

AN ANTI RACISM RESOURCE FOR
COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN WEST BELFAST

WORKING AGAINST RACISM

CEAD MILE FAILTE



West Against Racism Network
Líonra an Iarthair i gCoinne an Chiníochais



CHARTER

WEST BELFAST ANTI-RACISM CHARTER
CAIRT FHRITH-CHINÍOCHAIS IATHAR BHÉAL FEIRSTE

“ Racism is any idea claiming racial or ethnic groups are superior or inferior and that some should dominate others. Racism includes racist ideologies, prejudiced attitudes, discriminatory laws and practices resulting in inequality as well as anti-social beliefs and acts. ”

Adapted from UN Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice

Racism is often directed at Black people. Specific forms of racism include those targeted at Travellers, migrant workers, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, refugees and asylum seekers. Slavery, colonialism or racist immigration controls are examples of governments practising racism.

Communities, activists and others in West Belfast have a proud history of facing down discrimination, of international solidarity and anti-imperialism. We need to ensure a welcoming, intercultural community that challenges racism.

Racism occurs on a day to day basis and happens within our homes, workplaces, streets, and places of leisure. It includes racist texts, racist jokes, passing on racist views or making an instantly formed judgement about someone because of their ethnic background. Examples of racism include:

- Not letting people into a pub because they are Travellers
- Blaming migrants for jobs lost due to the 'credit crunch'
- Regarding the cultures/languages of others as primitive and expecting them to forget them and assimilate into the dominant culture
- Shouting sectarian or other racist abuse during a Celtic-Rangers game that is not going your way
- Being stopped, questioned, and expected to have ID papers by police or immigration officers when singled out because of your skin colour
- Regarding migrants labelled by governments as 'illegal' (whether Irish abroad or migrants in Ireland) as less deserving of basic human rights

Organisation: _____

Condemns racism in all its forms and commits to:

- Never engaging in any racist words or actions whatsoever;
- Never to ignore the racism of others but to challenge racism wherever possible and wherever witnessed.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

CAIRT FHRITH-CHINÍOCHAIS WAIN (Lionra an Iarthair i gCoimheas an Chinióchaís) fógartha
21ú Márta 2010, Lá Idirnáisiúnta na Náisiún Aontaithe um Dhlúthadh Leatromh Chinióch agus
comáradh 50ú bliain ar Ár Sharpeville.

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**RACISM
RUINS LIVES**



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Cover illustration by Brian Moore

The context of Racism in West Belfast

Sara Boyce, West Against Racism Network

Communities, activists and others in West Belfast have a proud history of facing down discrimination, of international solidarity and anti-imperialism. West Belfast has not suffered the sustained campaigns of racist violence seen elsewhere in the north in recent years: many of which appear orchestrated by elements of loyalism or other far right groups. There have been anti-racist activities and initiatives in West Belfast aplenty. Many people who have migrated out of the area to Britain, or elsewhere have faced varying degrees of racism. You would be forgiven for thinking West Belfast should be free from racism, wouldn't you?

The reality of course is more complex. Travellers' experience of discrimination and racist abuse are commonplace. Whilst violent attacks on migrants have been isolated here they have happened, as has verbal racist abuse from people within our community. Minorities in West Belfast also suffer racism from state agencies. Migrants increasingly suffer discriminatory laws blocking their access to, for example, vital homelessness assistance which is available to others when things go wrong; the actions of the state towards providing for Travellers is well documented.

The long standing Traveller and minority ethnic population in West Belfast has grown more recently through new migration. This includes many of the medical and nursing staff who alongside their local counterparts work at RVH hospital. Much good anti-racist, solidarity and support work has of course already been done, and there are examples in this booklet. We can never stop this anti-racist work. We need to ensure a welcoming, intercultural community that challenges racism. This booklet is aimed at those already doing or willing to support that work.

Purpose of this Booklet

The booklet is intended to encourage and help community organisations working in West Belfast to address the issue of racism. There are few if any anti-racism resources available that contextualise the issue of racism to the specific historical, political, social and cultural context of West Belfast. This booklet, while not claiming to be comprehensive, is intended as a contribution towards developing that analysis.

It is aimed at assisting community organisations in developing an understanding of the historical and the contemporary causes and processes of racism. It is also designed to encourage community organisations to focus on what practical actions they can take to fight against racism.

Foreword by Des Wilson

Anyone not hurt by racism finds it hard to realise how soul destroying it is. To be told by employers, “we don’t need you,” is bad enough but to be told by those who should be our neighbours, “we don’t want you,” is worse. Officially we say such things will not be allowed to happen but in fact they do and vast numbers of people suffer as a result.

This booklet is an effort to make sure racism is not part of us.

