

newstatesman

Special
Supplement

LIVING TOGETHER

The cities where everyone is a minority:
expert voices from around the world

supported by

COMMISSION FOR
RACIAL EQUALITY



30
years

Introduction

The Commission for Racial Equality, in association with the Smith Institute, held a round table discussion on the rise of “plural cities” – those where no single ethnic group holds the demographic majority. This event took place on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21st March 2006, in Leicester, which is becoming one of Britain’s first plural cities. It brought together many leading experts from around the world to discuss the experiences of their cities – including Marseille, São Paulo, Los Angeles, Cape Town and Oldham, and the implications for how cities generate policy, and what it means for integration and social cohesion

Participants

**NICK JOHNSON**

Director, Policy and Public Sector,
Commission for Racial Equality (Chair)

**TREVOR PHILLIPS**

Chair,
Commission for Racial Equality

**WILF STEVENSON**

Director,
The Smith Institute

**CHERYL WALTERS**

Director of Planning,
Cape Town, South Africa

**PAUL WINSTONE**

Policy officer,
Leicester City Council

**MICHAEL KEATING**

Service head, Research and Scrutiny,
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

**ALLEN FREEHLING**

Executive director, Human Relations
Commission,
City of Los Angeles

**BRITTA STRÖM**

Development manager,
Malmö City Council

**SALAH BARIKI**

Advisor to the Mayor of Marseille on community
development and Islamic affairs

**CLIFF MULQUEEN**

Deputy commissioner and general counsel,
Commission on Human Rights, New York City

**BRUCE PENHALE**

Corporate policy manager,
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

**NICO VAN WYK**

Head of the Division for Integration and
Education,
Municipality of Rotterdam

**JOÃO SILVA**

Secretariat of Policies and Partnerships,
Municipal Government of São Paulo

Editor: Natalie Brierley Design and cover: Leon Parks Publisher: Spencer Neal

newstatesman subscriber services: Stephen Brasher Freephone: 0800 731 8496 E-mail: sbrasher@newstatesman.co.uk

Published by New Statesman Limited. A supplement to the newstatesman issue 1 May 2006. © All rights reserved.

Registered as a newspaper in the UK and USA. Address: 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU

This supplement can be downloaded from the *New Statesman's* website at www.newstatesman.com/supplements

Plural cities

An international perspective



Trevor Phillips Thank you to everyone for joining us and being part of this discussion. Confronting urban spaces which do not have a single dominant cultural and ethnic majority is a new idea for us in the UK, and that poses a whole new set of questions about how we manage ourselves, how people relate to each other and how we handle our services. This is all the outgrowth of the central process of our time, globalisation, and, as Bill Clinton says, we should not treat globalisation as a policy. It is a fact. The important thing is how we respond to it.

In a sense, this is the age of the majority-minority city all over Europe. There are two possibilities in terms of how we approach it: we can be energised, and draw on the creativity of our diversity; or we can be fractured and hence find ourselves in cities which are depressed and divided. These things are not going to happen by accident. They are going to happen by our design, by the agency of public policy, by what people do in civic society and so on. The reason we want to talk about these things is so that we get the right outcome. If we do not handle

this prospect properly, there will be economic and democratic consequences. What happens when you cannot create the sort of coalition of interests and identity across a city which can give that city's government legitimacy? We have always been able to do that in various ways in this country because in most cities there is a dominant culture. But we haven't thought enough about what happens when the majority/minority situation occurs. Today is really an attempt by the commission to kick-start a discussion which hasn't had enough attention domestically, or on the global stage.

When we first started talking about this subject, some people thought it was a rather interesting academic notion, but I suspect that what we will hear today is that it is very real and concrete. If we can get it right, the successful cities will be beacons for a different kind of world, a world where 200 million people live and work outside of the country of their birth — twice as many as there were 25 years ago. In another 25 years we will be talking about a lot more spaces with many more different kinds of people in them. We ►



► have to learn how to manage that. I am looking forward to hearing what you have to say.

Nick Johnson I would like to echo that we see this as the start of the debate — not just with this group of people but those from other cities which could not be represented here for various reasons but which want to be involved. Our initiative has opened up real opportunities in terms of networking and making formal arrangements so that cities which are grappling with some of these issues can interact with one another. After today, we will be looking to find ways in which we can follow up these issues of interaction so that this is an on-going conversation and not just a one-off.

