



# *AN AGENDA FOR ACTION*

Reducing racial  
inequality in  
modern Britain

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modern Britain

Edited by Phoebe Arslanagic-Wakefield,  
Steve Ballinger, Ryan Shorthouse,  
Sunder Katwala Ioana Diac and  
Bartłomiej Staniszewski

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**Design:** Chris Solomons

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Contributors do not necessarily agree with the arguments and ideas expressed by other authors in this essay collection.

# FOREWORD

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Steve Baker MP

“ Every time I read my name, every time I write my name, every time I hear my name, every time I say my name, I am reminded I am descended from slaves ”

That is how one apolitical British Caribbean lady explained to me why Black History Month matters to her. The experience cemented in my mind the vital importance of seeing the other person's point of view.

Today's debate on race is characterised by unhelpful polarisation. People free of race hate, but who perhaps do not appreciate the issues faced by people who are not white, can seem to take for granted that ours is not a racist country and move on. This will seem complacent to many people who suffer discrimination and disadvantage today.

Similarly, when I tried to reclaim the plain English meaning of 'white privilege,' the backlash was immense. For those of us who want to defuse the race debate by promoting a classical liberal conception of moral equality, political equality, equality before the law, and equality of opportunity, there is plainly no point trying to recapture the language of those who have adopted divisive ideologies of injustice. Too many white British people lead lives of struggle and disadvantage to accept that somehow they are privileged by their skin colour. We ought not to ask anyone to apologise for who they are.

That is the crux of the problem of the race theory of those who no longer want to talk to white people about race. We seem to have imported from the USA their ideas and vicious conversation about race without ourselves having the same context. Perpetuating that mistake would be unwise, not least because not all racism is perpetrated by white people. One only needs to reflect on the appalling inter-ethnic conflicts around the world to know that intolerance, injustice, persecution, and hatred are sometimes perpetrated on a mass scale between non-white peoples. To suppose otherwise seems to privilege white people as uniquely wicked. That too is a terrible mistake.

“ Too many white British people lead lives of struggle and disadvantage to accept that somehow they are privileged by their skin colour ”

Collectivist ideas about justice will not prove a solid foundation for our future. We need a new narrative of morally, politically, and legally equal individuals, acting justly in the complex dynamic network of relationships that is society. No one should be held back and no one left behind. No one should be blamed for the consequences of actions taken by others.

If we can navigate these tricky conversations in a spirit of goodwill, somehow containing malign political actors exploiting division for electoral ends, the prize of a better society in which the colour of one's skin matters no more than the colour of one's eyes will be within our grasp.

It is a prize worth having. I hope this work contributes to that end.

**Steve Baker MP** is the Chairman of Conservative Way Forward and the Chair of the Advisory Board of Conservatives Against Racism for Equality.



## FOREWORD

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Rupa Huq MP

August's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham offered a range of images of modern Britain. From the BBC TV ident "It's a Brum Ting" to the closing ceremony with Punjabi MC, UB40 and Apache Indian melding Bhangra and Reggae; and the parade of flags from competing teams showing how the colonial legacy has given way to a present day commonwealth of nations. Yet today's depictions of race and our society's diversity are often more complex – and indeed, not always so positive.

“ There is growing awareness of the complexity of disadvantage, exemplified by the debates about white boys doing less well at school, but different groups cannot be played off against each other in a contest of competing grievances ”

As I sat down to pen my contribution to this collection, newspapers discussed how 'Multicultural London English,' derived from street slang, was predicted to overtake standard English as national language, while Mohammed had become the most popular UK boys' name for newly registered baby births. The TV news informed me that footballers' 'taking the knee' before the match was to be stopped, as its impact had receded in significance. Across the radio airwaves the BBC commemorated the arrival of the doubly displaced to our shores, when 50 years ago the East

African Asians expelled by Idi Amin were welcomed to Britain by Tory PM Edward Heath – by modern standards far to the left of anyone who would dare fight a Tory leadership contest today.

What this brief snapshot of everyday life says about the state of the nation could result in multiple possible interpretations. At worst, it could be said it took some fits and starts to get where we are now. At best, it could be said it took a gradual readjustment to bring us to a point where society has largely cast aside its imperial past and can now feel at ease with contemporary multicultural reality. From my own background, growing up in suburban Ealing, London (a seat I now represent in Parliament) I recall being in shock at being called “Paki” for the first time in 1978 as a six-year-old, startled at having to remind my playground tormentor that Bangladesh had been independent since 1971. That word is now as much a no-no as the unutterable N-word. Certain once-acceptable phenomena, that were for some of us deeply problematic – for a young me the Black and White Minstrel Show, for example – are now consigned to the past by the mainstream too. Crass stereotypes are not on.

Yet contradictions exist too, hinting that we might not have witnessed a one-way paradigm shift. The recent Conservative leadership contest saw a roster of competing Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates like never seen before; all of them current or former ministers. While this can be seen as progress, the contenders seemed to be falling over each other to disown the ‘woke agenda’ and critical race theory in favour of statues and some ill-defined construct of the ‘British way of life.’ There is growing awareness of the complexity of disadvantage, exemplified by the debates about white boys doing less well at school, but different groups cannot be played off against each other in a contest of competing grievances. We must not lose the gains of recent years, such as anti-racist education and the relatively harmonious race relations that our near neighbours across the continent could only envy.

Debate and discussion about race in Britain can be complex and contested. One’s opinion can shift in the space of a day from optimism

to a sense that we have barely advanced at all. It is for that reason that we need to move beyond angry exchanges about language to a cool-headed discussion of the changes to policy that could make a real difference to people's lives. To that end I warmly recommend this thought-provoking, candid collection of narratives from an eminent assemblage of experts, activists and scholars and hope it can in equal parts enlighten, educate and inspire.

***Rupa Huq is the MP for Ealing Central and Acton. She was formerly a senior lecturer in sociology at Kingston University and Shadow Minister for Crime Prevention.***

# INTRODUCTION

## *A new philosophical approach*

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**Ryan Shorthouse and Phoebe Arslanagic-Wakefield**

Worldwide protests following the cruel murder of George Floyd by a US policeman – on our streets and on our screens, in offices and on football pitches – highlighted people's anger at persistent racial inequality, demanding change so that black lives really do matter.

In Britain, that peaked in 2020 with the toppling of the statue of a seventeenth century slave trader, Edward Colston, in Bristol. We are not America, especially in our recent history of race relations, but there are still uncomfortable truths about our colonial past and ongoing prejudices today.

There has of course been significant progress on racial equality in Britain in recent decades. The British people have become progressively and overwhelmingly more tolerant and welcoming in their views on race.<sup>1</sup> Gaps in educational attainment have narrowed, with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Britons now more likely to be graduates than their white British peers, although outcomes vary by different ethnic groups and by geography

But it is not enough. There is still an unacceptable gap in the life chances and everyday experiences of people from different ethnic minority backgrounds in this country.

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1. Ipsos Mori, "Attitudes to race and inequality in Great Britain", <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/attitudes-race-and-inequality-great-britain> (2020).

Unemployment rates are higher for ethnic minorities than for white people, with a starkly high youth black unemployment rate.<sup>2</sup> There are lower levels of confidence in the police among black people.<sup>3</sup> People of Bangladeshi ethnicity had a rate of death from COVID-19 five times that of white British people.<sup>4</sup> Black Caribbean children are considerably more likely to be excluded from school than white children.<sup>5</sup> There are significant ethnic disparities in mental health outcomes in adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

There are notable differences in outcomes both within and between different ethnic minorities, with members of some groups consistently more likely to prosper in modern Britain. But there is still a general ethnic penalty when it comes to outcomes in adulthood, especially financial and health outcomes.

Particularly considering the disproportionately high COVID-19 deaths among some ethnicities,<sup>7</sup> the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson commissioned in 2020 yet another inquiry to investigate race and ethnic disparities in the UK. Doing so, Johnson proclaimed an intention that it would act to “set a positive agenda for change.”<sup>8</sup>

Yet the Sewell Report, launched last year,<sup>9</sup> failed to secure consensus. Instead of building support for ambitious policies that could tackle

2. Equality and Human Rights Commission, “Race report statistics”, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/race-report-statistics> (2020).

3. Cabinet Office, “Race Disparity Audit”, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/686071/Revised\\_RDA\\_report\\_March\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf) (2018).

4. Office for National Statistics, “Updating ethnic contrasts in deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), England: 8 December 2020 to 1 December 2021”, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/updatingethniccontrastsindeathsinvolvingthecoronaviruscovid19englandandwales/8december2020to1december2021> (2022).

5. Niamh McIntyre, Nazia Parveen, and Tobi Thomas, “Exclusion rates five times higher for black Caribbean pupils in parts of England”, *The Guardian*, 24 March, 2021.

6. Office for National Statistics, “Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England”, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20180328140249/http://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB21748> (2016).

7. Office for National Statistics, “Updating ethnic contrasts in deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), England: 8 December 2020 to 1 December 2021”, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/updatingethniccontrastsindeathsinvolvingthecoronaviruscovid19englandandwales/8december2020to1december2021> (2022).

8. Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, “Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: 16 July 2020”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-16-july-2020> (2020).

9. Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, “Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report”, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974507/20210331\\_-\\_CRED\\_Report\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf) (2021).

racism and racial inequality, it provoked a starkly polarised debate about whether modern Britain is institutionally racist or not.

“ Responsible politics has an obligation to those whose life chances are diminished as a result of racial disparities. The only way to meet that obligation is through action ”

Political debate and attention on racism and racial inequality in the UK are stuck and increasingly polarised between what we might call ‘intersectionalists’ and ‘individualists.’ The former, going beyond a valid observation about how class, race, and gender interact, risks totalising race, making it the determining factor for all encounters and outcomes for people from ethnic minority backgrounds, engendering a fatalism about the possibility of progress. The latter, while highlighting the real advances for meritocracy in Britain, struggles to acknowledge the clear evidence that entrenched and structural inequalities still exist, instead advocating that modern Britain is all but post-racial in attitudes and outcomes. Both positions are at odds with the evidence.

At a time when the pattern of opportunities and outcomes have never been more complex, our public discourse has become more binary. Instead of our politics fixating on an academic debate about the terminologies for racism in modern Britain, we think it is desperately important to instead focus on specific and actionable ideas that will actually mitigate the racism and racial inequalities that manifestly still exist in this country.

This essay collection brings together leading decision-makers and opinion formers from across the public, private and third sectors to contribute to more constructive conversations on race and develop solutions to catalyse change. We see it as a first step to developing a broad, cross-ethnic and cross-party perspective on how to address and solve racial inequality in our society.

The essays focus on three key areas of racial inequality: opportunities,

justice and belonging. These are obviously not exhaustive, but we believe this focus is on the areas requiring the most urgent attention. Contributors may not necessarily agree with others in this essay collection, but they unite in providing honest, hopeful and constructive thinking for challenging racial disparities in modern Britain.

Responsible politics has an obligation to those whose life chances are diminished as a result of racial disparities. The only way to meet that obligation is through action – this is the main conclusion from this collection, and should be the focus for politicians and policymakers when it comes to racism and racial inequality in Britain.

**Ryan Shorthouse** is the Founder and Chief Executive of Bright Blue. He became the Chief Executive at the start of 2014. Under his leadership, Bright Blue has grown significantly in size, reputation and impact. Ryan is also a Senior Visiting Fellow at King's College London. He is a trustee of two What Works Centres – the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) and Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO).

**Phoebe Arslanagic-Wakefield** was a Senior Research Fellow at Bright Blue. She is now a Senior Policy Adviser at Impetus-Private Equity Foundation. Phoebe is the Chair and Co-Founder of WiTT, the Women in Think Tanks Forum.

# INTRODUCTION

## *Opportunities and challenges in public attitudes*

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**Steve Ballinger and Sunder Katwala**

Race is an increasingly salient issue in public discourse. The politics of race have become more polarised, and for many people it can feel like a difficult topic to discuss, especially if that conversation turns into a shouting match. There are growing differences about the shifting language of race in Britain, across groups and generations, and much more potential for consensus around proposals for what should happen in practice to promote race equality and fair chances.

“It may be the language of ‘privilege’ itself that triggers a conflict between the hard-pressed, suggesting the argument is about race versus class”

Ethnic minority and white Britons have different experiences of Britain’s increasing diversity. Broadly speaking, for many white Britons the pace of change has felt fast – with growing migration and diversity combined with a sense that Britain has made significant progress in its efforts to reduce racism and prejudice. For ethnic minority Britons, an acknowledgement that there has been some progress over the generations is more often combined with the view that it has been too slow, with a need to speed up change rather than to focus on how far we have come.

The Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests had broad support and



approval from ethnic minority Britain. Two thirds were supportive of the protests, rising to eight out of ten of the Black British, and broad majorities across other minority groups.<sup>10</sup> About half of the white majority population was supportive, with a fifth critical, and a quarter on the fence.<sup>11</sup> Supporters of the anti-racism protests saw them in different ways: as an argument about the specificity of anti-black prejudice, or as a campaign to tackle racism and prejudice across all groups. Ambivalence about the protests reflected many different strands of opinion, such as doubts about timing during the pandemic or the apparent conflation of American policing and violence with the challenges in the UK.<sup>12</sup> There was a toxic and prejudiced backlash, which was especially visible online, though those on the fence about the anti-racism protests were keen to emphasise their commitment to tackling racism.

Yet these differences in attitudes towards race are not simply between majority and minority groups. There are also significant differences by age, education and geography within both majority and minority groups. To see this, ask a binary question: “Is Britain systemically racist?” – among white Britons, 28% say yes and 40% no. Among minorities, the balance is flipped: 43% believe the country is systemically racist, while 26% do not. Those are significant differences – but note that the median white and ethnic minority Briton is on the fence. The most striking thing is the difference by age: a plurality of younger white Britons *do* see Britain as systemically racist, while a plurality of ethnic minority over-55s disagree.<sup>13</sup>

Talking about ‘white privilege’ polarises attitudes both between ethnic groups and across generations and political perspectives too. The concept does have resonance with most ethnic minority Britons, who believe there is white privilege in Britain by a margin of 59% to 18%.

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10. British Future, “Race and opportunity in Britain: finding common ground”, [https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Race-and-opportunity-in-Britain.Final\\_30.3.21.pdf](https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Race-and-opportunity-in-Britain.Final_30.3.21.pdf) (2021). Full tables: <https://www.ncpolitics.uk/2021/03/race-and-opportunity-in-britain-finding-common-ground/>.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Responses from white Britons are strikingly different, with only 29% agreeing – though only 39% disagree and many are on the fence. Yet 47% of white respondents agree with the rather similar proposition that “it is easier to get on in Britain if you are white.” And 57% of white respondents agree that “black and Asian people face everyday discrimination in their lives in Britain today,” while just one in five disagree.<sup>14</sup>

“ This binary public argument often crowded out the nuanced reality; the story of opportunity and outcomes on race has never been more complex, not just across ethnic groups, but by age, education, geography and gender within them ”

So it may be the language of ‘privilege’ itself that triggers a conflict between the hard-pressed, suggesting the argument is about race versus class. This makes it harder to build coalitions for change and mutual solidarity. British Future’s polling across minority and majority groups finds that there is a ‘privilege penalty’ in choosing to use this language. Making similar arguments about opportunity and disadvantage, without using the word ‘privilege,’ will generate broader coalitions of support, across minority as well as majority audiences.

Instincts about how to talk about race also differ across generations – but it is possible to command a broader consensus when the agenda for change becomes practical. The public has an appetite for stronger action on hate crime, including on social media. It also wants to tackle the bias in recruitment for jobs, and expects to see Britain’s growing ethnic diversity at the top table of major institutions. Ironically, given the focus on culture wars over statues, Britain’s history of race is also the subject on which there is the broadest potential inter-ethnic consensus of all. A proposal to “Ensure the history of race and Empire, including its controversy and complexities, is taught in schools,”

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14. Ibid.

commands the support of three-quarters of white British and ethnic minority respondents, including 72% support (7% opposition) among ethnic minority Conservatives and 65% support (8% opposition) among white Conservative voters. Again, framing makes a crucial difference to unlocking this latent public consensus.<sup>15</sup>

“Placing more focus on what to do, as well as how we talk about race, offers the opportunity to attempt a more constructive public conversation”

This contrast was reflected in the extraordinary level of polarisation in the political and civic society debate about the Sewell Report in the Spring of 2021. Both the Government and its critics embarked on mutual recriminations over the perceived bad faith of their political opponents, each accusing the other side of ignoring the evidence, either about the progress made in Britain or the persistent discrimination that remains. This binary public argument often crowded out the nuanced reality; the story of opportunity and outcomes on race has never been more complex, not just across ethnic groups, but by age, education, geography and gender within them. The debate was almost entirely about how to characterise the state of race relations in Britain. When the *Inclusive Britain* action plan was published a year later, with its focus on future policy changes, it was a much lower profile intervention than the Sewell Report.<sup>16</sup> It did not resile from the contested Sewell analysis, yet the bulk of its emphasis was on the constructive agenda for change.

Ethnic minority voters can expect a rising share of attention in the years to come. There will be a larger number of ethnic minority voters, more geographically spread out over time as the suburbs become more diverse as well as the inner cities. There are likely to be more ethnic minority

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15. Ibid.

16. Race Disparity Unit et al., “Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities> (2022).

swing voters in the future. A strikingly high level of partisan identification was common among the first generation of Commonwealth migrants to Britain, and was largely sustained across the last three decades of the twentieth century. That sense of party identification has not transmitted itself to younger British-born ethnic minorities, who are more likely to have no particularly strong impression of the major political parties, as is common among their white British peers.

Labour maintains majority support across ethnic minorities as a whole, by a margin of around three to one across groups.<sup>17</sup> The Conservatives are advancing with some minority groups, such as British Indians, though they are still under-performing what socio-economic factors would suggest, while going backwards from a low base with Black Caribbean and Muslim voters.<sup>18</sup>

Around a quarter of ethnic minorities lean right politically. Ethnic minority Conservatives are not a well-understood group in media and political discourse. The quarter of ethnic minorities who vote Conservative are broadly centrist balancers on race equality, with views somewhat similar to those of white British Labour voters. Among ethnic minority Conservatives, half believe there is 'white privilege' in British society today while a quarter disagree.<sup>19</sup> Half of ethnic minority Conservatives supported Black Lives Matter anti-racism protests, a quarter of them 'strongly,' while a fifth were critical of the protests (11% strongly opposing them). But ethnic minority Conservatives see the description of Britain as systematically racist as lacking nuance, disagreeing with this by a plurality of 43% to 28%.<sup>20</sup>

Whether race unites or divides will depend on how the public conversation is led. We will lose opportunities for progress if the opportunity is derailed by a polarised 'culture war' between young and

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17. Matt Singh, "ITV Peston Policing Polling", <https://www.ncpolitics.uk/2022/03/itv-peston-policing-polling/> (2022).

