

# Post-colonial Britain: Immigration and the emergence of a multicultural society



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The end of World War II marked a watershed in British history. Once the world's preeminent industrial power, the devastation of the war was the final contributing factor to a process of economic decline vis-à-vis other industrial nations that dated to the 1890s. Though still one of the most important capitalist industrial economies, its earlier preeminence was no more. At the same time, the British Empire, which had been the largest empire during the imperialist age, was progressively dismantled. From the perspective of the metropole, its colonies were increasingly seen as too costly to maintain in both economic and political terms. Moreover, the legitimacy of the racist ideologies that had shaped imperialism and served as rationales for colonial rule were undermined by their association with the racist ideology of Nazi Germany (Füredi 1998). However, at the same time, the nation began the process of wartime recovery and rebuilding, and thus served as

a spur to immigration. As it did so, it became clear that as the economy of England prospered – particularly the southeast of England – the regions of Scotland and Wales lagged behind.

During the economic recovery that got underway after World War II, waves of immigrants from Britain's colonies or former colonies entered the nation. The new arrivals came overwhelmingly from British Commonwealth nations, and thus they possessed the British passports that gave them ready access to the empire's hub (Davison 1964). The vast majority of the newcomers can be divided into three major groups, based on their points of origin: the Caribbean, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa. The Caribbean contingent began to arrive in Britain in part due to the entry restrictions placed on them by the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in the United States that denied their ability to enter this nearby nation (Grosfoguel 1997). With this destination effectively cut off, Britain became the main immigrant destination of English-speaking West Indians. While by far the largest numbers were from Jamaica, constituting about a half of the immigrants from the region, a wide

range of countries were involved, including Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. Throughout the 1950s, the majority of nonwhite immigrants came from the West Indies. According to the 1991 census, about a half million British blacks trace their backgrounds to the Caribbean (Peach 1991, Goulbourne 1998:42–43).

Immigrants from the Indian subcontinent come from four countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. They include Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus. The earliest arrivals were mainly young men from rural backgrounds with low literacy levels who came to Britain either as a result of service in the British military or with the hope of being able to accumulate sufficient assets to restore the wealth and status of their families back home (Holmes 1988). However, many did not return, and in fact they became the beachhead for a chain migration that would grow in the 1960s into a large immigration stream. Later arrivals included a growing segment of more highly educated professionals and businesspersons.

When speaking of immigrants from Africa, it's important to dis-

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tinguish between blacks and Indians. The former contributed relatively small numbers, generally from such West African nations as Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. However, of particular significance to the politics of British immigration during the 1960s and 1970s were Indians forced out of East Africa by political events and who became in the process, in the phrase of Paraminder Bhachu (1985) "twice migrants." Diasporic Indians settled in many places in Africa, where they established themselves as "middle-men minorities," entrepreneurs whose clientele were often the most impoverished sectors of the African community. In some post-independence nations in East Africa, nationalistic policies were implemented that called for the "Africanization" of the local economies. What this amounted to was a challenge to the livelihoods of the Indian communities. The first campaign occurred in Kenya in 1966, which resulted in the flight of Indians to several destinations, including Canada and India; many Indians holding British passports opted for the United Kingdom. Similar campaigns subsequently were undertaken in Malawi and Tanzania, but as Harry Goulbourne (1998: 44) observes, "by far the most dramatic exodus of Asians from East Africa was from Uganda in 1972, as a result of the expulsion of Asians, citizens and non-citizens alike, by the dictator Idi Amin."

The earlier stream in the 1950s expanded considerably from the 1960s forward due to the combined impact of these three components. While some new arrivals came, at

least in part, for political reasons, as a whole this was overwhelmingly a labor migration: people moving to the industrial heartland where they concluded that there were greater economic opportunities than they could find at home (Solomos and Back 1995). The earliest arrivals tended to be young men, often unskilled and illiterate, that hoped to accumulate assets capable of restoring the economic well-being and social status of their parents in the homeland. They viewed themselves as temporary laborers or sojourners, not intent on remaining abroad, but instead hoping to return home with needed capital. However, by the 1960s a pattern of voluntary chain migration was firmly in place and, moreover, complementing the unskilled workers were skilled professionals and businesspersons (Holmes 1988). Dependents also began to arrive, and with family reunification came the emergence of ethnic communities.

