

**The Struggle That Cannot Be Named: Violence, Space and the Re-articulation of Anti-Racism in Post-Duggan Britain**

*The history of black struggles in Britain has often centred on spaces of racial violence and resistance. While there has been significant scholarly attention paid to the ways in which racism is articulated through particular places, less has been said about anti-racism being communicated through its associations with space and place. Using Tottenham as a case study, I draw on ethnographic observations at demonstrations and public meetings, in addition to semi-structured interviews with anti-racist activists resisting policing in post-2011 London. This paper argues that, over time, racist metonyms used to describe places racialised as black (e.g. Tottenham) have led to the rise of a metonymic anti-racism. Metonymic anti-racism is used alongside more overt anti-racist language, and has profound implications for understanding struggles against police racism in Britain. The paper analyses these implications, contextualising them historically, in light of neoliberalised racial discourses and how anti-racist metonyms shape articulations of black struggle against policing in post-2011 Tottenham.*

...And they said then that Tottenham, that Broadwater Farm, was a symbolic location. And the reason they've made it a symbolic location, is because it's the place we gave them a bloody good hiding. It's the place we stood up, and they fell down... So since then, there has been a vendetta against the community of Broadwater Farm, and a vendetta against the community of Tottenham – The Monitoring Group public meeting, 7 February 2015.

## Introduction

Since the 1980s Tottenham, part of the Borough of Haringey in north London, has been one of the focal points of black struggle against policing in Britain. Local government investigations found that, for many young people in the area, police searches and other misuses of power are considered a part of everyday life (Davis 1989: 74, Kober et al. 2012: 13). This culminated in a civil uprising in 1985, in which many officers were injured and one, PC Keith Blakelock, was killed. This incident only escalated the conflict, leading to multiple raids, arrests and three false imprisonments which were eventually overturned (Adams 1994). The person responsible for the death of the PC Blakelock was never found, and many Tottenham residents feel that this has marked the local area as a target for continual misuse of police power.

On 4 August 2011, Mark Duggan, a black man who called Broadwater Farm his home, was shot dead by police on Ferry Lane, Tottenham. Duggan's family were not informed; they found out about the killing when it was reported on the evening news. Organising a march to Tottenham Police Station, the local community demanded answers from a senior officer. (The police would later claim that Duggan had fired shots at officers, a story widely reproduced by the press; however, it emerged that Duggan was in fact unarmed when killed, posing no immediate threat.) The protesters outside the police station became agitated as their requests were ignored. A group of women led some demonstrators into the station itself, confronting the police directly. When one of the women was struck by an officer, an unaccompanied police vehicle had a brick thrown through its window, and the area erupted into civil unrest (Gilroy 2013). For five days, towns and cities across the country saw thousands of people take to the streets, attacking police stations and commercial outlets, clashing with officers in riot gear and appropriating high-value goods.

At a packed public meeting I attended in Tottenham in October 2011, attendees fiercely debated the issues and strategies they considered necessary for challenging police violence. Someone at the back identified herself as "a black woman" and demanded to be heard. Wearing a baseball cap low on her face, and a long dark green anorak, she stood up and exclaimed "We're always on the back foot, we're always firefighting, it's like we just keep going from one crisis to the next. And between each crisis, silence, as if nothing's happened." Similar sentiments were often repeated by older activists at public meetings about police violence in Tottenham. Fatal instances of police violence often recur in a specific geographical location, and this paper will demonstrate how Tottenham's history and ongoing issues with the police make space and place central to our understanding of both racism and anti-racist struggle.

This spatialisation of racial violence, and resistance to it, lead to places becoming racialised, or an existing racialisation becoming further entrenched. In this paper I seek to answer two key questions, both of which relate to the racialisation of space. First, how does the spatialisation of police violence shape how black communities organise and articulate resistance to this violence? Secondly, what are the effects of racialised spatial metonyms on black community organising? I argue that, while scholars have closely analysed racist and racial metonyms, less attention has been paid to anti-racist metonyms. Campaign groups in racialised spaces such as Tottenham employ a metonymic anti-racism in addition to more overt racialised language. There are profound implications for this articulation of political organising, which must be explored to assess the impact, and potential impact, of black resistance to policing in post-2011 London. Like other urban areas in Britain, such as Toxteth (Liverpool)<sup>1</sup>, Handsworth (Birmingham)<sup>2</sup>, St Ann's (Nottingham), St Paul's (Bristol) (Sivanandan 2008) and Moss Side (Manchester) (Irving 2011), three things have led to Tottenham becoming racialized as black. The first is a reputation for racist policing, the second is urban uprisings in the 1980s and the third is anti-racist campaigns which respond to both police violence and the spontaneous revolts which emerge on the streets.

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<sup>1</sup> REGIONAL POLICY. Inner cities policy and problems: regeneration of Liverpool and London; Docklands Urban Development Corporation; Docklands Light Railway and Canary Wharf; South Cardiff urban renewal: part 8, p. 248, 1986 Feb 04 - 1986 Nov 29, The National Archives, Kew, accessed [5 January 2016](#)

<sup>2</sup> Race Today - February | March 1982, p.52, accessed [at the](#) Institute of Race Relations Archives

In what follows, Tottenham is used as a case study for analysing how racialised spaces and places are employed as metonyms used to articulate black resistance to police violence. I argue that racialised metonyms that have developed over decades of black struggle require significant attention from scholars today. This paper is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief overview of the 1985 civil unrest in the Broadwater Farm area of Tottenham, and its aftermath. The second examines how black struggle mobilises around space following a particular event. Here, the state response to the 2011 civil unrest, involving widespread stops, searches, raids and arrests in black communities and the spaces they inhabit, is used as a case study. The third section analyses how mobilisation around racialised places provides opportunities to rebuild struggle, as well as the pitfalls of these spatialised racial metonyms.

## **Methods**

I draw on semi-structured interviews, literature analysis and observations made as an active participant in some of the organisations and institutions analysed. I carried out over 25 in-depth interviews over the course of this research, many of which were set up through attending events, public meetings and protests against racism and police violence. More often than not, protesters or meeting attendees would refer me to one of the primary organisers of the event in question, which resulted in the bulk of my interviews being conducted with these individuals. I understand the limitations of this approach, as the spokespeople of organisations, particularly those with formal or informal hierarchies, may not necessarily reflect the thoughts of other group members or affiliates. Nonetheless, given that my research looks at a number of organisations, interviewing those most

accessible and knowledgeable about them makes the most practical sense and provides particularly rich data. Furthermore, the narratives of the primary organisers in black community campaigns are rarely afforded a voice in academic literature, and this approach provides a new and rich empirical basis upon which to build my theoretical arguments. Listening to recordings of the interviews, I identified recurrent themes, including racialised language, spatialised language and strategies for resistance. It is through this process that I was able to perceive continuities among individuals and organisations, identifying particular patterns of resistance.

Observational research has been deemed in some ways preferable to interviews, particularly in the research of race and class in the UK: 'Not being limited to what people say explicitly enables us to train a kind of attentiveness to what remains unsaid and tacit forms of recognition and coexistence' (Back & Duneier 2006: 13). As well as observations of public gatherings such as protests and open meetings, I analysed flyers, posters, blogs and other forms of social media.

Some field notes are taken from a series of weekly protests outside the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court in 2014, while another Tottenham resident, Nicky Jacobs, was being tried for the murder of police officer Keith Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm unrest nearly 30 years before. A number of Broadwater Farm residents were also present outside the court, including some of those who had previously been wrongfully accused of killing PC Blakelock. Jacobs was eventually found innocent of all charges. Protesters recounted the events of 1985 during and after the civil disturbances, and I made detailed notes of this. Other field notes are taken from public meetings organised by The Monitoring Group

(TMG) and the Interim Afrikan National People's Parliament (iNAPP), discussed in more detail below. Owing to the sensitivity of the work undertaken, some of the detail, in particular the formulation of strategy and tactics, is not reproduced in this paper. However, overarching goals, public campaigns and theoretical underpinnings still provide rich and useful data, sufficient for furthering our understanding of how black communities are organising to defend themselves from the police.

## **Conceptualising Race and Space**

This paper uses one specific place, Tottenham, as a case study to help think about how an area which is constantly a site of struggle against racist policing, in the form of both civil unrest and community campaigns, shapes how anti-racism is articulated. While 'place' is a term that holds a multitude of meanings (Harvey 1993), we can understand places as 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings' that are not necessarily contained within physical boundaries, shifting in form as these relations decay and renew (Massey 2005: 28). There is also a more abstract conceptualisation of space, which pertains to 'the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist' (ibid: 5) – in the case of this paper, how the racialised politics of Tottenham transcends its physical boundaries. Importantly therefore, space and place are relational – meaning that they emerge through interactions, and are shaped by institutions, ideologies and forms of domination/subjugation (Lefebvre 1991). Taking this into consideration, it is useful in this context to understand place as specific and space as something that is more general

(Agnew & Livingstone 2011). In other words, space seeks to identify specificities of places (Casey 1996); for example, a place such as Tottenham can be described as an urban, as opposed to a suburban or rural, space. Thus, while individual places are vital in understanding histories, struggles and how urban landscapes are occupied, contested and manipulated through racialisation, these processes operate across space.

In order to analyse effectively race and space, I use critical geographies of race, a theoretical tool premised on three key assumptions: the identification of the aforementioned structural nature of racism (white supremacy in its hegemonic form), primarily reproduced through institutions; the importance of narrative analysis in understanding how racism operates; and the problematising of racialisation manifesting itself in a black/white binary (Price 2009). Racialised spaces and places have less to do with how the people who live, work or socialise in a place like Tottenham are racialised, and more to do with the relationship that this place has with white supremacy.

Black people began to migrate to Britain in significant numbers as a result of the post-World War II labour shortage, during which workers in colonies such as the British Caribbean were invited to the metropolitan centres of Empire. McKittrick (2011) reminds us that the racialized plantations of the Americas provide 'the future through which contemporary racial geographies and violences make themselves known' (950). This connection between colonial spaces and the present became increasingly apparent as the size of black communities increased substantially in cities such as London during the post-war period (May & Cohen 1974). Indeed,



[i]t seems uncontroversial to claim that the roots of the racialised postmodern city can be traced to the end of the colonial era. Not until this juncture did the metropolises of the West have to confront directly the 'problem of the racially marginalised', of (re)producing racial marginalisation in their own spaces (Goldberg 1993: 187).

Unlike the often violent invasion and coercion which took place in the colonies, the areas of British towns and cities where black communities settled became racialised gradually (Smith 1989). Then often called the 'coloured quarter' (Banton 1955), these spaces are shaped by 'our present system knowledge, inherited from enlightened colonialism and Eurocentric modernity, [which] repetitively constitutes blackness as a discrete (and hostile) racial category that routinely 'troubles' an already settled whiteness' (McKittrick 2011: 950). One of the ways in which the supposed unsettlement of this post-colonial relationship between Britain and the people it colonised is managed, is through the deployment of police violence (Gilroy 1982). Since the establishment of black communities in Britain, their policing has been categorised as constituting continual 'premeditated repression' (Keith 1993: 3) rather than reflecting policy or legislative changes. Indeed, Keith (1993) goes on to argue

Black social centres and social events become labelled variously as foci for political agitators (1960s London); scenes of mugging; drug dealing and street crime (1970s London); and/or potential sites of public disorder (1980s London), as the conflict between police and Black people becomes part of police routine. (159)

While this paper will demonstrate how these categorizations are particularly relevant to Tottenham, it is widely argued that significant qualitative changes have emerged in the ways state violence is racialised, following the onset of neoliberalisation.

Neoliberalism claims to eradicate class, but has in fact 'become a broad-based political and cultural movement designed to obliterate public concerns...while allocating wealth and resources to those who are most privileged by virtue of their class, race, and power' (Giroux 2005: 13). The assumption is that the meritocratic nature of the market means that the most productive individuals and organisations will yield the highest returns (Harvey 2008). This reproduces existing inequalities, creating a seemingly colour-blind racism (Goldberg 2009). Neoliberalism thus 'embraces both race-blindness and a post-Black framing as correctives to historically articulated racial exclusions and subordinations' (Davis 2007: 394). This neoliberalised racism has been analysed under a number of headings by scholars in the US: anti-racism (Goldberg 2009), muted racism (Davis 2007), colour-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2010), dog-whistle racism (Lopez 2014). This paper uses the term metonymic racism, which is more widely used by scholars investigating neoliberal racism in Britain, and which best depicts the linguistic element of this phenomenon (Solomos & Back 1995, Keith 2005).

A metonym is a form of metaphor that uses an associated image or term to replace a wider concept. In the context of metonymic racism, rather than referring to black people directly, individuals may be characterised by using pejorative terms associated with a specific ethnic or racial group, such as mugger (Hall et al. 1978), or by being identified with an area racialised as black (Watt & Stenson 1997), such as Tottenham. Hall et al. (1978)

analysed how politicians and the corporate press mobilise populist racism against African-Caribbean people by racialising some crimes as black, such as 'mugging'. This alleged street robbery epidemic created a 'moral crisis', whereby journalists and politicians portrayed a stable and righteous Britain being invaded by deviant and dangerous racial outsiders.

Metonyms such as the 'mugger' rarely reflect material realities - the idea that the mugger is generally a young black male was created by a police and media campaign during the 1970s. This campaign identified 'areas of above-average crime rates, even though at the time black immigrants were under-represented in the crime rates of these 'criminal areas'' (Hall et al. 1978: 45). Similarly, although the largest racial group in the area, only around 30 per cent of the people in Tottenham identify as black (Haringey Council 2012); yet the whole area is still racialised as black by local activists (HYPE Interview 1: 22.10.13) and the local police. The latter engage in initiatives such as Operation Trident specifically targeting African-Caribbean communities (Met Police 2012).

Urban Britain today is heavily racialised, developing "assumed levels of poverty and 'roughness', the racial, ethnic and religious make-up of an area, as well as stories of danger and memories of 'racialised' experiences" (Clayton 2008: 258). For example, researchers have found that in areas of London associated with the African-Caribbean community, such as Sandringham Road in Hackney, the police articulate violence towards black communities as location-specific rather than race-specific (Keith 1993). This racialisation of space has been more readily articulated under neoliberalisation, which employs racialised discourses that deny overt racism while reproducing racial injustice

(Goldberg 2009). Although often identified as something negative, these racial metonyms can also help us understand the ways in which black resistance to police violence is similarly spatialised.

Metonymic racism, like other racisms, skews perceptions, reproduces stereotypes and further embeds essentialism. It also reproduces a neoliberal logic, which denies the continuation of structural racism, choosing instead to apportion blame for social inequalities on the failings of individuals (Kapoor 2013), in this case ‘muggers’ or the residents of Tottenham. Neoliberalism therefore seeks to bury racism alive (Goldberg 2009) under metonyms which articulate racism while denying its existence. Once these metonyms can be used to essentialise specific racialised groups, they serve the same purpose as overt racialised language: the maintenance of white domination. This of course throws up a number of important questions. How effective are metonyms in communicating *anti-racism*? Could this lead to a watered-down version of the militant anti-racism of the past, or is this approach an opportunity to fight racism without reifying or essentialising race? This paper develops answers to these questions.