18. Ibid.

19. British Future, "Race and opportunity in Britain: finding common ground", [https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Race-and-opportunity-in-Britain.Final\\_30.3.21.pdf](https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Race-and-opportunity-in-Britain.Final_30.3.21.pdf) (2021).

20. Ibid.

old, where our major parties each pick a side and speak only to one social tribe, rather than seeking common ground. Placing more focus on what to do, as well as how we talk about race, offers the opportunity to attempt a more constructive public conversation. The challenge for those seeking common ground is to increase the salience of how we act on race, as well as how we talk about it.

**Sunder Katwala** is the Director of British Future. He was the General Secretary of the Fabian Society think tank from 2003 to 2011, and was previously a leader writer and internet editor at the Observer, a research director of the Foreign Policy Centre and commissioning editor for politics and economics at the publisher Macmillan.

**Steve Ballinger** is the Director of Communications at British Future. He was previously the Head of Media at the international development charity VSO and before that worked in media and communications roles at Amnesty International UK, Shelter and the Advertising Standards Authority.

OPPORTUNITY



# POSITIVE DISRUPTION

## *Alternatives to Alternative Provision in education*

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### Mark Emmerson

Alternative provision (AP) exists to provide education for young people who cannot attend mainstream schooling, most usually because they have been excluded.

But significant racial disparities have long existed in the chance of a student being excluded and thus placed into AP. Department for Education (DfE) data shows that, from 2006 to 2019, the percentage of black students being permanently excluded fell from 9% to 5.54%, from 9% to 6.2% for mixed heritage children, and from 6.3% to 5.8% for white children.<sup>21</sup>

Yet these averages mask the fact that exclusions of white and black Caribbean children were much higher over 11% in 2019. Indeed, there are still many boroughs and schools where black children are permanently excluded in much greater proportions to other ethnic groups.

In 2020, 30% of permanently excluded pupils from the City of London Academy Trust were defined as black or black/white British. While this figure does not represent significant over-representation, it was important for us to identify, recognise, and address.

These racial disparities in the likelihood of being excluded from

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21. Department for Education, "Statistics: exclusions", <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-exclusions> (2021).

mainstream schooling are extremely concerning because the damage to a child's educational outcomes and life chances caused by permanent exclusion are evidentially proven. The 2019 Timpson Review of School Exclusion noted that only 7% of children who are permanently excluded achieve good passes at English and Maths GCSE. This percentage was lower for children placed in AP at 4.5%, with over 30% going on to be classed as not in education and employment or training (NEET) upon leaving school.<sup>22</sup> The lack of meaningful engagement in work or education for these young people is of significant concern to society as a whole.

“ The outcomes of the first year of the Apprenticeship Academy were remarkable and achieved despite the pandemic restrictions that hampered the work placement programme ”

However, children who are permanently excluded for serious one-off offences, such as violence or drug dealing, pose a potential threat to the wellbeing, safety, and order of the school community, including through negative peer influence. Indeed, the peer effect of disorderly children on the wider school community, especially adolescents, is often overlooked. Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore in her influential paper explores adolescent hypersensitivity leading to a fear of social exclusion from peers and neurocognitive mechanisms where social reward and immediate social stimuli are much more influential than at other stages in life.<sup>23</sup>

Frankly, it is sometimes necessary to remove disruptive children from the school community when their behaviour threatens to negatively influence peers or detrimentally impact the positive behaviour culture of a school.

22. Department for Education, “Timpson review of school exclusion”, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807862/Timpson\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf) (2019).

23. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, “Avoiding social risk taking in adolescence”, *Current Directions in Psychological Science* (2018).



The crux of the issue is this: how and when do we remove disruptive children from the main school community, while simultaneously ensuring that they have opportunities to meaningfully re-engage with education, employment, or training? Furthermore, how do we avoid these children's damaging attitudes, behaviours, and sense of otherness from being reinforced by their exclusion?

“These racial disparities in the likelihood of being excluded from mainstream schooling are extremely concerning”

Many providers of AP, including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), face a real dilemma: they know that the best arrangement for excluded students would be small-scale bespoke provision, where children are not able to create a corrosive subculture. But the cost of buildings, management infrastructure, and enhanced support services for these children – including teaching assistants, mentors, counsellors and mental health provision – mean providers often have to enrol very large numbers of children. Some providers get around this by sub-commissioning provision or having reduced hours of teaching on site. But, clearly, these arrangements do not usually promote the consistent and rigorous provision that leads to good academic outcomes.

The City of London Academy Trust runs six secondary schools – in Islington, Hackney and Southwark – catering for over 7,000 young people in extremely challenging environments. Pupil premium rates, a government grant given to schools to improve the attainment of disadvantaged children, average over 50% across the schools, with two schools at approximately 70%.

Across all the secondary schools, 18 young people were permanently excluded in 2018-19. They were initially sent to PRUs with a number of others securing places at other APs.

With a desire to maintain very high standards for our disadvantaged students, we wanted to create a new curriculum model based on a

collaborative approach for excluded children across our schools. Protocols were set out for trust-based managed moves, respite provision, and education for those on longer, fixed-term suspensions from school. This arrangement continues to work well for students in years seven to nine who display unacceptable behaviour in their home school. Occasional permanent exclusions in this age group do occur, but our internal data suggests that this is much less frequent.

Turning our attention to older students in years 10 and 11, we began in 2019 to work on creating alternative, high-quality curriculum provision for students at risk of permanent exclusion. This was envisioned as an extension of their home school with the same standards, expectations, and opportunities. It was to be deliberately small-scale, with all schools in the City of London Academies Trust buying into the programme on a subscription model. Each school would be allocated places, irrespective of whether they had an immediate need for them. It would also be full-time school provision, staffed by excellent teachers drawn from the home school, and offer a one day a week work placement. Students would be taught well, with the expectation that they would remain at the provision and complete their GCSEs there. They would then receive specialist support to ensure progression towards one of three pathways for post-16 year olds: sixth form and A levels; vocationally oriented education; or apprenticeships. This vision eventually came together to become the City of London Apprenticeship Academy, which opened its doors, mid-pandemic, in September 2020.

Location was critical – we wanted the Apprenticeship Academy to be distinct from the home school but also easily accessible. So it was agreed that the provision would run out of one of the secondary school's sixth form blocks.

Each of the City of London Academies Trust's six schools agreed to contribute £6,000 to secure each place, with all schools having access to up to three places if required, with matched funding provided by the City of London Corporation through their Education Committee arm. This meant that for a full academic year, the cost of a student place was

£12,000 in total. The Apprenticeship Academy had a maximum capacity of 20, with 18 funded places and two extra in case of additional demand.

The curriculum was centred around the core GCSE provision of Maths, English, and Science, with the expectation that students undertake a one day work placement on Fridays.

In the first year of operation, in 2020-21, the Apprenticeship Academy supported thirteen students who would otherwise have been permanently excluded. Within this group, the ethnic breakdown was 62.5% white British, 15% black/Caribbean, 15% black other and 8% white European. There were nine boys and four girls, with eight from year 11 and five from year 10. Three students had special needs, two had child protection plans, and one was identified as a child in need. There were no children in care.

The Apprenticeship Academy's main objective was to reduce permanent exclusions. In 2018-2019, these stood at 18 across the six City of London Academies Trust schools. In 2020-2021, with the Apprenticeship Academy in operation, there was only one permanent exclusion across all our schools. The dramatic reduction in permanent exclusions is almost entirely due to the operation of this Apprenticeship Academy, which allowed home schools to maintain standards while providing support for students who could not remain within the mainstream school community.

Academic outcomes were managed in the same way as in the mainstream schools – through teacher assessed grades in June 2021, as a result of the pandemic. Four students (44% of this group) achieved at least a good grade 4 pass in English and Maths compared to the national average for AP of 4.5%. In addition, six (62.5% of this group) achieved grade 4 in English, four (44%) grade 4 in Maths, and 78% achieved a level 1 or 2 BTEC.

Very encouragingly, all students afterwards accepted places and enrolled at local further education or sixth form colleges, with two students going on to study A levels.

One case study of a student who attended the Apprenticeship

Academy is Student A. Student A was an academically able black boy in year 11 who took part in a violent gang attack involving weapons on a boy from another school, who was then hospitalised. Student A faced permanent exclusion but he and his mother wanted to take advantage of what the Apprenticeship Academy could offer as a positive alternative to permanent exclusion. Like all those who are enrolled, Student A was interviewed by the Head of the Apprenticeship Academy and myself to ensure that this was a voluntary and positive choice and it was clear to us that both the mother and the son wanted a fresh, positive start.

“ How and when do we remove disruptive children from the main school community, while simultaneously ensuring that they have opportunities to meaningfully re-engage with education, employment, or training? ”

Student A went on to achieve excellent grades, progressing on to A levels at a local sixth form college. While at the Apprenticeship Academy, Student A had also taken up a work placement with one of our strategic partners, a forward thinking executive recruitment company, and has continued working there on a paid, part-time basis. In short, the Apprenticeship Academy gave Student A the opportunity to achieve his potential, something which would have been extremely difficult had he been permanently excluded and placed in a PRU.

The outcomes of the first year of the Apprenticeship Academy were remarkable and achieved despite the pandemic restrictions that hampered the work placement programme. It is clear that with the right vision and leadership, and an emphasis on standards and high expectations, the children supported by the Apprenticeship Academy can now look forward to a much more positive future after secondary school education.

It is also clear that the leadership, funding, and operational model of the Apprenticeship Academy could be replicated in other places by trusts, small groups of schools, and local authorities, provided that they can establish the

collaborative relationships we enjoy within our Trust schools.

Transforming AP is not the easy option, nor is it a magic bullet. But the City of London Apprenticeship Academy has demonstrated that it is doable, with a profound positive impact on the children that attend. The issue of school exclusions, including the disproportionate risk of exclusion faced by black students, is too important for us to not try to establish a nationwide network of small Apprenticeship Academies for these vulnerable children. This is a successful, scalable initiative to reduce permanent exclusions and, consequently, the racial disparities we still see.

**Mark Emmerson** is a DfE (Department of Education) behaviour adviser and the CEO of the City of London Academies Trust.

# HIGHER AIMS

## *Tackling race and ethnic disparities in higher education*

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**Chris Millward**

When I started work as the access regulator for England's universities, the Government issued its guidance<sup>24</sup> to which we were required to 'have regard' by law. The guidance sought support for the then government's goal to increase the number of students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities studying in higher education by 20% from 2014 levels by 2020.

There is a substantial element of public positioning within guidance of this kind. The 2018 version was no different, seeking more than might be expected given the powers available.

England's BAME population is concentrated in London and other major cities,<sup>25</sup> where good pathways exist between schools, colleges, and universities. This is true even for some of the poorest students, as can be seen in the annual Department for Education data.<sup>26</sup>

While some BAME students have lower rates of progression to

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24. Department for Education, "Access and participation: Secretary of State guidance to the Office for Students", <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1112/access-and-participation-guidance.pdf> (2018).

25. Office for National Statistics, "Regional ethnic diversity", <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/1.6> (2020).

26. Department for Education, "Widening participation in higher education: Academic Year 2019/20", <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education/2019-20> (2021).

the most selective universities,<sup>27</sup> postgraduate research,<sup>28</sup> and senior academic positions,<sup>29</sup> the toughest challenge for universities currently is to improve access for people in industrial and coastal towns. Such places are furthest from our university towns and cities, rooted in industries that did not require higher level knowledge and skills, and have less ethnic diversity.

“ We can support individuals without falling into the trap of deficit assumptions and we can change our ways of working without lowering expectations and standards ”

However, getting in is just the first step if students and their communities are to gain the full benefits of higher education. There are longstanding race and ethnic disparities beyond admission; virtually every combination of entry grade leads to BAME students being less likely to achieve the top degree grades of a First or 2:1.<sup>30</sup>

This is demoralising for students and has profound implications for their future prospects, because a First or 2:1 can serve as a filtering device for graduate recruiters. The rate of entry into highly skilled jobs within a year of graduation is 74% for White graduates compared with 72% and 69% for Asian and Black graduates respectively, but there is virtually no difference in the rates for graduates of all ethnicities within the same degree classification.<sup>31</sup>

No surprise then, that the same government guidance stated, with concern, “that a student’s degree outcome depends on their ethnicity.”<sup>32</sup>

27. Office for Students, “Access and continuation data by ethnicity, provider tariff group and subject group”, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/access-and-continuation-data-by-ethnicity-tariff-and-subject/> (2020).

28. Office for Students, “Equality, diversity and student characteristics data”, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data/official-statistics/> (2021).

29. Advance HE, “Equality in higher education: statistical report”, <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2021> (2021).

30. Office for Students, “How do student outcomes vary by ethnicity?”, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/differences-in-student-outcomes/ethnicity/> (2021).

31. Ibid.

32. Department for Education, “Access and participation: Secretary of State guidance to the Office for Students”, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1112/access-and-participation-guidance.pdf> (2018).

This did give me sleepless nights. First, because there was only limited evidence on what could be done about it, and second, because I knew that any intervention would be controversial.

Research I had previously commissioned<sup>33</sup> suggested that learning, teaching, assessment practices, the curriculum, and the relationships between students and academic staff could be identified as causes. But so could differences in cultural, social, and economic capital, which affected students' sense of belonging and ability to thrive on campus.

So, to what extent should interventions help BAME students to adapt to the university environment? Or, should universities adapt to them?

This is where views become polarised. You need to search hard across public life to find people who say they do not want to reduce inequality, whether it relates to income, wealth, location, race and ethnicity or, perhaps most importantly, the intersections of these factors. There are, though, deep divisions about the right way to go about it. That was true when I started as the access regulator in 2018 and became even more so during my four years in office.

Progressives want to change the cultures, processes, and systems across one's life course, and they worry about a 'deficit model' focus on individuals. Conservatives want to promote individual opportunity and agency among young people; they are concerned about responsibility and standards and may associate inclusive practices with 'the soft bigotry of low expectations.' Universities are a particular site for scrutiny because they channel entry to the highest paid and most prestigious jobs, and are themselves a platform for investigation and debate.

Take the issue of the ethnicity attainment gap. Universities UK and NUS have collectively argued for institutions to change and for senior leaders to take responsibility for this, saying that "universities and students need to create more opportunities to talk directly about race, racism and the attainment gap and to identify what students think is

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33. Anna Mountford-Zimdars et al., "Causes of differences in student outcomes", *The Higher Education Funding Council for England* (2015).



causing it ... university leadership teams are not representative of the student body and some curriculums do not reflect minority groups' experiences."<sup>34</sup> Universities UK also recommended that "developing racially diverse and inclusive environments will contribute to improving a sense of belonging, and ensure that institutional culture and key decision-making are informed by contributions from a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences."<sup>35</sup>

In most organisations, these arguments would not be controversial. Businesses and public services need to understand the experiences and perspectives of the people they serve, and adapt their products, services, and ways of working accordingly. There are distinctive circumstances at play within universities, with reputations rooted in history and standards, obligations to academic freedom, and the expectation that students will contribute to their own learning. But surely we should expect universities to update their curricula and approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment in response to demographic changes?

Until 2020, Government lent its weight behind this process of self-reflection and change, driven by a Race Disparity Unit run out of Downing Street and the Cabinet Office. With the election of the current Government, however, we have seen the announcement of a "new approach to equality ... based on the core principles of freedom, choice, opportunity, and individual humanity and dignity"<sup>36</sup>, echoed by new guidance that access and participation work in higher education should be "rooted in liberty, agency, and fairness."<sup>37</sup>

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34. Universities UK and National Union of Students, "Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: closing the gap", <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-student> (2019).

35. Universities UK, "Tackling racial harassment in higher education", <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-08/tackling-racial-harassment-in-higher-education.pdf> (2020).

36. Government Equalities Office, "Fight for fairness", <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/fight-for-fairness> (2020).

37. Department for Education, "Guidance to the Office for Students: Secretary of State's strategic priorities", <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/48277145-4cf3-497f-b9b7-b13fdf16f46b/ofs-strategic-guidance-20210208.pdf> (2020).

The report of the Sewell Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities,<sup>38</sup> established in response to the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, takes a similar stance. The report argues that the struggle against inequality should be “not just about fully opening the doors, we also speak to the need for communities to run through them and grasp those opportunities.” “Measures to reduce attainment gaps”, it says, “need to be tackled early by engaging young people while their expectations are still forming, engaging teachers and parents, providing them with career guidance, and removing the academic, financial and cultural barriers to meeting their ambitions, rather than assuming their ambitions are low.”

“To what extent should interventions help BAME students to adapt to the university environment? Or, should universities adapt to them?”

This last extract reflects advice I provided in response to a request for evidence, but the effort to support individuals when they are young need not exclude measures to address organisational and systemic barriers beyond that. Promoting individual agency among young people alone will not succeed, let alone engender the greater level of trust advocated in the Sewell report.

I am now working in one of Europe’s youngest and most ethnically diverse cities at the University of Birmingham. All of our BAME students become Birmingham Scholars,<sup>39</sup> through which they receive enhanced personal academic tutoring and academic skills support, a dedicated induction programme and peer mentoring. We discuss carefully with academic staff and students how to engage learners with the programme without implying that they are inherently disadvantaged or lowering

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38. Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, “Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities> (2021).

39. University of Birmingham, “Access and participation plan 2020–21 to 2024–25”, [https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/outreach/2019-20-uploads/universityofbirmingham-access-and-participation-plan-2020-21.pdf?\\_ga=2.62009964.1311020867.1649059207-603410789.1641459564](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/outreach/2019-20-uploads/universityofbirmingham-access-and-participation-plan-2020-21.pdf?_ga=2.62009964.1311020867.1649059207-603410789.1641459564) (2019).

our expectations for them. Many subject areas are also bringing staff and students together to review the curriculum and the approach to learning, teaching, and assessment to ensure they meet the needs of an increasingly multi-ethnic student population.

“Businesses and public services need to understand the experiences and perspectives of the people they serve”

I have also joined the advisory board of a unique collaboration between the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>40</sup> This is testing new ways of assessing potential within postgraduate admissions, with the aim of tackling the under-representation of Black, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani students across all subject areas. The two universities have recognised that they need to change their assumptions and processes if they are to reduce inequalities within their postgraduate populations, which in turn influence their academic staffing. This is not at the expense of individuals, who receive support through scholarships, mentoring and research internships.<sup>41</sup>

The Government’s response to the Sewell Report<sup>42</sup> puts its actions for higher education under the heading of ‘opportunity and agency’ and there are no actions for universities in the section on ‘inclusion.’ This assumes that support for individuals when they are young will be sufficient to address the entrenched race and ethnic disparities beyond entry to higher education. Indeed, following the report, changes to curricula and approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment in

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40. University of Oxford, “Oxford and Cambridge win joint award to improve access to postgraduate research”, <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2021-11-24-oxford-and-cambridge-win-joint-award-improve-access-postgraduate-research> (2021)

41. University of Oxford, “Black academic futures”, <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/graduate/access/academic-futures> (2021).

