

The UN Experts are Wrong on Race

by Michael Curtis



And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of the expert's eye.

Cancel culture is at again, and can't take yes for an answer. This is evident in the response to a British official report, established as a response to the BLM movement, that points out that the dominant narrative on race tends to emphasize abuse rather than progress concerning ethnic minorities in Britain, and that social media, with their large user base, enormously amplify racist views. On March 31, 2021 the independent report of the British Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, BCRED, a body of ten experts drawn from a variety of fields, including science, education broadcasting, medicine, and policing, and all of whom except one came from ethnic minority backgrounds, was published. The 258-page report painted a complex picture of the issue of race in the UK, and among other matters tries to explain why some minority groups do better than others, indicating that in the

educational system black African, Indian and Bangladeshi students do better than white British ones.

The Commission was given the task of reviewing inequality in the UK, and focused on the issues of education, employment, crime and policing, and health. Contrary to cancel culture critics who argue that the official report ignored the role of "structural racism." BCRED demonstrated that disparities persist, that racism and discrimination affect people's life, and that racist attitudes exist in society and in institutions, and that action is necessary to tackle these attitudes. But the BCRED report also argues that although disparities exist between ethnic groups many factors other than racism may be the root cause. These factors include family structure, geography, drug use, socio-economic background, and education. The report did not deny that institutional racism exists in the UK, but did not find conclusive evidence of it in the specific areas, that it examined. It concluded for example that the increased risk of infection and death from COVID-19 was explained by socioeconomic factors, living in deprived areas, crowded housing, and exposure to the virus at work, and that the outcomes were driven more by risk of infection than by ethnicity.

The crucial argument of the report is that, while disparities between minority groups exist in many areas, factors other than racism are often the root cause. Among the factors are geography, family structure, and socio-economic background. The report challenges the fatalistic and pessimistic accounts that nothing concerning racial matters has changed and that seek to explain all minority disadvantage through the prism of discrimination by whites. Racism, it holds, is too often used as a catch-all explanation for disparities and inequalities that affect people from minority groups.

Critics of this conclusion will argue that the factors mentioned are themselves the result of "structural racism" and

long standing inequalities, but this is a circuitous argument. The problem is indeed complex. People will disagree on how to address ethnic minority inequalities but it is irresponsible to characterize those who challenge orthodoxy and want an informed debate as "race deniers," rather than analysts seeking accurate evaluation of the evidence. Why are the social outcomes of health unequally distributed between different racial and ethnic groups? Why do some ethnic minority groups have higher life expectancies and lower risks of many diseases than the white majority population, in spite of higher levels of deprivation? One last question, why do ethnic minority students, except those from black Caribbean backgrounds, have higher aspirations at age 14 than white students?

The issue of race as the explanatory factor for socio-economic inequalities deserves vigorous debate, but analysis should be one based on nuanced understanding of the existing acts and reality of conditions. Not surprisingly, there have been deliberate misrepresentation of the BCRED report especially that the report denies that racism exists. This is a false charge. The report in fact makes clear that the UK is not a post-racial society, and that racism is a real force that can deny opportunity. The Commission recommends government action to end practices that cause unjustified racial disadvantage or arise from racial discrimination.

A fulsome attack of the BCRED Commission report came on April 19, 2021 from a group of so called United Nations "human rights experts." This UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent categorically rejects and condemns the analysis and findings of the report. The problem is that it flagrantly misstates the arguments, conclusions, and recommendations of the report. It falsely states that the report distorts history, upholds white supremacy, and shifts the blame for the impacts of racism to the people most impacted by it. The Working Group holds that the BCRED report

repackages racist tropes and stereotypes, misapplies statistics, which lead to attacks on peoples of African descent. It says the BCRED ignores the pervasive role that "the social construction of race" plays in the inequalities in society, and blames identity politics. It is critical of the BCRED's call for a more responsible use of statistics.

It is helpful to examine both the Working Group of experts and the organization from which it originated. It is a body of five, chaired by U.S. attorney Dominique Day. The UN World Conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001 adopted the Durban declaration.

Among other matters, it requested the UN Commission on Human Rights to consider establishing a working group or other mechanism of the UN to study the problems of racial discrimination faced by "people of African descent living in the African diaspora." A year later the WG of experts was established by the Commission on Human Rights. It is composed of five independent experts appointed on the basis of equitable geographic representation. Member are chosen for a three year term, and can be renewed for an additional three year mandate. The Commission changed its name in June 2006 and became the UN Human Rights Council.

However, far from being an organization concerned with human rights in the countries of the world, the UNHRC has been fixated on the issue of the State of Israel. The obsession has meant that Israel has been criticized on more occasions than the rest of the world combined. The animosity against Israel began at the beginning with the creation of the Council which voted to make a review of alleged human right abuses by Israel a permanent feature of every Council session. is compounded by the rule that Israel is the only country which by item 7 is listed on the permanent agenda, the only country that is always investigated annually.

The UNHRC is composed of 47 states, of whom 15 were elected in

2021. Among the guardians of human rights are China, Cuba, Russia, Gabon, Senegal, and Bolivia.

It is an organization that has been focused on anti-Israeli resolutions, obsessively biased against any action of Israel.

The WG is a group of independent lawyers but its statements and conclusions ought to be seen in the context of the UNHRC.

It was set up to investigate and report on the situation of "people of Africa dissent globally." Its five members come from Jamaica, Poland, South Africa, Philippines, and the U.S. The current chair is a U.S. attorney, Dominique Day, who also executive director of a body called Daylight, and for a year a former teacher and researcher at Al Quds in the West Bank.

The Working Group of Experts "categorically" rejected and condemned the analysis and findings of the BCRED. Yet it remains a matter of objective analysis to assess whether the UK suffers from what the experts call legacy mindsets of racial hierarchy and from "institutional racism and structural invisibility." The bias and lack of objectivity of the experts is fully on display with its assertion that the BCRED report fails to acknowledge how the legacies of enslavement continue to shape wealth disparities, social stratification, and the experiences of people of African descent in Britain.

Thy hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye.