The Runnymede Trust
Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

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The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain

Chair: Bhikhu Parekh

The Commission was established by The Runnymede Trust

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PROFILE BOOKS

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Preface

The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain was set up in January 1998 by the Runnymede Trust, an independent think-tank devoted to the cause of promoting racial justice in Britain. The Commission's remit was to analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and to propose ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage and making Britain a confident and vibrant multicultural society at ease with its rich diversity. It was made up of 23 distinguished individuals drawn from many community backgrounds and different walks of life, and with a long record of active academic and practical engagement with race-related issues in Britain and elsewhere. They brought to their task different views and sensibilities and, after a good deal of discussion, reached a consensus. The report is the product of their two years of deliberation.

Given the fluidity of social and political affairs, and the constant emergence of new ideas and insights, no report can claim to be the last word on its subject, and this one certainly advances no such claim. However, as a carefully researched and thought-out document, hammered out in searching discussions conducted in a spirit of intellectual and moral responsibility, it represents, we hope, a major contribution to the national debate. In view of the violence inspired by racist doctrines, race is too important and sensitive an issue to be turned into a political football or approached in terms of narrow electoral calculations. We hope that our report will form the basis of, or at least pave the way for, a much-needed national consensus.

It is informed by several fundamental beliefs that in our view are, or deserve to be, shared by most people in Britain.

First, all individuals have equal worth irrespective of their colour, gender, ethnicity, religion, age or sexual orientation, and have equal claims to the opportunities they need to realise their potential and contribute to collective wellbeing. The principle of equal moral worth cannot take root and flourish within a structure of deep economic or social inequalities.

Second, citizens are not only individuals but also members of particular religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities, which are comparatively stable as well as open and fluid. Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society, and needs to reconcile their sometimes conflicting requirements.

Third, since citizens have differing needs, equal treatment requires full account to be taken of their differences. When equality ignores relevant differences and insists on uniformity of treatment, it leads to injustice and inequality; when differences ignore the demands of equality, they result in discrimination. Equality must be defined in a culturally sensitive way and applied in a discriminating but not discriminatory manner.

Fourth, every society needs to be cohesive as well as respectful of diversity, and must find ways of nurturing diversity while fostering a common sense of belonging and a shared identity among its members.

Fifth, although every society needs a broadly shared body of values, of which human rights are an important part, there is a risk of defining the values so narrowly that their further development is ruled out or legitimate ways of life are suppressed. While affirming such essential procedural values as tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences, and such basic ethical norms as respect for human dignity, equal worth of all, equal opportunity for self-development and equal life chances, society must also respect deep moral differences and find ways of resolving inescapable conflicts. Human rights principles provide a valuable framework for handling differences, but they are never by themselves enough.

Lastly, racism, understood either as division of humankind into fixed, closed and unalterable groups or as systematic domination of some groups by others, is an empirically false, logically incoherent and morally unacceptable doctrine. Racism is a subtle and complex phenomenon. It may be based on colour and physical features or on culture, nationality and way of life; it may affirm equality of human worth but implicitly deny this by insisting on the absolute superiority of a particular culture; it may admit equality up to a point but impose a glass ceiling higher up. Whatever its subtle disguises and forms, it is deeply divisive, intolerant of differences, a source of much human suffering and inimical to the common sense of belonging lying at the basis of every stable political community. It can have no place in a decent society.

We approach the current state of multi-ethnic Britain against the background of these and related beliefs. We believe that it is both possible and vitally necessary to create a society in which all citizens and communities feel valued, enjoy equal opportunities to develop their respective talents, lead fulfilling lives, accept their fair share of collective responsibility and help create a communal life in which the spirit of civic friendship, shared identity and common sense of belonging goes hand in hand with love of diversity. Having sketched our vision of a relaxed and self-confident multicultural Britain with which all its citizens can identify, we analyse the obstacles standing in its way and propose policies most likely to overcome them. The obstacles include racial discrimination, racial disadvantage, a racially oriented moral and political culture, an inadequate philosophy of government, a lack of carefully thought-out and properly integrated administrative structures at various levels of government, and a lack of political will. The policies we propose address each of these. They require not only appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures, but also a radical shift in the manner in which British identity and the relations between different groups of citizens are generally defined. Further, important changes are also needed within Asian and black communities themselves if they are to overcome the obstacles which they face and take full advantage of the opportunities offered by wider society. But since the nature and extent of such changes vary from community to community, and are best identified and undertaken by each community separately, discussion of them clearly falls outside the scope of this report.

