

NORTH EAST

RACE EQUALITY FORUM

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Sajid Javid, Racism and The State

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Public pressure has forced Amber Rudd to resign as Home Secretary after it became clear that she lied about so many aspects of current immigration policy which led to the Windrush scandal, and in order to protect Theresa May, the architect of the “hostile environment”.

The liberal establishment has welcomed the news that Sajid Javid will replace her at the Home Office. Without doubt, he will salve the conscience of some post-Windrush. Many have talked up the "progressiveness" of appointing a Muslim MP to this role. But in reality this represents a failure of analysis. We have to develop a deeper understanding of where racism comes from if it is to be effectively opposed.

In reality, having a brown person to manage a racist immigration policy will not make it less racist. Immigration policy is a very clear example of state racism, a type of racism designed and implemented by the state. Such racism is institutionalised within the laws, policies, actions and discourses of the state - and is implemented by state and non-state institutions.

The state exists to maintain the dominance of the capitalist system. Racism is a crucial element in this project. Javid is a vociferous supporter of the upwards mobilisation of wealth, the brutal austerity programme, and attacks on workers and the unemployed. This kind of political and economic order cannot exist free from racism. This is why it is permanently embedded in the state.

Immigration policy since World War 2

Post-war British immigration policy used racism to establish which immigrants were (un)desirable once the immediate need for labour was met. The post-war period saw policies

passed which created British subjects of those living in the ex-colonies, thereby allowing them to migrate to Britain. This included the Windrush generation as well as migrants from India and Pakistan. This resulted in many of Britain's post-war labour shortages being filled by Black and brown migrants. Once the labour needs were met, the state stopped primary immigration - but only of Black and brown migrants.

They did this first by introducing a voucher system and then in 1971 by restricting settlement to those able to prove that they had two generations of ancestors born in the UK. This criterion was easily met by those living in the white ex-colonies such as Australia but not by ex-colonial subjects, the ones whose countries and ancestors had been savaged by colonialism and slavery.

Thus, racism was embedded within state structures and processes and supported by racist discourses from government. Such racism was justified by arguing that tolerance to diversity could only be achieved by controlling the number of "coloured" people allowed to settle.

The construction of the "problem" immigrant by the state was a gradual process which was made easier by the everyday racism experienced by immigrants, famously encapsulated by racist slogan stating: "no Irish, no Blacks, no dogs". Roy Jenkins as Home Secretary in 1967 said that immigration must be controlled for the good of the immigrant and to prevent racism.

The presence of the immigrant was therefore presented as the cause of racism by the state, but also by politicians representing the right of the Conservative Party such as Enoch Powell in his famous "Rivers of Blood speech", almost commemorated this year. While the state's official articulation of this dynamic was displayed less aggressively, the principles of this first piece of racist immigration policy remain the bedrock of everything that has come after it.



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State racism today



State racism is not just a driver in relation to immigration in policy terms. The state has a number of racialised projects and structures, embodied within the police, the treatment of migrants and the War On Terror. Modern day immigration policy is interwoven with counterterrorism and the negative treatment of migrants.

This permeates health care settings, educational establishments, social work and engagement with private institutions. Workers within these settings are legally obliged not only to be border guards, but counterterrorism officers, because they are required to identify illegal migrants as well as potential terrorists. Opening a bank account and getting a tenancy has been politicised and racialised, but only for certain groups.

Whilst the request to see a passport for a white person can be explained in relation to verifying their identification, for Black people or those subject to racism, its purpose is to check immigration status and to establish whether that person belongs or not. To establish whether they are a legal citizen or not. Consequently, everyone who looks like a migrant, especially if they are Black, brown or Muslim, is illegal until proven otherwise. This is the “Hostile Environment” reserved for the racialised “other” and almost invisible to everyone else. University staff and people such as external examiners are now being asked to show their passports prior to being engaged and are effectively being asked to collude with this policy.

Racism: Institutionalised on a transnational basis

The 25-year anniversary of the murder of Stephen Lawrence reminds us that racism is institutionalised within the police, a key institution of the state. Little seems to have changed in that 25 years. A recent UN study has found that structural racism still exists within the police force and is most notably symbolised by the numbers of Black people killed in police custody. More than 100 racialised murders have been carried out since Stephen’s death.

