

Brighton & Hove City Council

Children, Young People & Skills Committee

Agenda Item 68c

Subject: Deputations from members of the public

Date of meeting: 7 March 2022

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the committee for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which the Chair will respond and the committee will give consideration to the matter.

Notification of two Deputations have been received. The spokesperson for each is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

**(1) Deputation concerning colour blindness KS2 Video
Spokesperson – Bola Anike**

Supported by:

K Soud

L Hammond

D Forest

R Beck

S Bell

Wards affected: All

Deputation 1 - Bola Anike

I feel the need to write this as a British Nigerian resident of Brighton, as a parent, and - not least - as someone who cares deeply about the UK's liberal education system (a system which, I believe, is the hallmark of any democratic society), I'd like to make the following points to this committee.

You may recall that, on November 4th last year, I wrote to the CYPS committee about a powerful and unifying primary school KS2 video resource (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clgu7BGnFOg&t=10s>) which I feel very strongly about. I sent you a link and I hope you had time to watch the video. Naturally, I understand how hard working you all are but, as yet, I have not heard back from any of you. Perhaps today will be the day! It is my hope that the committee will agree to endorse this resource and formally recommend it to the city's primary schools.

Colourblindness is the approach to anti-racist education that informs the content of this KS2 video. This is a universalist approach rooted in the classic liberal tradition of equality before the law. It is an approach that promotes and emphasizes the content of a person's character over and above the colour of

their skin (or any other immutable trait). A commitment to colourblindness is not a denial that racism exists or that there remains important work to be done to reduce and combat discrimination.

I believe that the 'one race, the human race' message of this video resource chimes with our vibrant city today. It is fitting that voices of children from this city and of experts from our university contributed to the production of this video. Colour blindness is my creed and the creed of many parents not just in our city but across the UK and the world. It unites people across racial religious and ethnic divides.

The tendency to propagate so called 'anti-racist' beliefs that centre racial difference over anti-racist beliefs emphasising common humanity is at odds with the values of many black and minority ethnic parents.

Teaching our children that they must focus on things they cannot control over and above things they can is in my view, a recipe for despair. If our schools propagate what many of us regard as an unbalanced and harmful approach to identity and race, then at the very least in the interest of fairness and equality they must ensure the promotion of liberal alternative approaches as well.

I am aware of other black parents who desperately want this unifying approach to how race and anti-racism are taught by this council. I will email members with full direct quotes but, respecting confidentiality and the public nature of this Deputation I will paraphrase what one mother of an 8-year-old said:

"the best way forward is educating our children about how we are all one. Skin colour is not a detriment! We should respect and love one another the same. Let's celebrate the diversity of our one human race!"

This was from a mother whose child had been called cruel names by a classmate at school - names that picked on the colour of that child's skin. But this mother does NOT believe her child's experience to be an indictment on daily life in our amazing city nor on the country as a whole.

I believe as do many other parents I know that an undue partisan and biased focus on skin colour doesn't help us. Let the message be one of unity - we are all humans together, there is so much we have in common. So together let's make a future defined by what unites us rather than what divides us. Thank you.

Supporting information:

KS2 video resource <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clgu7BGnFOq&t=10s>

**(2) Deputation supporting the Anti-Racist Strategy
Spokesperson – Catherine Fisher**

Supported by:

C Fisher
G Haley
V Trainer
A Ali
J Stephens
A Cole

Wards affected: All

On behalf of parents and carers from across the city, we want to express our support for the anti-racist education strategy currently under development in our city. We are proud that Brighton and Hove is taking a lead in this important and long-overdue area. Recent events, whether racist abuse at the Euros, ongoing allegations of racism in the Met police and the racism many of our children witness while online, while out and about, and indeed whilst at school, all illustrate just how needed it is.

We are disappointed at the attacks being made on the strategy, locally and in the national media many of which do not accurately represent the strategy and seem intended to provoke opposition. We have been sorry to see local Councillors sharing inaccurate articles on social media. And we are saddened that this scare-mongering has meant our schools have received abusive messages.

Brighton and Hove's anti-racist education strategy is about creating an education system and a society where everyone feels safe and equal. We understand that it has been developed with people affected by racism and addresses the urgent need to tackle issues that have historically led to inequalities for people of colour.

We agree with the 80% of teachers recently surveyed in a YouGov poll¹ who think that introducing more culturally diverse, representational topics is equally enriching and vital for white as well as ethnic minority students. It is important that all children have the opportunity to learn about black and ethnic minority achievement, giving them a more accurate and rounded world view.

The same survey revealed that 72% of teachers think the government should do more to support teachers in the teaching of cultural diversity in the curriculum. So, we are pleased that teachers in Brighton and Hove will be getting more support through the anti-racist education strategy.

Some of the opponents to having this strategy argue for the current "colour-blind approach" in schools that seems to advocate ignoring race and racism, making it somehow taboo to talk about difference or acknowledge the diverse

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/nadhimzahawi-make-the-teaching-of-bame-histories-and-experiences-mandatory-across-the-school-curriculum>

histories and experiences of individuals and groups in society and our schools.

The criticism from some newspapers, politicians and indeed some parents illustrates exactly why we need to get better at talking about race and racism. We can't tackle racism by pretending it doesn't exist.

All moves toward greater equality meet with resistance. This strategy is no different. We urge you to continue to develop and implement the strategy in order that all our children feel valued at school and in society and, are supported to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to thrive in modern multi-cultural Britain and our interconnected world.

Supporting information:

<https://www.change.org/p/nadhimzahawi-make-the-teaching-of-bame-histories-and-experiences-mandatory-across-the-school-curriculum>