



WORKS

Squatting in Brixton in the 1970s **Remembering Olive Collective (Liz Obi)** *(Est. 2008–2010)*

Olive Morris came to Britain from Jamaica at the age of nine to live with her parents who migrated some years earlier. She went to school in South London and was subject to all the inequalities and institutionalised racism that existed both in the British school system and the society at large. She left school age sixteen without any formal qualifications, but through her own determination and belief in herself and her abilities, she managed to achieve her O- and A-level exams, while working full-time, and was offered a place on a degree course at Manchester University in 1975.

From the age of sixteen Olive was involved in grassroots political activity. She was a member of the Black Panther Movement's youth collective based at 38 Shakespeare Road. She was active in the campaigns and issues facing black people in 1970s Britain, e.g. police harassment, deaths in police custody, the campaign against the Sus law, bad housing conditions and homelessness, issues of injustice in the courts and the prison system and issues around education and the practice of assessing black school children as educationally sub-normal. She was at the forefront of the black women's movement and was a founding member of the Brixton Black Women's Group in 1974 and later established the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD). Her focus was not only the local campaigns in the communities of Brixton and Manchester where she lived but also the national and international issues of the day. Olive supported black and white workers on picket lines, marched against the 1971 immigration bill, demonstrated outside courts, defended herself inside court, demonstrated for the freedom of Angela Davis and the end to the Vietnam War, supported the liberation struggles of Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, South Africa and Zimbabwe and the workers movements in the Caribbean. When she went to live in Manchester to attend university she became active in an international students group and also organised women's groups in the black communities of Moss Side.

Olive died of Hodgkin's lymphoma on 12 July 1979. She was twenty-six years old and a highly regarded black community activist who made an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of the people who knew her.