At the back of our minds, struggling to come out, there is a notion that some people are by nature or race, achievement or social class inferior. How that got in there we do not always know but we do know it often tries to break into our everyday life. We know also that while we need the cooperation of governments and other powerful agencies to ensure a peaceful life for everyone, governments and other powerful agencies have themselves created and fostered racism for profit.

What we are trying to do is take away the very notion of such inferiority among us and prevent it from being part of our life. Nobody can inflict racism on us and our neighbours unless we consent to it. We will make sure that consent is never given.

In the past news, information, ideas, ideals, even history were handed to us by a few, rather than being discovered and interpreted by ourselves. Nowadays that is changing. We are more and more in charge of our own ideas and ideals. We are not just hoping others will stop being racist, or praying for governments to stop it, we are creating the ideas, the ideals, the communities in which it simply will not be done. That is the aim; that is the possibility. That is what this booklet is about

**SMASH
RACISM**

**MIGRANTS
ARE NOT
TO BLAME**

**WORKING AGAINST
RACISM**



What is the West Against Racism Network?

The **West Against Racism Network** is a grassroots campaign based in West Belfast which campaigns against institutionalised racism and actively promotes an anti-racist culture in West Belfast.



We are a non-funded group and are not affiliated to any political party. We are open to any individual or group getting involved - the only criterion is that members are committed to the overall aim and objectives of our group. We would encourage you to get involved with WARN on an individual or an organisational basis. See back cover of this booklet for contact details or check out our website at: www.westagainstracismnetwork.org

Our main purpose is to campaign against state racism in all its form, whether that be in relation to employment, accommodation, policing, immigration, service provision or any other area. We also actively promote an anti-racist culture in West Belfast, communicating the message that racism has no place in our community.

What WARN does

WARN has engaged in a range of activities to raise awareness of and challenge racism in West Belfast including:

- Production of a range of anti-racism awareness materials including a '**Republic of Conscience**' anti-racism passport and a '**Many Faces of West Belfast**' anti-racism poster
- Launch of a welcome pack '**Comhar nagComharsan**' for minority ethnic communities, in conjunction with a number of community and voluntary organisations in West Belfast.
- An anti-racism charter initiative, aimed at community and voluntary organisations, service providers, businesses and others in West Belfast
- An anti-racism pledge of office signed by all MLAs for West Belfast
- Highlighting and responding collectively to racist incidents in West Belfast
- Challenging racist policies and practice operated by government departments and statutory agencies.

Definitions

Racism

Racism has been defined as the belief that a characteristic such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons based on one of these.

UNESCO, in its 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, has described racism as any theory claiming racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior; implying some are entitled to dominate others who are presumed to be inferior. UNESCO states racism includes racist ideologies, prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour, and is reflected in discriminatory laws and practices as well as anti-social beliefs and acts. UNESCO concludes that racism "...hinders the development of its victims, perverts those who practice it, divides nations internally... and gives rise to political tensions between peoples."

A **stereotype** is a popular belief or simplified standardized conceptions about specific social groups or types of individuals based on some prior assumptions (most often untrue). The word '**prejudice**' is used to refer to an often untrue assumption or 'prejudgment' made about a person or group of persons without adequate knowledge to do so. Both stereotyping and prejudice can involve making general assumptions about a person because of a group that they are thought to belong to. Racist prejudice or racist stereotypes are when this general assumption is made because of their real or perceived ethnic group.

Discrimination can mean any unjustified distinction or restriction based on a ground such as gender or age. Racial discrimination refers to such distinctions on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin. Discrimination can be direct or indirect:

- **Direct** racial discrimination means treating people in a similar situation from different ethnic groups in a detrimental way for a reason related to their ethnicity (for example refusing to give someone a job because they are black).

- **Indirect** racial discrimination refers to laws, policies or practices which appear neutral, but have a disproportionate negative impact on different ethnic groups which cannot be justified (for example unjustifiably requiring a fixed address for a particular service will impact disproportionately on Travellers).



Racism occurs on a day to day basis and happens within our homes, workplaces, streets, and places of leisure. It includes racist texts, racist jokes, passing on racist views or making an instantly formed judgement about someone because of their ethnic background.

Specific forms of racism

Racism is often directed at Black people. Specific forms of racism include those targeted at Travellers, migrant workers, immigrants, Muslims (Islamophobia), Jews (anti-Semitism), foreign nationals (xenophobia), refugees and asylum seekers. Slavery, colonialism or racist immigration controls are examples of governments practising racism.

Sectarianism

It is a misconception that 'racism is the new sectarianism' in the north of Ireland. Firstly, sectarianism here is a form of racism. Secondly sectarianism continues to play a powerful role in our society: it has not 'gone away' or somehow been replaced by other forms of racism. In general the term 'sectarian' can have a number of meanings in different contexts. It can refer simply to groups dividing into sects or to political factionalism. Sectarianism can also refer to a specific form, type or subset of racism. Sectarianism in Ireland is a type of racism rooted in the historic colonial process of subjugation whereby ethnic differentiation aided by racial and religious supremacism differentiated the native and settler populations.

