did this or something like that. It's not about that, but it's about – it's a subtleness of where you – you feel like you're second class citizens, and that come up easily where you know, somebody feel like you're not important.[82]

In both of these passages, we see the pain and frustration that Bola felt as a consequence of the racism of some of the white women that she worked with, a frustration heightened by the subtle yet pervasive nature of such behaviour. Similarly, Adithi – the only Asian woman in my sample, who has worked in community groups for over thirty years in the Cambridge area – suggested of the Cambridge Women's Resource Centre's commitment to anti-racism that:

> I think it was largely honoured, but I do think that there was... if I look back on it, I think perhaps these issues weren't bottomed out really, issues of race, and... there were tensions... and I'm not

> sure all the Black women who worked there would feel that it was a wonderful place to work at . . .[83]

When I asked Adithi what she thought these tensions were around, she suggested that it was largely around 'credibility and voice' – that some people were listened to more than others, and that this was to do with race.[84] But when I asked her whether she would then call white feminists 'racist', she responded:

> I wouldn't have called them racist as I wouldn't have called them classist. You know, I feel certainly that a lot of the women's groups that I went to were predominantly white middle-class women, so . . . but there was a – what I felt was the best bit of the movement is that I feel there was a willingness to share experience, and communicate, and think politically.

She further reflected:

> I think that for any kind of 'ism' to be you know – to have a huge impact, it's a way of looking at how that links with power structures. And . . . and I don't think the women's movement was sort of made up of women who wielded a lot of power, if you know what I mean.[85]

Clearly, then, there was a variety of responses by Black women to the debates over racism in the movement. As Adithi's response suggests, there was a certain ambiguity around what constituted racism in the actions of white women. She clearly believed the Women's Resource Centre to be a less than 'wonderful' place to work at for ethnic minority women, believing that they suffered from subtle prejudices there. Nevertheless, she was hesitant to apply the epithet 'racist' to the women who worked there, mirroring the controversial argument made by some white radical feminists that, as women, they could not benefit from racism in a patriarchal society.[86]

Birmingham Women's Workshop also suffered from divisions, although to a much greater extent than Cambridge. Indeed, it is a stark example of what could happen when these collectives went wrong. Opened in the summer of 1985, the Birmingham Women's Workshop was a collective set up with funding from the Economic Development Unit (EDU) and the European Social Fund to provide 'black and working-class women with training skills in non-traditional areas.'[87] The issues that split the workshop were explored in *Spare Rib* in an

article entitled 'Racism and Classism Splits Women's Workshop'. The article was pessimistic about the possibilities of Black and white women working together. The introduction stated: 'Most of the problems faced by black and white women working together are institutionalised and therefore intractable.'[88] The white co-ordinator of the group (which contained three Black women and five white women) alienated the collective that she worked with to such an extent that they resigned, due to what they claimed to be the 'intolerable racism and classism' of the manager. The Black workers alleged that the:

> white co-ordinator was totally domineering, and controlled all activities without proper consultation with her fellow co-workers. She continually informed them of decisions that she had already taken. This, they claim, made them powerless to take part in the decision-making process, and ultimately powerless to voice their own requests.[89]

Similarly, a white worker alleged that:

> The co-ordinator monopolised power, gives no support to other workers, uses the disciplinary procedures to undermine the confidence of workers, creates feelings of mistrust, emphasis on paper qualifications [sic], thereby creating class divisions.[90]

Despite the framing of the introductory paragraph article of the problem as being one of race, it is significant that the white women workers also resigned, and that class was also raised as an issue. This illustrates how race functioned not only as an isolated dynamic within identity politics, but often in conjunction with other marginalised identities, of which it was not always the primary one (as the debates over sexuality, disability and class in the movement at the same time amply demonstrate). Indeed, I would suggest that the white women's resignations from the collective ironically offers a far more optimistic vision of solidarity between Black and white women in the women's movement than the author of the article offers. Nevertheless, the affair clearly attests to the destructive power that the racism of white women could have in the movement, further exacerbated by the fact that the women felt that their complaints had not been handled fairly or neutrally by Birmingham City Council, or the union that the workers themselves belonged to.[91]

Sometimes, tensions between Black and white feminists were simply so high that bitter divisions occurred over seemingly trivial incidents.

One such incident happened in Liverpool at a social club in the city, Liberty Hall. This was a venue used by radical groups in the city for various events which included discussions, lectures, musical concerts, and films. Although there were events for and by Black women held there, it was used mainly – but not exclusively – by white women and men. Its heyday, judging by the advertisements it placed in the *Merseyside Women's Paper*, was in the early 1980s, but as Mandy Vere remembered:

> [...] one night there was a group – a women's group – booked to play there, and the previous week one of them had been involved in an incident in a nightclub where a Black woman had challenged a white woman for what she'd said, and it ... was very complicated but then basically there was a boycott of this group, this white women's music group, and then Liberty Hall was then embroiled in whether to put on this group or not, and it – the whole thing sparked off massive debates throughout the women's movement in Liverpool about what was racist and what wasn't, and what had happened and hadn't happened and how racist ... And obviously it had riled a number of Black women about all sorts of subtle things that had gone on for a long time about racism that people hadn't recognised and all of a sudden it blew up over this one incident [...] and everybody [was] involved.[92]

We can thus see that seemingly trivial incidents could explode to become vehicles for a whole range of tensions between Black and white feminists. This was perhaps particularly so in Liverpool, a city that was particularly steeped in racial tensions that long predated post-war migration, and in which the Black population remained far more segregated than in many cities.[93] It is telling that in Liverpool, unlike other cities examined in this book, there were few lasting coalitions between Black and white feminists. As one of the white women I interviewed there, Julie Callaghan (a colleague of Mandy in the radical bookshop that they both worked in) said, '[it] always seemed some kind of, like, they were very separate, there was some kind of, like, I dunno, suspicion. I don't think it was a good relationship at all, really.'[94]

Both Julie and Mandy – who were aware of issues of racism and supportive of the Black women's movement – remembered that, although there were friendly relations between individual white and Black feminists (particularly between lesbians), they could remember no specific instances of Black and white women's groups formally working together in the city.[95] This was also an impression confirmed by my interview with Cathy Jones, a Black woman who had been deeply involved in

Black women's activism in the city.[96] Indeed, *Merseyside Women's Paper* stopped production in 1986 in part because of these tensions, writing that 'We feel that we have become isolated and out of touch, partly because the Merseyside women's movement itself has become so fragmented . . . We know that *MWP* has never had much relevance to Black women and that we have failed to remedy this.'[97] A *Spare Rib* article written about the demise of the *MWP* was tellingly entitled 'City of Splits.' That this was so reminds us of the importance of place in feminist history. Local conditions – in Liverpool's case, its historic racial segregation and the severe economic deprivation that it endured in the 1980s – shaped race relations, which, in turn, shaped interactions between Black and white feminists. Black feminists in Liverpool believed that the city suffered 'institutionalised racism . . . much deeper than elsewhere in Britain', and as such, it is unsurprising that this shaped their priorities.[98] As two workers from The Black Women's Media Project in the city wrote, as compared to sexism 'Black women . . . still find racism their main stumbling block.'[99] The difficulties between Black and white feminists in Liverpool suggest that, when local socio-economic conditions were difficult, tense relations between Black and white feminists could result, allowing the potential for essentially trivial arguments to develop into deep rifts.

Other collectives in other cities, however, had more positive experiences. Workers at the feminist publisher Sheba were cautiously positive about the potential for transformation in the relationship between Black and white women. Sheba itself had been started in 1981 by six white women, only latterly becoming a mixed-race collective. At one point, it had two Black workers and one white, putting the collective in the 'unique situation' of advertising for white women to join what had become a largely Black collective.[100] Pratibha Parmar – one of the workers at Sheba – wrote:

> Generally, I don't think the Women's Movement has responded very well to the challenges put by Black feminists. White women have either been very defensive or downright insulting. For example, we have been accused of being too male identified because of our stress on the importance of class oppression. But with Sheba I feel very positive because of the politics of the white women who have joined the collective. It's very exciting but at the same time very difficult for us as black women – You're never sure how much you want to challenge or when it is the right time. Sometimes it doesn't come through in the best way because these things are very emotional so they can often

> be brought up in a way that isn't necessarily the most constructive. But I think because there is a basis of trust and a willingness to look at and hear what other women are saying this is positive.[101]

Without hearing more from the other workers at Sheba, it is difficult to know quite why precisely this venture succeeded more fully than others. It is tempting to speculate that most women working as publishers were more middle-class than the women, of say, Liverpool Black Sisters, and that their protection from the worst material deprivations of racism made day-to-day relationships smoother. Possibly the effect of working together in a small group every day created a common sense of purpose that averted the worst tensions and allowed, instead, for more harmonious relations. Black and white women in such collectives certainly knew each other much better than did Black and white women generally in the larger feminist scenes of any city. It may be that such close contact forced women to abandon their prejudices and to understand women from different ethnic backgrounds not as stereotypical figures spouting hackneyed political lines, but as complex individuals of generally good (if sometimes misguided) intent. Certainly, it seems that the worst venom between Black and white women occurred not in long-standing collectives where women knew each other well, but in racially mixed collectives that had only just been founded, or in cities such as Liverpool where Black and white women rarely worked together at all.

Not surprisingly, given the manifold dynamics at play in feminist coalition work, unexpected alliances were sometimes formed. One such coalition was the alliance of the professedly socialist-feminist Southall Black Sisters with various radical feminist groups in the 1980s – most notably Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) – in an attempt to plan a 'semi-permanent' alliance called the Network of Women (NOW).[102] The aim of this alliance was to protest against domestic violence, and they hoped to start with a national demonstration and rally against violence against women, an area to which SBS had turned their campaigning energies after the deaths of several local Asian women.[103] Although SBS perceived socialist feminists to be their most natural allies, few got involved: writing in a history of SBS, Rahila Gupta acerbically commented that 'most of them seemed to have been absorbed into the Labour Party or lucrative employment.'[104] But a focus on domestic violence made for an easier alliance with radical feminists – who were often criticised for their emphasis on patriarchy to the exclusion of race and class – than other issues would have allowed for, and this gave the coalition some initial momentum.

Even allowing for this common interest, however, the success of NOW was still distinctly qualified. SBS attempted to raise the issues of race and class with WAVAW, but, according to Smita Bhide in her write up of NOW's history, 'our success was limited. They said "yes, yes, of course", but stuck to their anti-men guns.'[105] Eventually, a rally was held in Hyde Park which three thousand women attended. This was an impressive figure, but – despite the 'heartening' appearance of delegations of Black women from Liverpool and Sheffield – the vast majority were white radical lesbians associated with WAVAW, rather than the hoped for rainbow coalition of women from a variety of feminist groups.[106] Furthermore, despite hopes for a long-lasting alliance, no more events were held, partly due to SBS's disillusionment with the process of organising so many women with different demands, a process which they felt severely diluted the group's original aims.[107] Whilst the alliance of NOW and WAVAW can hardly be characterised as a complete failure, it was still far from an overwhelming success, and points to the often frustrating and exhausting process of coalition building even amongst willing feminists. And although shared concerns around male violence (and perhaps a mutual antipathy towards 'femocrats') allowed for some surprising alliances between white radical feminists and Black socialist feminists, ultimately profound differences in analysis made such alliances difficult to sustain. Radical feminism was simply not as conceptually amenable to Black feminism as was socialist feminism, with its emphasis on the intersection of oppressions, and anti-essentialist thinking.

Overall, the evidence presented from the case studies of Black and white women working together is clearly mixed. Evidently these collectives were sometimes productive, and heralded a more integrated feminist politics that addressed issues of race in a way that the women's movement had failed to in the 1970s. Nonetheless, sometimes such ventures failed to transcend antagonisms between black and white feminists, particularly given the difficulties inherent in Black women joining collectives that had been established by white women. Quite apart from theoretical differences between Black and white feminists, the fact that most feminist institutions that became multi-racial had been founded by white feminists inevitably gave rise to day-to-day tensions and power struggles. In some cities, even starting such ventures was not possible, as in Liverpool; yet it seems likely that the lack of coalition work in this city further exacerbated tensions between Black and white feminists, tensions which are still present in the city today. Thus local conditions, as well as national debates, shaped the daily interactions of Black and white feminists. In the final analysis, it was perhaps too utopian

to expect multi-racial feminist collectives and coalitions to be able to fully transcend the racism of the society of which they were a part: it is an irony of social movements that they are doomed to be shaped by the very paradigms they hope to contest. The great expectations of some feminists only compounded the bitterness felt when such projects failed to work, despite the real practical and ideological gains that, in retrospect, we can see such ventures brought to feminism.

Conclusion

The 1980s saw heightened levels of interaction between Black and white feminists, which resulted in both animosity and progress. There was a sustained critique by Black women of many of the central tenets and campaigns of white feminism, which prompted a sometimes painful rethink of the unthinking universalism of many in the WLM. Examining these debates brings to our attention just how fraught these debates around race were for many feminists in the 1980s, and how central they were to the women's movement at this point. Significantly, it also points to how much these issues affected white feminists as well as Black. Whilst 'race' had often been framed as an issue for solely Black women in the feminist movement, encounters such as those described in this chapter forced white women to examine their own privilege and racially marked identities. Quite simply, these issues became ones that white feminists could no longer ignore in the ways that they had previously done. However, this was often a painful process, particularly because of the emotional investment made by many anti-racist feminists in seeing themselves as 'non-racist.' This critique also made feminism less attractive to white women, who could no longer find in the movement an emotionally affirming refuge from patriarchy, but instead a movement that required them to undertake serious self-examination. This was necessary to produce a feminism that could speak to more women; but the inability of the discourse around racism to transcend the idea or language of moral failure also accounted for some of the decline in activism amongst white women seen in the 1980s. Nevertheless, this period witnessed the formation of multi-racial coalitions and collectives that saw white and Black women working together politically in ways that would have been unimaginable even ten years earlier. This was greatly enabled by the transition away from the autonomous struggle model of activism that so shaped the activism of both Black and white women in the 1970s. Although the formations and success of such coalitions were, as we have seen, dependent on local conditions, working together on a

regular basis unsurprisingly enabled Black and white feminists to understand each other better. Multi-racial activism has continued in English feminism ever since, as well documented recently by Line Nyhagen Predelli and Beatrice Halsaa.[108] Whilst much remains to be done, it is clear that this shift in feminist praxis was in large part due to the efforts of the women examined in this chapter.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1980s, both the Black and white women's movements had transformed out of all recognition from the early 1970s. Revealingly, Beatrix Campbell and Anna Coote wrote in the introduction of the 1987 second edition of their account of the women's movement, *Sweet Freedom*, that:

> Five years ago, what we wrote seemed like contemporary journalism: women's liberation was still 'here and now'; we felt a part of it and able to contribute to its politics. By 1986 we were writing about something that was no longer with us in the same form: women's liberation as a self-contained and singular movement had become part of our recent history.[1]

Even more gloomily, Pratibha Parmar wrote of the Black women's movement in 1989 that:

> [...] it seems difficult to fathom where the optimism and stridency which many of us had who were active in the black women's movement has gone, and why. Where are the diverse black feminist perspectives which we felt were in the process of growth? And where indeed is the movement itself? [...] Four years is not a long time, but it is obviously long enough to see the disintegration of what was once an energetic and active black women's movement.[2]

From the perspective of the 2010s, such obituaries for the women's movement seem rather premature. Although undoubtedly, feminism had lost coherence as a national movement by the late 1980s, in fact – as most women in the movement noted – women's activism continued

throughout the 1990s, albeit on a generally more local scale.[3] Indeed, in the last few years, as has been well-documented by the media, feminism has had something of a resurgence. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the character of feminist activism had fundamentally shifted by the 1990s, a movement paralleled by the transformation of leftist movements in a newly post-socialist Europe. On a global level, as the possibility of a leftist transformation of society looked infinitely less likely in 1989 than it did in 1969, so did the prospect of a feminist transformation of society. On a more national level, however, there were more immediate and tangible factors that affected these changes. These factors were both internal and external to the movement.

Internal to the movement, the inability of the women's movement itself to deal successfully with many of the issues that caused division led to activist disillusionment and burnout. These issues were centred around both political ideology/strategy (i.e. socialist v. radical feminism), and, increasingly, issues of identity – sexuality, class, disability and most pertinently in terms of this book, race. This book has demonstrated the extent to which race structured the movement even in its early days; the implicit assumptions of the WLM were 'white', and sometimes imbued with colonialist assumptions about ethnic others. Even when some white feminists engaged in anti-racist efforts in the late 1970s and 1980s, it was difficult for them to break out of these older paradigms into more racially egalitarian ones, or for them to divest themselves of the white privilege that had accrued to them over the years. Thus the racialised structure of the women's movement continued to cause serious divisions between Black and white women into the 1980s. The challenge that Black women had posed to white feminists ultimately resulted in a more racially aware feminism (at least in some quarters). However, the difficulties that some white women had in responding to that challenge – and the emotional fallout that the accusation of racism produced – contributed in the short term to the breakdown of a movement that was already under many other pressures, and no longer sure of the political direction it should take. Black women did not merely ask white feminists to be more inclusive, but fundamentally challenged the ideological basis of white feminism by arguing that it should expand its remit to include the effects of racial discrimination and poverty. This resulted in an ideologically strengthened feminism; but at the cost of the loss of less politically sophisticated activists who could no longer see the relevance of debates in the wider movement to their own lives.

