Quakers in Britain submission to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

Introduction

Quakers are a faith community working for equality, peace, truth, simplicity and sustainability. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain is a national church supporting thousands of Quakers across England, Scotland and Wales. It is also a charity, working for positive change in areas such as climate justice, peace and disarmament, migration and criminal justice.

Our national organisation supports a network of over a hundred local Quaker meetings that have made a commitment to become 'sanctuary meetings'. They are engaged in practical work to build a culture of welcome towards newcomers to Britain, challenge racism in all its forms, and campaign to change the laws on destitution, detention and deportation. Our commitment to anti-racism and migrant rights stem from our belief that there is 'that of God in everyone', regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or any other characteristic.

Throughout our history, Quakers have been involved in both perpetuating and challenging racist power structures. For example, some Quakers profited from the transatlantic slave trade, while others campaigned for its abolition. Quakers have looked at racism many times during the past few decades, but we have only recently begun to embed anti-racism in our ways of working.

We would like to preface our submission to this call for evidence with two points:
1. We believe the Commission should focus on implementing the valuable recommendations of previous inquiries, rather than allowing the government to delay taking action by conducting further time-consuming analysis of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK.
2. The questions in this call to evidence focus too much on individual difference and not enough on longstanding, embedded, structural inequalities. We have framed our answers in the context of structural inequalities.

1. What do you consider to be the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK, and why?

We believe that two mutually-reinforcing factors are the main causes of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK:
1. A narrative that Britain is superior to other countries and that British people are superior to other people
2. Structural, organised behaviour past and present, including that which perpetuates and demonstrates Britain's superiority in the world. This behaviour

includes the transatlantic slave trade, empire, colonialism, militarism, and our trade relations with other countries.

Many Black, Asian and minority ethnic people have come to the UK because this behaviour has caused their countries to be underprivileged and the UK to become a destination of power and prosperity. Now that Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are a significant part of the UK population, our structures cause them to be treated with the same attitude of superiority that characterised the British Empire. Narratives of Britain as a superior nation go unchallenged across our society, from education to politics, resulting in a large proportion of the UK population believing the British Empire was 'something to be proud of' and that the colonies were 'better off' being part of it.[1]

Current UK government policies and political discourse reinforce historic inequalities between races and ethnic groups rather than challenging them. In our answer to this question we wish to draw the Commission's attention to three key areas where this is the case: immigration and asylum; education; and defence and security.

Immigration and asylum

The 'hostile environment' continues in essence if not name. It discriminates against people based on their nationality, which is inseparable from race and ethnicity.

Policies such as 'no recourse to public funds', 'right to rent', and the ban on asylum-seekers doing paid work, force people from migrant backgrounds into poverty.[2] They exacerbate racism by creating mistrust of people perceived as not being British, and by reinforcing the false view that migrants do not contribute to society.[3] These policies are implemented by a Home Office that independent reports have concluded is at best ignorant and thoughtless towards the issues of race and colonialism[4] and at worse institutionally racist.[5]

Racism is also perpetuated by rhetoric that demonises migrants and asylum-seekers. Anti-migrant rhetoric is both a cause and consequence of racism and the hostile environment. In its 2018 report on this issue, the Quaker Council for European Affairs found that anti-migrant hate speech impedes integration and inclusion of migrants in our society, and creates an environment that is conducive to violence.[6]

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[1] 'UK more nostalgic for empire than other ex-colonial powers', *The Guardian*, 11 March 2020
[2] *A Lifeline for All: Children and Families with No Recourse to Public Funds*, The Children's Society, May 2020
[3] 'Court of Appeal: Right to Rent scheme causes racial discrimination' JCWI
[4] *Windrush Lessons Learned Review*, Wendy Williams, March 2020, p7
[5] *Black people, racism and human rights*, Joint Committee on Human Rights, November 2020, p27
[6] *Anti-migrant hate speech*, Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2018

An example of anti-migrant rhetoric is the way in which ministers, officials and the Prime Minister have repeatedly referred to Channel crossings as illegal.[7] As the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) explained in their recent letter to the Home Secretary, UK government policies leave people with legitimate legal cause to come to the UK and seek humanitarian protection with no legal means of doing so. JCWI said: "To brand this as "illegal" or "criminal" activity is irresponsible and wrong and is precisely the same rhetoric that led to the wrongful detention and deportation of the Windrush generation."[8]

We ask the Commission to consider the impact of anti-migrant rhetoric and policies on racial and ethnic disparities. We call on the government to change its narrative and approach to immigration and asylum. It must acknowledge the UK's own role in causing migration through violence towards and exploitation of other countries; its responsibility to help those who are suffering and in need as a result of UK actions; and the ways in which UK society can benefit from welcoming migrants.