Sectarianism in Ireland today often remains undefined and dismissed as tribal or religious intolerance, with ethnic division still described often not in terms of Britishness and Irishness but in terms of Protestant or Catholic religion. Here religion is used as an indicator of ethnic group rather than just of religious belief. That is obvious in job applications when you are asked to mark Protestant or Catholic as your 'community background' rather than your actual religious convictions. All forms of racism, far from being a 'natural' product of difference, are social constructs based on characteristics such as skin colour or nationality but also other identifiers, including religious difference, as is the case with anti-Semitism. Historically a dominant signifier between the native Catholic and Protestant settler populations was religion, which acquired the rigid status of a racial indicator, unlikely to be changed by conversion. The Irish-British sectarian interface, like many other forms of racism in colonial arenas, retains religion as a key differential indicator. Sectarianism should therefore be understood as a form of racism, structured with its own set of stereotypes and prejudice.

Sedentarism

Sedentarism (or anti-nomadism) is a system of ideas and practices which serves to normalise and reproduce sedentary or 'settled' modes of existence and pathologies and repress nomadic modes of existence. Used against Travellers it constitutes racism.

Migrants

There are a range of terms used to describe migrants. Some of these are technical terms that relate to the legal/technical category of a person's migration status – for example, migrant worker or refugee. Being in such a migration category might be part of a person's identity (and how they describe themselves) or equally may not be part of their identity.

- An immigrant is someone who migrates to a country.
- An emigrant is someone who migrates away from a country.

Migrants either leave or stay in a country to become part of the community. There are a range of other reasons why a person would migrate to a country, for example to work there for a few years (**migrant workers**), to study or to be with family, or to escape persecution by their government (**refugees**). Note that '**asylum seeker**' is a term used by governments to indicate someone has applied for refugee status and they are still waiting for a decision.



Recently **migrant workers** have arrived in the north of Ireland mainly from other EU member states, including Portugal, Poland and Lithuania, but also from outside the EU in particular sectors such as medicine and nursing. Many governments still restrict the **civil rights** of migrants, limiting access to the right to work or essential social security protections against homelessness and destitution.

Given that migrants will have a different nationality to the host population, migrants will be part of the minority ethnic population. However minority ethnic groups also include many persons who are not migrants. e.g. Irish Travellers, 2nd/3rd generation members of the Chinese / Asian communities and many other persons born here but who identify themselves as a **minority ethnic group** due to a shared language, culture, national origin, religion or other ethnic indicators. The term "**ethnic communities**" is misleading as it refers to everyone rather than any specific group.

Everybody belongs to an 'ethnic group', whether minority or majority. Everyone has the right to self identify, and people often have multiple identities.

'**Black**' is an identity and organising term used by persons from non-white groups, with heritages in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, who share a common experience of racism.



Indigenous Minorities:

Irish Travellers: Indigenous ethnic nomadic grouping from Ireland who separated from the settled community between 1000 and 2000 years ago and who speak their own language, known as Cant or Gamin.

Romany Gypsies: ethnic nomadic group who have been in Europe for over 700 years, 500 years in Britain and over 150 years in Ireland. This group have their origins in northern India, Punjab region. They speak their own language which is related to Sanskrit.

Roma: is another Romany grouping but most Roma are from Eastern Europe, mainly rural Romania & Bulgaria.

Problematic Terms:

Words have meanings and the use of some terms (albeit unwittingly) can cause

offence. There is some terminology that is problematic and hence best avoided. This is sometimes as it is simply a collective label that can be used in a dehumanising way for example “**These people**” being used in relation to any group of people. One highly problematic term is ‘**illegal immigrant**’ as the use of the term illegal stigmatises and criminalises a person, who is not a criminal but is often doing nothing more than wanting to work, normally a commended value when applied to the rest of the population. The term is also technically incorrect and often misused as a stigmatising label. Nobody can be an ‘illegal immigrant’ or be themselves ‘illegal’. While someone can be conducting an act that breaches immigration rules or working without authorisation this does not make the actual person themselves ‘illegal’ - Article 6 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states “**Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law**”. A preferable technical term for someone working without permission is an ‘irregular worker’ - the terms ‘undocumented’ or ‘unauthorised’ worker are also used. The circumstances of becoming an irregular worker are varied and complex. Many workers who do have the legal right to work are denied the entitlement through: poor advice and information; being misled by exploitative rogue employers/agents; delays, mistakes and arbitrary decisions by the immigration service; and other factors. If someone works without permission it does not necessarily mean they have entered the country without permission. Many Irish migrants to the US have entered the country as visitors and then taken up irregular work but did have permission to enter.