The very language used to describe and define race relations in Britain is a source of considerable conceptual and political muddle. Such terms as 'minority' and 'majority' signify fixed blocs and obscure the fluidity and heterogeneity of real life. The term 'ethnic group' traps the group concerned into its ethnicity, and suppresses both its multiple identity and its freedom of self-determination. The term 'integration' is even more misleading, as it implies a one-way process in which 'minorities' are to be absorbed into the non-existent homogeneous cultural structure of the 'majority'. We are fully aware of these and other limitations of the dominant language of debate. Inventing a wholly new vocabulary does not help, for such a language would be too abstract, artificial and unrelated to the idioms of everyday life to be intelligible, let alone provide a vehicle for meaningful dialogue. We have therefore thought it best to avoid parts of the current vocabulary when we could

conveniently do so, and to make suitable qualifications and warnings when we could not.

A word about our mode of working is pertinent. We visited many regions, consulted a wide range of organisations, conducted interviews, organised focus group discussions and received several hundred written submissions. We also held several day-long seminars where well-known activists and experts in the field debated relevant issues in great detail; some of the participants later commented at length on the written reports of these seminars. The seminars were particularly helpful in relation to Part 1 of the report, which deals with issues of considerable theoretical and practical significance. For Part 2 we commissioned papers from experts in the relevant areas, invited comments on them from other experts, and discussed these in full Commission meetings. Broadly the same procedure was followed for Part 3.

We were frequently struck by the absence or inadequacy of research data in significant areas of public policy. We hope very much, therefore, that the Economic and Social Research Council will earmark funding for policy-related research on race and diversity issues, and similarly that other funding bodies will give high priority to research on the topics and concerns covered in this report.

For my part, it has been a great privilege to chair this Commission of distinguished and talented individuals over a period of two years. It was a delight to see them debate complex issues. I was also deeply moved by their enormous generosity and patience. In meeting after meeting they dissected drafts of the chapters, revising and even rethinking them in the light of their colleagues' searching comments. They gave most magnanimously of their time and energy without any hope of reward, and sometimes wrote and rewrote whole chapters out of loyalty to their colleagues and commitment to the cause of a better Britain. Working with such wonderful colleagues has been both a humbling and an uplifting experience. The report is entirely their creation, and I only hope that the understandable but regrettable tendency to identify a report with a commission's chair will be studiously resisted.

The Commission owes a deep debt of gratitude to a large number of individuals and organisations. They are all named in the acknowledgements in Appendices A and B. The report would not have been possible without the continuing support of the Runnymede Trust and the generosity of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Nuffield Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, our three funders. I should like

to express my own and the Commission's profound indebtedness to Robin Richardson for his marvellous skill in turning discussions and thoughts into a cogent text. I also thank my predecessor and good friend John Burgh, and Kate Gavron and the Commission's staff for their support over the last two years.

The report was inspired by and intended to rethink the seminal report *Colour and Citizenship* by Jim Rose and his colleagues, published in 1969. As a founder and trustee of the Runnymede Trust, Jim took a keen interest in our work and was most anxious to see its publication. Sadly, he died last year. We salute his memory with pride, remember with sorrow those who died victims of or in the course of struggle against racial injustice, and express our deepest gratitude to those countless white, black and Asian people in Britain who are continuing the struggle in small and large ways. Every generation owes its successors a duty to bequeath them a better country than it inherited. This report offers one way of discharging that great historical obligation.

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Bhikhu Parekh
July 2000

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Executive Summary

Overall summary

1   England, Scotland and Wales are at a turning point in their history. They could become narrow and inward-looking, with rifts between themselves and among their regions and communities, or they could develop as a community of citizens and communities. Britain as a whole could be such a community, and so could each part or region, and each city, town and neighbourhood. Building and sustaining a community of citizens and communities will involve:
  • rethinking the national story and national identity;
  • understanding that all identities are in a process of transition;
  • developing a balance between cohesion, equality and difference;
  • addressing and eliminating all forms of racism;
  • reducing material inequalities;
  • building a pluralistic human rights culture.

2   Part 1 of this report discusses each of these six themes. Part 2 considers what the tasks involve in various areas of social policy. Part 3 is concerned with strategies for change at national, regional, local and institutional levels.