Externally, changes in the wider political climate affected the women's movement. The Thatcher government was hostile to feminism. Yet, seemingly paradoxically, local government funding for feminist initiatives during this period increased significantly. In the early 1980s, many local feminist organisations moved from being volunteer organised to being funded through local government. However, this move often changed the nature of the organisations, often making them more bureaucratic and less political. Gail Lewis remembered when discussing the demise of BBWG:

> The other thing that happened was the grants strategy; you know, we became a bloody employment committee with workers . . . We stopped doing the things that we used to do, like standing on street corners selling papers . . . WE weren't knocking on doors any more. All we had to do by then was to give out a few leaflets through the council premises. At first we didn't; at first we would go out and encourage women, but we weren't doing that anymore; instead we just put it through the internal Lambeth mailing. We had become bloody managers, and this is what happens so often. You know, to get funding you have to meet certain criteria; to meet those criteria you have to adopt certain structures and to a great extent the structures dictate the relationships.[4]

Another London-based feminist, Sarah Maguire, remembered, 'The effect of the GLC was to fund us out of existence.'[5] The problems surrounding funding were also compounded in London, when the abolition of the GLC in 1986 meant that many feminist organisations that had come to rely on the council's funding suddenly found themselves – at least temporarily – without it.[6] Nevertheless, despite the fear that the abolition of the GLC and the other metropolitan councils across the country in 1986 would lead to drastic reductions in funding, ultimately many such feminist organisations were funded once more by the new, smaller councils. As Randall and Lovenduski noted, the beginning of the 1990s saw the contradiction of a local-government funded diversification of feminism alongside the decline of a coherent national movement and visible grassroots activism.[7]

Although it is tempting in these economically squeezed times retrospectively to cast the early 1980s as a 'golden era' of feminist funding (particularly in London), we must not forget that throughout the late 1960s, 70s and 80s, the women's movement faced overwhelming odds politically. Feminism has *never* been a movement that has been able

historically to command high levels of popular or political support. Despite the nostalgic memory often conjured up by feminists of the 'second-wave', even during this supposed golden era, feminism had little support within the mass media, and few ways of influencing society. It was certainly never in a position to be able to challenge effectively the 'Establishment' of interlinked political and business interests, all of which had vested interests in maintaining the patriarchal status quo. Looked at this way, it is in fact astonishing that both Black and white women within the women's movement managed to achieve what they did. Although there is much work still to be done, the fundamental achievement of both Black and white women was to change the terms of the debate. As Margaretta Jolly has suggested, whilst defining the tangible impact of the women's movement can be difficult, activists have nevertheless provided 'a contribution to cultural memories thats how how gender relations can be different and better'.[8] It would be unthinkable for any politician to now suggest in public that mothers should not undertake paid work, or that a woman in an abusive relationship has brought the violence upon herself, for example. Almost everyone in England now pays at least lip service to the idea that women are entitled to enjoy rights and opportunities equal to those of men. None of these things could be said of the 1970s. More specifically, within left/liberal political and academic circles, as well as feminist circles, a more holistic vision of social justice that takes seriously the intersection of different identities/oppressions has gained momentum. I want to suggest that this is the specific achievement of the Black women's movement in England, as well as in the US. More recently, activists have sought to commemorate both this activism – as seen, for example, in the 'Do You Remember Olive Morris?' project – and to reflect critically on the legacy of Black women's activism for both Black and white feminists. This has gone hand-in-hand with a renewal of Black women's activism, alongside the continued survival of some Black women's groups (such as Southall Black Sisters).[9]

This book has also argued that white feminists' relation to race should be considered in a more nuanced fashion than has previously been the case. Rather than unquestioningly accepting criticism of white feminists as racist, we should interrogate what was meant by this, and the ways in which such a term limits our understanding of how white women did interact with race. By exploring sources that have not been previously examined for evidence of anti-racist activity, this book has attested to the existence and variety of anti-racist practice within the WLM. Nevertheless, such activity co-existed with ethnocentric – sometimes deemed

racist – theoretical concerns and organisational practices that made the WLM a largely white affair. This brings into focus a larger question for historians by forcing us to examine how useful the term 'racism' is without an exploration of the contexts in which it was used. As a term, it is often used simplistically without any real examination of what the content of racism is or was. It is clear that many Black feminists utilised a definition of racism that was far more radical than that which many white feminists used. Furthermore, when white women *did* confess to being racist in the feminist movement, they were not necessarily admitting to a racism that was the same in content or virulence to that of, say, the National Front. Rather, taking their cue from Black radicals, they were understanding the implications of their position as a white woman in a white society. This meant understanding the way in which growing up in a racist society inevitably structured their unconscious attitudes to race, and also how 'white privilege' operated and how they benefitted personally from it.

The oral histories that were undertaken for this project highlighted the emotional content of these debates between Black and white feminists. The negative emotions generated by many of these debates were a factor in the apparent depletion in the number of active feminists by the late 1980s. What I didn't anticipate when embarking upon this book was the extent to which these emotions would shape my interactions with the interviewees. As we saw in Chapter 5, it became at times very difficult for white interviewees to talk about their involvement with these debates. The usage of this material subsequently provoked anxiety for some women.[10] As such, emotions became not just a subject of this history, but shaped the making of it. Using oral history was a uniquely useful way at getting at the 'raw' data of these emotions, and in particular provided an insight into the complex subjectivities of white women who occupied roles of both 'oppressed' and 'oppressor'. However, the obvious pain that these debates provoked does pose ethical questions about the use of such material, and further reminds us as historians about the very subjective nature of the oral history process.

This book has also highlighted the contingencies of place in feminism. It is clear that feminist activism and relationships between Black and white women were shaped by local contexts. The three cities that I have particularly focused on in this book had different histories. Liverpool, as we have seen, had a history of tense local race-relations that impacted heavily on relationships between Black and white feminists in the city, whereas the smallness of Cambridge essentially forced contact between Black and white feminists. Whilst relationships in the

latter city were hardly perfect, they were noticeably better than those in Liverpool, and this may be because Black and white women in Cambridge simply had to find a way to work with each other. London is perhaps too large to make such generalisations about. It certainly saw bitter debates between Black and white feminists, perhaps exacerbated by the tendency of London to attract intellectual radicals who were sometimes rather dogmatic. However, the city also saw a great deal of coalition work between Black and white women. This was probably shaped by the increasing proportion of the city's population that was Black by the 1980s, and, as that decade wore on, a decrease in racial tensions more generally. This makes a national picture in some ways difficult to draw, and any attempt at doing so must inevitably be qualified with caveats. However, when taking into consideration the material from other towns and cities that have also been examined in this book, it is clear that the larger national context of an increasing Black British population, and the various political events and discourses associated with this, makes claim-making in a national context both possible and useful. Despite variations across localities, almost all cities in England witnessed debates between feminists around race in the late 1970s and 1980s; and nearly all localities have seen more interaction and improved relationships between Black and white feminists since.[11] This reflects improving (although certainly not perfect) race-relations in England more broadly.[12] I'd also like to suggest that it isn't particularly surprising that feminism was unable to fully transcend the racism of the society of which it was a part. The British feminist movement was (and is) structured by race because Britain itself was and continues to be profoundly structured by race; and social movements do not stand apart from their host societies, but are fundamentally shaped by them.

These debates mirror the radical Black challenge to the English left more broadly at this point – here, I am thinking particularly of the work undertaken by Black scholars such as Paul Gilroy. Whilst it would be a mistake to underplay the racism experienced by the Black population in Britain during this period, the presence and strength of the radical Black critique in the 1980s was – perhaps paradoxically – indicative of the ways in which migrants from the Commonwealth had become increasingly embedded in the fabric of the nation. These debates between Black and white feminists could not have happened without increasing integration between Black and white populations, and were a product of that increasing interaction. One of the reasons why we see relatively little debate about race and feminism during the 1970s is because Black and white activists were very rarely to be found in the same room at

this point. This goes somewhat against the grain of the growing literature on postcolonial Britain by scholars such as Bill Schwarz which tends to emphasise the ways in which both the British people generally were unable to integrate the migrant population into visions of the nation. Whilst these debates were at times divisive, they also tell us much about more positive processes of social change.

By focusing on the question of race, the periodisation of the feminist movement, which classically places second-wave activism in the 1970s, has been brought under review. A focus on the dynamics of race in the movement reveals that women's activism in the 1980s was vibrant, and that Black feminism was flourishing. This supports the increasing historical attention that is being paid to the strength of radical politics more widely in the 1980s, most notably exemplified in the work of Lucy Robinson.[13] This book clearly supports the idea that the 1980s were a time of intense radical political activism. In establishing the expanded reach of the women's movement by the 1980s – both in terms of its theoretical concerns and activist constituency – and the infiltration of feminism into local government in the early and mid-1980s, this book has suggested that the early 1980s were, in fact, as equally vibrant a period of feminism as the early 1970s. This raises larger questions about ethnocentric chronologies in both feminist and English history. By expanding our historical scope to include the activities of Black and ethnic minority actors, our understandings of the temporal location of particular historical events and moments shift, sometimes dramatically. Recent history-making in England has largely failed to engage with race. This can manifest itself in a simple lack of acknowledgement of the involvement of Black and ethnic minority people in 'our island story'.[14] However, neither is simply acknowledging the Black presence in English history enough: an examination of the lives of Black subjects of both England/Britain and her empire should not just *add to*, but rather *change* our understanding of our history. This is something that many English historians of the post-war period have failed to do. Despite the lip-service paid by almost all historians to the seismic importance of New Commonwealth migration, for example, it is remarkable how little academic history has actually been written on the subject.[15] The scholarship that is available on the subject is marked by its ghettoisation: there has been little attempt to integrate the story of immigration into larger post-war narratives about political activism and the working-class, for example, yet it seems obvious that race profoundly shaped both of these.[16] As the work of historians who *have* addressed race has shown, moving away from ethnocentric narratives has the potential

to decentre English history away from an insular vision of an imagined national community of white Englanders, towards a more complex understanding of how England has been shaped by its interactions with the rest of the world.[17] This seems particularly pertinent in light of the ongoing debate about what the history curriculum in our schools should look like.[18] A move towards placing England more firmly in its (post)colonial context clearly has the potential to enlarge substantially historical understanding both inside and out of academia.

Finally, it is clear that questions surrounding race are still salient to contemporary feminism.[19] This book has demonstrated the ethnically diverse nature of the women's movement in England, and the challenges that this brought – challenges that were not always successfully met. Despite the risk of being accused of writing present-centred history, it is to be hoped that contemporary actors in women's politics may be able to learn something from the successes and failures of older generations of feminist women. The story of the 'second-wave' has largely been told from a white perspective; but through understanding more fully the contributions of Black women, we can enlarge our historical imaginary in a way that will give future activists an expanded and more inclusive sense of what feminism can achieve.

Brief Biographical Notes on Interviewees

Adithi C.* was born into a middle-class family in Mangalore in 1953, before coming to take a degree in English at Newnham College, Cambridge, in her early twenties. She became politicised whilst a student and became involved in feminist campaigns, including Wages for Housework. She worked for a while in the Women's Resource Centre in Cambridge in the 1980s. She has since moved onto working for a regional organisation that aims to provide help and support to ethnic minority populations.

Bola C.* was born in the early 1950s into a middle-class Black family in Jamaica. She moved first to Canada and then to Cambridge in her twenties, in the 1970s. She became involved in both the Cambridge Black Women's Group and in Labour Party politics in the 1980s, and worked for the council. She is an evangelical Christian, which informs her belief in social justice.

Julie Callaghan was born into a white working-class family in Seaforth, just north of Liverpool, in 1959. She left school at sixteen and went to secretarial college before becoming involved in bookshop work. She joined a consciousness raising group in the late 1980s and thus became involved in feminism somewhat later than most of the other interviewees. She works at *News From Nowhere*, a radical bookshop in Liverpool.

Gail Chester was born into an orthodox Jewish family in Bournemouth in 1951. She moved to London aged seven, and took a degree in Geography at Girton College, Cambridge, where she first became involved in the women's movement. She moved back to London after graduating and worked initially in local government before making a career for herself in the radical book trade. She remains an active and committed feminist.

Adele Cohen* was born in a Jewish family in Denmark in 1940. She escaped the holocaust as a baby before coming to England to study in the early 1960s. She eventually settled in Liverpool, trained as a psychotherapist, and was active in many left wing groups and the co-counselling movement. She moved to Israel for a few years in the late 1980s before returning to Merseyside.

Bridget Cullen* was born into a lower middle-class white family in rural Ireland in 1943. She travelled around Europe in the 1960s before eventually settling in London with her Indian husband. She became involved in radical politics around both feminism and Ireland in the 1970s, and is a key member of the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group.

Stella Dadzie was born in London in 1952 to a white mother and a Ghanaian father. She grew up with her white mother in London, but visited her diplomat father in Ghana regularly. She took a degree in German at King's College London in the early 1970s and became involved in radical Black politics at the same time. She was a founding member of OWAAD and co-authored *The Heart of the Race*.

Yvonne Field was born in a Black family in Deptford, London in 1960. Her parents were recent migrants from Jamaica. She worked in youth and community work for many years, and was a colleague of Miriam Levy. She was involved in Black women's groups in the 1980s, particularly in relation to her professional life, where she was a member of Aurat Obaa, a group of Black feminist youth workers based in London. She spent some time in Guyana in the late 1980s before returning to London and setting up her own diversity consultancy.

Valerie Hall* was born into a white working-class family London in 1939. Despite attending a prestigious grammar school, she left school with no qualifications. She moved to the Wirral in the 1960s became involved in radical politics in the 1970s, joining the Communist Party and becoming involved in Women's Liberation. She took a degree as a mature student in the 1970s and held various public sector jobs afterwards, and was also involved in the Black women's health council in the city. She is now retired, but continues to enjoy success as a poet.

Emma Hipkin* was born into a white non-conformist family in 1946 and grew up in Yorkshire, where her father was a minister. She attended university in the mid-1960s and became deeply involved in women's liberation in the midlands in the 1970s. She has since become a prominent feminist academic, working on intersections of race and gender.

Cathy Jones* was born into a Black family in Liverpool in the late 1950s. Upon facing systematic discrimination in the job market after leaving school, she helped to set up an employment agency for the Black population of the city. She then moved to London and became involved in Black feminist groups there, before moving to Houston in the late 1970s to study for a degree. She returned to Liverpool in 1981 and became involved once more in Black and feminist politics, eventually becoming chief executive of Blackburne House, a social enterprise aimed at low paid or unemployed women to equip them with the skills to progress into employment in technical professions.

Miriam Levy* was born into a Jewish family in London in 1949. She took a psychology degree and, after graduating, made a career for herself in youth work. During this period, she became a feminist, and subsequently became involved in feminist youth work for girls. She moved back to London in the mid-1980s where she became involved in Jewish feminism. In 1989 she gave up youth work to work full-time as a poet and writing workshop facilitator.

Joy Njnje was born into a Black family in Jamaica in 1959 and moved to Peterborough in 1966. She left school at sixteen and has done a variety of public sector clerical jobs. She became involved in the Cambridge Black Women's Group in the 1980s and was, for a while, the paid administrator for the group. Unlike

the rest of my sample, Joy was hesitant about labelling herself as feminist; but, like Bola, her Christian beliefs profoundly informed her sense of social justice.

Shelley Spivak* was born into a working-class Jewish family in Brooklyn in 1936. She won a scholarship to attend a prestigious college at 16, and eventually ended up teaching at a well-known women's college in the late 1960s. She came to the UK in the early 1970s and became highly involved in radical separatist feminism. Her life took another turn in the mid-1980s when she became increasingly interested in religious Judaism, eventually becoming an ordained rabbi.

Mandy Vere was born into a white middle-class Quaker family in Stockport in 1955. She came to Liverpool to study at the university in the early 1970s, but never finished her degree. She became involved in a number of radical causes in the city, and lived in a woman-only communal household for a number of years. She has worked in the city's well-known radical bookshop, *News From Nowhere* (run by a feminist collective), since 1976.

Notes

Introduction

* Pseudonyms.

1. Throughout this book, I capitalise 'Black' in line with contemporaneous usage, with the capitalisation intending to highlight the political nature of 'Blackness' as an identity. Though there are certainly legitimate arguments to be made for capitalising 'white' to highlight how it is, too, a political construct, I have decided not to for this book as this was not common usage during the period this book is concerned with.
2. Sally Alexander, Interviewed by Rachel Cohen, 2012, C1420/45, Sisterhood and After, British Library, London, transcript p. 46.
3. Of course, this is a hugely simplified rendition of an infinitely complicated movement. Nevertheless, the dominant narrative does more or less follow these turns. See Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1790–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981); and Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement 1914–1999*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000) for examples.
4. Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Christine Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned: Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, c. 1880s–1970s* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London and New York: Verso, 1992).
5. See Part 4, 'To Make the Facts Known' in Ware, *Beyond the Pale,* pp. 167–224, for a discussion of Impey's life and work; see Lucy Delap, *The Feminist Avant-Garde: Transatlantic Encounters of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 273–74 for a discussion of Marsden and empire.
6. Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 1.
7. Elizabeth Meehan, 'British feminism from the 1960s to the 1980s', in Harold L. Smith (ed.), *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990), pp. 189–204; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain,* pp. 312–53. Harold Smith, 'The Women's Movement, Politics and Citizenship, 1960s–2000 in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth Century Britain* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 278–91. 0ne exception to this rule is the afterword of Barbara Caine's *English Feminism* (pp. 255–71), which in addressing the movement in the 1970s, gives a complex and nuanced – if short – overview of the movement that takes into account race.
8. Eve Setch, 'The London Women's Liberation Workshop 1969–1979: Organisation, Creativity, Debate', (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway,

University of London, 2000); Jeska Rees, 'All the Rage: Revolutionary Feminism in England, 1977–1983 (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2007); Sarah Browne, 'The Women's Liberation Movement in Scotland, 1967–1979' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2009).

