



THE PAN-AFRICAN WORKER

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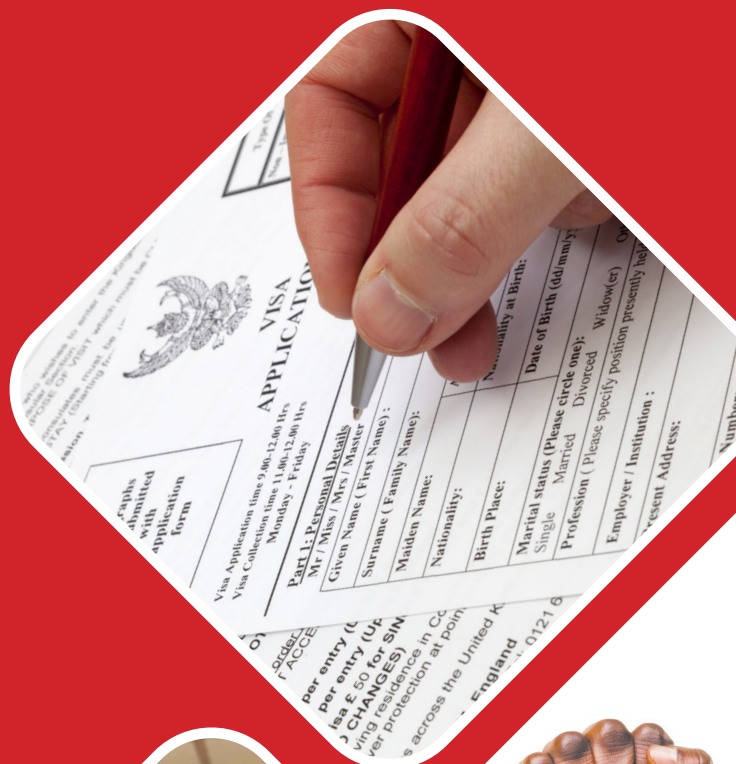
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BUILDING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, STRENGTHENING STRUGGLE

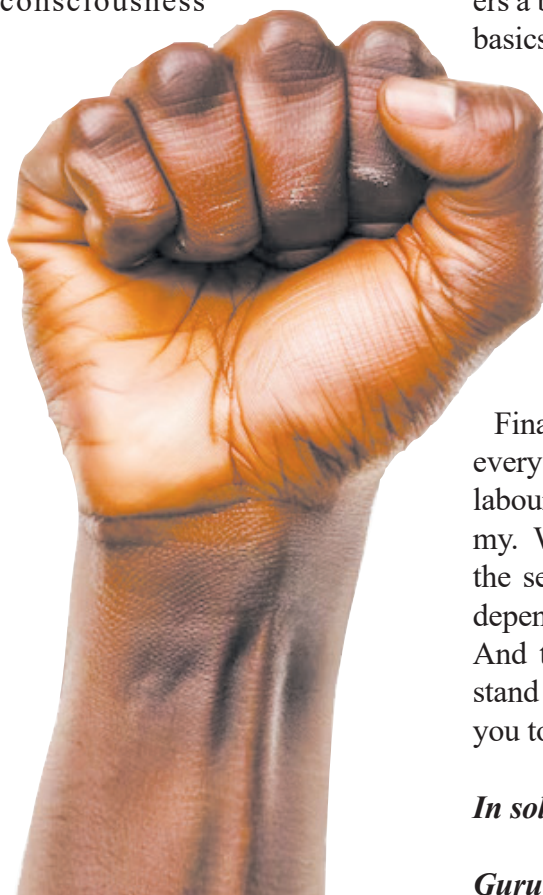
Comrades, welcome to the second issue of *The Pan-African Worker*. Our first issue was received with critical acclaim, recognised as a much-needed contribution to the urgent task of raising class consciousness among workers of African origin in Britain. We see this as our main contribution to the broader struggle of the working class.

This has been a long, hot summer of far-right agitation. As British capitalism continues to reel from the unresolved crisis of overproduction since 2008, migrants have become the convenient scapegoat for every social ill. From housing shortages to late trains. Campaigns have been organised to shut down the hotels where migrants are supposedly living in luxury, while British citizens suffer. The truth is starkly different. Asylum seekers are confined in conditions akin to open prisons, stripped of the right to work and to live with dignity.

