

# Altab Ali Foundation

## Ansar Ahmed Ullah



*Ansar Ahmed Ullah is a community activist and has been an active anti-racist campaigner in East London since 1980. He has been involved with the Altab Ali Foundation ever since it was formed in 2010. At present Ansar Ahmed Ullah is the secretary of the Altab Ali Foundation.*

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The year 1978 turned out to be a pivotal moment in the lives of the people living in and around Brick Lane, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. From mid 1970s many Asians, particularly the Bengalis who lived in the East End of London, were experiencing racism, social deprivation and high level of unemployment. The visible increase of immigrant groups in large industrial cities of the UK saw the rise of far right racist parties such as the National Front and its youth faction, the skinhead thugs who physically attacked members of the community and rampaged in Asian neighbourhoods. The police response was largely unsympathetic.

For the Brick Lane Bengali community, who were under constant attack from the racists as early as 1975, the murder of Altab Ali, a leather garments factory worker, in 1978 was a turning point, especially of its youth. It led to their mobilising and politicisation. They began to organise youth groups, community and campaigning groups and linked up with other anti-racist movements and groups.

Altab Ali Foundation was established in 2010 by a group of community activists of 1970s-1980s to recognise the anti-racist struggle of the Bengali community within the historical context of Tower Hamlets. The objective of the Foundation is to build a broader alliance of anti-racist, secular (but not excluding religious groups), progressive Bengali & non-Bengali activists to oppose racism, fascism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, fundamentalism and all forms of extremism.

Since forming the organisation, AAF has always organised various programme of activities without any resources. Some of these are:

- Observing the Altab Ali Day on 4th May each year
- Publishing the Altab Ali Day Pamphlet
- Appearance of the Committee members on the Bengali Television broadcasts on talk shows and publishing articles on "Altab Ali and the Battle of Brick lane 1978" in the Bengali news papers.
- Jointly sponsoring the 75th Anniversary celebration of the "Battle of Cable Street 1936", in 2011, and establishing a link with the "Battle of Brick Lane in 1978"

The AAF members feel that it is their duty to make sure that the future generations do not forget the importance of this day so that they can always avoid facing similar problems in future. The committee members also feel that launching of this website will highlight the contribution of Bangladeshi and other anti-racists activists in the struggle against racism and fascism not only in the east End of London, but throughout the UK.

The AAF committee members also feel that to highlight the Bengali Resistance Movement in East London in the 1970s this organisation should get involved organising a nation-wide essay competition for the younger generation, developing an oral history project and a history archive for the benefit of the future generation.

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