



# *“Sisterhood is plain sailing?” Multi-racial feminist collectives in 1980s Britain*

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**Natalie Thomlinson**

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**Introduction**

Race and ethnicity were difficult issues for second-wave British feminists. A feminist movement that was almost exclusively white was increasingly difficult to justify and sustain in a post-colonial Britain where ethnic minorities formed an ever-increasing proportion of the population. As such, as this chapter will demonstrate, white feminists in Britain were often accused of racism by their Black<sup>1</sup> counterparts; and these debates over race and ethnicity 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. 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.<sup>2</sup> 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, and

demonstrates that, despite tensions between Black and white feminists, the British women's movement was nevertheless able to salvage something positive from these often bitter debates.

In Britain, the beginnings of the movement commonly termed "second wave" feminism are often traced back to the first conference of the women's liberation movement held at Ruskin College, Oxford in March 1970. This and subsequent conferences gave rise to the four demands of the British Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), which were equal pay, equal education and job opportunities, free contraception and abortion, and free twenty four hour childcare. Three more demands were added over the course of the 1970s: these were an end to discrimination against lesbians, legal and financial independence for women, and for the right for women to be free from male violence, and the laws that perpetuated it.<sup>3</sup> The orientation of the WLM in Britain was predominantly socialist, although over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, radical strains of feminism became increasingly prominent. Whatever their political orientation, however, almost all of these feminists were white, a situation which was increasingly critiqued by Black feminists from the late 1970s. Indeed, given how the central the issue of race was to become to the British women's movement during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, extraordinarily little historical attention has been paid to it. Eve Setch, Jeska Rees and Sarah Browne have all written area studies of the movement within the UK, concentrating respectively on London, Leeds, and Scotland, but their predominant focus has been either implicitly or explicitly on the debates between (white) radical and socialist feminists within the movement.<sup>4</sup> 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 minimizing attention to other categories of difference in the movement, such as age, class, and most pertinently in terms of this chapter, race. Yet race is central to

understanding the form and trajectory of the feminist movement within Britain during these years. As this chapter will demonstrate, the challenges presented to white feminists by Black women created a more racially diverse/aware feminism. Yet differences of political orientation between Black and white feminists, and the structurally embedded nature of racial inequality in the UK, ensured that racially based divisions between feminists in Britain could not be entirely overcome.

### **The Black feminist critique**

Black women's autonomous activism in Britain dates back to the early 1970s, with prominent groups such as Brixton Black Women's Group being formed in 1973, and the founding of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) occurring in 1978.<sup>5</sup> However, it was the early 1980s that witnessed the most significant growth in Black women's autonomous organising in Britain,<sup>6</sup> a growth given impetus by the funding given to such groups by leftist local authorities (particularly the Greater London Council) in the early 1980s. This growth of the Black women's movement led to a greater interaction between Black and white feminists, and indeed the growth of a Black feminist critique of white feminism in this period was in itself a product of this greater interaction. Despite the presence of white feminist anti-racist groups in Britain during the 1970s, such activism engendered little comment from Black women's groups.<sup>7</sup> 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.

The prime contention of the Black feminist critique in Britain—as in the US—was that white British feminists had little concept of the ways in which racism profoundly structured their lives as Black women. Furthermore, they contended, 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. One prominent British Black feminist, Stella Dadzie, suggested during an interview that:

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.<sup>8</sup>

Essentially, Black British feminists argued that, 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. Crucially, British Black feminists argued that white feminists failed to do this, and 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.

These criticisms were often scathing, and given space in the increasing numbers of Black women's periodicals that were published in the 1980s. Typically, the London-based 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!<sup>9</sup>

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.”<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>

What for example—as Amos and Parmar argued—was the use of campaigning for better access to abortion when, as many Black feminists claimed, some Black women in Britain were being forcibly sterilized?<sup>12</sup> It was for such reasons that Black feminists came to critique white feminists

as “racist”. As such, Black women demanded not just a space within feminist discourse, but a fundamental transformation of the terms of the debate.

