CHAPTER 10

'The First Condition of Freedom': A Century of Anti-Racist Resistance in Cardiff

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Introduction

Angela Davis once observed that '[t]he first condition of freedom is the open act of resistance … In that act of resistance, the rudiments of freedom are already present.'[1] Acts of resistance ran through the history of slavery from sabotage to flight and on to revolt and revolution. Such acts contributed significantly to the abolition of slavery in the western hemisphere. Free black labour faced rather different challenges: discrimination in work and in the wider society, racist abuse, and the anti-black terrorism of what is usually called the race riot. Ideas of freedom run through the black political tradition from at least Frederick Douglass onwards and on to Black Lives Matter (BLM). While the ideas are complex and varied, in essence they have a common denominator, the assertion of common humanity. BLM has to assert this in a world where many are indifferent to black deaths in encounters with the police and in custody.[2]

BLM took off in Cardiff in 2020 as in much of the rest of the world, but it is important to root it in a tradition of resistance which goes back over a century. A long history of opposition to racism from within the black community has been evident, one which inevitably had a global perspective. Much of the political history of the Bu-

tetown area of Cardiff is sadly lost and probably irrecoverable, but enough is known so that at least an outline can be presented. In this chapter we consider the contemporary moment of the Black Lives Matter campaign and locate it in this historical context of resistance. We outline the triggers to resistance and conclude by asking questions of the Welsh government in relation to policing and injustice.

The 1919 Resistance

We need to start in 1919 with what has become the iconic moment in Black Welsh history, the anti-black riots of that hot summer. There was strong armed resistance to the attacks on the streets and particularly in homes and businesses in Butetown to the extent that the police feared many deaths if the white crowds broke into what was in the process of forming into a ghetto. Resistance was part of the response to all the riots in Britain and elsewhere in that year and can be linked with the idea of the 'New Negro' an assertiveness in the face of discrimination and a determination to build community and culture.[3] But there was also resistance in the form of holding protest meetings, articulating grievances, and making demand on public bodies. In Cardiff this was led by Rufus Fennell a man with a varied past, born in Georgia but very likely with Caribbean heritage. He had been briefly in the US army, in the Royal Navy in the Gallipoli campaign, served as a medic there, and come to Lancashire as a music hall artiste. By 1919 he said he was in Pontypridd and practising as a dentist. Once the riots broke out in Cardiff he immediately went there and assumed command.[4]

Fennell addressed protest meeting and was prominent in negotiations with the authorities in Cardiff and in London. Mainly this concerned the repatriation of those sailors and others who wished to return home after their wartime experiences and the violence with which they were rewarded for their efforts on the streets of the British ports in 1919. He was obstructed in his efforts by the authorities and arrested for alleged misappropriation of funds in London but the charge was quickly thrown out by a magistrate in Cardiff. He protested about the lack of food and water for those journeying to join a vessel transport and at the failure to provide the promised financial

inducements. Their return to the West Indies led to outbreaks of violence against white settlers and the authorities there, underlining the imperial context of black politics - a feature for decades to come. Fennell built nothing lasting in Butetown; he quickly left and had a career on the stage and in film as well as in various business ventures. Involvement in repatriation was a fragile basis for building political action in a settled community, anyway, to say the least.[5]

Local opinion, which showed an acute awareness of international movements and trends, was evident in the next year. It arose in the context of what was known as the 'black watch on the Rhine'. This had nothing to do with a regiment in the British army but was reference to a German patriotic song 'Die Wacht am Rhein', written around 1840 and very anti-French in sentiment. It had a revived popularity in the First World War. In the aftermath of the war, French troops occupied the Rhineland and some of them were Senegalese or from other colonial origins. Right-wing and patriotic politicians and commentators in Germany whipped up racist hatred of them, though the local population found them to be less aggressive than white French troops. But stories of rape and assault began to circulate. In Britain, the chief instigator of these was E. D. Morel, and his attacks were published in the *Daily Herald* before being collected in a pamphlet. At first sight both the author and the location of his attacks are puzzling. Morel had started life as a shipping clerk in Liverpool and had worked out from the statistics that King Leopold's empire in the Congo had to be based upon slavery. He was instrumental in exposing the scandal.[6] The *Daily Herald* was the mouthpiece of the TUC and the Labour Party. But, of course, being anti-slavery did not mean that someone was necessarily anti-racist and there was plenty of racism within the working class and its organisations. Morel's accusations plumb the racist depths, including accusations that black men had such large penises that they could physically damage white women. One voice of protest found its way from Butetown to the columns of the *Herald*. The letter signed only as 'One of the Oppressed' placed this in the context of the 'new spirit' of the British workers and of 'The New Negro', stressed the achievements of the 'black race' and saw it as being exemplified by the movement being launched by Marcus Garvey. In the interwar years there would be many efforts to link the international workers movement with back emancipation, from W E B Du Bois to Paul Robeson.[7]

