

THE SOUTHALL REPORT

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

SWRT-SHRG CONFERENCE

**9 November 2002, Featherstone High School,
Montague Way, Southall, Middlesex**

Summary Report

'In Southall it was clear to us that there was a pride in their community and this was evident amongst many of the residents. It was also notable that diversity was seen as a positive thing and this was shown in schools where for instance pupils learnt about different religions and cultures and on the streets where festivals of all faiths were celebrated.'

**Ted Cattle, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*
Chaired by Ted Cattle. For the UK Home Office**

'Southall is a success not because of government but inspite of it'
Jasdev Singh Rai, Sikh Human Rights Group

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SWRT - 2 Chignell Place, London W13 OTJ – Tel. 0208 579 8898 Fax: 0208 579 7439
Sikh Human Rights Group - 2 Chignell Place, London W13 OTJ
Tel: 0208 840 3222 Fax: 0208 579 7439 - E-mail: shrg@shrg.net web site: www.shrg.net

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COHESION: THE SOUTHALL EXPERIENCE

SWRT – SHRG Conference
9 November 2002, Featherston High School, Montague Way, Southall, Middlesex

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Background

«Things have changed, my parents were grateful for being in this country and were therefore reluctant in speaking out. I'm not. I don't have to apologise for being here because I was born and raised here, this is my country, I work here and pay taxes..»

(Jugraj Singh, young person from Shouthall)

In the field of Anti-discrimination, two important developments took place last year. The launch of the UK Government's Community Cohesion policy following the unfortunate riots last summer and the United Nations sponsored the World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Discrimination (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa. Cultural Diversity featured strongly in both.

Within the framework the WCAR follow up and according to the conference documents, a UK National Action Plan against racism is currently being formed with the understanding that the issue of cultural diversity and community cohesion will be addressed and reflected appropriately in its provisions.

The government's community cohesion policy is primarily based on a series of reports (i.e. Ritchie and Clarke, Ouseley and Cattle) that were composed before, and after, last summer's disturbances that aimed to «identify good practice, key policy issues and new and innovative thinking in the field of community cohesion» (UK Home Office *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team* Chaired by Ted Cattle). In both the Cattle report and the Ministerial one that followed it, outlying the government's approach on community cohesion, Southall is mentioned favourably as a successful example of community cohesion.

The Sikh Human Rights Group held a conference on Cultural Diversity in February 2001 and took on Culture Diversity as one of its major lobby issues at the World Conference in Durban. Since then, SHRG has launched a consultation on the issue of *Cultural Diversity and Community Cohesion* that involves a series of Conferences throughout the country.

The conference in Shouthall was organised by the Sikh Human Rights Group together with the Sikh Welfare and Research Trust and brought together experts and experiences from both within and outside the area. The aim was to discuss the Cattle report and the government's community cohesion policy but most importantly Southall's experience of community harmony and cultural diversity. The conference's outcome will feed into the continuous constructive dialogue amongst SHRG, the Home Office and other interested parties.

SHRG has worked closely with the community in Southall through the years and feels that the success of Southall may not have been analysed properly in the Race Relations Discourse.

The outcome of this conference will feed into both the government's community policy and the process of developing a UK National Action Plan against racism.

THE SOUTHALL EXPERIENCE

**SWRT – SHRG Conference
9 November 2002, Featherston High School, Montague Way, Southall, Middlesex**

9:30-10:00	Registration
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome Jasdev Rai, SWRT, SHRG Director
10:15 – 10:35	Cultural Diversity, Religion and Anti-Discrimination Elina Stamou, SHRG
10:35 – 10:50	The Community Cohesion Policy Home Office
10:50 – 11:05	Discussion
11:05 – 11:15	Tea Break
11:20 – 11:40	Policing Southall Inspector Shell, Metropolitan Police Southall and Community Liaison Officer in Southall.
11:40 – 12:00	Youth Voices , Jugrag Singh, Youth in Southall.
12:00 – 12:20	Community Cohesion in Southall Umesh Chander, Trustee of Hindu Mandir and Ex-Mayor of Ealing.
12:20 – 12:35	Discussion
12:35 – 13:35	Lunch
13:40 – 14:00	Politics and Community Cohesion Pyare Khabra, Southall MP
14:00 – 14:20	Media and Reporting in Southall Phil McCorkel, Former Southall Reporter for Ealing Gazette - local newspaper.
14:20 – 14:35	Discussion
14:35 – 15:15	Strengthening Culture Diversity: A Critical View of Government's Community Cohesion Initiative Robert Berkeley, Runnymede Trust Jasdev Rai, SHRG
15:15 – 15:30	Discussion
15:30 – 15:45	Closing Remarks – Executive Summary Jasdev Rai, SWRT, SHRG

Welcome, Dr. Jasdev Singh Rai, Director of Sikh Welfare Research Trust and the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG)

Welcome to all the participants.

A brief overview of SWRT and SHRG's work was given. SWRT facilitates voluntary sector organisations and holds its own programmes consistent with its aims. Four organisations are assisted with office facilities and administrative support. This is SWRT's first major conference. SHRG was established seventeen years ago in response to human rights violations in the Punjab in India. Since then it has expanded its activities to include human rights abuses of members of a wide range of ethnic, religious and minority communities around the world. SHRG's work is based on the humanitarian principles of Sikh philosophy. It is pluralistic in its approach. Equality is the essence of Sikhi. These values are consistent with UN Human Rights principles.

Following the WCAR last year, countries agreed to develop National Action Plans (NAPs) against racism. In this country the process of developing a NAP has begun and a national conference has been organised to discuss it, on the 20th of this month in Manchester. In this conference NGOs have been invited to submit suggestions for inclusion in the UK NAP on the basis of the work done throughout the process leading to the WCAR in Durban and the paragraphs adopted in the WCAR documents.

SHRG first raised the issue of cultural diversity in August 2000 during the preparatory meetings of the WCAR. Back then we were essentially alone in trying to place it in the conference's agenda. We were very surprised. We felt that cultural diversity, on the basis of equality and universal human rights principles, is the only way forward should we want to have peaceful societies. After extensive lobbying, governments and more NGOs acknowledged the importance of the issue and in the end the conference adopted a series of paragraphs in the final documents that call for respect and promotion of cultural diversity.

Within the framework of the WCAR follow-up, SHRG organised this conference to discuss, with the various experts, young people and NGO representatives, the issue of cultural diversity in this country with a focus on Southall, which has been characterised by the UK government as a successful example of cultural diversity.

I. *Cultural Diversity, Religion and Anti-Discrimination*, Elina Stamou, SHRG

In my presentation I would like to make a few introductory comments that might be useful to bear in mind during our discussion today. Cultural diversity is one of these terms that although it's acknowledged as being important, for many, its meaning is apparently 'elusive' and therefore not very useful. Attempts to bring the terms 'culture' and 'cultural diversity' in the political discourse are met with suspicion and fear of a potential controversy they might raise. It is true that both terms have been used with various different meanings in mind, yet it's also true that the reason why they remain 'elusive' and controversial is because so far not adequate attention has been paid on trying to bring them into the political discourse; at least not as mere decorative terms that will add a positive vibe to the discussions but as meaningful and crucial concepts that will add weight to the discussions of any future policy that aims to bring about community cohesion on the basis of equality and human rights.

Having said that, cultural diversity in itself does not presuppose equality or an 'automatic' state of harmonious co-existence of different cultures and communities. It needs to be accompanied by the understanding, acceptance and promotion of cultural differences on the one hand, and the tackle of racism and discrimination on the other.

In this, religion as a term and concept is often avoided to be associated with discussions on community cohesion. When it does get discussed, it is often outside the discourse as something separate, that does not concern public policy. Nevertheless, religious consciousness and belief for a lot of people is important. It is a crucial aspect of their individual and group identity that is more often than not seen as an integral part of their culture. As such it cannot possibly be left in the margins of discussions around cultural diversity, anti-discrimination and community cohesion.

