

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

Contents List

Did you see ...?

- *Information Professional* – page 2
- *Museums Journal* – page 2

Black Lives Matter

- *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: the report* – page 3

Broader issues – Other Agencies

- “Contested heritage” – page 15

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 16

Did you see ...?

Information Professional

The March issue¹ includes:

- Toni Velikova “The CILIP LGBTQ+ Network holds its annual general meeting”, a brief round-up of the Network’s first year’s activities and a look at future plans [p27]
- Saffeya Shebli “The Reading Agency’s Read, Talk, Share campaign”, which outlines how TRA are using the Government’s funding intended to help tackle loneliness to develop their “Reading Well” and “Reading Friends” programmes² [pp28-29]
- Rabeea Arif “One world, one library network”, which looks forward to the CILIP one-day international conference on 25 June³ [pp36-38]
- Paul Howarth “Libraries are for everyone”, which looks at some of the work in Suffolk to develop collections that reflect the communities in the county [pp48-49]:

“To maintain and grow their relevance and impact and to justify their place, collections need to be developed in ways that reflect and represent diverse communities and need.” [p49]

Museums Journal

The March/April issue⁴ includes some interesting articles:

- Jonathan Knott “A new style of trustee?”, which looks at the ways in which some museums are diversifying their trustees [pp6-7]
- Love Ssega “We all have a role to play in tackling climate injustice – including artists”, which introduces his work as one of the commissioned artists for Season for Change’s ‘Common Ground’ initiative⁵ [p10]
- Lauren John and Natalya Best-Forbes “How we are tackling racism at Somerset House”, which introduces the work being developed by their Anti-Racism Task Force [p11]

¹ *Information Professional*, Mar 2021.

² For further info, see: “Read, Talk, Share”, <https://readingagency.org.uk/news/media/read-talk-share.html>; and “Read, Talk, Share – our new campaign tackling loneliness and supporting mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic”, <https://reading-well.org.uk/news/read-talk-share-our-new-campaign-tackling-loneliness-and-supporting-mental-health-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>.

³ “Working Internationally Conference 2021”, <https://pheedloop.com/workingintconf21/site/home/>. John Vincent will be co-leading a short workshop on Libraries of Sanctuary.

⁴ *Museums Journal*, Mar/Apr 2021.

⁵ See: <https://www.seasonforchange.org.uk/meet-the-common-ground-artists/>.

- “How are you supporting young people’s mental health?” “Vox pop” column, which looks, very briefly, at initiatives at National Museums NI, the Jewish Museum London, and Leeds City Museum [p11]
- Orlene Badu “Hackney Museum is helping to tell the story of the borough’s Black community”, which introduces their “Diverse Curriculum – the Black Contribution”⁶ [p13]
- Chiedza Mhondoro “Powerful portraiture”, which reviews the temporary exhibition of work by Zanele Muholi at Tate Modern – “[...] a compelling portrayal of South Africa’s Black LGBTQIA+ communities”⁷ [pp38-41]

Black Lives Matter

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: the report

The long-awaited report⁸ from the Commission was published on 31 March.

There has been such a lot of media coverage that it seems sensible to try to draw together some threads from all this here – and, given its significance, this is at some length.

The Terms of Reference were published in July 2020. These include:

“The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities will review inequality in the UK, focusing on areas including poverty, education, employment, health and the criminal justice system. The Commission will look at outcomes for the whole population.

The Commission will set out a new, positive agenda for change – balancing the needs of individuals, communities and society, maximising opportunities and ensuring fairness for all. In order to understand why disparities exist, what works and what does not, the Commission will consider detailed quantitative data and qualitative evidence, commissioning new research and inviting submissions where necessary. Its work will improve the quality of data and evidence about the types of barriers faced by people from different backgrounds to help inform actions and drive effective and lasting change.”

⁶ See: <https://www.hackneyservicesforschools.co.uk/extranet/hackneys-diverse-curriculum>.

⁷ See: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/zanele-muholi>.

⁸ *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: the report*. Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, [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). The report has also been published in sections (HTML), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>.