#### “An Unnecessary Necessity”: Tottenham, North London

On 5 October 1985 police in Tottenham arrested Floyd Jarrett, a young black man from the local area, for what they claimed was a vehicle tax infringement. There are conflicting histories as to what took place after Floyd Jarrett's arrest; the following is taken from accounts by The Monitoring Group (TMG), an anti-racist organisation which emerged through partnerships built by a range of black and Asian anti-racist groups. One of the

features of the work involves continuing the efforts of the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Other sources for the account in this section come from internal government 'Home Affairs' documents declassified in 2015; the Gifford Report (the official report of the independent inquiry into the disturbances on Broadwater Farm in 1985); and investigative journalist David Rose, who has published his own in-depth report of the Broadwater Farm unrest and its aftermath. Police originally arrested Floyd Jarrett for a traffic offence which later proved to be unfounded (Rose 1992: 58, TMG 2014: 4). The subsequent inquest found that police confiscated, among other things, a set of keys to Jarrett's mother's home. Under the pretence of searching for stolen property, the officers used the keys to enter the property, where Jarrett's mother and younger sister were living (Gifford 1986: 67–70). In response to hearing the police account of the raid, the coroner at the inquest remarked: 'This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard' (ibid: 70). During the unlawful search, Floyd's mother, Cynthia Jarrett, was pushed over by police and left on the floor – she died of a heart attack.

In response, members of the local community marched to Tottenham Police Station demanding answers as to the circumstances of Cynthia Jarrett's death. According to the police and the Home Affairs Committee, "about 100 black persons of both sexes congregated outside the police station displaying a variety of placards accusing the police of murdering Mrs Jarrett...the demonstrators confined their action to shouting abuse at police officers positioned outside the station" (Home Affairs 1986: 7). The decision was eventually made to leave the police station and return to Broadwater Farm. According to The Monitoring Group, around 150 youths then decided to march to Tottenham Police Station to reiterate their demands, but were unable to do so owing to a number of police riot vans and officers occupying the periphery of Broadwater Farm (TMG 2014: 2-3). The

police and government accounts insist that the police were responding to calls from residents reporting criminal damage, which officers later “believed to have been a hoax, possibly to draw police onto the estate” (Home Affairs 1986: 9).

The account of the young people recalls hundreds of riot police, armed with shields and batons, shouting "Get back into your bloody hole! You're not leaving until we allow you to! Nigger Nigger Nigger! Oi! Oi! Oi!" and other racist slurs. While the government and police account makes no mention of racial provocation, all parties agree that bricks, bottles and other missiles were thrown at police as they battled on the estate for hours. Over 200 police officers were injured on Broadwater Farm that evening – PC Keith Blakelock, who was stabbed, died from his injuries. The unlawful raid which led to the death of Cynthia Jarrett, followed by a peaceful protest demanding answers that were not forthcoming, led to a violent uprising, resulting in a second death, that of a police officer (Gifford 1986: 119-120). Michael Keith (1993) reminds us that these instances of civil unrest do not take place in neutral spaces, but places

resonant with contested meanings; the social relations of conflict between the police and local Black communities were cemented through time in particular places lending these locations a distinctive sense of 'spatiality' (154).

This distinctive sense of spatiality is one which racialises Tottenham in general, and Broadwater Farm in particular, as black. This is the case whether it is viewed through the lens of identity and resistance adopted by many of its residents, or through that of the criminality and deviance ascribed to it by the police.

Following the disturbances, the estate was under police occupation for several months with, according to Bridges (1986), between 200 and 400 officers patrolling Broadwater Farm at any given time. One mother living on the estate told Race Today:

Doors were broken down, people beaten up, searches made and photographs taken. Phones have been cut off, or tampered with. We have learnt that the police question our visitors, and notes are made of people entering and leaving the estate... The police question the residents. We were asked about our country of birth<sup>3</sup>.

This level of blanket violence and harassment upon a specific community is almost unprecedented on the British mainland at this time. Boys as young as 14 were arrested in school grounds and taken to police stations for questioning. The police even targeted schools for children with Special Educational Needs. Race Today were told:

Children have been arrested and kept in detention... Parents have been refused access to children, who are being moved to different institutions around the country<sup>4</sup>.

The Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign was established to defend Floyd Jarrett and

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<sup>3</sup> Race Today – January 1986, p13

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

others accused of riot-related offenses. One member of the Campaign recalls having armed police raid his home, putting guns to the faces of his mother and younger sister. He was cuffed on the wrists and ankles, and carried by police while they punched him and used his head to open swinging doors. Thrown across the floor of the cell, his head was stopped from hitting the opposite wall by the boot of an officer who asked his superior for "Ten minutes with the black bastard". Fearing for his life, he was stripped naked and had saliva samples forcibly taken<sup>5</sup>, yet his experience was by no means unique among his Broadwater Farm contemporaries (Rose 1992: 99-117, Davis 1989: 74).

Thanks to a popular movement led by the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, the three men who were charged with the murder of Keith Blakelock (Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip) saw their convictions overturned in 1991. The court ruled that the evidence was 'unsafe and unsatisfactory' after forensic evidence proved that parts of Winston Silcott's statement were not made by him. The conclusion, therefore, was that the statement had in fact been fabricated by the police (Rose 1992: 77-84).