So, what is the position of 'culture' in the anti-racism or anti-discrimination discourse? Before moving into discussions on this I feel that it's important to make a brief note in relation to the 'anti-racism' or 'race' discourse, for in order to deal with racism we need to consider its sources and for that we have to look at the genealogy of the current discourse. It is a field that refers or reacts to classifications that were once constructed in order to exclude and dominate. Had such

classification evolved as a means of seeking better co-existence and real understanding, we may not have had to be here today. We need to question the basis of terms such as race, racism and racial discrimination. We also need to undertake a more thorough analysis in order to unravel the multiple definitions conflated within these terms and their use to human society.

When we talk of equality we have to ask the question «equality in relation to what and whom?». Is it the concept of equality that has developed as part of the western dominated discourse on 'race' in which we somehow refer to equality of all in relation to the 'white race'; or is it equality without reference to any specific group or culture, in which case we accept that all races and cultures have the same weight and importance in our equation. SHRG's position is the latter and it is within this context that we feel that culture is an integral part of the 'anti-racism' or perhaps better 'anti-discrimination' discourse¹ and that the recognition, acceptance and promotion of cultural diversity could be the antidote to racism and discrimination.

Although there is by now literature that discusses the importance of bringing 'culture' into the 'anti-racism' or/and 'anti-discrimination' debates, in practice public policy has somewhat changed in order to accommodate colour and to some extent descent/ethnicity but very little has been done in relation to protecting people's and group's cultural identities.

Discrimination and racism occur primarily because people are fearful of 'the different'. In this sense, people that come from different cultures are perceived as a threat to what is thought to be a 'homogenous national culture'. This is the case because homogeneity is being treated as an indication of 'normality', whereas cultural diversity is approached as a result of the 'invasion' of the different into the 'homogenous' whole. However, a thorough look into the British society can convince people that diversity and not homogeneity is the starting point of a dynamic process that involves a wide variety of perspectives, ways of life, individual and communal identities and economico-political circumstances that blend together and change through time. When this is accepted, cultural diversity will cease to be perceived as a threat and it will be approached as an opportunity for the equal and peaceful co-existence of different peoples.

Another point that is important to bear in mind is that when the importance of cultural diversity is acknowledged, it is usually in relation to the act of 'tolerance'. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily promote the co-existence of different cultures on an equal basis. The concept of 'tolerance' suggests merely a political 'recognition and accommodation' of different ways of being while it still presupposes cultural homogeneity of the 'nation-state' and assimilation of the minority cultures into the majority, 'tolerant' one. An alternative to the passive practice of 'tolerance' would be the active promotion of the more inclusive and dynamic concept of 'cultural diversity' that promotes respect for different cultures and protection of their rights on the basis of the human rights principles.

The WCAR provided us with a unique opportunity to discuss such issues and so SHRG raised them from the beginning of the process. The initial reluctance we were met with in Geneva, August 2000, slightly changed after persistent lobbying and an awareness-raising campaign through the organization of group discussions in Europe, Canada, US and India. Towards the end of this process, the conference was a little bit more prepared to accept the importance of embracing cultural diversity and the need to systematically challenge the idea of the existence of apparently 'a-cultural' civic structures in societies. We worked together with a wide network of NGOs from around the world. The final conference document included a few references to the importance of cultural diversity and now it's up to us all to make them meaningful.

Racism and discrimination go hand in hand with people's frustration of having to deal with an apparently 'a-political' and 'a-cultural' civic structure and anti-discrimination discourse. The issue here is the non-existent, limited or bias knowledge about different communities and the lack of a sense of belonging for all, combined with bad and inadequate public policies; vast relative economic disparities and the liberal model of governance according to which there is no space for 'culture' in the public sphere but it's something that concerns only the private life of people. This generates broadly speaking two main reactions that take place simultaneously, creating tensions and conflicts, much like those we witnessed last summer in the North of the country. The first one is rooted in the nationalist approach whereby the functioning of the British society is not and should not be 'a-cultural' but reflect the 'white-English, majority culture'. The second reaction comes primarily from non-white communities that in all this feel excluded and marginalized.

¹ For by using the term 'anti-discrimination' instead of 'anti-racism' it is easier in many ways and of course in some contexts to avoid all the limitations and racist connotations of the discourse as they have developed through time.

All these issues are far from new, they have been analysed by a wide range of experts. We have the B. Parekh and Ouseley reports, the Cantle and Ministerial reports and many others that have discussed community cohesion, the issue of British civic identity as well as that of the common values included in this identity. The questions however that come to mind considering all this work that has already been done since the 70s, is why are we still here today discussing such issues almost on the same basic level that we did all those years ago? Have we not progressed at all? If not, why?

As a follow-up to the WCAR with a focus on cultural diversity and community cohesion, this conference will attempt to deal with these questions. Although an undoubtedly difficult task, we do believe that finding out how cultural diversity and community cohesion can be embraced and realised in today's Britain and how this process can be improved, is possible as it is crucial for the multicultural future of the British society. On a smaller scale, Southall has been presented as a 'successful' example of that in the Cantle and Ministerial reports; it seems therefore the best place to start the discussions that will hopefully contribute to a better and a more coherent community cohesion policy in this country.

Home Office, Community Cohesion Unit

Introductory note by Dr. Rai: Due to unexpected developments the Community Cohesion Unit has not been able to be represented here today. They send their apologies and their presentation.

This presentation

- Background
- The Government's agenda
- The work of the Community Cohesion Unit

I. Background

- Last summer's serious disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley
- Less serious disturbances in Stoke and Leeds
- Government response two-fold
 - Immediate action to get summer activities up and running in local areas
 - alongside, reflection on why – through Denham, Cantle, Ritchie and Clarke reports (complement Ouseley).

Cantle Report - Key Conclusions

- Lack of trust between communities at root of problem
 - parallel lives lead to fear and conflict
 - complicated by the politics of envy
- Young people rarely involved or consulted by local agencies
 - community leaders only partially representative
- Little or no strategy or real incentives for agencies to address these issues
 - occasional community-based schemes which were truly innovative
- Compounded by serious deprivation in many areas

II. The Government's Agenda

- Mainstreaming community cohesion into Government policy
 - will require us to really understand how community cohesion issues work on the ground - with the help of the CC Panel and its Practitioner groups
 - and using this knowledge to influence Govt policies and programmes
- Occasional Govt programmes
 - e.g., summer activities
- But key is action at a local level
 - each area is different, and local agencies are best placed to lead change
 - joint LGA/CRE/Govt guidance will help local areas get on top of agenda

Isn't this just a problem for Bradford, Oldham and Burnley?

"The reports which examined the causes of last year's disturbances pointed to a range of factors none of which was unique to those towns. For this reason, none of us can be complacent.

Community Cohesion is an issue that we believe all authorities need to address. We are under no illusion that there are any quick fixes, or simple answers. But we have to start the process in earnest now."

Gurbux Singh, Jeremy Beecham and other LGA Group Leaders, Nick Ravensford and John Denham

A Definition of Community Cohesion

- A cohesive community is one where:
 - there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
 - the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
 - those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
 - strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Work of the Community Cohesion Unit

- Mainstreaming community cohesion into Whitehall programmes and policies
- Building the capacity of local areas to become beacons of good practice
- Deepening knowledge of community cohesion - what does it mean and how can we measure it?
- The Community Cohesion Panel and Practitioner groups

Mainstreaming community cohesion into Whitehall programmes

- Mainstreaming community cohesion into Government policy
 - will require us to really understand how community cohesion issues work on the ground - with the help of the CC Panel and Practitioner Groups
 - and using this knowledge to influence Govt policies and programmes

- ministerial Group to take actions forward
- Occasional Govt programmes
 - e.g., summer activities

Building the capacity of local areas to become beacons of good practice

- Build up an understanding of the situation on the ground - Local agencies find community cohesion hard.
- Issued Draft Guidance for Local Authorities - published along with LGA, ODPM and CRE - Revised version in December.
- Pathfinders Scheme - will include approx. 15 areas, who will become experts in community cohesion. Prospectus this week, participants announced in New Year.
- Beacon Council theme on community cohesion
- National approach - spreading the message through conferences, website

Deepening our knowledge base of community cohesion

- Information on local areas - working with GOs, NASS and other bodies.
- Developing measures of community cohesion - both at local and national level. Document to be published along with the revised guidance in December
- Working with the Audit Commission on a set of quality of life indicators - ensuring community cohesion is a key factor in their development
- Citizenship survey - attitudinal data
- Research base built into our papers for the Ministerial Group - e.g., Area-based initiatives

Community Cohesion Panel and Practitioner Groups

• Supporting the Panel and 13 Practitioner Groups

- Panel meetings every other month
- Practitioner groups meeting approx. every month
- Practitioner groups covering:
 - Education - Youth & Community – Regeneration -
 - Voluntary Organisations - Faith - Health & Social Services -
 - Leisure Culture & Sport - Leadership, Partnerships and
 - Political parties - Policing, Crime & Drugs – Housing -
 - Press & Media - Employment & Training.