Cultural differences between these communities and the host society provoked an immediate anti-immigrant response in all quarters of British society. Indeed, as Christian Joppke (1996: 478) writes, "In the 1950s, 'no blacks, no dogs' signs were not rare sights in houses and shop windows across Britain." Not only did these new arrivals raise anew the question of what it means to be British in an increasingly multicultural society. They did so by also raising the specter of race (Rich 1986). In his perceptive account of British race relations, 'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack' (1987), the cultural sociologist Paul Gilroy traces the shifting responses on

the part of the host society to the new people of color, focusing on the various reformulations of the category of "other" that have arisen since mid-century.

In fact, there is much that the new immigrants share with their established British counterparts, due to the impact of colonial administration on such matters as politics, education, and work, and as a consequence of the role of Christian missionary efforts during the colonial era. While British colonial administrators did not demand the assimilation of the colonized into English culture, as for example their French and Portuguese counterparts did, they did succeed in inculcating much about British culture, law, and politics (Goulbourne 1998: 38-39; see also, Banton 1983). However, at the same time, what Ann Swidler (1986) calls the "cultural tool kits" of the new ethnics reflect differences, at times profound differences, from the host society's culture. The new immigrants operate with what Gilroy (1993), in a reference to W.E.B. DuBois, refers to as "double consciousness": they occupy a cultural space that straddles both their old world and the new world they have come to inhabit.

During the first phase of immigration, non-white immigrants were uniformly referred to as black, reflective of the fact that host society tended to treat all in a similar fashion (Modood 1988). However, more recently there has been considerably more recognition of immigrant diversity on the part of the British public. Thus, there is a greater tendency to define groups in terms of national origin: Indian, Pakistani, Bengali, Jamaican, Trini-

dadian, and so forth. Likewise, there is a greater awareness of religious differences within and among these groups: Muslims, Hindus, and Sikh, for example. Two panethnic labels have emerged out of this and gained common currency, blacks (or Afro-Caribbeans) and Asians. The former refers not only to immigrants from Commonwealth nations in the Caribbean, but to blacks from Africa and elsewhere. However, since the vast majority of blacks are from the West Indies, a term that is often used as a virtual synonym for black is Afro-Caribbean. The term Asian has become the panethnic label for those immigrant groups from the Indian subcontinent. Sometimes it is also meant to include the Chinese, who have come primarily from the former British colony of Hong Kong.

Although fewer than 100,000 immigrants had entered the country by 1960, racial tensions nonetheless escalated. Some commentators at the time contended that race relations in Britain were beginning to resemble those in the United States, particularly in the Deep South (Rex and Moore 1967: 19). There was considerable evidence that housing and employment discrimination were rampant. Working class youth engaged in sporadic attacks on immigrants. Isolated incidents became more common as immigrants – and in particular West Indians – were accused of exacerbating the housing shortage, competing with whites for jobs, and contributing to such social problems as prostitution (Holmes 1988: 259). Violence escalated into full-blown riots in 1958 in

Nottingham and London's Notting Hill (Layton-Henry 1984: 35–38).

In addition to the fact that immigrants confronted racist barriers to housing, jobs, education, health and social services, and political participation, they also confronted a growing chorus of public opinion calling for immigration restriction. The political divisiveness of the immigration question could be seen vividly in the 1964 parliamentary election in Smethwick, a small industrial city in the Birmingham area, where the infamous unofficial slogan employed by the Conservative Party's candidate was, "If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour" (quoted in Solomos and Back 1995: 53).