And yet, the response from working-class migrant workers has been limited. This is not because they lack courage, but because years of systemic disempowerment have left our class disorganised, demoralised, and fearful. Too of-

ten, the main tool of resistance has been the petition. While petitions can highlight injustices, they cannot win emancipation. History teaches us that every gain workers have made has been won through organised struggle, not appeals to those in power.

Our participation in class struggle remains weak, and divisions within our own ranks somewhat rooted in different levels of ideological consciousness



have begun to emerge. Spontaneity dominates, and while many activists have the right instincts, they lack grounding in the theories and histories of working-class struggle. We have begun to address this through our Activist Development Programme (ADP), which seeks to strengthen the organisation and clarity of our movement. Time will tell if these interventions succeed.

Like our first issue, this edition covers a broad range of topics, from the basics of trade unionism to matters of worker wellbeing. We look closely at the Norfolk care dispute and draw out key lessons for all. Dami Herath, in poetic form, reflects on the heavy price migrant workers pay in pursuit of a better life in the UK.

Finally, I want to thank each and every one of you for your tireless labour across the British economy. Without your work, many of the services that vulnerable people depend on simply would not exist. And to our allies who continue to stand with us in solidarity, we thank you too.

In solidarity,

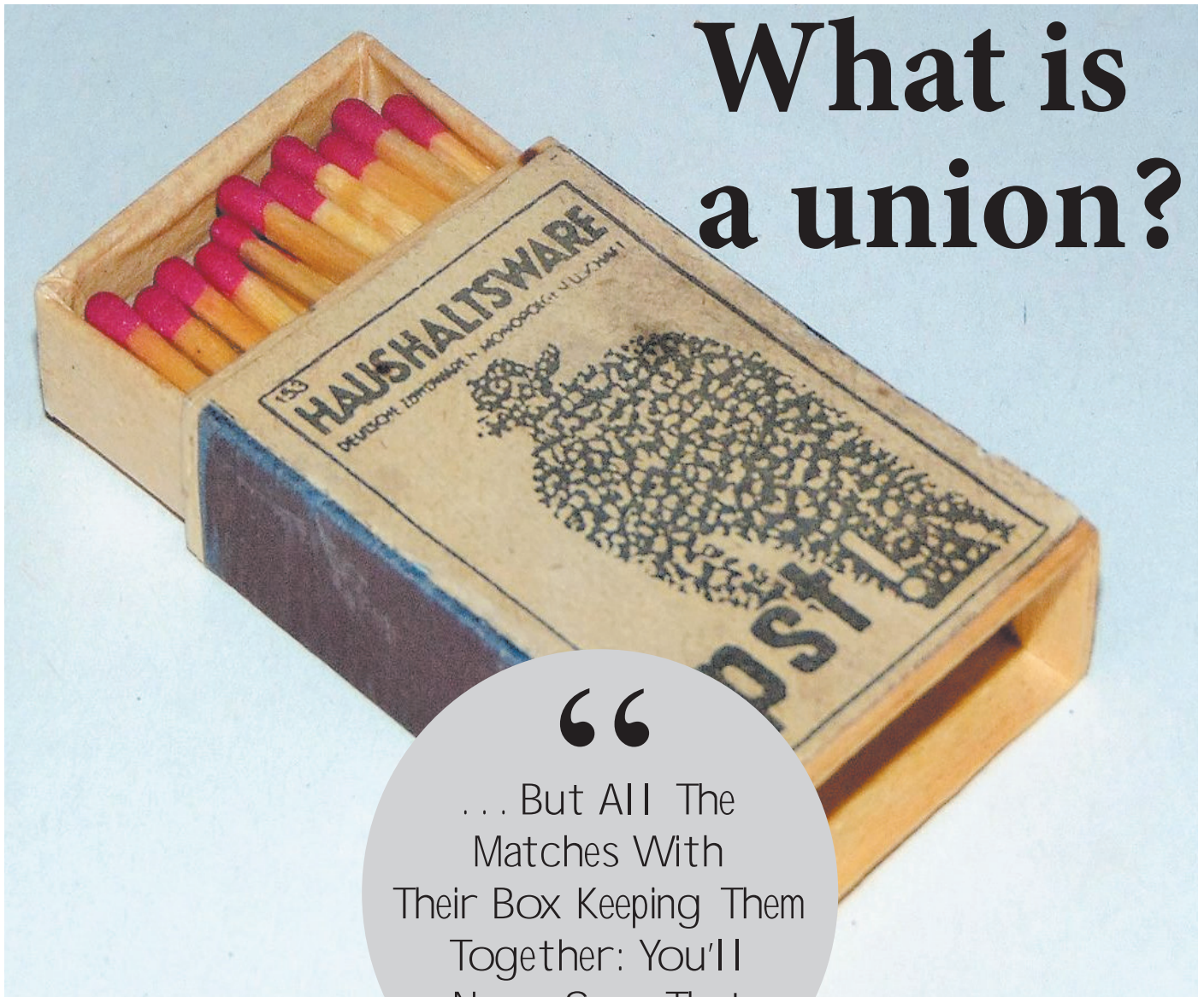
Guruuswa



UNIONISM



What is a union?



“
... But All The
Matches With
Their Box Keeping Them
Together: You'll
Never Snap That

”

When I was young, my parents were always talking about ‘the union’. One day, I asked my mum what a union was. She gave me a match.

“Snap that in half,” she said.

I snapped it easily and looked at her, confused. She gave me two more

matches.

“Snap those in half,” she said.

It was a little harder, but I still snapped them easily. Then she gave me a box of matches.

“Now snap that in half.”

I tried, but straight away it was obvious I would never do it.

“That’s a union,” she said. “You can snap one match. You can even snap two or three matches. But all the matches with their box keeping them together: you’ll never snap that.”





United Kingdom Housing Crisis: Are Migrants to Blame?

Listening to the news, it seems like migrants are the cause of all problems in this country: NHS waiting lists? Our fault. Crime? Our fault. But one problem above all is housing. The logic seems simple: if one of us lives in a house, that's somewhere a British person could be living, but isn't, because of us.

But are we really the problem? The short answer is no.

