



Reach Society

Building Connections

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Patrons: Lord Herman Ouseley, Prof Trevor Williams, Mr John Budu-Aggrey, Prof Sir Geoff Palmer & Mrs Marva Rollins OBE Newsletter: 019

Welcome: Dear Friends/Supporters, here's our forth newsletter in 2021; we hope you are all safe and well given the current circumstances, and thanks to everyone for their continued help and support.

About Reach Society: *Inspiring Young People since 2010:* Our core purpose is to *encourage, motivate and inspire our young people* to develop their full potential.

Reach Society's Virtual Careers Conference 6 -9 April 2021:

We made history as roughly 6,000 people registered for our inaugural Virtual Careers Conference, VCC. We wish to offer our sincere thanks and gratitude to participants, contributors, community groups and exhibitors. A report will produced in due course. Highlights included our Perfect 10 Workshops, meetings with Role Models and exhibitors and the Panel of Experts.



Materials and resources from our 30 exhibitors are still on offer until end of April. Simply visit "Exhibitors" on the VCC homepage here <https://rsvcc.weareproxy.co.uk>



Reach Society's Network Conversations: Held on the last Friday of every month (with the exception of August and December). Black professionals meet to discuss issues that affect our community; with the aim of finding solutions and building amity. Since April 2020 these have been taking place via zoom. Here is a flavour of some of our debates so far in 2021: **The impact of lockdown on the education development /progression alongside, our mental health and well-being in the Black Community.** Lead contributors Tony Cealy, Nathaniel Pamah, Alisha Scott, Dr John Ndikum, Hylton Forrester, John Kamara, Anthony Jemmott, Debby Enoe and Rudi Page. Other contributors: Tai Ibitoye, Dr Melrose Stewart, Peter Denis. **Covid-19 vaccine and the Black Community: Exploring the current viewpoints'**. Lead contributors Patrick Vernon OBE, Dr Winston Morgan, Dr Joan St John, Pastor Alton Bell, Angela Clarke and Terence Channer. **How do we inspire our young people to fulfil their potential?** Lead Contributors include: Oveta McInnis, Dr Melrose Stewart MBE, Karen Bryson, Ricky Nelson, Claudia McFarlane and Dr Dwain Neil OBE.

These conversations are open to any individual and for more info contact Dr Donald Palmer: db_palmer@yahoo.co.uk



The Society's Response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report Last year the government set up an independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in order to review inequalities in the UK. With regard to the call for evidence the Society, supported by experts within the community, submitted evidence in four areas; education, health, employment and the criminal justice system. Here's the Society's response to the Commission.

What the Report Omitted: *On 31 March 2021 the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities published its long awaited Report. However how many people in the modern Black community are aware that the Commission chose to disregard Reach Society's four written submissions, despite the Cabinet Office's written confirmation that they received the submissions.*

Is there any wonder that the final Report is a parody of the lived experiences of the Black citizens in the UK? Reach Society and a group of community organisations who gave written evidence to the Commission, are left with just one conclusion.

This government does not care about the effect of systemic racism on Black citizens.

It has no compassion for Black citizens and that is the reason it sees no need for any behaviour changes in the education, health, employment or the criminal justice system.

Is there any wonder that trust in this government is at a very low ebb, and sinking fast?

We have been serialising our submissions in our newsletters and featured below is our fourth and final submission on the criminal justice system. Our submission falls under two main categories - representation and relationship.

Representation

1. The under-representation of Black people in the justice system – Black staff in the justice system (such as judges, barristers, magistrates and others) make up roughly one percent of all staff. Consequently, the justice system is not sufficiently diverse or culturally competent to assess the demeanour of the vast majority of Black and minority ethnic citizens who are presented for trial. This gap in understanding in large part leads to the poor understanding of many of these citizens in trial situations. And this often leads to inappropriate sentencing decisions. More diversity is required at every level of the justice system, and extensive training in cultural awareness of judges is urgently required.



