



Bulletin

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Another country?

The future of Britain is in the hands of our young people. In August, Runnymede gave a group of young people the opportunity to tell us what the future will be like.

Rob Berkeley tells us what they told him.

Thirty young people were invited to take part in a pilot project for the Trust's major research project for 2003 – 'This is where I live'. In 1996 Runnymede had produced a document entitled *This is where I live – stories and pressures in Brixton, 1996*. The aim of this document had been to give voice to young African Caribbean men from Brixton, to include them in the debate and to remind policymakers of the lives of people their activities impact upon.

Angela Haynes, the report's author, wrote:

We hope that young African Caribbean men who happen to read it will recognise here their reality, and that so will their teachers, parents and youth workers. We hope further that policymakers in a range of fields – education, the youth service, the business community, voluntary organisations, the police service – will find this document a useful broad-brush reminder of the issues requiring further policy-oriented research. And, even more importantly, urgent action.

The future of Britain lies in the hands of . . . descendants of slave owners and slaves, of indentured labourers, of feudal landlords and serfs, of industrialists and factory workers, of lairds and crofters, of refugees and asylum-seekers
Contribution to Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

Taking part in public decisions is at the heart of our democratic life. Young people's participation is another stage in the gradual deepening of our understanding of democracy . . . establishing the habit of participation in the young is the best way to ensure that democracy flourishes in the future
Measuring the Magic, Carnegie Young People's Initiative

I've never really been asked my opinion about policy and things like that. It's been really interesting to think about some of the bigger issues to do with Britishness and identity and really good to know you're being taken seriously.
Participant (aged 15) on ABC Summer School



On the final day of the project, students and tutors record their presence at and appreciation of the ABC summer school, Oxford



MULTI-ETHNIC BRITAIN

The project draws together a number of public policy themes to (re)present the complexity and hybridity of British youth cultures

It is in this spirit that Runnymede begins the project *'This is where I live 2003 – the present and future of multi-ethnic Britain'*.

The new project builds on the 1996 report; extending its scope to consider the lives of young people from all parts of the British community of citizens and communities. The new project also builds on the recent work of the Trust and the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. *'This is where I live 2003'* will form a backdrop to the ongoing work of the Trust which will engage with policymakers and leaders in the public, private, and voluntary sectors to consider the best means of implementing reforms to engender and support a more successful multi-ethnic Britain.

Audiences for the new report will be extensive, and will include policymakers and practitioners, but also young people who will find it a useful resource for their own discussions about British identity. To make the report accessible to as wide a range of people as possible, we hope to engage with a variety of multimedia opportunities for collection of data and its dissemination – exhibition, internet-based, audio-visual, and interactive – as well as more traditional paper-based formats.

The report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain includes the following quote from Ben Okri:

Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings

The *'This is where I live 2003'* project will begin to tell the stories of young people in Britain. It will voice those who are often disregarded, and enable the Trust

to contribute to an elucidation of the truth of what it means to live in a multi-ethnic Britain in 2003.

This is where I live

The project draws together a number of public policy themes to (re)present the complexity and hybridity of British youth cultures. By the start of 2003 the results of the 2001 National Census should be made public. The results will be fascinating, as we will have at our disposal a much clearer picture of the ethnic make-up of the nation. It will tell us which ethnic classifications people have adopted; it will not tell us what these choices mean to them. This project aims to respond to some of the qualitative questions that the numbers and percentages of the census will undoubtedly spark.

Responses to last summer's disturbances in the northern mill towns emphasised the importance of engaging young people. The Cattle Report argued strongly for the empowerment of young people as leaders in the development of a new concept of citizenship and cohesion:

We were very struck by the views of younger people, who, in strong terms, emphasised the need to break down barriers by promoting knowledge and understanding of different cultures... Younger people were seen to be leading the process of transition and should be given every encouragement to develop it further.¹

It remains to be seen how younger people can be best supported in taking on this role and what routes they will be able to access for making their voices heard. This is where I live 2003 aims to be one route to empowering young people.

Yet it is clear that this voice needs to be distinctive, and reflect the media forms that young people have access to in other spheres of their experience. The multimedia approach of *This is*

where I live serves to engage a wider group of people with the project. It aims to bring the sophistication of new media to the development of ideas. All too frequently policy is made about and around the new media. *This is where I live* will use new media to influence policy.

The report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain argued for a rethinking of the national story. To engage as wide a number of people as possible with this process of rethinking, it is important that we begin to move the debate away from the hidebound media forms of yesteryear to the new everyday forms of media from the commercial and entertainment sectors.