Integration:

There are many different definitions of integration, a concept often used in the context of racial equality. Social integration can be seen as a **two way process** which involves action by migrants but also involves action by the host populations. Key factors in integration include: challenging anti-migrant **racism**; meaningful **interaction**; **equal rights and opportunities**; and the development of certain skills by migrants, including **language skills** - but only when there are opportunities to actually get and use such skills.

The outdated concept of ‘**assimilation**’ (basically all migrants should abandon their own language, culture, practices and should take on those of the local population) has largely been superseded by concepts of integration.

The Roots of Racism

Race prejudice does not drop down upon us from the sky. It's not in the water we drink or in the air that we breathe, nor is it a "natural" part of the way people relate to one another. When the media tries to explain racial violence, they usually tell us that the problem rests with a handful of bigots and "extremists" on the fringe of society. But this approach is misleading: it focuses on the symptoms of racism but neglects the cause of the disease. It blames individuals but overlooks the ways in which racism is built into this society's social and economic structures. It suggests that race prejudice will always be with us, and that the most we can do is try to teach 'tolerance' for our differences rather than challenging bigotry at its roots.

There is a more sensible way of understanding racism. Just as sectarian bigotry developed out of the policy of 'divide and rule' that British elites employed to conquer and then dominate Ireland anti-black racism is also rooted in history. It started with two key developments in the late fifteenth century: the so-called 'discovery' of the Americas and the birth of the transatlantic slave trade. Over 3 centuries upwards of ten million Africans were kidnapped and transported across the Atlantic, their misery overseen by powerful European states anxious to lay their hands on the wealth of the 'New World'. In the Americas, the theft of native resources involved genocide, an act justified through European assumptions about the 'backwardness' and 'inferiority' of those they called 'Indians'.

The enslavement and transportation of millions of Africans took these prejudices even further. Differences in language and culture had been part of human history since our earliest days, though this diversity did not necessarily lead to hatred. Europeans who journeyed to Africa before the rise of slavery wrote of their admiration for the people and cultures they encountered, and only rarely of any sense of hostility based on skin colour. But over the three and a half centuries in which the slave trade flourished, a full-blown set of prejudices about 'race' developed and became central to the way Europeans and their descendants in the Americas looked out at the world around them.

To put it another way, the whole idea of 'race' was invented out of the harsh mix of religious and ethnic assumptions that Europeans brought to the project of imperial

domination of Africa, the Americas, their people and resources. It was inseparable from the rise of slavery. Eric Williams, a historian from the former sugar colony of Trinidad, put it this way:

"The reason [for slavery] was economic, not racial; it had *nothing to do with the colour of the labourer*, but with the cheapness of the labour... The features of the [African], his hair [and] colour...his 'subhuman' characteristics ... were only the later rationalizations to justify [slavery]."





Even down to our own day, modern race prejudice is rooted in this early connection between the exploitation of cheap black labour and the 'invention' of race. That tells us two things that are worth bearing in mind as we think about how to confront racism today. First, racial bigotry had a definite beginning, and is not an inevitable part of the way human beings live with one another. Like sectarianism, it can be done away with, completely. The second insight is just as important: racism was built in to the economic foundations of society. Doing away with it is not just a matter of changing the bad ideas in individuals' minds, or of confronting the bootboys who bring it onto our streets. Ultimately the battle against racism involves challenging



the political and economic structures that continue to give it life. It is part and parcel of a fight for a new society, one based on equality, and one in which racial, ethnic and religious differences cannot be manipulated by employers and politicians anxious to keep their grip on wealth and power. Workers in the community sector, who see the results of poverty and growing inequality first hand, should be among those at the forefront of the fight against racism. Bigotry in any form is poison for our communities: it divides working class people from one another and weakens us all.

People in 'both established communities' in West Belfast do not have to look too far into the past to understand this. For generations, those who ran the Northern state relied on sectarianism to keep the poor divided and pitted against one another.

Since its founding, nationalists suffered discrimination in housing and employment; were cheated out of the right to vote, and were regularly subjected to violence at the hands of the police and the 'security' forces. Many working class Protestants lived in much the same social and economic conditions, but were raised to believe that this was 'their' state, and that they had more in common with the 'big house' unionists who presided over the misery than with their Catholic neighbours and co-workers. When on the rare occasion Catholics and Protestants managed to overcome their differences (as in the 1932 Outdoor Relief Riots) the police and the army were sent in to drive them apart. As we face into another period of economic desperation, we cannot afford to let sectarianism divide as it did in the past. A few property developers aside, no one on the Shankill or the Falls stands to benefit!