In 1921, this movement asserted its place in trans-Atlantic and Pan-African politics. On the first of August Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, as part of its meteoric rise, held a vast parade in Harlem to inaugurate the Second Annual International Association of Negroes. It was echoed in Cardiff by a parade at two p.m., to align as closely with New York time as was possible. It had not been possible to send a delegate there, but it could be marked on the street in Butetown. It was organised by W. D. Collins, President of No 269th Division of the UNIA and ACL. Cardiff and Newport. The parade was small but was followed by musical performances and the singing of the UNIA anthem 'From Greenland's Icy Mountain'. The UNIA aimed to return the diaspora to Africa and build a strong and united continent out of the imperial ruins. Garvey himself had come to Britain in 1912–14 and apparently worked on the docks in Cardiff for part of that time. What bound the movement together was the newspaper, *The Negro World*, banned from distribution in many territories. Three reports of activities in Cardiff survive. Collins articulated the creed of the movement: 'we fully realise that in unity of action lies our ultimate success as a race.' But the local branches had their own emphases and reworkings of the creed. In Cardiff, the chaplain M. Williams was particularly keen on the millenarian aspects, and leading the race out of Babylon. They were part of what has been called a black public sphere and participated in 'diasporic conversations.' In May 1922, John Actie, giving his address as 'Dock, Cardiff', reported on the conditions he had observed in West Africa, something which sailors must have done informally in many ports. If nations can be seen as imagined communities so the black race could be imagined because, as John Thorold puts it: '… Britain's ports [were] … nodes of maritime networks on which Garveyism flourished…'.[8]

One of the issues of concern to Garveyism in Britain was the Alien (Coloured Seamen) Order of 1925, part of a global effort to restrict the flow of labour of colour. In Cardiff the police enthusiastically followed Home Office instructions and registered as many imperial subjects as aliens as they could, treating the absence of birth certificates as evidence of a lack of connection (despite the fact that such documentation often was not provided in their countries of origin) and in some cases seizing passports which were held. Registration

meant the need for an identity card bearing a fingerprint so that racist officials had no need to learn to look at faces and it subjected the sailors to more control and harassment.[9] But there is no evidence of Garveyites activity in Cardiff over this. Instead, what seems to have been created in 1927 was the Colonial Defence League (CDL) with some links to the Communist Party. In the years that followed, there were many organisations created in the community and to make sense of them it is necessary to explain the underlying issues. The Seamen's Union wanted to restrict or keep out of employment those not white and British-born, and was generally supported by the institutions of the British state and the local institutions like the police. Sailors of African origin often accused the Arab population and their boarding house masters of bribing officials to secure preferential treatment for their compatriots. In 1930, a Rota system was introduced in an effort to control the numbers of sailors of Middle-Eastern origin who could enter the port and sign on ships. The mosque was an important institution of resistance for them while those of African origin tended to form political organisations and breakaway trades unions to contest the complex of institutions arrayed against them. They were often sustained by Christian churches and missions which opened in the community.[10]

The central figure in leading resistance was Harry O'Connell, a man born in Guyana who had been in Cardiff from around 1910. He seems to have established the CDL in 1927, but had been challenging the racism of the Seamen's Union since at least 1922. He was a Marxist, but while being ferociously anti-Trotskyist had come to reject the position of the Communist Party by the 1930s. When Trade Unions pressed for the Mercantile Marine Act of 1935, which provided subsidies for British ships as long as their crews were British, this immediately caused a severe crisis in Cardiff where so many seamen of colour had been registered as aliens in 1925. O'Connell was part of a vigorous campaign, but it was mounted and led by the League of Coloured Peoples (LCP), a London-based pressure group dominated by middle class professionals and led by Dr Harold Moody. It saw an opportunity to expand its tiny membership and for a short time had a branch with 178 members out of its total of 262. It conducted an investigation, exposed the actions of the police in the past and secured the ending of alien status for some of the seamen. O'Connell worked

with it but ultimately the CDL came to supplant the opportunist LCP and its branch evaporated.

