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Despicable Arson, No Matter the Motivation

Staff at [Football Unites, Racism Divides](#) refer euphemistically to the time following an arson attack and computer theft as a "tricky period." Multiple attacks culminated in the fire on 24 July, which damaged library holdings, burned leaflets and distributed smoke throughout the building. No one was injured, although the offices—located in a building that also houses affiliated resource centers for Asian women and for youth of African and Caribbean descent—have been relocated. **Howard Holmes**, FURD coordinator, told the *Sheffield Star* that, in his opinion, there was no "racist agenda." "They have stolen a couple of computers so there was profit to be gained" ("[Youth Centre Counts Cost of Arson Attack](#)," 26 July). The group, launched in 1996, directs an astounding array of projects, outlined in its [2003 report](#) (1.2 MB PDF file; see photo, right). An [account of the group's beginnings](#) makes for interesting reading. In a game between the home side, [Sheffield United](#), and Bolton, on 22 November 1996, just 1 percent of spectators were of color, compared to an ethnic-minority youth population of 44 percent in the Sharrow city-council ward. Further, researchers from [Sheffield Hallam University](#) reported that minority residents were suffering harassment on match days, such that they closeted themselves indoors. With a clear objective of ensuring "that people who play or watch football can do so without fear of racial abuse and harassment," the FURD partnership set to work. Its credo states:

FURD believes that football, as the world's most popular game, can help bring people together—people from different backgrounds, to play, watch and enjoy the game, and to break down barriers created by ignorance or prejudice.

The Global Game has long linked to FURD's [online resource library](#); sadly, at least some of the library's holdings appear to have been damaged in the fire. But we have learned much about the FURD partnership over the last few days: that its advocacy for the forgotten history of black footballers helped lead in 1997 to placing a headstone at the grave of Ghanaian-born **Arthur Wharton**, a goalkeeper for top-flight English sides in the 1890s; that it has devised a mobile, inflatable football game, stolen from a freight container after the 2004 European Championships; that it has helped form an Asian team to play in a regional adult league; that it has created women's sides, one of which competed in the 2002 Anti-racist World Cup; and that it has secured more than £150,000 for the Porter Project, an all-weather football pitch, training facility and future home for FURD—all located in Sharrow.

The Global Game regrets that it has taken a crisis to make us aware of the full scope of FURD's activities. We urge you to visit the [FURD website](#) and to let them know of your support.