As Trevor said, we can't just drift into a situation where diversity is ever increasing without looking at what the opportunities and risks are for our cities when we do that. There may be some tough decisions involved. We face challenges in terms of how we stop our communities becoming segregated. How do we build bridges between ever more diverse communities? How do we prevent extremism taking hold? What is the role that faith plays in society and how do we create a common civic identity in our cities that is greater than the sum of its parts?

Plural cities can be portrayed as disastrous or as presenting only challenges, but today I hope we will see the opportunities that diversity brings in international trade and tourism.

I am going to kick off by posing a question that focuses on the positive. What are the benefits that plurality or diversity brings to a city?

Allen Freehling Diversity is complicated. At a time when people are looking for simplistic answers, the complications which are attached to pluralism and diversity make the task of dealing with these realities all the more difficult.

The benefit of diversity and pluralism is richness. Globalisation has made living in a monolithic society impossible. Our lives are enhanced by the pluralism with which we live. We need to encourage that. Most of us here were brought together less than 24 hours ago and think about how our lives have been enriched by this experience already. This is just an example of the benefits that other people can derive from a diverse and pluralistic interaction.

Paul Winstone In Leicester, one of the great advantages we have experienced as a highly developed, multi-cultural and multi-faith city is the massive growth of entrepreneurship. We inherited a commercial class from east Africa between 1968 and 1975. Now we have the development of a Somali entrepreneurial business group. It gives us the opportunity to re-invent ourselves as a city. If you had a declining industrial base this would give you the perfect opportunity for rebirth and re-growth.

Michael Keating The immigrant history of the east end of London shows the benefits that pluralism brings. The contributions which the Huguenots, the eastern European Jews and the Irish have gone on to make to British society are recorded in history. However, it is important to remember that that process was never one of a cosy acceptance and that making it work led to conflict. We need to recognise that that conflict is not necessarily something which is unhealthy or disruptive. For example, in one part of the Borough of Tower Hamlets is a local market where all communities interact. Their interactions are not necessarily neat and polite but it works, nevertheless. The anxiety that we sometimes have about not allowing these relationships or interactions to be ones which are conflictual is something that we need to get over.

Cliff Mulqueen It's all about change. Change is good but nobody likes change. People struggle against it. However, without change we will just stagnate. Everybody has something to contribute. Immigrants rejuvenate a stagnant city and make it better. There are often hard knocks on the way but in the end there are always benefits.

Britta Ström You can see the growth that Malmö has enjoyed through immigrants. After the Second World War, we had a good industrial base but we did not have enough people to use it so we needed immigrants from the rest of Europe.

Economic growth comes from all the events we are engaged in, through education and providing skills to immigrants. It gives money back to the Swedes because we have a growing service industry. As our country's population increases, we need economic growth.

However, we now face a new situation because with migration comes discussions about religion. Many refugees in the late 1990s came from Bosnia and Yugoslavia. They were also mentally wounded from war, which meant that our society faced more challenges, which in turn brought about discussions to find new solutions to our work.

Our authorities were not so keen on change. Many people wanted to do what they had always done. And now, too, complications arise between the new challenges facing us and the old ways of solving problems. But, the majority of people in our society think that multi-culturalism is good for us.

João Silva Brazil is a young democracy. Our main concern is to address plurality in the cities through political change and development. We have a plurality which brings problems which we did not have before. But politically, this means we are advancing democracy in ways that will enable us to face the challenge and to have something for future generations.

Cheryl Walters In Cape Town we don't have much immigration. What we are facing are the issues of tolerance and history which have been suppressed in past years and have now come to the fore. Trevor spoke about urban space. That subject is important because the cities and neighbourhoods in South Africa are extremely isolated and segregated. The question is, how do we transcend that situation?

Nick Johnson Which is exactly the next issue I was going to raise: the danger of segregation with increasing diversity. Perhaps we could talk about people's experiences here and how you prevent that.

Cheryl Walters We are struggling with urban space and



integrating communities post-apartheid. The opportunity is available, when we create new residential areas or even mixed-use areas, to reintegrate people into society. The situation is difficult because now we have other discriminations, particularly economic, coming to the fore. People exercise choice so they send their kids to private schools. And many schools are faith-based which is a problem in terms of segregation. We are struggling with the situation.

