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Capstone Paper

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Olive Morris and the Fight for Black Power in Britain and Beyond: A Legacy of Activism and Resistance

"My heart will always be in Brixton." - Olive Morris

Olive Elaine Morris was born in Jamaica on June 26, 1952. Her parents were Vincent Nathaniel Morris, a technician, and Doris Lowena Morris, a factory worker. Her parents moved to Britain as part of the Windrush Generation. From 1945 to 1960, this generation consisted of large groups of emigrants from the Caribbean who boarded ships to Britain. The Black population in Britain went from around 300,000 to one million in just three years. One of these ships was the *Empire Windrush,* a converted Nazi troopship. This particular ship was among the first to ship out these emigrants, and as a result, the generation was dedicated to the name "Windrush." Morris's parents, like many people from the Caribbean, emigrated to Britain to fill the labor shortage after World War II. There were many job opportunities that were open primarily in steel manufacturing and the National Health Service. The Windrush Generation did not merely bring workers, and, therefore, an economic boost, but was the beginning of a more diversely populated country.

With a country starting to gain an influx of these international migrants, especially a predominantly white country, the preexisting white residents were becoming uneasy. This mosaic of migrants and their children, who came for employment opportunities, were now placed in a

landscape where people feared their skin color and emigration status. Morris, who stayed in Jamaica until she was nine, migrated in the thick of the beginnings of this new Britain.[1]

Once reunited with her parents in Britain, Morris was raised and went to school in South London, where she was submerged in the inequalities and institutionalized racism in the British school system and overall society.[2] Despite leaving school at sixteen years old, in 1975 she was offered to take a degree course at Manchester University.[3] There were very few students of color at Manchester University, as was her early schooling.[4] In comparison, the same year as Morris started her higher education, the United States withdrew from Saigon, where Portuguese colonial rule was ended by the Mozambique and Angola liberation movements. This decolonization was felt by Morris, as she understood the powers of colonialism and imperialism.

It is no wonder that being raised in a racially coded country where racism was rampant in schools sparked Morris's activism, even at a young age. Since she was sixteen, she has been involved in grassroots organizations and groups. One of her most notable activism actions was on November 15, 1969, when at seventeen years old, Morris saw a Black man, Clement Gomwalk, being arrested by the police in Brixton. He was a diplomat with the Nigerian High Commission who parked his Mercedes car in a no-waiting zone. Morris saw the tensions forming between the police and the man and intervened, along with five others, which resulted in the police beating and arresting her. A photograph was taken of Morris at King's College Hospital after the occurrence. In it, her face is bruised and her clothes are disheveled and dirtied, yet she stands remaining guiltless and determined in her youthful passion. On the back of the

[1] Liz Obi, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*, Volume 1, Lambeth Archives.
[2] Liz Obi, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*.
[3] Liz Obi, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*.
[4] Paul Keleman, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*, Volume 1, Lambeth Archives.

photograph, she writes, “Taken at about 10 PM on 15 Nov 64 after the police had beaten me up (at Kings College Hospital).” [5]

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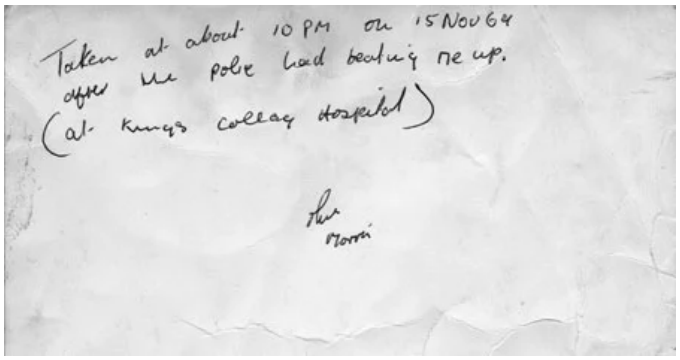

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Her fiery passion in her early activism years continued in her time at university. At Manchester University, while completing a Social Sciences degree, Morris was involved in broader societal issues such as the anti-apartheid movement and anti-immigration campaigns. She also fought against on-campus issues, such as the fight against the labor government's increase in tuition fees for overseas students. Despite this tuition increase not affecting Morris, she insisted on delving into the fight as she saw this as a discriminatory fee. She did not like that this increase treated their overseas students discriminatorily, especially since these students came here to earn a higher education. She believed this fee symbolized British racism as a whole.

Morris enjoyed her time at university. She loved to read and discuss topics she was interested in, which was almost every topic. She most notably took political philosophy,

[5] *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*, Volume 1.
[6] *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*, Volume 1.
[7] *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*, Volume 1.