42. UK Government, “Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities> (2022).

response to student demographics could lead to regulatory intervention.

My experience since I left the regulator shows that we can support individuals without falling into the trap of deficit assumptions and we can change our ways of working without lowering expectations and standards. Students and staff tell me they are inspired to be involved in this work and universities have their own reasons to drive it. We also, though, need government to embed it within its regulatory requirements, rather than advocating that we should not change. This will be crucial to engendering trust among our young, passionate, and increasingly multi-ethnic student bodies. A forward-looking Government should embrace it.

**Chris Millward** is the Professor of Practice in Education Policy at the University of Birmingham. He was the Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students from 2018 to 2021.

# HEALTH OF THE NATION?

## *Race and the NHS*

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### Lord Adebawale CBE

In February earlier this year, the independent NHS Race & Health Observatory (RHO) published an analysis of over 1,500 research papers going back ten years, with additional evidence from qualitative research conducted with communities across the UK.<sup>43</sup> The report detailed clear evidence of racial bias in the treatment of people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in the NHS and discussed the lack of progress on improving treatment of NHS staff from BAME communities.

The February 2020 edition of the British Medical Journal (BMJ) focussed on race and healthcare; a number of commissioned articles in the journal detailed the experience of medical students (44% of GPs are BAME) and considered research on artificial intelligence which showed that significant racial bias in algorithm design could lead to misdiagnosis or lack of appropriate treatment for BAME patients.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, in March 2021, the NHS RHO also published a study into the use of oximetry devices that measure blood oxygen levels. The study showed that such devices can provide false positives or negatives for people with brown skin and could thus lead to dangerous misdiagnosis of one of the most dangerous aspects of COVID-19 symptoms; the often

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43. Dharmi Kapadia et al., “Ethnic Inequalities in Healthcare: A Rapid Evidence Review”, *NHS Observatory* (2022).

44. Zosia Kmietowicz, “Are medical schools turning a blind eye to racism?”, *BMJ* (2020).

fatal reduction in blood oxygen levels.<sup>45</sup>

Prior to the establishment of the NHS RHO, there had been a number of studies into the experience of BAME staff members within the NHS. The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) study found disproportionate disciplinary action frequently occurred against BAME clinical and non-clinical staff and uncovered poor career progression for BAME staff in comparison to their white counterparts.<sup>46</sup> In many NHS institutions, reports of bullying and racism against black staff were numerous, and disturbing in their impact on individual victims.

“The evidence for the most effective interventions that change racist cultures is pretty clear; the actions of leaders make the most difference to culture”

The key findings of the WRES study were a failure to: support BAME staff; provide equitable access to career opportunities; stamp out bullying and racist behaviours; and provide appropriate cultures of care for BAME staff. All this had a direct impact on the quality of care for all patients regardless of race.

I could fill my essay with copious examples of research that show that the NHS has a problem with race. Forty-two percent of medical staff working in the NHS<sup>47</sup> are from a BAME background; in most organisations, the welfare of almost a half of your workforce would be a serious matter, requiring thoughtful leadership and understanding. In the NHS, not so much.<sup>48</sup>

The NHS has always struggled to relate to race, even when it relied

45. Olamide Dada, “Pulse oximetry and racial bias: Recommendations for national healthcare, regulatory and research bodies”, *NHS Race & Health Observatory* (2021).

46. Habib Naqvi et al., “NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard: 2015 Data Analysis Report for NHS Trusts”, *NHS Equality and Diversity Council* (2016).

47. NHS England, “NHS workforce more diverse than any point in its history, as health service commits to more action on representation”, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/07/nhs-workforce-more-diverse-than-any-point-in-its-history-as-health-service-commits-to-more-action-on-representation/> (2021).

48. WRES Implementation team, “NHS Medical Workforce Race Equality Standard”, [https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MWRES-DIGITAL-2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MWRES-DIGITAL-2020_FINAL.pdf) (2021).

on BAME staff to provide the care the population depended on. In the ‘no dogs, no Irish, no blacks’ days of the 1950s and 1960s, my mother, a nurse for over 40 years, experienced racism at its most direct. Having qualified as a nurse in Nigeria – following and according to the British nurse training curriculum and exams – on arrival to the UK she was told that she would have to take her qualifications again, and so she did. I still tell people today that my mother was one of only a few nurses qualified in two countries, and confident in the treatment of both snake bites and bee stings.

“ I could fill my essay with copious examples of research that show that the NHS has a problem with race ”

My mother told me stories of physical abuse from patients and of verbal abuse from colleagues. One attack by a patient left her with a permanent neck injury. Racial abuse during the 1950s was standard until the 1980s, rarely tackled by the NHS leadership or seen as something they needed to address or even acknowledge. Thankfully, my mum retired some years ago, but she can still remember her suffering alongside the other BAME nurses. The racism she suffered was casual, and because of the lack of action by leaders, implicitly endorsed.

We are a nation that struggles with race. We struggle to talk about it, relate to it, or accept that it has played a significant part in the history of our country. It is therefore not surprising that our most beloved institution, the NHS, contains a microcosm of the same avoidant dynamic in its culture. The culture of the NHS on race will always reflect that prevalent in our society. As we navigate ‘the age of denial’ in the 2020s, the NHS reflects this national dynamic also.

This matters to me because of my six years on the Board of NHS England and as the current Chair of the largest representative body of health and care leaders in the UK. But I have also personally run the gamut of our relationship with race. I have personally experienced racist comments, and from those too smart to be openly racist, the microaggressions that

comprise passive aggressive racism (yes, it does exist).

The NHS requires greater scrutiny on such issues because it deals with matters of life and death. The disproportionate poor treatment of black staff and black patients in the NHS shows that though we may all pay for a service, if you are black, you run the real risk of being treated badly.

My presence is an unpopular reminder of the obvious point that leadership matters. I persuaded Sir Simon Stevens, the last CEO of the NHS, to fund the RHO as an independent body capable of holding a mirror up to the NHS, so that it could truly see its inaction on racial disparities. I know, however, that the facts it has unearthed are not enough to create change.

In the NHS, as in the country, leadership matters. Everything leaders do – how they spend their publicly paid-for time, what they say and do not say, when and how they say it, and to whom they say it – matters. The poet Rumi said: “A fish begins to stink at the head, not the tail.” That is as true of the NHS as it is of the country.

The evidence for the most effective interventions that change racist cultures is pretty clear; the actions of leaders make the most difference to culture.<sup>49</sup> If we want to ensure that the NHS is both value for money and value for all people, NHS leadership has to take responsibility for the culture they are paid to create and lead.

The fact that the Health and Care Act 2022 has imposed a statutory duty on the NHS to focus on reducing health inequalities is an important step forward,<sup>50</sup> although it is disappointing that the Act did not specify racial inequality within this new framework. This legal duty is something that we must keep under review, as we know that the NHS is heavily influenced by its legal duties and responsibilities. If the Health

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49. Jovonnie Esquiedo-Leal and Ramona Houmanfar, “Creating Inclusive and Equitable Cultural Practices by Linking Leadership to Systemic Change”, *Behaviour Analysis in Practice* (2021); Ruby McGregor-Smith, “Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-in-the-workplace-the-mcgregor-smith-review> (2020); Yafang Tsai “Relationship between organisational culture, leadership behaviour and job satisfaction”, *BMC Health Services Research* (2011).

50. NHS England and NHS Improvement, “NHS England and NHS Improvement: Equality objectives and information as at 21 March 2022: Part 1: Section 6”, <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/B1587-nhsei-equality-objectives-and-information-31-march-2022.pdf> (2022).



and Care Act 2022 fails to make a difference in the next few years, we may need to take additional steps to clarify the legal responsibilities for NHS bodies to tackle racial inequality, within an overall drive to ensure that every part of our society has access to high quality health and care services.

“ The NHS has always struggled to relate to race, even when it relied on BAME staff ”

Political leadership is also essential to changing and improving the NHS's culture. Although it is important that the NHS retains its independence, we will not change deep-seated cultural problems without a clear demonstration of political will. Ministers should be asked to give an annual statement on the efforts being made to combat racial discrimination and inequality within the NHS. This political pressure will force leaders in the NHS to keep working on this agenda.

We must be realistic. Words alone will not be enough, inaction needs to have consequences. In the NHS one of the central motivators for change is money. We are now building the infrastructure to enable the NHS to collect consistent data on race. NHS bodies which consistently fail to make progress in tackling racial discrimination within their organisations should face financial penalties. Some may say that this is extreme, but racial discrimination has very real financial consequences for our country; from the loss of healthy working years to poor access and diagnosis creating demand for more expensive acute interventions later down the track.<sup>51</sup> An example could be looking at pay awards for senior leaders within the organisation. People who want the pay that comes with leadership roles need to demonstrate leadership on race.

Leading all the people, all the time, everywhere, means making the

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51. Frontier Economics, “Estimating the costs of health inequalities”, *Marmot Review* (2010); Gilles Bon-Maury et al., “The Economic Cost of Discrimination”, *France Strategy* (2016).

undiscussable discussable. It means talking about race, racism, and inequality as though it matters to them, whether the leader in question is black or white.

***Lord Adebawale CBE*** is the Chair of the NHS Confederation and the Chair of Social Enterprise UK.

# FRACTURED ASSETS

## *Explaining and understanding the racial wealth gap in Britain*

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Dr Omar Khan

Among the most consequential inequalities are those relating to assets and savings. In the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Wealth and Assets Survey is the best source of information for ethnic differences in savings and assets. These show some variety, but overall, ethnic minorities hold significantly less savings and assets than White British people do. Median household wealth varies from £34,000 for Black African households to £314,000 for White British households. Or, to put it another way, for every pound of the wealth of an average White British household, the average Black African household has 10p.<sup>52</sup>

Some groups have great assets, with Indian groups roughly or nearly matching the median White British household wealth figure of £314,000. Pakistani households, driven by their high rates of home ownership, have the next highest household wealth, at around 50-70p for every pound that White British households have.

When considering data on ethnic inequalities generally, it is common to try to control for other factors. This is because ethnic minorities are different from the White British population in various ways, that may or may not have to do with race or ethnicity per se. For example, ethnic minorities are more likely to be young – Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have a median age in their early 20s compared to over 40 for White

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52. Omar Khan, "The colour of money", *Runnymede Trust* (2020).

British people. White British people are much less likely to be migrants, and have historically been more likely to have better educational qualifications and more likely to be middle-class. Both of the latter two factors have narrowed since the 1990s, and in some cases reversed.<sup>53</sup> However, savings and assets build up over the course of one's life, meaning that inequalities that were prevalent three, or even four decades ago, will drive asset inequalities in the present.

“ That housing is the main asset source for many ethnic minorities, particular South Asian groups, highlights a number of issues ”

ONS data shows that when two particularly important variables in terms of saving and wealth – age and housing tenure – are applied, the largest ethnic assets gap in the UK is for Pakistani households, estimated to hold £271,000 less in assets and savings than White British households.<sup>54</sup> Controlling for these two variables also suggests that there is no statistically significant wealth gap between Black Caribbean and White British households. However, this finding is largely driven by Black Caribbean people's low rates of home ownership, with the ONS data indicating that Black African and Black Caribbean households have a net property wealth of £0. This shows why raw race equality gaps can be misleading, but also that applying controls can obscure socially and financially significant inequalities.

One obvious driver of wealth inequalities are labour market inequalities. Assets accrue more rapidly given consistent and substantial savings. It is not just that many ethnic minorities have worse labour market outcomes, explained in part by the labour market discrimination

53. Steve Strand, “Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: trends over time”, *Department for Education* (2015).

54. ONS, “Household wealth by ethnicity, Great Britain: April 2016 to March 2018”, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/articles/householdwealthbyethnicitygreatbritain/april2016tomarch2018> (2020).

that CV studies have shown over the last fifty years.<sup>55</sup> It is also that ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to unemployment, and are quicker both to lose their jobs in a recession and to regain work as the economy returns to growth.<sup>56</sup> This greater instability of employment and pay means that many ethnic minorities are more likely to need to dip into savings, less likely to save regularly, and so less likely to see their savings pots grow.

“Overall, ethnic minorities hold significantly less savings and assets than White British people do”

Why do these inequalities matter? Assets and savings are more unequally distributed than income and also more predictive of social mobility. A child who inherits even a small sum from a relative is able to take up opportunities, but just as importantly, is less likely to experience downward social mobility. Ethnic minorities are less likely to have assets or savings, and this is part of the reason why, as the Social Mobility Commission has highlighted, they are more likely to experience downward social mobility than their White counterparts.<sup>57</sup>

According to the Resolution Foundation, the average White British person inherited £3,068 over two recent years (2018-2019), almost 50% more than the next highest ethnic group, people of Indian ethnicity, at £1,958. Their research further found that “The average person of Black Caribbean ethnicity inherited £778, while those of Black African, Chinese, Bangladeshi or Pakistani ethnicity typically inherited nothing.”<sup>58</sup>

Two other important dimensions of savings or assets should also be considered when examining racial inequalities in terms of wealth. First,

55. Valentina Di Stasio and Anthony Heath, “Are employers in Britain discriminating against ethnic minorities?”, *Centre for Social Investigation* (2019).

56. Anthony Heath and Sin Yi Cheung “Minority ethnic disadvantage in the labour market: Britain” in *Ethnic differences across countries* (Oxford: OUP, 2007); Yaojun Li and Anthony Heath, “Ethnic minority men in British labour market (1972–2005)”, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 28(5/6) (2008), 231–244.

57. Social Mobility Commission, “Social mobility in Great Britain: state of the nation 2018 to 2019”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-in-great-britain-state-of-the-nation-2018-to-2019> (2019).

58. George Bingham, “A gap that won’t close: the distribution of wealth between ethnic groups in Great Britain”, *Resolution Foundation* (2020).

how fungible (how easy to convert into cash) savings are, and second, that different types of savings have different short-term and longer-term aims or benefits.

Not all savings can be easily converted into cash. This is important when someone requires immediate income to manage an unexpected cost. Homes and pensions are good examples of assets that are difficult to convert into cash or short-term income, while cash savings, ISAs, and shares are examples of assets that can more easily be converted. This first dimension of savings – their fungibility – relates to their second, their differing aims.

Most people require savings for short-term reasons, whether expected (such as a birthday present) or unexpected (such as a new boiler). Both kinds of short-term savings are particularly important where people experience income shocks. More recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the lower level of short-term fungible savings among ethnic minorities (at least half of Black African, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean households have less than £1,000 in such savings)<sup>59</sup> may have led them to be more likely to continue working, and so partly explain their higher death rates from COVID-19.<sup>60</sup>

The second kind of savings, longer-term, is used either to purchase or save up for a large item (especially a house), or to cover the costs of retirement.

That housing is the main asset source for many ethnic minorities, particular South Asian groups, highlights a number of issues. First, more of their savings is tied up in a non-fungible asset. Second, housing is not merely an asset, but also a place to live and an outgoing cost regardless, so that selling a house does not always yield the full cash value of a property sale. Third, that ethnic minorities not only have less short-term

59. Ibid.

60. ONS, "Updating ethnic contrasts in deaths involving the coronavirus, England: 8 December 2020 to 1 December 2021", <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/updatingethniccontrastsindeathsinvolvingthecoronaviruscovid19englandandwales/8december2020to1december2021> (2022); Equality Hub, Race Disparity Unit, and Kemi Badenoch, "Final report on progress to address COVID-19 health inequalities", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-on-progress-to-address-covid-19-health-inequalities> (2021).

savings, but also less diverse savings, means they are more exposed to economic cycles and so more risk. Fourth, ethnic minorities also suffer other housing inequalities, which are in fact among the most pervasive in the UK,<sup>61</sup> and lead to more insecure housing, greater overcrowding, and higher rates of homelessness.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, ethnic minority British people also have less pension wealth than White British people.<sup>63</sup> A previous positive finding that Black Caribbean groups had greater pension wealth than other ethnic minority groups could now be reversing because one reason for the greater relative pension holdings among Black Caribbean people in Britain was their greater representation in the public sector. Such employment did not always result in higher wages, but may have offered benefits in terms of greater security in retirement. Many of their children will have better (and more likely British) educational qualifications, greater aspirations, and higher wages, but their pensions may not be as secure as their parents' given they are less likely to work in the public sector.

Throughout this chapter and volume there have been questions about the extent to which racial inequalities are caused by discrimination or whether there are other contributing factors. It is clearly implausible that not every inequality is caused by discrimination, whether it comes to race or gender or any other widespread social inequality. Further, it is important to try to disentangle through statistical tools where other factors may contribute to an inequality, including where those factors increase the extent of an inequality as well as where they might decrease it. However, that is not what using a control can show; the most common way to control variables merely indicates that two variables are associated. It cannot determine which (if any) of the associated variables causes the other.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Nissa Finney and Kitty Lympelopoulou, "Local Ethnic Inequalities, Ethnic Differences in Education, Employment, Health and Housing in Districts of England and Wales, 2001–2011", *The University of Manchester in Association with The Runnymede Trust* (2013).

62. Bridget Byrne et al., "Ethnicity and Race in the UK: State of the Nation", *Bristol University Press* (2020).

63. Department for Work and Pensions, "Pensioners' Incomes Series: financial year 2020 to 2021", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pensioners-incomes-series-financial-year-2020-to-2021> (2021).

64. Judea Pearl, "An introduction to causal inference", *The International Journal of Biostatistics* (2010).

Having outlined the extent of racial wealth inequalities and their likely drivers, what can we do to tackle them? Two distinctions are useful here: first, between universal and targeted policies; and second, between policies that indirectly and directly address wealth inequalities.

“ Greater instability of employment and pay means that many ethnic minorities are more likely to need to dip into savings ”

The first distinction indicates that many universal policies could in principle and practice address racial inequalities. For example, policies that address housing costs (or shortages) or that increase the value of Universal Credit will put less pressure on all household incomes and allow all households to save more. Given that ethnic minorities are more affected by such rising costs, these groups may disproportionately benefit from such policies.

Policies targeted specifically on grounds of ethnicity or race are more controversial in the UK. But less controversial may be policies that fall into a ‘targeted universalism’ category. For example, a shared ownership scheme policy is designed universally, but can be slightly amended for, or communicated in a tailored way to, ethnic minority communities based on their different experiences or preferences.

The distinction between direct and indirect policies is relatively straightforward. If we tackle drivers of wealth inequality, such as labour market inequalities, that is an indirect way to tackle wealth inequality too.

Directly tackling the ethnic wealth gap would require policies that directly impact on savings. Two such policies were adopted by the New Labour Government, namely the Saving Gateway<sup>65</sup> – a matched savings scheme, offering 50p for every £1 saved by low income earners – and the Child Trust Fund, which benefited all children born in Britain and included a top-up for lower income families and financial education for

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65. Saving Gateway Accounts Act 2009.



parents in terms of how to invest the fund.<sup>66</sup>

Though there was some confusion and criticism of New Labour's approach to asset-based welfare policy on the grounds that their multiple policy aims were possibly contradictory,<sup>67</sup> if such policies were reintroduced and expanded, they could be better designed to tackle wealth inequalities specifically (for example, by offering greater top-ups for lower earning households compared to those offered in the original Child Trust Fund).