Given the breadth of scope for this project, Runnymede hopes to work in partnership with a number of organisations to deliver it effectively and successfully. Existing youth groups and networks, funding programmes, arts organisations, government, voluntary and private sector organisations will all be able to contribute to this crucial project.

Piloting the project

In just such a spirit of partnership, the pilot for the project was undertaken with the Oxford Access Scheme (OAS).² This student-led project aims to encourage young people from inner city backgrounds, especially those from minority ethnic communities, to enter Higher Education in general and the University of Oxford in particular.

Launched over 10 years ago, the Scheme is remarkable in carrying out groundbreaking work in such a 'traditional' institution. It is also remarkable for maintaining its management structure firmly based in its primary community, undergraduates at Oxford University, despite constant change and the near exponential growth of its work and budget.

This summer saw the OAS

¹ Community Cohesion: A report of the independent Review Team chaired by Ted Cattle (Home Office October 2001).

² For further information on the Oxford Access Scheme visit www.oxford-access.org.uk

launch a new project, the ABC Summer School. ABC (aspire, build and challenge) gathered thirty 15-year-old students from inner city comprehensives to the oldest of Oxford's colleges (University) for a week. The aim was to raise the students' aspirations, build their skills, and challenge any preconceptions they might have about university life. Runnymede was invited to design the curriculum for the week.

In an activity-packed week that included tours, ice-skating, rounders in the park, and karaoke, these students were invited to participate in debates and discussions, and give presentations on their concepts of British identity. They were also given cameras with which to take pictures that, for them, encapsulated aspects of Britishness.

The 30 students had been chosen from over 250 applicants from inner-city environments all over England, with Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham and London figuring prominently. There was a mix of ethnic groups; two-thirds of the participants identified as members of a non-white group. Below, some of their testimony is reported as a taste of the kind of insights the larger project should deliver.

Picture this!

The summer school participants were given disposable cameras and asked to take three or four pictures that captured Britain or Britishness. Some of the results are displayed here.

Given that they had only a couple of hours in which to take the pictures, with their adult chaperones in tow, in an unfamiliar city, the results are striking. A prize was given to the most evocative picture. Confoundingly, the prize was given to the student who bravely decided not to provide a picture at all, arguing that:

Britain is all around us, yet it is impossible to see. It is

either everything visible or nothing visible. In either case it is impossible to take a picture of. So my picture is the everything and nothing that is Britain.

More conventional approaches included architectural and historic references (pictures easily taken in Oxford). There were many pictures of Gilbert Scott telephone boxes and pillar-boxes. There were also pictures of black taxi-cabs and double-decker buses.

When talking about them the students were keen to refer to British creativity and design. Pillar-boxes were used as symbols of the pervasiveness of monarchy and the



guarantees of the Crown used to legitimise the postal service.

Flags abounded, traditionally flying or splashed across souvenirs or clothing – particularly relevant in a summer that has seen flags waved for Jubilee, World Cup and Commonwealth Games – with little reference to British fascists.

There were images of security and policing, noting that Britain is





a safe country in which to live and respect for the rule of law was valued by the participants. Nonetheless, some chose to point to more negative views of Britain: alcoholism, violence, vandalism, and homelessness all featured in photos.

This very limited exercise shows the power of imagery in discussing complex concepts. For some of the participants it was their opportunity to contribute to debates that they otherwise



found difficult to vocalise. It was often the case that the quality of the pictures was less important than the explanations the participants gave of them. A picture of Paddington Bear was made more evocative by the observation of his refugee status!

The power of using visual media in policy discussion is clear – the debates that arose from the photographs were useful in challenging the gaps between perception and reality around the myth-making inherent in any discussion of Britishness.

In their own words

A selection of the participants' writing in response to the question 'What does being British mean to me?':

- Being British means that I share characteristics and similarities with the people around me, but that's not to say that being British is all I represent. I'm still an individual and therefore I have individual characteristics. I like cheese and do karate. My friend Lauren also likes cheese and my Australian friend Kerry likes karate. Karate is traditionally a Japanese sport but we both do it. We have both adopted it as part of our culture and a part of our British and Australian lives. I guess being British means that I can be part of a thriving national culture and enjoy aspects of British life every day. It also means that I am a representative in part of a larger global community where I can share and gain many of the qualities of my own and other nations freely.
- Being British can mean that you share common characteristics but it also means that a person maintains their individuality.
- Britain to me doesn't really mean much. It's mainly there so I can tell people I'm British.
- Personally I feel that the majority of people take their nationality for granted. I do not think that anyone really appreciates being British, American, French, German, etc., myself included. What advantages are there to belonging to a certain nationality?
- Being British is about being me
- To be British is to be part of a large diverse community. No matter where you have your roots you can be British. The definition of being British is constantly evolving. The culture, traditions and community define the term 'British'.
- In my view there are two Britains; a prejudiced, traditional Britain, steeped in rules and regulations, the stiff upper lip and

a dislike for change. The New Britain is a diverse, multicultural and broad-minded place where people are free to be whoever and whatever they like