Marxism, social movements in Asia and South Africa, and sociology. The knowledge learned in these classes laid the framework for her time in the British Black Panthers (BBP), Brixton Black Women's Group (BWG), and Organization of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD), where she aided the group's involvement in the community, government, and internationally. [8]

Everyone who knew Morris sang nothing but praise and admiration for her. Her youthfulness came with passion and arrogance, something those at that age can agree with. Morris represented everyone: Black, Asian, Indian, Latin, underpaid, unemployed, financially struggling, single working mom, disabled, homeless - anyone affected by the way the world works. Looking at Morris' youthful passion for change ignited your own. Seeing her was like looking in a mirror. Morris quickly changed from a single person to a feeling, and she dared to make people ask within themselves, how am I changing the world?[9] She saw hope and told everyone that they could too. Her untimely death on July 12, 1979, at only twenty-seven, cut short her promising activism career but left an enduring legacy. She truly believed in justice for all, and to achieve that people of all backgrounds needed to come together in respect. Her spirit, as close friend Sheila Ruiz says, is something that she represented well ahead of her time.[10]

After Morris had attended university, armed with fresh knowledge and preexisting passion, she immediately networked with like-minded people to organize a strong local Black community. Here is when she helped create the Manchester Black Women's Co-Op, along with Ada Phillips and Kath Locke. After Morris' death, this co-op was reformed in 1980 as the Abasindi Co-Operative. In its prime, the Manchester Black Women's Co-Op most notably created self-help educational programs for people in their community. These programs were mainly attentive to the needs of young mothers, but anyone could reap the benefits from them.

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[8] Keleman, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*.
[9] *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*.
[10] Sheila Ruiz, *Do You Remember Olive Morris?*.

The co-op strived to cater to what the community needed. This is why a training program geared toward office skills was produced, so people of all ages could learn proper talents to gain better employment opportunities. Additionally, community initiatives were made specifically for young people to play an active part in it. Like Morris, people saw and felt the effects of institutionalized racism in schools, so to reverse this, they created their own programs for Black children.

Nevertheless, in 1979, the group's members underwent a significant revisit to their achievements and developments. While effective, the members stated that their programs were not as effective as they could be, particularly in raising Black women in the community, which was one of the group's main goals. To combat this, the group decided to expand their outreach and decided that the co-op should instead be autonomous and self-determining. That is why, in 1980, it was transformed into Abasindi.[11]

After the Manchester Black Women's Co-Op, Morris then joined the BBP, BWG, and OWAAD. These organizations are chronological, and all bleed into each other, yet still stand alone. Morris and all these groups were fighting against the racist society through the grounds of political Blackness and Black Power with some elements of Black Radicalism. These groups and the message they strived for is something Morris devoted her life to. This paper will go through the life and legacy of Olive Morris to argue how Black British organizations need to use feminism and socialism in order to combat racism.

The United States Black Panther Party (USBPP) was the first Black Panther Party across the globe. Many believe the USBBP is the only Black Panther Party when, in fact, there are many umbrella chapters. The first international branch was in Algeria, where the Algerian Black Panthers formed in 1969. Additionally, the USBBP influenced the Vanguard Nationalists and the Socialist Party in the Bahamas. Cuba was also affected, where USBBP leader Eldridge Cleaver

[11] Quote ps - idk

had ties within the Castro regime. In Puerto Rico, the Black Panther Party included the Young Lords, a nationalist group from 1966 to 1972. On the whole, USBBP inspired international Black Panther Parties in Australia, Bermuda, India, Israel, and the United Kingdom between 1967 and 1987. Some theorize that the hegemony of US capitalism was the reason and forefront behind the entire network of Black Panther Parties.[12]

While the BBP and USBPP are of the same network, they are considerably different. Depending on each member of both the BBP and USBBP, members will have varying degrees of opinions on this subject. Members of each Party either liked or disliked the other international group because of one fundamental difference between Black Britians and Black Americans. The key difference is that many of the BBP members' families and Black Caribbean migrants bought tickets to move to Britain willingly. Black American descendants were savagely torn from Africa to live in the US, a slavery-stained hostile country, forcefully turning them into Black Americans.

Regardless of this significant difference, the BBP used imagery and symbols from the USBPP, such as the raised fist. Overall, the BBP did support the USBPP. This can be shown in March 1970, when around three hundred BBP members went outside the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square to protest against the unfair treatment the USBPP was receiving.

The BBP was formed despite the already present Black grassroots movements and other Black-centered organizations that were available. Obi Benue Egbuna (1938-2014) was the main leader of the BBP from 1961 to 1973. In 1966, Egbuna visited the US to meet the USBBP and the Black community at large. There, he went through Black communities and absorbed himself into Black American culture. Egbuna learned much on his visit about the USBPP, Black life in the US, ideas about media, and Black radical literature. When Egbuna returned to the UK, armed

[12] Angelo, “Black,” 18.

with this new knowledge, he knew he had to develop a new Black Power organization. He first organized the Universal Colored People's Association (UCPA). Still, after several months, he felt that the message was dying and disorganized, so he resigned and created the BBP. Unlike the UCPA, Egbuna wanted the BBP to be "masculine" and a "fraternity of brothers." This was the start of the gender tensions within the BBP and is the catalyst for the BWG forming.[13] Other founding members included Darcus Howe, Linton Kwesi Johnson, and Olive Morris. Some early members were Altheia Jones-LeCointe, Farrukh Dhondy, and Mala Sen, where Jones-LeCointe and Sen identified as South Asian.