3   Part 2 starts with a discussion of police and policing. This is where, for many citizens and communities, the abstract concepts of equality, rights, difference and belonging are most clearly and concretely seen – or not seen. But the police service is only one part of the wider criminal justice system. The report looks next at this wider structure. It continues by considering the education systems of England, Scotland and Wales, then cultural policy, health and welfare, and employment. How a state sees and controls the borders between itself and others is of paramount importance. Thus the report looks also at immigration and asylum policy. This is currently a topic of great political sensitivity, and the report considers the responsibilities of politicians in leading public

opinion. The discussion of politics also embraces issues of representation on elected and unelected bodies. Part 2 closes with a consideration of religious motivations and affiliations, and of relations between religious bodies and the state in a multi-faith society.

4   Part 3 begins with a discussion of the role of government in providing direction and resources, driving through change and leading by example. The report then argues that legislation on equality needs reforming and strengthening, and discusses how this might be achieved. Lastly, there is consideration of what every organisation or institution needs to do if Britain is to develop as a community of citizens and communities.

Summary by chapter

1 *The Turning Point*
The futures facing Britain may be summarised as static/dynamic; intolerant/cosmopolitan; fearful/generous; insular/internationalist; authoritarian/democratic; introspective/outward-looking; punitive/inclusive; myopic/far-sighted. It is the second term in each of these pairings that evokes the kind of Britain proposed in this report. Many customary images of Britain are England-centred – and, indeed, southern England-centred – and leave many millions of people out of the picture. Increasingly, in Scotland and Wales people have a sense of multiple identity. Englishness is also in the process of being redefined. People in Britain have many differences, but they inhabit the same space and share the same future. All have a role in the collective project of fashioning Britain as an outward-looking, generous, inclusive society.

2 *Rethinking the National Story*
A state is not only a territorial and political entity, but also an 'imagined community'. What is Britain's understanding of itself? How are the histories of England, Scotland and Wales understood by their people? Of what may citizens be justly proud? How has the imagined nation stood the test of time? What should be preserved, what jettisoned, what revised or reworked? How can everyone have a recognised place within the larger picture? These are questions about Britain as an imagined community, and about how a genuinely multicultural Britain urgently needs to reimagine itself. Among other things, such reimagining must

take account of the inescapable changes of the last 30 years – not only postwar migration but also devolution, globalisation, the end of empire, Britain's long-term decline as a world power, moral and cultural pluralism, and closer integration with Europe.

3 *Identities in Transition*

All communities are changing and all are complex, with internal diversity and disagreements, linked to differences of gender, generation, religion and language, and to different stances in relation to wider society. There are also many overlaps, borrowings and two-way influences – no community is or can be insulated from all others. Increasingly, people have the capacity to manoeuvre between distinct areas of life and to be 'cross-cultural navigators'. Hybrid cultural forms have emerged, especially in music and the arts. In this context, does 'Britishness' have a future? Or have devolution, globalisation and the new cultural diversity undermined it irretrievably?

4 *Cohesion, Equality and Difference*

The government has stated that it is committed 'to creating One Nation', a country where 'every colour is a good colour ... every member of every part of society is able to fulfil their potential ... racism is unacceptable and counteracted ... everyone is treated according to their needs and rights ... everyone recognises their responsibilities ... racial diversity is celebrated'. The statement invites several searching questions. What values and loyalties must be shared by communities and individuals in One Nation? How should disputes and incompatible values between different communities be handled? How is a balance to be struck between the need to treat people equally, the need to treat people differently, and the need to maintain shared values and social cohesion? Most theoretical debates on such questions in Britain have been between what may be called nationalist and liberal theories of society. However, this chapter argues that the need now is for debates between liberal and pluralist theories. Britain should develop both as a community of citizens (the liberal view) and as a community of communities (the pluralist view).

5 *Dealing with Racisms*

In other European Union countries it is customary to use the phrase 'racism, xenophobia and antisemitism' as a way of summarising the

issues to be addressed. The term is cumbersome and is unlikely to become widespread in Britain. It is, however, helpful, for it stresses that hostility that uses skin colour and physical appearance as markers of supposed difference does not represent the whole picture. There is also hostility using markers connected with culture, language and religion. The plural term 'racisms' is sometimes used to highlight such complexity. A distinction needs also to be drawn between overt racism and institutional racism. This chapter discusses the history and development of racism and reviews and expands on the definition of institutional racism in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report. Tabulation of the interacting components of institutional racism is provided.

