**RACE EQUALITY NETWORK**

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**Who We Are**

The Race Equality Network (REN) was established in October 2000 as the Consortia of Ethnic Minority Organisations (COEMO) following concerns by BAME voluntary sector organisations that they were not properly supported by local Infrastructure organisations.

At the time the Race Equality Council was also dissolved and the BAME sector felt even more marginalised, fragmented and unrepresented.

COEMO, now renamed as REN, was born after months of consultations and collaboration not just with BAME organisations but also with the Council leadership as well as infrastructure organisations such as the Council for Voluntary Services.

The new body was officially launched at its first annual General Meeting by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Khalique on 8th August 2001, at Carlisle Business Centre and there was widespread support for its future success.

Barely a month earlier Bradford experienced riots (7 July 2001) as a result of heightened race related tension escalated by confrontation between the Anti-Nazi league and far right groups such as the British National Party and the National Front. Similar riots had occurred earlier in Oldham and Burnley.

T&A article on 7th August 2001 about the launch:

***Ethnic groups unite to bridge cultural divide***

*Asian and black community groups are being united under one banner in an attempt to bring cultures together and bridge divides. Membership of the Consortia of Ethnic Minority Organisations (COEMO) has swollen from 40 to 63 groups in the last week. COEMO was officially launched yesterday with leaders saying it was not an attempt to revive the Race Equality Council (REC) under a different name.*

*Secretary Yusuf Karolia said: "We want to form partnerships, particularly with other umbrella groups. But we are not a threat to other organisations. We have to work with all partners and make a difference to the quality of life of the citizens of Bradford."*

*Chairman Mohammed Salam said he hoped that bringing groups together would enable people to share expertise in applying for funding. He said: "It is true that ethnic minority communities have missed out on funding opportunities due to a lack of information, timely advice and development support which is why we felt a need for an organisation such as the Consortia."*

*The Lord Mayor of Bradford, Councillor Ghazanfer Khaliq, warned delegates at the launch not to focus purely on ethnic minorities to the detriment of the white population.*

*Kanchan Jadeja, Assistant Director of the National Association of the Council for Voluntary Services, said Bradford's problems meant it could be a target for Government funding.*

*She said: "People might be scared of Bradford at the moment and might not want to come here but clearly this seems to be an opportune time for this organisation and there are opportunities for groups to put their ideas forward in a very clear and rational way. The response of the Prime Minister initially to what happened in Bradford was because of a level of thuggery."Now the Home Office seems to be saying it wants to look at the deeper problems which caused what happened and there seems to be a level of willingness to find out what communities need and what can be done."*

**The Riots**

Following months of bringing together the fragmented BAME organisations, REN was now catapulted into developing a sector response to the riots which took place during its first year in operation. It engaged constructively with the Council, with Ted Cantle’s review and later directly with Home Office officials to develop a longer term response to prevent similar disturbances including helping to shape the Race Equality Act 2010.

Ted Cantle’s review was revealing and he commented that:

*"Leadership was different in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham to other areas that we visited in the sense that the local authority and other institutions had been seemingly less committed to a multi-racial, diverse society, and perhaps had been less willing to promote diversity as a positive virtue"*

Ted Cantle’s team came across widespread feeling that BAME communities did not have a stake in society and were not getting enough help to tackle their problems. The report identified a lack of hope and a sense that their future was limited by their economic and social circumstances. It only took the right trigger sometimes lack of access to service or provocation by far right groups, to tip that frustration into violent confrontation.

Ted Cantle said he was hopeful of a better future particularly young people who he said were really inspirational and gave him hope.

Working with the communities the measures Bradford Council, Police and other agencies took were extensive and focussed on bringing people together and raising cultural awareness and tolerance of each others beliefs. The strapline, One Landscape, Many Views, was soon enacted as a strategic approach to underline future strategies and policy responses which resonated well with the communities.