The events of 1985 illustrate how a space becomes racialized when racist policing, urban unrest and black community organizing coalesce. Rather than necessarily reflecting the demographics of the local population, a place like Tottenham is "structured by racism but reconfigured through resistance" (Keith 2005: 66). Racializing it as black serves not simply as an articulation of racism, but also as a metonym for anti-racist struggle. The Broadwater

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<sup>5</sup>Old Bailey Field Notes, Protest in Defence of Nicky Jacobs, accused of killing PC Blakelock



Farm Defence Campaign of 1985 was more than an initiative to keep local residents out of prison; it was a statement that people in the area were organised and unwilling to concede or consent to multiple levels of racist state violence. In 2011, the Tottenham Defence Campaign was established by some of the same people who were active in 1985, continuing Tottenham's legacy as a space racialised as black.

### Our Immediate Reaction: Crisis, Resistance and Racialised Spaces

Following the civil unrest in August 2011, black communities quickly mobilised to challenge the state's response. Members of the judiciary had been instructed to deliver the harshest possible punishments for riot-related offences, and they openly declared their commitment to passing 'deterrent' sentences. This led to a mother receiving a custodial sentence for handling goods appropriated in the unrest, suspects as young as eleven appearing in court, and a man with a history of mental health issues dying in prison while he awaited sentencing for stealing a gingerbread man (Bowcott & Bates 2011). Nearly 3,000 people were arrested in the weeks and months that followed the disturbances, two-thirds of whom were in London. Black people constituted the largest percentage of defendants, at 45 per cent (Bridges 2012: 7–8), despite constituting 13 per cent of London's population (Census 2011). Black people in the capital mobilised in response, and on a warm September evening in 2011, I attended a meeting in a large community centre hall, where a wide range of people gathered to challenge the police actions against the young people in the local area.

Although Tottenham has a history of black organising against the police, it is important to understand that such places do not constitute homogeneity but rather 'places of negotiation' (Massey 2005: 6). Present at the meeting was a mixture of older black anti-racist activists, Pan-Africanists, Rastafarians, youth workers, parents, Haringey residents and some local white trade unionists, socialists and anarchists. Despite their broad range of political backgrounds, attendees were discouraged from engaging in theoretical political discussions once inside the meeting. Speeches and debates over long-term strategies to overthrow white supremacy or capitalism were thus absent from the discussion. Rather, over 200 people gathered anxiously to learn from the newly formed Tottenham Defence Campaign (TDC) how they could best deal with the increasing intensity of police stops, searches, questioning, arrests, raids and incarceration.

It was quickly established that providing free legal advice for Haringey residents was a priority of TDC. One of the key resources was 'bust cards' containing information helping people to utilise legal tools, evidence collecting and other civilian strategies (Figure 5.1). This leaflet, printed on A6 paper, was distributed across every housing estate in the borough in the aftermath of the 2011 unrest. Underneath the TDC heading is written 'Tottenham Defence Campaign... For Us! By Us!'.

Tottenham is a racialised place, generally associated with its African-Caribbean residents, the largest racialised group in the area (Haringey Council 2012). The leaflet reaffirms a sense of place, with the first-person plural pronoun 'us' employed to invoke a collective sense of self in the local community. The bust card encourages residents to resist the

Figure 5.1

police: 'DO NOT accept any charge including cautions, answer any questions (whether it be in a van or interview or otherwise) or sign anything without speaking to a legal advisor. There is no such thing as a 'friendly chat''. This implicitly communicates to residents that the police may use deception in order to incriminate an individual. At the bottom, the small print explains that it has been produced by the Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), an 'independent anti-racist and civil justice organisation', and it gives their 24-hour support telephone number. NMP worked closely with TDC in 2011/2012; both Tottenham and Newham are terms employed as anti-racist metonyms that signify an outward-looking solidarity against policing.

**TDC** LEGAL INFORMATION  
Tottenham Defence Campaign.....For Usl By Usl

**IF YOU ARE ARRESTED...  
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- 1 Free legal advice at the police station
- 2 Have someone notified that you are in custody
- 3 Be given a copy of the 'PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) Codes of Practice' which explains your rights in details. Ask if not offered.
- 4 Remain silent and say "NO COMMENT" in a police interview
- 5 See a doctor if you have injuries or feel ill

We advise that you DO NOT accept any charge including cautions, answer any questions (whether it be in a van or interview or otherwise) or sign anything without speaking to a legal adviser. There is no such thing as a 'friendly chat' – anything you say may be used as evidence.

If you appear under 17 an appropriate adult (a parent/guardian or other responsible adult) will be required to be present during any interview.