While it's important to know where racial bigotry comes from, we also have to understand that racism changes its face with changes in the world around us. Many of the Irish driven from this country by hunger and oppression in the 1840s ended up on the wrong side of the antislavery struggle when they arrived in the United States. Some descendants of Jewish victims of the holocaust, planted in a new context that pits them against Palestinians, can today be found defending horrific Israeli war crimes and spouting anti-Arab racism. Both jurisdictions in Ireland, which for centuries saw so many of its own people scouring the world for freedom and the chance to make a living, now harass and brutalize Africans and other refugees who come here seeking refuge from oppression. A generation after this small part of the world was lifted by a grassroots challenge to sectarianism, hostility toward the immigrants who work in our lowest-paid jobs is all too common.

The roots of racism run deep, and in a context of growing economic desperation no community is immune. But just as race was 'made' in the brutal and unequal world of the slave trade, it can also be unmade in the struggle for a new one based on real equality. The people of West Belfast have as much of a stake in the outcome of that struggle as anyone else.

Brian Kelly

US historian and Director of the After Slavery Project

Anti-traveller Racism

Irish Travellers are seen as an ethnic or racial group in the North of Ireland, since 1997 under the Race Relations (N.Ireland) Order. Travellers have been protected from racial discrimination under this legislation and identity/culture recognised for the very first time anywhere in Ireland or the UK.



Travellers in West Belfast have used this legislation to the best of their ability to get redress for the discrimination that has confronted them, but it has been a painstaking task for the many families who have gone through it and others who just gave up on the idea of taking action. For centuries, Travellers & Gypsies have endured discrimination as part of everyday life and tended to pass it off. An Munia Tober has been involved in numerous projects to enable and encourage Travellers to stand up against discrimination as it is now illegal across the two islands.

Irish Travellers have been under the spot light for decades with negative media portrayals for so-called feuds, alleged anti-social behaviour and crime. Most negativity stems from prejudice and short sightedness against Travellers by the

local press. Travellers have worked to challenge these negative perceptions and stereotyping with campaigns such as 'Traveller Focus Week' in December which is funded by the Equality Commission and highlights the positive news stories that struggle to get into the mainstream media any other time of the year. But initiatives such as Traveller Focus Week, while undoubtedly positive are only once a year. **An Munia Tober** and other Traveller organisations believe the media have a lot to answer for as Travellers are viewed both in Ireland and Britain as one of the most hated groups in society, largely, we would contend, because of negative press.

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Pavee Focas Seltu Talusc

Traveller Focus Week

29th November - 3rd December 2010

Programme of Events

This artwork has been designed by young Travellers from the Coalisland community through the Belong Programme

Belong Traveller Focus Equality Commission FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

A particularly virulent example of this negative stereotyping was the Channel 4 programme, 'Big Fat Gypsy Weddings' which focused on a small group of Irish Travellers & Romany Gypsies, about five to seven families who are mostly related to one other, and portrayed them as the whole community. This has further developed

stereotypical views that Travellers are rich, trashy, violent and all Traveller women down-trodden.

Many people from the wider community now believe this is the reality of all Travellers' lives. The programme has also had the effect of giving some commentators within other sectors 'ammunition' to attack the Traveller community. Traveller support groups were forced to go on the defensive by doing radio/TV interviews or preparing newspaper articles. Local media, motivated primarily by the high viewer ratings for *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* rather than out of any concern to present a balanced viewpoint provided Traveller groups with the right to respond, which Travellers did take up in an effort to set the record straight.

My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding has also had repercussions for Travellers and Gypsies in West Belfast as well as across the country in terms of how they are seen and treated by the wider community. Young Travellers are now being bullied even more in schools, youth clubs and on the street. People are starting to hide their identity by putting on settled accents to be accepted. Some night clubs in Belfast and further afield have put on *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* theme nights. A young Traveller reported going to a popular gay bar in Belfast only to find that they were holding a drag show with a *Big Fat Gypsy wedding* theme. People present in the bar singled him out and subjected him to goading because of the show. This young man left the bar, feeling very upset and harassed.

The wider impact of such negative media coverage can be seen in the worsening attitudes to Travellers among the settled community. In July 2008 the Equality Commission undertook a survey among over 1000 members of general public in Northern Ireland regarding equality related issues and attitudes.

- 51% would mind a Traveller as an neighbour (this is 10 percentage points more than 3 years previous in their 2005 survey);
- 51% would mind a Traveller as an in-law (13 percentage points more than 3 years previous) and ;
- 38% would mind a Traveller as a work colleague (14 percentage points more than 3 years previous).