Many refugees in the late 1990s came from Yugoslavia and were mentally wounded from the war

Nick Johnson Bruce, what about your experiences? Oldham is not quite as notorious as South Africa but it has certainly been grappling with the issue of how to prevent segregation.

Bruce Penhale Residentially, we have quite a segregated community. Parts of the borough have a concentration of Bangladeshi people while others are predominantly white. This situation is a challenge for us, partly because people choose where they want to live, so we want to find ways to break down the barriers to those choices. ►



► One example is the housing market renewal programme, where we are partly looking to create new neighbourhoods which offer a more diverse range of properties of different tenures and types. This will, we hope, attract different groups of people. We should recognise that we are talking about long-term change and really, for that to work, people need to change their attitudes and not feel threatened by other people.

Work about people's identities is key to this. If we help people to strengthen their own identities, and to feel that their identity and culture is respected, they are likely to have more respect for others. They should then be more willing to come into contact with different people.

Nico van Wyk I believe that pluralism can enrich a society and its people. However, we recently carried out some research among a small group of residents in Rotterdam and we saw a widening gap between people from different backgrounds. Where we went wrong in Holland was that we were indifferent about recognising the problems. What we have learnt during the past four years, after the killing of Pim Furtuyn, the right-wing political leader, is that we did not recognise that people had problems with cultural diversity. If you do not talk about it you will have serious problems.

We realise that we can invest in better housing, better jobs and better education but we also have to invest in social and cultural integration. You cannot just sit back and wait to see what will happen.

Allen Freehling For reasons that we can all discuss, there is

an inherent fear of the stranger. Our task is to overcome that fear as effectively as we can. Another problem we face is the lack of economic equality. There are people in our communities who are in hopeless situations. Unless we change the system and provide everyone with job training and job opportunities, the divergence will continue to be exacerbated.

None of us can rest. None of us can allow our cities to rest. The challenges are constant. For example, about 60 per cent of high school students around Los Angeles are dropping out. What are they dropping into? They haven't been trained. They have no occupation which they can look forward to. They have no vocation. What is going to happen to them? Are they going to be ensnared by one of the 200 odd gangs around Los Angeles, which have about 200,000 members? Are they going to be selling drugs? Or will they be targets for shootings? What a horrible future for them and for Los Angeles.

We are constantly asking those tough questions and, we hope, are coming up with some right answers.

Nick Johnson What are those answers? What are some of the things that you have tried which you think have succeeded?

Allen Freehling Part of my academic background is economics. I really believe that economic determinism is the key to everything. The Human Relations Commission came into being as a result of the Watts riots 40 years ago. Yet the more time I spend in Watts and in south Los Angeles the more convinced I am that little has changed since then. So, one of the things I have been doing is talking to leaders in business and labour unions and saying that they have to pay attention to the economic needs in that area. Economics and education will help to start building the kind of bridges that we need.

Nick Johnson Paul, can you give us some examples of how your local authority is building bridges between communities?

Paul Winstone We were inspired into action by Ted Cattle, the associate director of the Improvement and Development Agency, when he used the phrase "separate but parallel lives" about the way in which many Asian, white and Afro-Caribbean people live in our city. One of the solutions which came forward was cross-cultural contacts and projects and, particularly, inter-school cultural initiatives.

We have had some great successes with schools twinning with each other, particularly with one predominantly

Catholic school and one Muslim school. They are just down the road from one another but they had never had any communication. Now they have a good relationship. The parents visit each other and the children do projects together.

Also, we have deep pockets of poverty in some white, working-class estates and we have tried to introduce joint initiatives for young people there with young people in largely black areas of the inner city. In one case, the Asian community has taken an interest in our plans to develop a regimental museum for the British Army, which will include information on the British in India seen in a new light and financed by Asian business people. This is an exciting and unprecedented project.

You have to have specific projects which are well thought through, well financed and bring together different quarters of the city. It can be done through music or sport but it has to be done through young people.



Britta Ström We have done much for deprived areas with schools, pre-schools, job seeking and community funding. In many ways we have seen good progress, but still the segregation is as big as before.

Now our planning agency has decided that the whole city must be engaged if we are going to break segregation. The first aspect is that we build the city together. We have tried to make

The more time I spend in Watts, the more convinced I am that little has changed since the 1960s

the central business district area move out, to incorporate more districts and build on the waste areas, providing facilities for smaller enterprises and cheap flats. But getting building companies to invest is difficult. They are keen to invest in schemes by the river or at the seaside. We have tried to build more cheap flats in those locations, but the building companies have the right to decide who is going to live in their flats. Another barrier is heavy traffic. Perhaps, in the future, we can build roads underground. But we must eliminate the barriers because they are preventing people moving across the city.

