

## **‘Question Time’ Panel**

19 January 2005 – afternoon session

*The Question Time Panel were led to the platform by Jeremy Vine as session chair.*

### **Jeremy Vine:**

My name is Jeremy Vine. We’ve got a very distinguished panel here and we’ve got some of your questions in front of us. And if I look a bit shell-shocked it’s because I’ve just come from Radio 2 where I do a weekday show every day. It finished at 2:00 and today we were discussing the job culture. We got an email from somebody who says ‘After 6:00 at night Tunbridge Wells has become like Basra’. Obviously not given to exaggeration, that person! I mention that because one of the questions coming up later points out that there is a citizenship test for new arrivals in Britain and could that be extended to the kind of people who spill out of pubs on a Friday and Saturday night in our town and city centres. So you’ve got that to look forward to.

Let me introduce you to our panel. Derrick Anderson is CEO of Wolverhampton City Council. Next to Derrick is Dr Beverly Malone, General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing. Rita Patel is Director of Belgrave Baheno, which does a lot of work with Asians in Leicester. Next to me is Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain. The Minister next to me on my right is Fiona Mactaggart, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy and Civil Renewal at the Home Office. Then we have Kieran Poynter, of Price Waterhouse Coopers, who has also been involved with a taskforce on equality and diversity. And you will all know Michelynn Lafèche, Director of Runnymede. Please give our panel a warm welcome.

### **Question One**

*JV: Our first question comes from S. Syed: ‘I often hear Muslims are not integrating in British society and I would like to know what on earth do “they” mean by “integration”. Is it that, being a Muslim, I must now stop praying five times a day or is it that I should start going to a pub during the lunch hour with my colleagues for a pint? What exactly does it mean for me?’ Iqbal Sacranie...*

**Iqbal Sacranie:** Well I would like to hear the answers to this question as well. I mean, the whole issue of Britishness, integration – we are talking about the common values we share in terms of tolerance, understanding, the issues of social justice, to ensure that all of us in this society are treated fairly and equally. We have a very diverse society and that’s a richness. Each culture side that there is, brings in some values but we need to differentiate between the cultural side of it and those that we all share as common values. Going to the pub? Fine as far as the English culture is concerned, norms, going to it absolutely no problem. But that cannot be enforced on any other person: unless you go to the pub you can’t be a good British citizen!

**JV:** So you can have integration without dilution?

**IS:** Indeed. Because of the mix of society which we have – the richness, the various different cultural groups that are in the British society and it’s sharing the common values. The British society that existed a hundred years ago and what we have today – there is a difference and that is something that we as a society have to incorporate and understand.

**JV:** Michelynn Lafèche, what do you think?

**Michelynn Lafèche:** I would agree with most of what Iqbal has said. I think, probably, the biggest problem that we’re facing is the debate on what ‘integration’ means and I think the question is actually not just important to Muslim communities in this country, but to all

communities in this country. What do we mean when we talk about 'integration'? Has the debate around the value of terms like 'multiculturalism', however that might be interpreted, has that added to our knowledge? Has that added to our general understanding? I think it hasn't. I think it has caused many problems in terms of how the general population understand what it is to be a diverse society, what it means to live in a society where we come from different backgrounds. We have different traditions but we also share a common space together and how do we build that successfully? So we need to have a clear understanding of what 'integration' is and a shared understanding of what that means, but it certainly doesn't mean that one culture predominates over another, and other cultures therefore have to fit into that culture. Not from my perspective.

**JV:** Now where does the government fit into all this, Minister? What's the government's official advice to Mr Syed?

**Fiona Mactaggart:** Well, the consultation that we preceded this strategy with was called 'Strength in Diversity' and that, I think, is at the heart of it. It's saying that Britain is a diverse society and that diversity is actually part of our strength. And you don't have to merge cultures together, you don't have to assimilate people into one grey mass. I think of it, sometimes, like the paint in the primary classroom when, unfortunately, the individual colours don't remain themselves, but end up kind of mud-coloured as they merge together. That's not the plan. It's more like a tapestry in which the different colours can weave together and, by being woven together, they make our society stronger. So that you can be British and Muslim and proud, and proud of both those things separately and, sometimes, you will find things coming together.

I really enjoy performances by a young woman who calls herself 'Hard Kaur'. She's brought together Bhangra music and rapping and so she provided a merger in her cultural performance which was incredibly engaging. But, actually, there's no government-sponsored merging going on here, it's actually 'let's, together, celebrate our difference, enjoy our difference and use the difference as a source of strength in future rather than a source of division as it has sometimes been in the past'.

**JV:** But, Derrick Anderson, if we're taking all that on board, for Mr Syed, the answer is he doesn't have to do that much himself, does he?

**Derrick Anderson:** I come at this debate very much from the point of view of what 'inclusion' means in terms of local policy. And, for me, integration in the locality means very much inclusion in terms of participation in the ways in which policies and services are delivered locally. It's about the ways in which we as local authorities encourage a sharing of ideas across communities. It's about the way in which we encourage people to value difference as a central part of the agenda. And, very much like Fiona, I have seen the real practice of integration with a fusion of ideas etc. manifesting themselves in the localities with not much difficulty at all.

**JV:** Beverly Malone?

**Beverly Malone:** Well, I was thinking about integration because I was brought up in a segregated city in the US, a southern town, blacks all on one side of town, whites all on the other side of town. When I was 12, we integrated the schools and the fear was that it meant 'annihilation' not 'integration'. It meant to become so bland – I think of the mixture of colours that my colleague talked about, where you cease to exist. I've always been amazed at people who consider themselves to be 'colour blind', as if it's something to be proud of. But I think that's one of the dangerous signs, diagnostically, that somewhere integration has lost the value of difference. And that someone does need to be able to distinguish between people of different colour just as we distinguish between men and women. And so I think that

integration can be accomplished but it should never be without having the valuing of diversity as a strength and the valuing of my difference.

**JV:** Well let me pick that up with you, Kieran Poynter. Being colour-blind is not necessarily a good thing. Isn't not seeing race a good thing?

**Kieran Poynter:** I think that if I can link it with the question, what we're talking about when we're talking about integration is inclusiveness not sameness. If every one of us was exactly the same, if we were identical, it would be a terribly boring place to be. What inclusiveness integration are about is valuing differences but recognising similarities as well. So, part of the integration of this particular man might be involvement in a football club or music or a whole bunch of other things which are consistent with his religion. But he doesn't have to go to the pub to be regarded as included, and he doesn't have to feel as though he has to be the same as everybody else. So I think it's about valuing difference, and valuing differences in skin colour or racial origins is just part of valuing difference. We're a much richer place for taking that attitude rather than trying to cram everybody into some particular little narrow image.