6 *Reducing Inequalities*

Three main approaches to combating social exclusion must be combined: (a) improving physical infrastructure; (b) using welfare-based measures; and (c) pursuing labour market strategies to improve underlying economic potential and performance. A single-pronged attack will not work. Within this framework key tasks include securing long-term financial and political support for projects in specific local areas; achieving and sustaining inter-agency working; empowering local communities; maintaining local commitment and avoiding activist burn-out; redirecting main programmes and resources; providing access to credit; striking the right balance between area-based projects and conurbation-level measures; striking the right balance between central government initiative and local responsibility; and engaging the private sector. Further, and essentially, measures should not be colour- or culture-blind.

7 *Building a Pluralistic Human Rights Culture*

Negotiations over contested issues – for example, the content of the national curriculum, sensitivity to cultural diversity in the health service, the wearing of religious clothing at work, equality for women in the home – cannot take place in an ethical vacuum. They require ground rules that provide a minimum guarantee of protection for individuals and a framework for handling conflicts of interest. The argument in this chapter is that such ground rules are provided in part by international human rights standards, for example those enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Home Secretary has said of the new Human

Rights Act, which brings the ECHR into domestic law, that it is 'an ethical language we can all recognise and sign up to, a ... language which doesn't belong to any particular group or creed but to all of us. One that is based on principles of common humanity.'

8 *Summary of the Vision*

Chapter 8 summarises the key points made in the report so far. The fundamental need, both practical and theoretical, is to treat people equally and with due respect for difference; to treasure the rights and freedoms of individuals and to cherish belonging, cohesion and solidarity. Neither equality nor respect for difference is a sufficient value in itself. The two must be held together, mutually challenging and supportive. Similarly, neither personal liberty nor social cohesion is sufficient on its own. They too must be held together, qualifying and challenging each other, yet also mutually informing and enriching.

9 *Police and Policing*

The values of community, citizenship, social inclusion and human rights, and the balance between cohesion and difference and between equality and diversity, discussed in Chapters 2–7, can all be either sustained or undermined by the way in which a country arranges and runs its criminal justice system. In the context of this report, the system comes under the microscope in two particularly sensitive ways. On the one hand, it must deal with racist crime with the utmost vigour; on the other, it must engage in its own processes with the utmost professionalism and fairness, and with the minimum of damage to wider relationships and public trust. This chapter discusses the impact of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry on the police service. It notes criticisms of many forces made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, and makes practical recommendations about the use of discretionary powers, the need for a better complaints system and better training, and the need to reduce deaths in custody.

10 *The Wider Criminal Justice System*

There is a growing body of data (albeit collected almost exclusively in England and Wales – the *British Crime Survey*, despite its name, does not cover Scotland) showing that black and Irish people are treated differentially at all stages of the criminal justice process, and that they are disproportionately likely to be imprisoned. This chapter discusses the

response of the criminal justice system to racist crime and considers the role and responsibilities of the prison service and the Crown Prosecution Service. It notes that certain American approaches to penal policy currently being adopted in Britain are likely to have harmful effects, and discusses the likely impact, from the point of view of race equality and cultural diversity, of a range of new government measures and initiatives.

11 *Education*

A country's education system is a gateway to employment and to participation in political, social and cultural affairs. It also equips children and young people – or fails to equip them – with the essential understandings, skills and values they need to play a substantial role in the building and maintenance of Britain as a community of citizens and a community of communities. England, Scotland and Wales have different educational systems and curricula, but in each there are individuals and institutions engaged in fine work in relation to race equality and cultural diversity. However, there is also a lack of commitment and leadership on these issues from the respective government authorities. Monitoring by ethnicity is inadequate or non-existent; there are substantial inequalities affecting in particular pupils and students from African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities; there is insufficient official guidance on the content of the curriculum; teacher training – both initial and in-service – needs to be improved; and the inspection systems are insufficiently rigorous and authoritative.

12 *Arts, Media and Sport*

The cultural fabric of a society expresses ideas of who 'we' are. To the extent that it is inclusive, it gives all people a sense of belonging and makes a strong stand against racism. Cultural fabric has many strands, but of particular importance are the performing, visual and literary arts, the print and electronic media, and a wide range of representative and recreational sport. This chapter discusses issues of programming, staffing, bias and representation in the arts and media, and in sport at all levels. It cites specific examples of good practice, including an exhibit at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, the play *The Colour of Justice*, a book of oral history, a number of anti-racism projects in professional football, and the constructive way in which one newspaper responded to a complaint about bias. But the overall message of the

chapter, in the words of a specialist who gave evidence to the Commission, is that 'the arts and media sectors do not see any implications for themselves in the Macpherson report', for they do not recognise that institutional racism needs urgently to be addressed within their own domains.