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The diversity of the police workforce is also woefully poor. Of roughly 125,300 police officers in England and Wales just 1630 (or roughly 1.3 percent) are of the modern Black community or MBC. By contrast, the BMC is around 5 percent of the British population. Consequently, greater diversity is required in order to give the police workforce the capacity to better understand the Black community. The current drive to recruit a further 20,000 staff is an opportunity for the government to make progress in this area of disparity.

Relationship

2. Disproportionate wrongful arrests – Urgent attention needs to be given to police behaviour in which people in the MBC are disproportionately and wrongly arrested compared to white citizens. A robust scheme for compensating the MBC for wrongful arrests is urgently needed to deter the police from persisting with this behaviour. In addition, police leadership and commissioners must be held to account for the sanctioning of this abuse by turning a blind eye to the unacceptable behaviour of the officers under their control.

3. Stop and search – Data from the police and Home Office indicate that citizens in the MBC are eight times more likely to be stopped and searched than white citizens in the year 2018 to 2019. Of roughly 370,500 people stopped and searched that year 65,800 (or 18 percent) were from the Black community. This disparity is horrific and undermines the trust and confidence of the Black community in the police.

The rationale for the excessive use of section 60 of the Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994 - which allows police to stop citizens without suspicion that a crime is actually taking place – must be reviewed and changes made in the interest of better relations between the MBC and the police.

4. Use of force – The anecdotal evidence in the community is that far too many encounters with the police escalate into the use of force for no apparent reason. Many Black citizens have suffered injury and death from this heavy handed approach which has undermined faith, confidence and trust in the police.

Home Office data indicate that the police are five times more likely to use force against citizens in the MBC than white citizens. The data shows that in 2018 these force tactics were used roughly 615,000 times, of which more than 94,300 (or 15 percent) were against members of the MBC. These police tactics included handcuffing, physical restraint, use of batons, irritant sprays, tasers and firearms.

5. Arrests under the Mental Health Act – Home Office 2019 data shows that citizens in the Black community in England and Wales were twice as likely as white citizens to be detained by police under the Mental Health Act.

Under the Act, the police have the power to formally detain any person if they appear to have a mental disorder (in the interests of their own health or safety) or for the protection of other people. In 2018 police used this power to detain citizens more than 33,000 times of which slightly fewer than 1,900 (or 6 percent) were Black citizens. This provision is also another

source of deep upset and disquiet in the MBC owing to its consistent misuse.

6. Better Black community and police relationship – Home Office data indicate that citizens in the MBC are also twice as likely as white citizens to die either during or immediately after having contact with the police. In the fourteen years between 2004 and 2019 roughly 2,600 people in England and Wales died during or after contact with the police. And roughly 150 (or roughly 6 percent) of them were from the modern Black community.

Reach Society believes that while the attitude of the police to the MBC remains one of enforcement and not of service the relationship will remain poor. Consequently, measures are urgently required for building viable bridges between the MBC and the police across the whole country.

7. The EHRC Advice - We hereby repeat the advice from Rebecca Hilsenrath, Chief Executive of the Equalities & Human Rights Commission, the EHRC:

“The police play a pivotal role in ensuring that we are all safe and protected. To build and maintain trust we need a representative justice system that reflects the people it serves and uses its powers in an intelligence-led way. Anything else threatens the relationship between the police and the community.”

“We know that both adults and children from some ethnic minorities experience disproportionate levels of force by police – sometimes with very serious consequences. They may also be at increased risk of restraint in mental health settings and are subject to higher rates of detention under the Mental Health Act. We need to find answers to these disparities.”

“We continue to ask police forces, the Home Office and Police and Crime Commissioners to not only retain but also build on protections designed to promote fair and equal policing. We have also repeatedly called for a “comprehensive race equality strategy” to tackle inequality right across society, including in the criminal justice system. We want the government to take urgent action so that Black and ethnic minorities do not continue to suffer unfair treatment or punishment.”

It is Reach Society’s belief that we are a very long way from where we should be if we wish to make the modern Black community feel safe and protected. Urgent action is required by the Home Office to make police commissioners accountable for the abusive behaviours of the staff under their control. The persistent harassment of British people in the modern Black community, over the last 72 years, amounts to systemic racism which needs to end.