

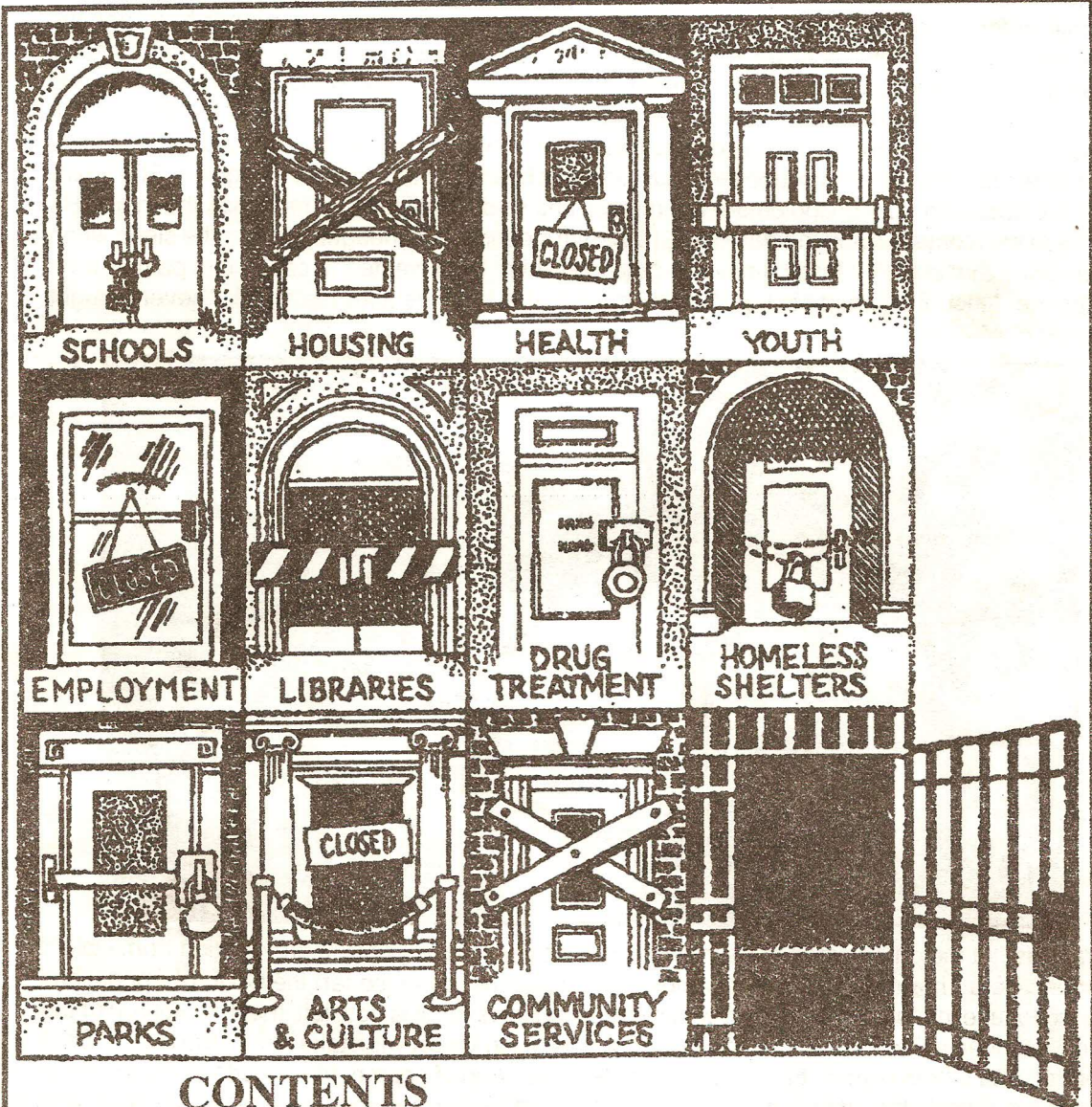
# ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS BULLETIN

Nº 5

Published by London Anarchist Black Cross

20p

FREE TO PRISONERS



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SUPPORTING CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

# KIRANJIT FREED!

As reported in *Bulletin No 2*, Kiranjit Ahluwalia was imprisoned for life in 1989 for murdering her husband, Deepak, by pouring petrol over him and setting him alight. Kiranjit was one of many women who have suffered years of systematic abuse from their husbands - in her case she endured it for 10 years. She had spent more than three years in prison and in July the Court of Appeal overturned the original conviction and recommended a retrial. However, in court on the 25th September, the prosecution accepted psychiatric reports saying that at the time she set fire to her husband, she was suffering from mental illness (also referred to as "battered wife syndrome") and thus it was a case of diminished responsibility. Mr Justice Hobhouse then ordered her immediate release.

