

Justice4Windrush Campaign

Pauline Campbell
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Email: paulinec100@googlemail.com

Azieb Pool
Artistic Director & CEO
Bernie Grant Centre Partnership
Town Hall Approach Road
Tottenham Green
London N15 4RX

Date: 11 May 2024

Dear Ms Pool,

DELIVERED BY HAND & Email to ceo@berniegrantcentre.co.uk

Re: Termination of Lease & Eviction Notice for Black Arts Production Theatre Ltd (BAP)

My name is Pauline Campbell and I am a lawyer, who over the past few years have been working with victims affected by the Windrush scandal. I am also a lawyer working on the Justice4Windrush Campaign, to ensure that we provide support and a voice to the Windrush generation and their descendants. Although much of our work relates to the Windrush Compensation Scheme, we also deal with members of the community who celebrate the importance of a generation whose descendants fought in two world wars and helped to rebuild Britain following World War II.

I am writing to you having had discussions with Andrew and Richard Reid of the Black Arts Production Theatre Ltd (BAP), and also being provided with a copy of the attached Eviction Notice, following your decision not to re-consider your position in respect of a rent increase, from £420 to £600, which BAP have informed you they simply cannot afford.

BAP was founded in 1992, at a time when it was felt there was a lack of opportunity available for black and Ethnic Minorities,' since its creation it has offered acting opportunities for young people of all ages, and more recently for adults, through Drama classes. BAP have put on various Productions over the past 32 years. Which more recently includes a Festival of Plays in 2023, which consisted of seven plays written and directed by young people, funded by the London Mayor, and Homecooked.

In October 2023, BAP Theatre, put on their Production in celebration of the Windrush Generation, titled, Welcome to England, directed by the renowned actor, acting coach and director, Judith Jacobs, also a Tottenham resident, held at the Bernie Grant Arts Centre, which was a 75th Celebration Sketch Show performed by actors from BAP's newly formed adult drama classes, which commenced in April 2022 and has engaged new performers and writers to tell their story as to what the Windrush means to us as 1st generation born. The Sketches provided insight into various Windrush experiences, supported by poetry from the Spoken Word and an exciting book launch. With the aim being to support, encourage and inspire audiences who joined the sell-out cultural celebration.

Accolades to BAP include prestigious young drama students which include, Letitia Michelle Wright who attended BAP, whilst living in Tottenham and attending Northumberland Park Community School. Letitia began her career with guest roles in the television series Top Boy, Coming Up, Chasing Shadows, Humans, Doctor Who, and Black Mirror. For the latter, she received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination. She then had her breakthrough for her role in the 2015 film Urban Hymn, for which the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) named Wright among the 2015 group of BAFTA Breakthrough Brits.

In 2018, she attained global recognition for her portrayal of Shuri in the Marvel Cinematic Universe film Black Panther, for which she won an NAACP Image Award and a SAG Award. She reprised the role in Avengers: Infinity War (2018), Avengers: Endgame (2019), and Black Panther: Wakanda Forever (2022). In 2019, she received the BAFTA Rising Star Award. She also appeared in Steve McQueen's 2020 anthology series Small Axe, which earned her a Satellite Award nomination.

Duayne Boachie is an English television and film actor from London. Between 2015 and 2019 he played Zack Loveday on Channel 4 series Hollyoaks. Duayne grew up in Tottenham and Wood Green in Haringey and attended Risley Avenue Primary School and St Thomas Moore School. He acted in school theatre productions, including playing Bill Sykes in Oliver Twist and Danny Zuko in Grease. He also attended BAP Theatre, based in Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Then continued his acting dream, studying Media Performance for Film, TV and Theatre at the University of Bedfordshire.

Both Letitia and Duayne, make a conscious effort to return to BAP when they can to support and encourage young new artists in realising their dream of entering the entertainment world.

The valuable work that BAP does for the young and adult members of the community in Tottenham cannot be underestimated.

New data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows knife and gun crime in London rose sharply in the 12 months before December 2023.

The Metropolitan Police Service saw a 21% increase in knife or sharp instrument incidents across the capital between 2022 and 2023. Between January 2023 and January 2024, the rate of increase stood at 16%.

In January 2024, these alarming figures prompted actor Idris Elba to launch the Don't Stop Your Future campaign. The aim was to raise public awareness and amplify the voices of those marginalised communities most affected in the capital. Elba called for a ban on zombie knives and machetes and, crucially, for better funding for youth services.

Across England and Wales, knife crime and violence has worsened over the past decade. The ONS has shown that the number of violent and sexual offences involving knives and sharp instruments (as recorded by police forces, excluding Greater Manchester Police) rose from

642 (in the 12 months between April 2010 and March 2011) to 891 (in the 12 months from January to December 2023). That represents a 38% rise.

Polls show that crime, policing, and personal safety are the top concerns cited by most Londoners ahead of the 2024 mayoral elections, which took place in May. Despite these growing concerns, however, there is little consensus on how to solve the problem.

In April 2024, newly re-elected Sadiq Khan, now serving an historical third term as London Mayor, pledged to increase funding of community projects aiming to keep young Londoners away from gangs following a 20 per cent increase in knife crime.

In addition, recent figures have revealed that Haringey is the most dangerous borough in London. The overall crime rate in Haringey was 142 crimes per 1,000 people. January 2024 figures found that Haringey residents was London's most dangerous area for drugs recording 127 crimes at a rate of 0.60 per 1,000 daytime population. However, on a more positive note Haringey's least common crimes are possession of weapons, with 198 offences recorded in 2023, an increase of 29% from 2022's figure of 154 crimes.