13 *Health and Welfare*

A recurring theme throughout the report is that public bodies should treat people both equally and differently. The need for both equal and different treatment is seen particularly clearly in services providing health and social care. This chapter reviews the twin roles of the NHS as (a) a provider of services and (b) an employer. The roles are linked in a striking paradox. The NHS depends, and for several decades has depended, on the contributions of Asian, black and Irish doctors, nurses, managers and ancillary staff. At the same time, patterns of mortality and morbidity are more serious in Asian, black and Irish communities than in the population as a whole, and there is much insensitivity in the NHS to the distinctive experiences, situations and requirements of these communities.

14 *Employment*

Broadly, in the context of this report, there are two large tasks to be undertaken: (a) to reduce unemployment and underemployment for all those who are affected; (b) to eliminate glass ceilings. The tasks have practical implications for the government at national, regional and local levels; for employers in the public, private and voluntary sectors; for unions and professional associations; and for those who provide financial and advisory support to new business enterprises. This chapter discusses practical implications, focusing in particular on the role of government, and stresses that there is substantial diversity among and within different communities, and that the labour market itself has changed substantially over the last 20 years.

15 *Immigration and Asylum*

Postwar British history is littered with legislation and regulations passed swiftly, and by both major political parties, to counter perceived 'floods' of immigrants and, latterly, asylum-seekers. There are two problems with this approach. First, the sense of panic the issue instils and the subjectivity with which it is discussed lead to bad law that does not work

even in its own terms, giving rise to challenges both in UK courts and among international human rights bodies. Second, and even more seriously from the point of view of this report, it undermines Britain's development as a community of communities. This chapter reviews and criticises immigration and asylum policy over the years and makes several recommendations for short- and longer-term action.

16 *Politics and Representation*

If Britain is to flourish as a community of citizens and communities (Chapter 4), its political leaders should shape, not pander to, public opinion on issues relating to race and diversity. Their legitimate desires to maximise their own electoral support and to diminish the attractions of their opponents should never involve playing the race card, either openly or covertly. Further, black and Asian people should be more fully involved than at present in the party political system at local and national levels, both as elected representatives and as party activists, as well as fully involved in nominated bodies. Such bodies should be representative in the sense of exhibiting a spectrum of perspective and experience. Both elected and nominated bodies should be strenuously and explicitly concerned with the themes discussed in this report.

17 *Religion and Belief*

Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam provides the European Union with a legal basis for action against discrimination based on, among other grounds, racial or ethnic origin and religion or belief. In Britain many public bodies have declared formally that, in addition to their obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976, they will not discriminate on grounds of religion. At present, however, such discrimination is not unlawful. This chapter considers the importance of religious identities and organisations in modern society; the practical and theoretical problems of introducing laws against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief; whether the Church of England should be disestablished; whether a range of religions and beliefs should be represented in public life; how to balance action against discrimination with the need for beliefs of all kinds to be challenged and interrogated; and ground rules for handling profound differences and disagreements between and within communities.

18 *Government Leadership*

Government has four principal functions: to provide political leader-ship; to allocate resources; to manage its own departments in ways that are both efficient and exemplary; and to formulate and implement leg-islation, with support, regulation and enforcement as necessary. During 1999 the government began to drop its colour- and culture-blind ap-proaches to social policy and to modernisation, and by early summer 2000 it was able to itemise several specific and significant develop-ments. It needs, however, to give a more explicit lead, to ensure greater consistency and co-ordination between its separate departments, to accord race equality and cultural diversity a higher profile, and to ensure that it hears and attends to a wider range of views and percep-tions.

19 *Legislation and Enforcement*

The Race Relations Act 1976 has had a positive effect – it has helped to curb the worst kinds of discrimination in employment and the provi-sion of services, and has had an invaluable impact on the general climate of opinion. The amendments made in 2000 will make it applic-able to the functions of nearly all public bodies, and introduce a positive duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity. These changes are most certainly to be welcomed. In the longer term, however, amendments are not enough. A new Equality Act is required, together with a new Equality Commission. Furthermore, there needs to be a Human Rights Commission to promote a human rights culture, and the United Kingdom should formally declare itself to be a multi-cultural society.