Its objectives were to:

- “build on the Race Disparity Audit to establish where there are the greatest evidenced-based, persistent disparities between ethnic groups
- examine the cause of persistent disparities – considering racism and discrimination, as well as other factors including income, gender, age, geography and occupation
- establish the extent to which there is geographical variation in outcomes for people of different ethnicities and how much difference local action can make
- consider how greater integration and addressing segregation within communities, can contribute to addressing disadvantages faced by some groups
- consider how the situation in the UK has changed over time and differences (or similarities) in outcomes for ethnic groups by generation
- examine how the UK compares to other similar countries
- review progress on taking forward previous Government action on ethnic disparities, including the implementation of past reviews
- provide opportunities for interested parties to offer evidence including organisations, members of the public, and front line workers in both the public and private sectors
- review the effectiveness of existing measures and approaches to promote equality and diversity in public sector bodies
- make recommendations for further action across Government, public bodies and the private sector”⁹

The report makes 24 recommendations which are grouped into four broad themes:

- Build trust
- Promote fairness
- Create agency
- Achieve inclusivity.

The recommendations are:

- Recommendation 1: Challenge racist and discriminatory actions
- Recommendation 2: Review the Care Quality Commission’s (CQC) inspection process
- Recommendation 3: Improve the transparency and use of artificial intelligence
- Recommendation 4: Bridge divides and create partnerships between the police and communities

⁹ The Terms of Reference and objectives are taken from: *Terms of reference: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities*, 16 Jul 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terms-of-reference-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/terms-of-reference-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>.

- Recommendation 5: Improve training to provide police officers with practical skills to interact with communities
- Recommendation 6: Replicate the factors of educational success for all communities
- Recommendation 7: Invest in proven interventions through better targeted funding
- Recommendation 8: Advance fairness in the workplace
- Recommendation 9: Investigate what causes existing ethnic pay disparities
- Recommendation 10: Improve understanding of the ethnicity pay gap in NHS England
- Recommendation 11: Establish an Office for Health Disparities
- Recommendation 12: Prevent harm, reduce crime and divert young people away from the criminal justice system
- Recommendation 13: Build social and cultural capital – enrichment for all
- Recommendation 14: Increase legitimacy and accountability of stop and search through body-worn video
- Recommendation 15: Empower pupils to make more informed choices to fulfil their future potential
- Recommendation 16: Open up access to apprenticeships
- Recommendation 17: Encourage innovation
- Recommendation 18: Improve safety and support for children at risk
- Recommendation 19: Undertake a ‘support for families’ review
- Recommendation 20: Making of modern Britain: teaching an inclusive curriculum
- Recommendation 21: Create police workforces that represent the communities they serve
- Recommendation 22: Equip the police service to serve the needs of their local communities
- Recommendation 23: Use data in a responsible and informed way

- Recommendation 24: Disaggregate the term ‘BAME’.¹⁰

Some of the recommendations are helpful at the current time – for example, the details under Recommendation 1:

“Fund the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to use its compliance, enforcement and litigation enforcement powers to challenge policies or practices that either cause significant and unjust racial disadvantage, or arise from racial discrimination.

Separately, the government should consider the complex issue of online abuse as a public policy priority.”¹¹

However, it is fair to say that there have been criticisms of the Commission and its Commissioners right from the start. For example, in an article¹² for Doughty Street Chambers, lawyer Donnchadh Greene commented:

“The recent appointment of Dr Tony Sewell as head of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has been cause for concern for racial justice campaigners. In an article in Prospect magazine, Dr Sewell stated that he believed institutional racism has given black children ‘the discourse of the victim’ and he has recently had to apologise for making ‘wrong and offensive’ comments about gay men.”

In a recent article for *The Conversation*, Raminder Kaur and Gill Margaret Hague look at the background to the selection of the Commissioners:

“The commission’s chair, Tony Sewell, has previously dismissed the existence of systemic racism. Co-author Samir Shah has expressed similar views, and so has Mercy Muroki. Another member, Dambisa Moyo, is in favour of ending foreign aid to Africa because it creates a dependency culture. And Kemi Badenoch, the minister for equalities that the commission directly reports to, has also previously denied the existence of systemic racism. It is of little surprise then that institutional racism has been dismissed in the evaluation of the commission’s findings.”¹³

¹⁰ Taken from: *Summary of recommendations*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/summary-of-recommendations>.