These figures highlight the mammoth task faced by the community within Haringey, along with the rest of London, and the UK as a whole in respect of crime. Therefore, the invaluable work that organisations like the BAP Theatre do are crucial to help supporting keeping young people off the streets, by giving them a focus, in which they can develop their acting and writing skills and gain a level of pride, not just within themselves, but within the community as a whole. For parents it is a lifeline for their children, a lifeline that has been in place for over 30 years, which is no mean feat for an organisation, relying so heavily on funding to continue.

Tackling knife crime has been at the forefront of BAP's aims and objectives, as such a number of BAP's Productions have dealt with what has been termed as Black on Black crime, with Productions themed Black on Black, nominated for an award, in which BAP use young performers to act out stories of the impact of knife crime and the devastation it does to young people and their families lives. *Involving young people rather than using young people.*

The Bernie Grant centre first opened in 2007, the Centre is the vision of Bernie Grant, Tottenham's late MP, who aimed to create an outstanding performing arts centre and a home for culturally diverse artists and creative sector entrepreneurs, and the BAP Theatre Company has been resident within the centre since 2010.

I understand that we are living in a time of Austerity and poverty is rife, with a cost-of-living crisis, but that is all the more reason why the BAP Theatre should be celebrated for the significant work it is doing for the Tottenham community. They have explained to you that they are unable to afford the rent increase, and despite that you maintain your position and subsequently have served them with an Eviction Notice, which is in complete contradiction to what the Bernie Grant Centre stands for and represents.

By way of information, I note that small businesses are being offered rent-free shops on London's famous Oxford Street to boost the area and support local business. Innovative ideas such as these are testament to the fact that sometimes it's necessary to think outside the box. Andrew Reid has discussed the option of a free rent with the Bernie Grant Centre, as well as

reducing rates for renting Theatre space, which has cost BAP up to £2,000, regrettably no agreement has been reached on reductions, irrespective of funding provided to the Bernie Grant Centre by the Arts Council.

BAP have informed you that they can afford £450 per month and that's all they can afford, (which has been paid to you in April), because every penny counts and increasing the rent to £600 is unreasonable, bearing the work BAP are doing in mind. In addition, there has been little thought placed on what will happen when BAP are evicted and what will happen to those young people attending the Production Company.

In July 2023, Tottenham MP David Lammy, made a passionate monologue regarding knife crime and how we as a society have "stopped caring" about knife crime because "so often the complexion of these people are not white." I am sure Mr Lammy would agree that anything that can be done to help our young people must be considered a good thing. With that in mind I have copied him, alongside the Mayor of London, who actively supports the Justice 4 Windrush Campaign and Andy Donald, the Chief Executive of Haringey Council and Nadine White, race correspondent for the Independent, as it is important, they are aware of the damaging effect the loss of BAP will have on the community.

In addition, Andrew Reid, one of BAP Directors, met with Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in August 2022, in respect of celebrating the Homecooked project, which is a violence reduction programme funded by the Mayor's London Violence Reduction Unit. This is a partnership project to help tackle serious youth violence in the Tottenham Hale ward. They provide a range of initiatives for young people and their families such as sport provision, employment support, a future leaders programme and mental health support. At that meeting the Mayor discussed the issue of fair rent for Theatre Spaces with Andrew.

Colin McFarlane, actor, and founder of the Justice4Windrush Campaign is extremely concerned about your decision to serve BAP with an Eviction Notice and as such says the following:

"Justice4Windrush stands in solidarity with BAP. Facilities and opportunities for young people have been decimated in the last 14 years. Organisations like BAP are worth their weight in gold because they keep young people off the streets, give them genuine hope for the future and often offer a pathway to a career in the entertainment industry and a lasting and valuable contribution to society. Without hope and opportunity children can fall into despair, which could have devastating results for them and the community in a host of ways. It's absolutely crucial organisations like this continue in order to maintain social cohesion. Evicting BAP from their home of 14 years because they can't afford the rent is very short sighted, it will cost society far more in the long term. An investment in lives and our youth is what's needed now more than ever, and the landlords need to show some compassion and understanding and support the incredibly valuable contribution this organisation makes to the whole community. I urge the landlords to show some charity, reverse their decision and be on the right side of this story."

**Colin McFarlane, Justice4Windrush CEO.
Actor & Campaigner (Batman Begins/ the Dark Knight/Outlander/Voice of the Cube).**

The Justice4Windrush Campaign, urge you to adopt a level of reasonableness in your decision to Terminate the Lease and would ask that you re-consider your position in relation to the rent amount and accept the offer of £450 per month to allow the invaluable work BAP are doing to continue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pauline Campbell
Legal Adviser to Justice4Windrush Campaign

Cc: Geoffrey Williams, Chair of Bernie Grant Centre

Cc: David Lammy MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA, email david.lammy.mp@parliament.uk

Cc: Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, mayor@london.gov.uk

Cc: Andy Donald, Chief Executive, 2nd Floor, Alexander House, 10 Station Road, London N22 7TY, email Andy.Donald@haringey.gov.uk

Cc: Nadine White, Race Correspondent for the Independent, Alphabeta, 14-18 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 2AH.

Cc: The Arts Council.