20 *Organisational Change*

This chapter discusses issues that need to considered and acted on in every authority or organisation, including government departments. It follows on naturally from the previous chapter on legislation, since a re-curring emphasis there was that one aim of legislation should be to promote and support self-generated organisational change. It is not necessary to wait for new legislation, however, before considering change at local or institutional levels. The chapter discusses leadership, documentation, management and mainstreaming, monitoring, train-ing and the concept of 'a listening organisation'.

21 *Checklist of Recommendations*

This chapter summarises the recommendations made in Chapters 9–20. In most instances, it is up to a government department or agency at Cardiff, Holyrood or Westminster to take the first initiative. However, it is frequently not necessary or even desirable for other bodies to wait for government action. All individuals and organisations can be involved in advocating and lobbying for the implementation of the recommendations made in this report, and can set up pilot projects and feasibility studies at local and institutional levels.

Note on Terminology

Britain
The term 'Britain' is used in this report to refer to Great Britain, that is, to England, Scotland and Wales. General statements that are true of one part of Britain are not necessarily true of other parts, for there are three education systems and two justice systems, and additional constitutional differences of major importance have been introduced by the Scotland Act and the Government of Wales Act. Recommendations in the report are directed as appropriate to the administrations in Cardiff, Holyrood and Westminster.

Minority/majority
The term 'minority' has connotations of 'less important' or 'marginal'. In many settings it is not only insulting but also mathematically misleading or inaccurate. Furthermore, its use perpetuates the myth of white homogeneity – the notion that everyone who does not belong to a minority is by that token a member of a majority in which there are no significant differences or tensions. The terms 'minority' and 'majority' are not used in this report except in quotations from others.

Ethnic
There is a gulf between specialist and non-specialist usage of the term 'ethnic'. For specialists, an ethnic group is one whose members have common origins, a shared sense of history, a shared culture and a sense of collective identity. All human beings belong to an ethnic group in this sense. In popular usage, however, the term 'ethnic' implies not-Western (as in 'ethnic food'), not-classical ('ethnic music'), not-white ('ethnic communities') or not-British (as in the late 1990s dispute about insignia on British Airways aircraft). To avoid misunderstanding, the term ethnic is seldom used in this report; it is never used as a synonym for not-white or not-Western.

Race

The term 'race' is of essential importance, since it refers to the reality of racism. It is unhelpful, however, to the extent that it reflects and perpetuates the belief that the human species consists of separate races. A further disadvantage is that overuse can deflect attention from cultural and religious aspects of racism as distinct from those that are concerned with physical appearance. It needs often, therefore, to be complemented with other terms.

This report uses the phrase 'race equality and cultural diversity', sometimes shortened to 'race and diversity', to refer to its overall area of concern. The phrase stresses that addressing racism requires not only the creation of equality but also the recognition of difference.

The words 'race' and 'racial' are not used in the report in ways that might imply the view that the human species consists of separate races.

The term 'racist violence' is preferred to 'racial violence', as recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report. It alludes to the causes of such violence and to how perpetrators justify it.

Asian, black and Irish

The report often uses the term 'black, Asian and Irish', or else 'black and Asian' or 'Asian and black', as appropriate. The word 'black' in this formulation refers to people with origins in Africa or the Caribbean. The word 'Asian' refers to all Asian countries and regions, not to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan only.

The report uses the term African-Caribbean in preference to Afro-Caribbean or Black Caribbean, and the term South Asian in preference to Asian if the reference is to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Introduction

The Turning Point

> *The future of multi-ethnic Britain, as also the future of multi-ethnic Europe, depends on many factors outside the specific struggle against racism: economic factors, the policies taken as a whole of different political parties, the adverse effect of harsh asylum policies, the prospects for real religious toleration, and much more. But despite the great difficulties to be faced, there is room for optimism at the beginning of the new century.*
>
> From a presentation to the Commission, autumn 1999

1.1   Britain is at a turning point, a crossroads. But was it not always so? Yes and no. Yes, there have frequently been times in the past when people in England, Scotland and Wales have believed themselves to be living at a propitious, historic moment. They were facing, they thought, a real parting of the ways. And yes, there have often been – in retrospect – unreal choices, illusory distinctions and false dawns. But no, it is not often that disparate but interacting forces come together so powerfully and so momentously as they do at present. It is a coincidence but symbolically apt that the current confluence occurs simultaneously with the start of a new millennium.

1.2   The interacting forces and trends of the present include devolution, and consequent questions about English, Scottish and Welsh identities; globalisation in a wide range of spheres, including economic, political and cultural; changes in Britain's sense of itself as a world power; cultural and moral pluralism, especially in views of gender relations, sexuality and the structures of families and households; and – the principal subject matter of this report – the recognition that England, Scotland and Wales are multi-ethnic, multi-faith, multicultural, multi-community societies.