**JV:** Rita Patel?

**Rita Patel:** I think 'integration' for me means not, *absolutely not* giving up your own identity, but having self-respect and mutual respect – respect for others around you. I think that there is a higher form of existence than independence and that's inter-dependence. Where integration comes together, where people have mutual respect, where they value what each one of us brings to the table, then that's where you can have true integration and I think, yes it's about building on the strength of diversity but there has to be a recognition in society that, in order to have integration, you have to value each person. No one can feel inferior or less than anybody else.

When I was a teenager we hated the words 'integration' and 'assimilation' and we fought it. That's why we formed the Belgrave Girls Youth Movement, because we felt it was about giving up everything that we were and we weren't about to do that. So I think that to the questioner who said 'what do I have to do as a Muslim? Do I have to give up the things that I am?', I would say, 'Absolutely not. Guard that because it's a precious commodity and only when you value that and when you bring that to the table and that's valued can we have true integration.'

**JV:** Thank you very much indeed. That's by way of further introduction to our panel, but I'm wondering if Mr Syed might be hereto ask a follow up. You're right there. Have we helped at all?

**Mr Syed:** No. I would like to know how I can prove that I'm a Muslim and that I have integrated into society. Look at me. I wear British clothes. I speak broken English but, still, I speak English and I have got a beard. That gives away my identity. Some people would recognise who I am. Now, people ask me 'Why don't you integrate?' and I say, 'How do you mean?' And they can't answer me back because I go to schools, give talks about how to deal with racist incidents and very often the teachers ask me, 'Why don't the Muslims integrate?' I say, 'What do you mean? I pay tax. I obey the law of the land—'

**JV:** Actually, paying tax is quite an advanced form of integration.

**Mr Syed:** I'm just like you. I do everything that you're supposed to be doing. Then how can I prove that I have integrated? Is it a criminal offence to go to the mosque or to fast one month a year? Is it an offence? I pray five times a day. I pray in my office. My employer allows me.

**JV:** Okay, let me leave the last word on this to the Minister if I can because he needs some practical suggestions here.

**FM:** I don't think it's *he* who needs the practical suggestions. I think the people who need the practical suggestions are those who ask him to prove his integration. And, actually, what you've described to all of us and reminded us of is the level of ignorant and casual racism which informs our society today. We're not going to fix that overnight, but we've just heard from a footballer [Paul Elliott] how things are getting better and I think I can hope, with some basis, that as the years go past, that question is less likely to occur and with the proposals that we've got here about educating and training teachers, we might be able to accelerate it. I certainly hope we do.

**JV:** Thank you very much and thank you Mr Syed as well.

### **Question Two**

**JV:** *The second question comes from Samantha Palmer who is with Liberty and Samantha says this: 'In order to meet targets, do you think there is scope for positive discrimination in, for example, employment. Have any comparative studies been undertaken of how other countries with positive discrimination can operate such schemes?' Kieran Poynter...*

**KP:** A very simple answer to that but I don't suppose one word will do: no. I don't think positive discrimination is the answer at all, and quite apart from the fact that it's actually illegal, I think that positive discrimination in employment doesn't work. If somebody is promoted or preferred on the grounds of race and that becomes evident, it becomes very difficult for them to operate because people assume they've only got the job because they were from a particular background. It's far more important, in my view, to create the opportunities for people to get promotion in the workplace based on merit. And in our organisation what we do is to try and find what the barriers are to people making progress and deal with those on an across-the-board basis, doing so in the hope that every now and then we'll find something which has a greater impact on people from a minority ethnic group and therefore gives them a leg up. But it's doing something that applies to everybody. And then when people are successful they have the credit of everybody around them for their efforts and for their abilities and are not questioned at all about whether they got that promotion for some other reason. Positive discrimination doesn't work.

**JV:** Derrick Anderson, what do you think?

**DA:** I very much agree that there are as many downsides to positive discrimination as there are upsides, and the focus really needs to be around positive action – challenging institutional practices, developing robust workforce strategies, and maintaining a strong focus on corporate governance arrangements such that the right sorts of balances, especially in public institutions, are reflecting their communities, other ways forward, more than positive discrimination. All the evidence is, especially in local communities, that it generates not just resentment from the point of view of the other communities or other target groups, but I think those who are 'favoured' dislike positive discrimination as well.

**JV:** But, out of interest, how do you ensure you have the right number of BME staff in Wolverhampton City Council?

**DA:** It isn't about ensuring that we have the right number of staff. It's about actually setting targets and getting the organisation to understand that we work to a set of values and a set of ways of working within the organisation which are about fairness, about justice and it's about getting selection and recruitment processes right so that there are no unintentional or institutional aspects to our process which discriminate against one group or another. If you get

that fairness and that justice right in the system then, by definition, people will start coming through into the workforce from the local community.

**JV:** Michelynn Laflèche, is there a quicker way of doing it?

**ML:** I don't think there's a quicker way of doing it, but I do think there's something Kieran Poynter raised which is worth reflecting on a little bit further. It's this idea [*tape is turned over*] ... that if we're to be truly fair, then we judge people on the basis of merit. Which seems like a good idea on the surface and, indeed, in the research that we've conducted looking at the experiences of black minority ethnic senior managers in private sector companies, they also want to be judged and promoted on the basis of merit. But they see at the same time, in a way not broadly understood, that merit is also mediated by race, and concepts of merit are often *racialised* in a way. And that, therefore, puts them at a disadvantage. We need to do further work on thinking through what 'merit' actually means. We don't want to go down the route of total meritocracy, obviously – we know where that leads us – but we do need to think further about what that decision means and where race fits into concepts of merit.

**JV:** Okay, well given that merit is, as you say, mediated through concepts of race, does anyone on the panel think that positive discrimination is the way to go? Beverly ...

**BM:** It sounds illegal, basically, and you know 'positive discrimination' versus 'negative discrimination'. So I don't want to say I would want to do something illegal, but I have to say that there are a lot of things where the words don't have anything to do with the meaning and the actuality of it. For example: mentoring. That is supposed to be a way of positively favouring someone so that they can move up in an organisation, not going through the traditional routes. A faster way to get promotion. But if you just look at the word itself, you've got *men*-toring. So who do you think gets most of the mentoring? 'Positive discrimination': I think that sometimes we play word games and we use these terms that have an illegal sound to them, but still people are excluded from opportunities. I get challenged on this because I'm told it should be a level playing field and the cream will automatically rise to the top. But the basic flaw in that argument is that the field is not level to begin with, and sometimes you have to re-adjust the field. And if you want to call it 'positive discrimination', I wouldn't agree with the term, but I would call it 'levelling the field'.