We also found that all the adult learning centres, particularly those for immigrants to learn Swedish, were outside the city centre. We have changed that now so that many are in the city centre and the new migrants are part of the city picture. People are getting used to seeing them. Immigrants shouldn't be hidden in the suburbs.

Michael Keating The Tower Hamlets Partnership brings all the local agencies together with residents and the voluntary and community sector to think about how they might address things jointly. Partnership is an over-used word these days but, again, like many clichés, it has a great deal of truth in it and unless you get people working together, you are not going to achieve the vision which you have agreed on.

Trevor Phillips One of the things we do not do in these situations where we are anxious about division by ethnicity and race, is to talk about ethnicity and race. English colleagues will know that if you say the word "segregation" outside polite circles such as this, people get upset. Even if you are describing a technical point, as I frequently do, it is hard to describe a situation which is about division by race and ethnicity without people feeling anxious, threatened and upset. ►



Nick Johnson What is New York's take on segregation and division?

Cliff Mulqueen We say what we think or how we feel. Sometimes we are pretty blunt. People just get on with it.

Wif Stevenson You also have a much stronger way of identifying the ethnic groups within the cosmopolitan area. You are quite up-front in talking about Afro-Americans and Irish Americans in a way that is foreign to the British experience.

Cliff Mulqueen We are ahead of the game because our whole society is built on diversity, be it religion or anything else. New York, in particular, is an immigrant city. We appreciate that. I have been talking to some of you about the British identity or the Dutch identity, and we do not really have that. Our American identity, particularly

our New York identity, is an identity of diversity. I am not looking to protect my New York identity because my New York identity is everybody.

► Is it possible to address issues of policy without using the words that imply that we are divided by ethnicity and race? Many people believe that if you do that, you create the problem. I wonder whether part of the discussion we must have is about the way in which we talk about this issue.

Cheryl Walters If we want to do anything we have to be brutally honest about the situation. People must understand what those labels or definitions are. Then you need to move forward from that point. If you sweep those concepts under the mat, you are starting from a premise which is limited.

João Silva In Brazil, because of the background of slavery, the white people are in a superior position to all the other ethnic groups. Minority groups form 65 per cent of the overall population, yet we have to create our identities. We are empowering people to be able to make demands and from there we can force the government to introduce policies to solve those demands.

We need to talk openly about race relations if we are to achieve harmony in this area. Although we do not have segregation as South Africa does, we do have racial and economic discrimination. We are putting the emphasis on education. We are introducing black history into primary and high schools in Brazil. We are changing history in Brazil by including these minority groups in organisations which are building up our country. Now we are making people say that although they are different they can contribute to make our society better.

Bruce Penhale There is a risk of getting involved in many small projects but what is needed are projects which impact on many people. We too have a schools linking programme which pairs schools with different pupil populations – for example, predominantly Pakistani heritage and predominantly white – and they take part in activities that help the children understand each others' cultural backgrounds. This now involves 51 schools. This is a key stage for influencing their views, and they are a captive audience.

Another way to progress is through the planning system. This provides a mechanism for influencing the location of housing and community facilities such as schools and community centres. That is an opportunity where you can create a place where people come together and have contact with each other. We need to ensure that this thinking about how we can influence cohesion is built into every area of policy.

Nico van Wyk We did not talk about our problems. If you don't talk about honour killings, homosexual discrimination or about white parents taking their children out of a school which has an increasingly black population, you can invest a lot of money into education and jobs, but your diversity will become segregation. You have to talk about these concrete problems. New York has an immigrant history, but so too

does Holland and for 20 years we did not recognise it.

Nick Johnson Perhaps we could hear about the Marseille experience?

Salah Barkiki In France we use the terms “black”, not “noir”, “Juif” for Jewish and even “Gaulois” for “French”. Now, we are trying to promote a common identity, like New York, with words such as “Marseillaise”. Most people feel that they are Marseillaise before being black, Arab or whatever.

Nick Johnson I was hoping that we could come on to the issue of how you promote a common civic identity which is greater than the sum of the different identities in the city?