Throughout the interwar period there was a good deal of disunity in the politics of Butetown. The War produced the full employment that the protests of the 1930s had failed to produce. Following a visit from Leary Constantine in 1943, there were efforts to build greater unity and in 1946 this led to the blocking of a city council proposal to build an area of housing for 'coloured people' in Butetown. A community which was mixed and had resisted racism internally rejected this, and could mobilise effectively enough to impose its will. In 1945, five men from the community attended the crucial Manchester Pan-African Congress, which called for complete decolonisation. The opening session raised the issue of the condition of Black communities in Britain an indication of their growing significance in the global world of anti-racist politics.

Post War resistances and the Anti-Apartheid movement

After the Second World War, the political framework established in the 1920s went into decline. The port was in rapid decline and the old leaders with their international connections began to show their age and eventually died. Jim Callaghan represented the area from 1945 until 1987 and was constantly stalked by the Guyanese-born veteran political activist Alan Sheppard, much to his annoyance.[11] But the next eruption of activity of which some record survives came about because four students from the University College came into the Butetown Community Centre in September 1969 and made some people, predominantly the young it seems, aware of the realities of Apartheid in South Africa. But something of the old international connections remained.

Gaynor Legall recalls that her uncles had told her that they could not get shore leave if docked in South Africa.[12] The intervention of the students was the basis for an organisation known as Black Alliance. It worked against racism and discrimination. In Butetown, drawing on the area's history, it had black and white members, and it operated in a context of the radical movements which had come out of the 1960s, which included anti-colonialism, the struggle for Welsh language rights, student radicalism, feminism, and labour militancy.

The Cardiff People's Paper ran from 1969 until it ran out of money in December 1976. It focused on tenants' rights, opposed much of the projected civic 'improvements' of the era and was generally the voice of the poor and the inner city. It seems to have had little connection with Butetown, though it revealed that there was a Residents Association for which Betty Campbell was the contact and that the paper could be bought at various places in the community. Perhaps it was significant that the bulldozers had already done their damage to Butetown by then, and the community had been displaced and only partly rebuilt. The experience was clearly traumatic.[13] The final issue, did however, give prominence to charges brought against some men from Butetown accused by the police of 'affray', which was a vague, blanket charge easy to convict on and hard to defend against.

The very first issue of the paper had stressed the importance of rejecting the Springboks. This highlights a cause which was to be very important in Butetown and in Wales generally. Boycotts of South African goods and criticism of business and financial links with the Apartheid regime started from the origins of Black Alliance. On one anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre of 1961, younger people from Butetown marched into the city centre and reenacted it using cap guns; men did the shooting and women dropped to the floor. The fountain outside City Hall was dyed red. Older, residents in the community often opposed this kind of activity as 'troublemaking'. But patient organising work wore this down, particularly the bringing of Butetown's powerful athletic club, the CIACs, into line behind the movement.[14]

Haneef Bhamjee (1946–2022), a refugee from persecution for his political activities for the ANC in South Africa, came to Cardiff in 1972. He quickly came to set up branches of the Anti-Apartheid Movements in many parts of Wales and sought to make a distinctive Welsh variant of the global movement. He had much support in the labour movement, especially from Dai Francis the General Secretary of the South Wales NUM, as well as from Mick Antoniw who had been the secretary of the NUS in Wales. But what really made the Wales Anti-Apartheid Movement distinctive, when it was finally established in 1983, was the black presence within it. From the beginning, Haneef had spent much of his leisure time in Butetown and saw it as a basic principle that people of colour should be involved. This

