

# Unison National Black Members' Conference 2020

31 January – 2 February

## ***Introduction***

This year's National Black Members' Conference took place in Bournemouth. The CVO Branch was represented by the following committee members Veronica Leacock and Promise attended as delegates and Tarlochan attended as a visitor.

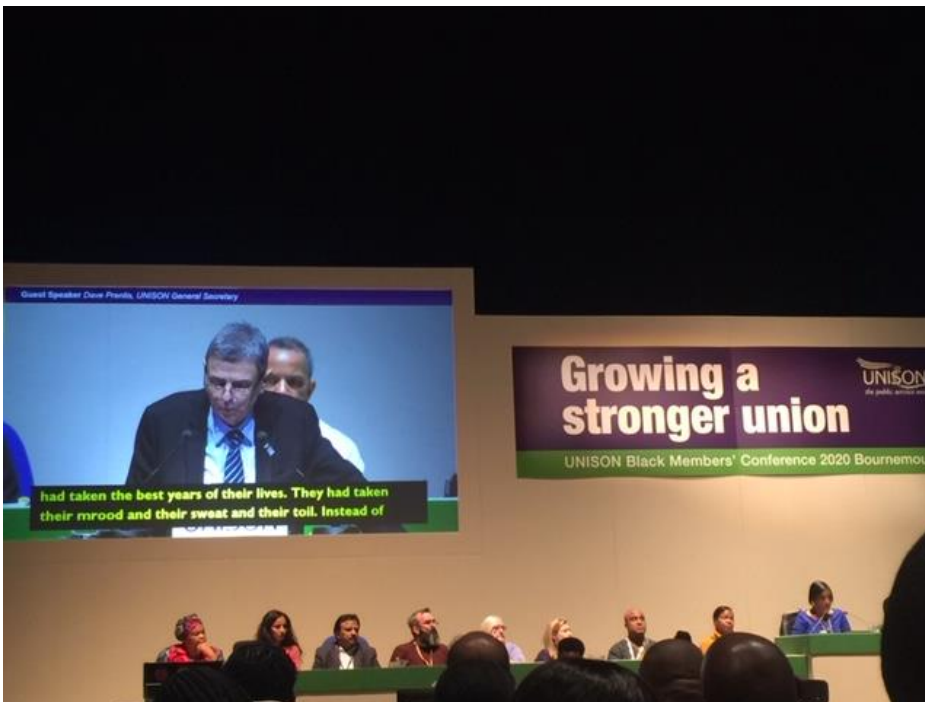
No motions were submitted by the CVO Branch.

## ***First afternoon of conference***

The afternoon started with the Greater London Regional meeting, Conference, a number of delegates had terrible trouble with the trains into Bournemouth, so proceedings started a little late as the guest speaker Dave Prentis, General Secretary was one of the many people that was held up.

Carol Sewell, Chair of the National Black Members Committee (NBMC), started the session by holding a minute silence for Kobe Bryant and all those that lost their life in the recent helicopter crash, she also remembered victims of Nazi Germany in recognition of the recent memorial.

David Prentis discussed all the challenges that faces us as a Union in the wake of a Boris Johnson government, whilst reassuring the delegates that we still have a voice if we organise and work as one.