**GETTING LEGAL ADVICE...**

We advise that you ask to speak to a legal adviser straight away. The police may say that it will be quicker without but this is unlikely to be in your best interests. If you don't know a solicitor already we recommend:

Bindmans 020 7833 4433 • Birnberg Peirce 020 7911 0166  
Hodge Jones & Allen 07659 111 192

Produced by Newham Monitoring Project – independent anti-racist & civil justice organisation. 24 hour freephone emergency service line for free confidential advice, support and legal referral: 0800 169 3111

For general enquiries contact:  
▶ [tottenhamdefence@gmail.com](mailto:tottenhamdefence@gmail.com) ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶

The majority of those who attended TDC events were people who identified as black. It was clear that this shared sense of anti-racist solidarity was an important component in the running of the campaign. At the first meeting, participants not only put their names and contact details on a circulation list, but also disclosed whether or not they were from Tottenham. This appears to have been done to ensure that the campaign remained Tottenham-led, working class-led, and black-led. The latter two are socio-cultural characteristics associated with Tottenham and it is therefore likely that most of those identifying as local residents were also working-class members of the black community. As the previous section illustrated, they also have a history of community organising in the

area. There seemed to be a sense of pride and 'neighbourhood nationalism' (Back 1996) about being from this place, which, in the face of racist violence, articulated a communal sense of defiance.

It could be argued that space is being essentialised in this context, with residence in Tottenham treated as a determining factor in the political identity and commitment of an individual. Even though a wide range of political identities came together to support TDC, Tottenham's local MP, David Lammy, showed no support for the campaign. Lammy's less critical stance on policing suggests that there are conflicting views among local residents as to how civil unrest and state violence should be addressed. Jason Nwansi, a Tottenham-based poet and rapper, performed during vigils organised by the family and supporters of Mark Duggan. Sometime after the unrest in 2011, he recorded a poem that articulates the socio-political divisions within the black community:

Dear David Lammy, do you even have a tongue?

Coz you're like a ghost in the town that I'm from.

You carved an image for yourself as Tottenham's good old son,

From the mean streets of Tottenham, to a backbench bum.

Silent when it's time to fight for justice and what's true,

And you're a million miles away from the modern-day Tottenham youth.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>'The Silence of the Lammy' [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRdrZUTRhGA&safe=active](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRdrZUTRhGA&safe=active) accessed 20

November 2014

Here, 'ghost' and 'miles away from the modern-day Tottenham youth' communicate the political disjuncture between David Lammy MP and Tottenham as a politicised entity. A political position which is considered to be uncritical of state violence is thus described as distant from the racialised places and peoples upon which such violence is carried out. In reality, of course, spaces racialised as black such as Tottenham constitute a set of 'changing and differential perspectives' (McKittrick 2011: 950) shaped by racial violence. These conflicting political approaches further complicate black resistance to policing, making long-term strategies for solutions all the more difficult. While reacting to a case of brutality can bring many sections of London's black communities together, constructing alternatives often brings to the surface political differences among individuals and groups. Institutional figures such as David Lammy are one example of this; these divisions will be revisited in the final section of this paper.

### Place and the Metaphorology of Anti-Racism

There is an obvious problematic between attempting to do away with the labels of racialisation and continuing to recognise the role that racialisation plays in a racist society (Ware & Back 2001). In other words, anti-racism prescribes us

the pious ritual in which we always agree that 'race' is invented but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world and to accept that the demand for justice nevertheless requires us to enter the political arenas that it helps to mark out (Gilroy

2000: 52).

This is further complicated by the effort to remain committed to the principle of black self-organisation as an important component in challenging racism. In addition, as neoliberalisation erodes the articulation of anti-racism into colour-blind discourses (Goldberg 2001), anti-racist metonyms risk being incorporated into this disarticulation of racism.

## **Concessions**

As was discussed above, one of the most effective forms of mobilisation emerges when people are reacting to a highly visible, racialised event. Such events are often closely related to a specific geographical area such as Tottenham. The black people who set up grassroots campaigns challenging state violence often live in areas with a relatively high black population. But groups like HYPE and TDC organise around specific places more explicitly. This is partly because 'people in a given locality understand [it] as having a particular history and as arousing emotional identifications, and [as being] associated with particular groups and activities' (Watt & Stenson 1997: 252). Reducing anti-racism to racially coded terms and phrases – thus demoting structural racism to a more localised problem – can reproduce neoliberalisation. As Angela Davis and Robin Kelley argue:

[The] path toward the complete elimination of racism is represented in the neoliberalist discourse of 'colour-blindness' and the assertion that equality can only be achieved when the law, as well as individual subjects, become blind to race. This

approach, however, fails to apprehend the material and ideological work that race continues to do (2012: 123).

Some groups engaged in grassroots black activism, such as the Interim National Afrikan People's Parliament (iNAPP), organise protests against police racism, particularly brutality and deaths in custody, while remaining explicitly committed to black politics. The iNAPP's projects include legal defence committees and an iNAPP Youth Core which addresses issues relating to young people, such as policing. They organise an annual Black People's Day of Action in New Cross (south-east London)<sup>7</sup>, culminating in a black-only event with speakers and discussions. In 2014, I attended the Day of Action which included a presentation from a youth worker, poet and activist in his late 20s named ShakaRa. His dreadlocks were covered in bright red cloth and his thirty-minute presentation was just as vivid. He spoke energetically and persuasively about black youth identity, listing the words that are used to describe black youth: BME, urban, under-privileged and so on. He cited a poll that found 76 per cent of black young people in the UK consider their primary identity to be British, which he said demonstrates a disjuncture from their African heritage and identity. He asked: "What is urban?". His answer to this rhetorical question was "a way of appreciating black culture without acknowledging it". This was an allusion to the many radio stations and other media outlets that employ terms such as urban; they feature black artists and presenters, but have white ownership and overwhelmingly white audiences (Pears 2013).

