

### ACTIVITY 1:

➔ Document 1: 'In Step With The Youth Movement', *Ealing Gazette* (11 January 1980).

Look at Document 1.

As a class, draw a mind map of 'Problems' that affect young people in your area.

And ways that you might 'Protest' about them – be creative!

### ACTIVITY 2:

Read Document 1. Then, to see footage of the 1979 riot mentioned at the end of Document 1, watch the video file **Southall.mp4**.

➔ Document 2: Struggles for Black Community: Southall, A Town Under Siege, film clip (DVD, Dir. Colin Prescod, Institute of Race Relations, 2008)

Today the class is going to form its own youth organisation and stage a protest. Using the newspaper and filmed interview with Balraj Purewal as a source of information, split the class into groups and assign the following tasks:

1. Think of the issues it wants to target – what are its aims?
2. Think of a name that reflects the organisation's aims and membership.
3. Design a logo and a slogan for your group.
4. Design a poster to advertise the group and its aims.
5. Devise ways to raise money for your organisation.
6. Choose the methods it will use to protest.
7. How is the group going to be structured – will it have leaders who make the decisions about policy, or will decisions be made collectively, by discussion and/or a vote?
8. Finally, enact a protest. Choose your method of protest – maybe a demonstration? Use the poster that has been created, nominate a spokesperson or spokespeople to explain the group's aims and justify its methods to a 'reporter'. Can you win people over to your cause?

# IN STEP WITH THE YOUTH MOVEMENT



DEDICATED: Balraj Purewal, general secretary of Southall Youth Movement

An organisation in Southall helps youngsters with problems and airs their protests

By Ian Malin



KILLED: Gurdip Chaggar

## Racist

A YOUNG Sikh, Gurdip Chaggar, was murdered in Southall in June 1976.

A year later at the Old Bailey, Mr Justice Lawson, sentencing the killers of Chaggar to four years imprisonment, said: "This was basically not a racial killing."

But the unrest that followed the killing was immense. Eighteen-year-old Chaggar was a quiet likeable student who had been stabbed to death.

There were riots in the streets, the Home Secretary came to Southall and for the first time young Asians felt exposed to racial conflict.

From the unrest the Southall Youth Movement was born. And it survives today, the only organisation in the area run for and by the young generation.

The movement has been given a grant by the Commission for Racial Equality which will allow it to stay for a little longer at its unimposing headquarters in Featherstone Road.

Its one full-time worker is Balraj Purewal who, at 25, is also the general secretary and one of the few original members.

He said: "After the Chaggar killing, young people realised how out of touch the community leaders were. We felt the young people had different needs."

"There were racist attacks nearly every day. When I was at school in the late sixties and early seventies we had to have police escorts to get there. After the Chaggar killing, a young leadership emerged within the community. It became a platform for the movement."

As far as the potential leadership of the Southall Youth Movement was concerned, the Chaggar killing may not have been racist but a lot of attacks on young Asians were.

Balraj continued: "The death of Chaggar coincided with a meeting of the Indian Workers Association who at that time were squabbling among themselves. They failed to take the initiative in a tense situation when we wanted to make some sort of protest."

Apart from wanting to voice their protests, the Movement noticed increasing frustrations within the young community.

Many youngsters were unemployed and wanted some "drop-in-centre" to meet and discuss their problems. Many were in trouble with the police and needed legal advice. Some were practically illiterate and wanted more schooling to be able to write job applications.

Executive member Sunil Sinha said: "We found the problems youngsters had were enormous. Statutory provision for them was scarce and often ineffective and we felt we could act as a supplement."

"The first thing that happened was that the members started a project for

unemployed youth. We contacted personnel managers in factories and found job vacancies for young people who wanted work."

The leaders got involved with young people on a personal level.

## Benefit

Balraj said: "We tried to motivate them to better themselves, to show that it would benefit them to go to school rather than give them a clip round the ear."

Three members of the movement eventually bought their building in Featherstone Road and soon at least 100 young people visited the centre a day.

Most of the young people were Asian but some were West Indian although the West Indians had their own centre, Peoples Unite, which was destroyed in last April's Southall riot.

Balraj said: "A lot of kids were only semi-literate and numerate and we had to teach them the basics of writing and mathematics. There was a vast reservoir of people who wouldn't go to an agency to find work and we would help them."

The movement had 659 members at the last count although many who drop into the centre are not registered there.

Young Asians are able to voice their protests now through an established movement. It encourages them to protest about things that affect their own community. But this does not mean they are cannon fodder for left wing groups.

## Protest

The movement picketed local cinemas in 1977 to protest against ticket prices and conditions there. They picketed a pub in Southall because they believed it was discriminating against Asians.

They took a large force to Hounslow in 1977 where Enoch Powell was speaking. Hounslow was next to Southall and they felt threatened by him. But they refused to take part in the Lewisham Anti-National Front marches.

Balraj said: "We wanted to protest but not in any sort of rowdy way and act as a spearhead for positive protest. We were the only organisation that was encouraging the young people to take part in local affairs."

But the events of 1976 and 1977 have been overshadowed by those of last April. A defence committee was formed between the Indian Workers Association, Southall Rights, Peoples Unite and the Southall Youth Movement.

The committee took statements and arranged for the best solicitors to represent the 342 people — many young Asians from Southall — arrested on that day.

The Southall Youth Movement itself has raised over £10,000 to help defendants.

One of its members, Kapil Juj, has been going to Barnet Court every day to give advice to defendants.

Sunil Sinha said: "The community took a battering that day and we have ensured that every person arrested knows that what he did was appreciated by the community. That's why Kapil Jum has gone to Barnet every day."

And he adds: "If there had have been no protest we would have really sunk. We have mobilised people and raised their hopes and that's the real reason why we exist. The biggest danger is apathy."



HELPFUL: The Southall Youth Movement

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Pretend you are a journalist for a local newspaper covering the demonstration held by your class's youth organisation and write it up as a news article. Will you write it up sympathetically, or critically?
2. Southall Black Sisters and The Monitoring Group are two self-help organisations working today to support the community in Southall. Can you find out why they were set up and what their main activities are today? How does what they do relate to the activities of the SYM thirty years ago? You could try to contact the groups directly and carry out an interview with a member of staff and ask the organisation to send you information, for example an Annual Report. You can also use the following websites:  
**[www.southallblacksisters.org.uk](http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk)**  
**[www.monitoring-group.co.uk](http://www.monitoring-group.co.uk)**
3. 'The biggest danger is apathy'. This was the conclusion of Balraj Purewal, of the Southall Youth Movement, being interviewed about the problems facing young people in Southall in Document 1. What does he mean by apathy? Why might it be dangerous? Think about the problems you face as a young person and how you have tried to overcome them. Have a classroom debate: 'This house believes the biggest threat to young people today is their own apathy.'