



Black for a Cause... Not Just Because...: The case of the 'Oval 4' and the story it tells of Black Power in 1970s Britain

Winston N Trew

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In March, 1972, Winston Trew and three other black men were confronted at the Oval underground station, London, by a group of seven white men claiming to be policemen, who accused them of “nicking handbags.” An argument broke into pushing and shoving, and then escalated into a fight. When police arrived they were arrested as it turned out the white men they were fighting were themselves undercover policemen. They described their experience in the police station as a ‘night of dread.’ After a 5-week trial at the Old Bailey the ‘Oval 4’ were found guilty of attempting to steal, theft, and assault on police. All were jailed for 2 years. In 1973 they were released from prison after a ‘successful Appeal.’

The Oval 4 episode is an eye-opening event because it not only illustrated the character and contours of Black Power activism in Britain in the 1970s—resistance to police violence and corruption and judicial collusion—it also debunks the myth that the 1960s was the only period of Black Power activism in Britain.

Praise for *BLACK FOR A CAUSE ... NOT JUST BECAUSE ...*

“...a profoundly original book ... there’s nothing else like it.”

-Chris Searle, Morning Star Online

“A brilliant book ... This is the first I have read on the modern history of Black people (in Britain). It is important that Black identity is dealt with in such an honest and powerful way.”

-Professor Emeritus Geoff Palmer, Heriot Watt University, Scotland

“... makes for compelling reading... Possibly the first book on the British Black Power movement written from the inside.”

-Harmitt Athwal, Institute of Race Relations, London

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