**JV:** I'll come to the Minister on this in a moment but let's have some comments from the audience on whether the field should be more actively levelled. Yes, Sir.

**David Michael** from the London Borough of Lewisham. I agree with Dr Malone. People are playing with rhetoric and I know that in this country, in a strict legal sense, positive discrimination is illegal but what a lot of people are ignoring is that, for many years, there's been positive discrimination in favour of the white majority in the population. And something has to be done. If for years the race and sex discrimination and the new laws coming out of the employment and race directives in Europe are not, as we heard earlier from the Home Secretary and the Minister, it's not going to happen overnight. And if we are going to get our workplaces, our institutions to be fair, which is what the gentleman from the council was saying, then we have to do it. I am in favour of positive discrimination to level the playing field.

**JV:** We're calling it active levelling, I think, this afternoon.

**Antoinette McKeown**, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. I would say that, rather than talking about 'positive discrimination', we should talk about 'affirmative' or 'positive' action and looking at how we 'redress' not 'address' the imbalance that currently exists within the employment field. I would say that, from our experience, creating

opportunities is not enough because it does not address the structural inequalities that currently exist. And changing attitudes is a 10-, 15-, 20-year strategy and therefore you can't wait on the merit debate for 10 or 15 years. You do need to tackle the imbalance through positive action now. What I would say, also, from our experience and for employment in dealing with religious discrimination in Northern Ireland, we have just had an evaluation of 10 years of our legislation which had, as a core component, affirmative action measures. The evaluation has demonstrated quite clearly that affirmative action was necessary to get the changes we needed in Northern Ireland, so I think we absolutely need affirmative action measures.

**Karen Chouhan**, 1990 Trust. We have models that show that, at the present rate of recruitment and retention in the police service and in teaching, we won't get equality, we won't get the representation based on the targets, now in my lifetime nor in my children's lifetime. Therefore, if we can demonstrate those models, we need to do much more than positive action or take the opportunities or the education approach. We do need positive discrimination because I want equality in my lifetime.

**JV:** All right, let's take a show of hands on this. We're talking, broadly, about 'should positive discrimination be legalised, be made compulsory, all quotas and whatever for businesses and the public sector for a start?' Who thinks we should have positive discrimination? Hold your hand up if you think we should have it. I think that's still a shade below 50% of the room. Fiona Mactaggart...

**FM:** The reason I'm hesitating is because what's happened is we've stretched the definition of 'positive discrimination' during this discussion and I'm not in favour of positive discrimination but I am absolutely, certainly, in favour of real positive action, targeting specific disadvantage in a way that works and makes a difference. That's what this strategy is about. It's about focusing action directly at what makes a difference, particularly at the most disadvantaged, those who are left behind. For example, in the Home Office the Home Secretary has a set of employment targets about the proportion of minority ethnic people who get jobs and promotions in the different aspects of the service. We have reached those targets – in terms of recruitment although not always in terms of promotion – in every area of our operation apart from the police, and I'm going to come to that. And that is not because we've positively discriminated, but because we've focused action on providing information, access to job markets, skills development, and so on

What do we do about the police? And it is a real issue because we know that a better police service is actually one which reflects the community it serves. We've made progress on the police, we're going in the right direction. The target for this year is 4.6% and it's 4.3% at present, but we need to go further, particularly in areas like the Metropolitan Police where there really is, as Karen pointed out, a long distance to travel.

Ian Blair, the Commissioner, has asked the Home Secretary to consider a form of positive action which doesn't amount to positive discrimination which is, for example, recognising this problem, to say that instead of queuing for consideration for application to the police, so that the people who first get the interview are those who first applied, because we know we might need more black and minority ethnic police officers, what about actually, in the interviews – not in the decisions, but in the interviews – giving a priority to those from black and minority ethnic communities? The Home Secretary will consider that. Let me tell you, the National Black Police Association is opposed to it. Why are they opposed to it? Because of the problem of other police officers. Because they think that it will have an effect on them. Now, it's not a simple thing. We need action to deliver results but we need action to deliver results which don't have unintended consequences and, as a consequence of getting one thing right, end up with getting other things wrong.

**Unidentified audience member:** My ears are hearing it but my mind is having difficulty integrating it. If positive discrimination is illegal, so is racial harassment illegal in this country. Positive action, positive discrimination is a must. When you get rid of those issues around Section 95 of the Criminal Justice System, when you address those, when you remove the barriers of institutional racism in this country, which affects the lives of black people on a daily basis, then you can tell me not to have positive discrimination.

We set the determinants here that very clearly equal access to education, to employment does not exist. You know, Fiona, when you discuss the issue of positive discrimination and say that you're against that, in your discussion you're not really against it, in fact what you've done is to place positive discrimination somewhere in the process of acquiring equal access and it's not very helpful. You tell any person in the black and minority ethnic community that they have equal access to education, to all other things that will allow them the same type of opportunity and equality as everybody else, and you wouldn't have that. It's quite clear to me that there's no other route to go here except positive discrimination, or 'redress' if you want to call it that. How do I know that? I was born in South Africa and raised on a raw diet of racism for many, many years. I know how this works.

**JV:** Thank you very much indeed. And thanks Samantha Palmer from Liberty for your question as well.

### **Question Three**

*From J. Hardman of Leicester City Council: 'What place do faith schools have in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain and is this a legitimate concern for the Chief Inspector of Schools?' You may remember David Bell talked about Muslim schools not preparing children for life in a multicultural democracy. Iqbal Sacranie...*

**IS:** Faith schools, I think, have a very important role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and for the future. And that's from seeing how they have performed over the last few years. There have been more than a thousand Christian faith schools in existence. Hundreds of Jewish schools have been in existence. Now, for the first time, you've got the Muslim faith schools coming in. There are 5 state-funded faith schools. And I think the results that we see in terms of achievements have been first class. The results prove for themselves how beneficial they have been.

Now there are other faith schools – not state-funded, these are independent schools – and, sadly, I think the Ofsted inspector has confused the issue of tradition schools with faith schools. He's been talking about tradition schools which refers to education taking place in madrasahs and mosques, which are very specific to the teaching of the particular faith, i.e. Islam, the learning of Arabic, and that's it. All the faith schools in this country have to conform to the national curriculum; there's no choice as to whether you take certain subjects or you do not. And I think the league themselves answer that particular point. So I think, for the future of this country, it is one issue where there is now consensus amongst the political parties, whether you're Labour, Tories or Liberal Democrats, there's a greater understanding that they have identified a specific need for it. We must ensure that the faiths are not discriminated against, so there'll be an opportunity in terms of standards that have to be maintained, and all the faith schools that have to come in, but the opportunity for them to apply for state funding should also be there so that, at the end of the day, we have positive results.