Allen Freehling In a school lunch hour where the kids had self-segregated themselves, two girls got into a fight over a boy, violence erupted and the police were called. It was not the black-white fight that we are accustomed to seeing, but a Latino-Armenian struggle.

One would hope that we could find responsible adults who would show the kids how they should model dialogue. We were immediately able to identify leaders of the Armenian community who were prepared to do this, but we could not find their counterparts in the Latino community. We then turned to the staff and asked them to take responsibility and they said: “We have a lot to say to them but we don’t know how to say it”. The assignment for the Human Relations Commission is to establish dialogue among students, staff, parents, administrators and people who live around the school. People know how to talk at each other but not with one another.

Nick Johnson We have heard from Cliff about this strong sense of being a New Yorker which trumps everything else. Is there the same kind of feeling in Los Angeles?

Allen Freehling An Angeleno is a person who lives in Los Angeles. I am not so sure that there are many immigrants who consider themselves Angelenos in the first generation. Maybe they do in the second generation but by the third generation we have got it wrapped up. We are talking about generational changes which make it possible for a person to be identified



not as a member of the Persian community, for example, but as a member of the Los Angeles community, with a Persian background. I wonder, Cliff, how long it takes for a person who has moved to New York from somewhere else to really be able to say, wholeheartedly, “I’m a New Yorker”?

Cliff Mulqueen That is up to an individual to take upon themselves. But once they do, no one is going to question them. One question for you, Allen, is how many people living in Los Angeles were born there?

Allen Freehling A very small number.

Cliff Mulqueen So even the Americans who live in Los Angeles are immigrants?

Allen Freehling Yes.

Cliff Mulqueen That’s not the same as in New York. Many of the people who live in New York City were born and raised there and then you have all the immigrants as well.

Nick Johnson What about Cape Town? Is there a Cape Townian?

Cheryl Walters Yes. I think that people are proudly Cape ►



► Townian and proudly South African. The few immigrants who are coming to Cape Town face xenophobia. This is not a migrant nation like America or even the UK, where people move from city to city or from a city to rural areas.

Nick Johnson Salah, you talked about a strong sense of being Marseillaise. How has that evolved?

Salah Barkiki Marseille is like New York. Many people are born in Marseille and the neighbourhoods are not so segregated. We have a football stadium where people are mixed for every match.

Paul Winstone When Leicester City were doing rather well in the Premier League, many people from the Asian community came out in blue and rallied round. The football club then went out of its way to attract entire Asian families. Now they are talking about having Asian weddings on the ground. When you are loyal in sport it cuts across all boundaries. There was a time when a black person would have had to be insane to walk into this football club. They would have been beaten up and abused. They were just not welcome. It is being welcomed that makes people feel relaxed.

But I have had some other not-so-positive experiences. As the years go by, people are rallying to their faiths in a way, perhaps, that their parents did not. This means that once again we have to re-define ourselves. Perhaps we can't just leave our ethnicity or religion at the gates when we come together. For

example, we have just had the *Jerry Springer Show* here. There has been an enormous faith backlash against that show as well as an enormous secular-humanist push to support it, and some of those splits have gone right through the city.

Nico van Wyk We have our native as well as Turkish, Moroccan and Yugoslav communities. Young people talk about themselves as being Turkish/Rotterdam or Moroccan/Rotterdam, but not Dutch. We need to emphasise the civic identity. This situation has to do with the history of the city. After Rotterdam was bombed in the Second World War, it was rebuilt with a no-nonsense mentality. It appeals to many young people from overseas.

Nick Johnson Are there things which your city authority does to encourage that, or do you just use it to your advantage?

Nico van Wyk We have just recognised the problem and started to get into the issue. Local authorities can create opportunities but integration is, in the end, a private matter. You can find Turkish mothers who have spent 40 years in Rotterdam and do not speak any Dutch. You have to make them aware that it is a necessity for their children to learn Dutch otherwise they will have problems.

João Silva In São Paulo, we have all kinds of segregation. One type comes from people who migrate internally; people from the south do not like people from the north-east, for example. To overcome that, we are creating an environment where people feel at ease. One way is through the school lunch, the contents of which depend on the school community. They have a menu which suits the school population. Radio networks have also been set up so that local communities are able to talk about the problems they face. Those things make segregation feel less of a problem.