In 1968 Parliament passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In part a response to the East African "crisis," its intentions were clearly racist. Under a policy known as partiality, it limited New Commonwealth black and Asian access to Britain, without similarly limiting the ability of Old Commonwealth whites from places such as South Africa and Rhodesia from settling. The Immigration Act of 1971 and the Nationality Act of 1981 served to further block primary immigration from New Commonwealth nations (Mason 1995: 28–30; Joppke 1996: 479).

The political left in Britain, particularly the leadership of both the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress, viewed the immigration question in terms of the legacy of British colonial rule. They sought to facilitate the transformation of former colonies into independent nations within the British Commonwealth, while arguing that im-

migrants needed to be viewed as workers with similar concerns as British-born workers. The socialism of the two institutions shaped their anti-racist stance. Labour was instrumental in promoting the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, which began with the assumption that racial harmony was a common good. Labour also played a key role in establishing the Commission for Racial Equality in 1976 (Banton 1985). It's not surprising that when immigrants – both blacks and Asians – began to become involved in politics, they gravitated to the Labour Party (Anwar 1986). Since a majority of nonwhite immigrants entered the country as formal citizens, they were equipped with the rights and privileges of established residents. This situation made possible a faster introduction into the arena of British politics than immigrants to most other liberal democracies.

One of the dilemmas for both the party and trade union organization was that many white rank-and-file members were hostile to the new immigrants, whom they saw as competitive threats in the workforce, unwelcome newcomers in their neighborhoods, and contributing to the enfeebling of British culture (Freeman 1979). These views played into the hands of the political right (Messina 1996). Perhaps nowhere was the perspective of the established political right more baldly presented than in Conservative MP Enoch Powell's 1968 "Rivers of Blood" speech in which he painted a picture of a nation overrun by the "coloured population" that would soon make the white British majority "stran-

gers in their own country" (quoted in Solomos and Back 1995: 60). Powell became the lightning rod for the anti-immigration movement within Britain's political establishment. He was also, it should be noted, removed from his post in the shadow cabinet for his remarks. This was a reflection of the consensus in the political establishment, across the ideological spectrum, that the course Britain had set itself on involved limiting immigration while promoting racial harmony: "good race relations" were seen as requiring "strict immigration control" (Joppke 1996: 479).

At the same time, fringe groups on the extreme right emerged, the most significant being the neo-fascist National Front. It operated at one level as a political party, running slates of candidates for local elections. The front gained notoriety when it won a parliamentary seat in the working class dockland area of the Isle of Dogs (Richmond 1994: 167–168). The Front functioned on a murkier level as well, wherein it was closely connected to violent skinhead gangs. An extremist culture developed, replete with rock bands, web sites, and the like. Whether organized or unorganized, neofascist skinheads were responsible for countless acts of violence and for encouraging, when not engaged themselves, in what became known as "Paki-bashing." One manifestation of this culture could be seen in the escalation of hooliganism in British football (Back, Crabbe, and Solomos 1999).

One of the most persistent negative stereotypes of blacks, and Caribbeans in particular, is that

they are inclined to engage in criminal activities and especially those associated with drugs. Acting on these stereotypes, the police enacted vigorous policing campaigns in many black neighborhoods, in the process escalating tensions between the communities and the authorities. Community leaders complained about intimidation, false arrests, and beatings, but elicited little response from police officials. In 1981, the tensions between blacks and the police exploded into full-blown riots in several locales, beginning in London's Brixton section and spreading to other cities, including Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Wolverhampton.

The Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher expressed relatively little sympathy for minorities in Britain, and was harsh in its criticisms of law-breakers. The Tories also made it clear that they would continue to seek ways to control the flow of immigration. At the same time, the government had to walk a fine line insofar as it sought to disassociate itself from the racism of the extreme right. In a campaign poster from 1983, the Conservative Party staked out its vision a colorblind society: a young black male in a business suit contains the caption, "Labour Says He's Black. Tories Say He's British" (Gilroy 1987: 57–9). The Labour Party, pushed by its left wing, challenged this position and undertook a campaign against racism. This campaign was particularly evident in the work of the Greater London Council, under the leadership of the leftist Ken Livingstone (Gilroy 1987: 136–151; see also Small 1994; Solomos and Back

1996). Since the 1980s, politics in Britain has become more centrist and less polarized. This was especially the case with the advent of Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Third Way."