**JV:** Can a faith school be multicultural?

**IS:** Indeed. Yes, it can. There are particular examples such as the one that's now being established in Tooting, Al-Risalah School. In fact, we have – I don't want to use the words 'positive discrimination' here – but we are making it very clear that we would welcome non-

Muslims in the Muslim school that's going to be established in Tooting, unlike other faith schools which bar people of other faiths coming in. When we are talking about integration, when we're talking about understanding of all faiths, that opportunity should be given. And I think we need more faith schools which enable people of other cultures and other faiths to come in because all religions have one thing in common: they bar discrimination. So why should that discrimination be applied in the faith schools where, I think, the very ethos of that faith is to ensure that there's no discrimination?

**JV:** Rita Patel, is that the way to go - for faith schools to open their doors to children of all faiths?

**RP:** Absolutely. I don't remember there being any kind of debate about whether there should be faith schools or not until the Muslim community started saying 'we want our faith schools'. So I find it a little bit disconcerting that it's come on the agenda in such a forceful way. You know, Indians have a tradition of sending their kids to Catholic schools both in India and in this country, and in Leicester a lot of the community queue up to send their kids to Catholic schools and I don't see any debate within the Indian community. I don't see any debate about whether those kids are getting a rounded multi-faith education. Every good school should have standards and multi-faith education. If we're bringing up a society that's integrated, as we talked about earlier, then there is a need to respect people's traditions and there is a need to ensure that individual choice is preserved. We're all told we have lots of choices in this society because it's a free society. Well, you know, let's practise that choice and let's not have this debate about whether Muslim schools *only* educate around the Islamic faith or whether they do it in a multi-faith way.

**JV:** Were you surprised to hear David Bell make those comments, Rita?

**RP:** Absolutely. And sometimes I think that not only do people genuinely mistake or mix up concepts, but I think that sometimes there are other power politics at play and people need to be honest and upfront about it. If they have issues, put the issues on the table and discuss those, but let's not wrap them up in a generalisation that actually damns a hell of a lot of people.

**JV:** Michelynn Laflèche, do you think faith schools have a role in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain?

**ML:** I do. I'm afraid I'm not going to contribute much to the debate because I agree with everything that Rita has just said. I think they have a valid role to play. This is from my personal experience of having been through a faith-school system, in another country, however. There's no evidence that I am aware of to suggest that faith schools, whether Muslim or any other faith, provide a lower-quality education and less of an education in terms of the requirements for living in a multicultural, multi-ethnic and diverse society.

**JV:** Does anyone on the panel want to disagree with anything that has been said or shall we move on? Or anyone in the audience? You would like to, Sir?

**Max Farrar,** I work in Sociology at Leeds Metropolitan University. I was at a session before which talked about 'choppy waters'. I think I'm probably going to hit an iceberg in a minute. The only thing I want to say in relation to this, and it's Michelynn's remark that prompts me to say this, is that when she says that there's no evidence, it does seem to me that it is significant that the Chief Inspector of Schools has looked, presumably, at a series of reports and I presume, I hope – and there is something seriously wrong with the public service if this is not the case – that he has some evidence for his concerns.

The thing that bothered me, having read the right-wing press, was how inflammatory and disgusting their coverage of it was, suggesting in one newspaper that these schools are stirring

up race hatred. I'm certain there's no evidence of *that*, but it is worth considering what the Chief Inspector has to say because I do think that there is a problem in this country of religious sectarianism. And by that I mean Christian fundamentalism, Zionism and certain forms of Islamic fundamentalism. And I do think that those are problems for faith schools to confront. So, I'm not exactly disagreeing with you, but I definitely think that this is something that should not be swept away in a sort of tide of political correctness.

**JV:** All right, Fiona Mactaggart, respond to that. If faith schools educate people along the lines of their religion they, by definition, split people up into different groups, don't they?

**FM:** Well let me tell you a couple of things that I'm proud of. The first thing that I'm proud of is that a Labour government introduced the possibility of faith schools which went beyond the Christian and Jewish schools which were permitted before then. I'm also proud that we introduced, in September 2003, a requirement that new independent schools have had to ensure that their pupils 'acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions'. There was no such requirement previously and I think it probable that David Bell's article is a response to him looking at that.

Now, that requirement was put on schools with a necessity that they achieve that standard by September this year. I was talking earlier about the role of inspectors in terms of delivering services. David Bell is an inspector. He has a responsibility to look at how schools do this. He has chosen to do it, in this case, in the form of an article which, in a way, seems to me to be a pity because, as you point out, that makes it open to the kind of reporting which I think has been very damaging in this case. But I think it's right that we set in the requirement, we put in place this kind of expectation of education, with inspectors making sure that people are doing it, and to help them if they're not achieving it. That's a right process and it's one that's inherent in the strategy that we're putting out here.

We're also going to help in other practical ways, because I don't think this is confined to one particular class of school. All sorts of classes of school have it. You know, we heard about religious sectarianism earlier in the 'Old Firm' game between Celtic and Rangers in Glasgow. It is embedded in our culture. It didn't take new religions coming into Britain to focus on religious sectarianism. We have it in the Christian culture, and one of the things that schools can do is confront that sectarianism by putting a focus on it.

We can also use every school to enable children to know more about each other's culture. The Home Secretary talked about the new religious education curriculum earlier. But we're also proposing in this strategy to establish foundation partnerships so that schools don't just live in their school community: they actually engage wider with other schools so that they do give children a learning experience that stretches beyond them. I believe that Catholic schools can learn from Muslim schools, can learn from secular schools, and so on, and one of the things we want to do is to give young people the widest possible experience. They should be able to have the benefits of being educated from within their faith, but that shouldn't confine them from being able to learn about other people's experience and belief.

**JV:** But how is a faith school better equipped to drive integration than a comprehensive.

**FM:** Well, I don't expect it to be *better*. I expect it to be at least as good at. And that's the expectation we should put upon everyone.

