

Black Lives Matter.

Discussion led by Peter de Groot

Summary

The topic for discussion was whether 'Black Lives Matter' was a political movement.

Some took the view that racism was prevalent in UK culture; others considered that there was very little racism overt or covert in the UK by comparison with other cultures.

The general view was that "Lives matter." The idea that some people are treated worse than others because of racism was considered to distract from the general social problems caused by increasing inequality and poverty.

Discussion

The idea that Slavery could be laid at the door of the European Colonial Powers was immediately disputed by members saying that it originated much earlier in history and included a very active trade in enslavement by Africans of fellow Africans. Cheap labour required by plantation owners in the Caribbean, North and South America, encouraged colonial traders to enter this lucrative trade. The meeting was reminded that this subject was to be dealt with at a future meeting.

The BLM has assumed the mantle of a political movement, and become a tool for anarchistic organisations intent on destroying our 'capitalist' free-trade based society. Some of their other aims, such as 'policing the police' and humanising the 'stop and search' policy will find some sympathy from many quarters.

Some members very clearly took the view that racism was a social attitude because blacks were treated relatively worse than whites and that this problem should be addressed. Others agreed that inequality is persistent and increasing, In the community as a whole, black people are over-represented in the bottom strata of society and are therefore more affected by increasing inequality.

Are black people treated poorly because they are black (racism exists) or get poor treatment because they are treated the same as everybody else who is poor and uneducated (racism does not exist)?

If the former, does our attitude to racism start at an early age? The theory exists that the very young are copying their parents, older siblings, teachers, role models etc and that once set upon this path they may follow for life. One of our members is in regular contact with young pupils (on his frequent visit to schools) and stated that youngsters nowadays make friendships seemingly surprisingly uncaring of race.

Assimilation of immigrants into our white society with its centuries built up of particular attitudes would seem to be an ideal way of achieving a society with similar aims across the board. Multiculturalism is letting each culture do its own thing, but this has led to concentrations of particular racial communities in particular areas. Never the twain shall meet. Why is it unreasonable to expect immigrants coming to live in a predominantly white culture conforming with white norms or at least blending in?

The apartheid policy in South Africa practised until its abolition in 1994 was racist because blacks were treated differently from whites purely because of their colour. Positive discrimination is supposed to mirror in positions of power and authority the proportional racial distribution of the population, but without regard as to whom is most suitable?

We can only hope that enlightened education at fully integrated schools will eliminate poverty and eventually drive out all notions of racism, perhaps aided by interracial marriage and that racism is not hardwired into the human psyche and always will cause conflict.