## Black Britain

The 1991 Census for the first time asked residents to classify themselves according to ethnic group. At that time, all blacks represented only 1.6 percent of the total population, which meant that there were approximately 880,000 blacks (Owen 1992: 2). It is assumed that little has changed in terms of overall percentage and that the overall number has grown only modestly in the ensuing decade. Thus, we can assume that there are somewhere around a million blacks in Britain, the majority of which were born outside of the country.

A comparison with the United States can be instructive. Unlike their American counterparts, blacks in Britain are relative newcomers. They represent a smaller percentage of the nation's total population than black Americans: less than 2 percent in contrast to 12 percent. Blacks in Britain are heavily concentrated in the southeastern region of the nation, with over half of all Afro-Caribbeans residing in London and sizeable enclaves located in the West Midlands (Small 1994: 63–4; Austin 1995, Mason 1995: 35–37). Black residential enclaves can be found in major cities: Brixton, Hackney, and Peckham in London, Handsworth in Birmingham, Moss Side in Manchester, and Toxteth in Liverpool. Nonetheless, there is far less residential segregation in Britain

than the United States, though there is evidence of white flight from neighborhoods as blacks move in. However, there is nothing approaching the hypersegregation found in major American cities (Massey and Denton 1993).

The relatively small size of the black population in Britain helps to account for the fact that blacks are less segregated, not only residentially, but also in other arenas of social life, such as in schools and the workplace. Black students tend to attend integrated schools and the workforce is similarly multiracial. Moreover, a consequence of high levels of black-white interaction is that in the more intimate levels of social life there is greater contact between the races than in the United States. Comparing intermarriage rates in the two countries can reveal the lower level of social distance most vividly: while only 3 percent of blacks marry non-blacks in the U.S., the figure is 25 percent in Britain (Small 1994: 48, 161–162).

As Afro-Caribbeans struggle to obtain an economic foothold in their new homeland, they confront the classical problems associated with poverty, unemployment, discrimination, low wage rates, and the like (Model 1999). They are over-represented in the ranks of the unskilled working class (Brown 1992). In terms of economic niches, males are well represented in the transportation and communications sectors, while women are concentrated in health care (Anwar 1995: 274). Blacks report lower levels of self-employment than other groups. At the same time, a black middle class has emerged, and has continued to

grow (Small 1994: 144, Ratcliffe 1999).

However, since most middle class job opportunities are located in the professional sector of the economy, educational attainment plays a major role in upward mobility (Gillborn 1990). Here there is reason for concern about the future since blacks have not fared as well as other groups in the classroom. In a study conducted by the Institute of Education, they are the lowest performing group in Government Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) standardized test results. Few obtained Advanced (A) Level qualifications, settling instead for obtaining Ordinary (O) Level qualifications. Blacks have higher rates of academic failure than the general student population. In addition, blacks are far more likely to be expelled or suspended from school for behavioral problems. Some educationists have expressed fears that in some inner-city neighborhoods a black underclass is developing (Salmon 1996).

An ethnic community has emerged, replete with a range of institutions that provide needed services to blacks. These include mutual aid societies, political organizations, cultural organizations, churches, and the like. The general ideological orientation of ethnic institutions encourages practices that assist in the integration of blacks into British society. In other words, there is an acculturationist character to them. At the same time, in serving the particular needs of a racial minority population confronting discrimination and poverty, they have served to articulate a sense of

what it means to be black in Britain (Kalilombe 1997). In the political arena, blacks have achieved a presence in the Labour Party via the creation of Black Sections in the party organizational structure.