**JV:** Okay, anybody else on this?

**Unidentified audience member:** I'm afraid I really have to disagree, with the greatest respect to all faiths. This is not an anti-religion comment but a general comment: there *has*

been intelligent debate, Rita, on the Left, certainly, about faith schools. It's not true to say that there has never been a debate about whether there should be single-faith schools or not. I was born in colonial East Africa and went to an all-Asian school. I can speak Punjabi, I can speak Urdu, I can understand Hindi and I can understand Gujarati. I understand the Sikh faith, I understand Christianity. I understand several faiths. And the reason for that is that I went to a school in which religion did not play a major part; but the mere fact that I mixed with people from different faiths meant that I had understanding, growing up, of those faiths. I think it is fundamentally wrong in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to have single-faith schools in a multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain. We need to have an understanding of all faiths where all religions are treated equally and fairly. And a very positive product of devolution in Wales is that single-faith schools have been completely rejected and I'm really pleased and proud of that one result of devolution.

**JV:** Thank you very much indeed. It's perhaps a little more evenly balanced than, perhaps, we first thought. The gentleman heckling – I'm sorry, who called out – go ahead.

**Sidney Shipton:** I am the co-ordinator of a national charity called The Three Faiths Forum which works with Muslims, Christians and Jews and I want to support one hundred percent my friend Iqbal Sacranie in what he said because too many people have no knowledge of inter-faith schools, of faith schools, and talk without knowing the situation. Let me just give two or three examples.

First of all, there have been faith schools in this country for many generations. There have been Catholic schools, there have been Church of England schools, all of which have had a high standard. There have been Jewish schools for the last 50 years and now, happily in my opinion, there are Muslim schools too. But we must not generalise. There are schools in all faiths which I wouldn't want to touch with a bargepole. But that's not the point. The majority of faith schools do have a rounded education. One only has to look at the performance tables of schools which appear in the press from time to time and one will see those that are at the top of those tables are usually faith schools of one description or another.

And I will give you just one example: in Liverpool there is a Jewish school called the King David High School. It has been there for quite a long time but the Jewish community in Liverpool has gone down, numerically speaking, for a considerable period of time. Why is it that 80% of the pupils in the King David Jewish High School are non-Jews? They go there because it is of a high standard of education, because of its religious ethos and therefore I think one should not talk without knowing something about faith schools. I have been the chairman of governors of one particular faith school and I know that the people in that poor district fought very hard to get their kids into that school because of its high standard of education, not only because of its religious ethos.

**JV:** Thank you very much indeed. Shall we stay on this for another five minutes? Because it's fascinating.

**Clive Lawton:** I was head of the King David High School in Liverpool for 7 years. It is, indeed, a Jewish voluntary-aided school, one of the 40 or 50 (not hundreds, Iqbal) Jewish schools in the country and, indeed, it had both Jews and people from other religious communities and none. And it was commended by HMI as a model, multicultural institution. I think we're speaking very narrowly here. I assume that an inclusive Muslim school with only Muslims will, in itself, be multicultural. A Jewish school with only Jews is multicultural. And, of course, every school is selective. To complain about some schools being selective and others not is to overlook the school from one community which only has whites or another that only has whatever segment, rural folk or farmers or Chinese or whatever it may be. And it's about the curriculum and the teachers, not about the make-up of the pupils. We're

distracting ourselves if we worry about the pupils in the school. We really need to pay attention to the curriculum and the teachers.

**Anis Rahman** from the Race Equality Advisory Panel from the Home Office. I'll just make a comment here about what the last speaker said, and I agree with him. As Iqbal Sacranie said, faith schools actually reflect the multicultural society of Britain. And both Catholic and Jewish faith schools have existed for hundreds of years, and they follow the national curriculum, etc. Mr Bell, from his high position, singled out Muslims, and he may be playing into the hands of extremists. You know that. But I stood up for one reason: that Muslims since 2001 have been suffering and facing very serious problems in this country. And this sort of rhetoric, which has no value at all, has singled out Muslims. And we should all condemn this attitude from the higher authority.

**JV:** Thank you very much. Let's move on to the next question. Thank you for all your comments on that.

#### **Question Four**

***JV:** This comes from Jayshree Mehta of the Peterborough Race Equality Council: 'Even before any legislation on incitement to religious hatred, there are people in the community who hide behind religious and cultural practices choosing not to discuss the issues affecting their own communities and threatening those who do speak out. How would you balance and ensure that freedom of speech is maintained if you go ahead with legislation?' Iqbal Sacranie*

...

**IS:** There are cultural practices which, sometimes, some of us find of an abhorrent nature. Let me give you a specific example: the issue of forced marriages is something which each of us would utterly and totally condemn as unacceptable because a forced marriage is no marriage and marriage is where two parties consent to it. But we have seen in the media, and from certain quarters as well, as though it's reflecting on some of the faith communities. And, of course, the Muslim faith community has also been referred to as if it's a practice that's quite active. It has been made absolutely clear that within the subcontinental culture, this abhorrent practice does exist but it transcends whether it's a Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or whatever. And it is those practices that we need to be very clear about, and where we need to be upfront in making sure that this is something not acceptable in society.

But when we are talking about incitement, there is a bit of confusion in the question. Religious practices which, I believe, are those that enable a person to be spiritually active, to carry out his duties in terms of what the faith demands of him, are not in contradiction to what is expected in society, because I think a good Muslim, a good Christian, a good Jew and a good Hindu is a good citizen. Now, in terms of the incitement aspect of it, where anybody incites on the grounds of one's faith, it is as bad and as abhorrent as someone who incites on the grounds of one's race.

In terms of race, there is already legislation in the country that makes a legal remedy available against whoever incites on the grounds of race. But we found that there are certain communities who transcend racial boundaries, like Muslims – who are not a mono-ethnic group. Therefore, there is not the same protection as colleagues from the Jewish community or the Sikh community would have. So the present legislation that the government is introducing is very specific, it's very clear. It's to do with incitement, to do with the believers who are being attacked or where hatred is being incited against them. Not the beliefs. A belief is something different, and that is not under discussion at the moment and there's been confusion in the media where one is treated like the other.

**JV:** Okay, well you brought us on to the law against incitement to religious hatred which we should discuss, so let's talk about whether that's been a good idea. It has been criticised by

some comedians who say that they won't be able to tell funny jokes anymore. Beverly Malone, do you think it's a good idea to bring that law in?

**BM:** I think it's a real thin boundary between building up one's self-esteem and the esteem of a community in terms of issues around, for example, my own African-American blackness, and how being supportive of that could be seen as inciting. I think there's a very thin boundary between support and incitement, and I think that sometimes it may even be in the ears of the hearer. So, my concern is about how we make sure that we give our children the information they need to keep their self-esteem intact in a world that does not always value them, without that being moved into the area of inciting to hatred. I think there's a real fine line here, and I think that is something we need to work on as parents and as communities: that we have a right to build up our children and to encourage them, but we don't have a right to do anything illegal or to create a situation that would be riotous or full of penalties.

