

Alvin: 'Dem take our culture, dem want keep we down as inferior people and dem want to class demself as superior to wo. I just hope them man way a do this interview you know can do something strong about this thing, or else war a go hot in Babylon, black against white.' (June 4 1978 Observer)

As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see "the River Tiber foaming with much blood". That tragic and intractable phenomenon which we watch with horror on the other side of the Atlantic but which there is interwoven with the history and existence of the States itself, is coming upon us here by our own volition and our own neglect. (April 20 1968, Enoch Powell)

"What we saw was trouble, what we saw was fucking war" (September 11 1985 Guardian)

"They are all niggers to me - West Indians, Pakistanis, Indians, Greeks, Malts and Cypriots. I don't count Greeks as really white." (May 15 1961, The Times)

This will be one occasion in my life, when I can say, I was around, I was home when history was written, and I'm not commemorating the death of someone great, but the beginning of the rest of a much valued life. God Bless Nelson Mandela. (February 12 1990 Vanley Burke Archive)

... Look for me in the whirlwind or the storm, look for me all around you, for with God's grace I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America, and in the West Indies, and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and

I have called this project 'Dem INVADÉ HANDSWORTH again me friend' because this title conveys the feelings present the 'angry suburb'; be they between white residents against immigrants, black youth against the police, or between the local community struggling to be heard, and those who insist on speaking for them. It captures for me the anger and frustration of a community whose voice has too often been ignored. The poster that inspired this title was advertising legal assistance for West Indians who found themselves incarcerated, justly or unjustly: a voice for the voiceless.



Handsworth Riots

On Monday September 9, 1985, a series of uprisings broke out over Handsworth. These uprisings and minor disturbances became a riot, due to a number of complex and contested reasons. I have studied various documents; with different versions of events, with the ultimate aim of trying to assess what actually happened. Though this has proved to be an impossible task when so many sources conflict regarding the not only the causes of events, but the actual events themselves.

One thing that we can be sure about was that Handsworth was a deprived area that had witnessed public disturbance before; a previous bout of rioting in the summer of 1981, which ultimately forced Supt. Webb to resign, but not before he was struck, on the head, several times, with bricks. Violence on the streets was therefore was not unprecedented in the area, an area that had since the end of WWII received a massive influx of migrants, largely of Indian and Caribbean origin. Handsworth had witnessed many large scale protests and demonstrations, predominantly focussing on anti-racist and anti-fascist movements. For a community that often could not be heard in the city, open protest was often the only way of transmitting its message. Especially when people in power held views like the following quotation from a conservative in 1970:

"The majority of these people think differently and react differently from us. They are different... Even after generations they are still primitives... These people have got no thought, no consideration - they are totally irresponsible, they have too many children, and they have no consideration for their neighbours. They make no effort. They live in filth... and if you live in filth you become filth." (Newton:1976:208)

This is of course not how everyone, or even the majority thought, and this is of course a full decade before any riots in Handsworth, but this view is clearly still present in 1985, as some of the article will show. Almost as if the riots confirmed what people had thought all along, that black people, especially young black men were different, and even primal, and that the civilised white man could do nothing to change him, so why try.

On the other hand there is some extremely intelligent reporting, and most papers, though perhaps not those with the largest readerships, do offer social explanations, rather than a racial or personal ones. The riots certainly ask questions, not only of the politicians but of the public as well, and if the riots were indeed a political statement then in some senses they may be seen as successful. On the other hand were they just acts of criminality, an 'orgy of violence' and looting, that led to the death of two innocent men. Were the riots racially motivated, socially, economically or politically motivated?

I do not have enough space to even offer an attempt to answer such a question, but I can offer a brief description of the events that happened September 9 1985. The violence centre around the Villa Cross Bingo Hall, and Lozells Road; where the sub post office was burnt down killing two Asian brothers.

The 'spark' was when police allegedly brutalised a motorised who they had stopped, and a nearby group of Rastafarians, sitting outside the Villa Cross Pub allegedly then attacked police officers. At 7.45pm the fire brigade are called out to put a fire in the disused Bingo hall, they are met by resistance and are pelted with bricks etc. After 8pm this 'mob' moves from the Bingo Hall and onto Lozells Road where looting and rioting kicks off, police and property, including the pub and church, are attacked and burnt. At 10.15 police in riot gear make Lozells a no go area. By midnight fires are raging beyond the control of firemen. At 7am, Tuesday, the burnt bodies of the Molidina brothers are discovered.



Dem INVADÉ HANDSWORTH again me friend

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Throughout the project I had envisaged a map of Handsworth, the physical location of events was, and is, important. If nothing else it makes events feel more tangible; I attended school just off this map.

Using our 'Sociological Imagination' we can picture Thornhill Police Station trapped between Handsworth park which had periods of infamy, and Soho and Lozells road; the arteries of Handsworth.

We can also see the city hospital, in which many black women worked, as either nurses or cleaners, and the many factories and foundries in which black men found their work. The railway is predominant and public transport also provided many jobs for black people, though never enough to stop chronic underemployment

The schools are marked, and were a huge source of controversy, schools were unable to cope with large numbers of immigrants children, and Afro-Caribbean boys suffered more than others in a system that failed to meet their needs.

RECIPE FOR CURRY GOAT

July 26 1991

Caribbean evening held at the Handsworth Cultural Centre. What is interesting about this group is that it is run by women, and is clearly intended to be for women, primarily. The different approaches to retaining Jammaicanness between men and women. It is important to remember that life goes on regardless of the politics happening in the area. This is not meant to show how life returned to normal, but that this strand of Handsworth life was ever present.

Shades of Black community family project can into being on 1st February 1989, hosted by five ladies of which the secretary Mrs E McChie is the founder of the project.

Shades of Black family project is a non-sectarian, no political voluntary group doing the best we can for our neighbouring community. As a family project we are housed under the umbrella of the Cultural Centre on Hamstead Road, Handsworth. The Caribbean [evening] is yet another joint venture community link strengthening all the time our working relationship and awareness of the community people.

CURRY GOAT

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| 2lb (1kg) goat meat | 2 stalks scallion, chopped |
| Salt | 1-2 hot pepper, chopped, with or without seeds |
| Black pepper | 2 tablespoons (loz, 25g) butter |
| seeds | ¼ cup (2 fl oz, 50ml) oil |
| 3 tablespoons curry powder | about 3 cups (1 ¼ pints, 750ml) water |
| 1 clove garlic, crushed | |
| 2 tomatoes, chopped | |
| 2 onions, sliced | |

Cut the goat meat into small pieces, place them in a bowl, and season with the salt and black pepper, curry powder, garlic, tomatoes, onions, scallion and hot peppers (remove the seeds from the peppers if you do not want the curry too hot). Allow the meat to marinate for at least 30 minutes. When you are ready to proceed, separate seasonings from the meat and fry the meat in the butter and oil until lightly browned. Add enough water to cover the meat and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, cover the pan and simmer until the meat is tender, adding more water in necessary. Stir in the seasonings in which the meat was marinated, taste, cover the pan again, and allow it to simmer for a further 10 minutes or until the seasonings are absorbed into the juice, which should now have more body without being too thick. The dish should not be at all dry. Some cooks prefer either to boil the meat first then add the seasonings when the meat is tender, or boil the meat and the seasonings together from the start. The choice is yours. Serve this splendid dish with white rice, mango chutney, grated coconut, fried plantains, boiled green bananas or whatever else you like.