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<sup>7</sup> This event commemorates the Black People's Day of Action in 1981, the largest black-led protest in British history, a response to a fire that killed 13 black teenagers in New Cross, which many in the community considered to be a racist arson attack.

ShakaRa went on to talk about how racism is articulated through new forms of language. He cited a speech by Tony Blair about serious youth violence, in which he called for a renaissance in our cities and a return to British values. Such values included “respect and tolerance to others”, but Blair had added that “youngsters [must] stop thinking they can commit a crime, get a caution and carry on being a criminal”<sup>8</sup>. Blair’s proposed solution was based on a value system associated with whiteness, as the remedy to the violence associated with blackness. The speaker went on, when African-Caribbean people arrived in the UK, saying you were from ‘yard’, meant you were from Jamaica. But ‘yardie’, someone from Jamaica, has now become a term synonymous with criminality. We see here how metonymic antiracism can play into the hands of metonymic racism, by cloaking the centrality of racialised oppression when resisting state violence.

Organisations such as iNAPP, which identify as Pan-African, consider these forms of articulating anti-racism as necessitating black liberation. Doing away with more overt racialised language, they argue, can distort black identities as well as our understanding of racism. Metonymic anti-racism could thus have a comparable effect to that of neoliberalised racial metonyms, which attempt to divert our focus from structural inequalities to individual failings or racially coded groups such as ‘yardies’ or Tottenham residents. In other words, metonymic anti-racism could potentially give the impression that it is not anti-racism that is being articulated, but simply inequalities or prejudices experienced by people from a particular part of the world or by residents in a specific

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=203> accessed 2 January 2015



urban area. In order for a place such as Tottenham to articulate anti-racism, and not simply to exist as a geographical place, activists must be able to communicate effectively the ways in which the area is inextricably linked with anti-racist struggle.

### **Rekindling old flames**

One of the things that using space to articulate anti-racism does is compel people to refer to histories of racial struggle. When I asked one activist, who had been involved in many of the post-2011 campaigns in Tottenham, she recounted how black communities today reside

in inner-city areas [and] traditionally came from migrant communities that had a history here [in London] from the [19]40s and '50s and '60s. The areas that they moved into obviously were the least desirable areas: 'No dogs, No blacks, No Irish'. And these people came in and made amenities and set up projects and made links and things were vibrant (CMP, Interview 1: 6/10/2013).

We see here the way in which non-legislated segregation was enforced by white communities and landlords in 1950s and '60s Britain, effectively preventing Irish and/or black people from renting or purchasing housing in particular areas (Pilkington 1988: 45–52). The areas where black communities established themselves are therefore today both

celebrating the establishment of a culture, and commemorating the history of racism and of resistance to it.

The events in Tottenham in 2011 echo the ones following the 1985 Broadwater Farm uprisings discussed above, which saw Tottenham become part of the 'Front Line' in the battle against police violence, along with other areas racialised as black such as Brixton (south London) and Notting Hill (west London) (Keith 1993). The Monitoring Group (TMG) continues the work of both the Broadwater Farm and Tottenham Defence Campaigns – one of their workers is worth quoting at length here:

When I say Tottenham's a Front Line, I don't mean Tottenham's a place where people come to sell drugs and do things like that. When I say it's the Front Line, I mean it's at the fore of a battle against this onslaught of this militaristic, racist police force. And the reason we're at the fore of that battle, is because we had to set up a defence campaign, because we had to rise up, because the police took the life of a black woman in Tottenham, and we stood up to them... It's the place where they want to get but they can't. It's the place where PC Blakelock lost his life... And ever since then, they've ensured that it remains a symbolic location (TMG, Tottenham Field Notes, 7 February 2015).

Here, we see a number of racial metonyms employed. While black resistance and policing are described as the main features of what both the above speaker and the British press refer to as the 'Frontline' (Cohen 2013), Tottenham and Broadwater Farm are places

racialised as black, a “symbolic location”. The speaker says they are “the place where they want to get, but can’t” – in saying this they do not necessarily mean that the police cannot enter the physical place that is Tottenham and spaces of historical resistance within it such as Broadwater Farm. What the speaker means is that the police, and the state, cannot penetrate the spirit of rebellion felt by those on the ‘Front Line’.

### **Pragmatic Subversion?**

Metonymic anti-racism can be useful in accessing mainstream institutions where necessary. It could also be argued that spatialised anti-racist metonyms help us to identify violence and upheaval, through remembering places such as Broadwater Farm or Tottenham as sites of resistance. An extrapolation of this argument is that only when the potential allies of black community struggles have developed a level of consciousness which enables them to detect the racially coded language and the urgency of defending communities from state racism and police violence, will they be able to build genuine links of solidarity with the black struggle.