### **Multi-racial feminist collectives**

The accusation of racism often resulted in bitter debates that at times paralysed the movement. However, over the course of the 1980s, working in multi-racial collectives became increasingly perceived by both Black and white women as a way of breaking out of the impasse that some of these debates had left feminist activism in. As prominent British–Asian feminist 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.”<sup>13</sup> This reflected an increasing emphasis on anti-racist activism within the wider British left at this point, as has been documented by Alastair Bonnett and Paul Gilroy.<sup>14</sup> Much of this work was funded by leftist local authorities. 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 feminist magazine *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. The article focused on four multi-racial collectives around Britain: Sheba Feminist Publishers, Camden Council’s Women’s Unit, 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 through the experiences of collectives such as these helps us to understand more fully the antagonisms between Black and white feminists during this period. These problems were not just based on theoretical differences, but grounded in the day- to-day 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. 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 its [sic] only just begun.<sup>15</sup>

## Local Authority funding ventures: Camden and Cambridge

Local authority funding was instrumental in sustaining feminist politics in the 1980s. Leftist local authorities in Britain at this point—in particular, the Greater London Council—were keen to fund the radical politics ventures of women and minority communities as a response to the spending cuts imposed nationally by the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, many such authorities had feminists on their staff, or serving as elected councillors. Certainly, the willingness of such authorities to fund feminist ventures speaks to the ideological gains that feminism had made within public political discourse in the UK by this point. Many such local authorities 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 Greater London Council’s Women’s Unit, headed by Valerie Wise.<sup>16</sup> 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 in north London 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 percent Black.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup>

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 for Black women to join the unit, as they were not subordinate to the white women—some of 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".<sup>19</sup> 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. As one of the Black women workers, Monica, 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.<sup>20</sup>

These complexities became particularly evident in interviews I carried out 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\*<sup>21</sup>—who evinced a moderate leftist rather than radical politics, and was committed to working in multi-racial collectives—remembered:

a covert racism was there, and sometimes [...] it hurt more than the overt one, because you know what's coming, but when you don't know what's coming[...]—as I usually say, if you stand in an ant's nest, well you cannot see the ants down there [...] But until it bit you—that's the time you know that you [are] standing in the nest.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Indian-born Adithi\*— who has worked in community groups for over thirty years in the Cambridge area—suggested of the multi-racial 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...<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup>

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 in Cambridge 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.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, then, there was a variety of responses by Black women to the debates over racism in the movement, and how successfully multi-racial feminist collectives transcended these problems.

### **Southall Black Sisters and the Network of Women**

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 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).<sup>27</sup> Southall Black Sisters (SBS) themselves were a predominantly Asian socialist feminist group set up in the Southall, West London—an area with a large concentration of South Asian migrants—in 1979. They quickly became well known both inside and outside of feminist circles for their numerous campaigns and outspoken criticism of both white feminists and the Southall Punjabi community. The aim of this alliance between SBS and WAVAW 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.<sup>28</sup> 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.”<sup>29</sup> But a focus on domestic violence made for an easier alliance with radical feminists—who were often criticized 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 SBS/NOW activist 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.”<sup>30</sup> Eventually, a rally was held in London’s 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> Whilst the alliance of NOW and WAVAW can hardly be characterized as a complete failure, it was still far from an overwhelming success. This points to the often frustrating and exhausting process of coalition building even amongst willing feminists. And although shared concerns around male violence 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.

### *Spare Rib*

One of the most famous and controversial multi-racial collectives in the British feminist movement during the 1980s was that at *Spare Rib* magazine. Set up in 1972, *Spare Rib* was by far the most well known and widely circulated of feminist magazines in Britain, and was seen as something as a mouthpiece for the national movement. In October 1982, the editorial collective—which was until that point, largely white—invited Black and Third world women to join. This move enlarged the group of women running the magazine significantly so that ethnic minority women comprised fifty per cent of the collective.<sup>33</sup> However, a heated debate over Zionism and Israel quickly morphed into a wider controversy that exposed ethnic tensions between Black and white women on the collective.