Discussion

- There seems to be an honest attempt by the Home office to listen to communities voices. In this, who they consult is important. Often there is no proper consultation with the communities concerned and at times wrong advice is given to the government by people linked to them in advisory capacity.
- After the riots of the mid-80s regeneration was seen as a way of tackling poverty, which was linked to the riots. In this, engaging communities in the whole process was given little importance. A lot of those organisations that got the information and had the resources to react and participate in the debate then, seem to be part of the process now, so much so that when the government initiates a new policy, government officials contact only those few organisations that they have been working with for years. This is understood to a certain extent (limited time to expand the network of consulting organisations or contact them all), yet it is crucial that in this process we have the involvement of as many organisations and communities as possible. We cannot work on a community cohesion policy by consulting only a few organisations and only certain communities.

- All this policy talk on Community Cohesion is very confusing for a lot of community organisations (because of the language but also because a lot of them are a bit suspicious of new policies that seem to be a case of reproducing old ones without really addressing and tackling the issues). It'll take a while till this community cohesion policy seeps into the ground and reaches the grass roots organisations. All such organisations should be involved in the process from the beginning of the process.
- The Home Office needs to publicise all relevant information on community cohesion policy as wide as possible. If not, we are running the risk of going back to what we have had so far - the involvement of only a few organisations in this process and the marginalisation of the rest of the community.
- Culture is still not considered adequately in government policies and practices - nationally and locally. Lack of reference to the importance of culture and their role in community cohesion, in the LGA Guidelines. We seem to be faced with a philosophy of 'denial' on the part of the government and the public bodies and structures as to what 'culture' is and how we understand it. A denial to address the issue. Officials seem to be comfortable not dealing with it and not thinking about it. Consequently, not much has been done in order to understand the cultural differences and without that, one can not expect acknowledgement and respect for these differences and essential cultural diversity based on equality.
- SHRG started bringing up the issue of cultural diversity in 2000 during the preparatory process of the WCAR because we realised that the whole race relations field tends to concentrate and address colour but not culture. There was a somewhat implicit understanding that «your colour is fine but your culture...well, we'll have to think about it». No parity given to different cultures and no coherent policy (in a country like Britain where a number of different cultures have existed in the last 30-40 years) that could make the majority white population feel comfortable in the presence of different distinct cultures. This is so because there is very little space in race relations policy and approach for seriously considering 'culture' and cultural diversity.
- SHRG still believes that cultural diversity is still an issue that is little understood in this country. It is still not properly addressed. It is still considered as something 'forced' upon the race relations discourse rather than an essential aspect of it that was there from the very beginning.
- Southall is a very good example of an area where different distinct cultural communities co-exist. This has been the case for years now mainly due to the philosophy of these cultures and their willingness to co-exist in harmony that has led to the development of various tools to be used in order to avoid conflict and tensions in the area.
- It seems that all relevant reports (i.e Cattle, Ousley and others) have avoided to address 'culture' and the issues around that, while when they did, it was very brief and superficial.
- Need to raise these issues with the political parties and ask them how their policies and programmes address the cultural diversity of the British society.
- It is very important for different faith groups to be allowed into the process of building community cohesion. Often it is very difficult for small community organisations to follow the whole process of consultation due to very limited resources. Their participation however is essential.
- Another issue that needs to be discussed is that of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'. It is a matter of great importance in the community cohesion discourse, especially the issue of civic citizenship and common values.
- It will be useful to have another conference in Shouthall with the attendance of the government.

II. Policing Southall, Inspector Shell, Metropolitan Police Southall and Community Liaison Officer in Southall

In Southall, the police has been working very closely with the communities and since the area is comprised mostly of faith groups, continuous dialogue with faith communities has been at the core of our community policy.

In some instances during the disturbances in Bradford and the other areas in the North of the country, the police reacted badly or better over-reacted contributing to the creation of an atmosphere of tension. In Southall the police approach is somewhat different in that before we react to an actual situation or a rumour, we meet up with the local communities, organisations and faith groups to discuss what is happening and what can be done to avoid escalation of tension. We need to have such preventive processes in other areas as well. Established, effective and strong links with the communities based on continuous communication is essential to community harmony.

Concerning the police policies and practices in Southall,

There is the community safety unit, which was set up after the Lawrence murder enquiry and looks at hate and homophobic crime in Ealing Borough;

Another very important mechanism in place is the 'Southall Faith Leaders Meeting', which meets at the police station every 8 weeks (plus emergency meetings) and is chaired by the most senior officer in the Borough (the operational commander). In these meetings issues that concern all different communities in Southall are discussed and tackled before they turn into conflict.

Also there has been community race relations training within the police structure in the Med. There is also a separate training in Ealing (mainly on Islamophobia after the events of the 7/11) for those police officers that operate in the area;

Furthermore, all police officers in Southall meet with the faith group leaders so that they have a better understanding of their culture, needs and issues. Police officers that are present in local events such as the main religious festivals, are informed about these events and their importance for the communities concerned. The problem is though that sometimes when there are big events and extra officers have to be brought from another area, although these officers are briefed about the events, because they come from outside Southall and are not familiar with the way the Southall police and communities work, they often are not interested to listen to this information and learn about the communities;

There are also officers allocated in the main schools in the area, working with them in order to prevent crime. In addition, there is a programme called 'summer action' outside term times that involves children from all races and religions. There are a few other community programmes that involve police and young people in Southall.

There was a report published last week, revealing that if you are black it is 8 times more likely to be stopped and searched in the streets of London than if you are white. For Asians it is 3 times more likely than being white. I think though that number of stop and search incidents have decreased after the Lawrence enquiry. There is the fear within the force that if police officers stop members of black and ethnic minority communities, they'll automatically be accused of racism. Yet it is true that a lot (the majority, in some cases like Ealing) of people dealing drugs and are involved in crime are of black or minority background. How do we deal with those issues? This is continuously discussed in the faith meetings between the faith leaders and the police officials. There is also a monitoring mechanism in place for the officers that stop and search.

Moreover, the Ealing police is trying to set up an Independent Advisory Group that would involve representatives from all different communities in the area. The aim of the group would be to examine racist incidents and police policies and practices so that they can suggest improvements.

We still need to have more gender sensitive police policies in place. Also important is for the public bodies to reflect, in terms of representation, the cultural diversity of the area.

The attitude of the people in senior positions of public bodies is crucial. In Southall police for instance you have an Inspector as a Community Liaison Officer exactly because the senior officials believe that the strong link with the community is essential.

One of the lessons learned from the Southall riots and the Blair Peach incident is the importance of good continuous communication between police and communities. The other one is to be pro-active rather than re-active.

Racial crime in Southall is reduced compared to other areas. This is however more due to the communities themselves than the police. It is the communities in Southall (mainly Sikh, Hindu and Muslim) that have accepted each other, they have agreed to live in harmony and work towards that. This might be the reason Southall has been highlighted as a successful example of community cohesion.

Youth Voices, Jugraj Singh, Young Person from Southall

One of the issues that I would like to draw your attention to is that of unemployment amongst young people. The construction of Heathrow airport has provided a lot of young people and their families with jobs, contributing to the decrease of unemployment in Southall. Nevertheless, this is not enough to keep young people off the streets. Southall has no facilities for young people and so they tend to wander around the streets, sometimes creating trouble. We need to create appropriate places of social interaction, sport and recreation facilities for young people in Southall. This will also serve to divert them from concentrating on areas where crime is thriving.

Maybe an idea towards tackling violence locally would be to organise visits for young people to other parts of the country or even better abroad. I know that when I started travelling I realised that so much is going on outside my area, that maybe it doesn't matter if somebody looks at you at times in a funny way or the local gangs because to my mind Southall was becoming smaller and smaller. This made me think that there are other, larger things that matter.