- For me being British means a number of things. It means having the freedom to worship any religion you wish and also having the freedom to do things that in other countries you would be unable to do. To be British also means to have opportunities to make yourself a better person, for example through education. Being British means not being discriminated against because of your colour, religion or race. Being British means having facilities available to you which will help you in all aspects of your life, from the health system to the educational system. These facilities mean we can live a better life. Being British means being able to live in a community and feel safe.
- To be British you need to feel in a community, and when your country has a large 'event' to feel you're part of it as everyone puts something together or takes part. Being British means that most of us are highly educated, polite, etc. We are not 'posh' or 'snobs'; we are just like any other hi-tech country. Another part of being British is that we live in a multicultural country and that's important in being British.
- If I were to tell you what it means to be British, I would definitely say that it is a multicultural country where different people interact and take account of different cultures and ethnicities
- For me, being British means opening doors. As a British citizen, many opportunities are now opened to me. Opportunities like free education which some people in the world would do anything for ... The multicultural system provides people like me with a lot of ease and comfort while travelling, learning or working... To be British is to have the opportunity to improve the world.
- If you say the words 'I am British' to a foreigner they instantly think of Britain as an angry intolerant society with xenophobia. In the 19th century and early 20th century, when someone said they were British, being head of the Empire, they thought that they were superior to others. This was wrong because the British controlled others against their will. Now being British is good because we live in a country where everyone has a decent standard of education and there is a lot of diversity. For example, when a British person goes out to eat there is so much choice, Italian, Chinese, Indian, etc. People are sometimes embarrassed to say that they are British but should not be because there is so much diversity, and when you say you are British, without seeing you, they cannot just think of an overweight, white, racist. As a nation we have actually embraced different cultures and should be proud to be British however rich or poor we are or where we live.
- To say to someone you are British, they will definitely conjure up a stereotype of you; posh, snobby, well mannered, fond of tea and crumpets etc ... I believe many people confuse being British and being English. It is one thing to be British, but another to be English. To me I am a British citizen and part of Britain's multicultural society. That is what I think it means to be British.
- On forms you tick Black British because it can be easier than saying where you really come from. I grew up here, though both my parents came from Nigeria. Britain is not important to me. I do not feel connected to people living in Scotland or Ireland. I just see them as people with different accents.
- Britain is an issue that I haven't thought about with sincerity. When thinking about Britain I

just view it as a country in which I reside. I don't feel any true attachment to Britain, and being British for me is just a formality. I show no shame in admitting to being British but I won't announce it publicly either.

- I am British. To me this means many things. It is a mixture of people's cultures, traditions, and general ways of life that is almost impossible to explain. Being British is living in a multicultural society where its members mix with each other and acknowledge each other's feelings.
- Even though I am aware of my Caribbean background, to also be British makes me proud to know that I have more than one cultural heritage. A sense of pride comes with being British as much as being Barbadian, as I know that I have more rights, opportunities, and privileges than I would have belonging to many other nationalities.
- I think overall that being British means to be proud of Britain and helping to make it a better place by ways such as keeping yourself and others safe.

Focusing on the future

The participants were able to take part in a focus group during the course of the week that enabled smaller groups to have more in-depth discussions about national identity. The discussions threw up the wide range of conceptions of Britishness and these young people's relationship to it. In one group, one of the participants advocated a concept of Britishness based on heredity and blood. He argued that Britishness had two meanings, a minimal legal status (passport-holding) which all could hold, and also a core Britishness which was only for those who had at least 10 generations of their family born and bred in Britain. In the same group, another participant argued that 'nation' was an outmoded formulation and needed to be replaced with world citizenship and ultimately



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Rob Berkeley is Senior Policy Adviser at Runnymede. He has special responsibility for taking forward the recommendations of the Report on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. Contact him at Runnymede [on r.berkeley@runnymedetrust.org]

world government. It is clear that the range of views about Britishness is wide, even among a group of young people from similar backgrounds.

Many in the groups noted multiculturalism as a key defining factor in Britishness. Yet they were unsure about what multiculturalism might mean or what its limits (if any) might be. There was reluctance from any group to be seen as imposing an overriding culture on any community. They argued, however, for equality and human rights as a basis for resolving conflicts. One group went so far as to question the development of a discourse around common values which they felt would be inextricably linked to current power structures. The majority (the powerful), they argued, cannot impose common values as people have the right to pursue different sets of values.