Michael Keating The notion of identity is a massive challenge. On the day that London won the Olympics bid, everyone was united and the following day, when the bombs went off on the Underground, everyone was united in a time of adversity and threat. You might talk to young people in Tower Hamlets who would define themselves as being British, Bangladeshi and Muslim, and that is a complicated relationship. Coming back to Trevor's point, I am not quite sure how to find a language that expresses this issue in a straightforward way. I don't think that authorities, states or

whatever have that ability yet. We want this complexity but we also want easy answers.

Allen Freehling I wonder if sheer numbers stand in the way of people identifying with a group? It may be easier to identify as an Angeleno or as a New Yorker rather than as a Californian or an American, for example. It is certainly very difficult to identify as a world citizen.

Britta Ström We do not speak about race in Sweden much. We speak about Swedes and immigrants. Many second-generation immigrants who were born in Sweden introduce themselves by saying, "I am from Somalia", "I am from Croatia" or "I am from Iraq". When we have football matches, for example, Sweden v Croatia, the young people with a Croatian background are waving Croatian flags. But perhaps if they go to their home countries, they might say "I am Swedish".

Nick Johnson Do people here get a feeling that there are situations – which could be inequality, poor housing conditions or a feeling of being threatened by crime or something – which force people to look for a narrower form of identity than might be helpful for our wider society? Is it the negative approach which forces people into a narrow identity?

Allen Freehling People are poorly prepared for demographic shifts. A high school in south Los Angeles used to be 100 per cent African-American, but today is 92 per cent Latino and 8 per cent African-American. I dare say that those families would never have prepared for that change. You talked earlier about the responsibility of faith communities. I do not think that the churches ever really address this problem, except to suggest that there is going to be a loss of political or economic power. I would then blame the clergy for not doing what they could have in terms of leading and guiding people rather than giving voice to their fears. Community leadership requires people to be responsible and visionary.

Cheryl Walters People don't consider the values that they are going to lose or gain when they come to a different place. They have made the choice of going somewhere else but may not understand that it will necessitate different behaviour.

In my country, I sit under a tree and we have long discussions. I can do that is because it is 32C, but you cannot do it here because it is 2C. People need to understand those differences. It is the sharing and nurturing of talent that is



important. Without it, trouble starts over something as small as a pen. And that kind of situation can turn into racism.

João Silva Brazil has experienced a lot of immigration from Bolivia. Segregation happens because the state cannot respond quickly enough to immigrant demands. The state should be prepared to respond to their needs. The state only

Some Turkish mothers have spent 40 years in Rotterdam and do not speak any Dutch

begins to respond after segregation occurs. But at that point, it is already too late.

Bruce Penhale Questions have been raised about identity and what strengthens people's identity. One of the problems occurs when people's identities are under threat. After 9/11 and the London bombings last year, it was clear that many Muslims felt under threat. Such a feeling of threat has reinforced that Muslim identity.

To get out of these situations, we need strong leadership. We need leaders who can offer an inclusive and long-term ►



► vision which is about all sections of the community. You have to be able to transcend different groups within the community and to have credibility, and that is a difficult task to accomplish. At grassroots level, we need people who have the skills to build dialogue across communities and who are respected in those communities.

Wilf Stevenson In the series of strategies you put in place after the riots, did you try to build a sense of “Oldham” at all, or did you find that too small or too difficult a concept?

Bruce Penhale It’s interesting. We’ve heard about Marseille, Los Angeles and New York, which are big cities. Our population is only 220,000. Like many cities in England, the local authority was created in 1974 out of smaller districts. The label “Oldham” is problematic for some people because the name relates to one of those districts. There is also a risk, if you get people identifying with too small an area, of becoming inward looking and introspective. Maybe at a city-wide level it can work, being a Londoner or a Mancunian, but there has to be a balance between wanting to create a common identity

for the people of Oldham as “Oldhamers” and not wanting to push that idea too hard because it is such a small area. There is tension there.

Nick Johnson An issue which has been expressed in many different forms is that of leadership, be it political, civic or community leadership, and how important it is to have people who can represent you and engage in a dialogue. Visionary leadership can bring people together but, conversely, leadership and politics can also stand in the way of that goal. For example, one issue which has not been discussed is the danger of extremism. What role does politics play in managing diversity and extremism?

Paul Winstone Politics is absolutely vital. It was the political activity by the Asian community here in the 1980s which made them a force to be reckoned with.