I would also like to point out that police or the council do not listen to young people. Local faith leaders don't listen either. It is so important to allow young people to speak out their views. Elders (especially members of migrant communities) don't speak the language of the system and are therefore in a way isolated from it. Young people however are the ones that function as the eyes of their families in that they are the ones who find out what is going on in the area and the country in general, informing their parents accordingly. It is therefore important to establish communication mechanism between the young people of different Southall communities and the various Southall public institutions.

Also the representation of black and ethnic minority cultures in Southall institutions needs to improve. It might be an idea for public bodies such as the police to make presentations, during recruitment times, to the different communities at places of social interaction such as the temples, universities and youth centres.

Last but not least, Southall is an area with a lot of migrant and refugee communities. A lot of these people have to deal with the stress of their past, often horrific, experiences. Most of them are faced with additional everyday racism and discrimination in this country. It would be helpful to establish counselling processes for these people, should they need support to deal with these experiences.

Community Cohesion in Southall, Umesh Chander, Trustee of the Hindu Mandir and Ex-Mayor of Ealing

We can certainly apply the success of Southall elsewhere in the country. This success stems from the communities' active pursuit of community cohesion and protection of the cultural diversity of the area.

Whether community leaders are faith representatives or not is not as important as the fact that we need to engage with people that have the capacity and willingness to intervene in situations and be active on a local level.

It's also important to approach local businesses and get them involved in community cohesion initiatives.

Communication amongst the different communities is important as well as that between them and the local and central government bodies.

Discussion:

- Police is often at the cutting edge of keeping peace in an area and the Southall police seems to have played their role very well as pro-active actors that function in order to reduce tensions and conflicts. In doing so police in Southall meets regularly with faith leaders, which is something that the rest of the government mechanism avoids in other areas. The latter limit their communication only to secular institutions and organisations, leaving out a very big number of the British population and a great many communities. This has been tried in Southall and failed. Faith communities have a very important, if not the most important, role to play in Southall's community cohesion process.
- We need to involve the young people in the process or better give them the space they need to express their views. We need to listen and take their views into consideration.
- Also we tend to give a lot of importance to negative incidents but very little attention is given to all these great initiatives by individuals, organisations and especially young people. We need to encourage such initiatives.
- Police might be briefed on the different cultures of the local communities but unless someone that is a member of these communities meets up with them so that he/she can explain the communities views and traditions in person, the briefings will be nothing more than another piece of paper with something written on it..
- Important to involve the local business community in any initiatives concerning better community relations.
- It's important to learn about other cultures. One doesn't have to know everything about the other cultures but more be open minded about them and so when an issue arises they are prepared to listen and learn facts and details on situations that will be able to bear in mind the next time similar situations arise.
- There has been a shift of approach at the Shouthall Council. Initially it was imposed upon them but they soon learned that listening and understanding the needs and opinions of communities is very important.
- On the issue of the Shouthall regeneration funds not being allowed to be distribute to faith organisations and the paradox of that considering the composition of Southall and the important role faith organisations have played in the preservation of peace in the area; this was something that the central government was responsible for since it was inserted in the funding guidelines as a condition for the distribution of funds. A lot of money has been wasted away because of that. It hasn't reached the faith organisations that are key actors of the Southall community.
- Parties' structures need to be changed in order to reflect the cultural diversity of the British society. For instance if there are two candidates in an area X, one Asian and one white, both of them very competent and the white one presents a list of a certain large number of contacts of people he added to the party's network, the party will congratulate him. If however the same is done by the Asian candidate, they'll probably initiate an investigation into how he acquired all those contacts and who these people are.

Politics and Community Cohesion, Pyare Khabra, Southall MP

I have been in this country since 1959. As such I have been involved in the fight against racism in this country for many years now. This is an issue that is not new to me at all. Nevertheless, the current situation surrounding this issue is very different to how it was in the past.

Race issues back then used to be in a way 'simpler', these days they have become more complicated and more sophisticated. People's attitudes are different, laws are different, the way race issues are approached are very different from the past. There was more unity amongst the people fighting racism in those days. Race was something recognised from all communities regardless of their ethnic or religious background that were united to fight open and crude racism. Now that times have become more complex and diversity is recognised, communities have a wide range

of different religious and cultural concerns that are linked to so many new (or newly recognised) manifestations of racism and discrimination that were not there before where the colour of the skin was the main consideration.

This change has been triggered by a series of riots and horrendous racist incidents throughout the country and Southall - BNP was involved in a lot of them.

The political situation has changed in the process sometimes for the worse. Now politicians often divert the attention of the public by focusing on issues that are not of our concern as British citizens, they are not of concern to our communities in this country. In this, political figures often play one community against another. This is further exploited by the far right. The whole situation got worse after the events of 11/09/02.

Communities need to realise what is happening and be united against racism and discrimination. People have prejudices, like communities do about each other, what is important is to control them and not let them turn into racism.

In the Cattle report, the team said that it came to Southall and consulted people and institutions. Well, I don't know when they arrived and who they met but they certainly did not speak to me. They also made all these remarks about Southall being a successful example of community cohesion but the reasons underlying such conclusions have not been mentioned nor the problems that Southall faces and can not be swept under the carpet.

It needs to be clear to people and the government that a lot of our communities have been here for many years and are not planning to go back. We have contributed to the development of this country and continue to do so. We are part of this country and its multicultural society. The sooner this realisation is made the better it will be for everybody.

It is also important to realise that one cannot expect for social conditions to change for the better without changing the rules and regulations that govern them. Change in policy has to take place in a way that it ensures the elimination of racism in this country and the protection and promotion of cultural diversity. In this there is a lot of responsibility in the hands of communities themselves. We all have to make sure that we respect each other and live in harmony. However as we all know the situation is still far from satisfactory and as we see members of ethnic minorities are not yet trusted by the system - for instance they can not yet occupy as many senior positions as the white majority.

Furthermore, young people's involvement in the fight against racism and the promotion of cultural diversity is crucial. This is especially so for young people from minority background. They should be more actively involved in policy-making and politics. Otherwise people like me that are getting old will have no right replacement.

Media and Reporting in Southall, Phil McCorkell, Former Southall Reporter for Ealing Gazette (local newspaper)

I used to work for the Southall gazette for four years and so I would like to speak about the way Southall has been viewed from the press as well as our relationship with the different communities in the area.

In my experience as a reporter Southall presents us with a unique situation because it's so diverse and although the local press is quite small (at least compared to other areas such as Manchester) and it has to deal with a wide range of issues. One inevitable gets drawn into this, forming close links with the communities and develops this way a certain type of responsibility towards them that is perhaps lacking in other areas.

Our offices were in town and so we were at the centre of it all, having the opportunity to meet the communities and discuss their issue regularly. The same is true for the Southall radio station, Sunrise. So there were always very close ties between the Southall community and the local press.

The Ealing Gazette managed to report on community issues by remaining objective and independent of any particular cultural, racial or religious group. This way it was trusted and valued by a lot of people coming from different communities. For this we have been accused by certain groups (that have their own agendas) as a paper that does not really understand the issues, because we avoid taking sides. We have often received hate mail from certain extreme groups that took advantage of conflicting situations in Southall in order to promote their own agendas. Despite all these

difficulties however, we do think that remaining independent and balancing the needs of the racial and religious groups involved in occasional tensions is very important for peace and harmony in Southall.

Something else that has helped us deal with difficult and often controversial issues in Southall is our search for the background of the disputes and our wish to collect as much information as possible before we write something. This information is always analysed in great depth, consulting the communities at the same time, and trying to really understand the conflict and the different point of views. Going for the easy simplified headlines was never our objective. It is part of the responsibility of a paper to avoid going along with the mainstream opinion and seek to look for the views of all parties involved. This way we have often helped the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Southall and at times managed to keep a certain extremist group (that has been trying in the past to play one community against the other) away from disputes.

We have also been very careful with the way we portray different communities in our paper. We avoid for instance statements like 'person of Somali appearance' knowing that such stereotypes are inaccurate and uninformative.

