TACKLING RACISM IN THE LGBT COMMUNITY
HOMOPHOBIA IN JAMAICAN DANCEHALL MUSIC
THE LGBT FACE OF THE US CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
THE PLAGHT OF GAY ASYLUM SEEKERS
WELCOME to the summer 2011 edition of the Runnymede Bulletin, flagship publication of the UK's leading race equality think tank the Runnymede Trust. As the summer season guarantees Gay Pride events up and down the country, we centre our focus on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities among us.

Through the lens of race equality, as ever, we explore everything from the plight of gay asylum seekers (page 4) to the establishment of Europe’s first black LGBT archive (page 26).

But before further teasers of what to expect, a word about the acronym which pervades this issue of the Bulletin: We first decided to go with ‘LGBT’ when we saw it was the abbreviation of choice of all our contributors - bar none. Also, ‘LGBT’ represents Runnymede’s desire to include members of all sexual minority communities in this discourse.

However, we are acutely aware that the individual letters within the acronym are not given equivalent airtime, either in this magazine or otherwise. We have found that there is a dearth of work being done to address the needs of minority ethnic transgender people, in particular. Please do tell us if you know different.

One thing we’ve not been short of for this issue, though, is a beautiful image. If you like our cover photo, then you’ll want to get to Rivington Place before 30 July to see the Autograph ABP exhibition of celebrated photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode.

Another date for your diary is 20 August for UK Black Pride. Read a note from one of its founders on the importance of organising the minority ethnic LGBT community, and check out some pictures from last year’s event, on page 8.

Part of the reason that such events are so important is that prejudice, as we discover, is not the preserve of majority communities. Racism in the gay community is the focus of Jaime Sylla’s piece on page 12, meanwhile homophobia in Jamaican culture and music is given thoughtful analysis by Philip Dayle on page 11.

Away from LGBT issues - though featuring a prominent gay poet and performer - is a piece on mixed-race identity and the arts on page 16. Written by yours truly, this article is happy overspill from last quarter’s edition, which focused on arts and culture.

So, now for sad news: this summer’s issue will be the last Runnymede Bulletin under my stewardship. I’ve had a fantastic year and a half editing this vibrant, forward-looking and yet reflective digital magazine. More importantly, it has been inspiring to work with so many talented and intelligent people, all passionate about achieving race equality.

I now step from editor to avid reader, keenly awaiting the autumn issue along with the rest of you. Long may the magazine live under the assured supervision of Runnymede publications editor Robin Frampton (robin@runnymedetrust.org).

And finally, a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has contributed - whether by writing, reading or lending an image - to the ongoing success of the Runnymede Bulletin. Your time, support and efforts are wholly appreciated.
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A SLEW OF ATTACKS AGAINST trade unionists and anti-racist groups have been carried out by supporters of the English Defence League (EDL), a far-right street movement, in recent months.

In the past few months, there have been incidents of the EDL harassing anti-racist campaigners in Liverpool, Brighton, and east London.

One incident involved a 20-strong group of EDL supporters intruding on a meeting on multiculturalism organised by Labour councillors in Barking, east London in May 2011. The group threw concrete pillars, glass and rocks at the attendees, injuring several including Beverley, 48, an NHS worker who was in hospital for three days as a result of a severe wound sustained to her hand.

Beverley relayed the disturbance to the meeting, explaining, “They were crazed on the other side of this glass wall. They started ripping pieces of glass off and frisbeeing them at us through the holes and then they started hurling rocks at us.”

The attacks follow poor election performances by the British National Party, which campaigns on a platform reflecting views similar to those held by the EDL.

In response to the spate of attacks, analyst Nick Lowles of Searchlight said: “The threat is that, as far-right activists decide the electoral path is no longer possible, we will see more aggressive street-based groups linking up and a rise in racially and politically motivated violence.”

In a separate attack, campaigners on their way to deliver anti-BNP leaflets in Essex were confronted by around 40 to 50 far-right activists who refused to let them off the train at Grays in east London. Further incidents have involved the targeting of a radical bookshop in Liverpool and an attack on a meeting about multiculturalism in Brighton.

Weyman Bennett, from Unite Against Fascism, cautions that the increasing frequency and escalating levels of violence of the attacks cannot be ignored.


RUNNYMEDE HAS PUBLISHED a new comment piece on welfare, diversity and solidarity, written by James Gregory, senior research fellow at the Fabian Society.

Published in the week of the 63rd anniversary of the NHS, the paper argues that when rejecting universal welfare reforms in favour of targeted services, we ought to consider what impact this has on solidarity between citizens. In particular, the paper argues that different ethnic groups in the UK should interact in a meaningful way on a day-to-day basis, and one way to achieve this is through universal welfare policy solutions.

However, the report, entitled Solidarity and Diversity: Crisis, What Crisis?, highlights that policy is moving in a targeted or means-tested direction, creating risks not only for black and minority ethnic (BME) people, but also for poorer people. Universal welfare on the other hand would improve social interaction, affirming the notion that we actually are ‘all in this together’, as well as making institutions more efficient. This is because, the report argues, those with the sharpest elbows are typically better able to make their complaints successful and improve those institutions. And when they do so, we all benefit.

RACISM IS STILL A REALITY for black middle class parents, according to a new report published in June by the Institute of Education. The study found that despite black middle class parents using similar strategies to white middle class parents in relation to supporting their children’s schooling, racism in education remains a reality and a barrier.

Black middle class parents recognise racism as less overt today than when they were children, but nonetheless pervasive in other subtle and coded forms. As the report’s author, Dr Nicola Rollock, found that these parents worked hard to protect their children from incidents of racism at school.

The study draws on a number of themes including agency, race, class and identity in educational settings. Researchers spoke to 62 parents of black Caribbean heritage to explore the interaction of social class and ethnicity and its effect on their children’s education. Parents viewed educational achievement as an important means of social mobility and a possible barrier against racism in their children’s future. However, despite experiences of racism parents avoided the term ‘racism’ in their discussions with school staff, due to fears of resistance and antagonism.

The report may help to explain why black pupils from advantaged backgrounds still do not do as well in education as their white counterparts. Its findings also suggest that social status and material wealth do not necessarily protect people from prejudice.

THE ABUSE OF STOP AND search powers under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 have been criticised by criminal justice action group StopWatch.

Figures indicating that people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are being disproportionately targeted under Schedule 7, are among the latest concerns raised by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo). In fact, Asian people are 42 times more likely to be stopped than white people using the power of Schedule 7.

Of the 85,000 stops carried out between 2009 and 2010, Asians accounted for 25 per cent, though they make up just 5 per cent of the national population. While black people accounted for 8 per cent of stops, and make up only 3 per cent of the population.

Schedule 7 enables police offers to stop and question people at airports, seaports, and international train stations in the UK – crucially, without needing reasonable suspicion to believe that they are engaged in any acts of terrorism. Officers may also go further by physically detaining the person for up to nine hours for what is known as an ‘examination’. This can entail stripping and searching the detainee, searching their belongings, taking their DNA and fingerprints, and questioning them on their social, political, and religious views. The detainee is expected to cooperate and comply with all orders even before a lawyer can be present or else there is a risk of being arrested for ‘obstruction’.

In response to this, Professor Ben Bowling of King’s College London, who is a member of the StopWatch coalition, said: “The use of these powers at the border should be based on reasonable grounds and in ways that are properly transparent and accountable. At present they are opaque and unaccountable and seem little more than arbitrary and discriminatory.”
New directory of London LGBT orgs

THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE guide to London’s LGBT voluntary and community sector has just been published by Kairos in Soho. The objective of this publication is to provide the most relevant information needed for the progress of LGBT communities. The directory, entitled The London Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Voluntary and Community Sector Almanac, contains up-to-date information on 89 diverse LGBT organisations based in London. In the Almanac, you can find the lowdown on the services that these groups provide, including their work across other equality strands, such as disability, ethnicity and gender.

The guide supplies detailed information of the results of the study and the ‘what, where, when, how and why’ questions behind the LGBT organisations. Particulars include their longevity, activities, financial sources and the types of people they provide services for, and their hopes for the future. The study findings are presented in statistical form, alongside quotes and a complete run-through of how the research was conducted. The Almanac also includes a list of publications that have come out of the LGBT sector, with topics including identity work and local government issues connected to the LGBT community.

Kairos in Soho is a charity that aims to rid the lives of LGBT persons of all prejudice and discrimination. The purpose of the Almanac, according to Kairos in Soho, is to provide strategic and grounded information so that the LGBT sector as a whole can develop and work together to provide a more open, reliable and stable environment for progress.