As a policy officer, I cannot do anything if I do not have politicians who say to me “Go ahead. Help manage the crisis and help design the multicultural city of the future.” We created the Leicester Multi-Cultural Advisory Group with the editor of the *Leicester Mercury*, a number of our politicians and local people from every community, and we set ourselves the task of establishing where we wanted Leicester to be in ten years time.

But, we could not have done that without the political will. We did some surveys in the early days and asked some people: “How racist are you?” Around 5 per cent said they were very racist and 20 per cent said they were a little bit racist. That’s good because it means we have 75 per cent of the population on our side. We can live with that.

What has happened in certain cities in the north of England is that because of a crisis in leadership the problematic 5 per cent has been able to expand and multiply and eat into the 20 per cent of passive racism, building itself into a much bigger block. Once there is political mobilisation against that development, we can isolate and defeat those forces and drive them back. That’s exactly what happened in the Isle of Dogs with the coalition that was built there by church people and the Bangladeshi community. We have put the same thing into effect here in Leicester. Within a day of the London bombings, we organised a rally with the Muslim community. At first it was going to be a demonstration but we said that a number of people might find that provocative so we had it as a peace vigil in the park instead. We managed to get a thousand people attending on one day’s notice. All the Muslim leaders spoke

and representatives from all the other faiths too. The police and the local authority were in attendance. We spoke as one city. We were not going to be divided from the Muslim community nor were we going to stigmatise that community. But we could not have done that without the political will.

Allen Freehling Californians, foolishly, have invoked term limits so, with rare exceptions, no one can hold office for more than two, four-year terms. Therefore, the office holder is normally looking at the next election and if he or she has any political will, it is often blunted by the fact that he or she cannot afford to incur the wrath of any particular group. Potential candidates or office holders should be people who have the political will to build the backbone where it may not exist in the body politic.

João Silva The Brazilian experience is one of needing political will to make changes. The problem is that politicians are not always willing to look at the social problems that we face. The only way in which we can make them have the will to bring in change is to set up civil groups which press them to put integration on the agenda. We have showed our politicians that we have the power of the vote. If they do not follow-up this agenda then we will not re-elect them. Our politicians are like politicians everywhere else in the world. We have to treat them as though they are on dog leashes. Otherwise, they do whatever they want to and they do it for themselves. Politicians must be forced to have the will.

Michael Keating I think it is about adapting political leadership. In the early 1990s in Tower Hamlets, the British National Party won a seat. The result was crisis management which galvanised people to unite and defeat that particular candidate. The messages of community cohesion which were made by the administration were strong and have been successful. Again, ten years on, the nature of the population has changed. For example, the Respect party is active in Tower Hamlets and its messages are about issues outside the local area. It is tapping into people's anxieties about what is happening in Iraq. Those concerns were not around even five years ago. Political leaders have to recognise that their messages about community cohesion, which were particularly pertinent some time ago, might need to be slightly different now to take on board different sorts of debates.

Nick Johnson Cheryl, what do you think were the causes



of the recent capture of seats in Cape Town by extremists and what is being done to try to knock it back?

Cheryl Walters The situation is difficult; one of the extreme party members now holds a senior position. The point was made earlier that politicians need to be serious about what they are doing. Half the time we are finding that if you thought politicians were supportive of a particular position for one, two or three months, by the time the fourth month comes, you're not sure if they are still with you.

The position in Cape Town is that people have been uncom-

We treat our politicians as though they were on leashes. Otherwise, they do whatever they want

fortable with the change of government nationally to the ANC. The result of the recent local election has shown it. It is hard to define what is going on and to know if we can turn the tables. I am not sure what will happen in Cape Town.

Paul Winstone There are times when we become a little complacent. We think that we have won the war against racism but racism never goes away. It just changes its form and it comes back twice as strong. ►



Bruce Penhale Colleagues from overseas may be aware that, in recent years, some towns in northern Britain, though not Oldham, have had councillors elected from far right political parties. A couple of things have come together to make this happen. One is a feeling in parts of the white community that they were being neglected by government and the second is the growing minority communities in those towns and cities. This created situations which could be exploited by the far right. Both parts need to be addressed. By taking action, central and local government are showing that they are interested in the concerns of the whole electorate and that they take them seriously. The second part is actually tackling the race issue head on, and having the debates about identity, values and people's place in society. In places such as Oldham, activists in political parties have tackled the issue of racism head on and challenged the far right on its own ground.

