Public Policy and Politics

Series Editors: Colin Fudge and Robin Hambleton

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The Local Politics of Race

**Gideon Ben-Tovim
John Gabriel
Ian Law
Kathleen Stredder**

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October 1985

GIDEON BEN-TOVIM
JOHN GABRIEL
IAN LAW
KATHLEEN STREDDER

List of Abbreviations

CRE	Commission For Racial Equality
DES	Department of Education and Science
EMLC	Ethnic Minorities Liaison Committee, Liverpool City Council (a sub-committee of the Housing Allocations Sub-Committee and phased out after the creation of the Race Relations Liaison Committee)
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
LEA	Local Education Authority
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
MARA	Merseyside Anti-Racist Alliance
MCRC	Merseyside Community Relations Council
NUT	National Union of Teachers
RRLC	Race Relations Liaison Committee, Liverpool City Council
S11	Section Eleven, Local Government Act, 1966
SCRO	Senior Community Relations Officer
WARC	Wolverhampton Anti-Racist Committee
WCCR	Wolverhampton Council for Community Relations

Guide to Reading the Book

The aim of this book is to provide a framework for analysing local struggles for racial equality. The analysis seeks to establish the role of local institutions in contributing to and maintaining racial inequalities as well as the different kinds of community response to local forms of institutionalised racism. In doing so it explores the nature of the relationship between anti-racist forces and those resistant to positive change, and the integral role of policy initiatives and reforms in helping to define and shape this relationship. Furthermore, it argues that the interests of racial equality are best served through a more direct and organic relationship between research resources on the one hand and political practice on the other. The research data on which this analysis has been developed is drawn from the authors' direct experience of working in local and community organisations in Liverpool and Wolverhampton.

The book is not intended to be used as a textbook or as a guide to further reading. There are many examples of this kind of approach to the field, including a bibliographical essay written by two of the authors (Ben-Tovim and Gabriel, 1979) and more recently a comprehensive bibliography compiled by Gordon and Klug (1984). The references which are cited in the book fall into three categories. The first is made up of secondary sources (i.e. published books and articles) which are used particularly in Chapters 1 and 2 to locate our own position in terms of current debates in race and politics and methods of researching race relations. Secondly there exist a range of primary and secondary sources which we have cited and which help to endorse or substantiate our arguments. In contrast to the first category of reference, the evidence and arguments developed in these sources are crucial to the development of our own analysis. The evidence on racial inequality in Chapter 3 falls into this category. Finally there is a category

of primary documents used more directly in the context of our ongoing participation and research based interventions in local politics. Many of the references in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 fall into this category. The bibliography is made up of references cited in the text as a whole.

The first three chapters of the book map out our position in terms of current themes and literature on research (Chapter 1) race and politics (Chapter 2) and racial inequality (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 represents the centre of the book and lies at the heart of our overall project. Its primary focus is local organisations since it has been in local organisations, such as Community Relations Councils and the local Labour Party, that we have drawn our analysis of local authorities (Chapter 5) and central initiatives (Chapter 6). Chapter 4 therefore provides an overview of three different kinds of local organisation concerned with the issue of racial equality: anti-racist, community, and those campaigning for policy change. Although our assessment of Community Relations Councils and local Labour parties is premised on our commitment to these bodies, it is by no means uncritical of their internal functioning and external strategies.

Chapter 5 looks more specifically at the two local authorities in Liverpool and Wolverhampton. Our knowledge and assessment of these has been developed on the basis of our involvement in local campaigns and strategic political interventions. On the one hand we explore various attempts to marginalise anti-racist forces on the part of local politicians and administrators. These in turn have provoked a series of responses on the part of local organisations to counter these pressures and to create power bases from which black people and anti-racist forces can struggle more effectively for racial equality and justice. We assess some of these community based interventions in the second part of Chapter 5.

In Chapter 6 we explore the role of central initiatives, which we have taken to include not only legislation but also government policy documents, circulars and directives as well as reports and statements of national organisations. The significance of these is established again through their impact at the local level and in particular we have witnessed a series of overtly negative measures emanating from the centre that have hindered rather than helped the cause of racial equality. Measures which could be described as positive, in fact, are for the most part the result of the efforts of

local organisations. This is because many of the 'positive' initiatives are sufficiently ambiguous and permissive so as to allow a variety of sometimes conflicting local interpretations. Local attempts to realise the limited potential of these measures have been achieved despite rather than because of support from the two local authorities.

The conclusion draws together the threads of our framework. Overall it is intended to provide a basis for reorienting and developing further research in race and possibly other areas of social science as much as it is intended to provide definitive answers to questions. We also hope that it will be used by practitioners and activists (including academics and students) for whom research has seemed remote, largely irrelevant or, worse still, dismissive of their everyday struggles for racial equality.