The first thing to understand is that, in 2024, England had almost one million empty houses. Of those, 265,061 were "long-term vacant", meaning they were empty for over six months. With almost 290,000 people without a permanent place to live, this problem could almost be solved just with the empty homes that already exist!

But the problem goes deeper. The UK used to have masses of council houses providing decent, affordable, and stable accommodation for all.

This all changed when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979. Between 1945 and 1980, UK governments built 4.4 million council houses. In the 40+ years since 1981, successive Labour and Tory governments have only built 250,000.

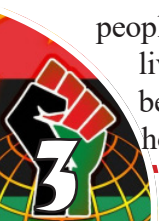
To make matters worse, Thatcher introduced a policy called Right to Buy, allowing tenants to buy their council homes. While good for individual tenants, it destroyed communities and meant council housing supply went down even further. In 1979, 42% lived in council homes; by 2016, it was just 8%.

Even worse, of those council houses bought under Right to Buy, more than half are now owned by Buy-to-Let landlords.

Homes built to provide stable housing are now in the insecure private rental sector where workers often spend 50% or more of their pay on rent. That is why there is a housing crisis in Britain: because houses are built to be bought, sold and rented for profit, not for human need.

This is how housing works under capitalism. So, the next time someone says migrants are the cause of the UK housing crisis, tell them: it wasn't migrants who stopped building council housing for over 40 years, and it isn't migrants keeping over 260,000 homes long-term vacant. It's landlords and politicians.

And it's the working class – both migrant and British – who must fight for housing to be provided as a right for all.



DOMICILIARY CARE LIFE



We are not the problem: We are the Power

● *By Nandi Moyo-Mwansa*

Across the UK, thousands of Black, migrant care workers keep the care system running – quietly, tirelessly, and often invisibly. We are called “essential,” but that’s not how we’re treated.

We are told we are “the problem” – in the headlines, on politicians’ lips, in public debates. They count how many of us are “coming in,” how long we stay, what services we use, schools, housing, healthcare. They talk about us as if we are a burden, not people. But we are not the problem. We are the ones holding up this broken system with our labour, our care, and our strength.

We work long hours – 12, sometimes 24-hour shifts – often with no breaks. We travel unpaid between clients. Live-in carers, in particular,

can earn well below the legal minimum

hour. Many of us are tied to visas, dependent on agencies that withhold pay, threaten deportation, or keep our passports. Some of us face conditions that amount to modern-day slavery.

This is not care – it’s exploitation. But we’re not staying silent.