¹¹ Taken from: *Summary of recommendations*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/summary-of-recommendations>.

¹² Donnchadh Greene “Challenging the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities”, *Doughty Street Chambers*, 12 Aug 2020, <https://insights.doughtystreet.co.uk/post/102gd96/challenging-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>.

¹³ Raminder Kaur and Gill Margaret Hague “Race commission report: the rights and wrongs”, *The Conversation*, 1 Apr 2021, https://theconversation.com/race-commission-report-the-rights-and-wrongs-158316?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%206%202021%20-%201909018661&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%206%202021%20-%20

The Conversation piece continues:

“The report erases the language used to understand how race works, such as recommendations to stop using the term ‘white privilege’ and to replace it with ‘affinity bias’, because it’s ‘alienating’ to white people who don’t accept that they’re ‘privileged by their skin colour’.

It supports a divide-and-rule approach that propagates tensions within and between groups, such as suggestions that ‘minorities who have been long established in a country ... in a context of racial and socio-economic disadvantage’, are held back because of a lack of optimism about social mobility and education, whereas ‘immigration optimism’ from groups newer to the UK means they’re less likely to face prejudice.”

In terms of the report itself, probably the most contentious findings include those summarised in the Introduction (p11):

“We found that most of the disparities we examined, which some attribute to racial discrimination, often do not have their origins in racism.

Racism has become one of the most potent taboos in the UK, which was not the case 50 years ago. Some argue this has just driven it underground where it operates as powerfully as ever to deny equality to ethnic minorities. That assumption is at odds with the stories of success that this report has found, together with survey evidence of dwindling White prejudice.

It is certainly true that the concept of racism has become much more fluid, extending from overt hostility and exclusion to unconscious bias and microaggressions. This is partly because ethnic minorities have higher expectations of equal treatment and, rightly, will not tolerate behaviour that, only a couple of generations ago, would have likely been quietly endured or shrugged off. The fact that this generation expects more is a positive aspect of integration.

However, there is also an increasingly strident form of anti-racism thinking that seeks to explain all minority disadvantage through the prism of White discrimination. This diverts attention from the other reasons for minority success and failure, including those embedded in the cultures and attitudes of those minority communities themselves.

There is much evidence to suggest, for example, that different experiences of family life and structure can explain many disparities in education outcomes and crime. Early years experiences, including stability and security at home, matters to children more than anything else. There are many different family structures that can provide a happy childhood, including millions of single parents doing a loving and effective

[%201909018661+CID_19a52d19052e389c428a4f0453d96338&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Race%20commission%20report%20the%20rights%20and%20wrongs.](#)

job in difficult circumstances. It is clear, however, that there continues to be a need for more explicit public policy promotion of parental and family support.

We reject both the stigmatisation of single mothers and the turning of a blind eye to the impact of family breakdown on the life chances of children.” [p11]

Given all this, it is no surprise that responses have been so mixed.

Before looking briefly at some other organisations’ takes on the report, let’s start with the Statement from CILIP¹⁴, which opens with:

“CILIP and the CILIP BAME Network would like to express solidarity with our colleagues from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, the BAME community, CILIP members and others who condemn the findings of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, the process by which those findings have been reached and the assumptions which have shaped the findings and recommendations.”

The Statement goes on:

“We live in an age in which misinformation is undermining public trust and confidence in our civic institutions. It is essential that independent processes, such as the Commission, model best practice in their use of evidence. Unfortunately, the use of evidence by the Commission to draw its conclusions appears to be very limited in nature, drawing on relatively few and in some cases contested sources and without drawing sufficiently on independent third party research.

This Commission could and should have presented an opportunity to take collective responsibility to address the reality of racism in modern Britain and its impact on the lives of millions of our citizens. While acknowledging that progress has indeed been made, it should have been an opportunity to explore the systemic drivers of racial inequality and their depressive effect on social mobility, opportunity and attainment.

