

A stylized illustration of a protest crowd. In the foreground, the backs of several people's heads and shoulders are visible, including a person with a large black afro, a person with two braids, a person with voluminous red hair and glasses, a person in a grey hijab, and a person with long red hair. They are looking towards a green wall where several protest signs are displayed. The signs include: a white sign with 'ACTIVISM NOW!' in large black letters; a sign with 'PORT TALBOT STEELWORKS' in red on a white background and 'NATIONALISATION NOT DEVASTATION' in white on a black background; a red sign with 'BY AMGUEDDFA CYMRU PRODUCERS' in white; a sign with a raised fist icon and 'BLACK LIVES MATTE' in black on a brown background; and a sign with a lemon slice icon and 'SILENCE IS VIOLENCE' in black on a pink background. The background features a green wall and colorful diagonal stripes in shades of blue, pink, yellow, and green.

ACTIVISM  
NOW!

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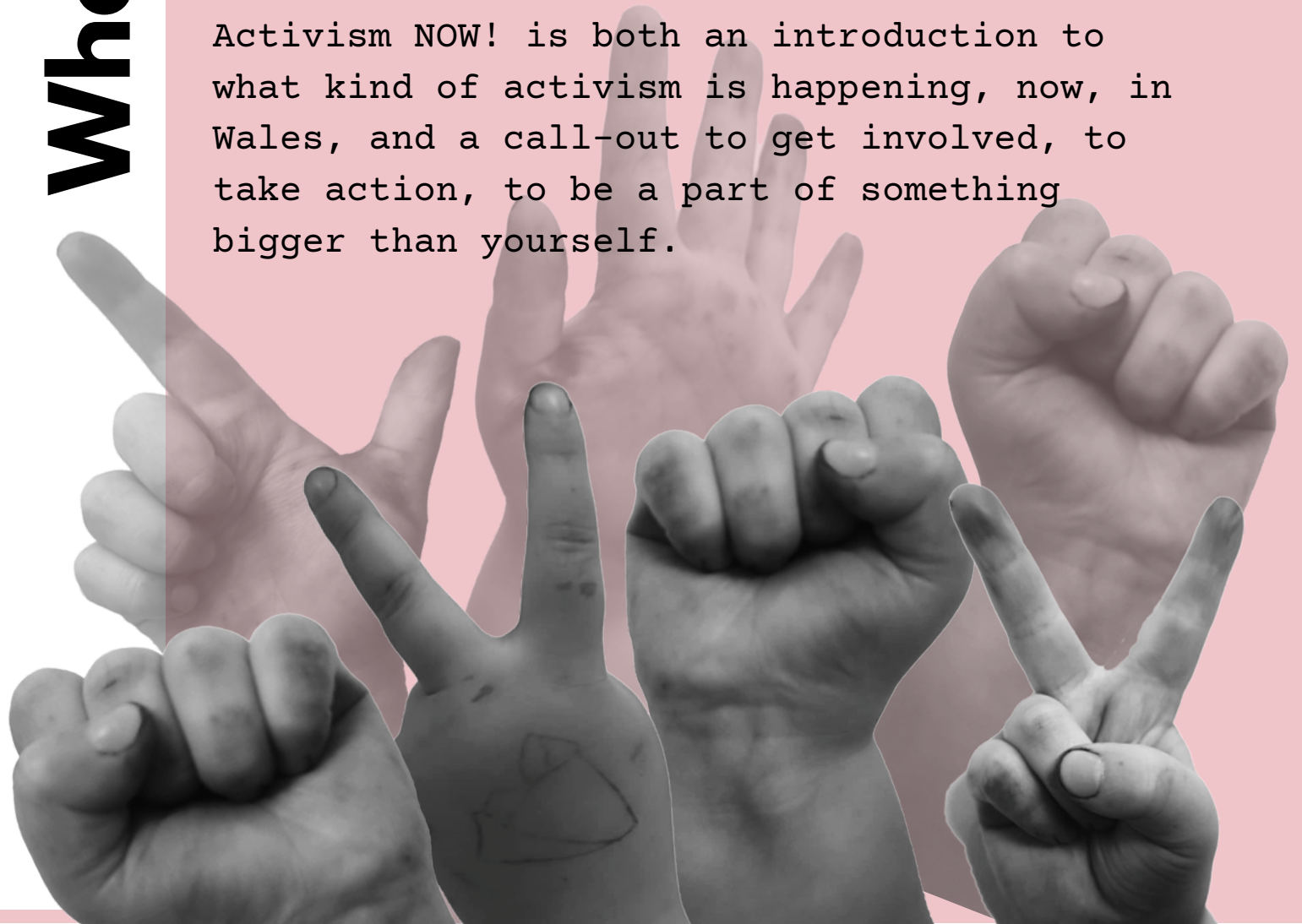
# What is this Zine for?

Welcome to the Activism NOW! Zine from Bloedd Amgueddfa Cymru Producers (ACPs) Alex Matthews, Beli Evans, and Ned Jones.