Despite evidence of improving attitudes towards blacks and gains in their socioeconomic status, it is clear that racism has not disappeared. The racist assault and murder of black student and aspiring architect Stephen Lawrence in 1993 was a reminder to the nation that, as Ian Hargreaves (1996) put it, "We have not put the racist devil behind us." The murder, of course, revealed the persistent problem posed by racist extremists. However, in addition, the fact that whites in the neighborhood where the crime was committed erected a wall of silence that protected the perpetrators, while the police failed to aggressively pursue the case, vividly pointed out that racism also took varied institutional forms (Goulbourne 1998: 149–151).

## The Asian community

Asian immigrants occupy a somewhat different social location in contemporary British society. In some respects, these immigrants look like a success story, and insofar as they do, they bear a similarity to recent Asian immigrants in the United States, who are sometimes portrayed as the so-called "model minority." While there is a tendency to overstate the level of economic success that has been achieved, in fact this segment of the new immigrant population is doing better economically than blacks. At the same time, Asians

have a higher unemployment rate than whites, tend to be located in the lower paying sectors of the economy, and continue to confront discrimination in hiring and promotion practices (Brown and Gay 1985). Language barriers also play a role in explaining economic disadvantage (Mason 1995: 57–58). It is also important to note that there are differences among the Asian groups in terms of their economic circumstances. Indians in general are doing better than their South Asian counterparts are, with Bangladeshis at the other end of the spectrum, experiencing the highest levels of unemployment and poverty.

Some Asians have found success in niche economies. Thus, many Indians, and particularly Sikhs, own small newsstands, convenience shops and restaurants. They have also found similar niches in public sector jobs, such as in the post office. In some instances, enclave economies that link entrepreneurs in Britain to their homeland in transnational economic alliances have developed. This can be seen quite clearly in the Bengali community centered on Brick Lane in London's East End, noted particularly for the numerous leather wholesalers in the area. Asians have a higher rate of self-employment than blacks or whites, with Bangladeshis having a lower rate than either Indians or Pakistanis (Mason 1995: 56). Paralleling this propensity to self-employment, these two groups also have the highest rates of home ownership of any groups, including whites. At the same time, there is evidence that they reside in substandard housing and in overcrowded con-

ditions compared to whites (Brown 1984: 96).

In terms of educational attainment, Asians are doing comparatively well. In spite of language barriers and cultural differences, Asians as a whole are high achievers on standardized tests and the number who go on to do A Level work and who continue on to university study is rising. In the Institute of Education study noted above, Indian students were found to be "the most highly qualified students in British schools and colleges," a situation researchers attribute in part to a "cultural commitment to education and family support" (Salmon 1996: 5). The value Asians place on higher education suggests that they are preparing their children, not for roles in the ethnic niche or enclave economies, but for careers in the larger society. As such, there is a clear acculturalist thrust to their orientation toward education and employment. This can be seen by the fact that many Asian families are overcoming traditionalist values about the roles of women and are increasingly coming to see the value of higher education for all of their children, regardless of gender.

At the same time, it is important to note that Asian groups are far more culturally distinctive than their black counterparts. This in no small part is due to the fact that they are largely non-Christian. One of the complex features of these groups is that their ethnic identities and their religious identities are intimately connected. Sometimes these identities are mutually reinforcing, while at other times this is not the case. Jessica

Jacobson (1997), for example, found that among young British Pakistanis, there is a tendency to distinguish their ethnic from their religious identity. The former, in their view, referred to their place of origin and thus was particularistic in nature, while the latter was universal. However the various ethnic communities define this interrelationship, it is clear that for all of them regardless of religious tradition – Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs – religious institutions have proven to be among the most important community-building institutions. Thus, wherever ethnic enclaves have emerged, mosques, temples, and gurdwaras have been established. This effort at transplanting their religious heritages into the context of an implicitly Christian nation suggests that in the cultural realm of social life, many Asians are intent on religious retention rather than acculturation. At the same time, they have sought to combat discrimination and in so doing have learned to work with the host society in various ways to accommodate their religious and cultural values in a new societal context (Modood 1994, 1997, 2000).