Access the almanac online at: kairosinsoho.org.uk/almanac.asp or order a hard copy for £25 at: info@kairosinsoho.org.uk/ 020 7437 6063

Irish Traveller families forced from Dale Farm site have nowhere to go

In a move to evict more than 100 residents from Dale Farm in Essex, Basildon District Council has stacked up legal costs exceeding £1m and will spend a further estimated £3m clearing the site. However, the issue of accommodation is not simply about cost. “This is ethnic-cleansing,” said one mother, “but the council is trying to disguise that fact with a lot of politically correct language.” The Gypsy Council has also stated that the stress on families and pressures from the way the planning system impacts on Travellers should not be underestimated.

Consequently the Travellers’ Aid Trust established a panel to evaluate the impact of the Localism Bill alongside other policies affecting Gypsies and Travellers. Their report A Big or Divided Society?, was published in 2011.

The report strongly recommends that local councils retain their duty to undertake Gypsy Traveller accommodation assessments and develop a national planning framework for Gypsies and Travellers to increase accommodation, which would present a win-win situation. Authorising sites spares the inconvenience and cost of unauthorised sites and strengthens community cohesion and inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers into the wider community.

travellersaidtrust.org/panel-review

£30 MILLION OF FUNDING for future Gypsy and Traveller sites is to be cut under changes proposed in the coalition’s Localism Bill 2010. Yet, because site shortage remains such a major issue, the costs of dealing with families who have nowhere to go are likely to equal £30m or more nationally, in any case. Gypsies and Travellers still suffer a 90 per cent likelihood of refusal for planning applications under current law.

Photo: The Advocacy Project
A landmark judgement by the British Supreme Court in July 2010 ruled that the Home Office could not send gay and lesbian asylum seekers back to their home country where there was a culture of homophobia and persecution of gay and lesbian people, even if they could live ‘discreetly’.

Unfortunately there are plenty of such countries, including Iran and Uganda where gay people are openly chastised, tormented and even lynched.

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) published guidance after this judgement which states how a claim from a gay or lesbian asylum seeker should be handled (see box).

According to Paul Canning, writing for Migrant Rights Network, this is a major source of concern because the first point on the guidance states that the court must first decide whether the asylum seeker is in fact gay. How does a person ‘prove’ they are gay, and what do they need to produce by way of evidence for the UK authorities to believe them? Many people are falling at this first hurdle, because the UK authorities simply refuse to believe that they are gay, sometimes despite a range of evidence.

Claims, especially from the vocal rightwing group Migration Watch, that the 2010 judgement would lead to an ‘explosion’ of asylum claims from gay people around the world have undoubtedly not helped in the public perception or in the Home Office decision-making process.

Calls to collect statistics on gay asylum claims have been met with ‘disproportionate costs’ claims by immigration minister Damian Green. Therefore it is very hard to get an idea of the number of claims, and whether they are increasing or not.

What is clear however, through a number of NGOs working with gay asylum claimants, is that the Home Office is increasingly dismissive of evidence that an asylum seeker is gay. This leads not only to the asylum seeker being at extreme risk when they are sent back to their home country, but also to a level of injustice that is hard to stomach.

As one commentator said today in relation to legal aid changes, if the Home Office had its house in order and we could have high confidence that their decisions were fair and just in all cases life would be a lot easier for all. Until this is the case, some gay and lesbian asylum seekers will continue to be failed and afforded justice, as their sexuality is denied.

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**Is the applicant gay or someone who would be treated as gay by potential persecutors in the country of origin?**

**If yes, would gay people who live openly be liable to persecution in that country of origin?**

**How would the applicant behave on return? If the applicant would live openly and be exposed to a real risk of persecution, he has a well-founded fear of persecution even if he could avoid the risk by living discreetly**

**If the applicant would live discreetly, why would he live discreetly? If the applicant would live discreetly because he wanted to do so, or because of social pressures (e.g. not wanting to distress his parents or embarrass his friends) then he is not a refugee. But if a material reason for living discreetly would be the fear of persecution that would follow if he lived openly, then he is a refugee**
Black, gay and proud

There is a need for organising, to create shared spaces for the black gay community, says Bisi Oyekanmi. Here he explains why UK Black Pride is a great example of how this can benefit the whole community.

Many people ask us what UK Black Pride is all about. Why does there need to be a black pride at all? Is it only for black people? ...the questions come thick and fast. The simple answer is that UK Black Pride, Europe’s biggest celebration of African, Asian, Caribbean and Middle Eastern LGBT people, is for everyone. We are proud to be the leading event in the LGBT calendar specifically aimed at celebrating being black and gay, an important juxtaposition.

For too long we heard that gay black people were not putting their money where their mouths were and getting out there doing something for the community. UK Black Pride was born out of a need to address this situation, as well as a frustration at the hackneyed way in which black LGBT people were portrayed in the mainstream LGBT community, and the inability of well-intentioned mainstream sister organisations to represent the breadth of our interests and aspirations. We also found that there were inadequate spaces for black LGBT people, and our families, friends and supporters, to gather and celebrate our lives and experiences.

As UK Black Pride celebrates its sixth year, it is an apt time to look back at how far we have come and what the future holds.

While wider society is becoming more accepting, our individual cultures are slow to catch up. Where their mouths were and getting out there doing something for the community, UK Black Pride has evolved from a one-day celebration to a series of activities throughout the year highlighting issues of concern to our community. It’s about bringing people together, showing that we are...
a force to be reckoned with, and about addressing the issues that are important to the black LGBT community. Is equality available to all black LGBT people? What responsibilities do we have to highlight inequalities? In the coming year we’ll be building on campaigns like the fast-tracked cases of black LGBT asylum seekers Brenda Namigadde and Eddy Cosmas. We plan to continue helping to bring the world’s attention to such cases and other ongoing inequalities in the UK and around the world.

This new and broader focus also aims to get more people involved. UK Black Pride is run by a team of volunteers reflecting the broad diversity of the black LGBT community. With a deep passion for the community and years of expertise in their respective professions, the UK Black Pride team has matured into an award-winning community organisation. We won Black LGBT Community Awards for Community Development in 2006 and 2007; were nominated for a Stonewall Community Award in 2009, and we won the Pink Paper Readers’ Award for Best Black or Minority LGBT Group in 2011. The dedicated work of the team is supported by sponsor organisations and individuals who help make UK Black Pride the success that it is. We have enjoyed and actively sought support and representation from a broad range of organisations. Many organisations hire a market stall or hold seminars at UK Black Pride to raise the public profile of their organisation and raise new members within black, LGBT, health and voluntary sector community groups.

Our team of volunteers are the people out there on the ground, along with the board of trustees, making sure everyone is having a good time. These are hugely rewarding roles, especially for young people looking to develop a broad range of transferable skills. We always have space for more volunteers, so if you are interested do get in touch.

This year’s event is going to be the biggest yet. With a chart-topping superstar headlining and a packed programme, we know it’s going to be a fantastic day. Check out www.ukblackpride.org.uk to buy your tickets and register for up-to-the-minute news and updates.

The sixth annual UK Black Pride festival will take place on Saturday 20 August 2011 at Torrington Square, Birkbeck College, London, WC1E 7JL. It will host a packed programme of music and live performances by renowned and emerging acts. There will be licensed bars, world food, chill-out zone, education and welfare workshops, community stalls and more. Get your tickets today!
Lessons from the US

Across the pond there have been progressive attempts to align the respective liberation movements of minority ethnic people and the LBGT community. **Mudia Uzzi** and **Charles Stephens** give us a brief history, looking also to how both might move forward.

A little over a year after the 1969 Stonewall riots erupted into the modern United States gay rights movement, Huey Newton, co-founder and leader of the Black Panther Party, published an article in the party’s newsletter called *A Letter from Huey Newton to the Revolutionary Brothers and the Sisters about the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements*. Calling for a unification of the black revolutionary movement with the gay and women’s liberation movements, his letter was breathtakingly inspired and politically risky. Though of both historic and symbolic significance, sadly it did not have the immediate political impact one would have hoped. Yet Newton’s words provided the blueprint, and even the spark, that would anticipate the tilt of progressive social movements over the next few decades.

Newton’s vision of combining the gay rights struggle and the struggle for racial equality was not unique in this era. Bayard Rustin, an openly gay man who played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement and influenced Martin Luther King Jr’s thinking around Gandhian tactics. Another example from this era is black lesbian writer, theorist, and visionary Audre Lorde - who, though her contributions to feminism and black feminism were more widely recognised - was also deeply engaged in the Civil Rights Movement.

The racial justice movement

If we examine contemporary examples of figures in the black community who are sympathetic to the struggles of LBGT people, we see a number of elected officials and Civil Rights veterans. Deval Patrick, the current governor of the state of Massachusetts has been vocal in his support of gay marriage and supportive of his lesbian daughter. President Obama has spoken extensively of LBGT rights and has been supportive of homophobic hate crime legislation and of gays serving in the military. U.S. Representative John Lewis and the late Coretta Scott King, who both hold historical status in the Civil Rights Movement, have been vocal in their support of the rights of LBGT people. Willie Brown, former Mayor of San Francisco, authored and lobbied for the successful passing of a bill legalising homosexuality in California. Iconic black civil rights organisation the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) developed an LBGT Equality Task Force in 2009 co-chaired by Civil Rights leader Julian Bond, one of many veterans of the Civil Rights Movement who have demonstrated an evolving, progressive view of LBGT equality.

