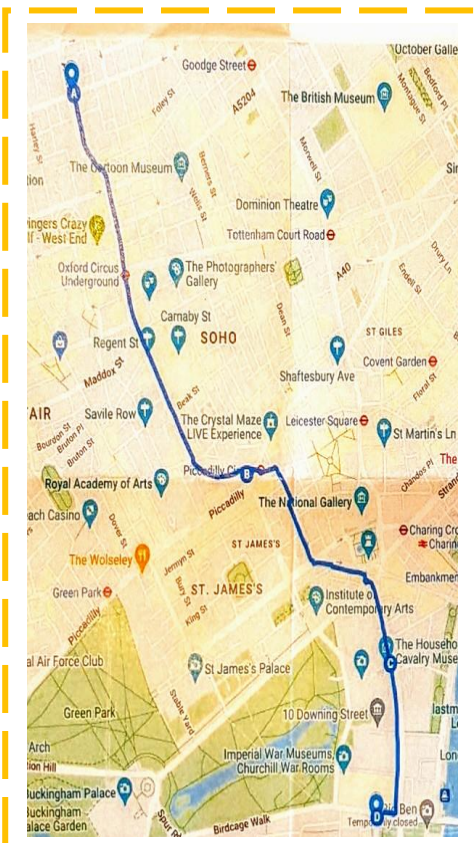


FIGHTING FOR A WORLD AGAINST RACISM!

Written by: Bill Acharjee



On Saturday 19th March 2022, I travelled from Southampton to London with my comrades from Stand Up To Racism and the Socialist Party, where we were overwhelmingly joined by over 10,000 anti-racist activists who took to the streets of London to march against racism, Islamophobia, and Antisemitism for UN Anti-Racism Day 2022. I also discovered that the event was to show solidarity and acknowledgement of an incident that took place in Sharpeville, South Africa on 21st March 1960, when police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid pass laws.



The London demonstration started at 12 pm where protestors met outside the BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place and would be marching on to Parliament Square where there would be live music and guest speakers.

Unfortunately, due to road closures our coach arrived at the capital just after 1 pm just in time to join the march but sadly missing some important keynote speakers who opened the event with speeches focussed on the war in Ukraine and the racism that was being faced by many Black and Asian people at the borders, as well as the racist hostile environments all refugees and migrants are being exposed to throughout the world.

It was great to see banners and marques from all major trade unions such as UNISON, Unite, UCU etc... and to find out that over 60 cities around the world were also hosting demonstrations and protests to show their solidarity for refugees impacted by war and conflict, and the continued support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

'Drive2Survive', a coalition of Romany Gypsy, Irish travellers, and nomadic activists, and their horses led the demonstration in style, followed by the marching drummers who made the chanting "Say it loud, say it clear, all refugees are welcome here!" so much more enjoyable as well as rhythmic. It was also fantastic to see so many people of all ages, creed and colour marching together, which gave me a glimpse of hope of how a united Britain might look like.



I also bumped into two refugees from Iraq who were with the Eastbourne Stand Up To Racism contingent and happy to hear how grateful and appreciative they were to be living in the UK free from fear and aggression, which made me realise how lucky I was to be born and raised in this country, although I can't say that my entire experience living in Britain has been free from fear and aggression to say the least.

When we finally reached Parliament Square, we were greeted by the uplifting beats of the British grime crew 'Roll Deep' who pointed out the three lone protesters with their 'Pro-Trump flags' who were there to oppose the ant-racist day but clearly to no success! After which, Stand Up To Racism Co-Convenor Sabby Dhalu and Nahella Ashraf took to the stage to compere and introduce the forthcoming speakers which included the likes of Labour MP's Bell Ribeiro Addy, Diane Abbott, Jeremy Corbyn, and UNISON Head of Equalities, Gloria Mills whose speeches focused around opposition to the Policing Bill, which would allow the Police the right to stop protests and the Nationality and Borders Bill, which if enforced is to discourage people from entering the UK to seek asylum.

Another key theme raised by many speakers was the horrific racist strip search by Hackney Police of the young Black school girl known as 'Child Q'. It was also great to see the poet and author, Michael Rosen, who shared his appreciation of the migrant NHS nurses that cared for him whilst he was hospitalised with COVID.

Unfortunately, as our return coach to Southampton was due to leave at 4 pm we missed out on the remaining fantastic speakers, however, there was one clear message that echoed throughout Parliament Square as we headed off, which was that we all need to play our part to support and protect each other from prejudice and discrimination, as well as our neighbours from war torn countries, and most importantly, we all need to STAND UP TO RACISM when it raises its ugly head!