1.3   Each of these changes involves dislocations in the way people see themselves, and in how they see the territorial, political and cultural space – 'Britain' – where they meet, and where they seek to build a common life. What will emerge? Possibly, and deplorably, a Britain where people are

divided and fragmented among the three separate countries and among regions, cities and boroughs, and where there is hostility, suspicion and wasteful competition – the politics of resentment. The prevailing mood could turn out to be one of aloofness and apathy towards other European countries, and disinclination to be involved on the world stage – for example, in action to protect the global environment or international human rights. There could be profound divisions by culture, religion and history, with no joint deliberation among people of different religious or philosophical beliefs, or among people with different perceptions and collective memories of the past. There could be a punitive and impatient attitude towards the poor. There could be widespread intolerance of numerical minorities of many kinds, including communities with roots in Africa, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Cyprus, Hong Kong, India, Ireland and Pakistan, and of Gypsies, travellers and asylum-seekers. A Little Englander mentality, and its equivalents in Wales and Scotland, could hold sway.

1.4　Alternatively, Britain could develop as what this report calls a community of communities. It would be at ease with its place within world society and with its own internal differences. In such a Britain there would be:

- mutually beneficial interaction between and within Scotland, Wales and England, and between regions, cities and boroughs;
- determination to develop each separate region, city or borough as a community of interacting and overlapping communities, proud of and learning from its own internal diversity;
- much engagement with the rest of Europe, with politics in the wider world and international law, particularly human rights law and standards;
- a readiness to share and to attend to conflicting perceptions of British and world history;
- resolution and action to remove racism and xenophobia in their various forms – colour/cultural; individual/institutional; behavioural/attitudinal; overt/subtle;
- dynamic contributions to world culture in a wide range of the arts, in science, medicine and technology, and in philosophical, political and moral theory.

1.5　The alternatives at the crossroads may be summarised as

static/dynamic; intolerant/cosmopolitan; fearful/generous; insular/in-
ternationalist; authoritarian/democratic; introspective/outward-
looking; punitive/inclusive; myopic/far-sighted. It is the second term in
each of these pairs that evokes the kind of Britain we propose in this
report. The forging and nurturing of such a society involves, at the
outset, reinterpreting the past. Re-evaluating the past, said a Reith lec-
turer in the 1990s, is a basic civic duty:

> Arguing with the past, like paying taxes, like observing the law, like
> queuing, like not playing music full blast when others will be disturbed,
> has suddenly become a vital part of being a member of society, an ordi-
> nary but important act of citizenship, a factor in establishing the idea of
> a home as a place you would like to belong, and might be allowed to
> stay.[1]

1.6   Notions of Britishness originated in the 18th century, were developed in
the 19th century, and were cemented through much of the 20th century.
Nevertheless, in the words of the editors of *Political Quarterly*, in the
journal's first issue of the new millennium:

> The British have long been distinguished by having no clear idea about
> who they are, where they are, or what they are. Most of them have rou-
> tinely described England as Britain. Only business people talk about a
> place called the United Kingdom ... It is all a terrible muddle.[2]

1.7   If arguing with the past is one simple duty of citizenship, then arguing
with the present, it follows, is another. 'Suddenly, in the space of a
moment,' writes Bill Bryson in his bestselling *Notes from a Small Island*,
'I realised what it was that I loved about Britain.' In a way this travel
book about England, Scotland and Wales introduced the inhabitants of
these places to themselves. It depicted Britain as an endearingly eccen-
tric place some of the time, and as essentially welcoming, friendly and
calm most of the time. The author offered up a handful of criticisms –
urban planners insufficiently respectful of tradition, a bossy landlady
who interfered with his freedom, a waitress who did not understand
him, an inflexible official, someone with a passionate interest he did not
himself share – but basically he found Britain wholly lovable. No
wonder the book was a bestseller. This is how he summed it up:

> Suddenly, in the space of a moment, I realised what it was that I loved
> about Britain – which is to say, all of it. Every last bit of it, good and bad
> – Marmite, village fetes, country lanes, people saying 'mustn't grumble'

and 'I'm terribly sorry but', people apologising to me when I conk them with a careless elbow, milk in bottles, beans on toast, haymaking in June, stinging nettles, seaside piers, Ordnance Survey maps, crumpets, hot-water bottles as a necessity, drizzly Sundays – every bit of it … What other nation in the world could have given us William Shakespeare, pork pies, Christopher Wren, Windsor Great Park, the Open University, *Gardeners' Question Time*, and the chocolate digestive biscuit? None, of course.[3]

