



Tennyson Makiwane comes to London - but how?

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Newby, A. (2015, Jun 17). Tennyson Makiwane comes to London - but how? Reading Race, Collecting Cultures - The Roving Reader Files. Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre.
<https://aiucentre.wordpress.com/2015/06/17/tennyson-makiwane-comes-to-london-but-how/>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on Manchester Research Explorer is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Proof version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Explorer are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Takedown policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please refer to the University of Manchester's Takedown Procedures [<http://man.ac.uk/04Y6Bo>] or contact uml.scholarlycommunications@manchester.ac.uk providing relevant details, so we can investigate your claim.



Reading Race, Collecting Cultures

Collections at the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre



Posted on 17/06/2015

Tennyson Makiwane comes to London – but how?



The Roving Reader Files

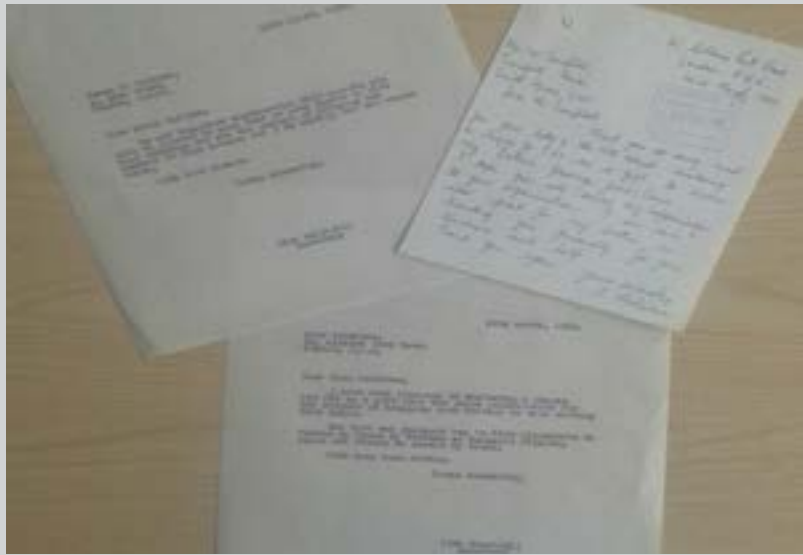
The Roving Reader has been out and about exploring other archives in Manchester. This week she's been to the People's History Museum and discovered tantalising new evidence of how one of the most significant participants in the early UK anti-apartheid movement came to Britain.

This post was going to be about the discovery of a touching migrant story. African woman lives in 1950s London and begs clergyman for money to bring brother to UK. Clergyman phones contact to get funds and cheque is sent off. Thank you note penned, good act done, brother home and happy. Not all migrant stories end so well, but it symbolises tales of separation repeated thousands of times in a world of war and economic deprivation...

True, this story features a clergyman, a sister, a brother and a benefactor. But when I say that these are Canon John Collins, Miss D Makiwane, Tennyson Makiwane and the Secretary of a UK Labour Party-linked fellowship, some of you out there might start jumping around shouting "Whoopie! Now we know who paid for Tennyson's travel ticket!"

Let's start at the beginning.

The Labour History Archive at the People's History Museum (PHM) in Manchester is packed with fascinating internationally-renowned manuscript collections. But it wasn't one of these that I was looking at. Uncatalogued in a corner was a mysterious set of boxes containing material about an all-but-forgotten organisation called the British Asian and Overseas Socialist Fellowship (BAOF). You know I'm all for a mystery and a good old rummage, so I got on with it.



Correspondence from the British Asian Overseas Fellowship collection at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre. Courtesy of People's History Museum, Manchester

What emerged was a jigsaw of information linking the Labour Party-backed BAOF to a myriad of activities in the 1950s and 1960s aimed at bringing together socialist students visiting the UK with like-minded individuals and groups across the nation, as well as organising lectures and tea parties in the shadow of that whirlpool of political intrigue called Westminster.