Wealth taxes are a tool that would in principle reduce the race equality wealth gap, but not necessarily increase ethnic minority wealth, unless such tax was repurposed to increase savings more directly. However, in addition to funding a more generous Child Trust Fund for lower-income households, wealth taxes could be used to incentivise savings for such households, or for all households as with ISAs (i.e. by offering tax relief for savers).

There are also policies on housing that could help tackle the racial inequalities discussed here; ethnic minorities have much higher rates of poverty (rising to 59% of Bangladeshi children) once housing costs are taken into account (in large part because they are more likely to live in areas with higher housing costs). This not only reduces their ability to own a home, but to put aside additional income for saving. There is therefore a strong argument to increase the housing element of Universal Credit and to increase Universal Credit's value in line with inflation and real costs generally, both to tackle poverty and to enable greater savings.

Policies that address ethnic inequalities generally and wealth inequalities generally are likely to address the racial wealth gap specifically. To the extent that wider social inequalities and racial discrimination are drivers of those wider inequalities, addressing discrimination will have a similarly beneficial effect. Alternative policies to address the high cost of housing, whether through greater building of social housing, increased

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66. Child Trust Funds Act 2004.

67. Carl Emmerson and Matthew Wakefield, "The Saving Gateway and The Child Trust Fund: is asset-based welfare 'well fair'?", *Institute for Fiscal Studies* (2001).

support for first-time buyers, or de-regulation of the green belt, would both reduce housing inequities and encourage greater home ownership, levels of savings and accumulation of assets generally.

Whatever our interpretation of these inequalities or our pre-existing policy preferences, the extent and consequences of the racial wealth gap in Britain mean that policymakers need to be considering a greater area of tools to address, to improve the lives of current and future generations of ethnic minority Britons and for the benefit of all of us.

***Dr Omar Khan*** is the Director of Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) and was previously the Director of the race equality think tank, the Runnymede Trust.

## TOO MANY HURDLES

### *Reducing career barriers for low-income ethnic minority employees*

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**Sandra Kerr CBE**

When I recently gave evidence at a House of Commons' Women and Equalities Committee session on ethnicity pay gap reporting,<sup>68</sup> I was challenged about the need for it in the UK. Why was ethnicity pay gap reporting necessary? What was the point? All companies care about their employees, so is this just another box ticking exercise to be imposed on businesses in the name of progress?

Behind these questions lies a miscomprehension about racial inequality in the workplace, and a lack of understanding as to why low-income ethnic minority workers face obstacles in their career progression.

With the Government's levelling up agenda's focus on addressing inequalities across key areas in the UK, there is a chance for us to look closely at the factors that prevent workers from black, Asian, mixed race, and ethnically diverse backgrounds from reaching their career goals. It also gives us the opportunity to examine what businesses can do to fix these inequalities, for as complicated as these issues may seem, the solutions are surprisingly simple.

The reasons for these obstacles in career progress faced by ethnic minorities come down to perceptions, recruitment, the need for allies and mentors, and, above all, ethnicity pay gap reporting.

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68. House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee, *Formal meeting (oral evidence session): Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting: One-off* (2022).

Business in the Community's (BITC) Race at Work surveys of 2015, 2018, and 2021 demonstrate that desire for career progression among black, Asian, and mixed race employees is strong.<sup>69</sup> However, they are still more likely to feel they need to leave their current employer in order to progress. In BITC's 2018 *Race at Work: The Scorecard Report*, 70% of black, Asian, mixed race, and ethnically diverse employees reported that career progression was important to them, but over half believed they would need to leave their organisation to progress in their career, in comparison to only 38% of white British employees.<sup>70</sup>

“ One simple way to contribute to this change is to include diverse employees on the selection panels for recruitment and progression wherever possible ”

Three years later, *Race at Work 2021: The Scorecard Report* showed that the proportion of ethnically diverse employees who feel they need to leave in order to progress has only gone down slightly, from 52% in 2018 to 45% in 2021. White British employees have faced a similar decrease in this belief, going down from 38% to 31% in 2021, while the biggest change in attitude came from mixed race and Indian workers, whose views changed from 49% to 42% in 2018, and from 52% to 44% in 2021.<sup>71</sup> These slow shifts in perception demonstrates there is still work to do, but both the problem and the solution can be traced to recruitment practices.

More stumbling blocks to progression lie in a persistent unemployment problem and current recruitment practices. Research has shown that racial inequality persists in the UK jobseekers' market, with young black men being more than twice as likely to struggle to find jobs compared to white men.<sup>72</sup>

69. Business in the Community, "The Scorecard Report, Race at Work 2018", <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/bitc-race-report-raceatworkscorecardoneyearon-oct2018.pdf> (2018).

70. Ibid.

71. Business in the Community, "The Scorecard Report, Race at Work 2021", <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bitc-race-report-raceatwork2021scorecardreport-oct2021.pdf> (2021).

72. Claudia Diehl et al., "The IFS Deaton Review (2021) Race and Ethnicity", *Institute for Fiscal Studies* (2021).

This problem could potentially be tackled by recruitment, but the *Race at Work 2021: The Scorecard Report* found that many employees from black, Asian, and mixed race backgrounds have concerns about fair treatment from recruitment agencies. Our research found that while seven in ten jobseekers from a Caribbean and African background said that they would use a recruitment agency when looking for a new role, compared to five in ten white candidates, just three in ten of black jobseekers believe they are treated fairly when they work with a recruitment agency.<sup>73</sup> Compared to black jobseekers, white candidates used recruitment agencies less often, but 49% believed they were treated with fairness, an increase from 43% in 2018.<sup>74</sup> These findings show a discontentment and lack of trust with recruitment agencies among black jobseekers, and demonstrate a clear need for fairer practices in recruitment.

But these issues can be turned around. Recruitment agencies can start by increasing the number of colleagues from diverse backgrounds at their own firms, and take bias awareness training, to change the perceptions of unfair treatment from black, Asian and mixed race jobseekers. Employers can play a role too, by setting recruitment targets to openly encourage more candidates from black, Asian, and mixed race backgrounds to apply. By appointing an executive sponsor for race, businesses can involve them in the recruitment process by setting targets for ethnically diverse representation and briefing recruitment agencies to ensure a shortlist of candidates includes talent from black, Asian, mixed race, and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

But this may only go so far as many jobseekers, particularly young candidates, feel their ethnicity itself is a barrier to landing their next role. BITC's *Race at Work: Black Voices Report* found that 33% of black employees felt that their ethnicity would pose a barrier to their next career move, compared to just 1% of white employees who felt the same.<sup>75</sup> But by

73. Business in the Community, "The Scorecard Report, Race at Work 2021", <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bitc-race-report-raceatwork2021scorecardreport-oct2021.pdf> (2021).

74. Ibid.

75. Business in the Community, "The Race at Work Black Voices Report", <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/bitc-report-race-blackvoices-august20.pdf> (2020).

businesses taking care in their selection process to be more inclusive of candidates from diverse backgrounds, this attitude will start to change.

One simple way to contribute to this change is to include diverse employees on the selection panels for recruitment and progression wherever possible, including by using photos and videos featuring young black, Asian, and colleagues of ethnic minority backgrounds at work to explain job roles rather than stock images. This demonstrates there are role models similar to the potential candidates working within the organisation. The *Race at Work 2021* survey found that 43% of black Caribbean and 38% of black African and Indian respondents say they want to see role models like them in the workplace.<sup>76</sup>

Allies are also part of the solution to supporting black, Asian, and colleagues of ethnic minority backgrounds in the workplace. Businesses can encourage colleagues to support younger workers as mentors, engage with senior executives in ‘reverse mentoring’ and appoint champions at the board level to be executive sponsors of race. These simple actions demonstrate company commitment to being a diverse and inclusive employer.

If a company makes these changes and builds the right culture, retention will improve, as more people will grow within their careers and want to stay. But companies should remember that the opposite is also true. For any company looking to avoid the ‘great resignation’ after COVID-19, introspection is necessary to assess the problems that may exist within their own organisation.

Those problems can be very serious. Last year, almost a third of black and Asian employees revealed they had witnessed or experienced bullying and harassment from their managers. Out of the 24,638 respondents to the *Race at Work 2021* survey, 38% of black, 29% of Asian and 27% of mixed race employees reported that they had seen or experienced bullying and harassment from customers, clients, and service users, compared to 13%

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76. Business in the Community, “The Scorecard Report, Race at Work 2021”, <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bitc-race-report-raceatwork2021scorecardreport-oct2021.pdf> (2021).

of white employees.<sup>77</sup>

Businesses need to act on this problem, as recent research has found that employers' likelihood of responding to reported cases of bullying is falling. In a survey of 114 employers, BITC research found that whilst 99% of companies encourage employees to call out bullying and harassment if observed in the workplace, fewer employers are reviewing these reported cases, falling from 45% in 2019 to just 38% in 2020.<sup>78</sup>

“Employers can play a role too, by setting recruitment targets to openly encourage more candidates from black, Asian, and mixed race backgrounds to apply”

A further, important step companies can take to become more diverse is to track, capture, and report their ethnicity pay gap data. This year, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee recommended that the government require mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting by businesses.

This would be a huge milestone in the push for racial equality, forcing companies to shine a light on their company make-up, even if it means revealing a less diverse picture than they would like. It means taking a good hard look at their employees and asking why their colleagues from black, Asian, mixed race, and ethnically diverse backgrounds are so few. That will lead to taking steps to make changes, from recruitment practices to board appointments. Whilst it may lead to some difficult conversations, it is important that companies do this now.

But taking these steps are only the start, and there is still so much to be done to combat racial inequality in the workplace. That is why we strongly recommend that companies sign BITC's "Race at Work Charter" and commit to its seven steps, including: appoint an Executive Sponsor for race; capture data and publicise progress; ensure zero tolerance of

77. Ibid.

78. Business in the Community, "The Race at Work Charter Report 2020", <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/bitc-race-at-work-charter-report-2020.pdf> (2020).

harassment and bullying; make equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace the responsibility of all leaders and managers; take action that supports ethnic minority career progression; support race inclusion allies in the workplace; and include black, Asian, mixed race, and other ethnically diverse-led enterprise owners in supply chains.

The steps outlined here can seem daunting, but if businesses tackle these issues one at a time, achieving racial equality is not an insurmountable task. As we see more roles filled by talented black, Asian, mixed race, and ethnically diverse candidates, businesses will see the benefits in being inclusive and diverse employers, the UK economy will benefit from the related economic boost of an estimated £24 billion year on year<sup>79</sup> and having difficult conversations about racial inequality will become a thing of the past.

***Sandra Kerr CBE*** is the Race Equality Director at Business in the Community and previously worked in the Cabinet Office.

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79. Ruby McGregor-Smith, "Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-in-the-workplace-the-mcgregor-smith-review> (2017).





JUSTICE

# CIVIL CONNECTIONS

## *Tackling racism online*

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**Jessica Figueras**

What legal duties do social media platforms have to tackle racist abuse online? In a nutshell, not many. That, however, does not indicate a lack of options.

Like all businesses, social media platforms operating in the UK must cooperate with court orders and police investigations. But they do not yet have any particular duty to take proactive action on online harms related to racism, antisemitism, or abuse directed at other protected groups. If a victim cannot secure support from the police or civil courts, then they are entirely reliant on the goodwill and capability of the platform where it took place. Experience indicates that this is often insufficient.

More can and should be done – but it is important first to note that solutions are hard to generalise. Race-related online harm covers a broad spectrum of criminal and non-criminal behaviours and acts, from speech perceived as offensive or hateful through to targeted and coordinated campaigns of harassment, threats of violence and worse. A platform looking to tackle the problem must consider all of these abuse types – alongside bullying and harassment targeted at other groups and individuals, terror content, child exploitation, spam, fraud, disinformation, sexually explicit content and more. And nor are platforms alike: abuse manifests differently depending on which features are available to abusers and victims.

Platforms therefore tend to base their safety strategies on three broad pillars:

First, policy; defining what is considered unacceptable behaviour, setting out sanctions for breaching it, and communicating it to users via the platform's terms and conditions.

Second, user tools; users are usually given a means to report abuse to the platform, plus some ability to protect themselves (such as switching off private messages).

Third, moderation and enforcement; moderators receive and investigate complaints, enforcing sanctions for policy breaches, typically suspensions and bans, as well as cooperating with legal requests.

Broadly, there are two reasons why this approach is inadequate.

“ There is a troubling language deficit affecting both human moderation and automated detection systems. Even Facebook's enormous safety team speaks just a fraction of the world's languages ”

Firstly, it ignores the systemic racism at the root of the problem. Protected groups are victimised online more than others, so do not enjoy equality of access to the service – and platform features such as algorithmic recommendation may even amplify the problem. Putting the onus on victims to complain after the event has the practical effect of silencing and driving them off platforms. Many platforms, including Reddit and Nextdoor, also use volunteers as first-line moderators, who may be biased and perpetuate the problem through unjust decisions.

Secondly, moderation is labour-intensive and underpowered given the scale of the challenge. The likes of Facebook employ many thousands of professional moderators, whilst small platforms may have just a handful, but safety teams of all sizes are struggling to keep up with the skyrocketing volumes of abuse and complaints. By necessity they must prioritise the worst: child exploitation, terrorism and situations where there is an active threat to life. Actions taken on other types of abuse may be too slow or insufficient to deter highly motivated abusers.

Most platforms do not verify user identity in any meaningful way,

making it relatively simple for abusers to evade sanctions by setting up new accounts to continue their abuse. Bad actors may even subvert the system by making malicious complaints about their victims, perhaps in concert with others.

“ The future design of the online public square is firmly up for debate – as well it should be ”

Exhausted, demoralised moderators are increasingly demanding that their employers invest in new, automated solutions to increase the scale of their efforts against abuse. There is particular interest in techniques aiming to stop harm and abuse occurring in the first place, which might start to equalise the online experience of discriminated-against groups.

The simplest form of automated moderation detects and blocks material containing banned keywords and phrases, such as racist slurs. Most platforms are also able to detect and remove media content that is on a blocklist, most notably child sexual abuse material. Bad actors of all kinds quickly learn how to evade the simplest systems. It is easy to wage a campaign of harassment without ever using a banned slur, and abusive media content can be subtly altered so as to go unrecognised.

So platforms are increasingly exploring ‘fuzzy’ machine learning algorithms that can make more nuanced judgements about situations, based on a wider set of data points about the users involved and the content they are generating and engaging with.<sup>80</sup> These machine judgements are expressed as confidence levels, enabling a wider and more subtle range of responses. For example, content identified as abusive with very high confidence could be automatically blocked, while lower confidence matches could be dealt with by removing posts and media from search results or recommendations, attaching a warning label, or putting the suspect material into some form of quarantine. Given that

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80. Forbes, “How AI can help moderate content”, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/junwu1/2020/12/01/how-ai-can-help-to-moderate-content/> (2020).

none of these techniques produce very accurate results, it is useful to be able to take a harm reduction approach; shaping and nudging the experience rather than relying on blanket blocks and bans which may turn out to be unfounded.

Training and tuning the predictive models these approaches are based on is an ongoing, fundamentally complex task for researchers, requiring large volumes of high quality data, which is not always available.

To take just one example, there is a troubling language deficit affecting both human moderation and automated detection systems. Even Facebook's enormous safety team speaks just a fraction of the world's languages and dialects, so lacks comprehensive, up-to-date, and accurate dictionaries to train predictive models on. This gives rise to serious concerns that unchecked online hate speech and misinformation is fuelling political instability in some countries.<sup>81</sup>

It is also not simple to accurately detect highly specific forms of abuse and harm. Training a machine classifier to recognise targeted racist harassment, for example, requires a large dataset of real content that generated complaints of targeted racist harassment. Many platforms do not differentiate much between different types of abusive content. And by far the biggest category of complained-about content is spam. But a platform that was able to collect enough good data about the specific experiences of specific types of victim might be able to develop more effective responses to abuse as it happens. For example, early signs of a racist pile-on could trigger temporary protections; a suspected abuser might receive warning messages discouraging them from posting or could be prevented from tagging or messaging a suspected victim.

'Victim protection' options like these were discussed following the European Championship, when England footballers Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka received a flood of online racist abuse. This was a very particular case – with high-profile targets, and a

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81. Wired, "Facebook is everywhere; its content moderation is nowhere close", <https://www.wired.com/story/facebook-global-reach-exceeds-linguistic-grasp/> (2021).

specific moment in time driven by the news agenda – which would not necessarily translate to other victims and other situations. It might also be hard to operate a victim protection system fairly. Platforms would need to work closely with a range of civil society groups to understand who needs protection, how and when.

“ Protected groups are victimised online more than others, so do not enjoy equality of access to the service ”

Nonetheless, these data-centric harm reduction approaches are in use to varying degrees today, albeit with big differences between platforms, some of which are more able to invest meaningful sums of money in research and development than others.

But there are other potentially effective options that have not yet been much explored, typically because they constrain user behaviours in ways that threaten platform revenues. That is because advertising revenue is fuelled by user engagement, whether that is a thousand likes on a cute animal picture or a thousand racist messages to a black politician. Privacy is also a concern in some cases.

Requiring users to verify their identity at sign-up (would-be Twitter purchaser Elon Musk’s favoured approach) and increasing the use of continuous authentication would make it harder for bad actors to evade suspension and bans.<sup>82</sup> It would tackle bots and ‘sock puppet’ accounts used for coordinated forms of abuse. Platforms do not like to put barriers in the way of new user sign-ups. But they could restrict unverified users’ ability to use features that could be abused – for example, tagging or direct messaging someone – an approach that is already used by many online banking services. The UK Government has put a requirement to this effect into the Online Safety Bill.<sup>83</sup>

82. Social Media Today, “Would Identity Verification Improve Social Media Safety, and Reduce Instances of Trolling and Abuse?”, <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/would-identity-verification-improve-social-media-safety-and-reduce-instances/596666/> (2021).

83. Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport, “New plans to protect people from anonymous trolls online”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-plans-to-protect-people-from-anonymous-trolls-online> (2022).

Verified identity might also potentially improve coordination between platforms and law enforcement in the case of actual criminality. While this aspect raises concerns about privacy, one might envisage a situation where a court ordered a convicted abuser to refrain from social media for a period of time. Platforms might appreciate some means to enforce this.

“Advertising revenue is fuelled by user engagement, whether that is a thousand likes on a cute animal picture or a thousand racist messages to a black politician”

Then there are more radical platform engineering options that would change the overall experience for all users, rather than just policing instances of abuse when they happen.