**JV:** We already have a law on incitement to racial hatred. Derrick Anderson, do you think we need a law against incitement to religious hatred?

**DA:** I have mixed feelings. There's one bit of me that says: quite clearly there needs to be something done to offer protection to vulnerable groups or groups that are being challenged unfairly in that respect. But there's another bit of me that says, if you're going to do that, then you have to be very precise so that the actions taken can be seen to be reasonable and don't then cut across other reasonable actions as well. And I just think the balance is incredibly difficult to achieve. So, as I say, one bit of me says 'yes' and another bit of me says 'but if you're going to do that, then you've got to be precise', and I don't believe that it's going to be easy to reach that level of precision to make it deliverable.

**JV:** We discussed this on Radio 2 the other day and a Sikh man who was listening called up and said he was in the audience at a stand-up comedy event and the comedian saw him in the front row and said 'Call off the search for Osama Bin Laden, he's turned up here.' Which isn't funny, but should it be illegal? Fiona Mactaggart...

**FM:** No. Nor would it be in the proposed legislation. And, you know, the hardest thing to fight is where you're being accused of doing something you're not doing. And that's what's happening here. There may be some other people who are, like me, old enough in this field, who remember the debate about the present legislation against incitement to racial hatred. And we had precisely the same debate about that. 'Oh, it's going to stop us making jokes!' That was the first bit. 'Oh, it's going to be a great crushing of free speech!' And actually, it has become normalised. People recognise that the legislation against incited racial hatred has actually helped to reduce – not completely, but it has helped to reduce – race hate crime. And that, thus, it has made our communities safer, and that the impact on free speech is an impact that we don't mind having, frankly.

We don't mind stopping people saying things that they have been prosecuted for under this legislation. And let's point out that there have been very, very few prosecutions and the reason is because it is precise, the terms are limited and it does require the Attorney-General to prosecute. Exactly the same will be true of the incitement to religious hatred proposals. And let's be quite clear that one of the factors which fed the riots in the northwestern towns in 2001 was relentless propaganda put out by the British National Party against the Muslim community. Not, making jokes about, you know, whether someone who wears a turban is Osama Bin Laden. Rowan Atkinson said 'I'm not going to be able to make the joke that I made about the Ayatollah looking for his contact lens when he's praying'. People find that offensive, but it isn't inciting to hatred. Inciting to hatred is dangerous. It leads to the desecration of graveyards, it leads to attacks on people. And you don't need to incite people to kill – we've got a law against that – to create an *environment* of hatred which actually makes other people more likely to be violent. And that's why it's worth legislating against.

It's difficult. I'm a 'free-speechnik' but what we're trying to do is right. What we're being *accused* of trying to do is wrong, and we're not doing that.

**JV:** Just wanted to ask you – we haven't mentioned the Daily Mail yet at all in this discussion, which is amazing, but are some of our newspapers already getting near to the point where this law could be used against them?

**FM:** Actually, they're not. Inciting hatred is different to being grossly offensive, untrue and outrageous. Lots of people writing or speaking about race are grossly offensive, untrue and outrageous and I would like them to stop, but I actually don't want to make it illegal, or for them to get a criminal record for doing it. I think we can try and create a discourse on a way of stopping the offensive behaviour which doesn't give people criminal records. But I do think that people who incite hatred, which has the capacity to be dangerous, *should* get a criminal record for it.

**JV:** Kieran Poynter, are you in favour of this law?

**KP:** Yes, I think I am although perhaps from a slightly different angle. I take the view that *hatred* is the evil that we're focusing on here and maybe we're just getting a complete set because we've covered other things already in the legislation. But if we had a law which said, 'It is illegal to inspire to hatred for whatever reason', that would be fine by me and that might cover the football matches, race, religion and anything else I can't imagine for the moment that people might incite hatred about; but hatred is the evil here, isn't it. It's causing people to get whipped up into a frenzy where they do the dreadful things that you were talking about just now, Minister. So if this is the only one left to legislate against, by all means add it to the list. But, if there are a few others, add them too.

**JV:** And Michelynn?

**ML:** Which leads nicely to where I would go with that. It's not just comedians who are concerned about whether or not they'll be able to make jokes any more. That's quite trite, really. It's actually some very serious, committed, deep thinkers on these issues, people who are deeply committed to racial equality, to religious equality as well, who are concerned, and who take different perspectives on it. There is no agreement across the board and across communities on whether or not the proposed legislation against incitement to religious hatred is good or not, and there are three main different views: one that supports the legislation wholly; one that does not support it at all, largely based on freedom of speech issues; and one that comes down the middle, which is what is proposed by Liberty and I think that's where I, personally, sit. If the government is really concerned about trying to ensure that there's protection for Muslims in particular against incitement, then perhaps the place to start is with playing with the existing law, extending the definition of incitement to racial hatred, and moving forward more slowly along that route.

**JV:** Minister?

**FM:** But what Liberty is suggesting is that we say, for the purposes of incited hatred, that Muslims are a race. And I actually think that the consequences of that for race relations are really quite damaging. So I wouldn't support such an argument.

[for a recent statement by Gareth Crossman of Liberty see *Legal Action* March 2005, p. 9]

**JV:** Let's have some comments from the floor on this. Is the new law a good idea and what's it needed for?

**Milena Buyum**, National Assembly Against Racism: We are in favour of this legislation but I want to take up a point that Fiona Mactaggart made about the BNP peddling hatred. Actually,

a lot of the BNP's material, be it on asylum seekers or Muslims, is already inciting racial hatred for different communities. There are tabloid media who have talked about 'human sewage' when referring to asylum seekers. I would contest that that is inciting hatred of asylum seekers, who are not a race either, but are experiencing racial attacks as a result of these kinds of headlines. So I would like to suggest that, although in favour of the new law, I think the existing laws have to be strengthened and used much more, and people prosecuted under them, because people don't think. And in defence of the religious hatred laws, I think it's wrong to say 'Look, so few people are being prosecuted under racial hatred legislation'. It undermines what we are trying to do, which is to discourage people from inciting hatred. On the contrary, we must say, 'We will prosecute people. We will take these people in front of courts and there will be heavy penalties including prison sentences for those who are doing it.' And, finally, in respect of Nick Griffin, who is on bail from the arrest before Christmas, I hope there will be some really strong action taken against him on the grounds of what he said on that TV programme.