That’s why we organise.

Who We Are – PAWA

PAWA, the Pan-African Workers’ Association, was started by and for Black and African workers — many of us migrants and care workers. We’re building a grassroots movement based on dignity, justice, and collective power.

We don’t just support individual workers – we develop leaders. We

help workers stand up to wage theft, abuse, and isolation. We take action together.

er. Because we know that real change comes from the ground up.

Solidarity with the IWW

We’re proud to organise with the support of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – a radical union that recognises our leadership and helps us grow.

Through this partnership, we’ve recovered stolen wages, taken abusive agencies to task, and held public actions that demand change. We’re proving that care workers can – and must – organise.

A Call to Action

If you’re a care worker (or even if you’re not) – join us. If you’re in a union – support us. If you believe in justice – stand with us. Because we are not the problem. We are the power.

And when we organise – across borders, across sectors, across communities – we don’t just survive. We fight. We lead.

And we win. They want us isolated, afraid, and silent. But we’re finding each other. And we are not afraid anymore.



● *Nandi Moyo-Mwansa is a Care Worker and PAWA Organiser*





Workers dreams shattered IN BRITAIN'S CARE HOMES

● By *Damith Herath*

In the glossy brochures and visa paperwork, the UK promised opportunity, dignity, and professional growth. But for many immigrants, especially those working in the care sector, that promise vanishes soon after arrival. Contracts are ignored, exploitation is normalized, and voices are silenced. Behind the closed doors of care homes, a quiet, heartbreaking reality unfolds.

Most of us carried more than just a suitcase – we carried hope and belief. When we first arrived, the beauty of a new country, the artistic architecture, and the richness of British culture overwhelmed us. We felt proud to be part of the frontline workforce. For many, this role gave us identity and motivation, a reason to believe in our dreams.

I want you to imagine your first day at work. Beautiful, isn't it? We used to sit and talk about yesterday's shifts for hours. There was excitement, purpose, and pride. But somewhere along the line, those dreams began to fade. Hopes were either lost or trapped in a repetitive loop—bounded by contracts and handcuffed by restrictive visas.

And now, when someone asks, "How are you?" – the once



meaningful question receives a flat reply: "I'm okay."

But is this okay?

Wouldn't it be fair to simply have another fellow worker to balance the workload? To be paid for our online training? To receive proper mileage reimbursements? Fair off-days? Extended pay on public holidays? Free sponsorships? To have our sick notes acknowledged and to receive sick pay? To experience true equality at work? To be paid for every single minute we dedicate to work?

Wouldn't it be fair to start, at the very least, with respect, equality, and diversity?

Is this truly the price we must pay for our dreams? To be poor despite working full-time? To struggle

while supporting our dependants back home? To ignore our own well-being and health? To endure bullying, threats, and exploitation?

Is it fear – planted and cultivated by our employers? Is it the leash called sponsorship tightening around our necks? Or is it the silence we've been forced to adopt?

How many times do we whisper to ourselves, "Enough is enough"?

My brother, my sister – I'm sorry. I can no longer ignore the voices in your minds. I hear you.

Let's unite.

Through unity, we will prove: dreams are priceless

● *Damith Herath is a Care Worker and PAWA Activist.*



WORKERS' VOICES



StephanieMcMillan.org



If the working class manifested our collective power, we could snap the chain of wage slavery like a twig.

Facing hearing without Support

“I am reaching out with urgency and a heavy heart. I have a work hearing scheduled for this Friday, which has already been described to me as a “serious case.” The truth is, I am not a member of any union. I had always meant to join but kept putting it off—something I now regret deeply.

Without representation, I feel isolated and uncertain about how to navigate this process. I know many workers may be in similar positions, delaying union membership until it is too late. My situation is a stark reminder of how vulnerable this leaves us when faced with disciplinary action.

I am desperately seeking advice or support to prepare for the hearing, but I also hope my experience encourages others: do not wait until a crisis to join a union. Protect yourself early. – *SV, Wigston.*

Punished for Speaking Up

“I switched jobs nine months ago, but what followed was stress and exploitation. A month in, a new contract was imposed – travel time pay removed, long-distance shifts forced, and rota punishments whenever staff spoke up.

I stayed silent at first, weighed down by debt and fear of losing my job, but eventually I couldn't anymore.