Furthermore, in Southall (like any other place) there are some communities that are more vocal and more organised in terms of representation than others. Often the voices of the less visible communities are not heard or their needs overlooked. This is also linked to the lack of proper representation of the Southall cultural diversity to public local bodies and the media.

Discussion:

- In the old days people were more united. They were all fighting discrimination on grounds of colour. With the passing of the years things have changed and communities as they feel more settled and free to express their views and opinions, speak against other forms of racism and discrimination that today have become more subtle and complex.
- In our fight against racism and discrimination it is important to avoid placing forms of discrimination in a hierarchy. We all need to be united against all form of racism and discrimination whatever their manifestations. The community cohesion agenda offers a distinct opportunity for all different communities to reassess their ways of viewing other communities, concentrating at the same time on how are we going to achieve cohesion by respecting our differences and not by attempting to assimilate and behave like the white population.
- The tension between being proud of your culture and wanting to preserve it and at the same time appreciating other people's culture and allowing some space for it as well without tensions and conflicts is an issue. Often people go out in the street, for instance during religious festivals in Southall, demonstrating their pride to be who they are. This can and is often misinterpreted as aggression to other cultures and taken up and exploited by people outside the community.
- One needs to be aware of the issues at hand so that we don't get sidetracked and influenced by the misinformation of the media and by some of those in positions of power.
- One of the problems that led to the disturbances in the North of the country last year was the often inappropriate role of the media. More responsible reporting is needed. Also one needs to be careful with the use of certain words that characterise communities. An example would be the term 'Asian' that seems to place a wide range of communities in the same basket, almost always carrying negative connotations with it. Perhaps the best way to deal with this is to establish and maintain constructive paths of dialogue with the communities so that, in this case for instance, they suggest the best way they wish to be characterised or the best way that their issues can be presented in the media. This is not to say that general terms such as 'Asian' cannot be used, rather that they should be used appropriately. We also recognise that the process of consulting communities on their views has its own difficulties such as differences of opinion within communities on certain issues especial that of identification, yet it seems to be a more responsible way of reporting that can contribute to harmony rather than tension.
- There has been noted in the last few years a certain slight change in the press that seems to be interested more and more on issues that concern ethnic minority communities in Britain. Some of them in some cases even seem

to be more careful when reporting on race issues. Their reporting also is a little bit more sophisticated on these issues than before. This is of course not to say that we don't have a problem with bad and irresponsible press that serves to stir up tensions, creating confusions and a series of misunderstandings for the average reader.

- In Southall there is also a close link between the local and ethnic press. They very often exchange information and views on issues of common interest.
- The press is mainly directed by commercial interests and the type of audience they think they have. Nevertheless this has to go hand in hand with ethical responsibility.

IV. Strengthening Culture Diversity: A Critical View of Government's Community Cohesion Initiative

Community Cohesion – Critical Review, Robert Berkeley, Runnymede Trust

I've been asked to give a critical review of the government's approach to community cohesion. This is not my style or that of Runnymede since for us the real project is to engage in dialogue with policy makers to deliver attitudinal and behavioural change rather than criticise. I hope that any critique I give here is taken in this spirit. I am keen to welcome anybody who is prepared to work for the delivery of a successful multi-ethnic Britain. I do wonder, however, about some of the approaches that have been evident since the agenda turned to 'cohesion'.

In this short paper I want to consider the providence of 'cohesion' and argue that alone it is pretty meaningless (or rather too meaningful) – and suggest a better alternative that might make more sense of the terrain.

Since 1997 and the coming to power of the Labour government, new social policy language has emerged in tranches to address policy areas that in the past were often dealt with in singular, vertical approaches. So far two big areas have developed into which much of government thinking and policy to do with 'race' have been subsumed – social inclusion/exclusion and neighbourhood renewal.

At the end of 2001, in response to the summer disturbances in Northern mill towns, a third policy tranche was introduced – community cohesion – into which, again, future policy for dealing with 'race' might well, and perhaps appropriately, be absorbed.

Some critics have argued that the summer disturbances were a signal of the failure of multiculturalism. That the power of choice for different communities to express their specific cultural values – to be perceived to self-segregate – whether this is true or not – led to breakdowns in community relations through a lack of shared identity – a British identity.

But what does community cohesion mean, and how is it translated into policy and practice?

Back in 2000, the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain used the term 'cohesion' in connection with its associated notion of a 'community of communities'.

Britain needs to be, certainly, 'One Nation' – but understood as a community of communities and a community of citizens, not a place of oppressive uniformity based on a single substantive culture. Cohesion in such a community derives from a widespread commitment to certain core values, both between communities and within them: equality and fairness; dialogue and consultation; toleration; compromise and accommodation; recognition of and respect for diversity; and – by no means least – determination to confront and eliminate racism and xenophobia.

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

The government has adopted the language of cohesion as a descriptor for a whole range of policy proposals building on reports released in the wake of last summer's disturbances in northern mill towns. These proposals currently amount to funding for a range of youth projects in Northwest towns to tackle a reported lack of dialogue between young people from different ethnic communities, some frenetic debates about religion in schools (which appear to have been

conveniently forgotten about), a plan for every local authority, some 'beauty contests' in terms of funding bids, and a lot of talking at the Home Office.

At this stage, however, it remains unclear what the government understands by social cohesion and what direct connections to this agenda can be envisaged for groups and individuals concerned with racial justice, and policy-makers with a responsibility for the promotion of racial equality.

There is a significant danger that the community cohesion agenda will sacrifice action on the fundamental issues around 'race', citizenship, and belonging, for a managerial approach focusing on local government structures. Community cohesion is a framework around which to group a large amount of policy activity – yet there remains at its heart a lack of coherence and understanding. It is only by tackling these larger questions that any coherence can be provided. It is only by beginning to address the core issues that racism can be challenged.

If the Home Secretary achieves his ambition to conduct a national debate on social cohesion, it is crucial that the process should not obscure the centrality to the achievement of a progressive cohesive community of both eliminating racism and increasing respect for diversity. It is crucial that any social cohesion agenda improves racial equality in the UK, and that those who campaign for racial justice have a clear stake in the debate.

In the report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, its authors argued for a synthesis of liberal and pluralist traditions in political thought – encapsulated in their definition of a successful multi-ethnic state as 'a community of citizens and a community of communities'. They noted that liberal conceptions of citizenship which argue there is a single political culture in the public sphere but substantial diversity in the private lives of individuals and communities do not go far enough as the public realm is not and cannot be neutral. Values and practices can therefore discriminate against certain members of the community, marginalizing them or failing to recognise them.

An attempt to combine a monocultural public realm with a multicultural private realm is likely to undermine the latter. For if only one culture is publicly recognised and institutionalised, other cultures will be seen as marginal, peripheral, even deviant and inferior.

Thirdly, the state has a right and duty to intervene in the private sphere to protect and promote human rights standards based on equal respect and dignity – thus making the public and private distinction difficult to sustain.

The cohesion debate currently falls foul of similar objections – by suggesting a public/private sphere it suggests that there is a way of behaving in public that is acceptable and that this way is the way of the white majority – how can we cohere if you continue to have your Saturday schools and 'segregated' schools – why not behave like us, we don't segregate in terms of race or religion. I don't mind what you do at home but in public you should behave in such a way as to fit in? In other words what you do at home is different to me – I have got it right and you haven't. The home secretary has found it difficult to stay out of the private sphere – his now notorious comments on the use of language in the home go to show that. Cohesion without equality and diversity may lead to errors being made of which I have given a crude typification here.

I want to quickly mention an alternative way of framing this discussion that might be more fruitful (borrowing heavily from the work of Bhikhu Parekh, which is given fuller explication in the latest Runnymede publication, 'Cohesion, Community and Citizenship')

Membership of a political community entails [in New Labour terms] rights and responsibilities – entitlements and sacrifices. Some of us are in the position to pay taxes to benefit others, we often defer our demands in order that the more urgent needs of others can be met first, obey laws that sometimes go against our own self-interest and sometimes against deeply held beliefs at the extreme, people are prepared to die for our country. No political community can be held together by force – despite some of the many disastrous attempts to do so – neither can it be held together purely by self-interest; this requires what might be called a common sense of belonging.

What are the components of this common sense of belonging?