The LBGT Movement

We also see examples of coalition building in the LBGT movement. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, for example, has incorporated anti-racism and racial justice in various aspects of its agenda and programming. Southerners on New Ground (SONG), an LBGT organising group, has also been committed to working within and among racial justice movements to bridge lines of differences.

Nowhere is the intersection of movements more pronounced than in the American HIV and AIDS epidemic. Black people and gay people, and certainly black gay people, have been and continue to be disproportionately impacted. AIDS then presents a critical moment, an opportunity to very clearly see the impact of how racism and homophobia interconnect. Health disparities in the treatment of HIV are rampant in the most marginalised populations, particularly those impacted by racial and heterosexist oppression.

More to be done

Though there have been triumphant moments where the most visionary and the most courageous have been willing to work with other communities, advocate on behalf of other groups, and see the negative impact of attempting to do political work in silos, there have also been moments of disappointment. Most recently actor and comedian Tracy Morgan said during a ‘comedy’ routine that he would stab his son if he were gay. Basketball superstar Kobe Bryant was fined a record $100,000 for directing an anti-gay slur at a referee during a NBA playoff game in April 2011. Also, former American football player David Tyree, said that he would trade his Super Bowl XLII win to stop gays from being allowed to marry. In the mainstream LBGT rights movement, we can also see instances of racism or exclusion of people of colour. Progressive and black gay activists have long critiqued mainstream LBGT organisations’ lack of focus on issues that heavily impact LGBT people of colour and other marginalised groups within the LBGT community. Moreover, after the 2008 Proposition 8 loss in California - which would have legalised gay marriage in the state - there was a considerable amount of contempt aimed at the black community, which was believed to have been in part responsible for the outcome. However, much of the anger by the gay community toward the black community was later recognised to be rooted in irrational and politically misguided information.

There are both successes we can celebrate and setbacks we can ponder from the 20th and 21st centuries. As the black feminist Combahee River Collective reminded us in the late 1970s while meditating on the oppression of black lesbians, if one group was oppressed, then they were all oppressed. Their fight for liberation necessitated an approach that recognized the simultaneous and manifold discrimination that many oppressed people face and that formed coalitions across progressive organizations and movements as political dangerous and morally unsound.
Jamaica? No problem

Philip Dayle gives a thoughtful analysis of homophobia in Jamaican culture

Earlier this year, a Washington Post article reported that in 2010 Jamaica accounted for almost a third of the people who were granted asylum in the US, based on their sexual orientation. In real terms, this means that last year, courts in the US determined that 25 gay, lesbian or bisexual Jamaicans were entitled to refuge because they had a well-founded fear of persecution on their home island.

Not so, said Cheryl Gordon, deputy chief of mission at the Jamaican Embassy in Washington DC: “I don’t believe we are more homophobic than anywhere else.” She went on to explain that as long as crimes were reported, there was action from law enforcement, irrespective of who the victim was.

Ms Gordon’s opinion stands at odds with the facts, even if pitched at a lower decibel than other rhetoric we have heard from Jamaican public officials. Current Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding trenchantly told the BBC’s Hard Talk programme in 2008 that there was no room in his cabinet for gays or lesbians. A former prime minister, P.J. Patterson, once felt obliged to declare in a public forum that “his credentials as a homosexual are impeccable.”

But as homophobic utterances from politicians go, Jamaican officials have not been the most outrageous. Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe has never backed down on referring to gays and lesbians as “pigs and dogs” and Gambian President Yahya Jammeh promised to “cut off the heads” of his homosexual citizens. While he was still a senator, US Republican aspirant for President, Rick Santorum, likened homosexuality to incest and bigamy.

As with many Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, Jamaica inherited British colonial laws which prohibit homosexuality. Though the UK has long since repealed such laws, homosexuality has come to play a massive role as an ethical marker between new, nationalist states and their erstwhile colonial masters. The argument is often made that the anti-homosexuality offences of buggery and gross indecency - derived from the 1861 Offences against the Person Act of Britain - are necessary to preserve native moral and cultural values.

In recent changes made to Jamaica’s constitution, the country’s parliament went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that no interpretation of “privacy” could result in a successful challenge to the laws against homosexuality. However, Jamaica’s legislative stichup pales in comparison with the aborted attempts to enact draconian “defence of marriage” type legislation in Nigeria - supposedly to bar against gay marriage - a few years ago. The Ugandan parliament recently ditched a bill that would have sought the death penalty for so-called “homosexuality offences”.

How then did Jamaica become the global standard bearer of the homophobia mantle? The answer is by no means simple. From Bob Marley to Usain Bolt, a brash self-confidence is associated with the Jamaican personality in the international imagination. Jamaica’s contribution to world popular culture - through reggae music, and recently, track and field dominance - has perhaps given the island of 3 million people an outsized global brand.

With the Jamaican persona, often come predominantly held cultural attitudes towards sexuality and gender. Opinion leaders on the island accept that hostility towards homosexuality exists almost as a part of the national DNA. There is a common understanding that visible displays of same-gender sexual activity are likely to attract physical abuse and possibly even mob beatings.

Jamaican anthropologist at Harvard University, Dr E. Akintola Hubbard, says that policing male sexuality and gender roles in Jamaica gets to the point where there is almost a “presumption of homosexuality” until a man can prove otherwise. A pervasive need exists to hype and over-dramatise the rejection of gayness. The obsession of reggae dancehall artistes with the theme of homosexuality – most infamously with Buju Banton’s song “Boom Bye Bye”, which called for the murder of gay people - demonstrates the extreme national preoccupation with this subject.

In a piece of dramatic irony, Buju Banton, who has been the target of a global “Stop Murder Music” campaign by gay rights activists, was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for drugs and gun charges by a Florida court. The outpouring of sympathy for the entertainer - who is seen as a protector of unique Jamaican values - took a bizarre twist, with supporters charging that his entire case had been a “set up” by a foreign, gay rights lobby. Banton’s story is the classic example of how Jamaican nationalism and homophobia becomes sexed up as one and the same thing.

It is difficult, and perhaps pointless to prove whether Jamaica is the most homophobic place in the world. But reports of gays and lesbians fleeing persecution from the country tell a harrowing story of intolerance and national anxieties about sexuality and gender. Addressing this issue requires strong moral leadership at the very highest levels, and a serious review of what goes into being considered authentically Jamaican.
Double struggle to belong

Jaime Sylla of gay men’s health charity GMFA reminds us that sadly racism is not limited to mainstream society or majority groups, and is also present in the LGBT community.

It is well-documented that people of African Caribbean descent living in the UK are likely to suffer racial discrimination. Twelve years after the Macpherson Report pointed to ‘institutional racism’, key institutions like the Metropolitan Police, the NHS and the education and criminal justice systems continue to be accused of perpetuating racial inequality.

As black LGBT people, we face the dual challenges of racial prejudice and of homophobia, within society at large but particularly from within those communities we belong to, both sexually and ethnically. Few other groups of individuals will have to endure such prejudices simultaneously and to such a debilitating degree.

Despite the persecution and discrimination experienced by the LGBT community, and our common struggle for equal rights and social acceptance as a group, many black and ethnic minority LGBT people feel the gay community is no more enlightened than mainstream society when it comes to racism. The types of discriminatory experiences reported vary, from subtle differences in the way we are treated, sexual stereotyping and objectification or more direct forms of discrimination, such as not getting served in, or admitted to, lesbian or gay venues.

Rejection from the gay community

As a black lesbian, Phyll Opoku, co-founder of UK Black Pride, did not always find the gay scene welcoming: “When I first came out, I went to this club and I thought ‘wow, this is great!’ The women all dancing with each other and I was hoping that someone would just ask me to dance but it didn’t happen, so I got up and I danced just by myself. And then someone said, ‘You stupid beep, beep, beep. Why don’t you just get off this dance floor? You’re in my way!'”

Phyll’s experience of coming out, and her desire to be accepted as part of the community, was challenged by the bigotry of someone who could not accept her because of the colour of her skin. She adds: “They were drunk but when I say ‘beep, beep, beep’, it was quite derogatory towards black people. So I realised that maybe that place wasn’t for me. I didn’t see anybody that looked like me, to be able to sit there and feel comfortable with them.”

Racist remarks at Gay Pride

Even on days to celebrate the whole LGBT community, racism can be felt, as Hanaan Baig discovered: “There was an incident several years ago while me and other group members of imaan (an organisation providing support for LGBT Muslims) were marching at London Pride. Other gay marchers came up to us and said, ‘I didn’t know we were marching with terrorists today!’ And that was a Pride day, yet there were other LGBT people who felt it was necessary, or perhaps even humorous, to make such comments. It was pretty offensive.”