The catalyst for this debate was an interview conducted in August 1982 by *Spare Rib* collective member Roisin Boyd with a Lebanese woman, a Palestinian woman and an Israeli anti-Zionist

woman. This interview was written up with the title “Women Speak Out Against Zionism”, and given the provocative sub-title “if a woman calls herself feminist, she should consciously call herself anti-Zionist.”<sup>34</sup> 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.”<sup>35</sup> However, the main focus of the anger of Jewish feminists was the fact that none of the letters from Jewish women which criticized the article were published.<sup>36</sup> Given that many of the Jewish feminists writing in often strongly criticized Israel themselves, many Jewish feminists concluded that the main motivation behind the non-publication of the letters was not anti-Zionism, but anti-Semitism. Supporting this contention was the fact that *Spare Rib* also published several articles and letters which contained innuendoes about “Zionist control” of the press that essentially read like updated versions of the longstanding idea of a Jewish world conspiracy.<sup>37</sup> One Black woman on the collective even complained regarding this debate 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).<sup>38</sup>

One of the most sensitive aspects of the whole debate, indeed, 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.<sup>39</sup> Feeling strongly about the issue of the Middle East, and wanting also perhaps to prove their power on the collective, it was apparently the newly arrived Black women who had largely forced the censoring of the letters. And they did this from the position that they, as ethnic minority women, had a greater claim to represent Palestinian interests than the white women on the collective did. However, this initial decision not to publish the letters from the



Jewish women obviously did not last—and by making the internal dissent explicit at all and eventually allowing discussion of the issue in the letters page, it became apparent that it was still the white women who ultimately held the balance of power at the collective. Having worked there for much longer, they had more experience in producing the magazine which ultimately gave them a greater degree of control over the magazine's editorial line—and there was also apparently a subconscious assumption at work that as the old guard, they were entitled to control of the collective. As an Asian woman on the collective noted, “The strain for us as Women of Colour is having to constantly assert our experiences and politics against the ‘norm’, whilst the white women have difficulty coping with always having their assumptions challenged.”<sup>40</sup>

Additionally, the “Women of Colour” on the *Spare Rib* collective clearly felt victimized over the accusations of anti-Semitism that were put to 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.”<sup>41</sup> It was these issues about power and control that transformed a debate around Israel into a debate that split the collective down racial lines. 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, producing a special “Black women's issue” in September 1983, soon after this controversy.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, the crisis at *Spare Rib* reflected the broader conditions that structured interaction between Black and white feminists during this period. The greater access to power and resources that the white women at *Spare Rib* enjoyed mirrored the broader inequalities between Black and white feminists, and indeed Black and white populations as whole in the UK, at this point.

Whilst the *Spare Rib* collective remained multi-racial and committed to representing the issues

of ethnic minority women the world over until its closure in 1993, recurring arguments about race and representation in the magazine demonstrated that tensions between Black and white women on the collective were never fully resolved. This reflects the mixed success of multi-racial feminist collectives more broadly in Britain during this period.

### **Conclusion: Impact and outcomes**

Overall, the outcomes presented from the case studies of Black and white women working together are 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. 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. Such pressures, 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. 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. We can thus see that these collectives and coalitions *did* have a significant impact on the women's movement in the UK. Although such coalitions enjoyed varying degrees of success, ultimately, working together on a regular basis unsurprisingly enabled Black and white feminists to understand each other better. Multi-racial activism has continued in British feminism ever since, as well documented recently by Line Nyhagen Predelli and Beatrice Halsaa.<sup>43</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> I capitalize 'Black' in this chapter to reflect its contemporaneous British usage as a political term including those of Asian—as well as African and Afro-Caribbean—descent.

<sup>2</sup> See Julia Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams: Black Women's Organisations and the Politics of Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1998), particularly pp. 199–220, for an analysis which, 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. Perhaps surprisingly, Line Nyhagen Predelli and Beatrice Halsaa apparently unquestioningly accept her analysis in *Majority-Minority Relations in*

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*Contemporary Women's Movements* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 166–167.

Conversely, many memoirs of white feminists are largely hostile to identity politics, as are the interviewees in film made by Vanessa Engle, *Angry Wimmen* (BBC: 2006), one of whom (Al Garthwaite) claimed that she could not think of a single positive thing that identity politics had achieved, a clear denial of the validity of the Black feminist critique and its positive impact upon feminism. Perhaps the most thoughtful and even handed treatment to these debates is given by Heidi Safia Mirza in her introduction to *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1–28.

<sup>3</sup> Beatrix Campbell and Anna Coote, *Sweet Freedom* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 16–18.