Egbuna frameworked the BBP with Karl Marx's ideology. Morris agreed to this to a degree, but what she did not approve of was how Egbuna wanted the BBP to be separated from white supporters and allies. Egbuna believed that even if white individuals were liberal, they still enjoyed the comfort, security, and privilege they received from the racist system of society. However, as the BBP started to get more attention, Egbuna started to accept some white support and allies. This is another difference from the USBBP, as they had always known they needed support from white individuals. The same aligns with the BWG, where the women in the group knew that they needed white support because they were all fighting for the same thing.

The UK tried to control the perception of Black communities through television. They would largely cover Black Power in the US and not in the UK, proclaiming it to be an American movement and not one in the UK. Instead, they would broadcast propaganda about Black communities, housing issues, immigration, and employment. During the BPM the nationwide accessibility of the television set boomed. People were more informed than ever, but the question of what they were watching was true or false was another issue. Despite the push for Black Britians to be blamed for societal problems in the UK, they felt more connected to African

[13] Angelo, "Black," 22.

Americans in the US through television. With the tensions Black Britians felt with their white neighbors they felt more connected to the African American protestors and activists that were broadcasted on the television, “

[w]hen the Black American athletes at the 1968 Mexico Olympics gave their Black Power salutes as they received their medals, thousands of Black people in Britain, from our generation and our children's, felt we were on the map. People remember that occasion like they remember President Kennedy's assassination: a symbolic moment in our history.”[14] This moment during the 1968 Olympics instantly connected millions of Black individuals around the world.

The African Americans being broadcasted brought up anger with Black Britons as well, because despite recognizing that the US also had racial issues, they felt that they were overlooked, and had a bigger problem. Blackness was invisible in Britain,

> “In Mississippi, the White man tells you straight that he doesn't want you in his neighborhood and you know where you stand with him. In Wimbleton, the Englishman will apologize most profusely when he refuses you accommodation on racial grounds… When you confront him personally, it is never his fault, he of course never has racial prejudice, it is always the neighbour who is the villain. The American will lynch you and doesn’t give a damn who knows it. But the Englishman always has enough residue of subtlety to lynch you with iron hands in velvet gloves.”[15]

Television in these times had the same issues we have now. There was a push from the Black community to include more Black individuals on television, especially to play roles in shows and films as doctors, lawyers, and in high-ranked positions. However,

[14] Rob Waters, “Black Power on the Telly: America, Television, and Race in 1960s and 1970s Britain.” 952.
[15] Angelo, “Black,” 27.

when this did occur, people threw words and statements such as “diversity hire” and that they “make too much on Black people.”[16] This prejudice occurs today, yet one thing can be certain, despite this the people that this represents need to see themselves represented on television, especially children of these groups.

The BBP fought for many things, such as the need to educate Black communities, the fight against racial discrimination, educating BBP members and British communities about Black history, police brutality, immigration, and fascist violence, executing civil rights demonstrations, and supporting Caribbean and Palestine liberation. The BBP were not scared to fight the police. They were prepared and willing to confront police officers when they deemed it necessary. Talk about the police here. BBP member and poet Linton Kwesi Johnson described the BBP as an organization that “came in to combat racial oppression, to combat police brutality, to combat injustices in the courts against Black people, to combat discrimination at the place of work, to combat the miseducation of Black youths and Black young people.” It was not a separatist organization, and they were proud of their slogan, “Black Power – People’s Power.” The BBP, as well as the USBBP, favored Huey Newton’s idea of revolutionary intercommunalism. The BBP did not use this term, but they did support a global socialist revolution, where the end goal was to expose the nation-state as irrelevant.[17] Across the board, the USBPP and BBP connected race and class to each other.

The BBP had two notable actions. First, they disagreed with the Immigration Act of 1971. This act created a legal framework for controlling immigration into the UK. Second, their most notable action was the 1970 Mangrove Nine Trial. The Mangrove, a Caribbean restaurant in Notting Hill, West London, was unwarrantedly and constantly targeted by police. On August

[16] Waters, “Black Power,” 966.
[17] Angelo, “Black,” 20.

9, 1970, what started as a peaceful march led to a violent riot. Out of the one hundred fifty protesters, nineteen were arrested, and nine were defendants, hence the title Mangrove Nine. The nine defendants were found not guilty, and it was a landmark case that showed the brutal police brutality in Britain.

The BBP had a Youth League. Additionally, before the Education Reform Act of 1988, the British state school system embraced a policy of classifying "difficult" students as "educationally subnormal," often shortened to ESN. While "normal" was defined by a set of tests and one's academic performance in the classroom, Black children were disproportionately listed as ESN (education). The BBP had its own published newspaper and publications. Their newspaper was *Freedom News,* and their publications were *Black Power Speaks* (1968) and *Black People's News Service* (1970).

In December 1968, Egbuna had to step down as leader as he was arrested and convicted of a conspiracy to murder police officers. He wrote an essay about resisting police violence. His arrest gave the BBP their first media attention, yet it was negative. They were labeled as "Black racialists" and "extremists." Jones-LeCointe stepped up as leader. Their growth was slow, but by the early 1970s, the BBP had around 3,000 members, mainly in the British left political circle.