There seems to be an identified need to promote a positive black LGBT identity that is relevant to the lives of all people on the scene and to the wider black community. A greater visibility of LGBT people from ethnic minority backgrounds and an acknowledgement of their culture in the mainstream gay community would also significantly promote self-acceptance, and contribute to the development of black LGBT social networks.

Despite his personal experience of racial abuse, Hanaan remains positive about being part of the LGBT community. He says: “It’s very important for us to stand together because, at the end of the day, we need to make sure that we’re unified and we show a unified front. We will learn from each other and we will teach other people as well. From the way we interact with other people, they will learn about our civility, about our humanity, our friendship, and about the way we love as well.”

“I realised that place wasn’t for me”

The LGBT community has too often been described as primarily white and middle class, a concept that excludes groups of people that don’t fit into those categories. Although traditional racial identity politics are breaking down, and individuals may now have lots of different identities, especially among the urban young, there is still often an innate need to belong to a group. Many black gay men in particular find the gay scene over-sexualised, dependent on commodity and unable to meet their social needs.

Black gay men are generally under-represented in the gay scene, and when they are portrayed it is often as hyper-sexualised objects, fetishised by others because of their ethnicity. Unfortunately, exclusion from gay spaces often lead to black gay men feeling isolated and less able to access support, services or information from community sources. With black gay men being in closer proximity to HIV than any other ethnic group of gay men, this becomes particularly relevant.

Even on days to celebrate the whole LGBT community, racism can be felt.

Phyll’s experience of coming out, and her desire to be accepted as part of the community, was challenged by the bigotry of someone who could not accept her because of the colour of her skin. She adds: “They were drunk but when I say ‘beep, beep, beep’, it was quite derogatory towards black people. So I realised that maybe that place wasn’t for me. I didn’t see anybody that looked like me, to be able to sit there and feel comfortable with them.”
Policy: have your say

Klara Schmitz explains how community groups and larger charities with a focus on race equality can have an impact on policy in the UK, by engaging with the UN

The government’s commitment to race equality will come under fire later this year when the United Nations body on racial discrimination (CERD) will examine what actions the government is taking to challenge racial discrimination. Runnymede is coordinating the input of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the forthcoming examination of the UK Government. We got together with a group of race equality organisations to draft a report on the state of race equality in the UK. We’re hoping this will inform the UN of the key concerns facing ethnic minorities, so that the most important issues are brought to the table at the examination later in August.

Why get involved?

At the last UK examination in 2003, many of the recommendations CERD made to the government echoed the concerns outlined in the NGO report, demonstrating how NGOs can have a real impact when acting at an international level.

The government does not like being criticised by a UN body, so to have a list of actions that the UN thinks the government needs to take to combat racial discrimination is a powerful tool that we can use to effect change and hold the government to account.

Compiling the report has been a valuable way to take stock of the key issues facing ethnic minority communities and the challenges that the current climate presents.

Getting involved in this process is also a valuable way for NGOs to channel their demands to decision-makers and make themselves part of this attempt to bring institutional mechanisms closer to the community.

If you’re interested in finding out more email Klara Schmitz: klara@runnymedetrust.org

These are a few of the issues highlighted in Runnymede’s forthcoming CERD report:

- **Recording stop and search.** The government’s recent changes to police stop and search powers have resulted in a significant reduction in the recording of stop and searches, and removed the requirement to record stop and accounts. This makes it more difficult to document discrimination against minority groups whom are being disproportionately stopped and searched by the police. What should be done? The government should reinstate the requirement to record stop and account and all the full details of stop and searches, as well implement measures to decrease disproportionality.

- **Prejudice in the media.** The role of the media, particularly the tabloid press, in spreading prejudice is a very serious concern, as is the lack of the Press Complaints Commission’s (PCC) commitment to taking complaints about offensive and racist coverage more seriously. What should be done? The government should increase pressure on the media to ensure that it does not propagate negative images of certain ethnic minority groups, and should create an independent PCC which regulates the media more effectively.

- **Lack of race equality strategy.** The Department for Communities and Local Government has not done any work on race equality since the Coalition Government came into power in May 2010. What should be done? The Department for Communities and Local Government should develop a race equality strategy outlining what they intend to do to tackle ethnic inequalities and promote equal opportunities between people of different ethnic backgrounds.
UpRise Against Racism is a collective of ordinary people who believe in unconditional equality and inclusivity in society, and seek to deliver creative ways of campaigning against racism, prejudice and all forms of discrimination.

At its core, Uprise Against Racism’s aim is to promote social cohesion through educational workshops and to celebrate diversity through creative events and the annual UpRise festival.

The UpRise Anti-Racism Festival 2011 is on 11 September 2011 in London’s Clissold Park.

The free outdoor festival will feature some of the UK’s finest performers, providing a platform for music with social commentary, inspirational speakers and a celebration of the human.

www.uprise.org.uk

Ethnic Minorities Coming Out

This photography project, exhibiting in Norwich 18 - 30 July 2011, tells the coming out stories of ethnic minority LGBT people.

www.sonalle.com

“It feels so strange not to tell your parents. As if you are hiding something... It feels like living a dual life”
1 Brit John Amaechi, the first openly gay player in America’s National Basketball Association (NBA), was made an OBE in 2011 for his services to sport and to the voluntary sector

BBC

2 In 2010 the UK Border Agency changed its asylum claims policy based on sexual identity to ensure that a person must not be expected to suppress their sexual orientation in the future to avoid persecution

UK Parliament

3 Justin Fashanu was the first black £1m footballer, and the first in the profession to come out as gay in 1997. There are currently no openly gay footballers in England’s top four divisions

The Justin Campaign

4 Black gay men in the UK have higher rates of HIV infection than any other group by ethnicity

Stigma Research

5 A 2001 survey found that more than half of black gay men had experienced both racism in the gay scene, and homophobia in Asian, African and Caribbean communities

Galop

6 UK Black Pride is running its sixth consecutive festival in August this year. Miss Dynamite, from the UK garage scene, will be headlining

UK Black Pride

7 Consensual homosexual acts between adults are illegal in about 70 of the world’s 196 countries; in 40 of these only male-male sex is outlawed

ILGA World Legal Survey

8 A recent poll found that 47% of Muslims agreed with the statement: “I am proud of how Britain treats gay people”

Pink News

9 The BBC has defended recent storylines in Eastenders and Holby City involving black or Asian men in gay kissing scenes. Research has found that 1 in 5 people reported feeling uncomfortable with homosexual scenes on television

BBC

10 Millionaire Baron Waheed Alli joined the House of Lords in 1998. Aged just 34, he became the youngest and first openly gay peer in parliament

The BBC

“ There are currently no openly gay footballers in England’s top four divisions”
Young, gifted and mixed race

Nina Kelly speaks to three young artists about how their mixed-race backgrounds impact on their work

“Being mixed race is the single biggest influence on my music,” says acclaimed producer and performer Tricky, who has named his latest album Mixed Race as if to rubber-stamp the point.

The Massive Attack musician makes it clear, from a statement on his website, that, for him, having close relatives from varying ethnic backgrounds has been a positive and enriching experience that has made him “much more open-minded”.

The capacity to move comfortably between cultures and diverse environments is a quality commonly attributed to, or owned by, mixed-race people. Tricky says, simply: “I come from both worlds.”

And this is a sentiment shared by several up-and-coming mixed-race artists – that is, artists who happen to be mixed race – when they examine how their dual heritage has shaped their work.

“You can appeal to people of different cultures because, rightly or wrongly, they each feel that you have some shared identity with them,” explains poet and playwright Sabrina Mahfouz.

The 27-year-old, whose background is a mix of Egyptian, Guyanese, Portuguese, English and Irish, says that the richness of her multicultural experience provides material for her performances:

“‘I have a solo show and in it I do characterisations and accents, all based on small observations about how people articulate their sentences. Partly this comes from seeing different people around the table in my own family, all with different accents and ways of speaking, which I always found fascinating.’

Dean Atta, a performance poet and playwright who works with Sabrina, agrees that a benefit of dual heritage as an artist is that your mixed-race background can attract a more diverse audience.

Dean, whose parents are of Cypriot and Jamaican origin, says: “I’ve never felt excluded from anything. The black community has never been something that I felt I couldn’t be part of, and I’ve always been comfortable around white people. I think the different aspects of my identity just broaden the appeal of my work.”

However, Dean doesn’t have, as he says, a “mixed race poem”, referring to John Agard’s Half-Caste as a paradigm for a piece of work ostensibly exploring the author’s biracial background. Like Tricky’s latest album, Agard’s tome to compounded racial identities explicitly addresses the mixed-race experience through the lens of someone living the reality.