**REN Mission Statement**

**“To establish a strong network of organisations and individuals that work together to create a viable BAME voluntary sector and achieve equitable outcomes for all communities”**

**REN** **Objectives**

1. To act as an umbrella group and create, develop and maintain a network of groups and individuals who would act as a focal point for information, advice and support and which collaborates with each other to identify, challenge and address issues arising from race inequality, poor community relations, and xenophobia and promote race equality and the fostering of good relations between communities

2. To work with and promote and support any charitable purposes which benefit the black and ethnic minority community, particularly groups involved in:

* Activities which indirectly or directly promote race equality and good community relations
* the advancement of socio-economic issues and the prevention and elimination of poverty and disadvantage
* community development and community capacity building
* integration and community cohesion
* neighbourhood renewal and regeneration
* educational and social advancement
* sports, recreational and leisure activities
* training and preparation of people for the jobs market
* provision of housing, health, care & support services
* fundraising efforts for local, national and international causes and disasters
* any other charitable work impacting on the social, economic, and environmental well being of ethnic minority communities

1. To campaign against xenophobia, ethnic, cultural and religious hatred including chauvinism and bigotry and the impact of such behavior and beliefs on communities and society as a whole

4. To promote and celebrate the diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial make up of the Bradford District, and beyond as relevant

**A Selection of Achievements**

* Delivered the **Improving Reach programme** at West Yorkshire level - Within Bradford district over 80 organisations were supported via workshops and training sessions on Health in the workplace; employment Law; Disability Rights; Management Committee training; and Quality Assurance processes. Also work carried out in supporting migrant communities including planning and facilitating Refugee Week.
* **BCCI Community Cohesion Project** - also known as **Communities Together**, REN brought together 8 community organisations to deliver activities to promote social cohesion whilst addressing key issues around racism and extremism. 156 activities were delivered through the programme. Partners included Kala Sangam, Milan Centre, Peacemakers International, Thorpe Edge Community Centre, West Bowling Centre, Grange Interlink, Bangladesh Community Association, and Bangladeshi Forum for Community Cohesion.
* **BASIS**- This programme delivered organisational development support to 90 front line organisations covering management committee training, review of structures, funding, quality systems and governance.
* **Community Cascade** – West Yorkshire level project partnered with the sub regional infrastructure support organisations delivering 4 specialist strands, Environmental, support with applying for funding, Marketing and Communications, and Community Cohesion. REN led on Cohesion and worked with faith based networks and BAME organisations to deliver a range of activities to strengthen community cohesion.
* **Working links established with government Departments** to influence national policy i.e. with the Home Office, Foreign Office and with the Communities and Local Government Department.

Ruth Kelly, the then Secretary of State for Communities who was supportive of the success of the organisation, commented in a Foreword in an Annual Report,

***“I would like to acknowledge the relevance of COEMO’s aim of empowering ethnic minority organisations, to engage more widely and effectively in mainstream activities in Bradford precisely where the emphasis is, in the development of cohesive communities. It is my hope that the link that COEMO is establishing with central government will help revitalise its commitment to promote opportunity for BME communities throughout Bradford and beyond”***

* **Support to organisations with fundraising** - REN organised regular workshops throughout the past 20 years attracting record attendance from BAME organisations seeking help with fundraising.
* **Partnership Development Programme** - In 2008 REN pioneered a unique networking opportunity with financial support from WYLDA, targeting BAME organisations to come together and establish working partnerships which would strengthen activities and fundraising opportunities. REN would advise and provide co-ordination and support with creating these working partnerships
* **Young People into Management (YPIM Project)** – After identifying a gap in the representation of young people on BAME Management Committees REN undertook a pilot programme, YPIM recruiting 8 young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These young people were mentored by 4 key individuals from the voluntary sector. These included Jenny Pupius, CEO of ABL; John Corbishley CEO of CNet; Surji Cair, Manager of Milan Centre; and Peter Tate from MAPA. Bradford CVS and BYDP provided formal training to the young people. The programme led to NVQ2 qualifications for the participants
* **“Changing Bradford”** book and exhibition**-** A heritage lottery funded project**,** REN recruited and trained up a group of young people as oral history interviewers contributing to a book and an exhibition which was held at Bradford’s Impressions Gallery
* **Numerous networking, consultation events and conferences** - REN has always attracted large gatherings of BAME organisations and disseminated information, conducted consultations etc. including:
  + The Working Together conference
  + Change Up project conference
  + Local Area Agreement seminar
  + Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities funding workshop
  + Consultation event on the Airedale Masterplan
  + Celebrating Community Cohesion in West Yorkshire
* **Leadership Development Programme** - Working with Empowering Minds, REN trained a group of BAME women from diverse ethnicities and a group of young BAME individual’s in issues around cohesion, racism and equality in 2019. Phase 2 is being worked up (as at July 2020) which will provide skills to participate on Management Committees and Boards etc.