9. See also Margaretta Jolly's discussion of this in her essay 'Recognising Space, Place and Nation in Researching Women's Movements: Sisterhood and After', *Women's Studies International Forum* 35 (2012), 144–46.
10. See Vicki Randall and Joni Lovenduski, *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Politics in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), David Bouchier, *The Feminist Challenge: The Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Joyce Gelb, *Feminism and Politics: A Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). It should be noted that Randall and Lovenduski are less guilty of 'white washing' the movement than Bouchier and Gelb, who barely mention the Black women's movement.
11. Julia Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisations and the Politics of Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1998); Ranu Samantrai, *AlterNatives: Black Feminism in the Postimperial Nation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002).
12. See http://www.femcit.org/ (accessed 15 December 2010) for more information on this project, especially Work Package Four 'Ethnic and Religious Citizenship' headed by Line Nyhagen Predelli and Beatrice Halsaa. The texts that have arisen from this strand that have been particularly relevant to this book are Line Nyhagen Predelli, Kim Perren, Beatrice Halsaa, Cecilie Thun and Esmeranda Manful, Working Paper Number Two: 'Women's Movements: Constructions of Sisterhood, Dispute and Resonance: The case of the United Kingdom', (2008: published online). http://www.femcit.org/files/WP4_WorkingpaperNo2.pdf (accessed 15December 2010); and Line Nyhagen Predelli, and Beatrice Halsaa, *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
13. Beverley Bryan, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe, *The Heart of the Race: Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Virago 1984); Amrit Wilson, *Finding a Voice: Asian Women's Lives in Britain* (London: Virago 1978).
14. Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, pp. 166–67.
15. Heidi Safia Mirza, 'Introduction', in Heidi Safia Mirza (ed.), *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–31.
16. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 9.
17. This can be most clearly seen in the 'Writing Our Own History' regular feature of the radical feminist magazine, *Trouble and Strife*.
18. Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past is Before Us: Feminism in Action Since the 1960s* (London: Pandora Press, 1989); Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell, *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (Oxford, 1982); Michele Roberts *Paper Houses: A Memoir of the Seventies and Beyond* (London: Virago, 2008); Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble: Life and Politics* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2007).
19. Rees, 'All the Rage', p. 3.
20. Segal, *Making Trouble,* p. 213.
21. I would date this back to the publication of Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967*–1975 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

22. Benita Roth, *Separate Roads To Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movement in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
23. Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington D.C.* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Stephanie Gilmore (ed.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second Wave Feminism in the United States* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press 2008).
24. Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
25. Becky Thompson, 'Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism', *Feminist Studies* 28 (Summer 2002), 336–60. These findings are also supported by Kimberley Springer's *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organisations 1968–1980* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005).
26. See Jonathan Dean, *Rethinking Contemporary Feminist Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 10–11, for a demonstration of the many feminists who use this chronological scheme.
27. Rees establishes the different chronology of revolutionary feminism in 'All the Rage'.
28. Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs* 14:1 (1988), 119–57.
29. Rachel Beth Cohen, 'Researching Difference and Diversity Within Women's Movements: Sisterhood and After', *Women's Studies International Forum* 35 (2012), 138–40.
30. The Sisterhood and After Project outlined their own similar dilemmas with this term: see Margaretta Jolly, with Polly Russell and Rachel Cohen, 'Sisterhood and After: Ethics, Individualism and the Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement', *Social Movement Studies* 11:2 (2012), 211–26.
31. See Caitriona Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists: The Boundary Negotiated Between Citizenship and Feminism by Mainstream Women's Organisations in England, 1928–1939', *Women's History Review* 9:2 (2006), 411–29.
32. Nancy Hewitt, Introduction, in Nancy Hewitt (ed.), *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of US Feminism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 1–12(8).
33. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 2.
34. See, for example, David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, revised edn (London and New York: Verso Books, 1999); and *Working Towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
35. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s,* 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 55.
36. A Sivanandan, 'Black Power: the Politics of Existence', originally printed in *Politics and Society* 1:2 (1971) 225–33; reprinted in A. Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 63.
37. Alastair Bonnet has also addressed the usage of 'Black' in Bonnet, *Radicalism, Anti-Racism and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 39.

38. Tariq Modood, "Black', Racial Equality and Asian Identity', *New Community* 14:3 (1988), 397–404 (399).
39. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 110.
40. See the work of Bronwen Walter for more information on 'whiteness' and Irish women, particularly *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place and Irish Women* (London: Routledge, 2001).
41. There is little written about Jews and whiteness in an English contest, although this will be explored further in Chapter 5. However, in an American context, work on this subject is provided in Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
42. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis, 'Contextualising Feminism: Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review* 15 (Winter 1983), 62–75.
43. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, pp. 110–18.
44. Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonialism', *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988), 61–88. This essay exists in several different forms and was initially published in the United States in 1984: I am using the first version published in the UK.
45. Ann Laura Stoler, 'Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth', in D. Davies (ed.), *Political Power and Social Theory* (Westport, Connecticut: Jai Press, 1997), pp. 183–206, reprinted in Philomena Essed and David Goldberg (eds.), *Race Critical Theories: Text and Context* (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 369–91 (379).
46. In particular, the debate in *Feminist Review* in 1986 over the work Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh illustrates these different uses of the term 'racism' very well. As Caroline Ramazanoglu wrote in 'Ethnocentrism and Feminist Theory: A Response to Barrett and McIntosh' 'Perhaps the core of the problem in Barrett and McIntosh's conception of how socialist-feminists should respond to black criticisms is that while they think the political issue is one of race rather than of ethnicity, they have presented their self-criticisms as an article on their ethnocentrism. It seems to me that black women are not accusing white feminists so much of ethnocentrism, which could perhaps be corrected by extending the field of vision, but of a crushing, institutionalized racism which is so totally and deeply entrenched in our ways of thinking and being that we cannot see clearly how we help to justify and perpetuate it.' *Feminist Review 22* (Spring 1986), 83–86 (84).
47. Bonnett, *Radicalism, Anti-Racism and Representation*, p. 120.
48. Ibid., p. 121.
49. This can be seen in the transition between the Marxist analyses of organisations such as the Black Liberation Front and Black Unity and Freedom Party in the early 1970s (as explored in Chapter 2), towards the more cultural (though still leftist) approaches of thinkers such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy in the 1980s.
50. See Ruth Frankenberg *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) for a thorough examination of white women who both accepted and rejected the ideas of themselves as racist. Chapters 4 and 5 of this book explore these issues further.
51. See, for example, my interview with Adele Cohen, explored in Chapter 5.

52. As Omi and Winant have written, 'The result of the "inflation" of the concept of racism was thus a deep pessimism about any efforts to overcome racial barriers, in the workplace, the community, or any other sphere of lived experience. An overly comprehensive view of racism, then, potentially served as a self-fulfilling prophecy.' Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, p. 70.
53. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), pp. 139–67.
54. Although this book addresses England rather than Britain as a whole, I have chosen to address Britain as a whole in this sub-section as immigration statistics are rarely disaggregated between the four provinces of the UK.
55. Quoted in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain Since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1984), p. 10.
56. Ibid., p. 68 for various estimates of the Black population of Britain during the eighteenth century.
57. Ibid., pp. 295–300.
58. Ibid., pp. 298–316 for more information on these riots. See Colin Holmes *A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), for – as the title suggests – an extensive discussion of Britain's self-image/presentation as 'a tolerant country', despite the overwhelming evidence that suggests otherwise.
59. It should be noted that this was also a period which saw the struggles of Black seamen in Britain over pay and conditions. For more information on this, see Laura Tabili, '*We Ask For British Justice': Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).
60. See Roderick J. MacDonald, 'Dr Harold Arundel Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples 1931–1947: A Retrospective View', *Race* 14:3 (1973), 291–310.
61. Rosalind Wild, ' "Black Was The Colour of Our Fight": Black Power in Britain, 1955–1976' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2008), p. 31.
62. Ras Makonnen, *Pan Africanism from Within* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 163–64.
63. Makonnen, *Pan Africanism from Within*, p. 179.
64. For more information on the Black intellectual milieu in Britain at this time, see Bill Schwarz (ed.), *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
65. R.E.R. Bunce and Paul Field, 'Obi B. Egbuna, C.L.R. James, and the Birth of Black Power in Britain: Black Radicalism in Britain, 1967–1972', *Twentieth Century British History* 22:3 (2011), 391–414 (92).
66. See Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg, 2007) for further discussion of these issues. Wendy Webster also addressed this subject in a conference paper entitled 'There will be mass-murder unless the Government get them out of the country before our men come back: Cross-national and cross-ethnic relationships in Second World War Britain', given at the Women's History Network Conference, 10 September 2011, The Women's Library, London.

67. Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 372. Many books discuss the arrival of Windrush and the figure of 492 (493, including a stowaway) is quoted widely, although it is not entirely clear where the number originated from.
68. Quoted in Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?* p. 53. Sundeep Lidher's PhD research at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, on the evolution of British immigration policy in the post-war period, has also shed considerable light on the disquiet caused by the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. Some of her findings were presented in her paper 'Commonwealth Citizens of Colour and the Evolution of Immigration Policy in Britain, 1945–62', given at the Modern British History Workshop, University of Cambridge, 4 June 2012.
69. Statistics quoted in Fryer, pp. 372–73.
70. For a comprehensive overview of post-war immigration statistics, see Ceri Peach, Alisdair Rogers, Judith Chance, and Patricia Daley, 'Immigration and Ethnicity', in A.H. Halsey, and Josephine Webb, *Twentieth Century British Social Trends,* 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 128–75; pp. 140–41, in particular, has an extremely useful table breaking down statistics by decade and broad ethnic group.
71. The slogan was not official and appeared anonymously on the streets of Smethwick; however Griffiths clearly exploited the sentiment behind it and did nothing to contradict it. There are many accounts of this election: Gordon-Walker's DNB entry http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31161?docPos=1 (accessed 30 November 2012) gives a brief overview.
72. Rosalind Wild, 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight', p. 58.
73. Ibid., p. 59.
74. Ibid.
75. A note is perhaps needed here on the Racial Readjustment Society (RAAS) founded in 1965 by Michael de Freitas, who later was to egotistically style himself as Michael X. Although the group – due in most part to de Freitas' self-aggrandising manner – courted significant media attention, and were given a lasting memorial in his autobiography, they were in reality a tiny group that deserve little more than a footnote in any serious history of Black politics in Britain. De Freitas' own demise – executed on a murder charge in Trinidad and Tobago after a lengthy criminal career that had included working for Peter Rachman – illustrates well enough their true place on the fringe of acceptability within Black radical politics in Britain at the time. See John Williams' recent biography *Michael X: A Life in Black and White* (London: Century, 2008) for more information.
76. Peach et al., 'Immigration and Ethnicity'.
77. Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 395. I write 'estimates' because the racial motivations behind some of these crimes can only be suspected rather than proved.
78. Quotation and statistics quoted in Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 155. See Peach et al., 'Immigration and Ethnicity', for more information.
79. See Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism and British Society, 1876–1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), for more information about anti-Semitism during this period. It should be noted that the Jewish community fought against such prejudice in numerous ways. One example is the '43 group' in London, an underground group of Jewish male youths who infiltrated and physically broke up anti-fascist groups immediately after the Second World War. See Adam Lent, *British Social Movements Since 1945: Sex, Colour, Peace and Power*

(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 19. The group included amongst its number the somewhat unlikely figure of Vidal Sassoon.

80. Stanley Waterman and Barry Kosmin, *British Jewry in the Eighties: A Statistical Geographical Study* (London: Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1986), p. 21.
81. See Remembering Olive Collective (eds.), *Do You Remember Olive Morris?* (London: Remembering Olive Collective, 2010), and http://rememberolivemorris.wordpress.com/ (accessed 30 November 2012) for more information about this project.
82. Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14:3 (Autumn 1988), 575–99.
83. See Chapter 1 of Jeska Rees, 'All the Rage', pp. 14–35, for an extended discussion of this.
84. It should be noted that the Black Cultural Archives has since moved to a purpose-built archival centre in Brixton, with much better funding.
85. See Maria Di Cenzo with Leila Ryan and Lucy Delap, *Feminist Media History: Suffrage, Periodicals, and the Public Sphere* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), for a discussion on the importance of periodicals to Edwardian feminism.
86. These name changes were related to changes in the organisations (LWLW and its successors) that ran it. For more information, see Eve Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women's Liberation Workshop, 1969–1979', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:2 (2002), 171–90.
87. I have not italicised the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group as the publication never had an official title.
88. Valerie Hall, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript pp. 12–13.
89. See Rees, 'All the Rage', p. 19 for a discussion of these issues.
90. It should be noted that I was never challenged by the archivists at the Black Cultural Archives or anywhere else about the propriety of reading 'Black women only' periodicals as a white woman.
91. Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 24.

1 The (White) Women's Liberation Movement, c. 1968–1975

1. Gail Lewis made this point forcefully in her keynote speech at the 'WLM at 40' conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, March 2010. Additionally, there are clear records of the presence of at least a few Black women: for example, Black activist Gerlin Bean talked of her presence at Ruskin in an interview with *Shrew* 3:8 (September 1971), pp. 10–12. Rachel Cohen briefly addresses the tension between the presence and invisibility of Black women in the WLM in 'Researching Difference and Diversity', 139.
2. See Bryan et al., *The Heart of The Race,* pp. 148–81, and Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams,* pp. 199–221, for further discussion of these issues.
3. See Margaretta Jolly, *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) for an extended discussion of the tensions that arose when feminists perceived that other feminists were failing in their duty of care towards each other.

4. Juliet Mitchell, 'Women: The Longest Revolution', *New Left Review* 40 (1966), 11–37. Sheila Rowbotham in her memoir, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties* (London and New York: Verso, 2001) also reflects on her growing discontent as a woman on the left in the 1960s.
5. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom,* p. 10; Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', in Michelene Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist: Stories of A Generation* (London: Virago, 1990), pp. 14–27 (15–16).
6. Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', pp. 14–15.
7. Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', p. 16; Campbell and Coote*, Sweet Freedom*, p. 10.
8. Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', p. 17.
9. London Women's Liberation Workshop, 'Introduction to the Women's Liberation Workshop', Papers of Sheila Rowbotham, 7/SHR/B/01, The Women's Library, London.
10. Rowbotham, 'The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain', p. 21.
11. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, pp. 15–16; Caine*, English Feminism*, p. 255.
12. Of course, without a definitive list of name present this is difficult to categorically establish, but it is certainly the impression given by the many accounts of Ruskin in *Once a Feminist*.
13. There are many accounts of Ruskin, but Sally Alexander – one of the principal organisers – gives a particularly evocative account that covers these events in *Once A Feminis*t ed. Wandor, pp. 81–92.
14. Gerlin Bean claims to have been one of two Black women present, though this is impossible to verify. Gerlin Bean, Remembering Olive Collective (ROC) interview, 9 September 2009, transcript p. 11, Olive Morris Collection, IV/279/2/20/1/B, Lambeth Archives, London.
15. *The Times*, 2 March 1970, quoted in Dominic Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were, Britain 1970–1974* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), p. 375.
16. Wandor (ed.), *Once A Feminist*, p. 5.
17. Sheila McNeil, 'Pockets of Resistance' (c.1971). This is a piece of journalism from an unidentified publication (possibly *The New Statesman*), found in the papers of the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 5WRR/B/06, The Women's Library, London.
18. Alberto Melucci, 'The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements', *Social Research* 52:4 (1985), 789–816.
19. Carol Mueller, 'Conflict Networks and the Origins of Women's Liberation, in E. Laranas, H. Johnston and J.R. Gusfield (eds.), *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), pp. 234–63.
20. Emma Hipkin, Personal interview, 24 January 2011, transcript p. 5.
21. Wandor (ed.), *Once A Feminist*, p. 112.
22. For more information on the personal and social and economic backgrounds of white women involved in the WLM, see Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, and Liz Heron (ed.), *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing up in the Fifties* (London: Virago, 1985). The latter has more women from working-class backgrounds who became middle-class through education than does Wandor's sample.
23. Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 263.