In Scotland the family of Sheku Bayou, who was killed in police custody in 2015,

is to sue the police because of their unwillingness to progress the investigation so that the family can get justice. The police have been accused of blatant racism and attempting to smear the victim.



Historically the police and judiciary have often refused to accept racial motivations to the murders of black and Asian people. In the case of Abubaker Sheikh, a Somali refugee murdered in Edinburgh in 1989, the trial concluded that there was no racial motive. Six months later the courts were forced to overturn their decision but only as a result of mass protests on the streets of Edinburgh.

Where once the Geneva Convention ensured that human rights were paramount in defining the treatment of refugees, geopolitical events including 9/11, the Iraq war and the war in Afghanistan and Syria have resulted in an increase in the number of displaced people seeking to enter the EU. Displaced and poor refugees fleeing violence and poverty have become the new enemy or 'undesirable'.

In 1999 the EU harmonised its immigration policies in relation to asylum seekers in order to reflect the shared objectives across its members. The UK too passed the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act which reflected the EU policy. This illustrates the transnational approach adopted by Europe and Britain towards asylum seekers. They have similar interests because the state in each country adopts a racist method.

The desperate migrants who find the means to travel independently and survive the dangerous journey to Europe, are often imprisoned within detention centres soon after arrival. They have committed no crime. The remainder are forced to live on a welfare system which doesn't give them the same rights as citizens to public housing and benefits. Much as the right-wing press use migrant use of the decimated welfare state as propaganda, it is in-fact a system designed to act as a deterrent to entering the UK.

Racism as an active process in the security state

This is how migration policy based on securitisation works.

The dehumanising project is central to state racism and has been advanced by practices such as secret deportation

flights, raids on workplaces to identify illegal migrants, as well as the much criticised "Go Home" vans.

The 'War On Terror,' particularly since 9/11, has adopted a stance which has cast the Muslim community collectively as potential terrorists. State narratives have argued that violence, extremism and terrorism are part and parcel of Islam and as a result hardwired into Muslim culture.

Such dehumanising, and demonising, narratives have been used to justify the illegal war in Iraq in 2003 and other foreign policy interventions since then, because killings and torture can only be made acceptable if the victim is presented as less than human. In this process the state plays a central role.

The Prevent Strategy, for example, was established in 2004 to change the "hearts and minds" of Muslims and stop them from "becoming terrorists." Since its inception it has been opposed by many trade unions, the National Union of Students, academics as well as Muslim organisations primarily because it targets Muslims and criminalises them before any crime is committed, turning them into "suspect communities". Those organisations, particularly Muslim ones which have been most vocal in opposing the Prevent Strategy, have been labelled as "extremist."

There were over 7000 referrals to Prevent in 2015-16, the vast majority of them Muslim, yet less than 5% of them were put through full "de-radicalisation" training. The Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 made it a legal duty for all public bodies to implement the Prevent Strategy, which has effectively turned public sector workers including teachers and health care professionals into counterterrorism and surveillance officers.

Over a third of all referrals to Prevent come from schools in England and Wales and are aged under 15: this is primarily because OFSTED which inspects



schools has stated within its policy guidance that one of the criteria used to inspect schools is the implementation of Prevent. It is hardly surprising then that teachers are referring children to Prevent.



Since counterterrorism is a reserved policy, the Scottish Government too is required to implement the Prevent Strategy and has produced guidance on how that is to be done. It has however refused to provide information on levels of Prevent funding, who it is distributed to or how many people have been referred as a result of its implementation.

We need anti-racist social movements

There is no doubt that - despite all of this - the Tories will argue that Sajid Javid, the son of an immigrant bus driver, will ensure that his areas of responsibility at the Home Office which include immigration, migration and counterterrorism amongst others, will be less racist.

Javid has said that the government will stop using the term "hostile environment." Language can be important. But racism is built into the structures of our state institutions and laws. The fundamental change that is required will only come as a result of pressure from the wider anti-racist movement, alongside the social movements of the left. The response to the Windrush scandal has galvanised this movement and given us an opportunity to unite our forces against state racism. To do that we must be clear. Sajid Javid is an agent of the state, not the anti-racist movement.

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The North East Race Equality Forum is a Network of around 300 individuals and organisations in the North East Region committed to promoting racial equality in the context of social justice. No one organisation is necessarily committed to every idea published in the name of the Forum. The Forum is supported by the 'Race', Crime and Justice Regional Research Network, which includes researchers from each University in the region.

