



Discussion about structural racism in Hackney 3 July 2020

Chaired by Jake Ferguson, CEO, Hackney CVS

Jake welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the conversation on structural racism. Jake gave the definition of institutional racism as below:

'Institutional racism (also known as systemic / structural racism) is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organisation. It can lead to such issues as discrimination in criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, political power and education, among other issues.' Source: Wikipedia

Philip Glandville, Mayor of Hackney, published a statement on 29 June confirming Hackney Council's commitment to addressing structural racism. Cllr Carole Williams, named as the lead Member for the Council's response to the Windrush scandal was invited to attend, and will be taking a leading role within the council for taking this area work forward also.

Cllr Williams commented that having a diverse cabinet is important and the council have been working since 2016 to tackle issues such as Windrush, working with Meg Hillier with regards to unfair NHS services and treatment, working on symbols of the slave trade such as renaming of buildings, streets, moving statues and wanting this to be long lasting changes. Cllr Bramble is also reviewing the curriculum and working with young people to get better outcomes for young people, especially young black men.

The Council is finding ways to improve others' understanding, educating themselves and others in order to level the playing field. The council wants to change the legacy of enslavement into a positive legacy with lasting and permanent change.

- We need to tackle the issue of language and terminology that is used. One attendee shared their experience of starting their career wanting to make a difference and find a way to impact the community however discrimination thwarted her efforts, and noted that discrimination can often be internalised. Whilst great support has been received by VCS, when applying for funding, a funder placed their organisation into the 'grassroots' category, which wasn't the category she had considered her organisation and that funders/commissioners should be mindful of language and that we [individuals/organisations] should not accept labels that stereotype. Tackling racism will be a challenge but we must go forward intelligently and it is an opportunity for all to learn together.
- There are aspects of the education curriculum that needs to include all of British history, the good and the bad, such as the history of the people who came to Britain after the commonwealth, explored with honesty.
- We need to explore what the practical things are that we could do now that can be seen or visible to bring people into positions of power? Discussion panels, interview panels need to be diverse and those who hold position of power need to be able to give space to change and change practically, however some people in high positions do not want to change the status quo, and we need to find ways around this.
- Recruiters need to take the risk of appointing the right/best person for the job and not be influenced by the ethnicity of the candidate, but instead recruitment decisions should be based on experience and merit.
- However should be noted that young black men remain unrepresented in the workforce, and this needs to be addressed.
- The issue of structural racism is complex and needs its own space for solutions to be found.
- Funding usually for 'BAME communities' is often not sufficient for minority groups to deliver change, taking account of the additional issues of structural racism, and organisations working in this space are often forced to compete for a small funding pots as opposed to dedicated funding for Black organisations. Funding is required for target clients [we can no longer homogenous the BAME community]. There are funding inequalities and there needs to be more money for smaller groups, often working to support people and communities with complex issue.

(The National Lottery Community Fund) commented that organisations should be open and honest with funding required for what is needed. Funding may be disproportionate to organisation size.

Action: Jake (Hackney CVS, CEO) to meet with TNLCF to discuss further.

Lara Rufus (Funding manager, NE London, TNLCF) invited the groups to contact her at lara.rufus@tnlcommunityfund.org.uk and have a discussion regarding funding needs.

Other comments included:

- A need for a physical space for the community where they can educate and learn as there has been a loss of spaces that were designed for community to use i.e. Centerprise. There is a need for political force, a need for new legislations and emergency legislation, politically will/force to enact these ideas/suggestions. There needs to be a Cultural Revolution, arts, education, media etc. Persistent offenders of racism need to be made accountable. Education needs to change, children are not being taught all of history.
- Conversations have to be honest and open. One attendee shared their experience of facing institutional racism in the borough, where if you raise an issue you are seen as the problem. There needs to be a safe space where these issues can be discussed amongst peers with support, to create a mechanism that forces change, a space for black professionals to support each other.

Action: Jake (Hackney CVS, CEO) commented that this is an area that we need to come back to discuss further and invited any attendees with ideas on how we can explore this further to contact Jake at jake@hcv.org.uk.

- We have to make structural changes and review/explore the immigration policy.
- The police have too much power and their training should be reviewed and roles should be appointed in line with the demographics of the borough.

Action: Jake (Hackney CVS, CEO) commented that members should look at Account group work on policing, there is a good piece of research available on [Hackney CVS website](#). Please do say thanks to the groups for their work. Meeting attendees can contact Tim@hcv.org.uk if anyone wants to work with the Account Group and Jake@hcv.org.uk for the Black Men for Change group.

- It was noted we shouldn't lose sight of work already undertaken to address the issues we are discussing, such as the [Policing in Hackney 1945 – 1984 report](#), as well as a film by Isaac Julien – Who killed Colin Roach? and the work the Roach Family committee and the work the Hackney Black People Association have been doing. There are a lot of resources available to use and revisit, which we need to revisit to first understand why previously we

have been unsuccessful, and take the lessons for how we can do things differently and move forward. - We need to think about the following; How do we function in an environment that is structurally racist? How do we protect ourselves? And how do we break down structural racism bit by bit?

- It was suggested that the BLM movement has raised the issue of structural racism and there should be a movement to set-up an [International Decade for People of African Descent](#) (IDPAD) working group using their framework for a small committee that can be funded to work towards this with a re-evaluation in 2025.
- Other comments noted the need to support organisations which experience challenges in reaching ethnically diverse communities. One example provided by an attendee was the need for elitism that exists within the fine arts sector, and the need to bring more ethnically diverse communities from Hackney. Jake suggested that the commentator advertise her work in the Hackney CVS newsletter, and to consider possibly hosting a focus groups with organisations which have the reach into the communities that are being sought to better understand how diversify their offer – however noted that this of course needs to be resourced for organisations with reach to offer their time and expertise.
- **Jermain Jackson (Chair of young people futures commission)** commented that the group has written a report which will be available in a few weeks, the recommendations are looking at education, employment, trust with police etc, to build a community with police. Jermaine suggested a centralised place such as a black institute like Young Black Leaders Summit where people can share and discuss Black people issues and 21st century challenges and to explore places for black community groups to go to.
- Jake (Hackney CVS, CEO) made a commitment to revisit the conversation on how we can make workspaces less racist.

In closing, Jake invited attendees to co-host conversations with Hackney CVS or for organisations to host their own conversations around structural racism with support from Hackney CVS if needed.

Action: Attendees of the meeting to contact jake@hcv.org.uk; if they would like Hackney CVS support.

Jake commented that further conversations are needed on the following;

- How Hackney can create anti-racist strategy
- Working committee i.e. IDPAD
- Staffing and welfare in challenging structural racism e.g. peer network
- Education – how do we address the lack of diverse history being taught in schools

- To consider how Unconscious bias training can be made more available within Hackney, as well as resources/training for combating institutional racism

Jake thanked everyone for joining the meeting and taking part in the conversation and listening.

Jake welcomes members to contact Hackney CVS for any questions/queries at either jake@hcvs.org.uk or reception@hcvs.org.uk.

The notes will be shared with Hackney council as we want to create a joint anti-racism strategy.