As part of our work on the STREIC! 84-85 STRIKE! exhibition, we've come together to think about its legacy in Wales. We think it's important to showcase, not just the work that's happening in communities across Wales (some that you may know about and some you may not) but also what issues and adversities communities still face today.

Welsh communities have a long and beautiful history of coming together to build a better life for one another, which we hope to highlight throughout this zine.

Activism NOW! is both an introduction to what kind of activism is happening, now, in Wales, and a call-out to get involved, to take action, to be a part of something bigger than yourself.



# Who are Bloedd?



Bloedd are a collective at Amgueddfa Cymru that's made up of young people aged 16 - 25 living in Wales.

This is a space for young people to collaborate with the Museum through participatory and paid opportunities.

We explore heritage, art, natural science, social history, culture and identity through exhibitions, events, workshops, publications and more!

To find out more or to get involved, email us at [bloedd.ac@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:bloedd.ac@museumwales.ac.uk) You can also follow us on [Instagram!](#) @bloedd\_ac





# TRADE UNIONISM TODAY



Since the defeat of the miners' strike in 1984, the situation for the labour movement and working-class people in Britain has seemed to have only gotten worse. The heavily unionised manufacturing industry has been decimated, the 2016 trade union act and other laws have been passed restricting unions, council homes have been sold off en masse and public services have had their funding cut to the bone and some have been outright privatised. The decline of industry in Wales continues with the planned closures at Tata Steel in Port Talbot that will result in at least 1,929 people losing their jobs. Just as the steel workers of Port Talbot, the striking miners of 84-85 anticipated the adverse effect pit closures would have on their communities. Within the ten years after the miners' strike ended in 1985, Wales saw more and more collieries closed, year by year. By 1996, 25,000 jobs were lost across mining communities in Wales.



These mining and manufacturing careers with strong trade union membership have been replaced with low pay, zero-hour contracts and insecure work. Union membership has fallen from over 13 million in the late 1970s to only 6.25 million in 2022.

Inequality continues to rise, with the richest 1% of Brits having more wealth than 70% of the country's population. The richest four Britons now have a total wealth of £42.2 billion while 20 million Britons have only £38 billion. (Statistics from Oxfam)

However, workers are starting to fight back with a new wave of strikes starting in 2022 among many professions, including teachers, nurses, rail workers, refuse workers, vets, junior doctors and workers at Royal Mail and Amazon. The labour movement in Wales, Britain and beyond is making a return and it is up to us to continue the legacy of working-class resistance demonstrated in the 1984/85 miners' strike.



# Queer Organising Today

Queer activism has been thriving over the past few years.

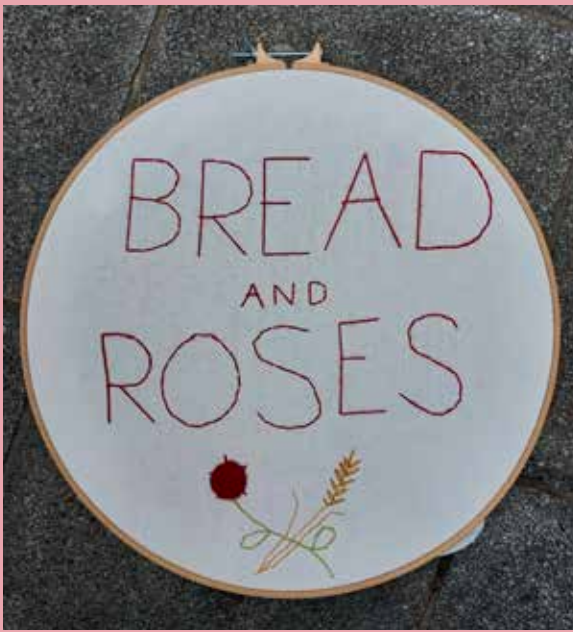
This has had some really great impacts, from material support for trans and queer people across Wales, to access to community, to opportunities for expression and greater visibility.

But we must also recognise that the reason for an increase in activism usually comes from an increase in oppression. The rise in transphobia across the UK over the past few years has made life especially hard for disabled, working class, and racialised trans women. When we celebrate the work of queer activists, we must also remember why this work is needed, and we can all work together to make a future where this kind of activism isn't needed.

The past decade has given life to many groups fighting for political and communal change for queer people in Wales. In 2016, Glitter Cymru was set up as a monthly meet-up for Global Majority LGBTQ+ people. Still running today, Glitter Cymru has influenced policy changes in Welsh Government, supported LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers in crisis, and created space for queer Global Majority artists to thrive. Glitter Cymru still has regular meetups in Cardiff and is heavily involved in activism.

In 2020, when COVID heightened isolation and financial burdens for queer people and the UK government scrapped the promised GRA reform, Trans Aid Cymru (formerly South Wales Trans and Nonbinary Mutual Aid Network) was created. This mutual aid network is run by and for trans people to provide financial support, free meals, signposting to advice, and community.





Embroidery from stitching4change



Sign from a trans rights protest organised by Trans Aid Cymru to protest delays to reform to the GRA (gender recognition act) in June 2020



Embroidery from stitching4change



Trans Aid Cymru have also organised protests around transphobic and queerphobic governmental policy and for overlapping issues, such as disability cuts (many trans and queer people are also disabled).