Despite five years of hard work, the BBP collapsed. There was infighting, a power struggle within the groups and society, and kangaroo courts.[18] After the BBP ended, many female members, Beverly Bryan, Olive Morris, and Liz Obi, formed the Brixton Black Women's Group.

The BBP and Morris committed their cause to define what being Black British meant. Political Blackness broadly called for the term "Black" to be an umbrella term for anyone who is not white. That is because anyone who is not white is highly likely to experience race-based

[18] Sarah Hughes, "The story of the British Black Panthers through race, politics, love and power." *The Observer*, 2017.

discrimination. That is why many groups and activists put together people who were Black and those of (particularly South) Asian descent. In the present day, Black has a vastly different definition than it did in 1970s Britain. Shiela Ruiz, a friend of Morris, asked this question, "Since I know where Asia is, I want to know where Black is. We used to have a term 'Black' which was inclusive. It was a political term. But if those of us of African origin are now solely being seen by the colour of our skin, it seems to me that that compounds racism."[19] Another BBP member, Don Let, agreed that the next generation of the Windrush generation and British Black youth had to form what "Black British" meant to them. That term, while useful for description, was not as simple as it seems.[20] In the British Black Power Movement (BPM), Black was an overarching term for any person of color. That is where the political Blackness and Black Power merge, as Black Power is used as an expression for any rage oppressed people feel,[21] "Black Power rage, drama, and style, as revolutionary jargon, offers something to everybody: to the unemployed, the idealistic, the dropout, the communist, the politically frustrated, the anarchist, the angry student returning from humiliations abroad, the racialist."[22] In this regard, Black Power could involve white individuals, but only if they fulfilled these terms.

In some regards, Black Power has been compared to"Back to Africa," particularly in the US, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Back to Africa was a political movement in the 19th and 20th centuries that called for those of African descent to leave their country and move to Africa. The ultimate goal of this is to have African descendants assert their dominance over the New World by immersing themselves in their African culture.[23] To others in various countries, Black Power means religious or political control.[24] Partiality

[19] Sheila Ruiz, "Being Part of ROC," 111.
[20] Don Lett interview by Greg Whitfield, Punk 77.
[21] Angelo, "Black," 18.
[22] William R. Lux, "Black Power in the Caribbean," *Journal of Black Studies* 3, no. 2 1972, 207.
[23] Lux, "Black," 209.
[24] Lux, "Black," 211.

in the US, can be described as, “What Black Power really was (and still is) rebelling against was the economic underdevelopment of the still unchanged plantation system and society shaped by slavery…Black Power is a psychological revolution or an aggressive encounter between a European culture and a nascent culture.”[25] I argue that Black Power is not necessarily about racism and being against white individuals but against an already racist system.

This ties into Black Radicalism, as it is a collection of thoughts, ideas, and theories on how to disrupt social, political, economic, and cultural norms. A key aspect of Black Radicalism is that schools and other institutions in the Western world choose to oppress all people of African descent. They argue that the West is structurally racist. They believe that these racist institutions allow Black communities to create their own independent organizations and nations since it is the only way to overcome racial inequality. Those that support Black Radicalism believe that Black independent education is a must.[26] That is why many people believe there should be separate schools for different races. They want to build an education system in the West that will give Black students the potential to be successful in society.[27][28]

Black radicalism is part of radical Black thought and is largely part of the Black Power Movement in the US. One of the first times arose in Ethiopia, where they struggled for independence from Europe in 1895. It continued throughout the years and was popular with Marcus Garvey (1976), Malcolm X (1970), and Kwame Nkrumah (1998). Each of these figures represents a different movement and period. However, they

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[25] Lux, “Black,” 222.
[26] Andrews, “Toward,” 5.
[27] Andrews, “Toward,” 6.
[28] Andrews, “Toward,” 5.

are all interconnected as they all agree that Western imperialism is the key feature to be overturned in order for African Diaspora descendants to unite and liberate. That is why the key fight is against places that are still under European imperialism's control and effect. Black radicalism "must be understood as the politics of revolution, seeking to overturn the system of Western imperialism that oppressed the Black population worldwide."[29]

Black Radicalism should not be confused with Black Nationalism, Marxism, or Critical Race Theory. Black Nationalism is commonly referred to as Black people needing to band together to fight racial oppression. "Nationalism" refers to Black being a country of sorts, which makes it more than an identified racial category. This is why many Black Nationalists feel that in the US, there is a nation of Black Americans who are separate from White Americans but remain in the same country. Malcolm X and the US Black Panthers refer to this, as they believe that they need to overthrow Western imperialism by developing a Black "nation within a nation."[30]

Black Nationalism and Black Radicalism both center on the diaspora of Africans. However, what differs from Black Radicalism is that "Black people as a nation that transcends national boundaries, connecting back to Africa, and does not seek to separate Black people of a particular nation into a residential grouping." People can and will be racist, but only from being taught it. People are naturally not born with a certain set of prejudices and biases. That is why Black Power and Black Radicalism argue that while individuals can be racist, it is the system that is inherently racist which is what teaches young and impressionable children.