24. An advertisement can be found in *Socialist Woman*, 2:1 (February/March 1970), unpaginated.
25. See Tufnell Park Women's Liberation Group, 'The small group', in Michelene Wandor (ed.), *The Body Politic: Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969–1972* (London: Stage 1, 1972), pp. 103–06.
26. For a description of the existence of perceived cliques and the difficulties faced by newcomers trying to break into them, see the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation group (March 1975), p. 4, Cambridge Women's Liberation Group Archive, GCLP CWLA O/6/1, Archives of Girton College, Cambridge.
27. Hester Eisenstein, *Contemporary Feminist Thought*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1984) p. 40, quoted in Rees, 'All the Rage', p. 50. This is an American example, but anecdotal evidence suggests that similar systems were in use in at least some groups in England.
28. Polly Russell writes that some of the interviewees for the Sisterhood and After project found their experiences in CR 'stifling or, on occasion, intimidating' in her article 'Using Biographical Narratives and Life-Story Methods to Research Women's Movements: Sisterhood and After', *Women's Studies International Forum* 35:3(2012), 132–34 (134).
29. Sue Bruley, 'Consciousness-Raising in Clapham: Women's Liberation as 'Lived Experience' in South London in the 1970s', *Women's History Review* 22:5 (2013), 717–38 ; 'Consciousness Raising – Back to Basics', *Spare Rib* 92 (March 1980), 49–54 (50).
30. Sarah Browne, '"A Veritable Hotbed of Feminism": Women's Liberation in St Andrews, Scotland, c.1969—c.1979', *Twentieth Century British History* 23:1 (2011), 100–23. Although this is an article that focuses on Scotland, the amount of English students at St. Andrews (including in its WLM group) makes this a pertinent example.
31. Lin Parker, 'Look to the Future, Sisters!' *Spare Rib* 166 (May 1986), pp. 19–21 (19).
32. Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 115.
33. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 11 January 2011, transcript p. 13.
34. Jo Stanley, 'Being a Feminist in Liverpool – 1969–1971', Papers of Jo Stanley, 7/JOS/01, The Women's Library, London. Despite the title, the first half of the memoir actually looks at her experiences in London.
35. 'Nina', letter in Cambridge Women's Newsletter (March 1975), p. 4, GCIP CWLA O/6/1.
36. Ibid.
37. Such community outreach can be seen by the establishment of several women's community centres, such as the Kingsgate Centre in North London (for more information on this centre, see the Papers of Tamar Karet, 7/TAK, The Women's Library, London). It is also demonstrated by campaigns such as those around the night-cleaners, in which WLM activists linked up with night-cleaner and political activist May Hobbs in an attempt to unionise this most exploited of work forces. See also, Sheila Rowbotham. Cleaners' Organising in Britain from the 1970s: A Personal Account', *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* 38:3 (2006), 608–25.

38. For more on the economic marginalisation of Black women, see Amina Mama, 'Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State', *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 1984), 22–34; and Gail Lewis, 'Black Women's Employment and the British Economy', in Winston James and Clive Harris (eds.) *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), pp. 73–96.
39. Barbara Taylor, interviewed by Margaretta Jolly, C1420/38/04, Sisterhood and After, British Library, London, transcript pp. 107–08.
40. Shirley Geok-lin Lim, 'Ain't I a feminist?' Reforming the Circle', in Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (eds.), *The Feminist Memoir Project*: *Voices From Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), pp. 450–66 (452).
41. 'Consciousness Raising – Back to Basics', *Spare Rib* 92 (March 1980), pp. 49–54 (54).
42. See, for example, Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta (eds.), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
43. Jolly, *In Love and Struggle*.
44. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 17.
45. Zoe Fairbairns, 'Feminist Epiphanies', paper given at Scottish Women's Liberation Movement history workshop, University of Edinburgh, 2009, reprinted on http://www.zoefairbairns.co.uk/epiphanies.htm, (accessed 1 August 2012).
46. Wandor (ed.), *Once A Feminist,* pp. 102–03.
47. Quoted in Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 8.
48. William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 129.
49. For more information on the masculinist cultures of the International Socialists – from which the SWP spring – see Celia Hughes, 'Young Socialist Men in 1960s Britain: Subjectivity and sociability', *History Workshop Journal* 73 (Spring 2012), 172–90. See also Rowbotham, *Promise of A Dream* for extensive comment on this issue.
50. 'Redstockings manifesto', New York, 1969. This has been reprinted in many places, but an online version can be found here: http://www.redstockings.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76&Itemid=59 (accessed 13 July 2012).
51. See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), for interesting parallel with several different forms of queer activism.
52. Bruley, 'Consciousness Rising in Clapham'.
53. Lynn Alderson quoted in Rees, 'All the Rage', p. 23.
54. See, for example, the personal accounts of dedicated feminists in both *Once a Feminist* ed. Wandor, and Amanda Sebesteyen (ed.), *'68, '78, '88: From Women's Liberation to Feminism* (Bridport: Prism, 1988).
55. Sebesteyen (ed.), *'68, '78, '88,* p. 241.
56. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November, 2010, transcript p. 7.
57. Ibid., p. 11.
58. Witness Hazel Carby's insistence that 'Black feminists in the US have complained of the ignorance, in the white women's movement, of black

women's lives… In Britain too it is as if we don't exist… White women in the British WLM are extraordinarily reluctant to see themselves in the situation of being oppressors, as they feel that this will be at the expense of concentrating upon being oppressed.' Hazel V. Carby, 'White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood!' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (ed.) *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982), pp. 211–34 (220).

59. Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 22–23.
60. Editorial, *Shrew,* 'Women's Liberation and National Liberation Special Double Issue' (December 1970), p. 2.
61. See, for example, 'Cuban Women Today', *Socialist Woman* 2:1 (February/March 1970), unpaginated, and 'Vietnamese Women make History' *Socialist Woman* 1:5 (November 1969), unpaginated.
62. See Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979), for the classic account of these links. It is worth noting that British feminists were aware of these connections: Juliet Mitchell wrote of the US that 'The Black Movement was probably the greatest single inspiration to the growth of Women's Liberation' in *Women's Estate* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) p. 60.
63. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* pp. 72–73.
64. Interview with Valerie Wilmer, *Spare Rib* 17 (November 1973), pp. 39–40.
65. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist,* p. 73.
66. I write this not because I believe that the oppression of women is necessarily less serious than racial oppression, but rather because they are so different that making direct comparisons seems fundamentally misguided.
67. Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 99. Nava argues in this work that women were the drivers of cosmopolitanism and racial integration in the capital, because of their relationships with the men who compromised the large majority of migrants. These are large generalisations to make on the basis of the evidence that Nava has before her, and in certain respects her arguments are flawed. In particular, her idea that women are intrinsically more likely to feel sympathy for outsiders smacks of essentialism, and fails to engage with the many other forms of privilege that women, despite their sex, may possess. Nevertheless, her work can be useful for thinking through the relationships between women and Black men.
68. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 78.
69. Joan Maizels herself wrote, along with Nan Berger, a highly prescient but astonishingly neglected feminist work from 1962 entitled *Woman: Fancy or Free? Some Thoughts on Woman's Status in Britain today* (London: Mills and Boon, 1962), further illustrating links between these leftist thinkers and older feminist traditions.
70. The BCL later became the Commonwealth Countries League.
71. For more information see the Papers of the Commonwealth Countries League, 5/CCL; Papers of Alice Hemming, 7/ALH, The Women's Library,

London. The officers and motto of the League are found on the letterhead of the correspondence.

72. Nan Berger, 'Twenty Nine Thousand Nights' (unpublished autobiography), Papers of Nan Berger 7/NBE/2/6, The Women's Library, London. For accounts of foreign visits see 7/NBE/4/2 (South Africa) and 7/NBE/4/3 (China).
73. Hermione Harris, 'Black Women and Work', *Shrew* 4:5 (October 1972), pp. 8–9, reprinted in *The Body Politic*, ed. Wandor, pp. 91–102; interview with Gerlin Bean, *Shrew* 3:8 (September 1971), pp. 10–12. It should be noted that the interview with Bean was part of an issue that specifically focused on women 'outside the movement', despite the fact that Bean had been to the Ruskin conference and was already involved in Black women's groups, as the interview makes clear.
74. Burton, *Burdens of History.*
75. Rosie Boycott and Christine Aziz, 'Women Alone', *Spare Rib* 17 (undated, c. 1973), p. 20.
76. Ibid.
77. Nirmal Puwar, 'Melodramatic Postures and Constructions' pp. 21–41, in Nirmal Puwar and Parvati Raghuram (ed.), *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*, (Oxford/New York: Berg 2003), p. 22.
78. See Vron Ware, 'To Make the Facts Known: Racial Terror and the Construction of White Femininity' in *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), pp. 167–224 for detailed information on Impey's life.
79. See, for example, Anne Dogget, 'India: A Country of Eve Teasing and Widow Burning', in *Spare Rib* 27 (undated, c. 1974), pp. 24–25, and Carol Dix 'The Shadow on the Cheese', *Spare Rib* 5 (November 1972), pp. 8–9.
80. 'The Women's Movement: Realities and Prospects', in 7SHR/B/07.
81. Of course, it is important to remember that there have been small Black communities in Britain for centuries. However, the comparative scale of these were tiny compared to the post-Windrush era. See Fryer, *Staying Power,* for more information on these communities.
82. Ceri Peach, 'Does Britain Have Ghettos?' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21:1 (1996), 216–35. See also Peach et al., 'Immigration and Ethnicity' for more information on the growing percentage of the ethnic minority population born in the UK in the closing decades of the twentieth century.
83. 'Feminists in the Factory', *Red Rag* 11 (Autumn 1976), pp. 17–20.
84. Barbara Taylor, 'Who are we?', *Red Rag* 11 (Autumn 1976), p. 21.
85. Sally Alexander, 'The Night-Cleaners – An Assessment of a Campaign', *Red Rag* 6 (undated), pp. 3–7.
86. Newsletter of Cambridge Women's Liberation group (March 1975) p. 2, GCIP CWLA 0/6/1.
87. Alexander, 'The Night-Cleaners', pp. 3–4.
88. Interview with night-cleaners, *Shrew* (December 1971), unpaginated.
89. Brixton Black Women's Group, 'And What Did We Find?', *Red Rag* 13 (undated, c. 1978), pp. 16–18.
90. Homi Bhabha, 'Challenging Racism in London', report of a conference held on 12 March 1983, London (London: GLC, 1984), quoted in Nira

Yuval Davis, 'Women Ethnicity and Empowerment', in *Who's Afraid of Feminism?: Seeing Through the Backlash*, eds. Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell (Harmondsworth: Hamish Hamilton 1997), pp. 77–98 (80); Paul Gilroy: *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002; originally published in London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), pp. 56–62; and Nira Yuval Davis, 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice* 40:3 (2006), pp. 197–214.

91. This tendency of valorising women as the true or most likely revolutionaries because of their double burden of oppression is most obvious in the early theorising of the Wages for Housework group. See Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972).
92. See, for example, '67 years as a feminist', *Spare Rib* 23 (undated, c. 1974), pp. 6–9 (an interview with former NUWSS organiser Gwen Coleman), and Sheila Rowbotham, interview with Florence Exten-Hann, *Red Rag* 5 (undated), pp. 19–22. Krista Cowman gives an in-depth exploration of this phenomenon in her article, ' "Carrying on a Long Tradition": Second-Wave Presentations of First Wave Feminism in *Spare Rib* c. 1972–80', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17:3 (2010), 193–210.
93. Caine, *English Feminism*, p. 257.
94. Paul Gilroy, Preface, *The Empire Strikes Back*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, pp. 5–6 (5).
95. Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-Imperial Britain: Britishness, 'Race' and The Radical Left in the 1960s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
96. Evelyn Farrer, 'You Don't Need a Degree to Read the Writing on the Wall', *Catcall* 7 (January 1978), unpaginated.
97. See Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes', for the most well-known critique of this tendency.
98. Burton, *Burdens of History,* p. 21.
99. Ruth Cavendish, 'Killing Time', in *Red Rag* 14 (November 1978), reprinted in Feminist Anthology Collective (ed.), *No Turning Back: Writings From the Women's Liberation Movement* (London: The Women's Press, 1981), pp. 121–25 (125).
100. Carby, 'White Woman Listen!' p. 232.
101. See Rees, 'All the Rage' for more on revolutionary feminists.
102. Setch, 'The Face of Metropolitan Feminism', 'The London Women's Liberation Workshop 1969– 1979.'
103. Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 191. He notes that 'The relationship between women's oppression, capitalism, and the family became one of the most important and controversial questions within women's liberation and the feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s', although he neglects to mention the controversial nature of this analysis in regards to Black women.
104. Pat Thane has discussed this period of 'universal marriage' (and indeed how anomalous this is in the longer historical perspective) in many of her recent publications, including Pat Thane, *Happy Families: History and Family Policy* (London: British Academy, 2010), p. 24.

105. The well-known community studies produced by British sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s often focused on this model of marriage, giving it a currency which it did not entirely warrant given the number of families which did not adhere to this model. The classic examples of this tendency are probably seen in Michael Young and Peter Willmott's *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1957); and *The Symmetrical Family: A Study of Work and Leisure in the London Region* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1971). Anecdotal evidence suggests that these works, and others like it, were staples of reading lists at teacher training colleges during this period. Given the disproportionate numbers of feminists who worked in educational establishments and other public sector jobs, it is interesting to speculate to what extent these works were of importance in shaping the world-view of white English feminists in the 1970s.
106. Statistics from Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh, 'Ethnocentrism and Socialist-Feminist Theory', *Feminist Review* 20 (Summer 1985), 23–47 (31). For a discussion of families and Asian women, see Wilson, *Finding A Voice*. These statistics are also supported by Peach et. al, 'Immigration and Ethnicity'.
107. Wilmott and Young, *Family and Kinship in East London*; Claire Langhamer, 'Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain', *Historical Journal* 50:1 (2007), 173–96, and 'Adultery in Post-War England', *History Workshop Journal*, 62:1 (2007), 86–115.
108. *Shrew* 3:4 (May 1971), p. 2. The slightly strange formatting of the quote is reproduction of the original – experimental typesetting and page layouts were a common feature of radical periodicals during this period.
109. Lee Sanders, 'The Backbone of Capitalism', *Red Rag* 4 (undated, c. 1974), pp. 21–22; Alison Fell and Angela Weir, 'The State the Family is in', *Red Rag* 4, pp. 13–16.
110. For more information on Delphy's views, see Christine Delphy, *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression* (London: Hutchinson, 1984). The first English translation apparently sold in mimeographed form in 1974 by Lucy apRoberts, at the Edinburgh National Women's Liberation Conference. For more information on James arguments on the housewife and her oppression, see Dalla Costa and James's, *The Power of Women*. It should perhaps be noted that although initially James's ideas were initially received with serious consideration (if controversy), bitter debates around Wages for Housework's tactics led to an estrangement between WfH and the mainstream WLM in the UK by the late 1970s. Many periodicals used in this study evidence the acrimony between WfH and the 'mainstream' WLM – for example, an argument between the Bristol Women's Centre and Black Women for Wages for Housework was played out in the pages of *Spare Rib* in the winter of 1977–1978 and was reprinted in other periodicals such as *WIRES* and the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation group. Selma James in her later writing also recognises – indeed, glories in – the disputes between WfH and the WLM. See Selma James, *Strangers and Sisters: Women, Race and Immigration* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1985) for more on James's intense antipathy towards the mainstream women's movement.

111. There are significant news items on NAG in the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group's newsletter of February 1975 and July 1975. NAG was still listed as in existence in November 1976. GCIP CWLA 0/6/1. Funnily enough the contact name given was for a male student at Trinity, illustrating that feminism touched the lives of men even at that fortress of the male establishment. It was presumably the same student who persuaded NAG to stage a picket of a Trinity feast with placards bearing the legend 'Wine and Dine with Sexist Swine!' (see above news items) – the argument being that money from the feast could be used to fund a crèche for workers instead.
112. Valerie Hall, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript pp. 1–2.
113. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 194), 3–17 (15).
114. Randall and Lovenduski, *Contemporary Feminist Politics*, pp. 274–75.
115. Carby, 'White Woman Listen!' p. 213; Amos and Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial feminism', 9–10.
116. See Mama, 'Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State' – she writes on p. 26 that 'In accordance with racial differentiation, we are to be found in the lower echelons of all the institutions where we are employed (this in itself reflecting the patterns of a segregated labour market), where the work is often physically heavy (in the factories and mills no less than in the caring professions), the pay is lowest, and the hours are longest and most anti-social (night shifts, for example).'
117. Carby, 'White Woman Listen!' p. 214.
118. Valentina Alexander, ' "A Mouse in a Jungle": The Black Christian Woman's Experience in the Church and Society in Britain', in Delia Jarrett-Macaulay (ed.), *Reconstructing Womanhood, Reconstructing Feminism: Writings on Black Women* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 87–111.
119. Joy Njenje, Personal interview, 28 March 2012, transcript p. 26.
120. See Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, Race and National Identity, 1945–64* (London: University College London Press, 1998), for more information about the different meanings of home for women from different ethnic backgrounds during the period immediately preceding women's liberation; see Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), for a nuanced account of the ways in which the rise of the 'labour-saving' home gave working-class women access to a modern, 'professionalised' housewife identity.
121. This antagonism seems to have taken place mostly at the level of verbal discussion rather than print. However, Sheila Rowbotham discusses these issues extensively in her memoir, *Promise of A Dream*. The staff of *Socialist Woman* were also bemused to be told they were 'sex-obsessed' by one leftist group after printing a review of Masters and Johnson – see *Socialist Woman* 1:5 (c. autumn 1969), unpaginated, for their response.
122. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 2.
123. Marsha Rowe, 'Masturbation – No longer a refuge', *Spare Rib* 21 (March 1974), pp. 7–9 (12).
124. See Anna Raeburn's sex advice columns in early editions of *Spare Rib* for examples of such advice. The work of American feminist and sexpert Betty Dodson also held similar advice and were received enthusiastically in England: the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group

in April 1977 (GCIP CWLA 0/6/2) carried an extremely positive review by Debby Slavin on pp. 10–11 of Dodson's *Liberating Masturbation*.