Education

We welcome the fact that the Commission asks specifically about education, but we believe education should not be seen in isolation from other institutions. The school system can be an instrument and tool for building peace and justice, but it can also reinforce and perpetuate inequity.

Race is clearly a factor in outcomes for young people, as shown by Runnymede's report on racism in secondary schools[9] and the Institute of Race Relations' research on the 'PRU to prison pipeline'[10], referring to Pupil Referral Units where young people often end up when taken out of mainstream schools. This inequity amounts to a structural violence on racial lines that the education system needs to recognise and change.

Currently the government's approach to education seems to be unhelpfully 'colourblind' – it largely fails to recognise young people's racialisation by society or affirm their experience of it. For example, Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch MP said: "We do not want teachers to teach their white pupils about white privilege and inherited racial guilt."[11] This approach both misrepresents a critical understanding of race and stifles important discussion.

Exploring white privilege (i.e privilege derived from being perceived as white) alongside other forms of privilege and *un*privilege derived from aspects of identity is

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[7] For example, 'Boris Johnson: UK could change laws to stop 'stupid and dangerous' migrant crossings', Sky News, 10 August 2020
[8] '100 groups demand safe and legal routes now', JCWI 2020
[9] *Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools*, Runnymede, June 2020
[10] 'Black working-class pupils unfairly excluded in England, thinktank warns', *The Guardian*, 28 September 2020
[11] HC Deb, 20 October 2020, c1010

a useful and important reflection. It is part of the conversation of disparity this Commission is exploring. It is of course true that white children and young people can be marginalised based on their identity. Educators must address these inequities as part of the wider work of challenging identity-based discrimination, not by attempting to deny it exists.

While this Commission's work is ongoing, the Department for Education has issued relationships, sex and health education guidance closing down the scope of conversation. It states:

> "Schools should not under any circumstances work with external agencies that take or promote extreme positions or use materials produced by such agencies. Examples of extreme positions include...promoting divisive or victim narratives that are harmful to British society."[12]

We fear this convoluted guidance will confuse teachers about whether antiracist voices are banned. Organisations such as Amnesty International[13], the Coalition of Anti-Racist Educators, and the Black Educators Alliance[14] have criticised the guidance.

Defence and security

Militarist violence by the UK state contributes to racial and ethnic inequalities, both directly through state policies and structures and through the wider cultural climate that it helps to shape.

Coercive military activities abroad and military stand-offs have often contributed to the stigmatisation of some categories of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, particularly those who are Muslim.[15] Wars tend to encourage a colonial mentality and lead to the devaluing of people who are deemed to be 'other' and are exposed to violence and oppression because of that. Recent foreign wars that the UK has been involved in have increased racism towards people from migrant, ethnic minority and Muslim backgrounds. The so-called 'War on Terror' in particular reinforced racism and Islamophobia.[16]

The Prevent programme is a key pillar of the UK government's approach to security and counter-terrorism. Yet it has enabled racism, cultural violence and stigma

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[12] 'Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum', UK government, 24 September 2020
[13] 'Teaching material calling for end of capitalism banned from schools as ministers brand it 'extreme'', *Independent*, 27 September 2020.
[14] 'Liberate our classrooms – defend our civil liberties', CARE and BEA, October 2020.
[15] Bayar, M. and Ertan, S., *The Impact of Military Interventions on the Integration of Muslim Immigrants in Western Countries, 1990–2013*, Global Society, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2016
[16] Fekete, L., *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*, Pluto Press, London, 2009

towards Muslims.[17] In 2018 the UN Special Rapporteur on racism raised concerns about Prevent.[18] The government's own statistical evidence and a report by Runnymede show that Muslims have been disproportionately reported and these referrals almost always proven unfounded.[19] Studies on Islamophobia have found that Prevent and other programmes have made it 'increasingly difficult for Muslims to engage in politics or public life.'[20]

Through our work on peace education, Quakers in Britain have seen examples of Prevent fuelling racism, such as teachers directed to monitor Pakistani students more closely than their peers and the ethnic targeting of Somali parents for Prevent training in London.

2. What could be done to improve representation, retention and progression opportunities for people of different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces (for example, in education, healthcare or policing)?