The tensions between Muslims and the host society have been greater than with the other Asian religions. The example of the Council of Mosques in the Midland's city of Bradford, a major center for British Muslims, is instructive in this regard. Established in 1981, it serves as an umbrella organization for local Muslims, whose mosques reflect the caste, ethnic, and sectarian divisions within the Asian community as a whole. The Council provides

unity amidst this diversity. At one level, it functions as a civil rights organization, working with local authorities in combating racism and promoting multiculturalism. In this capacity, it became a vehicle for political involvement.

In one engagement that generated considerable controversy, the Council worked with the local educational authority to provide halal food in schools for Muslim schoolchildren. Critics claimed that the willingness on the part of the schools to do so amounted to a capitulation to special interests. The situation became more heated when animal rights activists objected to the policy on the grounds that because halal food preparation forbids the stunning of animals prior to slaughter, it amounted to condoning cruelty to animals. Many in the Asian community viewed their critics as racists, and challenged them in the court of public opinion, in the end prevailing as the Bradford Council voted to provide halal meat in the schools (Lewis 1997: 112–114). This is an example of the ways that Asian Muslims have sought to insert themselves into the social and political realms of the host society in an effort to achieve mutual accommodation that permits the retention of valued aspects of their religious belief system.

Reconciling Muslim beliefs and values with the prevailing cultural values of the host society requires deft negotiation. The case of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* offers a particularly graphic illustration of this point. The novel was deemed by many Muslims as blasphemous due to its unflattering portrayal of the Prophet Muham-

mad. The book had been criticized by Muslims in India who invoked a law that forbid the publication of works deemed to "insult or outrage the religious feelings of any class" (Ruthven 1990: 87). Iran's fundamentalist leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa, which called for a death sentence for the author and his publishers. Many Muslims in Britain thought they could prevent the publication of the novel, and when that didn't happen, they engaged in public demonstrations against its appearance in bookstores. When many Muslims in Britain voiced support for the fatwa, Rushdie was forced to go into hiding, where he remained for years under constant police protection. The Muslim community came under considerable criticism as a result, with the blanket indictment of Islamic fundamentalist being hurled at what is, in fact, a highly diverse community – one clearly divided over this particular issue. The inability of many Muslims, including the leadership of the Bradford Council, to embrace Western ideals regarding freedom of expression and tolerance is indicative of a tension between illiberal traditional religious values and the liberal values of a modern democratic state (Parekh 2000: 298–304; see also Nielsen 1992 and Lewis 1997).

Generational tensions also are in evidence, pitting the desire of parents to instill traditional values and behaviors into children whose lives have been profoundly shaped by growing up in British society. Gender issues constitute a particularly significant realm of conflict surrounding topics such as traditional patterns of male au-

thority, premarital sex, and arranged marriages. In each of these areas, there is evidence that members of the younger generation appear to occupy a transitional space somewhere between the value world of their parents and that of British society at large (Alexander 2000). In this regard, Muslims are not alone, as similar tensions exist within the Hindu and Sikh communities as well.

There is evidence to suggest that many among the second generation remain committed to their ethnic and religious heritages (see, for example, Raj 2000). However, it is also the case that they are interested in and identify with aspects of British society (Lyon 1997). As is typical with the second generation in settler nations, they are engaged in a complex process of negotiating the construction of identities composed of elements from the old world and the new. At this point, the outcome of this process is indeterminate, but it is certain that the acculturation of the third generation and beyond will signal a new orientation towards the culture of their ancestors. Complicating the situation, a series of race riots in the summer of 2001 pitting Asians against whites – in Bradford, Oldham, and Burnley – points to the fact that such acculturation occurs within a society where extremist racism continues to cast its shadow.