In 2024, Cymru Queers for Palestine was formed, as part of the larger worldwide Queers for Palestine movement. The group advocate for Palestinian liberation alongside the connected issues of local anti-racism and freedom struggles. They follow a long lineage of LGBTQ+ groups showing solidarity with other causes they both directly and indirectly affect them, such as with LGSM.

In South Wales and beyond, there are now many groups dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQIA+ people in big and small ways. There are land projects, such as Teasel and Malwen, that support queer people in their connection to land and nature. Then there are artist communities, such as Welsh Ballroom Community that celebrates the ballroom scene in Wales, Y Teulu Teg that brings together queer global majority artists in Cardiff, and On Your Face Collective who create artistic projects telling queer stories.

There are also groups that provide practical support in many areas of life for queer people, such as the LGBTQ+ Law Clinic that offers free legal advice for LGBTQ+ people, Hoops and Loops, an LGBTQ+ asylum seeker and refugee support group, the TIN Wardrobe that gives free gender-affirming clothing to trans, intersex, and nonbinary people and so many more.

If you know about or are part of other projects, share on social media with the hashtag #ActivismNowZine so we can find it and learn more about you!



## LGBTQ: Inside Wales' first Ballroom community

🕒 17 June 2023



| There are many categories in Ballroom, including Old Way, New Way and Vogue Femme

# Alive in the Valleys

In Merthyr, like in every part of the Valleys or other deprived coalfield patch, we are known as apathetic, maybe disillusioned, alienated, lEft BeHind.

Looking around this exhibition, I wonder can you reconcile our epics of radicalism and activism with our lives today as ghosts and zombies of democracy - of Brexit Merthyr, of low turn-out Merthyr, of inactive Merthyr?

They say the Valleys are dead, a trail of ghost towns in hills that were once mountains. No one takes to the streets anymore. People barely even vote. We once rallied in quarries and on the tips but now they are conifer plantations and private business for tourists. The 'stutes, public halls and working men's clubs are car parks and plots of knotweed and buddleia. The Valleys are not ours. We live in the liminal space between past and present, alive and dead, real and imagined. We live suspended in loss, always prefixed by "ex-".

I hate this. I wanted to be a part of this exhibition to tell it all different to you. Museums are places of fact, especially government-mandated national ones. Dress me up in an AC uniform, as an expert with doctorates and theses. Will you listen to me now? I wanted my words on a plinth to tell you what I say is important. But you can't hear my voice over the museum's authority. The cold hands of objectivity conduct a post-mortem on my culture.





**IT'S  
NOT  
OVER**

Are Museums mausoleums? Stuffed animals and relics of lost and conquered cultures. Tools and toys never to be used, confined in glass cabinets. Is this exhibition my cultures' wake?

Elders tell me they've grieved for 30 years, watched the community get blown up, smelted down and abandoned. They say it fills the docks under the Senedd, is grassed over, miles away, lost to cemented progress.

I accidentally cried in one of the oral history interviews, my subconscious jumping out of the mask of objectivity I faked. Maybe my culture is dead, is that why people keep calling it heritage? Maybe I am grieving and have never moved past denial.

I've spent years fighting my cultures death. I've collected, documented, organised and presented a life I lived, live. Proof of spoil tips kids still unknowingly play on - that I played on. Transcriptions of radical socialism sermoned by bampas and nans in front rooms, photos of unions, marches and clubs, ethnographies of unspoken kinship laws and pilgrimages to caravans in Porthcawl, Blackpool and Barry. And my family work in factories and do manual labour and have skills and craftsmanship that is not lost. I can't see anything that has changed.

Outside my bedroom window is a coal mine too, the biggest in the UK. I still see trucks and trucks of coal, trains of coal, coal. I see it with my own two eyes, a 400-metre mountain of coal. It was meant to end before I was even born. But I see it. A whirring that parannoys me with tinnitus. Tens of light-eyes stare back at me every night, eating sacred land. I shout louder from the corner of this zine.

# We are not dead.

Did I ever tell you what the 84/85 strike is to me? I wasn't even alive then, but it has shaped me beyond what I can even conceive. I imagined myself different to what society and systems destined for me because of what they did then, in 84/85, '72, '26, 1831. What they built against company, police, hegemony and government. My inheritance is rich despite not having a pot to piss in. They bore a different route for me, a secret one that I found somehow in my subconscious. That map they buried in my soul, I built into the walls of Treharris Boys & Girls Club so people like me can find a way out from this classism and alienation. I used to say I was making a museum there, but this exhibition has made me realise it isn't one.

No, what I built is no mausoleum or wake. Most of the miners I grew up with are dead, but in me, their ideas live on.

I'm making a place for our culture to continue, not as a temporary spectacle to draw tourists or see on a school trip.

No, I'm making a place for my community,  
a 'stute or square,





NCB  
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A sneak peek at the exhibition space and mural dedicated to local working class heritage in Treharris. The opening is 2pm October 29th 2024 at Treharris Boys & Girls Club. All are welcome!