A range of views surfaced about the relationship between Englishness and Britishness. For many of the participants from visible minority ethnic communities, there was a difficulty in using the term English to describe themselves, except when overseas. They preferred to use a hyphenated British identity. It was argued that this was imposed from

outside and didn't arise necessarily from how they felt, given that the majority of their experiences were 'English'. To this extent they felt that they did not control their identity but that it was controlled by stereotypes and their perceived views of the white majority.

Participants were also asked about the range of communities to which they felt they belonged. Very few felt able to describe Britain as one of those communities. When asked to rank the communities that they were members of in terms of importance to their identity, Britain often came last on the list, if at all. For many, Britishness was unquestioned before the summer school and they were puzzled as to why it might be important. Yet in the debates around national identity all the young people had views and opinions, some changing radically throughout the course of the week.

It became clear through conducting the focus groups that the young people involved had some important ideas to share and had well-developed senses of place and identity. It was also clear that they were very rarely asked their opinion about these and were pleased to have the opportunity to vocalise and

further develop their ideas. Their discussion in these groups was high quality and covered issues similar to those of the wider public debate with refreshing honesty and insight.

Prospects for engaging young people with these crucial issues appear to be promising. We have a lot to learn and to share through the development of this project and through its dissemination; building links between people's experiences and understanding with the policy agenda so often imposed from above.

Starting here starting now

'This is where I live 2003' now moves into its next stage of development. Using the experiences gained from the summer school, Runnymede will be developing this major project over the coming months. It would be ideal to get a range of events in motion that would allow the maximum number of young people to engage with this project via the widest range of forms of expression. Progress will be reported in the Bulletin. If you or your organisation would like to be involved with the development and/or implementation of the project please get in touch with us at Runnymede. □

International Conference on Citizenship and Discrimination in Europe

Organised by CRER, University of Warwick, 6-8 December 2002, Venue: Cable and Wireless College, Coventry CV4 8GP

In the new Millennium, the salience and permanence of social exclusion and discrimination on the grounds of nationality, ethnic origins, belief and religion, gender and sexual orientation are beyond question in Europe. At the same time, citizenship is promoted as a programme for making equality the basis of social cohesion. Diversity and equality are valued as the core-element of the European collective identity.

On the one hand, pluralistic, multicultural or 'multileveled' membership is increasingly perceived by European institutions as a valuable feature of contemporary citizenship. On the other, a counter-agenda has emerged in the EU member states that crystallises national identity against the chaos of ethno-cultural and religious diversity, defines citizenship as an issue of national cohesion, and views welfare as conditioned by restrictive immigration policies. The liberal model of citizenship is under attack. So is the principle of tolerance towards diversity.

This conference will bring together leading international academics, policymakers, NGO representatives and social workers from all over Europe to discuss these issues and more. Each of the 3 days takes a specific focus:

- 6 Dec: (Anti)-Discrimination – Analyses, Hypotheses, Perspectives
- 7 Dec: Shifting Citizenship
- 8 Dec: From Supranational to Local: Experiences and 'Good Practice'

Speakers include:

- Prof. Laura Balbo / University of Ferrara (Italy)
- Dr. Rainer Bauböck / Austrian Academy of Science (Austria)
- Mr. Reynald Blion / Panos Paris (France)
- Prof. Giovanna Campani / University of Florence (Italy)
- Prof. Stephen Castles / University of Oxford (UK)
- Prof. Pierre Cours-Salies / University of Paris 8 (France)
- Prof. Gunther Dietz / University of Grenada (Spain)
- Prof. Han Entzinger / University of Utrecht (the Netherlands)
- Mr. Miquel Àngel Essomba / SOS Racisme Barcelona (Spain)
- Dr. Andrew Geddes / University of Liverpool (UK)
- Mr. Spyros Iatropoulos / DOKPY (Greece)
- Dr. Farhad Khosrokhavar / CADIS (France)
- Ms. Jean Lambert / Green MEP for London (UK)
- Dr. Françoise Lorcerie / University of Aix-Marseille (France)
- Prof. Marco Martiniello / University of Liège (Belgium)
- Ms. Emma Mateos / Colectivo Ioe (Spain)
- Ms. Dominique Noguères / Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (France)
- Mr. Ashok Ohri / OSCE (UK)
- Dr. Tariq Ramadan / University of Fribourg (Switzerland)
- Prof. John Rex / University of Warwick (UK)
- Prof. Liviu Matei / Central European University (Hungary)
- Prof. Catherine Wihtol de Wenden / CERF-FNSP (France)

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