### **The future of multicultural Britain**

In an article in *The New York Times*, journalist Warren Hoge (2001: A1) described Leicester as a

city that "defines diversity and tolerance." An industrial city of about 300,000 located in the East Midlands, it has become home to a growing number of African Caribbean and South Asian immigrants since the 1970s. Demographic predictions suggest that it will become Britain's first city with a non-white majority within a decade. The article observed that during the initial settlement period immigrants confronted considerable hostility and overt discrimination, with local government officials actually taking out newspaper advertisements telling the first newcomers – Indians arriving from East Africa – that housing, schools, and social services were already strained and thus they urged those thinking about coming to Leicester to think about other alternatives. Members of the National Front and skinheads marched and hurled verbal abuse at newcomers, and "Paki Go Home" graffiti was a common sight.

However, in the ensuing quarter of a century, it would appear that a corner had been turned and race relations have become in recent years considerably more constructive and positive. The second generation, in particular, appears inclined to view their home as one that appreciates its multicultural character. The new Asian residents, instead of being perceived as taking jobs from whites, are now viewed as playing a major role in the economic revitalization of the city, particularly in terms of commercial development and renewing derelict residential neighborhoods. Hoge (2001: A10) notes that, "A typical sight in Leicester

are Gothic churches with stone crosses or Victorian-period red brick mills and factory buildings now converted to Muslim community halls, Sikh and Hindu temples or small business centers." One of the reasons cited for the progressive improvement of ethnic relations was the role of local government officials in working with the new immigrants, and by their willingness to use the police to control right-wing extremists.

A closer examination of the situation reveals a rather more complicated picture. While the situation for Asians may well suggest considerable improvement, such is not necessarily the case for the Afro-Caribbean community. Blacks are not doing as well economically, being more likely to have lower paying jobs, experiencing higher levels of unemployment, and residing in council housing. In addition, they have considerably less political clout. Relationships with the police are often strained (Hoge 2001: A10).

In many respects Leicester can be seen as a microcosm of contemporary multi-ethnic Britain. Ethnic relations in that community are increasingly being shaped by the framework established by laws passed since the 1960s that sought to combat discrimination while promoting inter-group harmony. The most important law, one that replaced its 1965 and 1968 predecessors, was the Race Relations Act of 1976 (RRA). These laws collectively were designed to provide mechanisms for combating discrimination in employment, housing, and public services. The RRA added to this an effort to confront more indirect or institutional

forms of discrimination. It should be recalled that the first of these laws emerged at the same time that tighter immigration policies went into effect, the message of Parliament being that they wanted to effectively limit the number of new immigrants, while expressing a willingness to find ways to assist in the integration of immigrants already in the country. In short, highly restrictive immigration laws were coupled with the state's management of liberal race relations policies.

The underlying ideal-typical model of ethnic relations embodied in the RRA and the RECs was not to seek an assimilation in which differences disappeared as immigrants "became British." Rather it was that of a multi-cultural society in which a respect for tolerance and an appreciation of diversity were to be central. Christian Joppke (1996: 481) depicts the character of British race-relations policy in the following way:

*Official multiculturalism has expressed itself in a multitude of legal provisions, such as partially exempting Hindus and Muslims from Britain's strict marriage rules, allowing Sikh boys to wear turbans and Asian girls to wear shalwar (trousers) at school, or – curiously – excusing Sikhs from wearing crash helmets on motorcycles provided they are wearing turbans. A short walk along East London's Brick Lane or Southall's South Road conveys authentic images of Islamabad or the Punjab, with Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh men, women, and children in their traditional dresses, the sight of Mosques, and exotic smells and*



*oriental music from the bazaars and teahouses. Clearly there is no presumption for these ethnic groups to become "British" in any other sense than ownership of a British passport.*

While there may be no presumption, there is evidence to suggest that being British means more to members of ethnic minorities than simply being the holder of a passport. In a study directed by Tariq Modood (1997: 328–331), minority group members were asked both whether they thought of themselves as British, and whether they thought of themselves as members of particular ethnic communities. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents contended that "in many ways" they thought of themselves as members of the ethnic group. At the same time, excluding the Chinese, slightly under two-thirds of respondents stated that, "In many ways I think of myself as British." Thus, a majority of ethnics can be seen as engaged in a strategy of acculturation, wherein they are attempting to add a sense of being British onto their ethnic identity rather than engaging in an either/or strategy.