All platforms have their own (rather opaque) algorithmic recommendation engines, which determine what users ‘see and shape’ how they discover and interact with content. These have been criticised for amplifying hateful content and encouraging antisocial behaviour.<sup>84</sup> Opening them up for scrutiny would enable civil society groups to suggest improvements. Some have suggested that recommendation engines should be banned altogether for children; ordinary users could be given the ability to choose a different one. One idea I like is the ability to downvote content, with the effect of de-amplifying highly polarising content; the opposite of what currently happens.<sup>85</sup>

Features like these would probably not be technically challenging to design. But they would create a serious challenge to the social media industry as we know it. For this reason, various groups in tech and civil society alike have been exploring new models for future social platforms based on the premise that they should provide public infrastructure

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84. Nature, “Angry by design: toxic communication and technical architectures”, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-00550-7> (2020).

85. Tatam Hunter, “Twitter got a downvote button. Here’s what happens if you click it”, *The Washington Post*, 4 February, 2022.

rather than optimising solely for profit. The future design of the online public square is firmly up for debate – as well it should be.

**Jessica Figueras** is a technology strategist and adviser to government and tech companies, currently working in the field of cybersecurity, online harms, and data. She is a trustee and Vice Chair at the UK Cyber Security Council and a past Chair of NCT (National Childbirth Trust), the UK's largest charity for parents. The views expressed here are personal.



# A BETTER DEAL

## *Reforming drugs policy*

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### Damien Egan

Drug laws in the UK have remained relatively unchanged for the last 50 years, since the Misuse of Drugs Act came into force in 1971. In that time many countries and states across the world, including in Europe and North America, have made progressive reforms to their drug laws. Meanwhile, the UK has continued with the same approach, an approach that simply is not working.

Drug deaths are at record highs and have increased year-on-year since 2012, whilst the total cost to our society from illegal drugs is now at around £20 billion per year.<sup>86</sup> A new evidence-based approach to drugs would not only help reduce racial inequalities in the criminal justice system, but provide more opportunities for younger people who might otherwise have their futures marred by criminal records.

As the directly elected Mayor of Lewisham, I have seen how the UK's drug laws are widening racial inequalities in my borough and how they undermine public confidence in the police. Stop and search is a particular source of tension, disproportionately taking place on people of Black African or Caribbean ethnicity. For example, between 2016 and 2020, Black residents in Lewisham were 2.4 times more likely to be

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86. Office for National Statistics, "Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2020 registrations", <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2020> (2021); Home Office, "Review of drugs: phase one report", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report/review-of-drugs-summary> (2020).

stopped and searched by the police than White residents, with 60% of all these searches due to the suspicion of drugs.<sup>87</sup> This is despite long-standing research showing that Black people are no more likely to be carrying drugs than White people.<sup>88</sup>

“Despite being part of the new government strategy, the implementation of drug diversion schemes has been limited and patchy across the UK ”

With only one in ten searches for drugs actually resulting in an arrest in England and Wales, stop and search is not a particularly effective measure in preventing drug crime or a good use of limited police time and resources.<sup>89</sup>

Between 2016 and 2020, nine in ten drug possession proceedings brought forward by the police against young people in my borough were for small amounts of cannabis.<sup>90</sup> Having a criminal record is life changing for young people. It may cause problems in their education, and it becomes harder to find a job or even rent a flat. With nearly 40% of young people in Lewisham growing up in poverty, they face enough challenges in life without criminal records.<sup>91</sup>

We also know that young Black people are more likely to face harsher sentences or punishments than their White counterparts, meaning current drug laws are widening racial inequalities in the UK. It is not right that one group is being disproportionately punished. This is why drug law reform is so important.

We must ask ourselves whether possessing small amounts of cannabis

87. MET Police, “Stop and Search Dashboard”, <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/stop-and-search-dashboard/> (2022).

88. David Lammy MP, “Final report”, *Lammy Review* (2017).

89. MET Police, “People proceeded against aged under 25s for drugs and stop & searches of those aged under 25s for drugs on Lewisham Borough” (2020).

90. Ibid.

91. Rachel Walters, “Dramatic rise in child poverty in North East England in the last five years shows the scale of the ‘Levelling Up’ challenge”, <http://endchildpoverty.org.uk/dramatic-rise-in-child-poverty-in-north-east-england-in-the-last-five-years-shows-the-scale-of-the-levelling-up-challenge/> (2021).

is really so severe an infraction that it should lead a young person getting a criminal record? I believe a change in approach to how we police drugs, especially cannabis, would go a long way in reducing biased searches, reducing the number of young people going through the criminal justice system, and helping to restore trust in the police too. One good alternative is presented by the use of diversion schemes.

“ We must ask ourselves whether possessing small amounts of cannabis is really so severe an infraction that it should lead a young person getting a criminal record? ”

Diversion schemes are where the drug remains illegal, but the police move away from criminalising people for low-level possession offences. These schemes offer people caught with small amounts of drugs health and education training instead of a criminal record. This can be a second chance for many people – an opportunity to put their life back on track. Diversion schemes have been trialled successfully across the UK for some time now and have been shown to reduce reoffending rates, as well as saving the police time and money.<sup>92</sup> The policy is popular with the public too. A 2022 YouGov survey showed that 71% of the public back a change in the law that would mean possession of ‘soft drugs,’ such as cannabis, is no longer a criminal offence.<sup>93</sup>

This evidence base is why I am very keen to trial a diversion scheme in Lewisham for young people aged 18-25 who are caught with small amounts of cannabis. The data shows that a diversion scheme in Lewisham would prevent around 450 young people entering the criminal justice system every year.<sup>94</sup> I hope such a scheme would give

92. Hannah Gaffney and David Farrington, “Pre-Court Diversion Toolkit technical report”, *Youth Endowment Fund* (2021).

93. YouGov, “The YouGov big survey on drugs: should possessing or selling drugs be legal?”, [https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/na1mgu8mqd/YouGov%20Survey%20Results%20-%20Big%20Survey%20On%20Drugs%20\(non-pol\).pdf](https://docs.cdn.yougov.com/na1mgu8mqd/YouGov%20Survey%20Results%20-%20Big%20Survey%20On%20Drugs%20(non-pol).pdf) (2022).

94. MET Police, “People proceeded against aged under 25s for drugs and stop & searches of those aged under 25s for drugs on Lewisham Borough” (2020).

these young people, who are overwhelmingly from Black and lower socio-economic backgrounds, a second chance rather than a criminal record. The scheme could also free up the police to tackle the gangs who are running criminal enterprises and county lines drug operations.

Though drug diversion schemes were mentioned as part of the Government's new Drugs Strategy,<sup>95</sup> at the moment there is no consistent national policy. According to Transform,<sup>96</sup> this is leading to 'postcode lottery effects.' So far, too few large cities, with the exception of Birmingham in the West Midlands, have trialled these programmes. This means that young people living in cities across the UK miss out on the benefits of these schemes. In order to ensure everyone feels the benefits of these schemes, and to tackle racial inequalities within the criminal justice system around drugs, there needs to be a nationally coordinated approach.

Despite being part of the new government strategy, the implementation of drug diversion schemes has been limited and patchy across the UK. Importantly, few of these schemes, with the exception of the West Midlands, have taken place in large cities like London, which have more diverse populations compared to smaller towns.<sup>97</sup> That is why a new national strategy is required to ensure that all young people, no matter their ethnicity, can benefit from them. I also passionately believe we need to increase the support we provide to young people who are exploited and used by criminal gangs involved in the illicit drug trade, especially those who are caught up in county lines. Fifty years since the Misuse of Drugs Act, it is time for a new approach.

***Damian Egan is a British Labour Party politician, and the second directly elected Mayor of Lewisham in Greater London.***

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95. Home Office at al., "From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-harm-to-hope-a-10-year-drugs-plan-to-cut-crime-and-save-lives> (2021).

96. Transform, "Drug diversion in the UK", <https://transformdrugs.org/drug-policy/uk-drug-policy/diversion-schemes> (2021).

97. ONS, "Regional ethnic diversity", <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest> (2020).

# FEWER AND FAIRER

## *Reforming stop and search*

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**Rick Muir and Stephen Walcott**

The use of stop and search is probably the most controversial issue in British policing, and reform to stop and search is central to improving the relationship between the police and Britain's Black communities.

In England and Wales, Black people are approximately nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people, with people of Asian, mixed and 'other' ethnicities each around three times more likely.<sup>98</sup> In London, Black men aged 18 to 24 are 3.5 times more likely to be stopped and searched than White men of the same age.<sup>99</sup>

Some 85% of Black people are not confident that the police would treat them the same as a White person.<sup>100</sup> Seventy-four per cent of people from an ethnic minority background aged 16 to 30 think Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are unfairly targeted by stop and search.<sup>101</sup>

Despite the evidence that it undermines trust and confidence, the government and the police continue to rely on stop and search as a crime reduction tool. For example, the recent Beating Crime Plan states that "stop and search is one of the many vital tools used by the police to

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98. Home Office, "Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021> (2021).

99. Matt Ashby, "Stop and search in London: April 2021 to March 2022", <http://lesscrime.info/files/stop-and-search-london-2022-q1.pdf> (2022).

100. JCHR, "Black people, racism and human rights. Joint Committee on Human Rights", <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3376/documents/32359/default/> (2020).

101. Peter Keeling, "No respect: young BAME men, the police and stop and search", Criminal Justice Alliance, <http://criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/No-Respect-290617.pdf>. (2017)

tackle serious violence.”<sup>102</sup> However, most searches are for drugs, and a majority of those for possession, not for offensive weapons.<sup>103</sup>

“ The more the police use the power, the more people are exposed to an intrusive intervention that is evidenced to undermine trust and confidence ”

While at the individual level stop and search is an important tactical option for police officers if they suspect a person to be carrying an illegal item, there is no evidence that it is an effective crime reduction tool when used at scale. The College of Policing’s Authorised Professional Practice states that any crime reduction effect is likely to be “small, highly localised and short-lived.”<sup>104</sup> The Home Office’s own Serious Violence Strategy (2018) explicitly rejects the idea that the recent increase in knife crime was caused by the reduced use of stop and search following the 2011 riots.

So, how can we reform the use of this tactic so that it is not reproducing racial injustice nor undermining trust? We propose six reforms to the use of the power that we hope can improve public confidence in its use, particularly in Black communities.

First, stop and search should be used less, and the grounds for its use must be stronger. We should note that there are two powers that enable the police to stop and search members of the public. These are Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) (and associated legislation) and Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. PACE requires “reasonable grounds for suspicion” that someone is carrying something unlawful. Section 60, if authorised, does not require reasonable suspicion.

The volume of use matters: being stopped and searched is

102. Home Office, “Beating Crime Plan”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/beating-crime-plan> (2021).

103. Home Office, “Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021> (2021).

104. Rhydian McCandless et al., “Do initiatives involving substantial increases in stop and search reduce crime? Assessing the impact of Operation BLUNT 2”, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/508661/stop-search-operation-blunt-2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508661/stop-search-operation-blunt-2.pdf) (2016).

“embarrassing, intrusive and frightening”<sup>105</sup> and can have negative health-related and criminogenic effects.<sup>106</sup> The more the police use the power, the more people are exposed to an intrusive intervention that is evidenced to undermine trust and confidence in the police. It should therefore be used minimally and in proportion to threat. Moreover, the more the powers are used, the lower the ‘find rate.’ For Section 60 searches, the find rate of offensive weapons last year was just 0.8%.<sup>107</sup>

“ There is no evidence that it is an effective crime reduction tool when used at scale ”

Having strong grounds for suspicion is vital to the legitimacy and efficacy of PACE searches, which accounted for around 99% of searches last year.<sup>108</sup> Despite searches with strong grounds being more likely to result in a ‘find,’ HMICFRS found in 2021 that just 21% of PACE searches have “strong” recorded grounds. More specifically, in 2019-20, Black people were eight times more likely to be subject to a drug search and these were more likely to have “weak” grounds than searches of White people. This is despite drug finds being no higher in searches of Black people<sup>109</sup> and lower self-reported drug use among the Black population.<sup>110</sup>

Intelligence-led searches are more likely to have strong grounds, but these currently constitute just 9% of searches.<sup>111</sup>

105. HMICFRS, “Disproportionate use of police powers: a spotlight on stop and search and the use of force”, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/disproportionate-use-of-police-powers-spotlight-on-stop-search-and-use-of-force.pdf> (2021).

106. Juan Del Toro et al., “The criminogenic and psychological effects of police stops on adolescent black and Latino boys”, *Psychological and Cognitive Sciences* (2019), 8261-8268.

107. Home Office, “Police powers and procedures: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021> (2021).

108. Ibid.

109. HMICFRS, “Disproportionate use of police powers: a spotlight on stop and search and the use of force”, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/disproportionate-use-of-police-powers-spotlight-on-stop-search-and-use-of-force.pdf> (2021).

110. ONS, “Drug misuse in England and Wales – Appendix table”, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/drugmisuseinenglandandwalesappendixtable> (2020).

111. HMICFRS, “Disproportionate use of police powers: a spotlight on stop and search and the use of force”, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/disproportionate-use-of-police-powers-spotlight-on-stop-search-and-use-of-force.pdf> (2021).

Police-authorised professional practice ought to be amended such that the power is used in a targeted and intelligence-led way. Given its ineffectiveness as a crime reduction tool and the considerable racial disproportionality in its use, the Section 60 power ought to be repealed.<sup>112</sup>

Second, police officers need to be provided with better and more consistent training in procedural justice; how to conduct a stop and search respectfully, appropriately, and impartially, as well as how to avoid encounters escalating. The Independent Office for Police Conduct finds myriad examples of this not being the case, particularly concerning Black people.<sup>113</sup> Such is the importance of doing stop and search in a procedurally just way that the College of Policing's stop and search guidance should be mandatory across all police forces.

Third, there needs to be a determined effort to eliminate racial bias and profiling from the use of stop and search. Police officers should receive training in understanding the local context in which they operate, anti-racism, the impact of current and historical actions and trauma-informed practice. This ought to be accompanied by much stronger engagement with local communities. West Midlands Police's *Fairness in Policing* initiative offers an example of promising practice.

Fourth, the police should seek to divert individuals towards social interventions and away from the criminal justice system whenever a search leads to a low-level 'find.' Such interventions can support employment, mental health, education, and housing needs. We must shift to a focus on problem-solving, partnership and prevention, rather than easy criminal justice 'wins.'

Fifth, there must be much more robust independent scrutiny,

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112. Some 30% of searches under Section 60 were subjected to black people, meaning black people were 14 times more likely to be searched compared to White counterparts. See Home Office, "Police powers and procedure: Stop and search and arrests, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2021", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021> (2021); Home Office, "Stop and search section 60 relaxation: equality impact assessment", <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/stop-and-search-section-60-relaxation-equality-impact-assessment/stop-and-search-section-60-relaxation-equality-impact-assessment-accessible> (2022).

113. IOPC, "National stop and search learning report" <https://www.policconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/publications/OFFICIAL%20IOPC%20National%20stop%20and%20search%20learning%20report%202020%20April%202022.pdf> (2022).



oversight and accountability. This involves allowing the community to examine and challenge police practice. Bedfordshire CSP's traffic light system to assess officers' use of stop and search and Northamptonshire's Reasonable Grounds Panel are examples of good practice.<sup>114</sup> However, scrutiny panels and advisory groups are often not representative, independent, purposeful, supported, or influential.<sup>115</sup> These bodies should operate transparently and to more consistent standards, with their membership regularly refreshed.

“ We must shift to a focus on problem-solving, partnership and prevention ”

Finally, the police must get better at communicating the reasons for their actions. There should be continuous dialogue with the public about the rationale behind policies, priorities, actions, and decisions. These may take the form of local citizens' assemblies to engage the public in deliberating over difficult policing decisions.<sup>116</sup>

We should note that, even once we have taken these steps to eliminate individual prejudice and bias, wider structural inequality may mean racial and ethnic disproportionality in the use of the power remains. But it is important that the police demonstrate that they have done everything they can to be fair and seek to explain and counter residual disproportionality.

It is a huge undertaking to eliminate institutional racism in policing. Here we have focused on just one part of the problem, albeit one of the most significant. We have identified six steps to reform police use of stop and search. These are vital first steps on a journey towards anti-racist policing that works with communities to keep people safe.

114. Kirat Kaur Kalyan and Peter Keeling, "Stop and Scrutinise: How to improve community scrutiny of stop and search", <https://www.criminaljusticealliance.org/wp-content/uploads/CJA-Stop-and-Scrutinise.pdf> (2019).

115. IOPC, "National stop and search learning report" <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/publications/OFFICIAL%20IOPC%20National%20stop%20and%20search%20learning%20report%2020%20April%202022.pdf> (2022).

116. The Police Foundation, "A new mode of protection: redesigning policing and public safety for the 21st century", [https://www.policingreview.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/srpew\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.policingreview.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/srpew_final_report.pdf) (2022).

**Dr Rick Muir** is the Director of the Police Foundation, the UK's independent policing think tank. He previously worked at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) on policing and criminal justice reform. He is a Visiting Professor at Northumbria University. He was previously a local councillor in both Oxford and Hackney.

**Stephen Walcott** is a researcher at the Police Foundation. He recently co-authored the Strategic Review of Policing. His areas of interest include: police-race relations, disproportionate use of powers, workforce diversity and culture, trauma-informed practice and drug policy.

# CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITIES

## *Policing and British Muslims*

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**Akeela Ahmed**

Police relationships with British Muslim communities are complex. This is no surprise, but within this complexity is an opportunity to engender strong and positive relations with communities on all issues. That is good news, given the recent watershed moments that have confronted the police following the murder of Sarah Everard, the mishandling of the murders of the sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, and the inappropriate drug search of Child Q. All these cases and other recent investigations reveal that the police are still very much – 23 years since the seminal Macpherson Report – grappling with racism, sexism and misogyny, as well as religiously-motivated prejudice.

British Muslim communities are extremely diverse and increasingly so with the new arrivals from countries such as Afghanistan. They are also a very young population. This means there is no one type of British Muslim and that British Muslims often hold multiple identities. As such, there is a range of issues that impact and intersect police relations with British Muslim communities. It includes: stop and search; hate crime, particularly in relation to women and mosques; treatment of women, especially women of colour; as well as the more commonly debated issues such as Prevent and counter-terrorism policing. Undercutting all these issues is race and the ethnic identity of people who encounter the police.

In 2018 the lead for hate crime within the Met Police told me and

another colleague that he had never met a woman in a mosque or synagogue. We found this astonishing, especially given that most anti-Muslim hate crimes reported to the police were targeted against visibly identifiable Muslim women. How was it possible, given the increase in hate crime targeted against minorities in the nearly twenty years of policing since 9/11, that the hate crime lead for the Met Police had not met a Muslim or Jewish woman in a place of worship? His excuse was the gatekeepers of the community and faith-based organisations that he visited.