Riffat Ahmed, a visual artist and filmmaker, says her equivalent to Half-Caste was a photography project, in which she took portraits of herself clothed in the traditional dress of Bangladesh and of Saudi Arabia: her parents’ native countries.

Riffat, 26, feels that her artwork gave her the first channel through which to explore her complex mixed-race background, something she felt confused by as she grew up.

She says: “For years I struggled to describe where I was from. I felt international, like I was never from one place or another. I felt I had to choose between my identities as a kid, but through the arts I can express my frustration and conquer all my identities at the same time.”

Did other mixed-race people relate easily to conflict between separate branches of ethnic heritage? “I had mixed reactions,” Riffat replies: “Lots of people could appreciate what I was saying, but it’s not as though all mixed people feel dejected or have to choose between identities.”

Riffat’s response reinforces a well-supported assertion: that mixed-race people do not always have experiences in common when it comes to their identities. They certainly do not constitute a homogenous community, or share realities or histories in the same way as other ethnic groups.

This rendered one of the questions that Runnymede’s recent Arts and Mixedness project addressed trickier than it may at first seem: What elements of arts and culture are attractive to a mixed race audience?

Nonetheless, when put to Dean, Sabrina and Riffat they all responded similarly. By replacing ‘mixed-race people’ for something closer to ‘diverse audience’ in their answers, they...
each had ideas on how to avoid addressing only a narrow section of society.

Sabrina offered: “Anything that isn’t concentrating on a white middle-class male story immediately has more of a draw. It’s about encouraging artists who bring mixed-race characters and mixed-race perspectives into their work. This need not be the focus – the story could be about anything – but having this representation, and not sticking to a traditionally white experience, means the audience will be more diverse.”

While Dean, who organises regular performances and charity fundraisers, said: “The nights I put on are always mixed because those are the different people that I know, so it’s not a ‘black thing’ or a ‘gay thing’. I don’t like to do anything exclusive; it’s all about inclusivity for me.”

The mention of mixed-race audiences also reminds Riffat of a negative tendency she feels is linked to the label ‘mixed race artist’, or indeed to an artist from any minority ethnic group. “Something I don’t like about the art world is that if you’re from a particular background then you feel the need to reference it in your work; I don’t like that – when people see my name they expect me to deliver a certain type of work. It’s being pigeonholed.”

But Sabrina feels there is a less prescribed idea of what you might focus on as a mixed-race artist, perhaps compared to artists from different ethnic minority groups. “I think mixedness is a huge advantage in terms of expectation,” she says: “People don’t expect you to focus on the mixed-race experience, but they embrace it if you do.”

All three young artists see Britain or, perhaps more accurately, London as having just as much bearing on their sense of belonging and identity as their ethnic background or parents’ birthplace.

Sabrina says: “I think that whatever influences I’ve got I feel very British, especially growing up in London. My mixedness is more representative of London than my friends who aren’t mixed race.”

One of Dean’s music videos includes screenshots of the Union Jack, as well as the Cypriot and Jamaican standards. He says: “I’m a British boy; I’m a Londoner. It says on my Twitter page that I’m in ‘London via Cyprus and Jamaica’.”

Riffat agrees to an extent, though she sees her identity as more fluid. “When I was younger I’d say I was British, though never English, but I find that now I’m re-questioning how I would describe myself and I’ve really swayed. I’m so into my Arabic and Bengali cultures. But I do find that living in a certain place you identify with that place.”

So do any of them, like Tricky, see being mixed race as the biggest overall influence on their artistic expression? They each have in common the sense that there is more to their identities than a racial or geographical backdrop.

Dean says: “Who your family is will be a big influence on you and any artistic work you do, whatever your background. All aspects of my life and identity impact on my art: being a young person, being mixed race, being gay. London is probably the biggest influence on me; I’ve got friends from all over the place – from Bangladesh to Ghana – and part of that diversity is because I live in London.”

Sabrina says: “I haven’t been doing this long enough to know what my absolute biggest influence is. I think as you get older, roots and identity become more of an issue. So being mixed race could become the biggest influence on my work in the future.”

But she, too, feels there are other aspects of her identity which hold equal, if not greater, weight. “For me, it’s more female representation that I look for, rather than mixed race. I think a female of any race resonates more with me that a male of my exact shared background.”

While Riffat seems to be closest to the Tricky school of thought: “When I think about it, the experiences, questions and frustrations I’ve had, they drove me to look at representation in the way that I do. I guess I would say that being mixed race is the biggest influence on my work, but in an invisible way.”

Follow the links below for the artists’ latest work:

Dean’s latest play: bit.ly/QueenPokou

Riffat’s video project: www.generation3-0.org

Sabrina’s solo show: www.sarbinamahfouz.com

Arts & Mixedness online seminar: http://bit.ly/ArtsMixedness
Old and carefree? Social care and older ethnic minorities

Phil Mawhinney examines how the varying needs of older minority ethnic people may impact on the future of social care

The growing population of older black and minority ethnic (BME) people will face particular challenges in accessing important services such as social care, according to our financial inclusion research. The problems of the UK’s ageing society are ever-present: while the BBC reports on the Ageing Population ‘to Strain NHS’, the Daily Mail asks more generally Who Will Pay for the Elderly? We are constantly told statistics showing the increasing size of the older population - for example, by 2034 one in four of us will be 65 or over, compared to one in six in 2009, warns The Economist (see Figure 1).

What is less commonly mentioned is that the ageing society is becoming much more ethnically diverse than ever before. Our research shows that by 2051 there may be more than 7 million BME people aged over 50, making up nearly one in three people over 50 in England and Wales. This growing group of BME people may face barriers and difficulties accessing services that have traditionally served mainly white people, such as social care services.

Social care services and challenges
Social care includes the different kinds of support services that help older people (and others, such as disabled people) to be healthy, active and independent. It includes supporting people to cook, shop, live in their home and socialise. The long-term provision of social care services is currently the centre of much policy discussion and debate. Increasing life expectancies mean that people are living longer and requiring high quality, personalised care. The current system is widely seen as being unable to meet this increasing demand and cost. The recommendations of the Dilnot Commission - set up by the government to review how care should be funded - are due this summer and may herald significant reform. In the context of these policy and demographic changes, it is crucial to examine the specific challenges that older BME people face.

Firstly, BME people experience worse health outcomes than the rest of society, although this varies by group and health condition. According to parliamentary evidence, health surveys show that Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black Caribbean people are most likely to report the poorest health, and that ill-health starts at a younger age in these groups. As a result, they may have a particular need for social care, whether that is support in their own homes (such as home adaptations) or going into residential care homes. Further, data from the Office for National Statistics shows that Pakistani and Bangladeshi men have the highest rates of long-term illness or disability restricting daily activity - these people may have the highest level of care needs. Secondly, where older BME people live will have an impact on their ability to access care services, particularly residential care homes. Most BME people currently live in urban areas where support services are more diverse - day care centres supporting older Indian or black Caribbean people, for example, are more likely to be in London, Birmingham and so on. However, as older BME people grow in number they may follow the tendency of white people to retire to the countryside or the coast. So, we may find BME people with care needs living in rural areas that have always been nearly all-white - the much-debated depiction of an entirely white rural English village in ITV drama Midsomer Murders is perhaps an interesting reflection of this. Care services may have to adapt to reflect this changing situation.

Paying for care
Perhaps the most important consideration is whether the relative disadvantage experienced by BME people in terms of employment, income and wealth will make it difficult for them to access care. This, of course, depends on the government’s decision regarding how care will be funded; in particular the chosen balance between individual and state contributions. As things stand, those who require care but have insufficient means are given free care, but those with a certain amount of income and wealth have to contribute towards, or fully cover, the costs of care. This means that many people run down their savings or even have to sell their home. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) recently noted that long-term care may require a contribution of £24,000 per year (this figure is from Age Concern Research). At this rate, people will deplete their savings and other wealth very quickly.

So, the value of people’s assets - such as savings and property - is a crucial factor in terms of how care is funded. People from all BME backgrounds have fewer assets than the rest of the population (see our report Why Do Assets Matter?)
Informal care

A huge amount of care is provided informally by family and friends - helping with everyday tasks like cooking, washing and cleaning. Research for the Dilnot Commission suggests that informal caring is particularly common in BME communities. Indeed, Carers UK reports that there are 500,000 BME carers in England alone. Two reasons for this appear to be a strong moral obligation to care for older relatives and the fact that people in some communities have specific cultural needs. Indeed, it is still relatively common among Muslim communities, for example, for older people to live with their son or daughter, rather than go into care homes. One Pakistani participant in the research for the Dilnot Commission said: “We don’t like sending our old people into homes, no, really it’s not in my religion actually... unless they are very ill and we can’t keep them, otherwise it’s our moral duty to look after parents.”

