



# Black and Asian Police Association Greater Manchester

Newsletter: Issue 15

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## "Shackles"



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Where do I begin?

It all began a long, long time ago, September 2013 to be precise. Who would have thought a meeting with my line manager and a discipline policy would have taken me to February 2016.

I hear you ask the question; why? I'll tell you why, all because of a tattoo. A tattoo I had done on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011, celebrating black history month with a design of 1807; the year the slave trade act was abolished.

I was told I was in breach of the dress code policy as my tattoo was on show. Was I customer facing? No. Was I the only one with a tattoo on show in my office? No. Was I the only black member of staff with a tattoo? Yes.

From September to October 2013 I attended meeting after meeting with Unison as my representation. I'd raise the issue of others with tattoos, all of which fell on deaf ears.

After management realised the dress code policy was under review they decided to wait until it had been rewritten and challenge me again at a later date. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October an incident took place that made me say enough was enough so I decided to raise a grievance and put a stop to it all.

What shouldn't surprise you is what happened next. After discussing submitting a grievance and wanting to submit an ET on the grounds of discrimination through Unison I was informed by my Unison representative that my case was something they had

never dealt with and I was referred to someone who could support me. I'll give you one guess, BAPA.

Let me run this by you, I pay a monthly membership to Unison for support and legal support if required and yet they had no knowledge of the type of claim I was raising and referred me to BAPA who ask for a contribution of £20 per year (a token amount). BAPA is chaired by Paul Bailey a serving Detective Constable who supports other Black and minority ethnic officers and staff in his own time. As for my ET supported by Unison, they left it too late and I was out of time to submit it.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2013 I submitted my grievance. On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013 I was removed from my post to avoid further victimisation as suggested by the grievance manager until matters were resolved. On the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 I was placed in Human Resources.

The pressure and stress this caused me hit me hard and I went off sick. In March 2014 whilst still off sick my stage 2 appeal meeting was held and attended by myself and Paul, some findings upheld, some not. I appealed the decisions and took it to stage 3 with a new grievance manager.

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In June 2014 the findings of my stage 3 appeal had so many discrepancies the grievance manager had to review the errors that had been made. After the review had been made I received an amended stage 3 finding. Perhaps amended is the wrong word to use. It had been completely rewritten by a Superintendent undoing the previously upheld findings. In July 2014 I made a subject access request for all of the documents. I paid the required fee; it took 40 days to receive the documents that were heavily redacted and documents were withheld. I wrote to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) advising the of GMPs conduct in this matter. The documents that had been withheld were soon supplied albeit they were redacted but you can unravel who said what about you.

I didn't want to read the documents but it was the hardest thing I ever had to do. My grievance went to stage 4 at this point. Stage 4 sits with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), but no longer exists under the current policy. I cannot tell you how many meetings I attended with Paul Bailey with senior officers, with Command and the PCC's team. They all knew what had happened to me was wrong and yet no one had the guts to address the matter. I was prevented from taking up a 12 month expression of interest post I was successful in as the head of my department refused to attend mediation and in order to protect me; it was in my best interest to stay in HR.

After the PCC decided that I was out of time to submit my stage 4 appeal that I submitted in June 2014 he referred it back to Command for resolution. Who needs a process when you can make it up along the way? As management within my department refused to attend my return to post meetings and mediation failed (a day at the Midland Hotel) the Branch Commander took over my return to post. I was to return in January 2016, grievance still unresolved. Over 730 days of my life taken over and controlled by GMP.

January 2016 came and went. I was still in HR but I was still within the time scales to submit to the Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service (ACAS). Unison still would not assist me.

The minute I submitted to ACAS I started to receive emails from Command and the PCC. Everyone had just ignored all of my previous emails. It had got so bad I sent a number of chasing emails, but all of a sudden I was being heard.