**Jayshree Mehta:** I'm the one who asked the question. There are a number of issues here. The fact that the racial hatred law came into practice, and it has changed the society in this country, is rightly and absolutely how it should be. Those elements of life over which we do not have control should be covered by law. For example, race, gender or disability: rights in these areas should be covered by the law. Religion? I have a choice whether I follow one or not. And if there are some elements in some religions about which you say, 'well that's not how you practise' or 'that cannot be done in a civilised society', and if somebody wants to pass comment on that, that should be allowed.

As to the element of hatred, how do you judge the element of hatred? What somebody would be offended by? What kind of criteria are you going to have on that? And at the end of the day, in terms of freedom of speech, we're going down the slippery slope. How are we going to judge Salman Rushdie's book, which has suffered without there being the religious hatred law. What about the play *Behzti* in Birmingham? What about the *Jerry Springer Opera* on BBC2? How are you going to deal with certain things? *Goodness Gracious Me* – I mean, we all loved it. We all learned to laugh at ourselves. Any mature religion should be able to protect itself from any criticism, actually.

**Gay Moon** from Justice: We've done a lot over the last 3 years to campaign for a law against this very offence because we think that protection *is* needed for those religious minorities who are subjected to hatred. And I want to say that it's a very narrow offence. It *doesn't* catch comedians. It *doesn't* catch the Sikh play which, actually, is already covered under the incitement to race hatred. And I think there's been a terrific amount of scaremongering on this as to what, in fact, is covered and what isn't covered. You must bear in mind that the Attorney-General has to agree to any prosecution and he is bound by the Human Rights Act, which binds him not only not to discriminate, but also to ensure that there is freedom of expression. And not only is he bound by the Human Rights Act, but so is the court that will hear it, so are the Crown Prosecution Service that will be bringing the prosecution. They will all, each and every one of them, weigh in the balance the freedom of expression against the right to have a religion, or *not* to have a religion for that matter. And I would say that this is a very narrow offence. It's a crime and therefore it will have to be proved beyond all reasonable doubt, and therefore I don't think it's something that we at all have to be frightened about. It's not going to catch...

**JV:** But ... sorry, I don't want to interrupt you but, if Rowan Atkinson were here, which he's not, he would say he's got two jokes in front of him, he's only got time for one, tell the one that's definitely not going to get him into any trouble. He can't go down that line of thinking

...  
[tape is turned over]

**Gay Moon** [contd]: ... his jokes will not incite religious hatred and nor will academic debate.

**JV:** Okay, 'Tell the funniest joke', that's a good rule in life generally.

#### **Question Five**

*Our next question comes from somebody called Ho: 'Citizenship and being a good citizen appears at times to be a message which is being targeted to the immigrant community (so-called) rather than being realised as an issue for all of British society and its citizens. How would people re-address this situation in relation to a cohesive society?' How can you bring these citizenship standards and put them across the board, Fiona Mactaggart?*

**FM:** Well one of the things that we sought to do in the strategy is to say that coming into citizenship, the celebration of getting into citizenship, shouldn't just be for people who are new to British citizenship because they are migrants. We should look at whether we should have a similar sort of celebration as people pass their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and one of the things that we've done here is set up a working group to look at whether we can have something – in Australia they have what's called an 'affirmation ceremony' – a similar sort of thing. We've looked at the idea of a Citizenship Day, and we will have the first one in October this year where the point of it is to celebrate what goes into our citizenship for everybody. It will be during Black History Month – that is not accidental – but there's lots of things going on up and down the country where people are looking at stuff about my heritage, my roots, myself, who I am, my identity, all of that. And it should be for everybody. It shouldn't just be focused on 'are you people a good citizen?' It's actually 'are all of us good citizens?' It's the thing we share. The point of building opportunities is that we make a stronger society for everyone not just for people who in the past have been discriminated against.

**JV:** But it's almost as if higher standards of literacy and behaviour are being expected of people who've just arrived.

**FM:** That's what is being asserted and one of the reasons why this strategy makes it clear that it's *all* of our business, that 'good citizenship' is a universal expectation and requirement, is exactly to provide a bulwark against that kind of tabloid assertion, because it's not the case. Good citizenship is a requirement for everybody. You cannot assume that the majority white community are all good citizens, and we have a right to expect citizenship standards of all our neighbours, whatever their race, whatever their history, whatever their origins.

**JV:** Beverly Malone, are you in favour of citizenship tests?

**BM:** The way I look at it is that any group where the people are already members of the group, when somebody wants to come in from the outside, they're going to put kinds of expectations on them that they are not holding accountable to the group that's already there. This is what's happening and I think that it just needs to be acknowledged that there are different expectations, that there are people who are citizens who are already here – I'm not a citizen of this country – but who will not be as prepared as some of the people who will be coming into the country. And I respect the idea that we should all be good citizens and we should have high standards, but there is a reality to how people are treated when they are outside a group and wanting to get into another group. So I think that there's some unrealistic language being used around this issue.

**JV:** Rita Patel?

**RP:** Citizenship for me is about values and it's about setting the standard and the philosophy to which you work as a society and the standards that you want to uphold, and you can't just apply that to one sector of the society and say, 'Actually, guys, you have to measure up to this' and not have elected everybody into those values when you establish them. So I think if

we're going to apply citizenship tests to anybody, we should apply them to everybody. I think what is missing and, maybe, what has happened in other countries – and I don't know enough about citizenship tests in other countries – but what I see is that often the education system backs up right from when you are very young the values that are expected, the standards that are expected, where you show your allegiance, etc. And I think, in this country, we're trying to come into the idea of citizenship in the middle of a process and we're perhaps not necessarily approaching it in a systematic way but being rather ad hoc about it. I think it's a recipe for disaster unless we get it right. So if we really want to do it, we need to have a debate across society, establish the values and the principles on which we want to operate, and then set up a process whereby people – all people – elect into it.

**JV:** Derrick Anderson, tell us: are these citizenship ceremonies happening in Wolverhampton and what's the response?

**DA:** They are indeed. As the debate's going, I make a distinction between my perspective on the tests and my perspective on the wider agenda around citizenship. I really do like the idea of citizenship, demonstrating that you understand the expectations in terms of your contribution to civil society, that you respect other people, that you've got a sense of place and a sense of the history around that place. I have no particular problem. I can also understand the concerns that, as things stand at the moment, it seems that a particular group is being targeted and isolated. But in Wolverhampton I think we now have a good 40 or 50 citizens – there are only 40 or 50 citizens because I remind people quite regularly that for the majority of us, we're not citizens, we're subjects. And in that context, you know, I would welcome the extension of citizenship mechanisms and I'm looking forward to some of the things that are coming forward through government policy to encourage us all to be true and real citizens in our local environments.