Some suggest that this informal provision of care is in decline, as more BME people are born in the UK and live less in accordance with the norms of their relatives born overseas. In our previous report on pensions, we spoke to a Bangladeshi community worker who said that it is increasingly common for both members of a couple to be working, rather than the woman being the homekeeper. This suggests that the number of older people needing care outside the home is on the rise. So, there is likely to be higher demand for residential care from BME communities that previously had little need for it. Care homes will need to adapt to cater for the particular needs of people in these communities. For example, a black Caribbean participant in the commission’s research explained the importance of dietary needs: “Someone showed us an example where his father went to a care home and his dietary needs weren’t met. So to him, that was the reason why he died sooner.”

Planning for a changing context

As the population of older people grows and becomes more ethnically diverse, many more BME people than ever before will require care services and may face particular barriers to accessing them. Policy-makers need to factor this vastly increased ethnic diversity into their planning and ensure that people on low incomes or who are marginalised - including many BME people - are able to access good quality care as they grow older.

Home ownership and income poverty

Equity release - the process of accessing a proportion of the wealth tied up in your home - has been widely discussed as a potential way of enabling older people to free up money to help pay for care. This is particularly interesting because a lot of older people are poor in terms of income but relatively wealthy in terms of the value of their property. For example, JRF have been running a pilot scheme enabling people to release equity from their home to pay for support that will help them stay at home, rather than have to move into a care home.

However, only those who own their homes can potentially access this extra funding for care, and BME people are less likely to own their homes. However, this varies significantly by group; 66 per cent of Indian households are homeowners (close to the 70 per cent for white households) whereas 26 and 42 per cent of black African and black Caribbean households respectively own their homes (see Figure 2).

Another likely option for funding care is through some kind of insurance scheme, the Economist reports. Research suggests that even those who are able to afford care are unwilling to fund it through insurance. But more important than this is that many people may be unable to afford insurance, or will find that paying it pushes them into poverty. This may be the case for many BME people, who are more likely to experience income poverty, both while working and in retirement. Recent figures show that 52 per cent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are income poor, compared to 17 per cent of white British people (see Figure 3).
Does your organisation work towards race equality?

Join this newly established network to learn how asset-building policies could affect minority ethnic communities

Runnymede is now coordinating ASSETnet (the Asset & Ethnicity Network), a network focusing on ethnicity and asset building policies throughout Europe.

Runnymede has identified black and minority ethnic people find it difficult to build assets because of their experience of market disadvantage, including unemployment and low earnings. This then leaves them vulnerable to the financial shocks and emergencies we all face.

ASSETnet aims to increase awareness and interest in asset-building policies generally and to engage ethnic minority and migrant groups in this work. Runnymede will be doing this through partnerships with the Indigo Network and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), to bring together organisations working on asset-building and organisations working in ethnicity.

Runnymede also maintains an online social network space to support learning and information sharing among the members of the network.

Runnymede’s Financial Inclusion programme has led UK research on the different ways in which ethnic minorities experience disadvantage and financial exclusion.

Prior work includes reports on:

- Financial inclusion and ethnicity
- Ethnic groups and access to free cash machines
- Money advice services
- Ethnic minority retirement abroad
- Pensions and Bangladeshi self-employment
- Saving patterns among ethnic minority people
- Asset equality and ethnicity

Learn more about these publications at: www.runnymedetrust.org/financial-inclusion

For more information on how to join ASSETnet go to www.runnymedetrust.org/assetnet
What more must be done to meet the needs of black and minority ethnic people within the LGBT community?

**Ashley Thomas**
Stonewall

Let’s flip the question around and ask: “What more needs to be done to meet the needs of LGBT people within the black and minority ethnic (BME) community?” All LGBT people remain at significant risk of rejection, and I’d venture that coming from a BME community greatly multiplies this risk of social exclusion and emotional distress. While the rejection of LGBT people is clearly not the preserve of the BME community, there is a widespread idea that being gay is somehow incompatible with BME identity. We know our ethnic background well before we start understanding our sexual orientation or gender identity. BME communities can start doing their bit right now by opening up to the fact that LGBT people have always been members of their families, and present in their neighbourhoods. The very best support we can hope for will always begin at home.

**Parminder Sekhon**
Naz Project

Capacity building is a must. Strengthening infrastructure within the network of groups working with black and minority ethnic (BME) LGBT communities is the place to start. Needs are often identified, evidenced, and services are set up to meet them; the problem is sustaining those services. Funders see innovation as necessary; however, BME communities shouldn’t be disproportionately burdened with creating new projects. Proven practice should eventually be accepted as best practice and funders need to support and sustain the good work already going on. Our projects need reinvestment in order to survive, or vulnerable LGBT service users will suffer. Further, if the message from minority ethnic LGBT people is that mainstream services and events are of little relevance to them, these organisations need to look at access and inclusion. Our rich and diverse mix of cultures and religions should be reasons to challenge the pernicious prejudice that is homophobia, not reasons to stay silent or condone it.

**Sam Rankin**
EveryoneIn

Minority ethnic LGBT people are not just problems that need to be solved; they are people with identities that should be accepted. We can make our services more inclusive of all in many ways: we can take a person-centred approach that focuses on not making assumptions about all clients; we can build partnerships between race, LGBT and transgender organisations so that we can understand each other better and learn from each other; we can send out messages of inclusion and we can challenge all forms of prejudice in ourselves and in others. But whatever we do, we need to be patient and forgiving and keep going. For advice talk to projects such as EveryoneIn in Scotland ([equality-network.org/minorityethniclgbt](http://equality-network.org/minorityethniclgbt)) or use google to find others in a similar situation.

**Jane Standing**
Kairos in Soho

Racism in the media, policy, society and services means that LGBT people are rarely reflected in rounded ways that recognise the dynamic contributions and multifarious lives of black and minority ethnic (BME) people. The pursuit of ‘evidence of need’, particularly for communities of identity (such as BME or LGBT), results in a representation that is limited, at best, to what we may not have, rather than our real and layered experiences. At Kairos in Soho we learn from and support BME LGBT organising, celebrate its long history, continually inform ourselves about new work, and commit to lasting respectful relationships. Organisations wishing to address holistic needs could usefully reflect on the gross and disproportionate underfunding of BME LGBT work to build internal diversity and support the dynamic BME LGBT organising already taking place.

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**The Kairos in Soho team**

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**VOX POP**

Let’s flip the question around and ask: “What more needs to be done to meet the needs of LGBT people within the black and minority ethnic (BME) community?”

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Ephraim Borowski outlines the Scottish Government’s conception of cultural diversity and how this differs from the UK’s approach, both in terms of ideology and policy

“Give me a fixed point, and I can move the whole world,” said Archimedes. Without one, it’s barely possible to survey one’s surroundings. So this may not be the best time for an overview of race equality in Scotland, only weeks after a seismic shift in the political landscape, and while data from the 2011 census (whose ethnicity question even the Registrar General described as “irrational”) are almost a year from publication.

However, there are enough constants for some useful observations. The Scottish National Party (SNP), now with a majority in parliament, is not nationalist in the narrow chauvinistic sense. It is part of the cross-party consensus behind the One Scotland, Many Cultures campaign that has been running, albeit with some rebranding, for more than a decade, and its last budget protected funding for equalities.

There is also consensus that strong measures are needed to eradicate what former first minister, Jack McConnell, called ‘Scotland’s shame’. Although Labour criticised the previous SNP administration for weakening its opposition to sectarianism, a “zero tolerance approach to doing things in the anonymity of blogging or online” was a top SNP manifesto commitment. It is pointless to dispute who is holier than whom, when both are on the side of the angels, but there is no denying the seriousness of sectarian hatred when parcel bombs and bullets are sent to prominent Catholics. The new government’s first announcement was fast-track legislation before the new football season, and although that timetable has been relaxed, their commitment has not.

But, ironically, sectarianism is itself a discriminatory concept. The term as normally understood refers only to hatred and discrimination between Protestants and Catholics, suggesting an intra-Christian problem, that leaves those of other faiths or none untouched. But hatred thrives on hatred, and the message must be that it is never, ever, acceptable. We can have robust disagreements, but must never descend into name-calling or worse - we know too well where that leads. What matters is always what you do, never who you are.

The defining characteristic of hate crime is that it is motivated not by hatred of the individual but of some group to which the victim belongs. That elevates the importance of tackling such crime, and it is promising that police and prosecuting authorities recognise that, when fellow members of the group report feeling frightened and insecure, that it is not paranoia, but rational and justified. The viral anonymity of the internet makes it more insidious and unscrupulous, so legislation to crack down on people who peddle hate online is welcome.

It is valuable too that Scottish law recognises that whether the victim really was a member of the targeted group or was just believed to be, or whether the attack was provoked merely by some symbol associated with the group, is irrelevant - it is the motive that matters.