Travellers, especially young people who want to work in the mainstream economy

because of the decline in the traditional Traveller economy are facing prejudice. Examples of this employment related discrimination include:

- A young girl working in a shop in west Belfast was "outed" as a Traveller and in turn was viewed with suspicion by work mates. Customers counted change that they were given by the girl within open view and the young girl endured racist jibes. She was forced to leave her employment and has never worked again as a result of the racist discrimination and harassment she suffered.
- Two young Travellers from the Turf Lodge area who got work for a company that worked on a dirt bike competition in the Odyssey Arena in Belfast were sacked on the second day of their contract because the assistant manager found out they were Travellers. They brought their case to court with the assistance of the Equality Commission and in February 2007 were awarded compensation for racial discrimination won which sent a clear message that employers cannot discriminate against Travellers as they are protected under legislation.

In terms of access to services, Travellers are still being turned away from shops, restaurants and bars particularly in West Belfast. In the pre Christmas period 2010 An Munia Tober had complaints from Travellers that shops had either refused them entry or followed them around the premises.

Travellers' experience in West Belfast is unfortunately a reality right across the Traveller community, north and south of Ireland. The 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study found that 70% of Travellers in the North had experienced discrimination on a street or in a public setting on one or more occasion; 72% had experienced discrimination in a shop or a pub/restaurant and 65% had experienced discrimination from the PSNI or the Courts.

The 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study found that 70% of Travellers in the North had experienced discrimination on a street or in a public setting on one or more occasion

Education of Traveller children is still very much an issue, with the majority leaving school prematurely and without a qualification; some believe that trying to gain qualifications would be a waste of time as they wouldn't be able to find work

because of their background. Others have left simply because of the systemic discrimination and racist bullying that they have experienced.

Quite a few Traveller parents have complained to An Múna Tober they felt they were refused places in their local schools in West Belfast. Parents have returned their children to St. Mary's Primary school on Barrack St, where 97% of children attending are Travellers. Department of Education figures show that 572 Traveller children (primary) and 192 young people (post primary) were enrolled in schools in 2008/09. While certainly in recent years much progress has been made with Travellers' education too many Traveller children continue to have poor attendance and few Travellers achieve educationally to the same level as their peers.

Relations between the community and the PSNI is still an ongoing issue where distrust on both sides is still an issue. A recent piece of research by the Institute for Conflict Research into Travellers, the PSNI and the Criminal Justice System, 'Over Policed and Under Protected' draws attention to Travellers' largely negative experiences of policing. Among the complaints made in relation to the PSNI were the following:

- Excessive policing, inappropriate police deployment, 'suspect community' treatment of all Travellers during searches for one individual, failure to intervene in situations which warranted intervention and lack of response to queries or complaints.
- The disproportionate use of stop and search powers against Travellers has also been highlighted through this research. Over the past four years Travellers have been up to five times more likely to be subject to stop and search than any other member of the population. Travellers have also been disproportionately subjected to stop and search compared to members of other minority ethnic communities.

Government policy does not always help when it comes to the issue of anti Traveller prejudice and racism. For example, delays in developing Traveller sites can see Travellers living on land as 'unauthorised sites' and tensions with local residents can occur. When built sites are often located on the fringes of our towns and cities with Travellers often hidden from their 'neighbours'. To this day, some Travellers living on

the Glen Road still have very limited toilet, water and shower facilities. Some of the families living on the site since 1983 are facing eviction because of red tape.

In saying this, there has been good news regarding Monagh Road Travellers as their long and hard fight for accommodation has been won with the completion of Mill Race grouped housing scheme. This has come from very positive working relationship with North-West Housing who built and manage Mill Race.

What is An Munia Tober doing to combat racism and discrimination?

With very little resources and very few Traveller staff we are trying our best to change attitudes and promote our way of life in a positive manner.

The history of segregation between Travellers and settled people has done much to embed prejudice towards Travellers. AMT can assist Travellers and settled people to understand our 'differences' but also to embrace our 'sameness'. We have a group of volunteers in AMT who travel across the North to promote our culture and challenge racism; this is alongside their daily jobs and family commitments.

An Munia Tober has a range of projects which promote good practice in the delivery of services, in a non-discriminatory way, in health, education, employment as well as anti-racism projects within our arts & youth projects. We also deliver cultural & racism awareness training to statutory & voluntary groups across Belfast and the North. Without these vital projects, this work would cease and racism and discrimination against Travellers would go unchallenged!

Mark Donahue, Equality Officer, An Munia Tober

Take Action

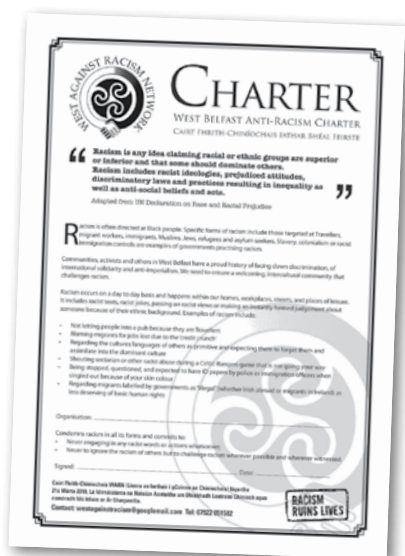
The **Useful Resources** section of this booklet contains lists of organisations which may be able to provide guidance and/or assistance with some of the suggested actions listed below.