“ I also have first hand experience of reporting hate crime to the police, on more than one occasion, and have received inconsistent responses ”

Why does it matter, you might ask? It matters because, as research by Crest Advisory reveals, 80% of British Muslim women – compared to 48% of British Muslim men – cited Islamophobia as a reason why Britain is a poor place to be a Muslim.<sup>117</sup> From talking to British Muslim women around the country, I know just how greatly their daily lives are impacted by anti-Muslim hate crime and the fear of Islamophobia.

British Muslim women have told me about their negative experiences of reporting hate crime to the police: how they have not been taken seriously or their experiences were belittled as being too low-level to be treated as a crime (the threshold for hate crime is high). The fact that the prosecution rate for perpetrators of hate crime is low, and getting lower each year,<sup>118</sup> only compounds British Muslim women’s perceptions that they cannot report their experiences of hate crime to the police, despite the fact that it is increasing, because they will either be mistreated or it will waste police time.

117. Crest Advisory, “Listening to British Muslims: policing, extremism and Prevent”, [https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c\\_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf](https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf) (2020).

118. House of Commons Library, “Hate crime statistics”, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8537/CBP-8537.pdf> (2021).

The result of all of this is a sense that there is no recourse for British Muslim women when they experience daily anti-Muslim hatred, a sense of isolation and being set apart from the rest of society and therefore an erosion of trust with police. The research from Crest Advisory also cited evidence that trust in the police is relatively high amongst British Muslims and the findings of their own research confirmed this.<sup>119</sup>

“ Women have told me about their negative experiences of reporting hate crime to the police: how they have not been taken seriously or their experiences were belittled ”

As research shows, the impact of hate crime goes beyond the individual victim and extends to their family, friends, and communities. A British Muslim woman's experience of reporting a hate crime (or of choosing, as many do, not to report it), and whether this is a negative or positive experience, affects not only her perception of the police more broadly but also those around her. The way in which police deal with anti-Muslim or Islamophobic hate crime will affect the relationship between British Muslim communities and the police, and therefore the levels of trust between them.

These experiences are compounded if a British Muslim woman is of Black or African and/or Caribbean heritage. During the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, many Black Muslim women spoke about their experiences of racism and their complex feelings towards the state and the police. They felt their communities were over-policed, either through stop and search, which disproportionately impacted Black men – many of them Muslim and/or newly arrived in the country – or through the questioning of their immigration status. This lack of trust was acknowledged by the former Met Commissioner Cressida Dick in

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119. Crest Advisory, “Listening to British Muslims: policing, extremism and Prevent”, [https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c\\_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf](https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf) (2020).

2021 who said that “we have a hill to climb” regarding distrust in the police among Black women and other marginalised communities.<sup>120</sup>

British Muslim women, Black women and other women of colour have also expressed how their interactions with the police in reporting crime, particularly hate crime, were often met with sexism. They have spoken about how they are sometimes reluctant to seek help from the police, for example in relation to sexual assault or domestic violence, because, in addition to the issues above, they also felt they were unlikely to be believed and have their reports taken seriously.

Often when police relationships with British Muslim communities are examined in the public domain, they are done so primarily through a counter-terrorism/Prevent lens. This perspective has become something of a well-worn approach over the last 20 years since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and has underpinned a wide range of government policies in relation to British Muslims and the tackling of Islamist extremism. Alas, by focusing narrowly and reverting time and again to this way of thinking about policing and community relations, strengthening ties and increasing trust between British Muslims and the police has stagnated. So far, there has been a neglect of opportunities to build further resilience among British Muslim communities by addressing their concerns and showing greater care and concern in dealing with the issues they are most often impacted by, in addition to dealing with extremism, radicalisation and counter-terrorism.

Crest Advisory research finds that British Muslims have high levels of trust in the police on countering extremism and terrorism, more so than for other routine crimes.<sup>121</sup> Yet there exists a perception that the vast majority of British Muslims are anti-Prevent and therefore anti-police and against counter-terrorism. This is very far from the reality on the ground.

120. Fuvvah Shah, “Cressida Dick admits Black women’s trust in policing has worsened in last year”, *The Independent*, 20 October, 2022.

121. Crest Advisory, “Listening to British Muslims: policing, extremism and Prevent”, [https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c\\_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf](https://b9cf6cd4-6aad-4419-a368-724e7d1352b9.usrfiles.com/ugd/b9cf6c_d12a4911772d4e04a683b69561c86501.pdf) (2020).

Public debates around the Prevent programme have been highly polarised, with the loudest voices on either side dominating. This presents a misleading impression of British Muslim attitudes to the police and can undermine policing and relations with British Muslim communities. It also means that any policy solutions, both national and local, put forward to strengthen relations in response to this polarised debate, focus too narrowly on tackling the loudest but smallest group of naysayers of the Prevent programme and are far removed from the less vocal majority. As a result, they can sometimes delegitimise constructive criticism of policing and genuine concerns raised by communities.

If these policies are adopted and implemented, it can limit the extent to which police or statutory agencies working on counter extremism are open, transparent and collaborative with grassroots partners, community organisations and experts. This leaves few opportunities for meaningful relationships with local and national partners, removing the possibility of co-designing solutions to addressing the most pressing issues facing communities; whether that is Islamist extremism, hate crime or Islamophobia.

At the moment, some British Muslims believe police engage with them solely because of the desire to target and overcome Islamist extremism. While they share that desire and trust the police to do this, they do not want that to be the only framework through which they are engaged. Doing so ignores their other experiences and perceptions about their interaction with police.

For example, I sit on a national advisory body convened by counter-terrorism police, comprised of community experts, statutory partners and academics who act as a 'critical friend' offering scrutiny and advice. It is a unique engagement forum that spans the country with regional groups and is a great example of how to cascade national policy down to regional localities, with broad engagement from local partners. Yet when asked to consider the impact of negative policing practices in relation to anti-Muslim and racist hate crime as reported by British Muslim women, the national system within which it operated could not

do so. Recognising the impact of these negative experiences would have been critical to understanding, and thereby overcoming, the barriers to engagement with police around the country within hard to reach or orthodox communities, in relation to counter-terrorism.

“ There exists a perception that the vast majority of British Muslims are anti-Prevent and therefore anti-police and against counter-terrorism. This is very far from the reality on the ground ”

In 2020-21, following the George Floyd killing, the independent members of the cross-government working group on Anti-Muslim Hatred, which I chair, were hearing of increasing concerns and unease about policing among grassroots communities. In order to address this, the group convened a national webinar bringing together senior police leads from the Met, West Midlands Police, the police BAME network leads from Nottinghamshire and community leaders, with an open Q&A session. The webinar provided a space for concerns to be raised but more importantly for better understanding between the police and the communities that attended. Community practitioners and volunteers gained an increased understanding of how to work with the police on the issues impacting them locally.

Ideally, police forces around the country would consistently adopt a holistic and systemic approach to working with communities and not one that primarily examines these important relationships through counter-terrorism. Such an approach to community relations would include joined-up thinking that proactively seeks community involvement in policy design and considers the impact of wider policing strategies in relation to stop and search, responses to hate crime reporting, drugs and gangs, and domestic and sexual violence. Understanding how these broad areas of policing interconnect to each other and intersect with community perceptions of policing would be critical to such an approach.



A holistic approach would gather and utilise data from each of these different policing areas and triangulate them with information from the ground, including with feedback on perceptions and complaints about policing. It would also include the police tackling head-on racism and misogyny within its own ranks, structures and systems, and working towards the prevention of racism, misogyny, harassment and offensive social media messages as uncovered in the recent investigation into Met Police officers.

I have first-hand experience of advising police at a national level on both counter-terrorism and hate crime, and so I know how dedicated they are. However, this has also given me unique insight into how siloed and unnecessarily disconnected the two areas are, especially when it comes to community relations. I also have first hand experience of reporting hate crime to the police, on more than one occasion, and have received inconsistent responses. One was positive but the other, which stayed with me, was negative; my report was not taken seriously and no crime was recorded until I shared my experience with the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) lead for hate crime.

An example of good practice is the response by Greater Manchester Police, following the Manchester Arena attack. Local police visited mosques in Manchester to provide reassurance and presence in case of attacks against mosques. The very physical presence of the police in mosques, in this instance, meant community members felt safe enough to report hate crimes they had experienced following the terrorist attack. This type of community-based policing, working in partnership with communities, not only helps increase the reporting of crimes but also engenders trust and is crucial to building relations and resilience.

It seems obvious to me that until the police, policy makers and other statutory partners start taking seriously the issues which impact grassroots communities – issues like hate crime – with the same due diligence and care that is afforded to counter-terrorism policing, relationships between the police and communities will remain complex. Put simply, if the police wish to have greater engagement and stronger

relations with communities, particularly British Muslim, Black and minority communities, then they need to not only better understand their concerns, and the impact of wider policing on those communities, but also to implement meaningful change in the way they view, engage with, and work with communities. The priority must then be to explore how these channels of open engagement and understanding can be developed so that policing can adapt to community concerns.

***Akeela Ahmed MBE** has been a business leader, social entrepreneur, and equalities campaigner for 20 years. In 2014, she founded She Speaks We Hear which gives unfiltered women's voices a platform. Akeela advises and works with the government in tackling anti-Muslim hatred, sitting on the cross-government Working Group on Anti-Muslim Hatred as Chair of the Independent Members.*



**BELONGING**

# SHARED PAST, COMMON FUTURE

## *Using history to bridge divides*

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**Zehra Zaidi**

In 2018, I co-led the Banknotes of Colour campaign to secure the first ever ethnic minority person on a British banknote, supported by the public, charities, race equality campaigners and educationalists, celebrities, and cross-party politicians.<sup>122</sup> In one meeting with Sarah John, the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, I underlined that this historic ‘first’ for representation would help to bridge our nation’s complex past, diverse present, and common future. More than anything else, this essay is about how we can create a ‘living bridge’ – to borrow a phrase identified with the link between Britain and India – between our shared past and the modern society we live in today.

In the so-called ‘culture wars’ on history and heritage, we are locked into a polarised debate with seemingly fixed positions on what is right or wrong. And that is where matters invariably grind to a halt with little hope of resolution, especially when social media’s echo chambers continue to reinforce our biases. There is often little discussion or directionality on what this means for our collective future and social cohesion.

If we want to make the case about history as a unifying and not dividing theme, we need to do two things. Firstly, we need to foster bottom-up discussion and connectivity across society. Secondly, we need

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122. Zehra Zaidi, “Our banknotes must feature ethnic minorities if we are to reflect modern Britain”, *Metro*, 16 December 2018.

to embed future thinking into work around integration, in a way that purposefully links past, present and future and is comfortable with the multiplicity of perspectives on our history.

“ This historic ‘first’ for representation would help to bridge our nation’s complex past, diverse present, and common future ”

The polarised positions on history and heritage frustrate because they appear unsolvable. Words like ‘decolonise’ and ‘woke’ have become loaded. Statues have become a battleground over the very nature of what it means to be British (while at the same time only 2.7% of statues are of historical, non-royal women).<sup>123</sup> However, interviews conducted by More in Common for its report *‘Dousing the Flames: How leaders can better navigate cultural change in 2020s Britain’* found that “most people are more nuanced and complex than the caricatures framed in culture wars narratives.”<sup>124</sup> That is why bottom-up discussion, connectivity and interactive events across society are so important.

I started the We Too Built Britain campaign in 2018 to tell the stories of under-represented people in Britain. It aimed to build social connections, show what we have in common and, importantly, to then help us understand and value our uniqueness and differences. I felt a huge responsibility to tell the story of *all* of Britain’s under-represented communities, but was of course informed by my own perspective as a British, Asian and Muslim woman. One-hundred-and-fifty years ago, Britain may not have afforded many opportunities to people of ethnic minority heritage, but it was important to also recognise that in such times, many white British people of lower socio-economic backgrounds also had fewer opportunities.

123. Caroline Criado-Perez, “I sorted the UK’s statues by gender – a mere 2.7 per cent are of historical, non-royal women”, *New Statesman*, 26 March, 2016.

124. Luke Tryl, Conleth Burns, and Tim Dixon, “Dousing the Flames: How leaders can better navigate cultural change in 2020s Britain”, <https://www.moreincommon.com/media/q43lim5p/dousing-the-flames-uk-mic-report-july-2021.pdf> (2021).

Growing up, the more I read about the stories of those from under-represented backgrounds, the more remarkable their achievements appeared and the more I connected with those from different backgrounds to me. As a cornerstone of the work of We Too Built Britain, I wanted to distil history to highlight the stories of people who made a difference along the way and specifically use civic symbols such as banknotes and statues to connect. We started this work before the recent Black Lives Matter protests, but the protests certainly brought more attention to our campaigns.

My first campaign on legal tender was for the recognition of Noor Inayat Khan GC on the new £50 banknote.<sup>125</sup> The Bank of England chose science as a category for the new face of the banknote and at that point, I joined forces with Patrick Vernon OBE to launch the Banknotes of Colour campaign. This was followed by a We Too Built Britain campaign for greater representation on coins. Both the Bank of England and Royal Mint have now committed to widening the diversity in our legal tender as a result of these campaigns, starting with the Diversity Built Britain 50p coin circulated in 2020.<sup>126</sup>

Noor's background was complex – a Muslim woman, born in Moscow to an Indian father and an American mother, brought up in Paris, and the grand-daughter of Tipu Sultan (the 18th century king of Mysore). In the Second World War she joined Winston Churchill's Special Operations Executive (SOE) and was the first female radio operator to be airlifted into enemy occupied France. She was betrayed and eventually killed at the Dachau concentration camp and is one of only four women in history to be awarded the George Cross.

Noor was a personal heroine of mine growing up as a young Muslim kid in Britain. Importantly, however, I felt her story could resonate with many. It also forms part of our national understanding of the importance

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125. Helena Horton, "Ministers back campaign to put Noor Inayat Khan on £50 note", *The Telegraph*, 17 October, 2018.

126. HM Treasury, "New 'Diversity Built Britain' coin unveiled", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-diversity-built-britain-coin-unveiled> (2020).

of the Second World War – from defeating the evil of fascism to opening the door to granting independence to the nations of colonial subjects who bravely fought in the war. That campaign led to veterans' groups requesting that we expand our campaign to honour more women of the SOE who came from all walks of life.<sup>127</sup> The words of the late politician Jo Cox, "We have more in common than that which divides us," is one of the most powerful phrases of modern times and the story of Noor and the women of the SOE is one that highlights not only our diversity but also the common ground between us.

When the Colston statue fell in June 2020, We Too Built Britain launched a campaign called Hidden Heroes for "more statues, not less."<sup>128</sup> We wanted to help layer the story of Britain, a story where different narratives and heroes can live alongside each other and where contextualisation helps us better understand how we got here. As with all our campaigns, cross-party MPs took up the baton, led by Tom Tugendhat MP and Preet Gill MP. They wrote in *The Times* that: "Instead of fighting over which of them [statues] to tear down, wouldn't it be better to nominate important but under-recognised figures and build new monuments to their achievements?"<sup>129</sup> This would counteract fears, articulated by the former Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden MP in a speech to the Heritage Foundation, that "woke warriors" were "determined to expunge large parts of our past."<sup>130</sup>

An approach to living history can help dial down the rhetoric. For example, however much the history of colonialism and empire is complicated or contested, it is central to the story of modern Britain. As the saying goes, 'We came here, because you went there.' Understanding the stories of migration from former colonies (and broader) and the

127. Change.org, "Put Noor Inayat Khan GC, Violette Szabo GC and Odette Hallows GC on new £50", <https://www.change.org/p/put-world-war-ii-heroines-noor-inayat-khan-violette-szabo-and-odette-hallows-on-new-50> (2018).

128. Zehra Zaidi, "The forgotten middle in Britain's 'Woke Wars' – and what we can learn from America", <https://capx.co/the-forgotten-middle-in-britains-woke-wars-and-what-we-can-learn-from-america/> (2021).

129. Tom Tugendhat and Preet Gill, "Britain needs more statues of diverse and forgotten figures", *The Times*, July 21, 2021.

130. Oliver Dowden, "The Threat to Democracy: Defeating Cancel Culture by Defending the Values of the Free World", 14 February 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doyk89OzlhM&t=682s>.

history of those communities will itself bring different perspectives. That does not mean that one group must be right or wrong, but that they can better live alongside each other. Celebrating the history of generations of migrants to Britain is important to both migrant communities – see, for example, Windrush 75, Black History Month, or South Asian Heritage Week – and local communities who can be proud of their role in the story of integration in Britain. It can also highlight barriers that such communities faced and still face.

“ I wanted to distil history to highlight the stories of people who made a difference along the way and specifically use civic symbols such as banknotes and statues to connect ”

In 2020, I ran a campaign to highlight the story of John Ystumlllyn, an eighteenthcentury gardener who was the first well-recorded Black man in North Wales. He had a traumatic start in life – abducted in western Africa to be raised in north Wales. John Ystumlllyn was also part of possibly the first inter-racial marriage in Wales. His story was passed down for generations as a testament to resilience, enduring love against racial and class barriers, and community acceptance. Our campaign collaborated with rose breeder Harkness Roses to launch the first rose named after an ethnic minority person in the UK and as a symbol of friendship, community, and tolerance.<sup>131</sup> We were honoured to see our rose planted at Buckingham Palace at the start of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

I am proud that we created a rose for friendship and to bring people together, but which also told the story of a more diverse UK and allowed us to have some complex conversations on the history of colonialism and slavery.

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131. BBC, “Black History Month: Rose named after 18th Century gardener”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-58983377> (2021).



However, looking at the past in isolation is not enough. One aspect that is less spoken about and will form much of my future campaigning is how we use history to build a shared narrative of our collective futures. There has not been a speech on cohesion and integration by a senior British politician since Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP when he was Communities Secretary between the years 2016-2018). The time is ripe for a post-Brexit integration strategy that helps to heal the many divisions since the EU Referendum. I would like to see four aspects included in a future integration strategy.

First, recognise the role of volunteering and community initiatives in building empathy and social connections. David Cameron's 'Big Society' never quite reached its full promise and a 2020 report by Danny Kruger MP commissioned by the now outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for a new era of community power.<sup>132</sup> We have seen inspiring examples of British generosity and compassion during COVID-19 and the overwhelming response to Homes for Ukraine. As a side note, the history of migration in Britain in twenty years' time will also be that of how it welcomed those arriving from Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

“ History is a living bridge. We can tell the stories of ordinary people to help understand our place in it ”

Second, use major events and anniversaries, such as the seventy-fifth anniversaries in 2023 of the Windrush and the NHS, to tell a story of shared history. Immigration is a two-way process and those who come here play an important role in our economy, public services, communities and history. It is right to celebrate the positive contribution of those who came to this country.

