

Reach Society

Building Connections

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Patrons: Lord Herman Ouseley, Sir Professor Geoff Palmer Professor Trevor Williams & John Budu-Aggrey

Reach Society's Think Tank Second Report: May 2016

The topic discussed is entitled: "An exploration of the contributions, over the last 60 plus years, by Black people to the British community; and the identification of our priorities for the 21st Century, in the UK."

"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek". President Barack Obama

1. Origins of the Think Tank

Contemporary discussion on the role of ethnicity in society, including its interplay with class, employment, health and opportunity are all too often fragmented. Moreover, the participants of such discussions are often limited to academics or policy makers while the voice and perspectives of the Black community is sometimes not given equal weight.

Reach Society recognises that there is an urgent need to correct this imbalance and provide a forum for identifying, discussing and offering practical and sustainable solutions for addressing issues facing our community. To pursue this endeavour the **Reach Society Think Tank** (or RSTT) - a collaboration between Reach Society and professional individuals in the Black community was formed. Specifically, this discussion is in collaboration with the **Caribbean Women's Standing Conference** and the report is the output from the RSTT's second debate on the topic of:

An exploration of the contributions, over the last 60 plus years, by British Black people to the UK; and the identification of our priorities for the 21st Century.

2. Executive Summary

The major pillars of any country or society are the political principles (such as democracy); economic viability and stability; maintenance of law and order; together with the security of its citizens; along with health, education and culture. Members of the roundtable acknowledged that black people in Britain have indeed contributed to these key aspects of society, but recognised also that greater awareness of our contribution is required and that it is the community's responsibility to highlight our involvement. However, there is still racial inequality in many aspects of society with more work needing to improve the **educational** attainment of young people within the black community. Other priority areas identified included: **social justice, wealth generation, visibility in the media, and black-led institutions**. The core of this debate and their wider implications are addressed below.

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3. The Themes Discussed

Participants were able to identify the following areas in which the black community have made positive contributions in the UK such as: social justice and racial inclusion (e.g. Race Relations Acts); NHS (e.g. black people have served at all levels since the 1940s); transport service; manufacturing industries; political representation, in central and local government; trade union movement; education sector; the third & voluntary sector; entertainment (such as the arts, music and sport).

4. Priorities and Solutions

Below are a set of priority areas (bold font) to be addressed in the 21st century, and some of the tentative solutions raised for consideration and implementation:

Primary education

- Engage children when they are young, expose them to opportunities
- Socialisation process must endure from childhood through to adulthood
- Get more churches involved in the education process
- Make more use of home education and demand more of the state education system

Wealth generation

- Resolve the issue of economic illiteracy
- Boost the level of entrepreneurial activities

Identity - knowing who you are, and your back story

- Better interaction between communities across the country
- Better inter-generational communication
- Shift mindset and take more opportunities for growth

Social and professional mentoring

- Reduce resistance to personal development
- Expand the range of knowledge or things understood

Social justice

- Continue to fight injustice (e.g. Black Mental Health UK)
- Continue to be agents for social change

Visibility in the media

- Change how we view ourselves by not over-relying on media portrayal
- Refine use of newspapers to current affairs

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Black institutions

- Make self-reliance our highest priority, ahead of anything else
- Build learning institutions led by experts from our community (e.g. Black Cultural Archives)

5. Conclusions

It may be concluded that the think tank participants felt that the Black British community is continuing to make a significant contribution to the UK. This positive behaviour should be recognised and celebrated by us despite the presence of barriers to progression and the presence of racial inequality. Education, wealth generation, social justice represents some of the key priorities for the Black British community; and they need to be addressed robustly as we journey through the 21st Century.

6. Acknowledgements

This note was prepared by the members of the RSTT; and they wish to thank members of the Caribbean Women's Standing Conference for their collaboration; and also the professional Black men who debated the topic.

7. References & Bibliography

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/heres-how-black-people-have-helped-make-britain-great-a6680371.html>

The Caribbean Contribution to the NHS

<http://www.manyriverstocross.co.uk/>

Celebrating 50 years of Caribbean recruitment TfL

<https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/assets/downloads/Generations.pdf>

The Black Presence in Britain

<http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/>

<http://www.powerlist.co.uk/>