125. This is particularly evident in feminist theorising around fascism, as discussed in Chapter 3.
126. Irene Frick, 'Wot No Orgasm?, *Red Rag* 4 (undated, c. 1974), pp. 6–7
127. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 238.
128. Geoffrey Gorer, *Sex and Marriage In England Today* (London: Nelson, 1971), p. 30, quoted in Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), p. 492.
129. Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, p. 405.
130. Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage, 1997), particularly pp. 2–3. The emphasis on mothering and respectability also has obvious implications for why the critique of the family enacted by the WLM was particularly unappealing to working-class women.
131. Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender*, p. 139.
132. Ibid., p. 3, p. 18.
133. Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate life in England 1918*–1963 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
134. Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender,* p. 123.
135. For a discussion of homophobia and Black nationalism, see, for example, Phillip Brian Harper, 'Eloquence and Epitaph: Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson' in *Social Text* 28 (1991), 68–86.
136. Newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group (June 1975), pp. 3–4, GCIP CWLA 0/6/2.
137. See Szreter and Fisher, Chapter 7 'Bodies', in *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution,* pp. 268–316.
138. See, for example, Germaine Greer, 'The Great British Breast' in *Spare Rib* 1 (June 1972).
139. Jocelyn Wolfe and Femi Otitoju both remember participating in these activities in the largely white WLM groups to which they belonged; but both were unusual in their level of involvement with white feminists. See Jocelyn Wolfe, ROC interview, 23 July 2009, transcript p. 14, Olive Morris Collection, IV/279/2/12/1c, Lambeth Archives, London; and Femi Otitoju, Heart of the Race project interview, 13 March 2009, transcript p. 33, 'The Heart of the Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women's Movement' collection, BWM 10, Black Cultural Archives, London.
140. Michael McColgan, ROC interview, 26 September 2009, transcript p. 3, Olive Morris Collection, IV/279/2/25/28, Lambeth Archives, London.
141. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 17.

2 Black Women's Activism c. 1970–1990

1. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Development of Empowerment* (Boston, Massachusetts and London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), for a development of this argument in an American context.

2. See, for example, Claudette Williams, 'We are a Natural Part of Many Different Struggles: Black Women Organising', in *Inside Babylon*, eds. James and Harris, pp. 153–64 (156); Randall and Lovenduski, *Contemporary Feminist Politics*, pp. 100–13; Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, pp. 4–5.
3. Samantrai, Sudbury and Williams all acknowledge the involvement of women in BBWG in Black Power, but underplay the amount of women-centered/quasi-feminist activity in the Black Power Movement itself, despite its sexism. See Williams, 'We are a Natural Part of Many Different Struggles', pp. 153–64; Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, pp. 4–5; Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, pp. 8–9.
4. Springer, *Living for the Revolution,* p. 3; Thompson, 'Recasting Multi-Racial feminism'. Christine Bolt also claims that British Black women's, 'efforts evolved behind those of white feminists' – Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned*, p. 172.
5. See Wild, 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight.'
6. Bunce and Field, 'Obi B. Egbuna, C.L.R. James and the Birth of Black Power in Britain'.
7. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams,* p. 6.
8. Carol Giardina has explored the American context for this in *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women's Liberation Movement 1953–1970* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010).
9. Wild, 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight'.
10. The 'Mangrove Nine' case was a trial of nine Black radicals (including Jones-Lecointe and Darcus Howe) which took place in 1971, centering around the Mangrove Cafe in London and alleged narcotic use. The case quickly became a cause célèbre for the apparently trumped up nature of the charges. All nine were found innocent of the main charges against them. For more information, see Wild, 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight', pp. 185–86. Wild notes the absence of Jones-Lecointe from the archive in 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight', pp. 144–45.
11. Wild, 'Black Was The Colour Of Our Fight', p. 101.
12. Ibid.
13. Cf Bryan et al, *The Heart of the Race*, pp. 143–51.
14. Ibid.
15. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 2; interview with Gerlin Bean, in *Shrew* 3:8 (September 1971), pp. 10–12 (11).
16. For more information on Bean's role in setting up BBWG, see the ROC Interview with Gerlin Bean, 9 September 2009, transcript pp. 2–3, IV 279/2/20/1a-b. For more information on UBWAG, see 'The United Black Women's Action Group', Papers of Stella Dadzie, Dadzie 1/1/8, Black Cultural Archives, London.
17. Liz Obi, 'Remembering Olive: Time to Pass the Memories On,' in Remembering Olive Collective (ed.), *Do you Remember Olive Morris?* pp. 5–8 (5).
18. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams,* p. 240.
19. Untitled piece on Manchester-Women's Co-operative. Dadzie 1/9 (part 1 of 5); Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams* p.245.
20. Dir. Sue Crockford/Tony Wickert/Ellen Adams, *A Woman's Place* (Independent: 1971).
21. Interview with Gerlin Bean, *Shrew* 3:8 (September 1971), pp. 10–12.

22. Black Women's Action Committee, 'Black Women Speak Out' (London: 1970), unpaginated, Papers of Ansel Wong, Wong/6/39, Black Cultural Archives, London.
23. Black Women's Action Committee, 'The Black Woman', in *The Body Politic,* ed. Wandor, pp. 84–89.
24. Ibid.
25. I say 'apparently' because I could not locate any records or firm information about the group. However, Gerlin Bean seems to suggests this in her interview in *Shrew* 3:8 (September 1971), pp. 10–12, in which she referred to no longer going to the BUFP meetings and a woman's group that was apparently connected to it.
26. Agnes Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political' [interview with BBWG members Gail Lewis, Melba Wilson and Olive Gallimore], *Trouble and Strife* 19 (Summer 1990), pp. 44–52.
27. Brixton Black Women's Group, *Speak Out*, 1 (undated), p. 2, Dadzie 1/8/3.
28. Gail Lewis quoted in Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 45.
29. Editorial, *Speak Out* 1, pp. 2–3 (2).
30. 'Black women together: The Need For a United and Autonomous National Black Women's Organisation', *Spare Rib* 47 (October 1979), pp. 42–45 (44).
31. Supplementary schools were Saturday schools run largely by women to give Black children a positive self-image, and a chance to catch up on basic skills that they may not be learning in a sub-standard and racist education system.
32. United Black Women's Action Group, 'UBWAG: United Black Women's Action Group: Who Are We?' Dadzie 1/1/11.
33. Yvonne Field, Personal interview, 16 April 2011, transcript p. 20.
34. *FOWAAD* 1, (July 1979), p. 10.
35. Joy Njenje, Personal interview, 28 March 2012, transcript p. 11.
36. Bola C., Personal Interview, 8 February 2012, transcript p. 9.
37. See interviews with Bola, Joy and Adithi for more information. Sudbury also gives a brief description of the Cambridge Black Women's group in *Other Kinds of Dreams* p. 240.
38. This is apparent from the contributions that women from Liverpool Black Sisters made to *Merseyside Women's Paper* and to a special edition of *Spare Rib* 166 (May 1986), that focused on Liverpool, particularly the articles by Liz Drysdale, 'Black Resisters', pp. 22–23 (22) and Barbara Phillips and Ann Carney, 'Changing Images' pp. 24–25 (24).
39. See Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, pp. 244–58 for a useful timeline of Black women's groups and events in Britain. Groups set up in the 1980s include the Hackney and Peckham Black Women's Group, a Bengali Women's Support Group in Sheffield, the Manchester Bangladeshi Women's project, and the national group for African women Akina Mama wa Afrika. Several groups in Scotland were also set up, including The Scottish Black Women's Group. Set up in Edinburgh in the winter of 1985, they produced a Black women's issue for the *Edinburgh Women's Liberation Newsletter*, held public meetings, brought Black women authors to discussions in Edinburgh, and perhaps most significantly, helped to set up Shakti, Lothian's first Black women's refuge.

40. Untitled short news item on North Paddington Women's Group, *Speak Out,* 3, (undated) unpaginated.
41. Constitution of the Haringey Black Women's Centre. Dadzie 1/5.
42. *Merseyside Women's Paper* (Spring 1985), p. 6.
43. Bryan et al., *Heart of the Race,* p. 245.
44. *United We Stand* 10 (undated, c. Summer 1986), pp. 8–9, Dadzie 1/8/2.
45. For more information about this, see the website of Kuumba Imani, the successor group to Liverpool Black Sisters, http://www.kuumbaimani.org.uk/ (accessed 30 January 2013). The information about Sheffield was given to me when I telephoned the Black Woman's Resource Centre; their main activity is now organising the Watoto pre-school.
46. For information about Brent Asian Women's Refuge, see 'Black Women Organising: Brent Asian Women's Refuge and Resource Centre', *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 1984), pp. 97–99. There is little information about the history of Amadudu extant, and I thus found an exact starting date for the organisation difficult to establish. However, in my interview with Valerie Hall, it seemed that the mid to late 1980s was the most likely date of its establishment. See Valerie Hall, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript pp. 6–7.
47. Janet Hadley,'Depo-Provera: Control of Fertility – Two Feminist Views', *Spare Rib* 116 (March 1982), pp. 49–53.
48. There is a lot of information about the Depo-Provera campaign, but the centre-spread, 'Depo-Provera – Ban it!' *Outwrite* 2 (April 1982), sums up the problems and aims of the campaign well. Amrit Wilson provides some concrete evidence and accusations in an article entitled 'Bengali Women and the Health Service': I have been unable to track this article down, but extracts from it are reproduced in Veronica Ware, *Women and the National Front* (Birmingham, A.F and R. Publications, 1980), pp. 1–4.
49. See, for example, Janet Hadley's 'Population Control, Racism and Imperialism: Depo-Provera', Papers of Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson, 7/EAW/C/17, The Women's Library, London. Hadley was a white women deeply involved in the Depo-Provera campaign and indeed, issues around race more generally, being a stalwart member of the campaigning group Women Against Imperialism.
50. See *We Are Here: Black Women's Newsletter* 4 (January 1985) for more information about Greenwich Black Women's Health project. Valerie Hall talked in some detail about Black women's health projects in Liverpool in her interview with me (Valerie Hall, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript p. 4, p. 8), and various health initiatives are mentioned the *Merseyside Women's Paper* in the early and mid-1980s. Pratibha Parmar writes more generally about the grounding that Black women's politics has in community organising in 'Other Kinds of Dreams', *Feminist Review* 31 (Spring 1989), 55–65 (55). Note that this article has no to relation Julia Sudbury's book other than sharing a title with it.
51. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 247.
52. Ibid., p. 248.
53. See Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams* p. 252 for information about Babamba. For more information about the Achinihu campaign, see *We Are Here: Black*

Women's Newsletter (10 September 1985), unpaginated, and *Merseyside Women's Paper* 33 (Summer 1985), unpaginated.

54. See also Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-war Britain: How the Personal Became Political* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 143–44 for more information about the GLC's funding of various radical groups and the political motivations behind this funding.
55. Loretta Loach, 'Is There Life After the GLC?' *Spare Rib* (March 1986), pp. 10–11.
56. Jennifer B Kerr and Paula Jennings, 'Scottish Feminism in the Eighties', in Shirley Henderson and Alison MacKay (eds.), *Grit and Diamonds: Women in Scotland Making History 1980*–1990 (Edinburgh: Stramullion Ltd/The Cauldron Collective, 1990), pp. 46–49 (47).
57. Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 48.
58. Arshad, 'The Scottish Black Women's Group', p. 147. Arshad herself was born in Malaysia, so these comments seem somewhat anti-Indian in this context.
59. For a (sceptical) discussion of leftist critiques of multi-culturalism, see Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) pp. 10–11. For a feminist and leftist critique, see Gita Sahgal, 'Fundamentalism and the Multi-Culturalist Fallacy' in Southall Black Sisters, *Against the Grain: A Celebration of Survival and Struggle* (London: Southall Black Sisters, 1990), pp. 16–24.
60. Bilquis Chowdury, 'NarI Kallyan Shangho: Bangladeshi women in Edinburgh' in *Grit and Diamonds*, eds. Henderson and MacKay, pp. 191–93.
61. Amrit Wilson, *Finding A Voice*, pp. vi–vii.
62. See Tariq Modood, Richard Berthoud et. al. *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 2011) for statistics relating to various communities, particularly Tariq Modood's chapter 'Qualifications and English Language', pp. 60–82 and Richard Berthoud's chapter 'Income and Standards of Living', pp. 150–83.
63. See for example, Nadira Mirza's interview with Rachel Cohen, C1420/17, Sisterhood and After, British Library, London, transcript p. 42. 'Religion didn't play a great part in that at that time. My awareness of the way we sort of all operated was very much about gender, feminism and black or white, quite clear at that time, at the beginning anyway.' The strongly secular stance of Southall Black Sisters – who set up a sister group, Women Against Fundamentalism, in 1989, also supports this analysis.
64. See Wild, 'Black Was the Colour of our Fight', for more information about this earlier Asian radicalism.
65. Wilson, *Finding A Voice*, pp. 56–58.
66. For more information about the Grunwick strike, see Graham Taylor and Jack Dromey, *Grunwick: The Workers' Story* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).
67. See, for example, the interview with Jayaben Desai in *Mukti* 5 (Spring 1986), pp. 7–8, 16.
68. Wilson, *Finding A Voice*, p. 175
69. See Amrit Wilson, Sisterhood and After interview with Margaretta Jolly, C1420/19, transcript pp. 107–11, British Library, London for more about AWAZ.

70. Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, p. 149.
71. See Anandi Ramamurthy, *Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements* (London: Pluto, 2013) for more information about the Asian Youth Movement.
72. See Amrit Wilson, Sisterhood and After interview, C1420/19, pp. 123–24 for an account of the importance of the Bradford 12 to radical Asian activism.
73. Rahila Gupta, 'Some recurring themes: Southall Black Sisters, 1979–2003 – and still going strong', in Rahila Gupta (ed.) *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers: Southall Black Sisters* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p. 23.
74. Ibid.
75. Pragna Patel, interviewed by Rachel Cohen, 2011, Sisterhood and After, C1420/18, British Library, London, transcript p. 66.
76. Harwant S. Bains, 'Southall Youth: An Old-Fashioned Story', in Phillip Cohen and Harwant. S Bains, ed. *Multi-Racist Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 226–43, 237.
77. Anandi Ramamurthy, 'The Politics of Britain's Asian Youth Movements', *Race and Class* 48:38 (2006), pp. 38–60, p. 51.
78. Ibid.
79. Avtar Brah, 'Journey to Nairobi', in S. Grewal et. al., *Charting the Journey*. pp. 85–86
80. Pragna Patel, interviewed by Rachel Cohen, Sisterhood and After, C1420/18, British Library, London, transcript pp. 68–70.
81. See Southall Black Sisters, *Against the Grain*, for more information on this history.
82. Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, p. 150.
83. Sahgal, 'Fundamentalism and the Multi-Culturalist Fallacy', p. 19.
84. See Southall Black Sisters, *Against The Grain*, for more on these campaigns.
85. See Amrit Wilson, interview with Margaretta Jolly, 2011, Sisterhood and After, C1420/19, British Library, London, for more information about her life.
86. Pratibha Parmar, 'Gender, Race and Class: Asian women in resistance', in Gilroy (ed.), *The Empire Strikes Back*, pp. 236–75, p. 252.
87. Ibid.
88. Sahgal, 'Fundamentalism and the multi-culturalist fallacy', p. 20., p. 18.
89. Ibid., p. 20.
90. Wilson, *Finding A Voice*, p. 175.
91. Gupta, 'Autonomy and alliances', p. 61.
92. Samantrai, *AlterNatives*, p. 5.
93. Anon, 'Workshop Report Back: The Family', *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* (undated, c. 1984), unpaginated.
94. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, pp. 200–01.
95. Gail Lewis, interviewed by Rachel Cohen, Sisterhood and After, British Library, London, C1420/14, transcript p. 109.
96. Ibid., pp. 188–89.
97. Bryan et al., *The Heart of the Race,* p. 145.
98. Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 59.
99. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 2.
100. Untitled flyer from Manchester Black Women's Co-operative, Dadzie 1/9 (part 1 of 5).