**JV:** Michelynn Lafèche?

**ML:** I'm against citizenship tests as tests unless they're applied to the entire population, similarly to what Rita was saying, but that's completely unrealistic and un-do-able. So I don't think we should have citizenship tests per se. I come from Canada where we have a long tradition of celebrating citizenship, especially for new arrivals, and the citizenship ceremonies and the tests that go with it are all very much engrained in culture more widely. But it is also a culture where citizenship is taught to children as young as 3 years old, and at that young age we begin to understand what it means to be a citizen in that country and how we contribute and work together towards building it. That's not exactly the situation that we're walking into here with the introduction of the tests now.

**JV:** Anyone want to comment on citizenship tests and whether we really need them? It was David Blunkett's idea, wasn't it?

**Linda Pizani Williams**, European Institute of Social Services, University of Kent: It's actually a comment more than anything. It just struck me as you were talking, and I just want to reinforce what Derrick Anderson said: I think that the concept of citizenship in a monarchy is actually quite difficult.

**JV:** I think we all agree with that. I've suddenly realised I'm not one. I'm getting rather worried. Yes, Sir?

**Unidentified audience member:** I'm a foreign national, coming from Italy. I think other people have only touched on the argument. The fundamental values and norms are called a 'written constitution'. So I think it would go a long way to solving certain problems about loyalty and recognition and a common set of values if the United Kingdom finally decides to get one.

**JV:** Of course, we're EU citizens, Derrick, aren't we?

**DA:** Yes, we are indeed.

**JV:** So that's all right.

**Liz Dixon:** I work for London Probation. There are a number of thoughts I've got. I was thinking about citizenship reading the Lemos & Crane, RaceActionNet publication about community conflict, and where it comes from. I spent a year as a child in a convent in Ireland and we learned about citizenship there and it was very interesting. I came back to England with more knowledge about the constitution of Ireland than I did about my own. And in that 'Community Conflict' article they say that often the young don't have 'political literacy', and because they don't have political literacy, they often don't engage in some of the areas in life where they can involve themselves in public society, they can invest more. And I suppose from my work as a probation officer for many years, both in prisons and outside, I find I work with people who are socially excluded and then become more excluded. And when I see them turning a corner sometimes, it's because they've started to *invest*. They've started to be involved and start to care more. So I think citizenship itself is an ideal, but what probably matters most is the *way* that we do it, and if some people celebrate that with a ritual, that's one way: some people like to go to universities and get their degrees, some people think that's really naff. We have different ways for different people.

**Beverley Prevatt-Goldstein** from BECON: The only thing I want to add is that we have all this fuss about getting people to do the test to participate in society, yet as part of the regional network for the northeast, we have a major job getting society to enable people to participate. We still have a problem of tokenism, exclusion and marginalisation. And it seems to me odd to have all this fuss about people having a test to say they're willing to participate, when the experience is that they are excluded at every single level of participation.

**JV:** Minister?

**FM:** The test is a test of English language and it is an important tool to enable people to participate. It has always been there in the law, and we're just making it real. One of the ways that people's exclusion has been entrenched is their lack of access to the English language and I think, frankly, that accessing everyone to the English language is a liberating force. In terms of how we're actually going to deal with some of the education issues that others raised: if you look at the strategy, on page 43, there is really quite a comprehensive programme of work with children, with schools, in terms of getting a much better understanding of what citizenship actually is.

**JV:** Thank you. I think we've got time for one more question and a very important subject.

### **Question Six**

*This is from Hemma Devlukia of Watford Council: 'Arts, sport and music bring young people together and enhance community cohesion. There are excellent prospects at the grass roots which prove that. What does the government propose in terms of setting targets for the Arts Council, the Sports Council, to bring young people together?' So here's a chance for us all to agree on the good things that the arts, particularly, can bring to our society and, Minister, I will start with you.*

**FM:** Well, I don't want to hog it – and I've got into pointing at pages now – but on page 46 we set out some of the things that we're doing which include, for example, a £30-million a year investment in working with local communities to use arts, sport in particular, to do this kind of thing. It is key that we do this. I've got a meeting next week with the Big Lottery Fund who now have a responsibility for community cohesion at the heart of what they do, and I am focusing with them on actually how they make sure that *all* of their programmes, whether for sport, the arts, whatever, have community cohesion at their heart, because I think that's going to make a big difference.

**JV:** Arts, music and so on and sport, Iqbal, hugely important in being a meeting place for people of different cultures?

**IS:** Very much so. And I think we just had to see what happened at the last Olympics – the jubilation and the support that we saw all across the British community. And it really shows that a bit more attention needs to be given by the government, and I think one should only welcome further resources in terms of establishing recreation centres and basically trying to find the impetus that really exists within, particularly, the ethnic minorities on some of these issues which have not been exploited and when an opportunity is given to them, it really comes out so well. So I would wholeheartedly support something that really benefits the whole spectrum of our communities.

**JV:** Anyone here want to celebrate the role of art and music? So we end on a very high note? Nobody at all! Michelynn, conclude for us.

**ML:** We showed our film this morning, and I think that says it from the Runnymede Trust point of view. We think that the arts and sports and other cultural industries as well are incredibly important for talking about cohesion but, more specifically, talking about the very serious issues of racism and discrimination. Young people, in particular, were our focus and they have the skills and the capacity to be able to talk clearly about what they're experiencing, how it affects them, what they see for the future and what solutions they would like to propose. I know there are many other projects like ours out there, and I hope that we're all going to be able to use them more effectively; and I look forward to the government supporting more and more of that work.

**JV:** Okay, thank you very much indeed. Don't leave until I've had time to thank our panel: Fiona Mactaggart, MP; Dr Beverly Malone; Iqbal Sacranie; Michelynn Laflèche; Rita Patel; Derrick Anderson and Kieran Poynter. Do give them a round of applause. Thank you very much indeed. And it's not over, ladies and gentlemen. Michelynn is going to say a couple of things to draw us together at the end. Thank you very much for having me.

**ML:** Actually, it's at this point that I have the pleasure of inviting Professor Bhikhu Parekh to the podium to put together some concluding comments for us. Bhikhu is a member of the Runnymede Trust. He was a trustee for many years and is now one of our patrons. He was also, obviously, present in the work that we did on *This Is Where I Live* and he was the Chairman of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain and he has very generously agreed to provide us with his thoughts and reflections at the end of the day today.