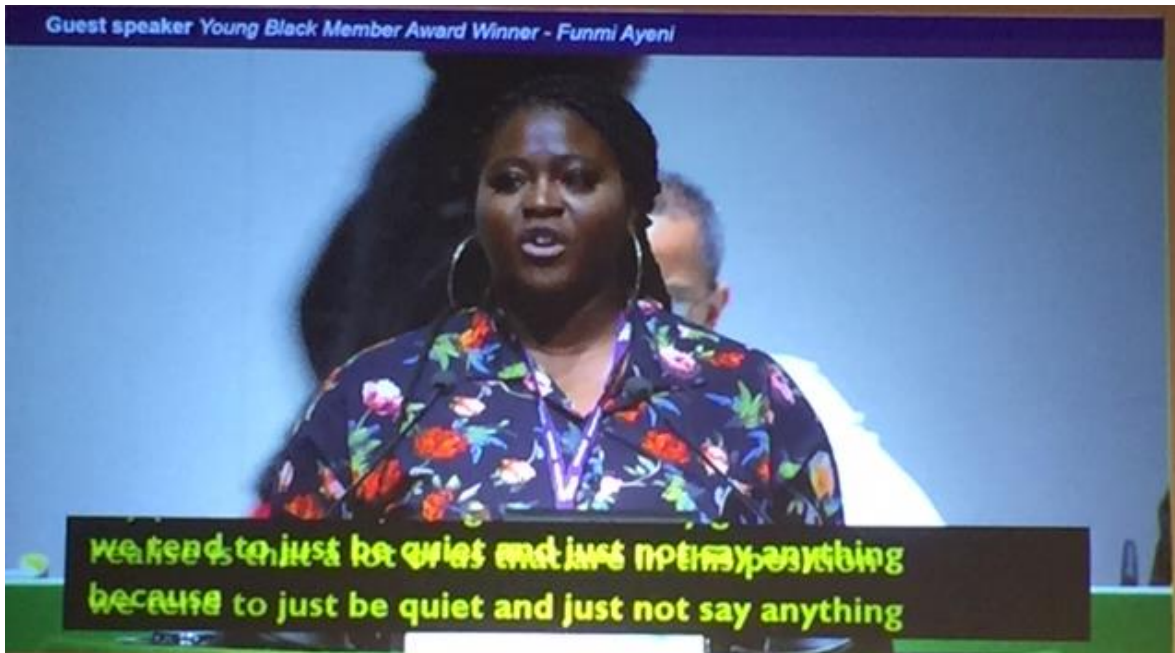


***Image 1:*** Dave Prentis, General Secretary

Margaret Greer, National Officer discussed the term Black and its meaning in terms of Unison's history as there seems to be a going question about its use. The message communicated was united we stand divided we fall.

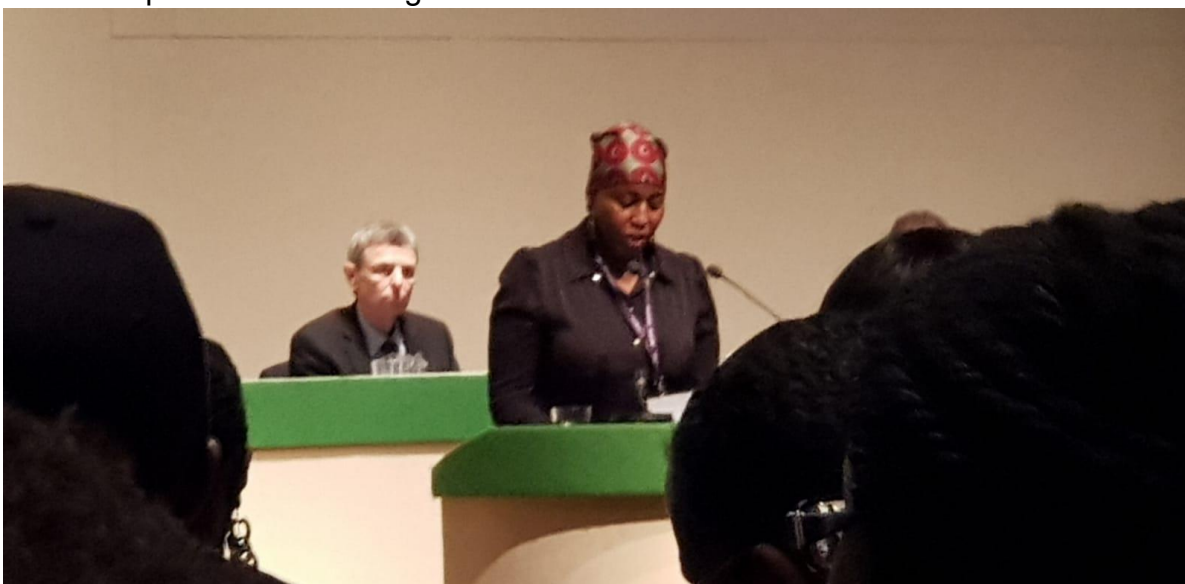
The video presentation on 'Why I Joined Unison' was very good with interesting talking points such as Unison provides learning and development opportunities.

Funmi Ayeni was the winner of the Young Black Member Award and the second guest speaker of the day, encourage by her mother, she is working hard to encourage other young people to join and spoke about all the advantages of joining, impressive speaker.



**Image 2:** Funmi Ayeni - Winner of the Young Black Member Award

7 motions were heard, 7 motions were carried. I spoke on **Motion 5, Black workers in the NHS and Disciplinary Procedures**. This issue motivated me to get up and speak because of my sister's experience of working in the NHS.



**Image 3:** Veronica Leacock – support motion 5

I unfortunately missed the Community Service Group Meeting I was unwell so went to rest.

## ***Full day conference and social***

Conference resumed at 9.30am, with a minute's silence for all past Unison officials.

5 Motion and 3 amendment to the motions were heard, 4 motions and the 3 amendments were carried. Motion 13 Kashmir Crisis was not carried. However it was noted that the union supports all human rights, no matter where they are being violated.