101. Minutes of OWAAD meeting held on 1 May 1979, Dadzie 1/1/35. It appears that London-born Olive Morris's involvement in the Manchester Black Women's Co-operative whilst she was at university there had effected links between them and London-based groups that may not otherwise have existed, despite the fact that Morris was gravely ill by this point.
102. *FOWAAD* 3 (November 1979), p. 11.
103. Gail Lewis quoted in Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 49.
104. Ibid.
105. Samantrai, *AlterNatives,* p. 10. Predelli and Halsaa describe OWAAD's founding as a 'watershed' moment in *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements*, p. 55.
106. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 2; Bryan et al *Heart of the Race*, p. 165.
107. Valerie Mason John, Mason John, Valerie (ed.), *Talking Black: Lesbians of African and Asian Descent Speak Out* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 9.
108. Editorial, 'On Black Women Organising', *Speak Out* 5 (December 1983), pp. 2–7.
109. Ibid.
110. Bryn et al., *The Heart of the Race*, p. 167.
111. For a full list of the concerns that the conference addressed, see *Black Women in Britain, Speak Out* (London, c. 1979)p. 1, Dadzie 1/8/1.
112. The similarity of many of the names given by Black women in London to their written productions during this period can be extremely confusing. This may have been because there was a large overlap in the personnel of these productions. It also suggests the pervasiveness of metaphors around voice and silence in the discourse of feminism – and particularly Black women's activism – during this period.
113. Untitled document by OWAAD Interim Planning Committee, Dadzie 1/2/3.
114. 'Black Women in Britain Speak out', Dadzie 1/8/1, p. 1.
115. Minutes of OWAAD meeting held 13 December 1981, Dadzie 1/3. Although, as Dadzie herself has suggested later, this figure is unsubstantiated and seems to be contradicted by the photographs from the event, which seem to depict mostly African and Afro-Caribbean women.
116. It appears that women in OWAAD were all proficient in English, but this was not necessarily the case for the women of the communities that members of OWAAD were agitating on behalf of (particularly Asian communities).
117. Southall Black Sisters, 'The Need for Afro-Asian Unity', Dadzie 1/1/32.
118. Ibid.
119. Minutes of OWAAD meeting held 13 December 1981, Dadzie 1/3.
120. Anonymous history of ELBWO. Dadzie 1/1/12.
121. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 240.
122. Brixton Black Women's Group, 'Editorial: Black Women Organising', *Speak Out 5* (December 1983), pp. 2–7, later republished in *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 1984) as Brixton Black Women's Group, 'Black Women Organising', 84–89.
123. *Speak Out* 4 (July 1982), pp. 1–4.
124. Ibid.

125. File containing two anonymous personal histories of ELBWO and Southall Black Sisters, Dadzie, 1/1/12.
126. BBWG, 'Editorial: Black Women Organising'.
127. Gerlin Bean, ROC interview, 9 September 2009, transcript p. 3, IV/279/2/20/1a.
128. Femi Otitoju, Interview for the 'Heart of the Race' project, 13 March 2009, transcript p. 19, BWM 10.
129. See Carmen, Gail, Shaila and Pratibha, 'Becoming Visible: Black Lesbian Discussions', *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 1984), 53–72; Valerie Mason John and Ann Khambatta, *Lesbians Talking Making Black Waves* (Scarlet Press: London, 1993), pp. 7–8 and Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams,* p. 68.
130. Of my interviewees, Bola and Joy evinced an evangelically-influenced disapproval of lesbianism, and Stella a leftist disapproval of too great a focus on 'bourgeois' sexual issues.
131. BBWG, 'Editorial: Black Women Organising'.
132. Gail Lewis, quoted in Quashie, Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 47.
133. Khambatta and Mason-John, *Lesbians Talking Making Black Waves,* p. 13.
134. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 252.
135. I make this assertion on the basis of the fact that discussion of both feminism and lesbianism ceased to be controversial in Black women's conferences from the mid-1980s onwards.
136. 'We Are Here' conference pack, Dadzie 1/8/4.
137. Ibid.
138. 'Workshop Report Back: Our Differences', *We Are Here*: *Black Feminist Newsletter* (undated, c. 1984), unpaginated.
139. Ibid.
140. See, for example, Sue Cartledge and Joanna Ryan (eds.), *Sex and Love: New Thoughts on Old Contradictions* (London: The Women's Press, 1983) for an insight into white feminist thought on these subjects at a similar time.
141. 'Workshop Report Back: Our Differences', *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* (undated, c. 1984), unpaginated.
142. *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* 5 (March 1985).
143. See the editorial of *Spare Rib* 130 (May 1983), p. 4. for more information on this transition.
144. Shabnam Grewal, Jackie Kay, Liliane Landor, Gail Lewis and Pratibha Parmar (eds.), *Charting the Journey: Writing by Black and Third World Women* (London: Sheba, 1998).
145. See particularly the introduction to the section 'Turning the world upside down' pp. 257–58, and Pelusa, 'Turning the World Upside Down', in Grewal et al. *Charting the Journey*, pp. 307–14, for an analysis that both acknowledged the importance of connections with white feminists as well as acknowledging the difficulties in the process.
146. Alice Walker, *In Search of our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: The Women's Press, 1984) p. xii. Although this superficially could read as a deliberate play on the homophobic connotations of lavender – as in Betty Friedan's dubbing of lesbians in NOW 'the lavender menace' – this interpretation seems highly doubtful given Walker's gay-friendly politics. An interesting discussion of the possible meanings the phrase could have is given here in Amryl Johnson, 'Purple Politics and the White

Woman's Dress' *New Internationalist* 227, January 1992, http://www.newint.org/features/1992/01/05/purple/ (accessed 12 October 12).

147. See Helen (charles) [brackets original], 'The Language of Womanism: Rethinking Difference', in Mirza (ed) *Black British Feminism*, pp. 278–98 for a more in-depth discussion of this.
148. *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* 5 (March 1985), unpaginated.
149. Ibid.
150. Akua in 'We Are Here Collective' (1988), quoted in Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 204. From the footnote that Sudbury gives, it is unclear whether this publication was an edition of the periodical *We Are Here* that wasn't in any of the archives I used, or whether it was a different but related one-off publication.
151. Sudbury writes that 'writing as a womanist declares that I refuse to subsume "race" to class or gender, but that I equally refuse to wait until racism is defeated before raising issues of gender.' Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 46.
152. Letter from Shaila Shah, *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* (June 1986), unpaginated.
153. Helen (charles), 'The Language of Womanism: Rethinking Difference', in *Black British Feminism* ed. Mirza, pp. 278–97 (294).
154. Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?* particularly p. 3 (though the book as a whole functions as an examination of the mutual influence between white and Black British and American feminism).
155. Jacqueline Nassy Brown, 'Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic Space', *Cultural Anthropology* 13:3 (1998), 291–325.
156. Black Women's Action Committee, 'Black Women Speak Out'.
157. The Soledad Brothers were three African-American prisoners (George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo and John Cluchette), who were accused of murdering a white prison officer in California's Soledad Prison in January 1970. When they went to trial, Jackson's brother Jonathan attempted to take the judge and jurors hostage in a futile attempt to free his brother. This ended in a bloodbath in which several people (including the judge and Jonathan Jackson) were killed. The weapon used by Jonathan Jackson was registered in the name of Angela Davis, who had been involved in the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee. She subsequently became a fugitive, was eventually captured, tried and found innocent by a sympathetic jury. These events were some of the best known of the Black Power struggle in America, and were well reported in England.
158. Sandra Hurst, ROC interview, 1 October 2009, transcript p. 2, Olive Morris Collection, IV/279/2/4/1, Lambeth Archives, London.
159. Bryan et al, *The Heart of the Race*, p. 145.
160. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 14.
161. Yvonne Field, Personal interview, 16 April 2011, transcript p. 24.
162. Bola C, Personal interview, 8 February 2012, transcript p. 10.
163. Anonymous review of *For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf*, *Speak Out* 2 (c.1978), p. 12.
164. According to Lorde, 'Zami' was a 'Carriacou term meaning women who work together as friends and lovers' the term became used widely as an alternative to 'lesbian' by gay Black women, and gave its name to two UK

conferences held for Black lesbians: Zami I and Zami 11 in 1985 and 1989, and also a socialist organisation for Black lesbians called Zamimass, which was founded in 1990. See Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 163 and p. 253 for more information.

165. *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* 4 (January 1985), unpaginated.
166. Amina Mama, 'Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State, *Feminist Review 17*, 'Many Voices, One Chant' (Autumn 1984), 21–35 (22).
167. *Speak Out* 5 (December 1982), pp. 21–22.
168. Ibid., p. 20.

3 Jewish Feminism in England, c. 1974–1990

1. See Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis, 'Contextualising Feminism: Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions', *Feminist Review* 15 (Winter 1983), 62–65 (63).
2. See Susannah Heschel (ed.), *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader* (New York: Schocken, 1983) and Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View From Tradition* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981) for more information on religiously focused Jewish feminism in America. It is significant that there were no similar publications in England.
3. See Erica Burman's discussion of the non-appearance of a British Jewish Feminist Anthology in Erica Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances: Jewish Feminism and Feminist Psychology', *Feminism and Psychology* 4:1 (1994), 155–78.
4. Waterman and Kosmin, *British Jewry in the Eighties,* pp. 44–47. However, it must also be noted that the notion that all Jews are middle-class is something of an anti-Semitic shibboleth. As the authors note, within Redbridge Jewry – which they thought typical of British Jewry as a whole – only about 40 per cent of the Jews at the time of the study there could be considered 'true middle class' (p. 46). There are of course many working-class Jews, and the ultra-orthodox communities of Stamford Hill record some of the highest rates of poverty in the nation.
5. Jenny Bourne, 'Homelands of the Mind: Jewish Feminism and Identity Politics', *Race and Class* 29:1 (1987), 1–24.
6. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 10.
7. Ben Gidley and Keith Kahn-Harris, *Turbulent Times: The British Jewish Community Today*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), p. 1. Exact numbers are impossible to calculate as the census at this time did not have a question on ethnic origin or faith.
8. See, for example, Jonathan Sacks, 'Will our Children Marry Jewish?', http://www.aish.com/jw/s/48882687.html (accessed 24 February 2011).
9. Harriet Wistrich, 'The Use and Misuse of Identity Politics', in Jewish Feminist Publications (ed.), *A Word in Edgeways* (London: J.F. Publications, 1988), pp. 22–29 (27).
10. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 165.
11. The *Jewish Chronicle* was a regular target of Steve Cohen's booklet, *That's Funny, You Don't Look Anti-Semitic*: *An Anti-Racist Analysis of Left*

Anti-Semitism (Leeds: Beyond the Pale Press, 1984). Miriam Levy also talked about the right-wing nature of *The Jewish Chronicle* in my interview with her, 3 November 2010, transcript p. 27.

12. Greville Janner, 'Black-Jewish Controversies', *Patterns of Prejudice* 20:2(1986), 3–11.
13. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 167.
14. See Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews,* 4th edn (London: Phoenix Press, 2001) for more on this point, particularly p. 520. Isaac Deutscher is perhaps the classic example of a Jewish leftist who was converted to Zionism by the horrors of the holocaust.
15. David Cesarani, 'The Alternative Jewish Community', *European Judaism* 19–20 (Double issue for Winter 1985/Summer 1986), 50–54 (52).
16. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 165.
17. See Juliet J Pope, 'Anti-Racism, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism – Debates in the British Women's Movement', *Patterns of Prejudice* 20:3 (1986), 13–26; Bourne, *Homelands of The Mind,* and Lynne Segal, *Making Trouble*, p. 123.
18. For more information about Jewish feminists in England in earlier periods, see Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States 1881–1933* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1990).
19. For example, see the themed 'Focus on Jewish feminism' edition of *Ms* in July 1974.
20. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 11.
21. See, for example, Randall and Lovenduski, *Contemporary Feminist Politics,* pp. 87, 225–26. I should note that I do essentially agree that the 1980s were the prime period for the articulation of identity politics; nevertheless, such politics had roots further back in the 1970s than is often realised. Segal, *Making Trouble*, p. 213, also places identity politics in the 1980s.
22. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 9.
23. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 8.
24. Roszika Parker, 'Being Jewish: Anti-Semitism and Jewish Women', in *Spare Rib* 79 (February 1979), pp. 27–31 (27).
25. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 9.
26. Anon, *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* 60 (September 1974), p. 2. This example also illustrates well that identity politics, from the beginning, were lampooned from within the left as well as outside it.
27. Ibid, pp. 9–10.
28. Parker, 'Being Jewish', p. 27.
29. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 9.
30. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 10.
31. Anonymous letter in *Manchester Women's Liberation Newsletter*, reprinted in *WIRES* 53 (13 July 1978), p. 20.
32. Roszika Parker, 'Being Jewish', pp. 27–31.
33. Ibid., p. 31; p. 27.
34. Ibid., p. 28.
35. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 10.
36. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 17; Personal conversation with Gail Chester.

37. *LWLN* 245 (3 December 1981), unpaginated.
38. On the question of being Jewish, see, for example, Isaiah Berlin's famous letter to David Ben-Gurion 'Who Is A Jew?', written in January 1959 and republished in many places, including here: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/israel_studies/v013/13.3.berlin.pdf (accessed 4 December 2012). On the separation of Jewish religious and cultural identities, see the identically titled essay by Isaac Deutscher, 'Who is a Jew?' for the classic statement in the posthumously published collection, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). It seems likely that many of the women involved in the Jewish feminist movement in England would have been at least aware of the existence of these texts, although they were not discussed widely in print (probably because they were not specifically feminist statements).
39. 'National Jewish Lesbian Conference', *LWLN* 310 (7 April 1983), unpaginated.
40. Miriam Metz, 'It is a Tree of Life', in Jewish Women in London Group, *Generations of Memories* (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 217–45 (240).
41. Sue Cooper writes about the Jewish feminist group in York in her contribution 'From 1970' in *'68,' 78,' 88* ed. Sebesteyen; pp.72–78 (76). I was told about the group in Nottingham at the WLM@40 conference in Oxford in 2010. There is an advertisement for a group in Cambridge in the March 1978 edition of the newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation Group (p. 11) GCIP CWLA/0/6/2; and also an advertisement for a new Jewish feminist group somewhat later in the *Merseyside Women's Paper* (Spring 1985), p. 16. However, the fact that my sole Jewish interviewee from Liverpool was unaware of the existence of this latter group suggests that it was not successful.
42. This information was found on the website for Jewish Women's Aid http://www.jwa.org.uk/about_us.html (accessed 4 December 2012).
43. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 27.
44. Dena Attar, 'Why I am not a Jewish Feminist', *Shifra* 2 (May 1985), pp. 8–10.
45. Wistrich, 'The Use and Misuse of Identity Politics', p. 26.
46. Ibid., p. 27.
47. Metz, 'It is a tree of life', pp. 240–41.
48. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, p. 21.
49. Sheila Saunders, 'Excuse Me, is there a Christian in the House?' *Shifra* 2 (May 1985) pp. 29–30.
50. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 18.
51. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript pp. 20–21; Personal correspondence with Gail Chester, 9 January 2013. The Half Empty Bookcase and The Jewish Women's Network are also discussed by Elizabeth Tikvah Sarah in 'Being a Lesbian Rabbi' in Rebecca T. Alpert, Sue Levi Elwell and Shirley Idelson (eds.) *Lesbian Rabbis: The First Generation* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. 75–90 (88); and by Alice Shalvi in 'The Geopolitics of Jewish Feminism' in T.M. Rudavsky (ed.), *Gender and Judaism: The Transformation of Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 213–42 (235).

52. Contributions were advertised for in many of the periodicals under discussion in this essay, particularly *WIRES* and the *LWLN;* Burman, 'Experience, Identities and Alliances', 165.
53. Ibid.
54. That this should be the end point of Jewish feminist activism was suggested by Elly Bulkin in 'Hard Ground: Jewish Identity, Racism and Anti-Semitism' in Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Barbara Smith, *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism* (New York: Long Haul Press, 1984), pp. 91–230 (191).
55. Editorial, *Shifra* 1 (December 1984), p. 2.
56. 'Almost an editoral', *Shifra* 3/4 (December 1986), p. i.
57. Elizabeth Sarah, 'Knowing No Bounds . . . Or What's a Nice Jewish Lesbian Like Me Doing Holding the Sefer Torah?' *Shifra* 1 (December 1984), pp. 9–12.
58. 'Almost an editorial', p. i.
59. Jewish Women's History Group, *You'd Prefer Me Not to Mention It: The Lives of Four Jewish Daughters of Refugees* (London: Calverts North Star Press, c. 1983), back cover.
60. Caroline, *You'd Prefer Me Not to Mention It*, p. 23.
61. Jewish Women in London group, *Generations of Memory,* p. 5.
62. Julia Bard, 'Review Essay*: Generations of Memories: Voices of Jewish Women*', *Feminist Review* 37 (Spring 1991), 83–94 (91).
63. Dena Attar, 'Why I am Not a Jewish Feminist', *Shrifa* 2 (May 1985), pp. 8–10. It should be noted that Attar also robustly defended Jewish feminists from anti-Semitism in both *Spare Rib* Letters, *Spare Rib* 137 (December 1983), p. 5, and in 'An Open Letter on Anti-Semitism and Racism', *Trouble and Strife* 1 (Winter 1983), pp. 13–16, and was generally considered by the women I interviewed to be a part of the Jewish feminist movement, despite her criticisms.
64. Segal, *Making Trouble,* p. 123.
65. Ibid., p. 229.
66. Bourne, 'Homelands of the Mind', p. 2.
67. Ibid., p. 14.
68. Ibid., pp. 11–13.
69. Danielle Harway, Gail Chester, Ros Schwartz and Val Johnson, Introduction, *A Word In Edgeways*, p. 1.
70. Francesca Klug, 'Jewish Feminism and Identity Politics: A Review Article' in *A Word In Edgeways,* pp. 19–23 (19).
71. Gail Chester, 'Notes on the Impossibility of Passing', in *A Word in Edgeways*, pp. 10–14 (10–11).
72. Adrienne Baker, *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society: Transitions and Traditions* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 209.
73. Metz, 'It is a tree of life', in *Generations of Memories*, p. 224.
74. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2011, transcript p. 21.
75. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2011, transcript p. 20.
76. 'Women Speak Out Against Zionism', *Spare Rib* 121 (August 1982), pp. 22–23.
77. Ibid., p. 22.
78. Editorial, *Spare Rib* 130 (May 1983), p. 4.