Kiranjit suffered from her husband both physically and mentally. Family and friends had seen the scars and bruises, but in her Asian community marital break-up was regarded as shameful and so she endured the beatings. She had tried to commit suicide twice; she had sought court orders to keep Deepak away. She had been beaten with the buckle ends of belts; been raped; had handfuls of hair ripped out; been cut; he tried to run her over and threw her down the stairs. He once held a screwdriver to her eyes and threatened to gouge them out. She was beaten whilst 8 months pregnant. She finally snapped. Speaking from prison before her release she said: "It all became too much that night. He had made me a physical and mental wreck. I saw him sleeping and thought 'how can he sleep when he has done this to me?' I lost it. I never meant to kill him. I just wanted to cause him pain, like he caused me. I thought if I hurt his feet, he wouldn't be able to come after me again. I never thought he would die."



Kiranjit is not the only woman to be imprisoned for murder after years of provocation from violent partners. Sara Thornton is another example, although in her case (so far) the Court of Appeal has refused to take into account battered wife syndrome. However, it is possible that the attitude of the courts is "softening" towards battered wives. But how much longer will it take before the likes of Sara Thornton and others receive the "justice" they deserve? And of course, the attitude of the courts in some ways reflects the attitude of society - it is time that battered women were taken seriously and the responsibilities of us all come into this. If Kiranjit's family had acted sooner instead of leaving her to face the torture alone, maybe she wouldn't have had to spend any time in prison at all.

For further information, or to send letters of congratulation/support to Kiranjit, write *c/o Southall Black Sisters, 52 Norwood Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 4DW.*

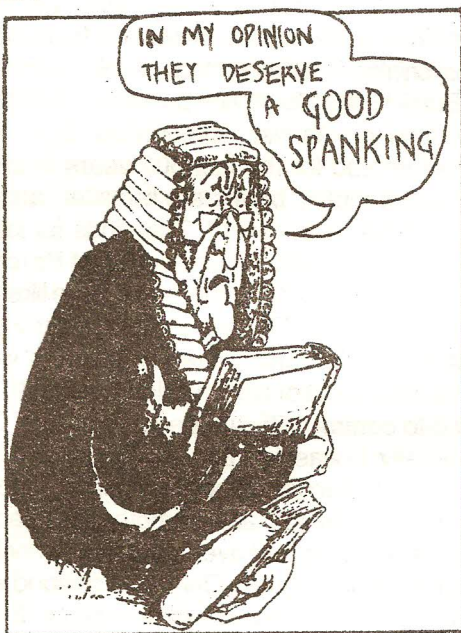
**STOP PRESS:** 29/9/92 Sara Thornton and 28 other women were reported to be on hungerstrike in Bulwood Hall Women's Prison, apparently over food and conditions. No more details at present.

## COMMENT

## Spanner in the Works

*"Now is the time to demand.....the right to walk down the street handcuffed to our lover."*

In 1991, 16 gay men were convicted in court for assault charges relating to consenting to gay sado-masochistic sex. Several were sent to prison. It followed a lengthy police investigation - "Operation Spanner" - into what was described as a "ring" of gay men who were into SM. That all involved were fully consenting was considered irrelevant to the case. Judge Rant (no kidding!) said that "the courts must draw the line between what is acceptable in a civilised society and what is not".

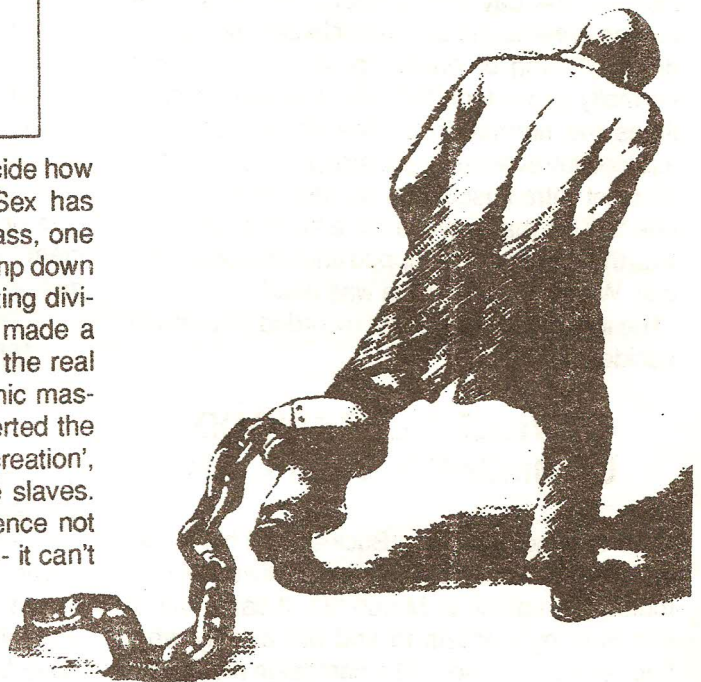


Yet once again the powers that be decide how we should have sex and who with. Sex has always been an issue for the ruling class, one where they have constantly tried to clamp down on 'deviants'. This is partly about creating divisions - a 'deviant' or 'pervert' can be made a convenient scapegoat to distract from the real creators of our problems - our economic masters. Partly, gay sex has always subverted the religious/political ideal of 'sex for procreation', the creation of new peasants or wage slaves. Partly sex itself is a wonderful experience not totally under the control of our bosses - it can't always be bought and sold. (Before you write off, these are only a tiny fraction of the many reasons for anti-gay feeling!)