Third, place a renewed focus on citizenship. Citizenship is currently

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132. Pioneers Post, "Kruger report calls for new era of community power to level up the UK post-Covid", <https://www.pioneerspost.com/news-views/20200925/kruger-report-calls-new-era-of-community-power-level-the-uk-post-covid> (2020).

more of a costly administrative exercise than a process centred on integration and the stories of new British citizens. Citizenship fees and associated costs can be reduced.<sup>133</sup> We could also look at making more of citizenship ceremonies in the national discourse. Australia, for example, has a national day.

“However much the history of colonialism and empire is complicated or contested, it is central to the story of modern Britain”

Fourth, embrace our increasingly digital reality. This would need a joint effort by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). Technology, in particular immersive technology, is going to transform how we learn, dream and connect – from free apps to immersive museums (which encourage more than just intellectual understanding or debate and instead put one in another’s shoes via interactive exhibits) to immersive travel (enabling us to experience other cultures without ever having to get on a plane).<sup>134</sup> It can be the great equaliser in terms of access and can also help promote empathy between different backgrounds.

In terms of my own campaigns, we tried to go beyond representation and storytelling via civic symbols to actively build community connections. After the launch of the John Ystumlyn rose, Harkness Roses and We Too Built Britain created a community gardening scheme to promote social cohesion and mental health. Five-thousand free roses were given to more than 600 community gardening groups all

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133. UK Visas and Immigration, “Fees for citizenship applications and the right of abode from 6 April 2018”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fees-for-citizenship-applications/fees-for-citizenship-applications-and-the-right-of-abode-from-6-april-2018> (2022).

134. Angela Chen, “Is virtual travel here to stay, even after the pandemic subsidies?”, *National Geographic*, 20 April, 2020.

over the UK.<sup>135</sup> These allotments and gardens run by charities for their service users play a huge role in bringing people together and building community resilience that promotes understanding.

“One aspect that is less spoken about and will form much of my future campaigning is how we use history to build a shared narrative of our collective futures”

History is a living bridge. We can tell the stories of ordinary people to help understand our place in it. We can bridge racial and other divides and tell the story of modern, diverse Britain. We can take the politics out of culture wars on history and heritage and allow for complexity and duality to co-exist. We can build a consensus on where we want to go as a society. And we can build that common future together – but armed with better knowledge, inspiration in the power of increased representation, renewed bonds of citizenship and the fostering of greater empathy.

***Zehra Zaidi is a lawyer and the founder of We Too Built Britain.***

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135. Matthew Appleby, "John Ystumlllyn rose: 600 community groups request first rose named after ethnic minority person", <https://www.hortweek.com/john-ystumlllyn-rose-600-community-groups-request-first-rose-named-ethnic-minority-person/article/1738684> (2022).

# STARTING IN SCHOOLS

## *How to teach the British Empire*

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**Dr Samir Puri**

The debate in Britain on how to teach the history of the British Empire is so factionalised that thinking about how to move beyond it awakens the former diplomat in me. Bridge-building is urgently needed between rival perspectives that have become polarised and immovably entrenched. Each side has its hardcore adherents, who irreconcilably subscribe to 'the Empire was ultimately good' or 'the Empire was heinously evil,' as their default argument. Such sentiments shape any discussion of how the history of the Empire could be taught at school, a debate that has itself become factionalised too. Peace talks between these factions, so to speak, are urgently required to move forward and to seize a generational opportunity to recast how the Empire is taught in schools.

“ The purpose of teaching history to children is not to tell them what to think but to equip them with the ability to think for themselves ”

How we teach our national history to young people is an emotive subject and one that provokes a range of views. Strong reactions tend to follow any attempts to present a stance on this issue. For instance Nadim Zahawi MP, then Education Secretary, suggested that the British Empire's role in creating the Iraqi civil service is an example of

a positive legacy that could be taught to children.<sup>136</sup> Conversely, there is frequent criticism<sup>137</sup> of approaching the Empire as a balance sheet of good and bad given the violence, racism and exploitation that it was also responsible for.

“Imagine a country that is multi-ethnic but with a population largely ignorant of why this is the case”

When it comes to navigating these vexed questions, I would like to suggest a handful of golden rules that we can all hopefully agree on, and that might prove instructive in steering the debate forward around how we teach the history of the British Empire in schools.

The first golden rule is that neither side can ‘win’ the public debate about the legacies of Empire; over whether imperial legacies should be honoured, condemned, or a mixture of these approaches. History is ultimately a subjective art, an exercise in storytelling as much as it is the assembly of primary and secondary source evidence. No faction of the debate can ‘win’ because there is always more evidence to assemble in the service of a contending perspective. This is partly because the English, and later the British, Empire lasted an incredibly long time — close to five centuries elapsed between the Elizabethan court advisor John Dee (1527-1608) proposing a ‘British Empire’ and one of the final acts of Empire in 1997, when the former Hong Kong Crown Colony was handed to China. This matter, of the duration of the British Empire, makes it incomparable from a teaching perspective to, for example, the short and brutal existence of Nazi Germany (1933-1945). Whereas we (and the Germans)<sup>138</sup> feel that the debate over Nazi legacies has rightly been resolved in favour of its undeniably heinous essence, no such resolution is ever likely in the British Empire debate.

136. Chris Smyth, “Teach pupils the benefits of the British Empire, says Nadhim Zahawi”, *The Times*, 28 March, 2022.

137. Sathnam Sanghera, “Was the British Empire all bad?”, *The Times*, 22 March, 2022.

138. John Kampfnier, *Why the Germans do it better: notes from a grown-up country* (London: Atlantic Books, 2021).

How then should the Empire be taught in Britain's schools? The second golden rule is to distinguish between the needs of adults and the needs of children. The bitter and passionate Empire debates waged by adults in comment pages and on social media fulfil emotional and intellectual needs that should not dictate the educational needs of young children. The purpose of teaching history to children is not to tell them what to think but to equip them with the ability to think for themselves about complex topics. The Empire is a prime candidate for deploying these skills. It was indeed complex and multi-faceted, appearing in different guises at different times across swathes of the world. I suggest laying out the Empire in its full time span and showing children precisely where the selective examples they dive into for detailed study are located. Do not befuddle children by loading the dice, picking out only the 'good' or 'bad' legacies such as the civil services or slave traders, simply to prove a point. Tell them that the Empire is a big, complex, and divisive topic, but do not put them off. Also tell them that understanding the Empire is fundamental to understanding how our country has developed in both recent and in distant history.

This leads me to a third golden rule, and that is to reflect the increasing diversity of the British populace in teaching this subject. It will be deeply personal to some children while remaining rather abstract for others. Many modern Britons have personal and family backgrounds that come from the former British colonies and the tone of teaching, as well as the stories told, need to reflect this balance; not out of tokenism but out of a duty to ensure that Britons with Caribbean, African, Cantonese, South Asian and other relevant backgrounds can locate themselves in the story of Britain's evolution. This duty extends, too, to their classmates, whose origins are more exclusively from the British Isles, so that they also leave school equipped with a clear comprehension of the circumstances under which Britain became multi-ethnic. This is a public good that is essential for the lasting health of the UK. Imagine a country that is multi-ethnic but with a population largely ignorant of why this is the case – such pitfalls await those who carry with them into adulthood

scant or prejudiced views of how the end of the British Empire and the creation of the Commonwealth shaped migration patterns to the UK.

A final golden rule concerns the importance of other empires to the British populace. This should be firmly on our minds given the tragic Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. I learned an important lesson when I worked in east Ukraine for the Foreign Office in the first Russia/Ukraine war in 2014-15. The imperial collapse of greatest relevance to my East European colleagues was undoubtedly the collapse of the USSR in 1991. This is relevant here because the British-Polish community is huge, according to the last UK census, and we must be aware that history teaching should serve the actual diversity of British communities and not be restricted to the stories of specific minority communities. Of course, there is insufficient time in the curriculum to teach about one empire, let alone several of them, but this point is raised to help to frame the teaching of the British Empire. It must be located in the wider context of the age of empire, to paraphrase the title of historian Eric Hobsbawm's book. When we speak of the British Empire, we must teach children that other empires have also existed, with immense legacies of their own, and that empires have become extinct all over the world with good reason. In the twenty-first century, we have better and more modern ways of organising our world, but we must also understand how far we have come in this journey.

“ Neither side can ‘win’ the public debate about the legacies of Empire ”

As a concluding thought, we must also respect the passage of time. Today's Generation Z and Generation Alpha children will have no direct experiences or memories of the British Empire. By contrast, the last generation to actively experience the British Empire at its height is the World War Two generation. This matters because the passing of the generational baton should inform how we teach the history of Empire. The World War Two generation was also the Partition generation and

the Windrush generation; we must not shy away from telling all of these stories. The Empire directly shaped the lives of our grandparents – its legacies still indirectly affect the lives of our children.

“ Understanding how our country has developed in both recent and in distant history ”

***Dr Samir Puri** is a visiting lecturer at King's College London, author of *The Great Imperial Hangover*, and a contributor to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. This article reflects the views of the author alone and does not represent any institutional affiliation.*



# OLYMPIC AMBITIONS

## *Sporting heroes reflective of all Britons*

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Chris Grant

If life in the UK can be compared to a game of Snakes and Ladders (and it definitely can), the benefits of participation in sport and activity – ranging from developing personal skills and confidence to extending networks – can be seen as a set of upwards escalators, and that is before you even get to the positive impacts on health and happiness. Elite sport can bring the nation together and also lead the way in updating and upgrading perceptions about what it means to be British. Yet not only have we failed to exploit these benefits, we have allowed structural and institutional barriers to keep them beyond the reach of whole sections of the population.

In 2015, there were signs that we might put this right when the Westminster Government published the first comprehensive strategy on sport and activity in a decade, *Sporting future – a new strategy for an active nation*.<sup>139</sup> It was launched by Tracey Crouch and its genius was that it put substance behind the claim to be that rare thing, a ‘cross-government strategy,’ by specifying five crucial areas of national life in which sport could and should have a positive impact: physical wellbeing; mental wellbeing; individual development; social and community Development; and economic development.

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139. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, “Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation> (2015).

It was my belief in *Sporting future* that motivated me, in 2016, to join the Board of Sport England. As CEO of the 2012 legacy charity Sported I had a particular interest in 'Social & Community Development,' but it seemed obvious to me that all five outcomes were interdependent and that, if the strategy could be successfully implemented, the benefits at local and national levels would be broad, deep, and important.

“ Given the chance, people from every background can fall in love with any sport or activity, and some of them will excel ”

The story of what happened next features some good news, but mainly paints a depressing picture of the ways in which our political system wastes good ideas and good people. Although Tracey Crouch MP has recently returned to prominence through her chairing of the review on football governance, her tenure as Minister was cut short. The promised annual updates soon petered out and the prospect of a joined-up approach feels as elusive as ever.

However, this did not negate the opportunity to use sport and activity as drivers for much-needed social change, not least in addressing longstanding racial inequalities. When tackling big, complex challenges, you have to start where you are. From my starting point in the Sport England boardroom – and with strong connections to our Olympic and Paralympic performance programmes – I decided that there were two elements of the sporting system, leadership and talent, which could become powerful drivers of progress towards racial justice.

The introduction of the Code for Sports Governance created the opportunity to accelerate the diversification of leadership, as board vacancies would come up more frequently. We started from the assumption that there were plenty of highly-qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds who could improve sports boards, but were either unaware of the opportunities or put off by a sense that they would not be welcomed. On this basis, Sport England and UK Sport instigated a programme that has, in the last four

years, doubled the proportion of female board members and more than trebled the proportion of those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.<sup>140</sup> There is still work to be done, particularly in relation to executive roles, but the fact that ethnic diversity in the boardrooms of publicly funded sports bodies is now broadly in line with representation in the working age population should be acknowledged as a major step forward.

“ Elite sport can bring the nation together and also lead the way in updating and upgrading perceptions about what it means to be British ”

The tougher challenge relates to what is referred to as ‘talent,’ but should more accurately be described as ‘opportunity.’ These are the entry points and progression routes which, if everyone had access to them, would result in our national teams looking and sounding like the whole population, rather than drawing on narrow segments, as many sports currently do.

It ought to be self-evident that the colour of someone’s skin, or the place their grandparents were born, plays zero part in their aptitude at different activities. The truth is simple – talent is everywhere, opportunity is not. I have seen with my own eyes how, given the chance, people from every background can fall in love with any sport or activity, and some of them will excel. Whether it is Ocean Racing Sailors from Haringey, Table Tennis stars from Drumchapel, Jockeys from Brixton, or a remarkable woman called Preet Chandi – a physiotherapist and Captain in the British Army who recently came close to breaking the record for the fastest solo trek to the South Pole.

Echoing UK Sport’s successful Mission 2012 campaign, which set the target of a top-three finish in the medals table for both Olympics and Paralympics, I am advocating Mission 2032, with the aim of athletes and support teams reflecting the UK population by the time of the 2032

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140. UK Sport, “Sport England and UK Sport reveal plan to transform diversity of sports boards”, <https://www.uk-sport.gov.uk/news/2019/09/20/copy-of-uk-sport-sets-out-exciting-blueprint-for-the-future-of-elite-sport> (2019).

Summer Olympics and Paralympics in Brisbane.

I am under no illusions that this is highly ambitious. When I spoke recently to coaches and administrators from our world-class Olympic and Paralympic performance programmes, I referenced the British Boxing Board of Control's Rule 24, which – until it was rescinded in 1948 – stated that “title contestants must have two white parents.” Whilst we would all like to believe that things are very different now, the data that I’ve been able to access relating to the composition of our representative squads suggests that, for many of our sports, Rule 24 might as well still be in place.

“ But there is the opportunity for a bigger prize; we can finally shake off those outdated ideas about what different people are capable of and who we are as a United Kingdom ”

I do not have the stats for our Paralympians, but it is instructive to look at who represented Team GB at the recent Tokyo Olympics. Across the 19 sports, *seven* were 100% white and a further two of our biggest sports, swimming and rowing, each had just *one* athlete from an ethnic minority background in squads of 29 and 45 respectively. When you compare this to the make-up of our population, the census data tells us that, in the age-group from which our teams are selected, around one in five Britons are from a Black African, Caribbean, Asian, mixed, or other ethnic background. So, of the total of 282 athletes who make up the data set that I have seen, you would expect the number from a minority ethnic group to be above 50. The actual number in Tokyo was 39, but of these, 26 competed in athletics and boxing, leaving just 13 athletes from an ethnic minority background across the other 17 sports.<sup>141</sup>

I estimate that around one third of our Olympic sports have *never*

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141. Alexandra Topping, “Team GB still too white and suburban, says Sport England board member”, *The Guardian*, 9 August, 2021.

selected an athlete who was not white. You might assume that this state of affairs will improve organically over time. But if you look down the pathways, you can see that it is not happening. An analysis of athletes in their late teens and early twenties funded through the Talented Athlete Support Scheme, across 35 Olympic and Paralympic sports, showed that 15 sports had fewer than 10% ethnically diverse athletes and four were 100% white. Only eight of the 35 had athlete profiles which came close to matching the population.

It is not just about race. Look at the composition of Team GB, Paralympics GB, the Pathways, and the Support Teams, and you will see major imbalances in terms of the regions people come from, the type of education they have had and their socio-economic background. But the racial dimension stands out. It is extreme, and that is why I have compared the situation in our sporting landscape to Apartheid.

“ Ethnic diversity in the boardrooms of publicly funded sports bodies is now broadly in line with representation in the working age population ”

While many of the reasons for the current inequalities sit ‘upstream’ of sport, for example within the education system, the sport development and performance sector is better placed than almost anyone else in UK society to move us all beyond the outdated beliefs that hold our nation back.

As in other spheres of life, we are held back by false assumptions about who is interested in particular activities and who might be talented. These stereotypes are old and deep. They are racist because they routinely exclude certain people from certain roles or opportunities. So when you visit a bank and see black security guards and cleaners, but only white directors, or when you go to a multi-sports event and see black sprinters but only white showjumpers, swimmers, and hockey players, that might feel normal – for now at least – but we have to understand that it is not natural.

At this Summer’s Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, we have had the chance to see the reigning Men’s Olympic Javelin Champion

in action. His name is Neeraj Chopra, and he grew up in rural India. He could be a great example of the inspirational power of representation, and I hope we will do everything we can to showcase his talent to the large cohort of Brummies and other Brits with South Asian heritage. This is even more important when you consider that, going back to Team GB in Tokyo, our squad of 282 included not a single athlete of South Asian heritage.

“I estimate that around one third of our Olympic sports have never selected an athlete who was not white ”

Diversity is a given. We are a melting pot in the corner of the Atlantic who have always been connected to the rest of the world, and that is a massive advantage. So we do not need to generate diversity. What we have to do is let it in. When I spoke to the UK Sport conference, I congratulated them for having already done one of the hardest jobs in creating world-leading performance pathways. But where are the gateways? The access points? They are certainly not in cities, which is where most of our ethnically diverse population live. Looking again at Team GB in Tokyo, 35% identified as coming from major urban areas, compared with 82% of the whole population. One of the things I have been pushing for is the creation of new, urban, multisport talent gateways that better enable people from larger towns and cities to start their journey towards competing at the highest level.

The next job is to ensure that the world-class pathways and performance programmes are ready to welcome and nurture talented people from every part of the nation and every background, who will come to them through these new Gateways. Another way of putting this is that there needs to be a focus on inclusion.

With diverse gateways and inclusive pathways, we can expect to see advances in performance, but there is the opportunity for a bigger prize; we can finally shake off those outdated ideas about what different people are capable of and who we are as a United Kingdom. There are

few, if any, sectors that attract as much media and public attention on a daily basis as sport. So it is ideally placed to become a positive example for industry, commerce, education, and the whole nation.

This is a big challenge, but it is also a massive opportunity. We are all impoverished by the current state of affairs and we will all benefit when we change it. The athletes who will represent us at Brisbane 2032 are, for the most part, already in secondary education. That is why we need to move quickly – to look beyond the existing sporting infrastructure, to innovate, and to ensure that all of us in the UK see ourselves reflected in our sporting heroes.

**Chris Grant** is an experienced organisation development consultant and author of *Better Decisions*. He is an independent board member of Sport England and a member of the Financial Services Culture Board, having previously chaired the UK Chip & PIN Programme. From 2014 to 2018 he was the CEO of Sported

# THE NEW MINORITIES

## *On 'Other Whites'*

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**Dr Alexandra Bulat**

At the vaccination centre in Cambridge, I was asked how I describe my ethnicity. “Eastern European”, I responded. The volunteer checking me in replied that they did not have this category on the form. “Romanian, then?” I asked.

“Would this be Other White?” she continued, to which I said, yes, this is what I usually tick on surveys. So “Other White” I was. Little did I know at the time that the Other White category will be the subject of many discussions on vaccine take-up and public health outcomes more broadly. After I became, to my knowledge, the first Romanian-born County Councillor in 2021, I lost count of how many times I heard that “we need to do more to engage with the Other White demographic.” I also lost count of the number of times I was invited to various discussions and events to add my ‘lived experience,’ almost always as the only Eastern European, and usually as the only migrant, in the room.