79. 'Sisterhood . . . is Plain Sailing', *Spare Rib* 132 (July 1983), pp. 24–27.
80. Ibid., p. 24.
81. Adi Cooper, Karen Goldman, Rosalind Haber, Francesca Klug, Judy Keiner and Sally Lawson, Letters, *Spare Rib* 131 (June 1983), p. 26.
82. Madge Dresser, Letter, *Spare Rib* 132 (July 1983), p. 5.
83. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2010, transcript p. 12.
84. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011, transcript p. 7–8.
85. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript, p. 20.
86. Erica Burman, 'The Politics of Identity Politics', in *A Word In Edgeways*, pp. 7–10 (10).
87. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 167–8.
88. Sue O' Sullivan, *LWLN* 320 (14 June 1983), unpaginated.
89. Letters, *Spare Rib*, 134 (September 1983), p. 46.
90. Letters, *Spare Rib*, 132 (July 1983), p. 5.
91. Letters, *Spare Rib* 135 (October 1983) p. 4.
92. Adele Cohen, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript p. 9.
93. *Spare Rib* editorial collective, 'Sisterhood . . . is Plain Sailing', p. 25.
94. However, it is also important to note that the debate did not split the movement simply down Black and white lines. Some Black women did support Jewish women. Once again illustrating the heterogeneity of opinion around race amongst Black as well as white feminists, prominent Black feminist and author Barbara Burford wrote into the *LWLN* stating 'As a black woman, I find it hard to express how angry I was at the appalling arrogance of the open letter from the Women of Colour group at *Spare Rib* . . . . Does the Women of Colour group at *Spare Rib* expect everyone in the world to love them? . . . Being black does not automatically make a women super-right-on or more radically chic . . . ' *LWLN* 319 (7 June 1983), unpaginated. Additionally, it was a white woman on the collective, Roisin Boyd, who had produced the article 'Women Speak Out Against Zionism' that was at the root of the controversy.
95. There are Jews who are mixed race, and some Sephardic Jews (such as the Mizrahim, who have their origins in the Middle East) are not white: however, the Jewish feminist movement in England was overwhelmingly composed of women of Ashkenazi (i.e. European) backgrounds. According to Adrienne Baker, less than 3 percent of Jews in Britain were of Sephardic origin, (Baker, *The Jewish Woman in Contemporary Society*, p. 17). Additionally, Miriam in her interview remembered that it was 'very Ashkenazi identified' (transcript p. 20). As we have seen, there were workshops at the Jewish feminist conferences for Sephardic women, but how well attended they were is unclear. Furthermore, even some Sephardic women – dependent on country of origin – would be phenotypically white and not Black.
96. *Spare Rib* editorial collective, 'Sisterhood . . . is Plain Sailing', p. 25.
97. Ibid.
98. Ibid.
99. *LWLN* 247 (15 December 1981). It should be noted that this letter-writer was particularly extreme in her opinions and was not particularly representative of most feminists who found Jewish feminism problematic. However,

that *LWLN* nevertheless chose to print her letters – most of which were extremely offensive in their anti-Semitism – is telling.
100. Danielle Harway, Gail Chester, Judy Keiner, Judy Yelling, Sally Lawson, 'Response to Women at *Spare Rib'*, *LWLN* 318 (30 May 1983), unpaginated.
101. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2010, transcript p. 7.
102. Pope, 'Anti -Racism, Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism', 15.
103. 'Statement from *Outwrite*', *Outwrite* 5 (August 1982), p. 2.
104. See *Outwrite* 13 (April 1983), p. 4; *Outwrite* 14 (June 1983), p. 2; *Outwrite* (18 October 1983), p. 2.
105. See for example *WIRES* 133 (August 1982), p. 4, and *WIRES* 144 (Summer 1983), unpaginated.
106. 'Statement from A Woman's Place Collective', *LWLN* 322 (28 June 1983), unpaginated.
107. Elizabeth Sarah, 'Challenging Some Myths About Jewish Experience', *London Women's Liberation Newsletter* 325 (29 July 1983), unpaginated.
108. See, for example, the *Manchester Women's Liberation Newsletter* 47 (June 1983).
109. Bourne, 'Homelands of the Mind', p. 14.
110. Jewish Women in London group, *Generations of Memories*, p. 255.
111. Barbara Smith, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place', in Bulkin, Pratt and Smith, *Yours in Struggle*, pp. 67–87 (67–68).
112. 'In Search of Common Ground', *Trouble and Strife* 17 (Winter 1989), pp. 67–87 (39–44).
113. Elly Bulkin, 'Hard Ground: Jewish Identity, Racism and Anti-Semitism', in Bulkin, Pratt and Smith, *Yours in Struggle*, pp. 91–230 (191).
114. Metz, 'It is a Tree of Life', *Generations of Memories*, p. 240.
115. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2010, transcript p. 29.
116. Shelley Spivak, Personal interview, 23 November 2010, transcript p. 27.
117. Ibid., p. 26.
118. Although, the group Women Against Fundamentalism, formed in 1989 mostly by SBS members, is a notable example of a group that does include Jewish as well as Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Christian members.
119. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 168.
120. 'Them and us: A Response to Jenny Bourne', *Outwrite* 61(January 1988) p. 4 and p. 7.
121. Letters, *Spare Rib* 235 (June 1992), p. 5.
122. Burman, 'Experiences, Identities and Alliances', 170.

4 White Anti-Racist, Anti-Fascist and Anti-Imperialist Feminism, c. 1976–1980

1. Pratibha Parmar stated at the 1978 socialist feminist conference at workshop for Women Against Racism and Fascism (WARF) that 'The women's movement in Britain has never taken up the question of racism in any real way and because this issue affects all black women, we feel that a failure to take it up has ensured and will continue to ensure that the Women's Liberation Movement as a whole is irrelevant to the needs and demands of most black women.' It is unclear whether Parmar was an active member of WARF or not. See Parmar, 'Other Kinds of Dreams', 56.

2. The emphasis on organising around one's own oppression is something addressed both explicitly and implicitly in the many primary and secondary texts that have come out of New Left radical politics. Two interesting discussions are to be found in L.A. Kaufmann, 'The Anti-Politics of Identity', in Barbara Ryan (ed.) *Identity Politics in The Women's Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 23–34; and the chapter 'Organising One's Own' in Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, pp. 178–213.
3. An anonymous interviewee for the FEMCIT project complained of 'post-modern representations' the racism of white feminists, pointing to the activism of WARF as evidence of the anti-racist nature of the WLM, quoted in Predelli and Halsaa, *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements*, p. 163. Whilst I do not agree that WARF is indeed evidence of the essentially anti-racist nature of feminism, it is nevertheless true that simplistic assertions of the racism of white feminists have caused groups like WARF to be overlooked in the historical record.
4. Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, pp. 178–213.
5. Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2000), p. 123.
6. Ibid., p. 118.
7. Ibid., p. 145.
8. David Renton, 'Working-Class Anti-Fascism 1974–1979', in Nigel Copsey and David Renton (eds.) *British Fascism, The Labour Movement and the State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 141–59 (143); Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, p. 125.
9. Copsey *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, p. 125. This latter group adopted the bi-monthly newsletter of the Kingston Campaign Against Racism and Fascism – CARF – as its newsletter, (somewhat confusingly, CARF was sometime used as an alternative term to the organisation itself).
10. Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain*, p. 136.
11. David Renton, *When We touched the Sky: The Anti-Nazi League, 1977*–1981 (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2006), p. 141.
12. Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain,* pp. 133–34.
13. Ibid., p. 138.
14. Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, p. 195.
15. Brixton Black Women's Group, *Speak Out* 2 (undated, c. 1978), pp. 2–3.
16. See Renton, *When We Touched the Sky*, for an extended (if partial) discussion of how the ANL crafted their popular appeal.
17. See Hughes, 'Young Socialist Men in 1960s Britain', for more information on the masculinity cultures of IS, from whom the SWP sprung.
18. See Renton, *When we touched the Sky*, for an example of the glorification of such tactics.
19. *Scarlet Woman* (January 1979), p. 12. See also Women and Fascism Study Group*, Breeders for Race and Nation* (Birmingham: Bread and Roses, c. 1980), p. 25, for a critique of such activism.
20. For a detailed discussion of this, see the (rather obscure) periodical *Forewarned Against Fascism* (August 1978), p. 4. The newsletter of the Cambridge Women's Liberation group (July 1978) also reported that the All-Cambridge Campaign Against Racism and Fascism had called WARF 'disruptive' (p.3). The Cambridge Women's Liberation group were very unhappy about this. GCIP CWLA 0/6/3.

21. Renton, *When We Touched the Sky*, p. 144.
22. (London) *Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter* 57 (August 1974), p. 5.
23. (London)*Women's Liberation Workshop Newsletter* 59 (4 September 1974), p. 5.
24. *Scarlet Woman* 9 (January 1979). Areas featured included Birmingham, Manchester and Teeside.
25. *Scarlet Woman* 9 (January 1979), p. 12. This reading material included David Edgar's pamphlet 'Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front', before turning to state racism and Sivanandan's 'Race, Class and State: the Black Experience in Britain'(*Race and Class* 17:4 (1976)), and finally attending to the development of immigration laws, and their relation to the labour market.
26. *Scarlet Woman* 9, (January 1979), p. 12.
27. 'Feminists in Action', *Socialist Woman* 6:3 (Spring 1978), pp. 4–6 (4).
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Though this is not a perception that would not bear much scrutiny over a longer historical durée, given the historic links between socialist and feminist activism.
31. See Rees, 'All the Rage', for an in depth discussion of the controversies that political lesbianism aroused at the end of the 1970s.
32. See Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, pp. 18–25, for more information.
33. *Taking Racism Personally: White Anti-Rracism at the Crossroads* (Nottingham: Peace News, c. 1978/79).
34. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 24.
35. Ibid.
36. Julie Gottlieb, 'Feminism and Anti-fascism in Britain', in *British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State*, eds. Copsey and Renton, pp. 68–94.
37. Ibid., p. 73.
38. Within three years, Hazel Carby's seminal essay 'White Woman Listen! Black feminist and the Boundaries of Sisterhood' came out of the Centre as part of the landmark collection from the centre, *The Empire Strikes Back*.
39. 'Women and the National Front', *Red Rag* (unnumbered, August 1980), pp. 28–31.
40. Interestingly, given the emphasis on autonomy in the WLM, at least one of the group was a man. The names given were Janet Batsleer, Lucy Black, Trisha McCabe, Richard Marlen and Robin Wilson. Hazel Carby was credited for reading a draft of the work.
41. *Breeders for Race and Nation*, p. 3.
42. Ibid., p. 30.
43. Newsletter of Cambridge Women's Liberation group (August 1978), p. 10, GCIP CWLA 0/6/3.
44. *Breeders for Race and Nation*, pp. 18–20.
45. Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Schiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 364.
46. Women and Fascism study group, *Breeders for Race and Nation,* p. 22.
47. Winifred Holtby, quoted in Women and Fascism study group, *Breeders for Race and Nation,* p. 22.
48. Ibid., p. 18.

49. Women and Fascism study group, *Breeders for Race and Nation,* pp. 23–24.
50. Ibid., p. 30.
51. Veronica Ware, *Women and the National Front* (Birmingham: A.F. and R publications, 1980), p. 2.
52. It should be noted that Ware does include a discussion of Depo-Provera and its impact in *Women and the National Front*, pp. 1–4.
53. Anon, 'Shadow on our Future,' *Hunky Dory* 1 (1978), pp. 20–22 (21). Ironically, the author of this piece actually opposed WARF on these grounds, suggesting that she misunderstood the nature of the group's activism, which, as we can see, came from a similar ideological perspective on focusing on what fascism would do to white, rather than Black, women.
54. *Breeders for Race and Nation,* pp. 25–26.
55. Anna Zajicek, 'Race Discourses and Antiracist Practices in a Local Women's Movement', *Gender and Society* 16:2 (2002), 155–74.
56. Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack, 'The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relations Among Women', *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 1:2 (1998), 335–52 (343).
57. Women and Fascism Study Group, *Breeders for Race and Nation,* p.30.
58. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 24.
59. Anon, 'Shadow on our Future,' *Hunky Dory* 1 (1978), pp. 20–22 (21).
60. Ruth Frankenberg, 'Growing up White: Feminism, Racism, and the Social Geography of Childhood', *Feminist Review* 45 (Autumn 1993), 51–84.
61. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 18.
62. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2010, transcript pp. 10–11; Adele Cohen, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript pp. 2–21 (as a trained psychotherapist, Adele talked about co-counselling in depth).
63. Tia Cross, Freada Klein, Barbara Smith and Beverley Smith, 'Face to Face, Day to Day – Racism CR', in Gloria T Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith (eds.), *All the Women are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), pp. 52–56 (52).
64. *Taking Racism Personally*, p. 2. The pacifist aims of *Peace News* were not foregrounded in the pamphlet, although the introduction did note the commitment of *Peace News* to non-violent demonstration.
65. Ibid.
66. Manchester WARF, 'Eight white women uncover their own racism', in *Taking Racism Personally*, pp.8–10.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., p. 9.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990; originally published New York: Anchor books, 1959) for the classic analysis of the performed nature of everyday social interactions. Goffman emphasises that certain performances are expected in certain situations, (see 'Reality and Contrivance' section of 'Performances' chapter) which seems particularly pertinent in this case. He also makes the point that most interactions are performed to some extent – 'life itself is a dramatically enacted thing' (p. 63). This is not to suggest, however, that performances are necessarily dishonest or insincere, but rather

that there is no straightforward link between performance and sincerity (pp. 61–62).
72. Gail Chester, Personal interview, 10 January 2011. Unfortunately the audio quality of this particular part of the recording was too poor to transcribe, but Gail confirmed this opinion in later conversation.
73. See Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 124–126. Reddy allows for this in his work, although I would argue that his use of the word 'regime' itself suggests suppression or restriction of expression.
74. Ware, *Beyond the Pale*, p. 18.
75. See the interview with Janet Hadley in *Once a Feminist*, ed. Wandor, pp. 71–80.
76. 'Draft discussion papers of Women Against Imperialism Group', p. 1, Dadzie 1/1/22.
77. (London) *Women's Information and Newsletter Service* 29 (30 June 1976), unpaginated.
78. 'Draft discussion paper of Women Against Imperialism Group', p. 4, Dadzie 1/1/22. The capitalisation of 'Imperialist/Imperialism' is original.
79. Ibid., p. 6.
80. *LWLN* 123 (undated c. June 1979), unpaginated.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Draft discussion paper of Women Against Imperialism Group, p. 1, Dadzie 1/1/22.
84. Rossiter, 'Not Our Cup of Tea', p. 193.
85. Wandor (ed.), *Once a Feminist*, p. 80.
86. Rossiter, 'Not Our Cup of Tea', p. 193.
87. See Eileen Fairweather, 'Armagh Jail from the Inside' *Spare Rib* 91 (February 1980) pp. 30–31, for information about the Andersontown group's activity in organising these events.
88. Rossiter, 'Not Our Cup of Tea', p. 217.
89. Aileen Kayes, 'Delegation to Armagh', *Merseyside Women's Paper* 33 (Summer 1985), p. 3.
90. Bridget Cullen, Personal interview, 19 April 2011, transcript p. 23, p. 26. Nevertheless in unpublished work, she does write that connections that were made between the PTA act and excessive policing in the Black community, after the 1980 National Socialist Feminist Conference.
91. Bridget Cullen, Personal interview, 19 April 2011, transcript pp. 23–24.
92. See, for example, an unpublished conference paper on 'Repressive Laws Against Black People and Against Irish People' from 'Workshop on Racism' event in West London (held on 11 November 1978), Dadzie 1/1/31. Bridget Cullen also suggested in our interview that coalitions became more frequent in the 1980s (transcript p. 26).
93. *We Are Here Black Feminist Newsletter* 6 (undated c. summer 1985), unpaginated.
94. 'Socialist-Feminist Conference' *FOWAAD* 7 (November 1980), pp. 12–13.
95. Presumably the conference organisers had failed to think through the unfortunate connotations of the term 'National Socialist'.
96. Sue O' Sullivan, 'The connections between our struggles', *Spare Rib* 102 (January 1981), pp. 23–25.