The speakers for the day was Jose Bird, Unison President and Katrina French CEO StopWatch. Jose Bird looked at the politic landscape and encourage delegates to consider joining labour watch and generally getting more involved. Katrina French provided us with statistics about the landscape for young boys in the community and Boris Johnson's initiative on knife crime is going to impact the innocent much more than the small minorities of the guilty. She was looking for more people to get involved.

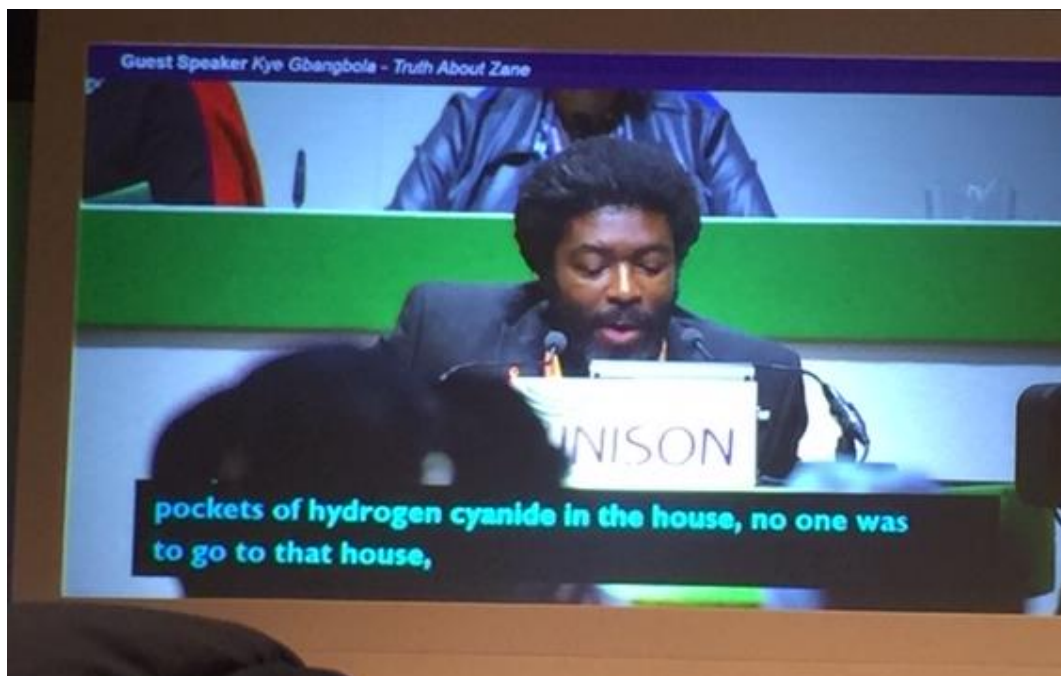
Yvonne Green was presented with the Mandela Award.

I attended two fringe meetings 'the Rise of the Far Right' and 'stigma of Mental Health in Black communities. Both sessions were very informative and worth attending.

The social was held at the Carrington House Hotel, it started at 7pm and finished at 1am, it was well attended, and it seem like fun was had by all.

## ***Final day***

The final day of the conference started at 9.30 where we heard 16 motions under the areas of International and Campaigning. All the motions put forward today were carried. The guest speaker was a gentleman by the name of Kye Gbangbola presenting the Truth About Zane.



***Image 3:*** Kye Gbangbola – Truth About Zane

Kye Gbangbola spoke about the life and sudden death of his son Zane, who would have just reached his teenage years. He provided us with shocking information on the Government cover-up of his son's death and the disability that has left him in a wheelchair, this caused by toxic

hidden landfill just behind the family's home. I would recommend reader of this report to research his compelling story and his continued fight for justice for Zane.

We were asked to recommend two motion to carry over to the national conference. The motions I put forward were,

Motion1: ***Mind the Gap – Addressing Racial disparities in the public sector*** and Motion 21: ***Organising Against the Rise of the Far Right***.

I choose Motion 1 because I felt if we understand and start addressing this issue, will would be the bedrock for developing and creating strategies that will deal with several issues that was identified in the other motions put forward. Motion 21 was chosen simply because of the current climate in the UK and the brazen attacks that individual is facing based on how the look or sound. This was backed up by a message that was read out by a delegate received the day after the UK left the EU reminding members of a block of flights that 'we are now a sovereign nation and if you speak in your mother tong, you should leave this country and free up the council flats for the English people'.

## ***In Conclusion***

The main message of the Conference was that we need to continue to work together as one, remain united in this time of uncertainty as together we can win. The overall vibe was a good one with lots of learning and networking opportunities. The National Black members conference was an enjoyable experience, a place where our authentic voice can be heard, I would recommend attending.