Mutuality of claims and obligations. Members of a community recognise each other as part of a single community, and are bound together by claims and obligations that do not obtain in relation to outsiders. This does not mean that they

have no obligations to outsiders, but rather that, other things being equal, their obligations to their fellow-members are stronger and more pressing.

Fellow-feeling or a sense of concern for other members of the community, including a willingness to promote their interests, if necessary at the cost of one's own.

Loyalty to the community or commitment to its integrity and well-being. This does not mean that members of a community might not disagree deeply on many important issues, and periodically protest against their government, but rather that they care enough for their community not to allow their differences to get out of control and damage its well-being.

The common sense of belonging is the basis and the defining feature of a community. No group of people can be said to constitute a community unless its members feel that they belong together. A common sense of belonging breeds mutual trust, and the consequent confidence that no member will be a free rider; and that they can count on each other to obey the laws, respect the rules, and in general discharge their share of the burden of collective life. It gives a deep sense of moral and existential security, and the reassurance that none of them is alone and that they can depend on other members to stand up for them at times of need or in their struggle against injustice.

The common sense of belonging also fosters a spirit of sharing, and the confidence that if one of them were to sacrifice her interests for the sake of others, this action would be appreciated and reciprocated on an appropriate future occasion. It also gives the community the confidence to live with and even cherish its differences, for it is secure in its sense of unity and knows that differences and disagreements can neither undermine its harmony nor be used by outsiders to destabilize it. An insecure community is too worried about its unity to tolerate, let alone delight in, its differences.

The common sense of belonging is tied to a community of men and women, not to the territory. It is critical and reflective, and combines attachment to the community with a capacity for detachment. It certainly has an emotional component, but the latter is guided by a careful assessment of the well-being of the members of the community. It represents a quiet loyalty and commitment to one's fellow-members and a willingness to fight against injustices and inequalities, not an exuberant, unconditional and blind love.

Broadly speaking, the common sense of belonging, the sense of mutual concern and commitment, requires the following (they do not guarantee it, by the way, for nothing can, but they do facilitate its development):

1. Some of its values are universally valid, morally compelling, and admit of no compromise. Some others are distinctive to a community and form part of its cultural and moral identity. If they conform to the basic human values, they are binding on its members, but admit of compromise in exceptional cases. Yet others are subject to debate and enjoy only a limited moral consensus. A common sense of belonging requires recognition of these differences, demanding agreement where it is justified and tolerating and even welcoming differences where it is not.

2. The common sense of belonging requires equal citizenship. This means that every member of the community should feel an equally valued part of it and enjoy the same rights and opportunities as others – his interests should receive equal consideration, his views should be heard and respected, and so on. Belonging to a community of men and women is conditional upon being accepted as one of them. Equal citizenship both signifies and gives reality to such reciprocal acceptance. Since justice implies equal citizenship, it is one of the essential conditions of a sense of community.

3. Since members of a political community often belong to different religious, cultural, ethnic and other communities, which are partly constitutive of their identity and matter much to them, the political community should respect their legitimate differences and allow them to express their identities in appropriate ways. If belonging to it required that they should abandon other forms of belonging, they would consider the moral and cultural price too high and would resent and feel alienated from it. Respect for non-political identities is therefore essential for a common sense of belonging. The respect has its obvious limits, for no political community can accommodate all forms of diversity or meet their unreasonable demands. It is therefore vital that a political community should provide institutional mechanisms for negotiating their differences and resolving their conflicts in a spirit of democratic participation. It should also create conditions in which its members can live with their multiple identities, and possess the confidence to view each one of these critically and moderate its demands in light of the others. Political and non-political identities can fertilise and

complement each other. One can be British as well as, and deepen and enrich one's Britishness by virtue of being, Scottish or Indian and Muslim or Hindu. The political identity should therefore be so defined that members of the community can all own and identify with it, albeit in their own different ways. Such a mediated form of common belonging does justice to both political and non-political identities, and benefits from their creative interplay.

4. Common belonging has an irreducible emotional component. Self-interest, equal citizenship, respect for one's culture, etc., give one good reasons to want to belong to a community, but these are not enough. These conditions might be met, and yet one might feel no particular attachment to the community. The converse is just as true. How one can build up such an emotional attachment, feel at home in the community, and wish to remain part of it is not easy to specify. Familiarity plays an important part, for when one understands a community and knows one's way around in it, one is likely to feel at home in it. Familiarity in turn is a product of socialization.

5. How one is treated by the community also plays an important part. Those who are devalued, mocked, taken lightly, treated as outsiders, made butts of offensive jokes, and so on, build up alienation and resentment and do not feel a sense of attachment to the community. It is therefore essential that the experience that the members of a community have of its major institutions should be one of respect and fairness. The educational, economic, political and other institutions of a society, which profoundly shape the perceptions and emotional responses of citizens, should be inclusive, hospitable to differences, reflect a wide range of sensibility such that they are not identified with a particular class, gender or race, and should empower their members so that they do not feel like helpless objects of another's will.

6. Even when these and other conditions are met, a sense of common belonging cannot be guaranteed. For all kinds of reasons, some groups of citizens might never feel part of the community even though they have no grounds for it. And even when a society has successfully fostered a sense of common belonging, it cannot be sure that the latter will last forever. Unavoidable economic and technological developments might create unexpected conflicts of interests. New moral and cultural trends might give rise to forms of life to which some groups of citizens might be antipathetic. New immigrants might arrive, bringing with them unfamiliar ways of life and thought. International conflicts might lead some members of the community to privilege their transnational identity and distance themselves from their fellow citizens. Every political community needs to be alert to these and other challenges, and find ways of renewing or winning afresh the allegiance and loyalty of those in danger of becoming disaffected and detached.

I think we need to ask ourselves how far the cohesion agenda faces the challenge of creating a common sense of belonging – or how far it is the catch all – motherhood and apple pie – that will result in some short term plans from councils that are rarely felt, not-enduring, tokenistic, and ignorant of the endemic racisms and discriminations that are still the experience of many members of our community today.

An Analysis of the Cattle and Ministerial Reports, Jasdev Rai, SHRG

It takes a crises to make the government listen. However the signs are good and it seems that the government is beginning to listen. The government acted fast, responsibly and with determination in the wake of the disturbances that took place last year in some northern towns. It swiftly dismissed spurious attempts to blame the violence on drug wars and effectively suppressed Islamophobic propositions. Enquiry teams were set up and a community cohesion team was set up. The government realised that its anti-racism policies needed a different approach.

However there seemed to be some realisation even before the events that there were dimensions that race relations had not tackled. A report had been sanctioned by Bradford from Lord Ousley. The Parekh report had also come out before the violence. However Lord Parekh was ridiculed in the British press for some words in his long report which were taken out of context. It may have given the government the excuse to give the Parekh report lesser attention than it may have merited.

As a group, we started to concentrate seriously on Race issues in 2000 in preparation for the World Conference Against Racism. It occurred to us that the race discourse in the United Kingdom and in Europe played down culture and concentrated on colour. An implicit message in such a policy is that colour is fine but cultural differences can still be a problem. A policy like this was bound to lead to problems at some stages. Those communities who identify themselves with strong and distinctive cultures may feel left out and may react. We held a conference on cultural

diversity in February 2001. To our surprise this was a subject that had not been dealt with adequately in the race discourse in the United Kingdom. The conference sought to emphasise the need for culture diversity to be an intrinsic aspect of the race discourse.

The enquiry under Ted Cante was wide and extended to the untroubled places as well such as Southall and Leicester. The enquiry team came from various backgrounds and communities thus giving it a range of potential perspectives.

The report is quite long and covers a wide number of issues. It identifies many possible causes of the discontent that may have given rise to the disturbances. There is no doubt that the range of opinions expressed to the team and the inferences made give a unique insight into the problems and issues that are still inherent in race relations. Among areas looked are

- Peoples and Values,
- Political and Community Leadership
- Political Organisations
- Strategic Partnerships
- Regeneration Programmes, Initiatives and Funding
- Integration and Segregation
- Younger People
- Education
- Community Organisations
- Disadvantaged and Disaffected Communities
- Policing
- Employment
- The Press and Media

The Cante enquiry team made a number of proposals some of which are radical in themselves. The sum of proposals is quite extensive and if put into practice, could no doubt make a significant impact on the predicament of communities and improve race relations to some extent.