There have been numerous reports on improving representation, retention and progression opportunities for people from different ethnic backgrounds in public sector workforces. Examples include: the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry;[21] Roger Kline's report on the "snowy white peaks" of the NHS;[22] the Lammy Review;[23] the Windrush Lessons Learned Review;[24] and the Lawrence Review.[25] We believe the Commission must focus on ensuring the recommendations of these reports are implemented.

3. How could the educational performance of school children across different ethnic and socio-economic status groups be improved?

The difficulties in awarding reliable examination results in the summer 2020 exposed the limitations of relying on examination and assessment to determine life prospects. Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Education Committee, acknowledged in 2020 that "There is a risk it will lead to unfair bias and discrimination against already disadvantaged groups."[26] This is not a 2020, pandemic-related anomaly. Teacher assessment is subject to the identity-based biases and blinders we know everyone

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[17] *Preventing education?*, Rights Watch UK, July 2016
[18] 'UN rights expert hails UK for anti-racism action but raises serious concerns over Immigration Policy, Prevent programme and Brexit', OHCHR, 11 May 2018
[19] *Islamophobia: Still a challenge for us all*, Runnymede, November 2017
[20] *What is Islamophobia?*, Narzanin Massoumi, Tom Mills, David Miller (eds.), 2017
[21] *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, 1999
[22] *The "snowy white peaks" of the NHS*, Roger Kline, 2014
[23] *The Lammy Review*, David Lammy, 2017
[24] *Windrush Lessons Learned Review*, Wendy Williams, March 2020
[25] www.lawrencereview.co.uk
[26] 'GSCE and A-level results 'could be affected by bias'', BBC News, 11 July 2020

experiences,[27] and examination results are influenced by numerous factors outside either ability or effort such as poverty, neglect, mental health and disparities in teaching. Young people of all identities can have their life chances skewed by this system. The government is doing little to address these barriers. Rather than trying to promote 'social mobility' or 'levelling up' for a few to escape poverty based on 'merit', the government should challenge inequality for all. We hope that this Commission will not perpetuate the myth that meritocracy removes barriers based on racial identity. It does not. There can be no meritocracy without equity, i.e. without a level playing field. Instead, we urge the Commission to both acknowledge institutional racism and encourage educational institutions to work in partnership with learners to challenge it.

4. How should the school curriculum adapt in response to the ethnic diversity of the country?

The current English curriculum is largely passive about ethnic diversity and racial justice, and that passivity can contribute to racial and ethnic disparity. More positive are the new Welsh curriculum's emphasis on "ethical, informed citizens"[28] and the focus in Scotland on children's rights. The inclusion of "mutual respect and tolerance in fundamental British Values" in the English curriculum is inherently tokenistic and is undermined by the UK government's approach to areas such as migration, security and defence, which contribute to racism in our society.

We think the history curriculum needs to adapt, but that the Commission should also look beyond the curriculum to a whole school culture. The curriculum in England could also be much improved by drawing on the curriculum models being used in Scotland and Wales.

History curriculum

The Holocaust is rightly a compulsory part of the secondary school history curriculum. Other examples of racist history, however, are optional extras. A more proactive approach in which teachers must also cover examples of racism in Britain would demonstrate that addressing injustice is a living concern for all. British history does not lack examples of racism or of people resisting racism, but these are often ignored. For 14-16 year-olds in England, modules on migration and empire already exist but schools often do not opt for them. Similarly for younger students, it requires the individual teacher to proactively pursue these topics. Black History Month should be unnecessary, but currently provides a valuable opportunity without which many crucial national stories would go unmarked and unexplored. Organisations such as

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[27]'Teachers Are People Too: Examining the Racial Bias of Teachers Compared to Other American Adults', Starck et al., *American Educational Research Association*, 14 April 2020
[28] 'Developing a vision for curriculum design', Welsh Government, January 2020

Equaliteach,[29] Facing History and Ourselves[30] and Journey to Justice[31] provide excellent rigorous learning in these areas, but also rely on the willingness and capacity of schools to enable those independent groups to reach students.

Teacher training must also reflect the need to challenge racism and celebrate ethnic diversity. As the Runnymede Trust has argued, Holocaust education provides a valuable model. They recommend creating a sister to the Centre for Holocaust Education that would support effective teaching on questions of race, identity, empire.[32] We support the establishment of such a centre.