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[29] Andrews, "Toward," 6.
[30] Andrews, "Toward," 6.

Morris adopted and took parts of the BBP political ideology of political Blackness, Black Power, and Black Radicalism in various ways. She took what politics and knowledge she learned in the BBP, and co-founded the BWG in an effort to combat the gender tensions that persisted in the BBP. Morris knew that the gender strife within her brothers and sisters in the BBP was what aided to its downfall and was not letting the organization advance. Sexism and racism, despite being two separate types of discrimination, overlap in many ways. There is an intersectionality between all forms of biases and human rights issues, but these two forms raise the biggest questions. Seeing that in political Blackness, Black Power, and Black Radicalism that it is the system because racist and sexist, BWG and OWAAD combat this through feminism and socialism.

The BWG was established from 1973 to 1989 and is self-described as a "Black socialist feminist" organization in an effort to dissolve gender and race struggles.[31] It is considered to be the first autonomous Black women's group to be created in London and Britain.[32] Notable members, a few of them founders, include Beverly Bryan, Olive Morris, Liz Obi, Gail Lewis, Dorothea Smartt, and Amina Mama. The group fought against racism, sexism, fascism, class oppression, and more in both London and the world at large.[33] The BWG was established from 1973 to 1989 and is self-described as a "Black socialist feminist" organization.[34] It is considered to be the first autonomous Black women's group to be created in London and Britain.[35] Notable members, a few of them founders, include Beverly Bryan, Olive Morris, Liz Obi, Gail Lewis, Dorothea Smartt, and Amina Mama. The group fought against racism, sexism, fascism, class oppression, and more in both London and the world at large,[36]

[31] Brixton Black Women's Group. *Speak Out!,* Verso, 2023, vii.
[32] *Speak Out!,* vii.
[33] *Speak Out!,* vii.
[34] Brixton Black Women's Group. *Speak Out!,* Verso, 2023, vii.
[35] *Speak Out!,* vii.
[36] *Speak Out!,* vii.

> "Understanding that to be Black in Britain was to be positioned outside the boundaries of the nation and that, in its corporeality, the state was antagonistic to Black life, Black women radicals endeavored to find ways of being in the world that were not tethered to the ruse of citizenship, the fallacies of the nation-state or the horizon of empire."[37]

The BWG was collectively run as a group rather than having specific people in certain positions. The same went for *Speak Out!*, which was collectively written and never credited to specific contributors. Their non-hierarchical process was meant to represent their message of a society where everyone had a voice, especially minorities such as working-class Black British women, "Sometimes I think it's hard for generations now to really understand the depth and scope of that idea of the collective, and to some extent, it might have gone too much that way."[3839] This was the BWG's way of socialism, yet is an example of how it can go too far. Members would sell *Speak Out!* on the street or at the Big Bank Center, which was a nursery, the Law Center, which was converted from a bookstore, and cultural centers.

The BWG is important because Black female feminists were integral to the BPM. Black women, such as Morris, believed that they were "not only making history but rewriting it."[40] The experience that Black women had is a reflection of how all Black people were treated, as well as how women in different classes were. Grassroots organizations such as the BWG sought to shape this duality.[41] The BWG partnered with the Mary Seacole Craft Group to establish the Mary Seacole House, which was renamed in 1970 to the Black Women's Center. Mary Seacole was a British nurse who was born in Jamaica. Seacole fought to be a nurse during the Crimean War and

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[37] *Speak Out!,* 3.
[38] Gail Lewis, "Gail Lewis Interview," Interview by Isabella Apgar.
[39] *Speak Out!,* 7.
[40] Yula Burin and Ego Ahaiwe Sowinski. "Sister to Sister: Developing a Black British Feminist Archival Consciousness." *Feminist Review*, no. 108 2014, 112.
[41] Burin, "Sister," 112.

was known to overcome prejudice. This Black women's center was the first of its kind in Britain, used as a meeting point for many other women's groups and organizations, and the postal address for OWAAD. The center hosted many events: information and referral services pertaining to legal and welfare rights, craft workshops, health services which included contraception and pregnancy advice, children's activities, and a library and resource center with a big collection of women and race literature.[42]

Gail Lewis, BWG and OWAAD member, joined the BWG because it was a Black, feminist, socialist, anti-imperialist women's organization. Lewis claims the biggest challenge the BWG had was time. They used "Black as an anti-imperialist sign…So what was key to us was that we knew that by using the term Black, it was a sign under which we could convene and bring together multiple constituencies whose very formation, and indeed presence in Britain, was because of colonialism. So one of the big slogans that traveled around the Black formation that sense was 'we're here because you were there.'" The BWG's passion for anti-fascism and anti-imperialism brought many like-minded individuals together.

The BWG claimed they were "Black socialist feminists." Members understood that human rights issues were overlapping and intersecting. The BWG was central to the topic of class structure. Being a "Black socialist feminist" had all to do with the intersectionality of race, gender, and class which positions you in society.[43] They believed that the foundation of successful organizations was ordinary people.[44] For the BWG, these were women of color who were mothers and sisters and held jobs. Ordinary people know what they need, so when they come together in a group, they have more power to spark change.