WARN supports the adoption of a community development approach to working against racism, one which is underpinned by the set of core values outlined in the National Occupational Standards for Community Development as follows: equality and anti-discrimination; social justice; collective action; community empowerment and working and learning together. Central to community development practice is the challenging of oppression and the exclusion of individuals and groups alongside the promotion of the value of difference and diversity.

One of West Belfast's assets is its strong community infrastructure. Community organisations of all types and levels in West Belfast can play a pivotal role in the work against racism and for diversity in our community.

Below are some suggested actions which your organisation might wish to undertake:

- Sign and display WARN's Anti Racism Charter (see inside back cover of this booklet)
- Join WARN. See back cover for contact details
- Don't let racist remarks and/or incidents go unchallenged
- Challenge racist media coverage - contact the Editor to complain
- Organise anti racism/equality training for your staff/members/volunteers/service users.
- Equality proof your organisation's internal policies and its planning processes
- Develop an anti-racist code of practice for your organisation.
- Develop or support partnership initiatives with Minority Ethnic groups



- Provide opportunities for voluntary work for people from migrant communities and asylum seekers
- Form alliances for campaigning and lobbying on anti-racism/equality issues
- Engage in outreach work with minority ethnic communities
- Conduct a needs assessment/mapping exercise to establish what the specific issues are for minority ethnic communities living in your area and develop appropriate responses e.g. provision of English classes or a drop in service
- Make your services accessible to minority ethnic communities – this may involve production of literature, posters advertising services etc. in other languages, promoting your services in places which members of minority ethnic communities use, involving members of the minority ethnic communities in designing the service/project to ensure that it meets their needs
- Create a dedicated post within your organisation to work on issues of racism and cultural diversity
- Applying for funding to carry out specific, small scale pieces of anti racism work which can gradually be built upon. Examples of funding sources include Belfast City Council's Good Relations Grant Fund which is for community relations and cultural diversity projects, with anti racism projects fitting within this.
- Provide funding to Black and Minority Ethnic groups or anti-racism groups working locally to engage in anti racism and cultural diversity work
- Share your examples of good anti racism practice with other community organisations through networking events, newsletters, production of case studies, the media etc.

Examples of Good Practice

Below are just a few examples of positive initiatives undertaken by community and voluntary organisations in West Belfast to address the issue of racism. Many other organisations are also undertaking valuable anti racism work and should be commended for this. These examples are simply included to demonstrate what can be done, often with little resourcing but with great commitment and energy by all involved.

Anti-Racism World Cup

The 'Anti-Racism World Cup' takes place each year at Donegal Celtic FC. Over the last six years this event has grown from humble beginnings to being the largest community anti-racism event to take place in Ireland. Teams travel to the ARWC from across Europe

and beyond, from Dusseldorf to Palestine, Congo to Manchester representing anti-racist/anti-Fascist campaigns, community groups, youth groups etc. Last year's tournament involved over 500 local people and 100 international guests. It was a showcase for anti-racism against a backdrop of an upsurge of racist attacks in Belfast. The teams take part not just in a weekend of football with local Irish teams but also participate in political talks, exchanging ideas and talking about their experiences with local groups and individuals. Sport, politics, music and great fun is the order of the day, all in the cause of anti-racism and anti-fascism. The tournament supports the work of WARN. If your organisation would like to become part of the Anti-Racism World Cup **contact stevearwc@hotmail.com or Sean on 07747 776036**

Falls Community Council

The Falls Community Council has been to the fore in developing anti-racist good practice in West Belfast. Over the years FCC has worked to put race on the agenda by lobbying with central and local government on key policy issues. FCC has also sought to work with local grassroots organisations such as WARN to ensure the West Belfast community understands and takes ownership of difference within its community. FCC has been active in helping WARN develop their many excellent initiatives by endorsing its work, actively volunteering staff, making their premises available to groups or by preparing funding applications. FCC believes in a partnership approach. Partnerships enable greater numbers of people to be brought together for important anti-racist campaigns. The joining together of organisations strengthens the position of all our efforts in creating a united voice against racist discrimination. The production of pamphlets, the organising of seminars, debates, demonstrations, the sharing of platforms during public meetings and the issuing of statements are just some of the ways FCC works with WARN and other community organisations to address the issue of racism and to promote cultural diversity in West Belfast.