Everyone wanted to listen. I was removed from my post on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013. 808 days later I returned to my post on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

I returned with an outcome that satisfied and acknowledged what the Force had put me through, how they had made me feel and how badly they had dealt with the grievance. I work



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with the people who said I had a volatile demeanour; I had a chip on my shoulder and various other comments. The one thing they do know is that my tattoo is still on my shoulder; is still visible and I won't be bullied into changing who I am. They don't own me, I own me.

We all have voices and we need to make sure we are heard and not sit in silence. Don't be afraid to ask for help. If we don't speak out how can we support each other and make the changes that GMP try and cover up?

I first met Paul on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013. I became an executive member of BAPA in March 2014. Paul has been there with me every step of the way with me. Not telling me what to do, just listening and supporting me in whatever I wanted to do even when he has his own things to deal with. We need to support and trust each other.

I've learnt a lot in the past two years and I intend to keep learning so I can continue to support BAPA as an executive member and others as Paul did for me.

Heather M Ramsey

## It Is Not The Critic Who Counts

...not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at worst, if he fails at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who never know victory or defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt.



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# New Year – Renewed Collaboration.

January 2016 saw an assembly of representatives of Cheshire, North Wales, Merseyside BPA and GMP BAPA at Cheshire Constabulary HQ to launch a process of regional collaboration among Black Staff Networks.

This initiative is not new; there has been regional coordination almost from the inception of the NBPA particularly in the years when the amalgamation of regional Constabularies was being seriously considered by the Home Office. Other regions in the south of the country have made great progress in terms of this form of regional networking. This North West initiative was largely prompted by the fallout from the October 2015 NBPA AGM Conference when a number of forces were severely criticised by Home Secretary Teresa May who singled out Cheshire and a few others for their lack of progress on the recruitment of Black officers into their ranks. This may explain why Chief Constable Byrne of Cheshire took a particular interest in this regional collaboration which is intended to share ideas and to promote Policing as a career of choice within our communities.

A number of challenges were discussed such as vetting and poor application if the provisions of the equality act. NBPA President Janet Hills attended the event and pledged her support in terms of the National agenda. Delegates agreed to meet again with a view towards working on a set of concrete goals towards better representation in the regional forces. Next meeting is to be hosted by Merseyside.



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## Cultural Awareness 'and' Criminal Investigation.



Duwayne Brooks with Paul Bailey.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 I had the pleasure of listening to Duwayne Brooks whilst he spoke during a Cultural Awareness in Criminal Investigation event held at Sedgley Park. Duwayne was with Stephen Lawrence when Stephen was murdered in a racially motivated attack in Eltham, South London, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1993.

I found Duwayne's presentation absolutely absorbing; his account outlined how poorly he was treated by the police and by investigators who disbelieved him, how he was ignored and side-lined by the Criminal Justice System as a whole and how the events that Thursday evening had shaped the rest of his life. It was apparent to me

listening from the audience that Dwayne was reliving every moment especially when he took questions from the floor. I can only imagine the courage that it must have taken to speak in front of a police audience.

We must learn from this as there have been cases within Greater Manchester in recent years that could have turned out quite differently.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" George Santayana

Anyone who has an opportunity to hear Duwayne speak should grab the opportunity with both hands. By Paul Bailey



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## New Year – New Collaboration.

We have been looking for Psychotherapists in the Greater Manchester or surrounding areas who specialise in Black and White dynamics, as we recognise that Black & Asian members are not currently receiving the specialist support and counselling that they need and deserve.

We have been in touch with the Black & Asian Therapist Network and are pleased that we are able to promote this network to our members.

# Black & Asian **Therapist** Network

Are the UK's largest independent organisation to specialise in working with Black and Asian Clients.

They work to energise and inspire Black and Asian people to engage proactively and consciously in their psychological lives. They also promote high quality therapy for Black and Asian people, actively support new therapists into the profession and develop partnerships with institutions and individuals who want to develop their skills with this client group in therapy, supervision and training.

For more information visit their website at <http://www.baatn.org.uk/>



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