set it apart from the British movement that wanted a broad base, to rock the boat as little as possible, and saw the black presence and any concern for racism and discrimination in the UK as a potential stumbling block. WAAM proudly declared that it was 'beholden to no-one except the oppressed of South Africa', unlike what it saw as the role of other anti-racist organisations in Wales as 'gatekeepers' financed by government, or sources close to government. It faced much opposition from within Wales, but won over many institutions to the cause, such as the WRU, the Eisteddfod, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, as well as the labour movement. When Nelson Mandela came to Cardiff in June 1998 to receive the freedom of the city, anti-racist campaigners noted the irony of those who had opposed WAAM and had called Mandela a 'terrorist', but werenow lining up to shake his hand.[15] The importance of Butetown to WAAM and Haneef's role within the community led to a renewal of its politics and their global connections.

In the 1980s, black politics in Britain turned from what Ambalavaner Sivanandan called 'resistance to rebellion'.[16] Rebellions, mainly sparked by police actions, broke out on the streets of many cities starting with Bristol in 1980, and spreading much more widely in 1981, 1985 and 2011. While sometimes called 'race riots', these were very different from the events of 1919 in that the ghetto rose up against the police rather than racist crowds attacking the ghetto. None of these outbreaks was matched in Butetown, though there seems to have been an effort to create something in 1981 that was dampened down by a news blackout, while an attempt was made to ambush a police car in 1985. The only urban riots in Cardiff during the period in question were in Ely, in 1993 and 2023.[17]

This location of riots has a connection with the changing geography of race and ethnicity in Cardiff. After the outbreak in Ely in 2023, a caller named only as 'Sarah' phoned into Jason Mohammad's Radio Wales show to talk with insight and knowledge about what she called 'the southern arc of Cardiff'. By this she meant an area ranging across Ely, Grangetown, Butetown, and St Mellons, divided between east and west, but comprising some of the most deprived wards in Wales. Investment goes into the northern areas of Cardiff, but apart from some prestige projects technically within the southern wards there is little or no benefit to most local residents.[18] Stop and Search is

six times more likely for black than white residents, while preventive measures like floodlights are not switched on; a stabbing in Butetown was not even reported on the news. To live in these areas can itself be seen a stigma, and can result in snarky comments. This division of the city has official recognition: 'The "Southern Arc" of Cardiff is made up of the following electoral divisions: Adamsdown, Butetown, Caerau, Canton, Ely, Grangetown, Llanrumney, Riverside, Rumney, Splott and Trowbridge.'[19] It has a population variously estimated at between 150,000 and 170,000. Were it a single local authority, it would be 'by some margin' the most deprived in Wales.

It may be that the divisions within this territory are significant. Butetown was cut off from the new developments of Cardiff Bay by a dual carriageway, Lloyd George Avenue. While it no longer has all the physical barriers of railways, canals and docks that once kept it apart, the railway lines are still there, complemented now by 'the no-man's land of Callaghan Square to the north, the back of Dumballs Road to the west, and the Bay development to the south', which created substantial though perhaps more permeable boundaries. Certainly, people of colour have moved around within the arc. For instance, when Butetown was redeveloped in the 1960s, a docker might move into Grangetown to remain within reach of employment. Others would have been rehoused in an area such Llanrumney. Anecdotal evidence also suggests movement continues within the arc; this is frequently not voluntary, but a response to gentrification and rising rents. Many people want to stay close to areas they know with familiar restaurants, shops, and food, but gentrification is tending to fragment the arc, and movement follows cheaper rents. In London in 2011, it seems that the vast spaces of deprivation were significant, but they were broken up by pockets of affluence and shopping centres which formed the targets of rioters. Cardiff lacks such shopping hubs breaking up the arc. Only City Road might provide an example, but it is north of Newport Road and located in Roath. However, despite lacking such a hub, as the biggest social housing estate in Europe and Cardiff's most vast space of deprivation, Ely has nevertheless been the generator of rebellion.[20]