For further information contact Gerry McConville, Director, FCC on 028 90 20 20 30 or email: gerry@fallsCouncil.com

Grosvenor Road Community Centre

For the past nine years Roden Street Community Development Group, which manages the Grosvenor Community Centre has worked to break down barriers between the indigenous community and migrant communities. The centre



has supported migrant families to access facilities and to organise themselves collectively. What started out on a very small scale with four or five of the Filipino community approaching the centre to play basketball on a Saturday morning, after some negative experiences in a local leisure centre, has gone from strength to strength. The centre now supports and facilitates a range of projects with the Filipino community including the long established fathers' basketball team, the Rising Stars youth basketball team, which is comprised of both local and Filipino young people, a fathers' support programme and the provision of childcare. More recently the centre has supported the establishment of a Latvian ladies volleyball team which is also based in the centre. The Grosvenor Community Centre was also instrumental in facilitating the establishment of WARN by providing a meeting space and other supports in the early days of its existence. Among the benefits in this work has been a greater mutual awareness and understanding of each community's culture and positive attitudes within the local communities towards migrant families. One of the most significant impacts has been the 'ripple' effect outwards, with Filipino families accessing local services including schools and young Filipinos joining the Roden Street Youth Club. Key to the success of the programme has been the centre's flexibility in accommodating the needs of the Filipino community around shift work, child care etc and its awareness of the need

to let the work develop organically and in partnership with the local community. Ongoing challenges include the lack of funding and staffing to provide the kind of support required - much of this work is done on a voluntary basis by Centre staff and volunteers.

For further information contact Tina Black, Manager, Grosvenor Community Centre on 90 310701

Whiterock Children's Centre Multicultural Project

Whiterock Children's Centre Multicultural Project has been running for four years and has recently secured funding for a further three years to continue working with and supporting black minority ethnic families living in West Belfast. The funding has been provided by The Henry Smith Charity and the project will continue to work in partnership with Saol Ur Sure Start, Upper Springfield.

The work with Black and minority ethnic families started when it was brought to our attention by a health visitor that a number of asylum seeker families living in West Belfast were in need of support. The project has now developed and expanded and we provide practical and emotional support to the Black and minority ethnic community living in West Belfast; this includes migrant worker, asylum seeker, refugee individuals and families. It includes consulting with voluntary and statutory service providers, to refer to appropriate agencies and receive referrals. The project also aims to provide advocacy and support in key areas such as healthcare, education, housing, benefits and immigration.

The project also offers free English classes (ESOL) with free childcare (subject to availability), social groups, trips, global education training programmes for immigrant parents. Whiterock Children's Centre are committed to promoting diversity and equality in our community. We are committed to challenging racism and support the work of WARN. For further information contact Clare Anderson, Multi Cultural Project Worker on familylearning@hotmail.co.uk or 90 438438

Useful Resources

Websites

An Munia Tober	www.anmuniatober.org
Anti-Racism World Cup	www.antiracismworldcup.net
Belfast Migrant Centre	www.belfastmigrantcentre.org
Equality Commission Northern Ireland	www.equalityni.org
Law Centre NI	www.lawcentreni.org
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland	www.mcri.ie
Refugee Action Group	www.refugeeactiongroup.com
Residents Against Racism	www.residentsagainstracism.org
South Belfast Roundtable	http://donegallpass.org/html/the_south_belfast_roundtable_o.html

Publications

Belfast City Council (2010) *New to Belfast? A guide to support services*. This guide includes information on accessing language classes, employment advice, immigration advice, legal assistance and advocacy support

Curtis, L. (1984) *Nothing but the same old story The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism Information on Ireland*.

Rolston, B. and Shannon, M. (2002) *Encounters How Racism Came to Ireland Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications*

Donnelly, N. (2009) *Migrant Workers, Racism and the Recession*. UNISON. Available from [http://www.unison.org.uk/file/MW_Racism_and_the_Recession_-_final_report\[1\].pdf](http://www.unison.org.uk/file/MW_Racism_and_the_Recession_-_final_report[1].pdf)

Garvey, B. et al (2011) *The New Workers, Migration, labour and citizenship in Northern Ireland in the 21st century*. Migrant Workers Research Network. Available from www.union.ie or telephone 0044(0) 28 37 515229

Wilson, R (2010) *Distant Voices, Shaken Lives. Human Stories of Immigration Detention in Northern Ireland*. Refugee Action Group. Available from <http://www.refugeeactiongroup.com/download?id=MTg=>

Community Change (2007) *How [not] to Exclude*. Available from <http://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/how-not-exclude-community-change>

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2009) *Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes A Resource for NGOs in the OSCE Region* available from www.osce.org



To keep up to date with the work of WARN or if you wish to get involved please visit:

www.westagainstracismnetwork.org