1.8   It is a beguiling but also remarkably limited and excluding list. Consider who and what it leaves out. For a start, it omits Scotland and Wales – the author claims to be writing about Britain (the 'small island' of his title), but much of this list, as indeed most of the book itself, is limited to England. Further, the list is limited in effect to the rural southern counties. It leaves out the English regions, with their distinctive identities and needs, and the urban and institutional life that is the daily experience of the vast majority of British people. It also leaves out the third of the population who are, by the government's own figures, classified as living in poverty. Most are unlikely to think of *Gardeners' Question Time* and Ordnance Survey maps as epitomising their country. Equally, it leaves out all or most people in Britain who have close family or community links with Africa, Bangladesh, the Caribbean, China, Cyprus, India, Ireland or Pakistan. There is barely anything in the list that resonates with their experience and perception of the land where they live. The references to Windsor Great Park and Christopher Wren evoke a national story that excludes them, or relegates them to subservient and marginal walk-on roles. Other than mentioning stinging nettles and careless elbows, the list leaves out all conflicts, difficulties and tensions, both in the present and in the past – it is both apolitical and ahistorical.

1.9   Significantly, the list gives no sense of the changes that have taken place in the very world it celebrates – the world of village fetes, country lanes and haymaking. Here, as elsewhere, there are conflicting loyalties and complex identities; profound disagreements about gender equality, sexuality, the upbringing of children, the nature and role of families; concerns about social class, status, life-chances and employment; disputes about the truth or otherwise of religion and the basis of morality; and unsettling anxieties about the cultural and economic dislocations brought on by modernisation and globalisation.

1.10 It is interesting to consider a further list of sights and memories, one likely to strike chords with substantially more people. It evokes political differences and disputes; ideas and ideologies; public bodies and their buildings; social and industrial change. In its closing image there is a fusing of urban and pastoral, continuity and new life.

> Behind the daily activity of our lives is a broad current of memory within which the sights and sounds, the people and the emotions that we associate with being British are a permanent implant, indelible. If our lives were to flash in front of our eyes most of it would be concerned with events and people here in Britain. Harold Wilson would be there, and Enoch Powell and Ted Heath, and the shuffling queues in a dole office, and the sound of a Salvation Army band, and the naughty chirruping of the voices over the crackling radio airwaves when we switched on for *Round the Horne*, and the smell of wax on the floor of a public library, and the roar of the crowd at the Arsenal football stadium, and the antiseptic lines of beds in a ward at the old St George's Hospital, and a moonscape of rusted metal in Trafford, and the unexpected perfume of wild flowers in an abandoned railway bed.[4]

1.11 In 1998, in preparation for the establishment of the new Scottish Parliament, a number of consultations about Scottish identity and expectations of the new constitutional changes about to occur were undertaken. Over 450 discussion groups addressed the same three themes: 'Describe what living in Scotland means to you'; 'What is your vision and hope for Scotland as it could be in about 20 years' time?'; 'To bring about your vision, how can Scotland's Parliament listen to your voice and represent your views?' Some of the replies are quoted in Box 1.1. They serve to introduce many of the themes of this report: how to reimagine English, Scottish and Welsh history so that it includes everyone; how to understand identities in transition; how to balance cohesion, difference and justice; how to deal with racism.

1.12 In gathering evidence for this report we organised focus groups in Birmingham, Cardiff, Glasgow, London and Manchester. Questions for discussion included: 'Do you feel British – does that define how you think of yourself or do you feel black, Asian, Mancunian, a Londoner, etc?'; 'Do you feel European, or a world citizen, or what?'; 'Is it possible to feel British and something else as well?'; 'Is there a tension between the identity and values of your parents and community and those of society as a whole?'; 'Is your community being slowly eroded?' Box 1.2 shows

Multiculturalism Rethought: The Parekh Report The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, set up by the Runnymede Trust in January 1998, has produced what arguably amounts to a new take on multiculturalism. The Commission and its activities represent a far-reaching endeavor over three years involving numerous consultations among academics, civil servants, government departments, NGOs, community groups and members of the general public. In October 2000 the Commission produced its conclusions: a 400-page document entitled The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (Runnymede Trust 2000), also