97. Planning Group for the 1980 National Socialist Feminist Conference, 'What's Imperialism Got To Do With It?', *Spare Rib* 102 (January 1981), pp. 22–33 (22).
98. Sue O' Sullivan, 'The Connections Between Our Struggles', *Spare Rib* 102 (January 1981), p. 23.
99. 'National Socialist Feminist Conference: Report back workshops one and two', Dadzie 1/1/32.
100. Ann Rossiter, 'Not Our Cup of Tea', pp. 199–200; 'Socialist-Feminist Conference' *FOWAAD* 7 (November 1980), pp. 12–13.
101. 'Socialist-Feminist Conference', *FOWAAD* 7, pp. 12–13.
102. 'Report Back' from National Socialist Feminist Conference, Dadzie 1/1/32 BCA.
103. 'Socialist-Feminist Conference', *FOWAAD* 7, pp. 12–13.
104. Ibid.
105. Frankenberg, *White Woman, Race Matters*, especially chapter six (pp. 137–90).
106. Marlene Packwood, ' "Women Against Racism and Fascism" – Not a Feminist Campaign', *Catcall* 9 (March 1979), pp. 17–19 (19).
107. Anon., 'Shadow on our Future', *Hunky Dory* (1978), pp. 20–22.
108. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, 2nd edn (London: The Women's Press, 1979), p. 105.
109. Madhu Kishwar, *Scarlet Woman* 12, quoted in Sue O' Sullivan, 'The Connections Between Our Struggles', *Spare Rib* 102 (January 1981), pp. 23–24 (23). White Irish woman Roisin Boyd also articulated a similar opinion in the article 'Sisterhood . . . is Plain Sailing', *Spare Rib* 132 (July 1983), pp. 24–27 (24).
110. Marlene Packwood, interview with Adrienne Rich, *Spare Rib* 103 (February 1981), pp. 14–16, (15). Rich's response to this statement was ambiguous.
111. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 200.
112. Helen Berenger, *LWLN* 65 (19 May 1978), unpaginated.
113. *WINS* 50 (1 December 1976), unpaginated.
114. See for example Jan McKenley, 'What, Me Racist?, *Spare Rib* 101 (December 1980) pp. 24–27 (24); and a letter from Sue Wilson *in Spare Rib* 104 (March 1981), p. 5.
115. See Sheila Rowbotham, 'The Trouble with Patriarchy' (pp. 364–69) and the reply by Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor, 'In Defence of 'Patriarchy' (pp. 370–73), in Raphael Samuel (ed.) *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge, 1981).

5 Critique and Coalitions: Black and White Feminists Working Together in the 1980s

1. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, particularly pp. 199–220.
2. Ibid, p. 199.
3. Predelli and Halsaa, *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements*, pp. 166–67.
4. Segal, *Making Trouble*; Roberts, *Paper Houses*; Dir. Vanessa Engle, *Lefties: Angry Wimmin* (BBC: 2006).
5. Heidi Safia Mirza, introduction to *Black British Feminism*, pp. 1–28.
6. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 9.

7. Apart from the scathing commentary provided by BBWG on All-London Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee (of which WARF was a part), *Speak Out* 2 (undated, c. 1978) pp. 2–3.
8. *FOWAAD* (July 1980), p. 11. The conference was held at Plashet School, East Ham, London.
9. 'Artusha', *We Are Here*: *Black Feminist Newsletter* (September 1985), unpaginated.
10. Amos and Parmar, 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', 4.
11. Ibid., 17–18.
12. Ibid., 17. Black feminist antipathy towards Greenham was also demonstrated in Gail Lewis's essay, 'Who Feels it Knows It: Rethinking the Peace Movement', in Grewal et. al (eds.), *Charting the Journey*, pp. 271–76.
13. See Gail, Carmen, Shaila and Pratibha, 'Becoming Visible: Black Lesbian Discussions', and Mama, 'Black Women, The Economic Crisis and the British State'.
14. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of these internal debates and concerns.
15. Bryan et al, *The Heart of the Race*, pp. 174–75.
16. Yvonne Field, Personal interview, 15 April 2011, transcript p. 11.
17. 'Problems in the Relationship Between the Black Women's Movement and the White Women's Movement', Dadzie 1/1/21. Unfortunately it is not entirely clear what conference this paper originates from: the events and debates it refers to suggests that it was probably one of the later OWAAD conferences in the early 1980s, or the Black feminist 'We are Here' conference in London in 1984.
18. 'Problems in the Relationship Between the Black Women's Movement and the White Women's Movement', Dadzie 1/1/21.
19. Stella's own handwritten response to the paper in question is attached to the back of the document in question, Dadzie 1/1/21. Many of her points outline the factual inaccuracies of the document, including the relationship of white women to the Depo-Provera campaign. For Stella's critique of the feminist movement, see *The Heart of the Race* (which she co-authored), as well as her interview for this project.
20. Kum-Kum Bhavnani and Margaret Coulson, 'Transforming Socialist Feminism: The Challenge of Racism', *Feminist Review* 23 (June 1986), 81–92 (89).
21. 'NAC: The Case for Change', in Hannah Kanter, Sarah Lefanu, Shaila Shah and Carole Spedding (eds.), *Sweeping Statements: Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement 1981–83*. (London: The Women's Press, 1984), pp. 236–39 (239).
22. Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript pp. 5–6.
23. *LWLN* 370 (19 June 1984), unpaginated.
24. See 'NAC: The Case for Change', p.236 for more information on the Scottish situation.
25. Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, p. 201.
26. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 42
27. See Rees, 'All the Rage', for an in depth analysis of the impact of the Ripper murders on feminists in Leeds, and the effect this had on RTN marches.
28. *WIRES* 47 (31 March 1978), p. 9; *LWLN* 56 (15 March 1978), unpaginated. That it happened at this conference once again suggests the greater ability of socialist feminists to incorporate race into their thinking.

29. *WIRES* 47 (31 March 1978), p. 9.
30. *LWLN* 56 (15 March 1978), unpaginated.
31. *LWLN* 261 (30 March 1982), unpaginated.
32. Ibid.
33. Bhavnani and Coulson, 'Transforming Socialist Feminism', 84.
34. Ibid.
35. Cherry Groce was shot and paralysed from the waist down on 28 September 1985 by police searching her home in Brixton, looking for her son. These events sparked two days of rioting in Brixton. A week later, Cynthia Jarrett died of heart failure triggered by a police raid of her home in the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham, north London. These events triggered the Broadwater Farm riot in which PC Keith Blakelock was killed.
36. Ruth Frankenberg and Janet Martens, 'White Racism: More Than a Moral Issue', *Trouble and Strife* 5 (Spring 1985), pp. 17–22 (17).
37. Jenny Bourne, 'Towards an Anti-Racist Feminism', *Race and Class* 25:1(1983), 1–22 (4).
38. Jan McKenley, 'What, me Racist?' *Spare Rib* 101 (December 1980), pp. 24–27 (24).
39. Sue Wilson, letters page, *Spare Rib* 104 (March 1981), p. 5.
40. See Renton, *When We Touched the Sky*, for an extensive discussion of the decline of Anti-Nazi League activity in the early eighties.
41. Bourne, 'Towards An Anti-Racist Feminism', 14–15.
42. News and announcements, *LWLN* 346 (20 December 1983), unpaginated.
43. News and announcements, *LWLN* 398 (8 January 1985), unpaginated.
44. 'Report Back From Bolton Conference', *WIRES* 132 (June 1982), p. 9.
45. Anon., 'Yes But . . . What Do Black and Working Class Women Think?',*Spare Rib* 122 (September 1982), p. 18.
46. Ibid.
47. Rees, 'A Look Back at Anger'.
48. Mandy Vere, Personal interview, 7 December 2010, transcript p. 10.
49. Alastair Bonnett, *White Identities: Historical and International Perspectives* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 128.
50. Veronica Reilly, letters page, *Spare Rib* 135 (October 1983), p. 5.
51. Chris Wilson, letters page, *Spare Rib* 137 (December 1983), p. 34.
52. Dyana Maloney, *LWLN* (August 5 1983), unpaginated.
53. Frankenberg and Marten, 'White Racism', p. 17.
54. Ibid. p. 7.
55. Of course, the ANL would never have termed themselves to be politically liberal, and they did understand racism grandly to be a product of the capitalist system. However, the way in which they also perceived racism as a personal attribute of individuals implicitly drew on liberal understanding of the capacity of the individual to have the agency to resist cultural discourses around race.
56. I am grateful to Jon Lawrence for this insight. Of course, feminism during this era always had an intellectual current, particularly in its socialist feminist strand. However, the evidence from the periodicals examined in this book suggest that the debates around identity politics were far more central to day-to-day feminist activism in the early 1980s than were debates

around socialist feminism in the 1970s, which appear to have been more confined to an intellectual 'elite'.

57. 'City of Splits', *Spare Rib* 166 (May 1986), pp. 36–38.
58. Emma Hipkin, Personal interview, 24 January 2011, transcript p. 11.
59. Bridget Cullen, Personal interview, 19 April 2011, transcript p. 35.
60. This was further reinforced by a further (untaped) conversation I had with Bola C. sometime after the interview, in which she suggested the irritation that some Black women felt with some Irish women by using almost exactly the same reasoning—'Opening your mouth, it gives you crucial seconds of an entry, but for us there is the first recognition, which is of colour'. This suggests that this particular analysis of the different form of racism experienced by Black and Irish woman was well-known in the women's movement.
61. Miriam Levy, Personal interview, 3 November 2010, transcript pp. 12–13.
62. Ibid., p. 13.
63. Ibid.
64. Adele Cohen, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript p. 15.
65. Whether Adele felt that the accusation was particularly unjust because of her status as a holocaust survivor was unclear to me: certain parts of the interview seemed to suggest so.
66. Adele Cohen, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript p. 19.
67. That a white woman attended a Black meeting suggests that allegedly 'separatist' groups could be more fluid than we might think. Unfortunately, I was unable to probe more deeply into this during the interview itself.
68. Cathy Jones, Personal interview, 2 March 2011. Claire did not deny Valerie's involvement with this group, but rather questioned Valerie's account of the foundation of the group, which Claire saw to be the result of the hard work of Black women in Liverpool. Unfortunately the audio quality of the majority of the recording of this interview was too poor to transcribe.
69. Valerie Hall, Personal interview, 1 March 2011, transcript p. 5.
70. Ibid., p. 18.
71. Given the term's lack of contemporary currency, I would argue this suggests that this was a phrase that Valerie used at the time, rather than just retrospectively.
72. Frankenberg, *White Woman, Race Matters*, especially chapter 6 (pp. 137–90).
73. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?' *Spare Rib* 168 (July 1986), pp. 18–25 (19).
74. See Alastair Bonnett, *Radicalism, Anti-Racism and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993) for an in-depth analysis of this activism. Gilroy heavily critiques municipal anti-racism in *There Ain't No Black in The Union Jack*, pp. 177–94.
75. The fact that white women had 'set the terms' of the collective was one of the main points of contention for the Black women who joined the *Spare Rib* collective. For more on this, see 'See How We Run', *Spare Rib* 131 (June 1983), pp. 6–8 and pp. 30–31.
76. Linda Bellos, 'Advice to White Collectives Wishing to Employ Black Workers', Dadzie 1/8/4.
77. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?', p. 20.
78. Ibid., pp. 20–21.

79. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?', p. 21.
80. Ibid.
81. Bola C., Personal interview, 8 February 2012, transcript p. 12.
82. Ibid., p. 14.
83. Adithi, Personal interview, 12 March 2012, transcript p. 12.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., pp. 28–29.
86. See Chapter 4.
87. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?', p. 24.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?', p.25.
92. Mandy Vere, Personal interview, 7 December 2010, transcript p. 11.
93. See Stephen Small, 'Racialised Relations in Liverpool: A Contemporary Anomaly', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 17:4 (1991), 511–37, for more information about segregation and the Black population in Liverpool.
94. Julie Callaghan, Personal interview, 7 December 2010, transcript p. 18.
95. Mandy Vere and Julie Callaghan, Joint personal interview, 7 December 2010, transcript p. 18.
96. Cathy Jones, Personal interview, 2 March 2011.
97. Editorial, *Merseyside Women's Paper* 35 (Spring 1986), p. 2.
98. Liz Drysdale, 'Black Resisters', *Spare Rib* 166 (May 1986), pp. 22–23 (22).
99. Barbara Phillips and Ann Carney, 'Changing Images', *Spare Rib* 166 (May 1986), pp. 24–25 (24).
100. 'Can Black and White Women Work Together?', pp. 18–19.
101. Ibid., p. 20.
102. Smita Bhide, 'N.O.W. or Never' in Southall Black Sisters (ed.), *Against the Grain*, pp. 30–36.
103. These women were Krishna Sharma, Balwant Kaur, and Mrs Dhillon and her five children. See Southall Black Sisters, *Against the Grain*, for more information on the tragic circumstances of these deaths.
104. Rahila Gupta, 'Autonomy and Alliances,' in Southall Black Sisters (ed.), *Against the Grain*, pp. 55–61.
105. Smita Bhide, 'N.O.W. or Never', p. 33.
106. Ibid., p. 35.
107. Ibid., p. 30–32, 36.
108. See Predelli and Halsaa, *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements,* for a comprehensive overview of contemporary Black-white feminist relations in the UK, Norway and Spain.

Conclusion

1. Campbell and Coote, *Sweet Freedom*, p. 1.
2. Parmar, 'Other Kinds of Dreams,' 55.
3. It is worth noting that whilst most of the women interviewed for both this project and books such as *'68, '78, '88* and *Once a Feminist,* readily

admitted to the changed nature of activism by this point, few characterised the women's movement as totally absent.

4. Quashie, 'Talking Personal, Talking Political', p. 52.
5. Interview with Sarah Maguire in Dir. Engle, *Angry Wimmin* (2006).
6. Loretta Loach, 'Is there life after the GLC?', *Spare Rib* (March 1986), pp. 10–11.
7. Randall and Lovenduski, *Contemporary Feminist Politics*, p. 360.
8. Margaretta Jolly, 'Assessing the Impact of Women's Movements: Sisterhood and After', *Women's Studies International Forum* 35:3 (2012), pp. 150–52 (150).
9. For more information on Black women's activism in England today, see http://blackfeminists.org/ (accessed 11 December 2012), which is a website and blogging space for three Black feminist groups in London, Manchester and Birmingham. For more information about the current work of Southall Black Sisters, see http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/ (accessed 11 December 2012).
10. These anxieties were eventually resolved to the satisfaction of all parties; it would have been out of the question for me to use the material otherwise. In some cases I assented to not quoting certain passages of the interview, which I firmly believe was the prerogative of my interviewees in any case. In one case, an interviewee asked to see the material before I submitted the book to quell her anxieties about being misquoted. After having seen the book she was satisfied that this was not the case.
11. See Predelli and Halsaa, *Majority-Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements*, p. 184. They write of the United Kingdom that 'While the interests forwarded by minoritised women's organisations were overlooked or resisted by majoritised women's organisations throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, it seems justified to say that their voices have since become increasingly recognised by the majoritised part of the women's movement.'
12. See Paul Gilroy's introduction to the second edition of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* for a cautiously optimistic assessment, pp. xi–xxxix.
13. Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*.
14. Paul Gilroy in 'A Land of Tea-Drinking, Hokey-Cokey and Rivers of Blood' (*The Guardian*, 18 April 2008) gives the example of the lack of acknowledgement given the Caribbean, Indian and Polish airmen in the Battle of Britain' http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/apr/18/britishidentity.race (accessed 10 December 2012).
15. There has yet to be a comprehensive historical account of post-war commonwealth migration, although historians such as Colin Holmes have covered it as part of a wider time-frame (see *A Tolerant Country?*) and sociologists such as John Solomos (see *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) and Paul Gilroy (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*) have indirectly addressed this history. Two of the best known surveys of twentieth century Britain – Peter Clarke's *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–2000*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 2004) and Kenneth O. Morgan's *The People's Peace: Britain Since 1945*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) only cover very briefly immigration, and neither devote anything like a full chapter to it. Another example comes in the form of the otherwise excellent volume of essays *Classes, Cultures, and Politics: Essays on British History in Honour of Ross*

McKibbin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), in which none of the fourteen articles address immigration, perhaps an even more surprising omission for a book on twentieth century British social history.

16. For an example of this ghettoisation, see Jerry White's (otherwise excellent) *London in the Twentieth Century* (London: Viking, 2001). Work such as Mike Savage's *Identities and Social Change since 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) skim remarkably quickly over the impact of immigration, although the social identities of the white working and middle classes were surely profoundly affected by this experience. This marginalisation seems to stem directly from a conception of immigrants as a category somehow outside of the 'working' and 'middle' classes that both English political activists (as this book has shown!) and English historians have, for a long time, used as their primary categories of analysis.
17. For critiques of such history making, see Paul Gilroy, preface to *The Empire Strikes Back* and *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. Historical work that attempts to move away from this insular vision is most obviously seen in the work of Antoinette Burton, Bill Schwarz, and Catherine Hall, particularly the latter's *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002). Bill Schwarz's recent *Memories of Empire* vol.1: *The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) is a brilliant recent example of what moving away from an insular, island-based history can do.
18. There has been much journalism devoted to Michael Gove's support for redrawing the history curriculum to emphasise Britain's role as 'a beacon of liberty.' One typical piece is this by Charlotte Higgins, 'Historians Say Michael Gove Risks Turning History Lessons Into Propaganda Classes' (*The Guardian*, 17 August 2011) http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/aug/17/academics-reject-gove-history-lessons (accessed 17 August 2011).
19. See Terese Jonsson, 'Piercing the Whitening Silence' published on the F-Word on 16 March 2009, http://www.thefword.org.uk/features/2009/03/piercing_the_wh (accessed 16 December 2011), for an excellent discussion of the contemporary situation.

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