It is essentially from this report and the associated ones such as the Ousley Report from which the Government drew its own set of proposals. Looking at the range of possible issues of potential conflict, the government introduced a policy labelled the community cohesion policy. The policy is quite far reaching and co-opts a range of interested and affected parties. There is an independent advisory team under the stewardship of Ted Cante.

Cante highlights a number of potential causes, such as poor housing, lack of opportunity, lack of representation, gender inequalities, lack of interaction between communities and also lack of or misplaced policies by local authorities. Cante also sees segregation as a major issue. The team was critical of single community schools.

Following the Cante report, the government moved on to set up a cross Ministerial task force to influence a uniform policy across various departments. The Ministerial team came up with its own proposals and set of principles. They are far more cautious and general than the report and proposals by the Cante team.

A new set of guidelines has been set up called the Draft Guidance on Community Cohesion. It is drafted with a range of bodies in mind, namely:

- Local Government
- Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
- Home Office
- Commission for Racial Equality

There is a lot of guidance on listening. There is certainly a shift from insularity and directional tendencies to responding to the communities voices and concerns.

It is clear that there is a sea change and it seems obvious that there is an attempt to listen and respond. However there is a danger that this is all rhetorical. The listening is fine but there are deeper questions that remain un addressed.

The various enquiries have looked at the communities and the local authority policies.

The various reports subtly transfer the bulk of responsibility for breakdown of good race relations on segregated communities and local authorities. However the enquiries have failed to look closer to home, at the policies adopted by the Home Office and the dogma of race relations that has influenced the experts and the advisors. In other words; Will the system really be able to hear?

Both the Cattle team and the Ministerial team refrain from introspection. The nearest they come to this is an admission that there is a lot to learn but fail to expose the shortcomings that have needed this learning at the core of race relations policy. Local authorities activity reflects what happens at the national level. Local authority policy is driven by the nationally accepted discourse. Some may lag behind, others may be innovative, but local authorities do not generally deviate from national trends or national alternatives.

The Cattle report considers Southall a success. Southall is also a segregated society. It is a society that is diverse with several communities co-existing peacefully. There are tensions but they are not as severe as many other towns. These tensions are also successfully ironed out by those who have access to power in Southall and those who influence the outcomes. Southall has a single faith school and schools with dominant single communities. Yet it is a success. This raises some questions about the inferences that have been drawn from some of the other cities. There is some inconsistency which has not been properly explained.

The issues of housing, opportunities, gender inequality are not unique to the Northern towns. While Southall is more prosperous than many of these towns, it has its problems. But the problems of housing and opportunity exists in several towns among the wider White community too. These problems certainly aggregate tensions, but they are unlikely to be so fundamental to the causes as is being propagated by both the Cattle and the Ministerial report. They need to be integrated in any package of policies otherwise policies may remain mere words.

Both are right when they examine policies adopted by the press. It is certainly true that the press in Southall has had a responsible attitude to reporting news concerning the various communities. It is also true that such reporting in Northern cities may have been a little partial and at times offensive to some communities. The press has a great role to play in promoting communities to respect each other or evolve prejudices about each other. But the press reflects general national policies, trends and even legislative parameters. If it had been unlawful to write offensive news against religious communities, then the press would have refrained from this line, Clearly the necessity for making prejudice and offence on religious ground unlawful is something that needed to come from the national level rather than expect local press to be responsible without offering it the tools imposing responsibility.

There is a serious issue that is sidestepped by all enquiries. Did the experts in the race relations field lack close communications and understanding of communities or was the government not listening to them. This will remain a persistent question until an enquiry looks at the issue

In summary, the enquiries and reports were conducted in a hurry as expected. Their inferences were also made in a short time. Yet the solutions and issues they raise will influence communities for a long, long period, possibly 1-2 decades. It is therefore important to have sound basis for the policies to be adopted.

In fact there is little difference between Southall and Bradford. Southall waited for official assistance but got Bair Peach, little regeneration money for its real developmental projects, and a local authority which dumps unpopular projects in Ealing upon Southall. Southall in fact is a success because the community took its life and opportunity in hand. Southall is a success not because of government but in spite of it. The community went about its building its own success by bypassing the State institutional system. In the Northern towns, the community also lost faith in the system, but waited to be bailed out from the handicaps. The opportunities were less and the venues were limited.

A lot needs to be done. The community in Southall is a success because its leaders found a way of talking to each other without State assistance. When leaders tolerate, the community has no problems. This is a message that needs to seep into government. .

In summary, the reports fail to bring new understanding to the race relations field. It is proscriptive even if tries not to be. It has failed to develop a coherent culture diversity policy that will enable the majority community to be comfortable with the minority cultures. It has not come up with adequate guidelines for one of the most influential institutions, the press. Lastly it needs to ask embarrassing questions that go to the heart of the problem in Bradford and elsewhere. Did

the advisors fail their communities or was the government not listening? Is there a problem inherent in the Race Relations discourse?

Discussion

The diversity of communities needs to be maintained in the Community Cohesion policies. There is a danger this can be seen as the French revolution coming 200 years later to Britain, attempting to form a cohesive and across the board culture with little room for real diversity.

Culture diversity however must respect universal human rights principles. Culture should not be an excuse to hide suppressions of these rights. This is one of the guiding principles. This also takes us to another debate as well, 'what are the basis of these universal human rights? Whose culture influenced them?'

There is also the danger of stigmatising communities, sometimes known as demonising. Today we hear a lot about Islamophobia and its implications in the public. In the late eighties, the Sikhs went through this experience when the label of terrorism was associated with Sikhs. An atmosphere of phobia of Sikhs was generated. It still exists in some places. The Sikhs went through this difficult period alone, without any help and recognition of this dilemma. Communities without much political strength behind them, can suffer from this without the press and other institutions recognising the suffering of that community. It is important that the 'demonising' of communities is addressed and stopped.

New communities settling in areas where there are other settled and strong ethnic communities can also suffer neglect, marginalisation and prejudice. The Somali community in Southall hasn't had anyone representing them in the political field yet and because of that they are often neglected.

At the government level, there is a need for introspection and a need to acknowledge the shortcomings in the anti-discrimination field as well as a need for a willingness to address them.

Difficult questions will have to be asked, such as was there a reluctance on the part of the government to listen or were the advisors playing court, failing to draw attention to some of the real concerns. or were the experts unaware of them . Do the experts have respect for the communities they come from?

Concluding Remarks – Executive Summary, Jasdev Rai, SWRT, SHRG

Culture and Race Relations

- Cultural diversity is one of these terms that although it is acknowledged as being important, for many, its meaning is apparently 'elusive' and controversial. This is so because so far not adequate attention has been paid on trying to bring them into the political discourse as meaningful and crucial concepts that will add weight to the discussions of any future policy that aims to bring about community cohesion on the basis of equality and human rights.
- Cultural diversity policy concerns the understanding, acceptance and promotion of cultural differences on the one hand, and the tackle of racism and discrimination on the other.
- When we talk of equality we have to ask the question «equality in relation to what and whom?». It is equality without reference to any specific group or culture, where we accept that all races and cultures have the same weight and importance in our equation. Culture is an integral part of the anti-racism and anti-discrimination discourse and recognition, acceptance and promotion of cultural diversity could be the antidote to racism and discrimination.
- Racism and discrimination go hand in hand with people's frustration of having to deal with an apparently 'a-political' and 'a-cultural' civic structure and anti-discrimination discourse. The main issue here is the non-existent, limited or bias knowledge about different communities and the lack of a sense of belonging for all.

- Diversity and not homogeneity is the British society's most essential aspect. When this is accepted, cultural diversity will cease to be perceived as a threat and it will be approached as an opportunity for the equal and peaceful co-existence of different peoples.
- Not just tolerance but promotion of cultural diversity.