The Commission could have impartially examined why people from BAME backgrounds in our community continue to experience structural disadvantage in terms of education, employability and income, as highlighted by the Government’s own Ethnicity Facts and Figures website [15].”

The Statement goes on to argue that:

“Instead the Commission chose to use this data and other evidence to support their assumptions about the reasons for these disparities. No substantive consideration was given about how racism impacts on the

¹⁴ “CILIP Statement on the Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities”, CILIP News release, 9 Apr 2021, <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/news.asp?id=559636>.

¹⁵ *Ethnicity facts and figures*. Gov.uk, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/>.

creation of these very disparities or how it operates in society to help to generate adverse outcomes. In so doing, the Commission failed for the most part to foreground the lived experience of people from BAME communities living in Britain today and at worse displayed a tone, which was dismissive of those voices of the BAME community it acknowledged; this resulted in their voice being sadly absent from this report. The end result was a final report, which many people do not recognise as a true reflection of racial equality in Britain today; especially by those whose lived experience should lie at the heart of the report.

This Commission had a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring the racism and racially-driven disparities in our society into the cold glare of public examination and by exposing them to begin the process of addressing them in a structured, systematic way.

Sadly, it has chosen not to do so and in the process has missed the opportunity to make a positive difference to the lives of millions of people. Moreover, it risks sending a message to the people who harbour racial prejudice in their hearts that the status quo is acceptable, when it is not. Furthermore, we are concerned that if this report is regarded as valid, and therefore accepted as worthy of guiding policy, that it will have a detrimental impact on the current momentum to address racism and inequality in education, the workplace and society at large.”

Echoing views expressed across the heritage sector (eg in relation to the Government’s interventions into the work by the National Trust¹⁶), the Statement continues:

“We support the idea that the taught curriculum must reflect the ‘full national story’ and in our view this means correcting imbalances in the body of knowledge that have arisen from historical inequalities and actively re-balancing whose identity is represented and whose story gets told.

Political intervention into intellectual freedom risks creating a culture in which knowledge and free enquiry are tacitly suppressed in the pursuit of a specific agenda. We strongly urge both the Commission and the Government not to intervene in the informed process of the interpretation and presentation of the broadest possible view of our shared history by professionals.”

And:

¹⁶ See, for example: “We need to defend the freedom to research our histories in all their nuance”, MA, 16 Feb 2021, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2021/02/qa-we-need-to-defend-the-freedom-to-research-our-histories-in-all-their-nuance/?utm_campaign=1890975_16022021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,14J33,27LU0M,4C3R3,1; also further coverage in *The Network Newsletter*, 240, Feb 2021, <https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-240.pdf>, p7ff.

“We refute the idea that drawing attention to racial inequality means drawing focus away from the other mechanics of inequality in our society. All are important, all of them intersect and all must be tackled if we are to build a more equal, just and inclusive future.

We believe that neither equality nor social justice are the preserve of the political left or right. Nobody ‘loses’ by shining a light on how racism impacts on racial inequality in our society. Everybody loses when we deny that these inequalities exist, when we seek to diminish their impact or shirk the labour required to correct them.

Unfortunately, rather than serving as a positive and constructive contribution to one of the most pressing debates in contemporary public policy, the report itself is in fact deeply problematic. Instead of starting from a position of neutrality and drawing conclusions from the evidence presented, it manifestly starts with an agenda – to demonstrate that race is less of a mechanism for inequality in ‘modern Britain’ than class, family or geography – and then retrofits the evidence to this argument.”

Finally, the Statement gives a strong call for the next steps:

“We feel on this basis that it is necessary to call for an independent public enquiry into the process by which the report was developed and the degree of direct or indirect intervention by Government into its findings.

We further call for a fully-independent Commission to undertake a further review in order to set out a structured approach to tackling the scourge of racial inequality in today’s Britain and to begin to make reparation to the millions of people, of all ethnicities, who have been let down through this process.”