Metonymic anti-racism in fact forces anyone interested in building links of solidarity with black community struggle to interrogate thoroughly the subtle ways in which structural racism operates. This can provide a safeguard against those activists whose limited understanding of the issues can disrupt the functioning of a campaign. An example of this

lack of understanding is articulated in a reflection posted on social media by a TDC organiser:

I'm really pleased with yesterday's event, but there was one blot on the evening for me. This happened at the end of the night when a white woman was on her way out and stopped to ask me why we had only focussed on the deaths of Black people at the meeting. I bit my tongue and said, "Maybe it's because this meeting is to remember those who lived in and around Tottenham and were killed by the police, I don't recall the police having murdered any white folks in Totty lately!" Then this white woman then said that this was divisive! This white woman is a so-called anti-racist, anti-fascist SWP<sup>9</sup> supporter! And SHE'S telling ME that Black people remembering their OWN people is divisive! (TDC Field Notes 2013b: npn)

Here, an organiser of a public meeting about black deaths in custody is using the racialised space of Tottenham to subvert an argument with someone antagonistic to the politics of TDC. What is implicit is that most of the attendees at this event on black deaths in custody understood the role that structural racism plays in how black people are policed. The overall strategy of metonymic anti-racism appeared to be effective, not least in dealing with the white person to whom the post refers. The writer uses Tottenham as a shield, metonymising anti-racism in order to deal quietly with people who are unwilling or unable to understand why black campaigns need to exist. Metonymic anti-racism can therefore be

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<sup>9</sup> Socialist Workers Party

used to defend black-led activism subtly from attacks from "so-called anti-racist anti-fascist" activists who accuse them of being "divisive".

Haringey Young People Empowered (HYPE) runs workshops on policing and intra-communal violence in multicultural schools in the north London borough after which it is named. Many of its members have politics in line with the assumptions of critical race theory, which posits racism as embedded in the fabric of western society. Yet by associating their organisation with Haringey, they have been invited to run workshops in schools and receive funding from the local authority. Its members conceded that they would be unlikely to achieve such benefits if they were called 'Black Young People Empowered' or any other designation that reflected their relatively radical perspectives. One member of HYPE explained:

White is invisible, black is not invisible. They are the antithesis of each other...white allows you to get away with stuff and allows you not to be scrutinised...you have black on black crime, but never white on white crime...you have whites who have an issue with black history month. But black history month is just the month where you use the bits of white history that white people left out (HYPE Interview 1: 22 October 2013).

By this logic, not referring directly to blackness or the politics itself of race in the name of the organization (instead using Haringey as a racial metonym), gives the anti-racist politics of HYPE the sort of invisibility that whiteness enjoys. The invisibility of whiteness,

normalised in our society, is a key element in the reproduction of its power (Ware & Back 2001). Therefore, by making the politics of anti-racism invisible, yet consciously incorporating it into the politics and actions they engage in, black community struggles can potentially mimic the contradictory power of whiteness. This is done by using invisibility as a source of power, normalising their anti-racist discourse, which can be more beneficial than labelling it as something that creates an impression of marginality or controversy.

One of the key differences between African-Caribbean communities (and to a lesser extent African communities), and communities of Asian heritage living in Britain, is the manner in which Asian communities can identify themselves through ethnic markers other than skin colour. Some black activists argued that they had to organise around race. Their language and religion are often a replica of those of their colonial masters: speaking English or practising Christianity reproduces the historical norm within British society. Independent linguistic or spiritual formations, such as Creole or Rastafarianism, are considered by many in black communities as marginal or uncouth. The historical disjunctures created by the transatlantic slave trade in various Caribbean islands have resulted in relatively little shared history beyond the trauma of enslavement. It perhaps therefore makes sense that black communities draw upon more contemporary symbols of black identity in Britain, which include black British-derived vernacular, cultural and spatial formations.

## Conclusion

The geographies of racialisation have always played an important role in articulating black community struggle in places such as Tottenham. As anti-racist movements advanced, making it more difficult for the state, press and other institutions to use overt racist language, neoliberal colour-blindness gained traction (Davis 2007). The police and media outlets, knowing that particular areas are associated with blacks, use these places as racial metonyms, replacing overt racist language with a term associated with race – in this case, a racialised space (Keith 1993).

This paper has argued that metonymic anti-racism now dominates the names of black grass-roots organisations resisting policing in London. Black struggles use the strong sense of community affiliation associated with racialised places: Tottenham (Defence Campaign), Newham (Monitoring Project), Haringey (Young People Empowered), or (West London) CMP. The social meanings of these spaces help to mobilise people into organised resistance, encouraged by the constant reference to space and place made by the activists cited in this investigation.

A black sense of place, defined by the violence and upheaval in spaces racialized as black such as Tottenham, illustrates the precarious relationship between blackness and space. The centrality of racial metonyms has led to spaces racialised as black transcending physical boundaries. This is a necessary development to avoid the essentialisation of space and place. Spatialised metonymic anti-racism thus demonstrates some of the most galvanising articulations of black resistance to state violence in post-2011 London.

Scholars have long grappled with the contradiction of seeking recognition of existing racial inequalities without reproducing or essentialising race. What metonymic anti-racism suggests is that those engaged in black struggle against the police are using spatialised political identities which are attempting to reconcile this paradox. In addition, these organisers show a pragmatic ingenuity, navigating the neoliberalised discourses that attempt to suppress overtly racialised language and effectively accessing resources as a result. As scholars and activists, it is vital that we recognise the ways in which anti-racism is being communicated, in order to further our attempts to re-establish anti-racist struggles as a central component of the progressive left in Britain and beyond.

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