Scotland recognises the diversity of diversity, steering away from a single stereotype of minority communities. So the Scottish Government has consciously chosen not to use the term ‘black’ in its literature. It is easy to find examples where the unthinking use of the term ‘black and minority ethnic (BME)’ results in exclusion, further marginalising and alienating ethnic and cultural minorities that do not share that pigmentation. For example, a friend was told that because her son “wasn’t black”, an attack on him for wearing a kippah (the Jewish skull-cap) could not have been racist.

There is not one minority community, but many, as different from one another as they are from the majority - if, even, such a thing exists. Some minorities, however, are spread very thinly, and so are threatened by the devolution of resource allocation to local authorities in whose areas small minorities are literally invisible. Fortunately Scottish localism seems not to share the UK Government’s identification of ‘communities’ with neighbourhoods, and the protection of the equalities budget is a hopeful sign of a continuing commitment to support from the centre where it is most needed.

There has recently been much discussion of whether multiculturalism has failed, as the prime minister declared in March 2011. But the system of parallel silos that he described is not multi-anything. Consider what ‘multi-coloured’ means: separate distinct patches form a colour chart, not a pattern. For that, the different colours must connect and interact. What David Cameron described is not what Scots recognise, as his party chairman, Baroness Warsi, has acknowledged. Here different communities are identifiable and distinct, while at the same time forming a single pattern.

At Runnymede’s panel discussion in the Scottish Parliament in March 2011, I was asked what the policy priority should be for promoting good race relations in Scotland. My answer remains the same: that we should recognise the diversity of the diversity of overlapping minorities, to create a society in which all can feel proud to assert their identity as parts of a coherent pattern. Just like threads in the tartan.
Kon Karapanagiotidis OAM, founder and chief executive of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre in Melbourne, reports on the shared experience of the first and the newest Australians

In the heart of Melbourne I watched our local Indigenous Australians, the traditional custodians of the land, welcome a group of asylum seekers to the country. It’s an Indigenous tradition steeped in more than 68,000 years of Australian history, whereby the custodians formally welcome people to their country.

What was profound about this moment was not just that the oldest living culture in the world, the first Australians, were opening their arms and hearts to the newest, but that they were willing to do so despite their own plight and place in their country. Indigenous Australians are one of the most oppressed and disadvantaged communities on this earth.

I spoke on this night of how no one was better placed to understand the story of the refugee than Indigenous people. They are displaced just like asylum seekers; the only difference being that this has been done to them in their own country, on their own land.

Like asylum seekers they know what it is like to lose family, to be separated from them through no choice of their own. The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their parents was official government policy in Australia from 1909 to 1969, with more than 100,000 children stolen from their families. Beyond the recent apology, there have been no reparations.

Asylum seekers in Australia are the living ghosts of our country, living the lives of beggars in one of the most prosperous countries in the world. Most of the asylum seekers my organisation (the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre) assists live in the community with no income, healthcare or right to work. Indigenous people also know this story well, as they have a life expectancy 17 years shorter than other Australians and many live in extremely poor conditions.

In Australia, our government preaches the principle of punishment rather than of protection. It tells Australians to follow fear. We currently have almost 7000 people locked up simply for seeking freedom and asylum in our country. This number includes almost 1000 children who, along with the adults, are left often indefinitely in limbo, many descending into despair and self-harm. Indigenous Australians live the consequences of the politics of fear too, as they are overrepresented in our prison system at a rate of 12 times the national average, and deaths in custody continue to rise to an all time high. Both Indigenous and new communities are being criminalised and demonised for their race, for being ‘other’. One indigenous man said at the migrant welcoming event: ‘I was born a political football. Punished for my blackness in a country that knew nothing but blackness before this time.’

Asylum seekers and Indigenous people are both subjected to government interventions that strip them of their self-determination and basic human rights. The Australian administration is currently trying to deport genuine refugees to Malaysia, a move that is illegal and immoral given the dangers they will face returning. In the Northern Territory, Indigenous people are having their income quarantined and their rights under the Racial Discrimination Act suspended, all under the catchcry that others know what’s best for them.

In the absence of a moral compass from any major political party in Australia we are having a race to the bottom. Indigenous people and asylum seekers have become the scapegoats for most economic and social ills in our country, despite not being responsible for any of them. This has stained the very fabric and heart of Australia and remains our national shame. Until we start having an honest conversation about race and racism we will continue downwards into this moral abyss.

The irony is Australia is a nation built by boat people, whose success is founded on multiculturalism. In reality it’s only our Indigenous people who can lay claim to this land. Yet they do not claim to own it, describing themselves instead as its custodians, there to care for it and protect it. Just like the land they don’t believe the right to freedom can be owned, that no one has a mortgage on it. If they can find it within them to welcome freedom seekers to Australia, why can’t the rest of us?
Muslim identity as a form of defence

THIS BOOK REFLECTS ON AND challenges the discourses and policies surrounding young Asian Muslim men in the UK. Written before the 7/7 London bombings in 2005, it considers how such men construct their own sense of identity, challenging simplifications and moral panics. The book is based on the author’s interviews with 24 young (12 to 18-year-old) males in an economically deprived West Midlands town. The predominantly working class young men talk about their Muslim identities, life in school, sport, romance and their aspirations in the context of everyday racisms.

The book commences with a thoroughly engaging overview of how ‘race’ became increasingly entwined with the political discourse of post-war immigrants who were seen as the bearers of social ills and problems. Making refreshing use of the concept of ‘moral panics’, the text makes a cogent argument that young Muslim men, in particular after the 2001 conflicts in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford and the global ‘War on Terror’, are characterised as either culturally alienated or culturally determined. The trajectory is either one of radicalisation or cultural self-segregation and, as such, this group has become the new folk devil of our times.

The book goes on to argue how a Muslim identity, far from fixed, is used strategically by the boys as a form a defensive community in the context of everyday racism. The book offers interesting details of the daily lives of the boys and how they value and defend their collective Asian Muslim identities, as distinct from talk of atomised ‘white’ culture. The book is also attuned to the play of masculine identities in these discourses, which construct female Muslim identities in ways that seek to control their behaviour through moral codes not applicable to boys or men.

We learn about the Asian boys’ behaviour in school; their belief that school teachers treat them differentially or are unable to deal with the racism they face; and how they stand up for one another. Even the school playground is spatially organised along ethnic lines. The boys also appear to construct mutually exclusive identities of either excelling academically or being socially valued by one’s peers. Yet at the same time, far from being politically alienated, the boys talk of their political awareness of global issues and involvement in anti-Iraq war demonstrations, which were discouraged by schools. Shain asks pertinent questions about the role of schools in promoting active citizenship through the national curriculum, and the balance of social engagement and criticism alongside constructing normative values.

“Young Muslim men... are characterised as either culturally alienated or culturally determined.”

A strength of the book is that it keeps alive the contingent nature of group formation; boys in one-to-one interviews talk more openly of their friendships with non-Asians and once out of secondary school, their local ties are loosened, and other forms of relationship become possible. The book also consistently engages with competitive masculinities be they in sport, friendships with girls across racial boundaries, or control in school. At root, the argument tends towards working class boys seeking respect among their peers, as too few conditions exist for them to enable them to succeed in other spheres. Though this is plausible, at times it feels as though the point is not made convincingly enough.

The New Folk Devils covers an ambitious expanse of terrain and, on the whole, engages with lives of young Asian Muslim men in ways that challenge notions of Muslim identity and cultural closure. What the text lacks, however, is a sense of the boys as real characters; at times one feels that the interviews only partially substantiate some of the claims. That being said, it is a very readable account of the lives of these young men in their own words, which cannot be reduced down to a generalisation about Asian or Muslim identities.
Engaging multiculturalism

SOUTHALL BLACK SISTERS (SBS) has been providing a place of refuge and campaigning for the rights of black and minority ethnic (BME) women in the UK since 1979. Given their long and proud heritage, a report by the group examining an issue as pressing as cohesion, faith and gender equality deserves attention. It is a shame, therefore, that the report came out when it did - despite its many perceptive and pressing insights, it feels like the political discourse has moved on at breakneck speed and the resulting dust cloud has obscured its continued relevance.

The report opens with a summary of the debates surrounding community relations and policy from multiculturalism through to community cohesion. The authors discuss the Big Society agenda and point out that: “The notion of the ‘Big Society’ remains silent on how questions of poverty and social exclusion of the most marginalised and vulnerable (perhaps the greatest obstacle to civic participation) in our society will be tackled.” The report is critical of the attitude to multiculturalism in the years preceding the McPherson Inquiry; the authors believe that it “reduced (multiculturalism) to recognising and tolerating difference rather than being seen as a necessary component in dismantling institutional racism”. The idea that race relations policy fundamentally fails to challenge inequality and privilege is one that will recur in their report; in fact they are even more scathing of the community cohesion agenda that would follow it, and this criticism takes up the rest of the report.