What have reactions been elsewhere?

Many organisations have commented that the report is a missed opportunity: for example, *BMJ Opinion* says: “The UK government report on race disparities is a missed opportunity and will lead to a worsening of systemic inequalities [...]”¹⁷

The IRR are highly critical of the report, stating:

“From what we have seen, both the findings and the recommendations of the government-commissioned Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report fit neatly with the government’s attempts, post-Brexit, to portray the British nation as a beacon of good race relations and a

¹⁷ Mohammad S Razai, Azeem Majeed and Aneez Esmail “Structural racism is a fundamental cause and driver of ethnic disparities in health”, *BMJ Opinion*, 31 Mar 2021, https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2021/03/31/structural-racism-is-a-fundamental-cause-and-driver-of-ethnic-disparities-in-health/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+bmj%2Fblogs+%28Latest+BMJ+blogs%29&q=w_blogs_bmj-com.

diversity model, in the report's words, for 'white majority countries' across the globe."¹⁸

Similarly, Friends, Families and Travellers¹⁹ state:

"The report continues the pattern of ignoring the experience of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people. In the 258-page report, the terms 'Gypsy', 'Roma' and 'Traveller' are mentioned 15, 16 and 20 times respectively, with the majority of these appearing in footnotes and the appendices.

This perpetuates the long-established pattern of no visibility for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people in Government actions, reports and recommendations.

June will mark two years since the Government's 'commitment' to establishing a 'new national strategy to tackle Gypsy, Roma and Traveller inequalities', which has yet to be seen.

The report identified Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students as having the lowest attainment up to and include A-Levels, and yet there is no recommendation for Government action to correct this.

The Commission denies the existence of 'institutional racism' and promotes instead the myth that 'random acts' of racism are truly to blame. Random acts of racism are not behind the systematic vilification of Gypsies and Travellers."²⁰

The Chartered Management Institute say:

"While we welcome some of the recommendations in the report, such as a recognition of the need for more comprehensive data, resources and guidance for employers of what works in the workplace, and calls to drop unhelpful generalisations such as 'BAME' (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) – the overall outcome is disappointing.

Responding to the report Chartered Companion Pavita Cooper, Chair of the CMI Race Advisory Committee, said: 'It has taken so long for frank discussions about the true experiences of people from diverse ethnic groups at work to reach the top of the agenda, that this report must not be used as an excuse to de-prioritise progress towards anti-racism.

¹⁸ Institute of Race Relations "Press Statement", 31 Mar 2021, https://irr.org.uk/article/irr-responds-to-commission-race-ethnic-disparities-report/?ml_subscriber=1653596629632029763&ml_subscriber_hash=u1f9&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=irr_responds_to_the_commission_on_race_and_ethnic_disparities_report&utm_term=2021-04-07.

¹⁹ "Friends, Families and Travellers is a leading national charity that works on behalf of all Gypsies, Roma and Travellers regardless of ethnicity, culture or background." [Taken from: <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/news/fft-response-to-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-report/>].

²⁰ Friends, Families and Travellers "FFT response to Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report", 31 Mar 2021, <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/news/fft-response-to-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities-report/>.

Brave conversations followed up with robust actions are how we collectively better serve and benefit from the diverse society we live in.”

The CMI comments continue:

“We know there are challenges around data collection, but this should not be used as an excuse; understanding and communicating the wider experience of people from diverse ethnic groups is key to making progress. There are many ways the Government can address this, for example by introducing sliding scales where larger companies report more granular data, minimum thresholds for reporting by different ethnic group, requiring employers to publish a narrative explaining differences in their pay gap, and using the five headline ethnic groups rather than the full 18 ONS classifications [21].

To ensure we build back more inclusive, the government should also make it a condition for any organisation receiving public funds in relation to any economic recovery programme such as the Plan for Growth or Skills for Jobs to commit to measuring and reporting their ethnicity pay gap.”²²

In a blogpost²³ for JRF, Andrea Barry (their Senior Analyst), shows that the findings of the Commission are not borne out by the data:

“As an organisation that wants to solve poverty in the UK, we openly recognise that the inequities between ethnic groups cannot be ignored and must be addressed if we are to truly solve poverty. The investigation should have been an excellent and in-depth discussion of the evidence and data on institutional racism, including poverty, labour market outcomes, housing, and social wellbeing. Thankfully, the report acknowledged labour market differences, but disappointingly it explained these away as individual choices based on historical experiences. That is simply not borne out by the data.