I'd joined Unison two years earlier and reached out for help, but support came too late. I

faced meetings alone, forced to humble myself just to keep working. New managers arrived in the eighth month, yet the exploitation – especially of workers on sponsorship – continues.

Payslip errors, missing mileage, and unresolved queries have become routine. My May payslip still isn't corrected. I wait for union advice, but if nothing changes, I will go to ACAS. Workers deserve dignity, fair pay, and protection – not punishment for demanding their rights.” – *LN, York.*



pawa@iww.org.uk



CASE STUDY



Norfolk care dispute: Lessons learned

●By Esther Siyekaya

In October 2024, a PAWA member posted a desperate message: “Where does one report if their employer abuses them?” Within 48 hours, organisers from the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) reached out. Soon after, workers at a Norfolk care company began sharing stories of racial abuse, exhausting shifts of up to 10 days in a row, delayed wages, unpaid overtime, arbitrary deductions, and a culture of fear.

Many were tied to the job by skilled worker visas, making them vulnerable. With the union’s help, some recovered hundreds of pounds in unpaid wages. Others moved on to new jobs. One worker reflects on what could have made their struggle stronger:

1. Don’t Wait to Join a Union
At first, I ignored colleagues’ complaints, thinking I wouldn’t stay long. By the time I was targeted, I was in a union but not active. If I’d started organising sooner, we would have been stronger.

2. Power in Numbers
We all faced the same problems, but we dealt with them individually. Management exploited this, rewarding some while punishing others. Even the “favoured” still suffered unpaid hours



and stress. United action would have been far harder to ignore.

3. Know Your Rights
We were forced to sign contracts agreeing to repay visa sponsorship fees if we left early. The IWW explained this was unlawful, and helped us file a grievance together. Without that knowledge, management kept exploiting us.

4. Don’t Face the Boss Alone
When I complained, a director threatened my visa and future references. Alone, I broke down in tears. With a union rep, I could have answered back. Always demand the

agenda and take a rep to meetings.

5. Small Wins Build Confidence
We won back unpaid wages and stopped illegal deductions. The company began acting more professionally – sharing agendas, rescheduling meetings, and responding to emails. These wins encouraged us to keep organising.

Bonus Tip: Keep every document – contracts, payslips, rotas, messages. They can make or break your case.

I’m now training as a union rep so I can help others. No one should face this alone.



RENTING



Know your rights as a renter

If renting in the UK, you have legal protections - even if you rent from an informal landlord, share a room, or don't have a written tenancy agreement. Knowing these rights can help you avoid exploitation and unsafe living conditions.

Tenant or Licensee – What's the difference?

Tenant - You usually have stronger rights. You are a tenant if you rent a specific space—such as a whole room or flat - that is for your exclusive use, and you pay rent regularly. Even without a written contract, you have legal protections, including rights to repairs, notice periods, and protection from eviction without a court order.

Licensee – You have fewer rights. You are often a licensee if you share a room with more than two people, or if your landlord lives in the same property. You still have the right to reasonable notice before being asked to leave – at least four weeks in writing – but your rights around repairs and eviction protection are more limited.

Knowing whether you are a tenant or a licensee helps you understand exactly what your landlord can and cannot do.

Tenancy agreements and your rights

Whether or not you have a written tenancy agreement, you still have legal rights if you:

Pay rent regularly

Have your own room in the property, or share with just one other person.

Verbal agreements with your landlord are legally binding. Your landlord must keep the property in safe repair, including heating, plumbing, electricity, and the building's structure.

Repairs and safety

Even without a written contract, your landlord is responsible for keeping the property safe and in good repair. If they refuse, and the disrepair is serious or dangerous, contact your local council's private rental sector team. They can inspect the property and order the landlord to fix it.

Keep written records, photos, and videos of any problems. If you are a licensee, your rights to repairs are weaker, but you can still raise safety concerns.

Evictions: don't leave without proper notice

If your landlord tells you to leave, do not leave immediately. They must follow the legal process:

Tenants can only be evicted through a Section 21 or Section 8 notice and a court order.

Section 21 notices often turn out to be invalid, especially if your deposit was not protected, you weren't given a gas safety certificate, or the landlord has no required licence.

If you receive a notice, contact Shelter's helpline for advice before acting.

Illegal eviction – changing the locks, threatening you, or harassing you to leave – is a criminal offence.

