

## MEETING

When: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011, 7-9pm – Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011, 7-9pm  
Where: Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green, London E2 6HG  
What: 7-8pm - Political discussion – May, feminism's relationship to the state. June, TBC.  
8-9pm - Organising meeting

## The Original Sexists – Justice for Zara

On 23 April supporters of Zara Senkan leafleted customers of The Original Tour London Sightseeing company, boarding at Victoria Bus Station. They highlighted a serious issue of sex discrimination and victimisation at the company. Zara worked for the company for five years until the end of 2010 when she was sacked. During that time she was on the receiving end of bullying, sexism and unfair treatment by managers and co-workers. Zara was sacked shortly after she submitted a grievance to the company about some of these issues. Over a four year period she was subjected to systematic sexist bullying by her co-workers and managers; she was told her job was “not for women” and was subject to many other sexist remarks, and she was systematically isolated in the workplace especially by the managers who wanted to “divide and rule” — they fabricated stories about



Zara, her work and her behaviour. Supported by her union, the RMT, Zara is pursuing a case for sex discrimination through an employment tribunal. All Zara wants is to set the record straight and prove that Original Tour was guilty of condoning and worse, perpetrating, clear sexist and unfair treatment that should have no place in any company. Zara sums it up: “They wanted me to have a nervous breakdown and leave the job, but they couldn't break me so they sacked me”. For on-going information join Zara's Facebook campaign page 'Justice for Zara'

## Andrew Lansley, greedy Andrew Lansley

The coalition government's proposed reform threatens to completely remove the NHS from its founding principles of free comprehensive care based on the population's needs, and is set to open the door even wider to private profit-making companies. Cuts to frontline staff, ward closures and diminished services are now a serious concern across the whole spectrum of health care services. Barts and the London hospital plan to reduce nursing staff by 10% equating to 630 jobs. London Ambulance service plan to cut 890 jobs, including 560 frontline workers. Nowhere have the Tories more unashamedly reneged on their promises than in maternity care where the shortage of midwives is a chronic problem. The coalition's pre-election promise to increase the number of midwives by 3000 was swiftly dumped. UK maternity wards are now at crisis point, and fears over the stillbirth and maternal death rates continue to make headlines. Despite this midwifery services are being pared back and training budgets disappearing. CEMACE, a body that investigates and reports on all deaths related to childbirth to improve the quality of maternity care, has just been scrapped. This agenda of cuts will cause irreparable damage to our NHS and must be resisted. The Royal College of Nurses voted 99% in favour of a vote of no confidence in health secretary Andrew Lansley. NHS workers and service-users are joining to fight in their local areas. There will be a demonstration on the 17<sup>th</sup> May. **For more details** - <http://www.keepournhspublic.com/index.php>



# Sexist Pigs Cut our Pensions!

By Laura Schwartz

In March 2011 University and Further Education lecturers went on strike against significant cuts to their pension scheme which included forcing employees to pay more while their employers pay less, and ending the final salary scheme for anyone new to the workforce. Picket lines went up in every college and university across Britain totalling five strike days. Pensions are now political. Students were also clear that these seemingly bureaucratic changes were part of a broader attack on higher education which affected them too. At Goldsmiths College, University of London students took over management's offices for 4 days – an interesting tactic whereby an occupation was used to enforce a picket line and prevent bosses from coming to work. But the sexist nature of these attacks on pensions needs to be more strongly highlighted. For the proposed changes discriminate especially against any employee whose wishes to take a career break or to return to work part-time. They are therefore most likely to affect women with children. They will reinforce conservative and nuclear family arrangements, deterring fathers or non-biological family members from taking an equal part in childcare. Academia today is still a comparatively welcoming space for feminists: but right now our feminism needs to extend beyond the words we write in books to struggling in our own workplaces against retrograde practices which divide and exploit in highly gendered ways.

## Bringing together a community in solidarity

By a Tower Hamlets teacher

Almost every school in the borough closed either partially or entirely on 30 March due to joint action by local Unison and the NUT. After picket lines, several hundred people assembled at Weavers Fields for a march to a rally at the London Muslim Centre. Kids were on our megaphone all the way, others leaned out of windows to cheer us, cars beeped, and we got escorted off the premises of Canary Wharf to one of my kids leading a chant of “you’ve got loads of money”. We were en route to support workers at another school where the head had been intimidating strikers. We met the workers of a Sure Start children’s centre holding a formidable picket line — this was one of many highlights, as we all cheered in riotous solidarity. About 2,000 people had taken to the streets, the majority of them women, many of whom had never struck or demonstrated before. The demonstration, full of school bands and workers with their kids marching as service users as well as providers, felt massive, was incredibly loud and lively, and got loads of public support. Another of my kids appeared out of nowhere, clutched my hand and said in an awestruck whisper “I’ve never seen anything like it.” The rally – hundreds strong - consisted of a top-table speaker panel made up of male union big-wigs with lots of fighting talk. There was lots of chanting, demanding a general strike, a big vote in favour of combined public sector union action over pensions, and, I hope, a sense that we need to hold our tub-thumping “leaders” to account and demand action. A one-day strike by itself is going to win nothing, but this was a necessary experience, giving us practice at organising, arguing, mobilising and demonstrating and boosting confidence. Perhaps most important, it allowed us to have solidarity with workers of different unions, in different schools, with parents and children — in short, our community. Opportunities to build this solidarity are in themselves vital if we are going to be able to go on to fight a battle with a chance of winning. One such opportunity may come as the NUT plans to ballot over national strike action on cuts to pensions in the summer term.

### Feminist Fightback in your classroom

Feminist Fightback have been going into schools talking to young people about feminism and how to fight gender injustice. We have a workshop that is suitable for 14-18 year olds and can be used for Citizenship classes, as well as A level Sociology and Politics. If you would like Fightback to visit your school, or would like access to our teachers pack and lesson plan email [feminist.fightback@gmail.com](mailto:feminist.fightback@gmail.com)

#### Tower Hamlets nurseries

Feminist Fightback is involved in producing a newsletter for Tower Hamlets nurseries facing cuts. To get involved or to contribute contact us: [feminist.fightback@gmail.com](mailto:feminist.fightback@gmail.com)

# feminist fightback

we're still here  
we're still angry  
we're still fighting