As a Senior Analyst, and having completed a PhD in Economics, I deal in evidence and data. JRF have conducted research on ethnicity and poverty and we think the evidence speaks for itself. Our data on employment by ethnicity is especially stark as there is a clear

²¹ See:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion>.

²² Chartered Management Institute “No New Deal, Same Stacked Deck”, 7 Apr 2021, https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/article/no-new-deal-same-stacked-deck/?utm_source=BM7APR&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=BetterManagers&utm_content=CREDRESPONSE&dm_i=SYT,7BAAS,4H1XSR,TNZCB,1.

²³ Andrea Barry “Sewell report response: what does the data really tell us?”, JRF, 7 Apr 2021, https://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/sewell-report-response-what-does-data-really-tell-us?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20WC%205%20April%202021&utm_content=JRF%20weekly%20round-up%20WC%205%20April%202021+CID_94114b96dbec7b8115d27467bfc177dd&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Read%20Andreas%20blog.

occupational segregation in the labour market. Nearly one in three Bangladeshi men work in catering, restaurants, and related businesses, compared to 1 in 100 White British men. Only 1 in 100 White British men work in taxi, chauffeuring, and related businesses, compared to one in seven Pakistani men. There is a substantial ethnicity pay gap [...]

In the report the Government cited education statistics as perhaps why we should bring attention to the poor outcomes for white working-class men. It is simply not right that white working-class men have such poorer education outcomes, and this is something we should act on [...]

Many ethnic groups cannot just have their chances improved slightly by education; they are still held back from accessing similar jobs at similar pay levels as their White counterparts. Although legislation, such as the Race Relations Act in 1965, 1968 and 1976, has had some effect in reducing discrimination, hereby lessening labour market inequities, these inequalities still exist as the BME employment gap is still similar to what it was in the 1980s. Just reviewing poverty figures shows that there is still a persistent problem for some ethnic minority groups. In 2017-20, poverty rates increased for children from Bangladeshi, other Asian, Black, and Other ethnic groups. These increases meant that over half of children in households headed by someone from Bangladeshi, Pakistani, other Asian, and Other ethnic groups were locked in poverty before the start of the pandemic. Over 40% of working-age adults from Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnicities were trapped in poverty. Finally, this is a persistent and intergenerational problem as pensioner poverty rates for Pakistani pensioners are high, at 38% compared to White pensioners, of which 16% are locked in poverty.”

There have also been some severe criticisms of the report’s stance on education: for example, Leon Tikly (University of Bristol) has written²⁴:

“The report focuses primarily on what’s called the attainment gap. Some minority groups (including students of Indian, Chinese and African heritage) outperform their white peers in examinations and in accessing higher education. The authors highlight this as evidence of the absence of institutional racism.

They ascribe the continued underachievement of other groups (including learners of Black Caribbean, dual white/Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage) to several socio-economic factors: living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; coming from broken homes; having lower aspirations;

²⁴ Leon Tikly “What the government’s report on race gets wrong about the education system”, *The Conversation*, 26 Apr 2021, https://theconversation.com/what-the-governments-report-on-race-gets-wrong-about-the-education-system-159494?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202021%20-%201930918895&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202021%20-%201930918895+CID_28a61b69959d6a5cfda345d3dcfc7e06&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=What%20the%20governments%20report%20on%20race%20gets%20wrong%20about%20the%20education%20system.

and, in the case of Pakistani pupils, a parental failure to properly assimilate into British culture [...]

Social class certainly does affect the majority of both white and Black learners in terms of outcome and opportunity – an issue that needs to be addressed. But by focusing on socio-economic disparity alone, the report side-steps how central an issue racism is.”