Whole school culture

Whole school systems and culture must also address racial and ethnic disparity. Where a school's culture perpetuates racial disparity, it can supersede anything that happens in individual lessons. Identity-based disparities and bullying remain common in schools.[33]

Government asks schools to be inclusive, but this needs more than authoritarian approaches of power-and-control over young people (such as the 'zero tolerance' approach). Schools need to be supported to tackle racism and racial disparity because as RJ Working has highlighted, "By the time a matter is in the hands of the Police or a school disciplinary system, it is too late."[34] Rather than a solely top-down peacekeeping approach, schools need peacemaking to respond to conflict and peacebuilding to address injustice experienced by young people.[35] We encourage the Commission to consider restorative approaches to racism in schools, as these:

- encourage young people take responsibility for their actions
- enable the harm to be directly addressed
- give space for constructive apologies
- allow all parties to learn from the incident
- provide for positive and inclusive ways forward together to escape the victim/perpetrator negative trap.

8. What could be done to enhance community relations and perceptions of the police?

Justice and equity are key concerns for Quakers. We believe that justice plays a crucial role in creating peaceful and inclusive communities and building a country

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[29] equaliteach.co.uk
[30] www.facinghistory.org/uk
[31] journeytojustice.org.uk
[32] '7 Actions to Change the History Curriculum', Runnymede Trust, 10 June 2020
[33] 'New research carried out by the Diana Award for Anti-Bullying Week', Diana Award, September 2020
[34] 'Zero Tolerance and Tackling Racism Restoratively in UK Education', RJ Working, 19 October 2020
[35] Positive Peace in Schools, Hilary Cremin & Terence Bevington, 2017

where civil liberties and freedoms can flourish. We call for a transformative justice system – one that focuses on prevention and restoration, rather than punishment. Below we outline our suggestions for improvement in four key areas: community relations, preventing crime, stop and search, and undercover policing.

Community relations

The government's policy and practice in community relations must show more understanding of the effects of racism and the need for equity and anti-racism. The government must implement the recommendations of previous reviews and inquiries that have highlighted where and how institutional racism affects community relations. The lack of sufficient action is illustrated by the fact that David Lammy MP says the majority of the recommendations in his report have not been implemented.[36] Recent reports by the Racial Justice Network[37] and Netpol[38] have shown continued disparities in the way that the police and criminal justice system treat people from Black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant communities. Quakers call for the government to show leadership in addressing racism, and for communities themselves to have greater involvement in preventing and responding to crime in their areas.

Preventing crime

The government and police must do more to tackle the underlying causes of crime and enable people affected by crime to transform their lives. The Checkpoint initiative in Durham[39] and the public health approach to violence in Scotland[40] are two excellent examples of this that should be rolled out more widely. The restorative justice approach practised by charities such as Why me?[41] is also crucial to transforming communities and organisations into places where those affected by crime can make a fresh start. These approaches can provide better outcomes for both those harmed by crime and those who use it to harm others.

The under-resourcing of public services is also an important factor affecting perceptions of the police. Certain ethnic minorities are disadvantaged when it comes to benefiting from public services anyway, and these inequalities increase as resources decrease.[42] Those who experience the police as a force, rather than as a service, say that engagement with the police is inherently unsafe and to be avoided. Funding cuts in other services also mean that police have to cover areas which are not crime-related and for which they may not be properly trained, such as mental health. These issues can only be addressed by investing in public services such as mental health and ensuring people have equitable access to them.

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[36] HC Deb, 30 June 2020, c173
[37] *Hate Crime & System(ic) Injustice*, Racial Justice Network, November 2020
[38] *Britain is Not Innocent*, NETPOL, November 2020
[39] 'Checkpoint', Durham Constabulary
[40] 'Violence including knife crime', Scottish government
[41] why-me.org
[42] Racism and Criminal Justice. Rebecca Roberts 2015 Criminal Justice Matters 101.

Stop and search

'Stop and search' is a significant factor in negative perceptions of the police. Black people are nine times more likely nationally to be stopped and searched[43], which rises to as high as 25 times in certain areas.[44] The recent Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) review[45] into the use of stop and search by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) identified 11 opportunities for improvement. The IOPC looked into five investigations involving the stop and search of Black men by MPS officers and found the legitimacy of stop and searches was being undermined by factors including a lack of understanding about the impact of disproportionality. The Commission must consider the IOPC's recommendations, as stop and search has clearly damaged community relations and perceptions of the police.