The fundamental issue which underpinned these wider 'rebellions' was resentment at the style of policing. This was echoed in Butetown by the trial and conviction of the Cardiff Three for the murder

of Lynette White on Valentine's Day in 1988.[21] The conviction came despite strong contrary evidence, a highly implausible prosecution case and no evidence linking the men to the scene of the crime; it has been kept alive by their subsequent retrials and acquittals, as well as failed prosecutions against the police officers involved. But this was not the only issue in the news. Mahmood Mattan was hanged in Cardiff for the murder of Lily Volpert in 1952, but the miscarriage of justice it involved was far from forgotten. In 1998, he was pardoned in the first case taken to the Appeal Court by the recently formed Criminal Case Review Commission. It took South Wales Police until 2022 to apologise to his family; the previous year, Nadifa Mohamed was nominated for the Booker Prize, and won the Welsh Book of the Year prize for her fine novel *The Fortune Men*, which reconstructed the case and its world.[22] Deaths of people in custody, allegedly at the hands of the police, have continued. So, it is little wonder that Black Lives Matter resonated in 2020.

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter was a somewhat older social movement in the US that emerged in a particular context. Civil Rights had long since ceased to be a major activating cause. The politics of the right had arisen from the 1970s in many ways in reaction to it. Reagan was an opponent of Civil Rights, but activated his politics by talking of 'welfare queens'. It was not necessary to *say* that they were black. The victory of the US in the Cold War led to competing anti-socialist visions of the future: either it was the end of history, and nothing stood in the way of liberal capitalist democracy, or the world would fragment into a religiously based 'clash of civilisations'. Osama Bin Laden seemed to confirm the latter view, and the so-called 'war on terror' stoked Islamophobia. Then the world entered recession in 2007–8.

Onto this stage emerged a series of social movements that were seen as 'leaderless'. Certainly, they lacked a commanding figure like Martin Luther King or Malcolm X. Occupy Wallstreet spread widely outside New York and had many imitators; it said it spoke for the 99 per cent, not the 1 per cent, and crystallised the issues of the banking crisis. There were many others, such as #MeToo, The March for

Lives, and on the right the Tea Party movement. We might also consider the *gilets jaunes* in France, as well as the Yes Cymru affiliates who painted 'Cofiwch Dryweryn' murals all over Wales, in similar ways. Social media played an important role in spreading the word about the causes, and Black Lives Matter is very much part of this landscape. However, we should not get too carried away by the novelty. Each cause had lower profile leaders, but leaders nonetheless. BLM likes to say it is *leaderful* rather than *leaderless*. It clearly had originators, one of whom issued the dictum: 'Hashtags don't make movements. People do.' So, the new style invites us to think on new ways of organising, rather than supporting the view that spontaneity is the key to social protest and that organisation leads to incorporation and emasculation. Disruption is what produces results.[23]

BLM as a global movement originated in 2013 with Alicia Graze, Patrisse Collins and Opal Tometi. It drew on recent developments in black feminist theory, and stressed intersectionality. The trigger was a series of killings of black people who posed no threat to anyone. On 26 February 2012, Tryvon Martin was killed in Sanford, Florida, because he had walked through a white neighbourhood and made a white man (George Zimmerman) fear for his property. Zimmerman stalked Martin, and shot him. It took forty-five days of protest to secure charges against Zimmerman, and on 13 July 2013 he was acquitted. The president at the time, of course, was Barak Obama, and there was much talk of the US being post-racial. The president himself was not keen to criticise law enforcement, and stressed the need for people of colour to look to their own behaviour – don't wear hoodies, hitch up your pants, get a better education, don't give occasion to be killed. The case of Martin made a mockery of this. Then, on 9 August 2014, Michael Brown was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St Louis, and became another high-profile case. Days of protests and clashes with police followed, which grew as a new style of 'freedom ride' was introduced and protestors travelled over long distances in buses to join in. Along the way, there were discussions and consciousness raising; Opal Tometi gave it a social media presence and a hashtag. All three originators of BLM had experience in social movements and organising, and they knew each other.[24]

So, when George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis on 25 May 2020, BLM was already a well-established move-

ment and had organised more protests than at any time since the Civil Rights movement. The excruciating footage of his death went viral and was more visible because so many people were confined to their homes because of the Covid-19 pandemic. But what was critical was that it became an issue of concern to many white people. If you were a person of colour, of course, with a family tradition of political and trade union activism, you were well aware of global events and that it was no novelty. It wasn't a watershed moment for black people, it is what they had been saying this for years, and to be unaware of it revealed one's privilege.