The majority of the report addresses the reactions and concerns that Patel and Sen encountered when they interviewed a group of 21 women who regularly used the services of Southall Black Sisters. The women aged from 25-60 were from a variety of South Asian or African-Caribbean backgrounds. All but one of the women described themselves as religiously observant though they were quick to define their religion in personal terms. One declared: “I feel that religion is in my heart, religion is my personal relationship with God.”

Religiosity did not prevent them being worried by the power given to unelected religious leaders as gatekeepers for the communities they claim to represent. In particular they feared the instability or unwillingness of these figures to address women’s issues:

“I would like my views represented by women not by community and religious leaders. What would the others know about women’s issues? We are struggling to fit into this country and this community. If religious leaders bring their laws where can we run to? There will be more suicides, depression, castaways, and conversions. It would be the biggest disaster.”

Patel and Sen highlight the sense of isolation that many of these women feel and this is compared with the sense of belonging they receive from SBS: “Please do not cut their funding because if their activities are cut then I will feel imprisoned within my home with nowhere to go.” This feeling is exacerbated by the lack of English language skills and the often open hostility they feel from much of society: “I don’t feel like I belong in this country… race is always an issue and yet I am intelligent, educated and can speak English… So someone who doesn’t speak English and is not educated – what they hell must they be going through?”

The abiding theme of this report is the manner in which the community cohesion agenda threatens to place women at the mercy of unelected, conservative, patriarchal elements in their communities while at the same time failing to open up a space for their integration into “mainstream” British society. Many of the women stated that they felt trapped by a lack of English language and the persistent racism they experienced from much of wider society, while at the same time unsupported or actively oppressed within communities that advocates of cohesion and the Cantle Report believe are self-segregating, narrow and isolated. These issues remain pressing, perhaps more so in the light of the Prime Minister’s attack on an ill-defined “state multiculturalism”. David Cameron advocated “muscular liberalism” while at the same time opening the door for exponentially greater religious control over education. The solution offered by Cohesion, Faith and Gender is of a genuinely engaging multiculturalism, one that is not afraid to challenge discrimination and entrenched hegemony regardless of the groups involved. It is the one that SBS sees itself as providing, and that proponents of the much maligned term ‘multiculturalism’, such as Bhikhu Parekh and others, have always advocated.
Celebrating a history

**Ajamu** tells us about plans already underway to create Europe’s first dedicated black LGBT archive

“There are no new ideas, there are only new ways in making them felt” - Audre Lorde

The *rukus!* Black LGBT Archive hopes to become Europe’s first dedicated archive devoted to the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual experience. Deposited at the London Metropolitan Archives in October 2010, the collection aims to generate and preserve historical, cultural and artistic materials relating to the lived experience of the black LGBT community in the UK, opening it up for the public to see.

The main objective of the project is to increase awareness of the lives of black LGBT people and their histories. To this end *rukus!* hopes to produce exhibitions, publications, talks and workshops. It is also important to create oral history interviews, to preserving a record of testimonies, and to establish permanent premises for the whole archive.

Printed materials, magazines, pamphlets, flyers, posters, and club memorabilia, collected from activists, DJs, club promoters, writers, artists, and magazine publishers are assembled and displayed for the first time in a collection entitled *The Queen’s Jewels.* This is a fascinating insight into what has helped to define black LGBT culture in the UK. Both the black press and the gay press ignored the black LGBT presence in the early years, even now portraying it as a minority interest. *The Queen’s Jewels* is central in our attempt to address this, demonstrating our historical struggle for visibility.

The archive also includes our current endeavour, *Sharing Tongues,* which is an oral history project, uncovering and highlighting individual experiences and stories about everything from relationships and work to faith and spirituality from as wide and diverse a range of black LGBT people as possible.

The 11-year-old *rukus!* Federation, which runs the Black LGBT Archive, is known for its long-standing and successful programme of community-based work with black LGBT artists and cultural producers. *rukus!*, which is a play on the word ‘raucous’, looks at what happens to openly black lesbians and gay people in the arts and cultural sector when they reach a particular age. We ask questions such as ‘where is the counter-culture within our own black and/or LGBT communities?’ and ‘why is our experience so bound up in sexual health, hate crimes or a victim narrative?’ We hold these debates over fish and chips or curry goat, rice and peas, while watching *Dr Who* or *Star Trek*.

We work to engage with that ‘unsayable something’ about who we all are: the swish of the young casually fabulous black queen with the 24-inch waist and over-sized Gucci bag; or Londoners for whom home is still Lagos, as well as Peckham. We represent the older invisible community embodied by artists such as Sandi Hughes, a retired black lesbian grandmother and filmmaker, who this month started her new job as a club DJ in Liverpool. We simultaneously speak to the younger generation of fierce and fearless artists, activists and cultural producers: the fresh approach to poetry, and political astuteness of Jay Bernard; the rhymes and inventiveness of Dean Atta; and the political activism of Godwyns (Justice for Gay Africans), Seaon Burckley, Van Sertima, Skyetshooki and many others.

All of this and more makes any community engagement aimed at our diverse communities challenging, as they are deeply complex and layered. Yet much of the LGBT sector applies a one size fits all approach to engagement or continues to perceive us in stereotypical ways. Funders offer paltry pots of money for quick fixes to organisations ill-equipped to really appreciate our experience. We are not just people with needs to be fixed. We are individuals with lives to be celebrated.

As black queer lives are represented more and more in a monolithic way - or simply ignored - it is important for us to continue to nurture deep, mutually beneficial relationships with black and minority ethnic and LGBT organisations, not as hollow rhetoric, but as relationships that work in practice. It’s important that we continue to make our voices heard, share our creativity and celebrate ourselves and those who have been part of our journey.

**AJAMU TELLS US ABOUT PLANS ALREADY UNDERWAY TO CREATE EUROPE’S FIRST DEDICATED BLACK LGBT ARCHIVE**
“Boom bye, bye inna batty man head,” sang Buju Banton, as people around me made their hands into gun shapes and mock fired in the air, smiling and nodding in agreement. That was 1992 and I was on the verge of coming out as gay (the ‘batty man’ referred to) and as I left the dancefloor to ‘get some air,’ I felt under no illusion that the step that I was about to make would alienate me from a lot of people and, importantly for me, a lot of black people. Nearly twenty years later, how far have we come? If it is true, as Mudia Uzzi and Charles Stephens note in this Bulletin (p10), that if one part of a group is oppressed then we all remain oppressed, defeating homophobia is as important as eradicating racism.

Undeniably there has been significant progress. Despite being aged 18 in 1992, any sexual activity I engaged in would have been illegal. It remained legitimate for people to discriminate against me on the basis of my sexuality, and protection from any harassment was minimal. Within less than a generation, change has been remarkable and the result of a mammoth struggle by men and women across this country and beyond for human rights. Yet we still have some way to go before we can declare victory, especially in terms of the level of reported homophobic hate crime. We also have to guard against the prospect of progress being restricted to particular class, ethnic or regional groups and ensure that equal rights for LGBT people extend to all, regardless of background.

While it is clear that the fight against homophobia and the fight against racism have much in common and much to learn from each other, the intersections between racisms and homophobia create some complex challenges.

When David Cameron made his call for “muscular liberalism” in response to so-called “state multiculturalism” in Munich earlier this year, he introduced a list of values that confirmed as genuinely liberal: “Freedom of speech. Freedom of worship. Democracy. The rule of law. Equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality . . . this is what defines us as a society. To belong here is to believe in these things.”

It is a marker of how far we have come in the last decade that a Conservative prime minister, who voted to retain the anti-gay Section 28 less than ten years ago, and who gained his constituency seat when a Tory MP defected in protest at his party’s position on gay rights, can declare that British values depend on equality for minority sexualities.

For many, attitudes towards issues of sexuality are largely informed by their religious faith. The protection of freedom of belief and equality on the grounds of sexuality are positioned in the popular imagination as in competition. Attitudes to sexuality are often quoted as evidence in the misguided ‘clash of civilizations’ discourse, which argues that Muslims can never fit into Western democracies. The Christian Legal Centre and others have tried to make the case that freedom of belief requires freedom to discriminate against LGBT people. Often, as in the case of “thwarted” foster carers Eunice and Owen Johns, those arguing this position are from minority ethnic communities. Across the globe, countries in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa maintain homophobic laws on their statute books and in some recent cases, such as in Uganda, have pursued the extension of these laws to include the death penalty for homosexual acts. Together, these trends have given homophobia a minority ethnic face.

At the centre of this maelstrom are people trying to live their lives - LGBT people from the UK’s minority ethnic communities. In this edition of the Bulletin we have emphasised their voices, responses to racism and homophobia, and efforts to build community. While cuts to public spending are putting much of this work at risk, it is crucial that we recognise the importance of addressing homophobia as integral to our efforts to fight racism.
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