Undercover policing

Working for positive social change is a cornerstone of Quaker spiritual life. We view campaigning and activism as a positive force for good in society. Therefore, we regard the fact that over 1000 campaign and activist groups have been infiltrated by police since the late 1960s[46] as inherently damaging to democracy. We hope that the inquiry will uncover how these activities impact on racial and ethnic disparities and damage trust in the police. This accountability is essential to enhancing perceptions of the police.

9. What do you consider to be the main causes of the disparities in crime between people in different racial and ethnic groups, and why?

This question locates the cause of crime with individuals and their differing identities. Some ethnic groups are more likely to be arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned. The disparity exists not in the individuals but rather in the treatment of individuals by the criminal justice system, which largely depends on their racial or ethnic group.[47]

The main causes of crime are entrenched, unacknowledged and longstanding social injustices, one of which is racism. This underpins and embeds poverty, denudes lives and contributes towards a climate in which crime can flourish. In such societies some never have to seek justice, and others have lost any trust that they could achieve it.

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[43] 'Police powers and procedures, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2020 second edition', National Statistics
[44] 'Dorset Police: Black people '25 times more likely' to be stopped', BBC News, 25 September 2020
[45] 'Review identifies eleven opportunities for the Met to improve on stop and search', IOPC, 28 October 2020
[46] 'The impenetrable wall of police silence', Richard Garside, 13 November 2020
[47] Bromley Briefings Winter 2019 pp 24,25. Prison Reform Trust

These factors have been frequently identified. For example, a recent HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP)[48] found that there was a considerable gap between Black and minority ethnic prisoners and prison staff in their understanding of how ethnicity influences rehabilitation and resettlement. The rehabilitation of Black and minority ethnic prisoners is less likely to have positive outcomes if prison staff don't understand or accept how racism affects their lives outside of prison. Successful rehabilitation work is founded on relationships of trust and a nuanced understanding of the circumstances which led to the crime. Without this, the cycle of crime continues.

10.   Can you suggest other ways in which racial and ethnic disparities in the UK could be addressed? In particular, is there evidence of where specific initiatives or interventions have resulted in positive outcomes? Are there any measures which have been counterproductive and why?

A key problem with the UK government's approach to addressing racial and ethnic disparities over the past few decades is the lack of action in response to any recommendations made. The fact that numerous reports have been commissioned but not implemented has resulted in a lack of trust from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities about the willingness of the government to take action to bring about real change. Racial and ethnic disparities will only be addressed if the government truly commits to tackling structural inequalities and takes real action to further this aim.

One such action would be to abolish the Prevent programme and replace it with a strategy that respects human rights and addresses the underlying causes of violence. The Prevent programme has been counterproductive because it has created distrust and stigma in and towards the communities it focuses on.

To improve education, it would be constructive to invest in peace education in line with the UK's commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.7.[49] The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on the UK government to 'Intensify its efforts to tackle bullying and violence in schools, including through teaching human rights, building capacities of students and staff members to respect diversity at school, improving students' conflict resolution skills…'.[50] We encourage more investment in supporting citizenship education and the training of citizenship teachers.

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[48] *Minority ethnic prisoners' experiences of rehabilitation and release planning*, HMIP, 28 October 2020
[49] https://indicators.report/targets/4-7/
[50] 'Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' CRC, 3 June 2016

Military interventionism and geopolitical conflict have – both historically and recently – been shown to encourage racism. Therefore developing respectful relationships through focusing on creative diplomacy and peace and disarmament could reduce the incidence of racism and of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK. As suggested by Rethinking Security,[51] the UK government must address the causes of conflict by investing in public services and tackling climate breakdown. It must stop engaging in activities, such as military intervention, which lead to anger and suffering in communities in the UK and around the world.

Encouraging peaceful relationships and greater inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and exchange could increase mutual respect and challenge stigmatising stereotypes and discrimination against people from different backgrounds. It has been extremely disappointing to note that former interfaith staff in local government are now almost entirely funded by the Prevent programme – giving them a potentially damaging biased rather than constructive role. We ask that funding be de-coupled from Prevent and restored to genuine interfaith work.

Conclusion

We believe the main cause of racial and ethnic disparities in the UK is an ongoing narrative of British superiority towards other countries and peoples. This approach is embedded across government and society. In order to address racial and ethnic disparities, the government must lead attempts to challenge this narrative and embed anti-racism in policies, practice and discourse across society.

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[51] https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/policy-makers/