Correspondence, leaflets, tickets, invoices. I was drowning. But as I persevered I drew together three letters that seemed to be linked. A helpful (not to say artistic) archivist rose to the occasion to provide the image you see above so you can take a look too. Yes, it was another touching migrant story, but the address of the clergyman couldn't be ignored – '2 Amen Court'. Okay, okay, sounds like I made it up. But I didn't. I just had to check it out...

When I realised who this clergyman was, I knew there was far more to these letters than met the eye. Amongst other things, Canon John Collins was instigator of many initiatives that helped anti-apartheid activists in South Africa. The fact that the surname of the African lady was 'Makiwane', and that the dates were in March 1959 also began to point in one direction. Tennyson Makiwane had appeared in London not long after.

What's the significance of that? Well, the 1950s were a time of ferment regarding apartheid in South Africa. 1955 saw the beginning of a series of bus boycotts. The Treason Trials involving many anti-apartheid activists kicked off in 1956. After establishing Christian Action in London, in 1952 Canon Collins had founded a fund to assist the families of those detained in the ANC's non-violent campaign against the Pass Laws. By 1954 there was talk of a sport and cultural boycott, and in the same year the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) was formed.

By December 1958 the All Africa People's Conference in Accra was calling for a boycott of South African goods, and South African students active in the resistance were migrating to the UK. Linking up with the likes of Christian Action and the MCF, they supported the boycott call.

But there was a snag. Most were either Indian or White. A call for an economic boycott would only be credible coming from the mouth of someone from the majority Black community, suffering the worst excesses of apartheid discrimination. Yet Blacks were too poor to travel and had great difficulty getting passports...

Up popped Black South African Tennyson Makiwane in the middle of London. Lo and behold! Here was exactly the man for the role! But wait a minute... How did a communist Black member of the ANC Youth League who'd been involved in the bus boycotts and Treason Trials suddenly saunter into this cauldron of activity in the colonial motherland?

Cue the PHM correspondence. Nowhere can one find exactly how Tennyson got to London, although after his arrival he became active in the Committee of African Organisations and spokesman for the ANC. In the late 1950s he is known to have left his country for various conferences in Africa, one of which was in Cairo. From the PHM correspondence we now know how the leap from Cairo to campaigning in support of the Boycott Movement in the UK came about, and how Tennyson was able to take to the stage alongside British MPs, trades unionists and clergy in orchestrating a nationwide month-long boycott of South African goods in March 1960. The image below shows Tennyson on the far left, preparing to participate in the mass march and rally involving thousands of demonstrators descending on Trafalgar Square on 28 February 1960. Provided by eye-witness Manu Herbstein, it captures the excitement of the times.



Tennyson Makiwane (far left) with Liberal MP Jeremy Thorpe and Father Trevor Huddleston. Photograph by kind permission of Manu Herbstein

So what exactly had happened back in March 1959? The missing links in the story were the BAOF and Miss D Makiwane. Miss D was actually Tennyson's sister Daisy, whom Manu Herbstein remembers being a student who lived in the same London hostel as he did. Her link to Canon Collins had prompted the phone call to the Secretary of the BAOF which resulted in a cheque for £40 being posted to Daisy along with instructions on how best her brother could reach the UK from Cairo. Daisy wrote back with her heartfelt thanks – and the rest is history...

The Centre has many resources relating to the anti-apartheid movement. Isn't it exciting to think that hidden in collections in other institutions dotted around our city there are fascinating building blocks of historical knowledge waiting to be discovered?

I'm grateful to the following individuals for their help in confirming my hunch concerning the significance of the BAOF correspondence: Christabel Gurney, Secretary of the [Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives](#) Committee, who has written about the history of the Anti-Apartheid Movement; Manu Herbstein, who was kind enough to permit us to share with you the photo he took of Tennyson Makiwane, as well as his personal reminiscences of meeting Daisy and Tennyson in 1959 in the hostel where Manu and Daisy lodged. Thanks also to the dedicated archivists at the PHM. And if anyone wants to read further about the Boycott and Anti-Apartheid Movements more generally, come into the Centre to peruse Roger Fieldhouse's *Anti-Apartheid. A History of the Movement in Britain. A Study in Pressure Group Politics*. You won't regret it.