Record incidents, take photos, and try to have witnesses. If you feel safe, you can call the police, though they may not always be knowledgeable about housing law.

Licensing and shared homes

Many shared houses require a landlord's licence, especially if they are rented to multiple unrelated tenants. If your landlord needs a licence but does not have one, you may have extra protections, including the right to claim up to 12 months of rent back.





Caring for yourself isn't selfish – it's necessary. With rest, movement, and mindful routines, you can nurture both your wellbeing and the passion that drives your work. Transformation begins with small, consistent steps.

Strong Minds, Caring Hearts

● *By Abdul-Malik*

Working in the care sector – whether as a youth worker, nurse, or caregiver – is rewarding but also demanding. Long hours, heavy workloads, and emotional strain can drain both our minds and bodies. Too often, we focus on others and forget that we too need care.

Mental health is real, and it deserves our attention. If ignored, stress and exhaustion can lead to burnout or illness. The good news is that with small, intentional steps, we can protect our wellbeing and find balance in our work and life.

One powerful step is building a routine. Structure helps us stay grounded. Start small—morning stretches, a short walk, or journaling before bed. These habits create stability, especially on challenging days.

Movement is also medicine for the mind. Exercise releases endorphins that lift mood and energy. You don't need a gym; try walking, skipping, or dancing to your fa-

vorite music. What matters most is consistency, not intensity.

Sleep is another essential pillar. Many of us sacrifice it, but rest is the body's way of healing. Protect your sleep by creating a calming night routine – limit screens, sip tea, or read before bed.

Nutrition also shapes how we feel. A balanced diet fuels focus and strength, while skipping meals or relying on caffeine leads to crashes. Small mindful choices can transform energy and clarity.

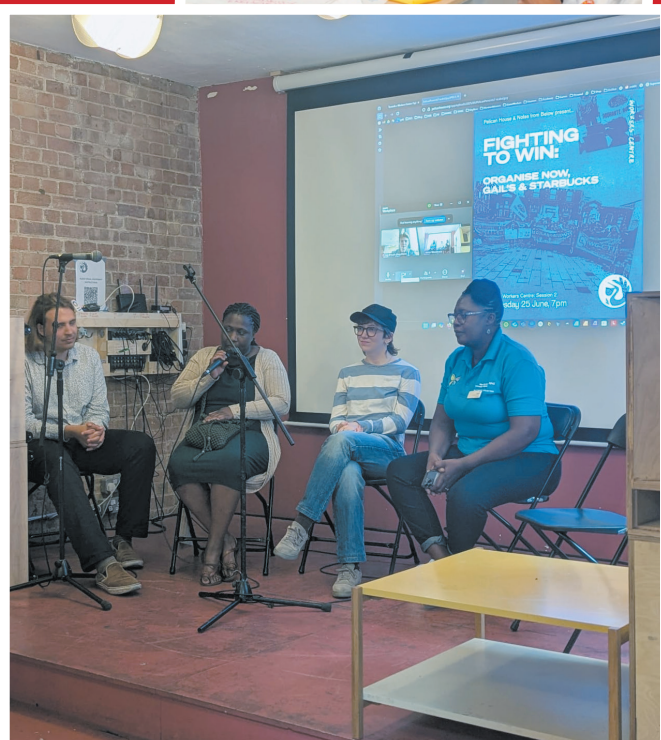
Finally, remember that it's okay to seek support. Talking to a trusted friend, counselor,

or mentor can lighten emotional burdens. Asking for help is not weakness – it's wisdom.



Exercise frees the mind . . .

PAWA GALLERY



UPCOMING EVENTS



**5-9 September: New Organising Conference
(Liverpool)**

**8 September: Parliamentary debate on immigration
rules**

10 September: Online ADP training

20 September: Monthly general members meeting



JOIN AND GET INVOLVED



STAY CONNECTED

**Follow the news and updates from The
Pan African Worker
on social media.**

Join the journey as we build a vibrant
and stronger working class.

Use any of our online platforms
– we'd love to have you with us.

TELEGRAM QR CODE



@PAWA_UK



<https://pawa.uk>



THE PAN-AFRICAN WORKER

About

PAWA is a workers association for mostly but not exclusively African workers aimed at improving working conditions and work possibilities in the UK. We are a chartered association of the IWW, a registered trade union in Britain.

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