What of the movement in Cardiff, and how was it inflected by the Welsh context? These events are very recent and it is difficult at this stage to achieve a comprehensive perspective and place them historically or to characterise them precisely. From a young black standpoint, nevertheless, there can be some preliminary reflections in attempting to analyse the recent activism from various relevant perspectives. Protests were held on the streets despite the restrictions on public meetings, whilst books addressing racism sold in large quantities.[25] In keeping with the wider movement, events in the city lacked visible and high-profile leaders. This, no doubt, was partly in order to prevent victimisation; for gathering masses, the wearing of masks because of Covid-19 provided anonymity, increasing exposure for speakers in relative terms. There was generally an avoidance of being distinctive, of wearing bright colours that were noticeable. Microphones were also passed around at public meetings. All of this reflected the gradual increase of policing, with the South Wales Police being leaders in the use of facial recognition technology. There were some attempts to make arrests, one of many challenges from policing faced by social movements; it had been the previous experience of Anti-Apartheid in Wales that black people were singled out for police attention.[26] Another aspect was revealed in Swansea when a young, visible, activist was targeted by the same force in an attempt to turn her into an informant;[27] this eventually led to the dissolution of the group.[28]

Regardless of such problems, the demonstrations in other parts of Wales could be experienced as transformational, even if fleeting. In Rhyl in 2020, the experience of mass lying on the ground and chanting 'I can't breathe' has been described as signifying

> the emotional reflexivity that existed in Wales regarding anti-racism. It demonstrated how people in Wales of all races and ethnicities were reflecting on the treatment of black people globally and felt moved to act, in an attempt to change the structural and institutional racism in our nation.[29]

In Cardiff, despite the very palpable impact of mobilisation, the actions could appear to participants be off the cuff or even chaotic. Meetings were simply announced on social media and the lack of figureheads and uniting leadership would inevitably be felt at an organisational level. But it is likely that there was considerable covert leadership to achieve the results it did. Fundraising seems to have been limited and to have been mainly to pay fines for those who were arrested. These factors were also presumably the result of the rapid emergence of the movement in Cardiff (ad hoc circumstances, in which fundraising might create problems rather than opportunities), with it being closer in some ways to the image of a hashtag movement and lacking the steady organisational work which characterised the US movement. Protestors were looked down upon as 'young, wokey, lefty, loony … just causing trouble'. There was much 'whataboutery' – things were worse in Russia or North Korea, decried the usual suspects from the right. More concerningly and symbolically, in a protest outside Butetown police station, during a minute of silence held for Mohamud Mohammed Hassan who had died there in police custody, some police officers appeared to talk through it and even seemed to laugh.

As with Anti-Apartheid, the issue of the relationship between the global and the local arose, starkly. Hassan was one of two men of colour who died in circumstances associated with police custody in south Wales in 2020, at a time when the protests were ongoing, but there was more concern in the public sphere with creating murals for George Floyd than with local victims.[30] The myth of Welsh exceptionalism to racial hatred – too busy hating the English, and inherently tolerant – reared its unhelpful head.

Whatever the obstacles faced and the attendant weaknesses in the organisation of BLM in Cardiff, it did mount a significant number of demonstrations and events. There were protests over the deaths of Hassan and Mouayed Bashir, as well as critiques of the

nature of policing coupled with ideas for its improvement. This was contextualised with postings on the scandals over the behaviour of some Metropolitan Police officers and of the Met's general culture. There was condemnation of the use and the unreliability of facial recognition technology (in November 2021, the ex-Lib-Dem councillor Ed Bridges, with the support of Liberty, won an appeal against its use by the police, and studies of its efficacy suggest it is particularly vulnerable to error for people of colour).[31] There was a protest march against the Far Right, and to welcome asylum seekers. As so often in the past, internationalism was invoked with references to the war in Iraq, Islamophobia, imperialism, and the treatment of the Chagos islanders; even class featured explicitly, with protests over the cost-of-living crisis and references to anti-capitalism. Paul Robeson's birthday was marked with an account of his links with Wales.[32]