Leon Tikly argues that, by taking the stance it does, the report lets school leaders and politicians off the hook:

“If a third of under-13s (and more than half of 13-year-olds) have witnessed – or been subjected to – racist comments and bullying at school, schools have to create a safe and inclusive environment where all students are valued and where abuse is dealt with.

They need to provide appropriate support for refugee learners. They need to develop a culturally inclusive curriculum that encourages a balanced appraisal of Britain’s colonial past. They need to actively engage with parents who may themselves lack information about or have had a negative experience of, the English education system. And they need to equip their staff to understand racism and know how to deal with it.

Students of colour who do succeed do so *despite* it and not because the system has suddenly become fairer, as this report tries to argue. The real struggle for anti-racism in education continues apace.” [emphasis his]

In addition, there is an interesting angle on this thrown up by new research²⁵:

“In a 28-country study, the Policy Institute at King’s College London and Ipsos MORI looked at what the British public thinks are the most serious forms of inequality today, against the backdrop of COVID, and how opinions compare with those in other nations.”²⁶

What this research shows is that:

“We found that Britons are unusually focused on inequalities between areas in Britain. Just over half (51%) say inequalities between more and less deprived areas of the country are one of the most serious types of inequality. This is much higher than the European average of 39% and above any other western European nation.”

In terms of the Commission’s report:

²⁵ *Inequalities around the globe: what the world sees as most serious*. The Policy Institute, King’s College London/Ipsos MORI, 2021, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/policy-institute/assets/inequalities-around-the-globe.pdf>.

²⁶ These three quotations are taken from: Bobby Duffy “British people have unusual views on inequality – new study”, *The Conversation*, 7 Apr 2021, <https://theconversation.com/british-people-have-unusual-views-on-inequality-new-study-158453>.

“Meanwhile, the recent report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities has divided opinion about the extent and nature of discrimination faced by ethnic minorities in the UK – but our study shows it remains a priority for many Britons. Racial inequality ranks third in the overall list of the most important inequality types in Britain, picked out by 36%, behind only economic and area-based inequalities. This is significantly higher than in Europe as a whole (29%), and suggests that many of the British public are not complacent about the need to do more.”

Finally, a comment from the UN²⁷:

“The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent categorically rejects and condemns the analysis and findings of the recently published report by the UK’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which, among other conclusions, claim that ‘geography, family influence, socio-economic background, culture and religion have more significant impact on life chances than the existence of racism.’ Among other things, the Report blames single parents for poor outcomes, ignoring the racial disparities and the racialized nature of poor outcomes that exist despite an increased prevalence of single-parent families in every demographic. The Report’s conclusion that racism is either a product of the imagination of people of African descent or of discrete, individualized incidents ignores the pervasive role that the social construction of race was designed to play in society, particularly in normalizing atrocity, in which the British state and institutions played a significant role.”

It is clear that this debate is not over, and we may well return to this in future issues of the *Newsletter*.

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“Contested heritage”

In a recent *ARA Today*, the ARA note:

“We have also formally responded to the consultation on National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code. This includes the suggestion of a presumption of 'retain and explain' in regard to statues, regardless of what the evidence in the records held in archive services suggests and regardless of the conclusion that can be drawn from them.

²⁷ “UN Experts Condemn UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report” (statement by independent experts of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council), 19 Apr 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27004&LangID=E>.

Our response expressed our concern about the following: negation of value of archive record by government; the Framework directing professional and experienced record-keeping staff for political objectives; the undermining of the impartiality, fairness and equality in all archive processes as stated in our Code of Ethics; and significant loss of trust from our community. We will continue to keep members up to date with developments.”²⁸

Abbreviations and acronyms

ARA = Archives and Records Association
BAME = Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BMJ = *British Medical Journal*
CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
IRR = Institute of Race Relations
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
MA = Museums Association
ONS = Office for National Statistics
TRA = The Reading Agency
UN = United Nations

This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

John Vincent
Wisteria Cottage
Nadderwater
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 01392 256045
E-mail: john@nadder.org.uk

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²⁸ Taken from email from the ARA, 7 Apr 2021.