

Embargoed until 00.01 hrs 22 January 2009

Race 'myths' threaten racial harmony, say population experts

Race relations in Britain are under threat from a series of ill-informed myths according to a new book by two of the country's leading experts on the topic.

Using previously unpublished evidence, Professor Ludi Simpson and Dr Nissa Finney from The University of Manchester show how repeated falsehoods about immigration, integration and segregation are misleading policy and promoting racial disharmony.

This is the basis of the authors' new book *Sleepwalking to segregation? Challenging myths about race and migration*, published today by The Policy Press.

After years of investigation, the Manchester pair have found no evidence "whatsoever" for the existence of race ghettos in the UK. In fact the opposite is true with increasing ethnic mixing.

And claims by head of equalities watchdog Trevor Phillips that Britain is "sleepwalking" into racial and religious segregation are also dismissed in the book.

According to the academics' review of evidence, white flight is no greater than brown or black flight. And there is white movement into minority concentrations in Leicester, Bradford, Lambeth, Wolverhampton, Wycombe, Manchester and Merton. By claiming problems are created by segregated areas, they say, politicians have stigmatised the areas and their residents.

The authors also provide evidence that areas with large populations of Muslims do not act as a 'breeding ground' for terrorism.

"By propagating myths using bogus and alarmist interpretations of population change, individuals such as Trevor Phillips, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester and Sir Andrew Green, Chair of Migration Watch are inadvertently promoting racial segregation," said Professor Simpson.

"Misunderstanding breeds mistrust and division between ethnic and religious groups. This book is about dispelling those myths. The truth is that Britain's so-called ghettos are diverse areas both ethnically and socially where no one ethnic group dominates."

Dr Finney added: "The only concentrations which resemble anything like ghettos are of white people. The average white person lives in an area which has more than 94% white people in it.

"British Pakistanis, for example, live in areas which on average have 26% Pakistani residents. In almost every city with a sizeable immigrant settlement area, children of immigrants have on balance moved away from those areas not to them or between them. So it is wrong to argue there is retreat. Rather, we are witnessing dispersal."

Ends

SOME OF THE MYTHS BEING CHALLENGED:

You can read more by visiting:

<https://www.policypress.org.uk/page.php?name=simpson>

- **The myth:** Britain has too many immigrants. **The evidence:** there are unexceptional immigration levels in Britain. Less than 3% of the world's migrants live in the UK compared to 5% in Germany and 20% in the USA. Migrants make up 9% of the population in the UK, the same as the average for Europe.
- **The myth:** Britain's becoming a country of ghettos. **The evidence:** Thousands of wards have a majority white population. Only eight wards have a majority of a single minority ethnic group. These wards are in Leicester, Bradford, Pendle, Ealing and Tower Hamlets. The highest proportion for a single minority group is 74%, the proportion of Indians in the population of the Latimer ward of Leicester. This does not meet the criteria of a ghetto
- **The myth:** More segregation into friendship groups. **The evidence:** When the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality claimed in 2005 that "alarmingly, we showed that young people from ethnic minorities were twice as likely to have a circle of pals exclusively from their own community as were older ethnic minority folk", he was using a judicious compound of alarmist language and false claim to scientific rigour to create a striking message about friendship groups, unsupported by the evidence. For most minority young people, roughly half or more than half of their friends are White.
- **The myth:** Minorities want to live in segregated neighbourhoods. **The evidence:** Housing aspirations of young people from white and minority ethnic groups are very similar: they all desire safe neighbourhoods with good environments, no anti-social behaviour and to be near to family and friends. Focus groups across many districts show that minority young people want to live in mixed neighbourhoods.
- **The myth:** White flight and minority retreat. **The evidence:** The movement out of minority neighbourhoods is non-racial: it is at similar rates by each minority ethnic group and the White group. Dispersal of this kind is evident for each ethnic group, for the 1990s and the 2000s and for districts, wards and street-level neighbourhoods. Indians are leaving Leicester, Caribbeans are leaving Lambeth, Bangladeshis are leaving Tower Hamlets and Pakistanis are leaving Bradford. These patterns have non-racial explanations. They represent aspirational movements reflecting responses to housing markets and lifestyle choices and well established trends of suburbanisation.

Notes for Editors

1. The book *Sleepwalking to segregation'? Challenging myths about race and migration* is published by The Policy Press on 21 January 2009 price £14.99 pb (ISBN 978 184742 007 7) £55.00 hb (ISBN 978 184742 008 4). It is available to buy from www.policypress.org.uk or from Marston Book Services, P O Box 269, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4YN (01235 465500) plus £2.75 p&p.

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3. The Policy Press (www.policypress.org.uk) is a leading social science publisher based at the University of Bristol and is committed to publishing books that make a difference.