Moreover, as Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham (1999: 690) point out, British ethnic minorities not only engage in defensive actions against racism, but also make "a sizeable number of claims for extensions of minority rights..." and thus they play an important role "in the overall public discourse on migration and ethnic relations..." Insofar as this is the case, they are making claims about the nature of British citizenship and about their

role in the process of reshaping what it means to be British in a multicultural and multi-ethnic society.

T.H. Marshall (1964) has pointed out that conceptions of citizenship are linked to particular notions of national consciousness. Changes in one lead to changes in the other. In this light, the debates underway over what it means to be British have particular relevance. On one end of the debate are those who seek to view Britishness as unchanging and exclusive – a perpetual reminder that "there ain't no black in the Union Jack." This position is not only found in the extreme fringes of British politics, but among more mainstream conservatives as well. In terms of the latter, it found expression in Lord Norman Tebbit's cricket test of loyalty, wherein he proposed that one could determine whether or not a person is really capable of being British depending on whether in international cricket matches she or he cheers on the British side or the team from their country of origin. This jingoistic "test" raises the issue of dual or divided loyalties, implying that at least some immigrant groups can't be truly British. Such is the case only if one is opposed to a reconfiguration of national consciousness in a fashion that accords with multiculturalism.

At the other end are those who refuse to embrace a British identity. This can be seen both among the nation without state nationalists in Scotland and Wales who refuse to consider the prospect of being Scottish or Welsh as well as being British. It can be seen in the irredentism of Irish republicanism

in Northern Ireland. It is also evident among the most marginalized members of the Afro-Caribbean community, who – bitter over their treatment in Britain – opt to view themselves as a marginalized diaspora people. Finally, such an antipathy to Britishness can be found among the more fundamentalist elements of the South Asian community, and particularly among Islamic fundamentalists. They, too, view themselves as an exilic peoples, residing in a society whose liberal values are seen as antithetical to their own religious beliefs.

In the middle are those who seek to foster a new multicultural sensibility that accords respect and tolerance for diversity, while simultaneously seeking to redefine what it means to be British, and in so doing establishing the basis for a shared culture. In 2000, the Runnymede Trust published a report produced by its Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain that sought to articulate what this middle ground might look like. Chaired by Bhikhu Parekh, the report sketches a "vision of a relaxed and self-confident multicultural Britain with which all of its citizens can identify," and argues programmatically that Britain needs to develop both as a "community of citizens" and as a "community of communities" (Parekh 2000b: xv).

In addition to assessing what needs to be done to combat racism and remedy social inequalities, the report devotes attention to "rethinking the national story" and to exploring "identities in transition" (Parekh 2000b: 14–39). That these are sensitive matters that evoke

considerable controversy can be seen by the response to the report's release. Both the press and the electronic media riveted on the assertion in the report that "Britishness...has systematic, largely unspoken, racial connotations," or to be more specific, that "Britishness and whiteness go together like roast beef and Yorkshire pudding" (Parekh 2000b: 38, 25). This statement was frequently misrepresented to say that Britishness had racist connotations.

What the authors intended was quite evident: to move away from as historic association of Britishness with whiteness toward a more inclusive, multi-ethnic understanding of national identity. It is a call for the promotion of civic assimilation into a liberal democracy that has to adapt from a heretofore-singular focus on individual rights and protections to one in which groups, too, are accorded rights and protections. At the same time, it is cognizant of the

need for channels of intercultural evaluation, which are needed to determine when illiberal group practices ought to be permitted and when they ought to be banned by a liberal democratic society. While this challenge is not unique to Britain, what makes this case distinctive is the fact that the issues are laid out more clearly, with a greater appreciation of the virtues of multiculturalism.

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