Paul Winstone You need to build a broad coalition for change which has a depth and consensus that is able to go forward. We were able to do that here locally, but you

► Under globalisation, many people in cities like Leicester who once saw themselves as Asian people in Britain now see themselves as much more globally connected with what is going on in Pakistan, India, the Muslim world and so on. You

Immigrants in France since the 1930s are now saying: 'There is no place for Muslims here'

cannot just talk to them about housing and education and not talk about Palestine and Iraq, for example. In that sense, you must continuously renew and remobilise your political will. We have to remember that yesterday's immigrants tell other immigrants not to come here. This is part of the base of Jean-Marie Le Penn's politics in the south of France. If you look at the immigrants who came to France in the 1930s, they are now saying, "There is no place for Muslims here." People feel so privileged and safe in our city that they can turn their backs on asylum seekers, and we have to be wary of that.

need to have it on a national level.

In relation to what João was saying, the complexities of Brazil's history do not allow a coalition to come to life easily because there are so many geographic regions and sub groups, but it is still necessary to construct one.

João Silva Dialogue is the way to build those changes.

Allen Freehling There may be a tendency to think that we have all the answers and that we can solve all the problems, but we can't.

Somebody used the word "depressed". I heard that as "emotional depression" because the situation at the moment seems to be so awesome. If anyone feels that way, I would refer him to philosophers such as Hegel who show us that the pendulum is constantly moving. We are living through a difficult time because of the rightward swing of that pendulum but it is not going to be that way forever. We have to fight the tendency to feel that the problems are so huge that we can't solve them. We can. We can even force that pendulum back towards the centre. It requires that coalition of partners to make it happen.

Cheryl Walters In the UK, the white, working class seems to be forgotten. They feel aggrieved because they are not being seen or heard. It is particularly interesting in terms of the debate that we are having today about pluralism, that they seem to be ignored. Maybe, as others have said today, there are some things that we do not want to talk about but they actually have an influence on this debate.

Michael Keating I think, sometimes, that pluralism is a middle-class concept. Certainly, economic divides may be fundamental. Again, if I take the example of Tower Hamlets, the thing which unites a large section of the population is poverty. Whether that is something you want to unite around is another question. However, we need to recognise it.



Cliff Mulqueen But you have to find a way to give people hope. I agree that it comes down to economics. People need to have the hope that they can do better for themselves and that their children will do better in the future. Otherwise they have no stake in society. So we have to figure out a way for everybody to develop a stake and have pride. You laughed a bit at having pride in poverty but, as Trevor said, maybe that is something which can unite people. It is the underdog feeling: “We can be better than them so let’s strive to be better”.

Nick Johnson I would like to thank everyone for your contributions and for your willingness to discuss your experiences. You have spoken of how we must learn from the successes and failures in your particular environments and that has been worthwhile. One thing to take away with us today is the need to continue to talk openly and honestly about these issues. It is impossible to build the coalitions we have discussed without that honesty and openness. Also, we must learn to take advantage of opportunities that may be hidden to some of us, but which others are exploiting.

Many of you have said that there is never a static position where you can say, “We have solved it” or “This is the answer”,

because the situation is changing every day. Population patterns and migration are changing to such an extent that the challenges facing us are constantly evolving. We have to be prepared to say that something which worked five years ago may not work today. In some cases, that means experimenting and being prepared to risk something not working instead of waiting for a concrete answer.

We have to discuss and share the problems which are facing us and then we can look at how we can overcome them. What has also come out of this discussion is what role governments play in creating a suitable environment. We have looked at some of the barriers that exist which, perhaps, we would not necessarily have thought about and at ways of bridging communities, through, for example, culture, sport and politics. Talking about civic, national or, in some cases, local identity is one way of bridging the gap between people. It is a combination of all of those factors which is needed to make a plural city work. It’s about recognising that no one has the answers. We just have to keep talking and trying things. We have to keep trying to find solutions. That is what today has been about.

Thank you to everyone for participating and to the Smith Institute for jointly hosting this event.

newstatesman

3rd Floor
52 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0AU
Tel: 020 7730 3444
Fax: 020 7259 0181
www.newstatesman.com



Commission for Racial Equality
St Dunstan's House
201 - 211 Borough High Street
London SE1 1GZ