

The Liberation MOVEMENT

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No to violence against Black Women - No to Divide and Rule

A national anti-racist organisation has warned against the shocking video footage of a South Asian shopkeeper grabbing an African Caribbean woman by the throat fuelling dangerous hostility between the two communities.

Black-led The Liberation Movement, which is based in the South London neighbourhood where the incident happened at Peckham Hair and Cosmetics store yesterday, said: "We are outraged at the totally unacceptable violence against a Black woman and support the boycotting of the shop until the perpetrator is arrested and charged with assault by the police. It's truly perverse that officers arrested the woman and not the man."

The statement added: "But the shocking incident must not be used to stoke divisive anti-Asian hostility in the African Caribbean community. We have seen the danger of it violently playing out in America and don't want that to happen in Britain. Members of both communities face the common enemy of racism and must unite together to fight it."

Hundreds of people demonstrated outside the shop after the incident and more protests are being planned.

Black British newspaper VoiceOnline has headlined its main story: "Call to boycott Black hair stores after woman is assaulted."

According to paper, the UK Black hair industry is worth an estimated £88m, but popular high street stores targeted towards African and Caribbean women are predominantly owned by South Asian businessmen and this has caused resentment.

Black community influencers have used their social media to call for "Black people to start buying their hair products from Black-owned retailers instead".

Community historian Kanye Kawasaki says: "It's time we chose our community over convenience. Down Peckham High Street alone there are nine 'Afro' hair shops, none of which are owned by us."

The Liberation Movement co-chair Deborah Hobson, a previous customer at the shop where the incident happened, said: "We must urgently combat the violence against black women, which has become so normalised in our society."

She added: "We call on the police to immediately release without any charge the woman who was attacked and for her attacker to be arrested for a gender-based assault."

In July, footage emerged of a Black woman being handcuffed at a Croydon, south London, bus stop by two male Met officers in front of her child, who was distressed and crying. It turned out the woman was falsely accused of not paying her bus fare.

The Liberation Movement joined with other organisations to demonstrate outside Croydon Police station last month to protest about the incident.

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Note to editors: The new Black-led The Liberation Movement was set up by African Asian and Caribbean community and trade union activists from all around Britain. It has the cross-party support of more than a dozen MPs, community groups, trades councils and trade union bodies. Among other things, it campaigns on and supports organisations opposing police and prison killings in custody and police brutality, fighting for Windrush and Grenfell justice and defending migrants. www.liberationmovement.org.uk