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[42] *Speak Out!,* viii.
[43] *Speak Out!,* 7.
[44] *Speak Out!,* 8.

What made the BWG socialist was the way they worked on meetings. Members would visit other like-minded groups and report back to the BWG on what they could take inspiration from. The key part is that they would form a group view on it and then enact it.[45] They also had a working-class methodology,

> "Even if people had been middle class…they became working class once they were here. We *had* to understand the class. Reading Marx meant you had to understand how a class dynamic was also central…we weren't just 'socialist feminists' we were *Black* socialist feminists, and we had to understand that class struggle, gender struggle, and anti-racist struggle were all part of the terrain in which we operated."[46]

It is critical to understand the intersectionality between race, sex, and class. These things the BBP tried to address, but the BWG took the initiative of.

The BWG formed another group called the Organization of Women of African and Asian Descent (OWAAD) that was around from 1978-1983, becoming the first national Black women's organization in the UK.[47] It differs from the BBP and BWG because it specifically highlights Asian and African women, still on the grounds of political Blackness.[48]

OWAAD has a newsletter similar to *Speak Out!*, tilted *FOWAAD.* The main principles of FOWAAD was to give the public information about OWAAD, feedback on the National Black Women's Conference that OWAAD held, information about what is generally going on in the UK, US, and around the globe, a place for sisters to give their voice and hear others, and most importantly, "you will begin to see it as <u>your</u> paper - for it is <u>your</u> letters and articles, <u>your</u> news

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[45] *Speak Out!,* 8.
[46] *Speak Out!,* 8.
[47] *Speak Out!,* vii.
[48] *Speak Out!,* vii.

and reviews, your ads, cartoons, and poems, which will make OWAAD into the genuine mouthpiece of Black women in Britain."[49] This message is very similar to the BWG. However, the difference between the BWG and OWAAD is that it started to differentiate between those of African and Asian descent. BWG used "Black" as the overarching term, whereas OWAAD discerned between the two groups.

Black British feminism is a dwindling subject. Morris sought to combat this and symbolized the perseverance Black British feminists went through. Black women in Britain in the mid to late twentieth century continued the rebellion against their mother country because Britain had always been hostile towards their presence.[50] Black women were not always silent, only unrecognized, as it has taken time for Black women's labors to be addressed, "we were the women, we had responsibilities, we were doing childcare, we were doing everything, and we should be recognized and should have a voice in the organisation, not just be their secretaries…because that's where we were relegated."[51] During the BPM, Black women were doing "backroom jobs" such as typing, cooking, and housework. They were placed on pickets and protests "expected to follow, not lead."[52]

The BWG knew that Black women had to be involved with white feminism, which was a radical train of thought for this time. At this time, white-led women's groups would campaign for greater abortion rights. However, while the BWG agreed with this, they argued that their campaigns failed to mention or account for the way women of color were treated in the healthcare system, especially in terms of reproductive needs.[53]

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[49] Front cover of FOWAAD Issue 1, 1979. Published by OWAAD (Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent).
[50] *Speak Out!,* 2.
[51] *Speak Out!,* 3.
[52] *Speak Out!,* 3.
[53] *Speak Out!,* 9.

In the matter of Black and white feminism, there are two arguments: One, feminism should not be separated by race since the fight is against all women, or two, feminism should be separated by race because women of different races experience feminism and racism differently. Gemma Tang Nain, a Black feminist from the Caribbean, favors the first side. Nain states that the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) allows women of all races, but provides an additional branch where women of different races and skin colors can go.[54] Nain is confused as to why Black women in the US and UK allow racism to overshadow sexism because it typically leads to a rejection of feminism on Black women.[55] This has caused issues within OWAAD, where racism was more focused on than sexism, many claiming it was "not a choice, it's a necessity."[56] On the US side, it was different, "for to choose one and omit the other is detrimental to her well-being." and that "it should be obvious that the Black Liberation struggle claims first priority."[57]

Mainstream feminism, including in the present times, does not take Black women experiences into consideration. In this stance, feminism can be race-blind and, therefore, is insensitive to the Black community as a whole.[58] In Black feminism, the key parts that differ from perceived white feminism are reproduction, patriarchy, and family. These three concepts all compare and contrast with one another. Reproduction refers to the inaccessible and mistreatment of Black women in healthcare, where they are often not treated to the same standard as their white counterparts. Black women are more likely to not receive or be given "bad" birth control, no access to safe abortions, and mistreatment and disrespect from doctors. In patriarchal society and family, Black women are more likely to experience male violence in the household, and not

[54] Gemma Tang Nain, "Black Women, Sexism and Racism: Black or Anti Racist Feminism?" *Feminist Review*, no. 37 1991, 1.
[55] Nain, "Black," 2.
[56] Nain, "Black," 2.
[57] Nain, "Black," 2.
[58] Nain, "Black," 2.

report on it. These are political problems that, while white women may experience as well, Black women are more affected by.[59] As Audre Lorde, a famous Black lesbian writer, states, "Black feminism is not white feminism in Blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as Black women."[60]

Maternal politics is a feminist and anti-racist fight. Black British female feminists were forced to "(other)mother." (Other)mothering has been a cultural and historical practice that can be dated back to the era of slavery. It is when women or mothers take care of children that are not biologically their own to help both the biological mother and their community. (Other)mothering can be personal, such as having friends or neighbors help care for your child. However, it is also political. During the BPM, when mothers had to go to work, other women would assume responsibility and take care of their children, especially when Black children were not getting equal education as white children.