General

- In the old days people were more united. They were all fighting discrimination on grounds of colour. With the passing of the years things have changed and communities as they feel more settled and free to express their views and opinions, speak against other forms of racism and discrimination that today have become more subtle and complex.
- In our fight against racism and discrimination it is important to avoid placing forms of discrimination in a hierarchy. We all need to be united against all form of racism and discrimination whatever their manifestations. The community cohesion agenda offers a distinct opportunity for all different communities to reassess their ways of viewing other communities, concentrating at the same time on how are we going to achieve cohesion by respecting our differences and not by attempting to assimilate and behave like the mainstream white population.
- There is difficulty sometimes to balance between the pride of being a member of our culture and wanting to preserve it and at the same time appreciating other people's culture and allowing some space for it as well.
- People have prejudices, like communities do about each other, what is important is to control them and not let them turn into racism.
- We need to be aware of the issues as well as the way people in power often use situations, playing one community against the other in order to promote their own agenda.
- It is also important to realise that one cannot expect for social conditions to change for the better without changing the rules and regulations that govern them. Change in policy has to take place in a way that it ensures the elimination of racism in this country and the protection and promotion of cultural diversity.
- Political parties' and public bodies' structures need to be changed in order to reflect the cultural diversity of the British society.

Police

- Police is often at the cutting edge of keeping peace in an area. In Southall they are pro-active actors and function with the aim to reduce tensions and conflicts. In doing so they work very closely with the Southall community through a series of projects. They also meet regularly with community representatives and faith leaders, which is something that the rest of the government mechanism avoids in other areas. The latter limit their communication only to secular institutions and organisations, leaving out a very big number of the British population and a great many communities. This has been tried in Southall and failed. Faith communities have a very important, if not the most important, role to play in Southall's community cohesion process.
- On the issue of the Shouthall regeneration funds not being allowed to be distributed to faith organisations and the paradox of that considering the composition of Southall and the important role faith organisations have played in the preservation of peace in the area; this was something that the central government was responsible for since it was inserted in the funding guidelines as a condition for the distribution of funds. A lot of money has been wasted away because of that. It hasn't reached the faith organisations that are key actors of the Southall community.
- Human rights training of police officials is crucial. Also essential is appropriate training on the cultures and needs of different communities in their area.

- Public bodies such as the police to make presentations, during recruitment times, to the different communities at places of social interaction such as the temples, universities and youth centres.

Youth

- We need to involve the young people in the process or better give them the space they need to express their views. We need to listen and take their views into consideration.
- Also we tend to give a lot of importance to negative incidents but very little attention is given to all these great initiatives by individuals, organisations and especially young people. We need to encourage such initiatives.
- Unemployment amongst young people needs to be addressed. But the creation of new jobs must go hand in hand with the creation of appropriate places of social interaction, sport and recreation facilities for young people.
- One of the ways of tackling violence locally would be to broaden young people's horizons with the appropriate information on race issues, human rights and cultural diversity education and the organisations of visits to other parts of the country or even better abroad so that they network with other young people and also meet other communities.

Media

- There is a very strong link and established communications paths between local press and the various communities in Southall. This creates a certain type of responsibility upon the reporters as to what they can write and how. They are accountable to the community. The Southall reporters meet with the communities representatives frequently. They aim to be objective and independent of any particular cultural, racial or religious group, balancing each time the needs of the racial and religious groups involved in occasional tensions and community issues. This way they are trusted and valued by people coming from different communities.
- The Southall press reporters, when confronted with controversial community issues, search for the background of the disputes and collect as much information as possible before they decide to write anything. This information is always analysed in great depth, consulting the communities at the same time, and trying to really understand the conflict and the different point of views. This way and combined with their pro-active reporting they often act as mediators in community conflicts and key actors for their resolution.
- In Southall there is also a close link between the local and ethnic press. They very often exchange information and views on issues of common interest.
- The press is mainly directed by commercial interests and the type of audience they think they have. Nevertheless this has to go hand in hand with ethical responsibility.

Strengthening Community Cohesion Policy

- It takes a crises to make the government listen. However the signs are good and it seems that the government is beginning to listen to the community voices. In this, who they consult is important. Often there is no proper consultation with the communities concerned and at times wrong advice is given to the government by people linked to them in advisory capacity.
- All this policy talk on Community Cohesion is very confusing for a lot of community organisations (because of the language but also because a lot of them are suspicious of new policies that seem to be a case of reproducing old ones without really addressing and tackling the issues). All Community organisations and NGOs should be involved in the process from the beginning of the process.
- The Home Office needs to publicise all relevant information on community cohesion policy as wide as possible and form links with all community organisations and NGOs.

- Culture is still not considered adequately in government policies and practices - nationally and locally. We seem to be faced with a philosophy of 'denial' as to what 'culture' is and how we understand it. A denial to address the issue. Consequently, not much has been done in order to understand the cultural differences and without that, one can not expect acknowledgement and respect for these differences and essential cultural diversity based on equality.
- SHRG started bringing up the issue of cultural diversity in 2000 during the preparatory process of the WCAR because we realised that the whole race relations field tends to concentrate and address colour but not culture. There was a somewhat implicit understanding that «your colour is fine but your culture...well, we'll have to think about it». No parity given to different cultures and no coherent policy (in a country like Britain where a number of different cultures have existed in the last 30-40 years) that could make the majority white population feel comfortable in the presence of different distinct cultures. This is so because there is very little space in race relations policy and approach for seriously considering 'culture' and cultural diversity.
- Southall is a very good example of an area where different distinct cultural communities co-exist. This has been the case for years now mainly due to the philosophy of these cultures and their willingness to co-exist in harmony that has led to the development of various tools to be used in order to avoid conflict and tensions in the area.
- It seems that all relevant reports (i.e Cattle, Ousley and others) have avoided to address 'culture' and the issues around that, while when they did, it was very brief and superficial.
- Need to raise these issues with the political parties and ask them how their policies and programmes address the cultural diversity of the British society.
- Another issue that needs to be discussed is that of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'. It is a matter of great importance in the community cohesion discourse, especially the issue of civic citizenship and common values.
- The government has adopted the language of cohesion as a descriptor for a whole range of policy proposals. At this stage, however, it remains unclear what the government understands by social cohesion and what direct connections to this agenda can be envisaged for groups and individuals concerned with racial justice, and policy-makers with a responsibility for the promotion of racial equality.
- There is a significant danger that the community cohesion agenda will sacrifice action on the fundamental issues around 'race', citizenship, and belonging, for a managerial approach focusing on local government structures. It is only by tackling these larger questions that any coherence can be provided.
- It is crucial that the process should not obscure the centrality to the achievement of a progressive cohesive community of both eliminating racism and increasing respect for diversity.
- An attempt to combine a monocultural public realm with a multicultural private realm is likely to undermine the latter. For if only one culture is publicly recognised and institutionalised, other cultures will be seen as marginal, peripheral, even deviant and inferior.
- An alternative approach comes from the work of Bhikhu Parekh, «Membership of a political community entails [in New Labour terms] rights and responsibilities – entitlements and sacrifices. It is held together by a common sense of belonging». The components of this common sense of belonging are mutuality of claims and obligations of members that feel as part of a single community, fellow-feeling or a sense of concern for other members of the community and loyalty to the community or commitment to its integrity and well-being.
- The common sense of belonging is the basis and the defining feature of a community. It requires the following:
 - Some of its values are universally valid, morally compelling, and admit of no compromise while some others are distinctive to a community and form part of its cultural and moral identity;
 - Equal citizenship.

- Since members of a political community often belong to different religious, cultural, ethnic and other communities, which are partly constitutive of their identity and matter much to them, the political community should respect their legitimate differences and allow them to express their identities in appropriate ways.
- Familiarity with the community ways, for when one understands a community and knows one's way around it, one is likely to feel at home in it. This is a product of socialization.
- Respect and fairness.
- Being alert to challenges and finding ways of renewing or winning afresh the allegiance and loyalty of those in danger of becoming disaffected and detached.
- We need to ask ourselves how far the cohesion agenda faces the challenge of creating a common sense of belonging.

We wish to thank all the volunteers who helped, without whose assistance this conference may not have succeeded.

**We will be grateful for your comments. Please send them to
Sikh Human Rights Group
P.O. Box 45 , Southall, Middlesex UB2 4SP**

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**Conference organised by Sikh Welfare Research Trust
2 Chignell Place, London W13 0TJ United Kingdom
Ph 0208 579 8898 Fax 0208 579 7439**