That moment at the vaccination centre I questioned, once again, what the Other White category tells us about one’s experiences and identities. You can be from Belgium or Brazil, Russian or Romanian, ‘Western’ or ‘Eastern’ European, from New Zealand or Australia. You can be someone who is British-born but still chooses this category to identify with their non-British heritage, such as some second-generation Polish migrants I met who ticked the same box as me.

I also know British citizens for whom ticking the Other White category



sends a political message, a way of saying “I feel European.” In contrast, I met naturalised British citizens who now identify as white British and choose not to state any other background, some even deliberately avoiding mentioning their non-British family members.

“ Even if a majority of Australian people and Romanian people would tick the ‘other white’ box in the census, Australians will enjoy more positive British public perceptions than Romanians ”

Since I naturalised as a British citizen, I found it even more challenging to tick the Other White box without thinking about it. It feels that the Other White category means “white people who are not British or Irish,” so where do you stand if you are a naturalised citizen, especially when some of us do start identifying as British after many years spent in the UK?

The reality is we do not know very much about who identifies with this group, what makes them tick that box, and how this categorisation process can shape identities, belonging, and the meaning of citizenship. All these are questions that come up even before we start thinking about how to address structural inequalities involving this group, whether it is in access to healthcare, or political representation. There have been entire PhD theses, such as Halej in 2015,<sup>142</sup> written on unpacking this exact topic of the ‘boundaries of whiteness.’ Yet in policy discussions, we seem to still be stuck in the ‘we need better data’ phase when speaking about this ethnicity categorisation.

We started speaking more frequently about Other Whites in the context of EU migration, in particular post-2004 migration from Central and Eastern Europe. The 2011 census showed that the group of people identifying as Other White has increased by over a million in a decade. In 2022, the Home Office reported receiving over six million applications in total to the EU

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142. Julia O Halej, “Other Whites, White Others: East European Migrants and the Boundaries of Whiteness”, *UCL* (2015).

Settlement Scheme. This application system opened to the public in 2019 for EU migrants who arrived in the UK before 1 January 2021 and their families to apply for their pre-settled status (limited leave to remain) or settled status (indefinite leave to remain). This group of migrants, whose rights are covered by the Brexit Withdrawal Agreement and the EU Settlement scheme, makes up around 10% of the UK's population.

In media and political narratives, EU migration has also been portrayed as white, relatively privileged migration. While it is correct to say that the majority of EU migrants would tick Other White in the Census and other research, in reality, there are significant differences in how migrants from the EU have been treated, the positions they have in the UK job market, and the stereotypes circulating about them.

Romanian and Polish citizens alone make up over a third of EU migrants in the UK.<sup>143</sup> They are citizens of EU member states who faced work restrictions at different points – while 2004 Accession countries had the Worker Registration Scheme at the start, for Romanians and Bulgarians ‘freedom of movement’ was truly free only with a work permit between 2007 and 2014. In addition, not all EU migrants identify as ‘white,’ and thus the question of racial equality should also be central in our discussions of EU migration, in addition to considering the needs of the EU Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community (GRT), who often arrive in the UK from Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and mostly other Central and Eastern European EU countries.

It is no secret that British public attitudes towards migration differ by migrants’ country of birth. A large body of sociological research, including my own PhD thesis<sup>144</sup> on attitudes towards EU migrants, shows how narratives on EU migrants are shaped based on nationality-based stereotypes, with Eastern European migrants being seen in a less positive light than their Western counterparts.

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143. Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, “EU Migration to and from the UK”, <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk/> (2022).

144. Alexandra Bulat, “How does local-level contact shape attitudes towards EU migrants? A comparison of British, Romanian and Polish residents”, *UCL* (2020).

The way we categorise ethnicity and nationality impacts many policy areas. The data we operate with is often not good enough to be able to assess how policies affect communities differently. During the pandemic, public health was probably the most frequent context in which the presence of the Other White was discussed. Vaccine take-up data has consistently shown how Other White ethnic groups have higher levels of vaccine hesitancy than white British or Irish categories. Interestingly, in much of the discussions about this, the Other White category is used almost interchangeably with 'Eastern European.' I spoke with officers from different local authorities asking my advice on how to engage Romanians in the UK with public health information about COVID testing and vaccines. However the data, both my own and the councils', is anecdotal if we speak about specific national groups.

Although anecdotal and community evidence gives good insight for local authorities, it is extremely challenging to make the best use of funds to target events, communication, and materials for specific communities. The Other Whites speak tens of different languages and there is no such thing as specific community spaces where this Other White group goes to. There are, however, Greek churches, Polish skleps and Romanian Saturday schools. Thus, relying on the Other White category prevents us from effectively targeting programmes or communications to specific groups by nationality. Our interventions to engage with the Other White demographic are not as effective or culturally competent as they could be. We may be too broad and miss out on specific group challenges, or be too narrow – for instance assuming it is mainly about Poles and Romanians, and overlook all the other groups.

Some would argue there needs to be a better representation of the Other White migrants in public life in the UK for their lived experiences and specific challenges to be addressed more directly. The catch is that the way in which we categorise people also impacts whether we can increase their representation through specific interventions. Many organisations and authorities have tried to address some of the structural inequalities by creating specific opportunities for BAME groups – especially in terms of

learning and training, and often leadership programmes, such as within some political parties.

“ We started speaking more frequently about Other Whites in the context of EU migration, in particular post-2004 migration from Central and Eastern Europe ”

While often the Other Whites are part of these initiatives, in other contexts they can easily be excluded either by design or by assumptions about who fits which tickbox. An interesting report from the University of Birmingham and Centrala Space<sup>145</sup> shows, for instance, how the Other White category excludes Central and Eastern European art and artists from diversity measurement and reporting. Similarly, while there is research showing the under-representation of ethnic minorities in local politics, such as in Sobolewska and Begum's 2020 report<sup>146</sup> on ethnic minority representation in local government, there is no centralised data on councillors of migrant background.

The 2021 Census would significantly improve the quality of data that authorities and policymakers, as well as politicians, work with, as the 'Any other white background' respondents were prompted to self-identify, while 'Roma' and 'Gypsy and Irish Traveller' had categories of their own. The latter two will be really important for local policymaking as we know Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller groups have suffered systemic inequalities and also need provisions at the local authority level, for instance in addressing the lack of or inappropriate traveller sites in some areas.

We need to engage with the limitations on this data and the anxieties around drawing conclusions to enable targeted communications and outreach, and ultimately provide equality in outcomes for all migrant communities. For a start, here are three things we can start doing, whether

145. University of Birmingham and Centrala, "In-between spaces: Inclusion and representation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) artists in the UK creative economies", <http://centrala-space.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/CEN01-In-Between-Spaces.pdf> (2021).

146. Maria Sobolewska and Neema Begum, "Ethnic minority representation in local government", <https://www.johnsmithcentre.com/research/ethnic-minority-representation-in-uk-local-government-07-07-2020/> (2020).

we are council officers, elected representatives, researchers, or simply interested members of the public.

“ We do not know very much about who identifies with this group, what makes them tick that box, and how this categorisation process can shape identities ”

First, engaging critically with the data. In the short term, we need to assess the existing data and how it can be used to communicate with different migrant groups. We need to be honest and open about what it can tell us and what it cannot tell us. The 2021 Census is an opportunity to update the assumptions we are currently working on. For instance, the added ‘Roma’ answer option within the ‘White’ category could assist local authorities in targeting services and support for the Roma community, which has been among the most marginalised. Such data could have been extremely useful, for instance, in outreach on the EU Settlement Scheme, where the Roma community faced significant barriers in applying and thus needed local-level support, such as with digital access.<sup>147</sup>

Second, recognising that ‘whiteness’ can manifest in different ways and that the ‘other whites’ are not a homogenous group. Certain hierarchies of whiteness are constructed through media, social, and political narratives, and therefore the experiences of different groups, whether it is the public attitudes they encounter or their ability to access their rights in the UK, may vary. British public opinion makes distinctions between migrants according to their country of origin.<sup>148</sup> Even if a majority of Australian people and Romanian people would tick the ‘other white’ box in the census, Australians will enjoy more positive British public perceptions than Romanians. There are complex reasons for these differences in

147. See, APPG and NGO reports on the challenges faced by the EU Roma community in the UK. For example Philip Brown, “Falling through the gaps: the EU Settlement Scheme and the case of Roma communities in the UK”, [https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/uploads/9/3/6/8/93687016/sm03\\_-\\_euss\\_report\\_v9.pdf](https://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/uploads/9/3/6/8/93687016/sm03_-_euss_report_v9.pdf) (2020).

148. Scott Blinder and Lindsay Richards, “UK public opinion toward immigration: overall attitudes and level of concern”, <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-of-concern/> (2020).

public opinion, but we can all agree they do affect how migrant groups will interact with our institutions, support services and overall, their level of trust in different services, from going to the GP to registering to vote. Thus, we need to work on our messages for various migrant groups, as culturally competent and targeted communications could be much more effective to tackle some of the challenges authorities face, including the lower take-up from Eastern Europeans in certain council support programmes or lower trust in using the NHS or charities for support.

Third, working towards increased representation of migrants in political and public life in the UK, whether that is in the structures of local authorities or as elected representatives. This will not only lead to having more of the community leaders who are so actively sought when a need for engagement is identified; it will also help to reflect the diversity of UK residents, which is what representation should be about. Embedding engagement in power structures is much more effective at addressing and preventing inequalities than one-off engagement when challenges are already there.

Not all Other Whites are Eastern European and not all Eastern Europeans are Other Whites. Other Whites are a diverse group and there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to engage this group, whether it is on COVID1-9 messages or politics. So it is time, both locally and nationally, to ensure this group is represented all year round, in all policy areas, not only when we need someone with ‘lived experience’ – or when our communication strategies do not go as well as expected.

***Dr Alexandra Bulat*** is a Labour Councillor for Abbey, Cambridgeshire County Council.

# TALENT AT THE TOP TABLE

## *Race and the establishment*

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Salma Shah

The establishment is a concept that preoccupies us Brits. What is it? And who belongs to it? Are you with it or against it? Being welcomed into this mysterious group and learning its codes and ways of being for many seems a daunting and impossible task. Being anti-establishment is also a powerful statement about where your beliefs and experiences lie, but, like all things in Britain, the establishment is a constantly evolving thing, especially when it comes to its membership. How race in particular encounters the establishment is what this essay explores.

This is not an attempt at an empirical assessment of race policy produced by the British Government over the last few years, but instead a reflection of many years in Whitehall and Westminster. In as much as lived experience counts for something, the suggestions made here, about possible changes to ensure minorities are included in the establishment, are drawn from reflections on my time in government.

Without even articulating what the establishment is, we can conjure a distinct picture. This is the realm of decision-makers and those who influence them, the people who hold the levers of power in absolute and soft terms. In particular, the civil service and the Monarchy, the latter encompassing civic roles too, are the establishment in this context.

At the outset it is worth noting that there is lots for the UK to be proud of when it comes to race. We are, by and large, a tolerant, welcoming, and

open society. So, the suggestions for change come from a high watermark. What can we build on? And what will make the difference in places that still need to reflect modern Britain?

“Those with decision-making powers or enough clout to influence ministers are not drawn from the widest possible pool”

Having worked as a temporary civil servant for over five years, I can attest to the lack of ethnic diversity around the top table. It is important to draw a distinction between the permanent civil service and the political teams. Elected politicians are far more reflective of the country, while ‘mandarins’ – who can undoubtedly be excellent public servants – are not. This, in my view, is in large part because of the closed nature of their recruitment. It is self-selecting and shielded from political interference, therefore continually following a pattern that has had little disruption or a compelling catalyst for change.

It is obvious that those who make and implement policy should be representative of those affected by policymakers. Yet diversifying the civil service brings challenges. You cannot just bring people in cold; they will need to be part of the system. And consideration is also required as to the type of diversity that is most relevant to policy. Is it class diversity, ethnic diversity, or gender diversity? Do we want diversity of thought more than differences in identity?

The civil service communicates in a unique way and can be intimidating to those who do not speak the language. There can be a tendency to recruit ethnic minorities who are middle class, a result, again, of self-selection.

The civil service is conscious of its corporate responsibilities and has published the *Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*,<sup>149</sup> which

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149. Civil Service, “Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: 2022 to 2025”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2022-to-2025/civil-service-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2022-to-2025.html#annex-actions> (2022).



contains a hefty list of actions to help it become a more representative employer. But the changes proposed largely improve current processes and are spread far and wide to cover several different facets of diversity. They do not solely deal with race but also improve horizontals like the reporting of bullying and working on better data collection. These are worthwhile, but not radical, and will not effectively address the lack of diversity at the top.

“ There will always be an establishment in some form, so it is important to work with what we have and to recognise that it is not paradoxical for Britain to aspire to having the most inclusive and open establishment possible ”

A mere 7% of people in senior roles are from a minority ethnic background.<sup>150</sup> As a result, those with decision-making powers or enough clout to influence ministers are not drawn from the widest possible pool.

I have often reflected on how it is possible that a Conservative Government has managed to recruit and promote, beyond all expectations, members of a diverse range of ethnic minorities, whilst the professional arm of government is still trailing behind. Our ‘front of house’ is a lot more developed than the rank and file. Look at the Cabinet versus the list of Permanent Secretaries.

Here the establishment can learn from party politics. Tony Blair had all-women shortlists; though these are no longer in use, they did help to bring a gender balance to the commons. Similarly, David Cameron’s success in bringing diverse talent to the fore was a consequence of a big, broad effort to be inclusive, encouraging people to apply for places that they may not have been bold enough to go for previously.

Many ethnic minority Tory MPs are now in safe rural seats. They

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150. Cabinet Office, “Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-diversity-inclusion-dashboard/civil-service-diversity-and-inclusion-dashboard> (2022).

were championed and were encouraged to be seen as more reflective of their party than their ethnic background. Their lived experience was a bonus to the legislative and later government process. Indeed, the crop of minority MPs, representing what is seen as an establishment party is, in my opinion, one of the strongest examples of advancement on race equality.

The civil service should try to emulate this success. Recruitment needs to be broader and more open. There should be a policy where a dedicated percentage of people who join the fast stream should be ethnic minorities only. This is not a tick box quota exercise – it should force the civil service to seek people out and put them on a path to success in the upper echelons of the civil service.

It is unlikely that many people from my hometown of Hyndburn in Lancashire will make the jump themselves. Like others, they will need encouragement and outreach to bridge the gap. It is dependent on finding the talent that meets the criteria of the entrance exam, of course, but insisting on this quota means people who have not interacted with the civil service previously are for the first time offered the possibility.

The Monarchy, perhaps the pinnacle of the establishment, has over the years dealt with many challenges in relation to its approach to race. The Queen has deftly dealt with questions pertaining to her role as head of the Commonwealth and the sometimes negative connotations associated with our history with former colonies.

If we start with the premise that the Queen is in fact a unifying figure, we can see that the Monarchy acts as an important symbol. It bridges many second and third generation immigrant communities with the homes of their ancestors and for many those bonds remain strong.

This network should be maintained and strengthened; not through symbolic gestures, but through practical and visible efforts to show commitment to the Commonwealth as an institution and to its ability to bind people from it to the UK. The impact of this is about opening the doors of the establishment to those it seeks to remain connected to.

As a start, the Palace should consider its own senior leadership

team and create a new post for Commonwealth Private Secretary to HMQ. The Sovereign should deepen the connection with the Commonwealth, particularly those countries with large ethnic minority communities in the UK. A unit within Buckingham Palace should be dedicated to Commonwealth issues – enhancing, rather than replicating, the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). And each Royal Household could also have a member of staff recruited through a Commonwealth-only scheme, welcoming the best and the brightest from our family of nations to Britain.

The British interest in foreign policy and respecting traditions is an important part of supporting the establishment. Ethnic minorities in positions of power are often placed in a difficult position, expected to hold themselves to a higher standard or carry a ‘unique burden’ to prove a loyalty to their home. Some can still regard ethnic minorities as conflicted on national loyalty, but it is perfectly possible to be patriotic and from a minority background. We should utilise those communities with strong bonds to our institutions more strategically, making them an important part of international relationships.

“Elected politicians are far more reflective of the country, while ‘mandarins’ – who can undoubtedly be excellent public servants – are not”

The establishment prides itself on pomp and pageantry and though the ceremonies and uniforms look exclusive, an often-overlooked place of diverse inclusion is civic structures, particularly at local level. High Sheriffs and Lord Lieutenants are ceremonial, but the history they embody and the duties they undertake are ancient. The uniforms and accoutrements they possess are important symbols, especially when owned by a diverse office holder.

Many civic mayors are drawn from varied ethnic minority backgrounds. These positions are again linked to the political realm, as the electorate

allows such a varied group to form the talent pool for these positions.

For those roles that are not tied to elected office, more could be done to represent modern Britain. Take, for example, Lord Lieutenants. The role historically involved organising the local militia on behalf of the Monarch, but is now more about being the eyes and ears on the ground, helping to provide insights about the realm.

“Each Royal Household could also have a member of staff recruited through a Commonwealth-only scheme, welcoming the best and the brightest from our family of nations to Britain”

Taking this model, it would be useful to find and professionally recruit more people from diverse backgrounds for these roles and to define more clearly the requirements for the office. Transparency and promotion are key, in order to publicise that this is a job worth having and that atypical backgrounds are considered.

For many people, getting rid of the establishment would be an easier way to equalise society. But there will always be an establishment in some form, so it is important to work with what we have and to recognise that it is not paradoxical for Britain to aspire to having the most inclusive and open establishment possible.

The establishment can be meritocratic. People of all backgrounds can have the opportunity of joining the elite because Britain has evolved. The top is no longer defined by where you were born and is much more accessible. Talent and skill are rightly prized above the old ideas of pedigree and breeding.

At the heart of this essay is the principle of good recruitment. But we cannot rely on good people finding their way through by luck or coincidence. The establishment must go out and actively seek those people who do not already put their hands up in the small circle from which it currently draws its members.

When we say Britain is an inclusive society, it is true at the highest level.

We need more effort at the top, but with some subtle but meaningful changes we can have an establishment that looks more like the society that it serves.

**Salma Shah** is a partner at Portland, the communications and public affairs company. Previously, Salma was Special Adviser to the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, from 2018 to 2019. She served in the UK government from May 2014, in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).

While there has been progress on racial equality in Britain in recent decades, there is still an unacceptable gap in the life chances and everyday experiences of people from different ethnic minority backgrounds.

Political debate on race in the UK today, however, is stuck and increasingly polarised – when it should be building support for ambitious, actionable policies that could meaningfully tackle racism and racial inequality.

This essay collection brings together a wide range of leading decision makers and opinion formers to share their constructive approaches to address racial disparities in modern Britain. The essays focus on three key areas: opportunities, justice, and belonging. We see it as a first step to developing a broad cross-ethnic and cross-party agenda for change to address racial inequality in our society.

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