<sup>4</sup> Eve Setch, “The Face of Metropolitan Feminism: The London Women’s Liberation Workshop 1969–1979”, *Twentieth Century British History* 13:2 (2002), pp. 171–90; “The London Women’s Liberation Workshop 1969–1979: Organisation, Creativity, Debate” (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2000); Jeska Rees, “‘Are You A Lesbian?’ Challenges in Recording and Analysing the Women’s Liberation Movement in England”. *History Workshop Journal* 69 (Spring 2010): pp. 177–87 ; “A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978”, *Women's History Review* 19:3 (2010), pp. 337–56 ; “All the Rage: Revolutionary feminism in Britain, 1977–1983” (PhD diss., University of Western Australia, 2007); 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), pp. 100–23 ; “The Women’s Liberation Movement in Scotland, 1967–1979” (PhD diss., University of Dundee, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, pp. 1-21 for more information on Black women’s autonomous organizing In Britain.

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<sup>6</sup> See Sudbury, *Other Kinds of Dreams*, for more comprehensive information on this.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Stella Dadzie, Personal interview, 24 February 2011, transcript p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Artusha, *We Are Here: Black Feminist Newsletter* (September 1985), unpaginated.

<sup>10</sup> Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, “Challenging Imperial Feminism”, *Feminist Review* 17 (Autumn 1984), pp. 3–19 (12–13). Amos and Parmar, “Challenging Imperial Feminism”, *Feminist Review* 17, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>13</sup> “Can Black and White women work together?”, *Spare Rib* 168 (July 1986), pp. 18–25 (19).

<sup>14</sup> 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: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 177–94.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Bellos, “Advice to White Collectives Wishing to Employ Black Workers”, Papers of Stella Dadzie, Dadzie 1/8/4, Black Cultural Archives, London.

<sup>16</sup> Although the activities of these left-wing councils in radical politics are well-known, they still await their historian. More information can be found in 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 and Loretta Loach, ‘Is There Life After the GLC?’, *Spare Rib* (March 1986), pp. 10–11. Sudbury in *Other Kinds of Dreams* also provides much

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information on the funding opportunities provided by local councils to Black and ethnic minority women's organizations in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly pp. 126-127.

<sup>17</sup> "Can Black and White Women Work Together?", p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 20–21.

<sup>19</sup> "Can Black and White Women Work Together?", p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> \* Indicates pseudonym.

<sup>22</sup> Bola C., Personal interview, 8 February 2012, transcript p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Adithi, Personal interview, 12 March 2012, transcript p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 28–29.

<sup>26</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>27</sup> Smita Bhide, "N.O.W. or Never" in Southall Black Sisters, ed., *Against the Grain: A celebration of survival and Struggle* (London: Southall Black Sisters, 1990), pp. 30–36.

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> Rahila Gupta, "Autonomy and Alliances", in Southall Black Sisters, *Against the Grain*, pp. 55–61.

<sup>30</sup> Bhide, "N.O.W. or Never", p. 33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 30–32, 36.

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<sup>33</sup> See Editorial, *Spare Rib* 130 (May 1983), p. 4 for more information on this enlargement of the collective.

<sup>34</sup> “Women Speak Out Against Zionism”, *Spare Rib* 121 (August 1982), pp. 22–23.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> This accusation was articulated by Adi Cooper, Karen Goldman, Rosalind Haber, Francesca Klug, Judy Keiner and Sally Lawson, in a letter to *Spare Rib* 131 (June 1983), p. 26, and in similar letters to other feminist publications.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Letters, *Spare Rib*, 134 (September 1983), p. 46 and Letters, *Spare Rib* 135 (October 1983) p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Spare Rib* editorial collective, ‘Sisterhood...is plain sailing’, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> 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, as evidenced by a letter from the prominent Black feminist and author Barbara Burford to the *London Women’s Liberation Newsletter* 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.

<sup>40</sup> “Farzaneh” quoted in “*Spare Rib*...See how we run”, *Spare Rib* 131 (June 1983), pp. 6–8, 30–31 (7).

<sup>41</sup> *Spare Rib* editorial collective, “Sisterhood...is plain sailing”, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> 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.

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