With Operation Spanner, the court took a clever line. The gay community was divided on SM sex. A lot of people see SM sex as dirty and twisted. What is at issue here is that people have been sent to prison for consenting to acts of sex. Whether you want to be involved in SM sex yourself or not is irrelevant. To thousands of people it is part of their sexual relationships and the state is cracking down on it. The sickness of bourgeois society is at its worst when it locks people up for no more than exploring their bodies and relationships in their own way, needing no ones permission.

The "Spanner" mens' appeal was dismissed in the Court of Appeal by Lord Lane earlier this year, although this infamous bastard did reduce their sentences. Five of them are still inside, however. They are appealing to the House of Lords, the hearing is on the First of December. An SM Support Group, the "Countdown on Spanner Campaign" is organising actions and protests around this issue. It is vital that these prisoners should be given support. The fight to control our own sex lives is part of the daily struggle to run our own lives.

**"Countdown on Spanner": 69 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6BP. Send a SAE.**



# ORVILLE BLACKWOOD

Orville Blackwood was an Afro-Caribbean man from Brixton who died in Broadmoor High Security Hospital on the 28th August 1991. He was originally sent to prison in 1986 for 4 years for robbing £24 from a betting shop with a toy gun. At the time, he was suffering from depression due to constant hassles with police amongst other things. During his sentence, the prison authorities decided that he should be placed in a mental hospital and he was sent to one. However, he had a run-in with a nurse there who took against him and he was dragged off by 14 riot police who beat him up. He was then sectioned to Broadmoor. His mother and family were refused access during his first weeks there.

Orville had finished his original sentence and was awaiting a 'tribunal' decision on whether he should be released or not. It was planned to release him into the community and preparations were underway for this. On 28th August 1991, 13 days before the tribunal, Orville died in Broadmoor. The official version of his death is that he refused to go to "Occupational Therapy" which is a code name for cheap labour. It isn't compulsory and Orville should have been allowed to go to his "room". Instead he was accused of inciting others not to go, and was taken to "seclusion". At this time he was calm. He was held in seclusion for much of the day until a doctor and at least 9 nurses entered the cell and injected him with 2 drugs, 150mg of each. These drugs are not normally given together and it amounted to 3 times the normal dose. The drugs were also injected intravenously (ie. straight into the vein) and not intramuscularly, as they should have been. (This may have led to a heart attack). He was then beaten up, stripped and left alone in the cell. Within 3 minutes, he was dead.

The inquest into his death recorded a verdict of accidental death.

## ORVILLE BLACKWOOD COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Orville's mother, Clara Buckley and his family and friends, set up the Orville Blackwood Community Campaign in March '92. It came out of Mrs. Buckley's efforts to find out exactly what happened to her son. The campaign aims to for a public inquiry into deaths at Broadmoor, a judicial review into Orville's death and to mobilise

community support for people in the 'Mental Health' system.

## CONFERENCE: MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM GONE MAD!

The Orville Blackwood Community Campaign held a conference on the 19th September 1992, to get people together to find practical ways to forward their aims. It was attended by about 150 people, including black community activists, past inmates of the 'mental health system' and family friends. The atmosphere was very positive, concentrating on racism in Mental Institutions and psychiatric attitudes to black people. A speaker from Black History for Action put racism in Mental Institutions into its historical context. Scientists have attempted for the last 500 years to show that black peoples' brains are "smaller" and so they must be "subnormal". This finds its latest expression in a 1988 British Journal of Psychiatry Report that Afro-Caribbeans are more likely to be "schizophrenic". There is a widespread suspicion that schizophrenia is the psychiatrists' word for what they can't or won't understand, or that it is used to control "difficult" people.

Generally it was felt that the Mental Health system, including the special hospitals such as Broadmoor, Ashworth and Rampton are used as a form of social control over elements in society that are seen as a threat. Orville Blackwood was viewed as a threat because he was black. It was also felt by the conference that there needs to be more community support for people under pressure or who have 'mental problems' to prevent them being sucked into the murderous state mental hospital system.

## WE'RE NOT MAD, WE'RE ANGRY

In general, mental hospitals are part of the state apparatus for keeping control over 'dangerous' elements in society. Many of those imprisoned in maximum security hospitals have come from the prison system and are often stropky individuals who fall foul of the prison authorities or those who have 'mental problems' diagnosed after being locked up.

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