Black female feminists would often go to protests and boycotts but were met with pushback, therefore, they had to escalate their approach and demonstrate their dedication. One of these examples is going to a protest while pregnant. This would raise questions, concerns, and most of all, attention. It symbolizes the past and future of prejudice and resistance, as the mother has gone through discrimination and her baby will be forced to as well. That is if the way of life and path of racism continues. Going to a protest tells people that if things do not change, the baby's life will be the same as the mother's.

[59] Nain, "Black," 2.
[60] Anim-Addo, "Activist-Mothers," 45.

Equal education for children of all races is a massive part of the problem. Morris was affected by this, as was, by assumption, most of the BBP, BWG, and OWAAD members. The Caribbean, once under British rule, was affected by this imperialism. This country is still being affected negatively by this, as are their schools. In the Caribbean, their educational system was redesigned in formerly and currently English colonial-ruled regions to have their students learn about English history and tradition. Similarly, in the US, when Black children in the South are taught white American history as if it were their own.[61]

These have detrimental effects on Black students. The Prime Minister of Guyana, who was taught this warped English history, states how his own history was "neglected, if not vilified," and that his instructors would "[establish] to us that we had no history."[62]

During the BPM, the education system was also affected. Black students were discriminated against by other students and teachers, and the schooling itself did not adequately teach Black history. In this section, Blacks will be referred to as people of African descent. Black children are underachieving and being excluded when compared with white students.[63] Black children were seen as "the problem." British schools are anti-Black due to their inherent racism and the politics that prey on the fear that Blacks are a "threat to the 'British way of life.'"[64] The politics spouted anti-Black rhetoric, which reflected itself in schools. Britain, in itself, is a racially and ethnically prejudiced nation in both historical and contemporary times.[65] The government has continually alienated the Black community in Britain and has implemented

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[61] Lux, "Black," 208.
[62] Lux, "Black," 208.
[63] Mark Christian, "The Politics of Black Presence in Britain and Black Male Exclusion in the British Education System," *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 3 2005, 327.
[64] Christian, "Politics," 328.
[65] Christian, "Politics," 328.

immigration policies that are anti-people of color.[66] It all groups together into poverty and class.[67]

> "There are three main ways in which a teacher can seriously affect the performance of a Black child; by being openly prejudiced; by being patronizing; and by having low expectations of the child's abilities. All three attitudes can be found among teachers in this country [Britain]. Indeed, these attitudes are widespread. Their effect on the Black child is enormous and devastating."[68]

Since Black children have been attending schools in Britain to the present, it is a common fact that their performance when they are young shows they are highly capable and bright students. However, it also shows that as these children get older, their achievements lessen. This is because white teachers expect Black children to be not as intelligent, dangerous, and disruptive.

How Black school children are treated is merely a reflection of the treatment of Blacks in Britain and the world,[69]

> "When I go out I have to remember that I am a Black youth. Other people see me like that. I have to be careful of what I do, say and how I behave because others are always judging me as a Black youth. Not as a youth, but a Black youth. If I'm out with my friends we are not seen as a group of friends, but a Black gang. Some people think when they see us, we will rob them or something. It gets you down sometimes. If you're Black you're not allowed to have a childhood, you know."[70]

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[66] Christian, "Politics," 329.
[67] Christian, "Politics," 329.
[68] Christian, "Politics," 330.
[69] Christian, "Politics," 339.
[70] Christian, "Politics," 339.

Enoch Powell (1912-1998), a British politician during the 1960s, created an anti-immigration xenophobia and exploited the socioeconomic fears of white British working-class citizens. Powell's ideology still remains today.[71] He can be described as the forerunner to Thatcherism, where Margret Thatcher openly endorsed his stances on people of color.

1980s Britain was not a good place for the working class and Black communities. Both suffered great socio-economic despair, where the latter, in particular, suffered from police brutality and little to no economic opportunities for youth, which led to devastating riots. These riots were the worst that have ever happened in mainland Britain. Riots reached a pinnacle in July 1981 in Liverpool, where mainly Black youth and the police battled in what resembles a war zone. They fought over all the decades worth of discrimination that Black communities had to face in all various social areas, such as policing, education, housing, and employment. All things that Olive Morris set to combat.[72]

These riots reflected the politics of Black presence and that racism is inherently institutionalized, "if you also happen to have a Black face, there is no escape from the poverty."[73] The British media scapegoated Black youth, particularly males, and labeled them as "muggers," and blamed them for the failing economy.[74]

Under right-wing Thatcher in 1982, the national unemployment rate rose to more than three million. Black communities suffer the most from Conservative politics. In 1997, the Conservative Party lost the general election, giving hope to marginalized