Out of this moment, or conjuncture, the Welsh Government has taken what many see as decisive action. There is an ambitious plan for an anti-racist Wales by 2030, for the education curriculum to include Black history, and a review has been made of monuments and street names linked with slavery and empire. But what might be the critical view from the activist, the social movement participant of these developments? They are clearly welcome developments, but there may also be reservations about them. Is a seven-year target too ambitious? Might seventy be more realistic? This is one question that may issue from below, from those with direct experience of the 'hidden injuries of race'. Additionally, are the plans too broad and not adequately focused? There are also conceptual and theoretical questions. Officially, we may speak of covert and overt racism; but from the perspective of the person of colour, both are overt. Framing is therefore an issue. The strategy is also one-dimensional, based entirely upon race, with little of the stress on the intersectionality that characterised the US movement. There should also be a focus on class and capital, which, from the presumed left-wing perspective of a Labour government, should be understood as being entwined with race in obvious ways. There is then the practical and fundamental issue of policing, particularly with regard to the Welsh Government's apparent lack of commitment in devolving power – yet it is obviously one of the main pressure points in terms of racial

confrontation and harassment.[33] The communities in the southern arc are over-policed in this regard, and there is a sense that they are treated with contempt – a veteran Welsh language protester noted the difference between the policing of their demonstrations BLM demonstrations.

Conclusion: Welsh government and police injustice

In conclusion, it is pertinent to ask the following question. How will the Welsh Government address issues of policing when it has no appetite for it to be devolved?

Wales is a small country with a small elite, which can legitimately be seen as having a narrow and rather cosy political culture with a broadly progressive centre, one that tends to co-opt radicals rather than develop a hard edge. This can limit progress, where the requisite counterpoint to government-driven agendas are lost. Anti-apartheid in Wales resisted such incorporation, but there are danger signs. BLM is linked directly to the publicly funded Race Council Cymru. Will it become more difficult to speak truth to power when a movement with Marxist-intersectional roots is drawn into the soft middle of the Welsh political sphere? Its role is not hand-holding and singing songs around a campfire. Deva R. Woodly sees social movements as a fifth estate, always a necessary and independent part of the polity as a check on bureaucracy and oligarchy.[34]

Beyond this there is the wider British context. Policing is not the only area of concern outside of Welsh Government control. Wales remains part of a neo-imperialist system, with its borders controlled from Westminster, and a check upon the aspiration to be a nation of sanctuary.[35] The institutional framework within British political culture and the constraints it has imposed has seen a damaging general decline in political protest from the days of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, or the massive strike wave of 1970–4. The use of the resources of state to defeat the miners in 1984–5 was symbolic of this. Serious riots broke out over the poll tax in 1990, but since that time there has been a falling away of radical protest. Demonstrations have always been directed at the media as much as the immediate audience, and we are currently seeing how even larger demonstrations can suffer from

virtual media blackouts. Repressive legislation is currently making protest even more difficult. The English right is weaponising devolution, and on its fringes there are mutterings about bringing it to an end. *The Daily Telegraph* has branded Wales 'the wokest nation in Europe', clearly something it does not consider a badge of honour.[36] Across Europe, police forces are countering criticism by arguing that the nature of policing is not understood, and that there ought to be respect, automatic rather than earned, for the uniform.[37]

These are concerns that need to be taken seriously, but a responsive government is something anti-racist campaigners a century ago could only have dreamed of. The contrast between Welsh Government's and the UK government's response to 2020 is palpable. Opinions may differ on whether 2020 is seen as a sea change, or as a passing opportunity whose moment should be seized. Each will require sustained political action and mobilisation. The current political situation remains tenuous in the light of the issues of progress and hope broached in the introduction to this volume; advance is never simple and uncomplicated, but any progressive movement needs hope as well as hard-nosed realism. Indeed, it might be seen as a precondition of radicalism. Pessimism of the intellect, indeed, but is there a fairly firm foundation for optimism of the will?[38]

Notes

1 *https://archive.org/stream/AngelaDavis-LecturesOnLiberation/AngelaDavis-LecturesOnLiberation_djvu.txt* (accessed 15 September 2023), p. 6.

2 Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018; updated edn 2023).

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