**Some Board Members who have served as Directors of REN**

**Dr Geetha Uphadya**

Served as Chair for several years. Dr Geetha was the Chief Executive of Kala Sangam

**Yemi Fagborun**

Founder Member and Vice Chair for many years. Yemi is the Director of The Peacemakers

**Yusuf Karolia**

Founder Member and General Secretary since inception, currently Chair. Yusuf is General Secretary of Grange Interlink

**Gurdev Dahele, MBE**

Gurdev was highly active in supporting communities and was Chief Executive of ABL

**Pushpa Prabhakar**

Highly active in the Hindu community and served as General Secretary of the Hindu Cultural Society. Pushpa worked as a teacher and Section 11 Co-odinator in the Council

**Surji Cair**

As Milan Centre Manager Surji served on REN Board for many years and was a founder member

**Dr Mohammed Abdus Salam**

Founder Member, served as first Chair then CEO. Dr Salam has worked at and served on various organisations including ABL, Bangladesh Porishad and Pakistan Community Centre

**Cllr Imran Khan**

Chair for 10 years, CEO Grange Interlink and Deputy Leader of Bradford Council

**Peter Tate**

Long time employee in the Council’s Youth Team, and Director of MAPA, Peter served many years as Vice Chair and was Founder Member

**Sam Keighley**

Worked in Bradford Council and Trident and was Chair of ABL, Sam served on the Board in her capacity as Chair of ABL

**Mohammad Abbas**

Founder Member and long time Treasurer of REN, Abbas is an accountant by profession and Director of the Eid Committee

**Ashok Nair**

Served many years on the Board and founder member, an active member of the Hindu community and served as Secretary of the Hindu Cultural Society. He has served on the Management Committee of Bradford Law Centre for many years.

**Balu Lad**

Founder Member and teacher who served as Board Member for many years as an active member of the Hindu community

**Mahmood Mohammed**

Council employee with many years of service supporting communities and founder Member who served on the Board for many years

#### ****Cora Browning****

Cora served many years on REN Board. She is a Registered General Nurse, Trades Union representative, was Chair of the Bradford branch of the Royal College of Nursing and member of the Yorkshire and Humber Board of the RCN, and active member the Bradford district women’s forum.

#### ****Asif Khan****

Pak Kashmir United Forum promoting Arts and Culture of Pakistan and building bridges between Pakistani community and other communities residing in West Yorkshire.

#### ****Nisar A F Raja****

Qualified accountant, Chair person of Pakistan Community and Neighbourhood Association and Justice of the Peace on Bradford bench.

#### ****Abdul Ismail****

Founder Member with wide community involvement including CNet, and particularly the Khalifa community locally and nationally. Abdul worked many years at Bradford Council as Community Development Manager supporting many groups with their development and funding support

#### ****Jenny Pupius****

Was Chief Executive of ABL and governor of Bradford College. Played an active role in the Development Trusts Association, serving on the Regional Advisory Group for Yorkshire and the Humber.

#### ****Javed Khan****

**Founder member Javed served many years on the Board actively involved in various groups including West** Bowling Community Centre, Quadrant Participation project and Manningham/Girlington plus PACT project, management committee member of Girlington Community centre and a Board member of West Bowling Sure Start.

#### ****Yvonne Hall****

Yvonne is the Managing Director of Palm Cove Society which operates as a halfway house to give individuals the breathing space required to develop life skills and the basic knowledge required for UK living. Many of our residents have now moved on into their own tenancies and are successfully integrated into their new found environment, many return or telephone periodically to access our outreach service.

#### ****Dr. Balbir Singh****

Founder Member and served on Board for many years. Dr Singh was the first Sikh Labour Councillor in 1986-1994. Chairman of Bradford Racial Equality Council. and lead many other local groups, Family Service Unit, Police Ethnic Minority Liaison committee, Asian Disability Action Awareness of Bradford, Bradford Educational & Cultural Association of Sikhs

**Apologies to the all the other individuals and organisations too numerous to mention who have dutifully served on the Board and helped the organisation to fulfil its objectives.**