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[71] Christian, "Politics," 332.
[72] Christian, "Politics," 333.
[73] Christian, "Politics," 334.
[74] Christian, "Politics," 334.

communities. However, things have been the same, if not worse, as in 2001, "Black people were five times more likely to be arrested than Whites or other ethnic groups…[and] were six times more likely to be sent to prison than Whites."[75]

The Stephen Lawerence Inquiry was a groundbreaking stance in British race relations. It is the first inquiry to take a concrete stand and acknowledge that there is institutionalized racism in a majority of UK institutions, organizations, and politics. It is called the Stephen Lawerence Inquiry because on April 22, 1993, an eighteen-year-old Black teenager who dreamt of being an architect was murdered by a group of white youths. He had Jamaican British heritage and was killed near his house in Eltham, south London. It took over a decade for his murderers to be brought to justice, but those mainly involved in his death still roam free. His death raised already-asked questions, such as how this could be allowed to happen, why his killers were not charged soon after his death, and why the police did not do anything. Stephen Lawrence's murder confirmed that the British criminal justice system was institutionally racist. The Stephen Lawerence Inquiry tried to improve race relations between British Black communities and the government by revising the education system. However, there are debates about whether or not it has been working. Doreen Lawerence, Stephen's mother, stated on the 10th anniversary of his murder,

> "In some respects, we are beginning to become a little more complacent again. People think we have had the inquiry and so everything's fine, but it's not. There are lots of people still complaining about racist attacks."[76]

[75] Christian, "Politics," 334.
[76] Christian, "Politics," 336.

Doreen Lawerence's words reflect a past, present, and future worth of discrimination and the pain and suffering that racism can cause. Her words are a cautionary tale for people around the world if things do not change.

In September of 1978, Morris was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Despite undergoing cancer treatment, it was unsuccessful. Morris died on July 12, 1979, at age twenty-seven, at St. Thomas' Hospital, London, United Kingdom. She is buried at Streatham Vale Cemetery in South London. A few weeks after her death, hundreds of people came to her memorial service in a moving show of admiration and respect.[77] 18 Brixton Hill, where Morris lived, was renamed the "Olive Morris House" for her efforts and contributions to help change the lives of disadvantaged people living in Lambeth. Under a blue plaque, etched into the stone, reads, "My heart will always be in Brixton," a quote from Morris.

However, by the 1990s, the Lambeth region had an inefficient administration of housing and council tax benefits by the company Capita. Morris' friend Liz Obi says this irony would have Morris turning in her grave, as people are being conned in her name. Residents were "receiving summons to court for bills they were not eligible to pay, or would be evicted for non-payment of rent because it took Capita over three months to process claims." Obi knows that if Morris was here for this scene, she would have stood up and tried everything to effectively change it, another act of selflessness.[78]

Unveiled in October 2008, "The Bronze Woman" is a statue that was placed in Stockwell Memorial Garden, South London. This statue was based on a poem by Cecile Nobrega (1919-2013) to commemorate the resilience, steadfastness, and resourcefulness Black women prevailed during the terrifying enslavement in the Caribbean. The poem and statue are a symbol

[77] Liz Obi, "Remembering Olive," 5.
[78] Liz Obi, "Remembering Olive," 5.

of the determination it takes to survive and hopes to inspire future generations and to tie Black Caribbeans and Black Britons together.[79]

At 121 Railton Road, the building Olive Morris squatted on, another blue plaque went up in October 2024, “Olive would have been staggered at one level to think that she'd have a blue plaque and to have a name up on the wall, but what she would have said was, ‘okay, okay, if that's going to happen, my name is simply the placeholder for all the multitudes of the names of all the other Black women.’”[80] Aiding to her selflessness in the names of all the other Black women who did not make it.

At the Lambeth Archives, London, UK, is the Olive Morris Collection. There are many documents from Morris’ life which have been donated from her close friends and family. The Remembering Olive Collective is a website that holds much information about her life, which can be accessed for free. Those that run it are,

> “Women who come from India, North America, Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the UK, who meet monthly in Brixton to honor the life and spirit of Olive Morris through a continuous will for change. Women who somehow find child care, get the night of work, call in sick, finally get their visa issues sorted out, so that they can make it to Brixton and talk about intangible and beautiful ideas like justice, solidarity, and revolution.”[81]

Olive Morris dedicated her life to what she believed in. She was a Jamaican British anti-racist, anti-fascist, university-educated, Black feminist squatter who tirelessly went above and beyond. She was a member of the Manchester Women’s Co-Op, BBP, BWG, and OWAAD where she was too much of an influential figure to be called inspirational. Her death at such a

[79] Burin, “Sister,” 116.
[80] Gail Lewis, “Gail.”
[81] Burin, “Sister,” 117.

young age symbolizes her youthful power and audacity, leaving her energy frozen in time. While researching her life and legacy, you can feel her spirit through the pages and documents. Despite being generations apart and across thousands of miles, it is as if you know her personally. That legacy in itself is remarkable. To be remembered and looked up to in such a way is astounding. Remembering Olive Morris is not just an example of what humans can do, but of what we are. She dares to ask us, "How will you leave your legacy?"

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