

To: Rt Hon Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Monday, 08 June 2020

Dear Sadiq,

Thank you for the session on Friday and for responding quickly and robustly with a commitment to act. What's key now is that Londoners, particularly those affected by systemic racism, can clearly see action will be taken in the short and longer term. What is deeply concerning is that the principle of policing with consent has been lost in regards to African and Caribbean communities.

'Young black people will simply not settle for anything less than a radical paradigm shift that indicates a fundamental restructuring relations, capable of inspiring confidence and with the demonstrable outcome of riding the Metropolitan police service of the many racist officers within its ranks'

Quotes from Black Men for Change member:

I am writing on behalf of the Black Men for Change network to offer our help in determining these next steps and focus for action. Following your request to meet last week I quickly canvassed the network's views about what needs to happen or change. Below is a summary of those comments. It's not an exhaustive list of course but provides a starting point for further discussion. As you may know, the network contains many black men with vast experience of tackling structural racism and its impact. It also includes many younger men with the lived experience of 21st Century police brutality and oppression.

'I cannot overstate the seriousness of the situation. It's to be noted that African and Caribbean communities expressed confidence in MPS is the lowest level ever recorded.'

Quote from Black Men for Change member:

As a member of the VRU, canvassing their views has enabled me to act with a level of community accountability and ethical leadership at Board meetings. As a network we have made repeated calls to meet with you as Mayor since we were established last June 19 to ascertain how committed you were to tackling racism. However that opportunity never materialised. Now would be a suitable opportunity to have a focussed discussion.

'Many young people are at home and are watching very detailed acts (historical racism and police brutality) now streaming on their devices and many are seeing old cases for the first time, which is only adding to the pain and trauma they experience in their communities.'

'In my experience London is one serious poking incident away from a major, serious civil uprising.'

Quote from Black Men for Change member:

From my own observations as a member of the VRU I have raised the need to address structural racism and the violence meted out by the state on black communities – not just in policing but across the board (around mental health, social care, the prison system and so on) – being guided by regular conversation and accountability to the Black Men for Change network. I have pushed the importance of talking about these structural challenges at every VRU meeting, writing to Sophie, Lib and others, yet talking about race has been a struggle as is often the case at a strategic level with system leaders often playing political football with the issue or simply ignoring it. The fact this never became a core part of the VRU's focus is, in hindsight, an example of silent racism in itself and this concerns me and my colleagues. The excuse made for its lack of inclusion was that structural racism wasn't just an issue for the VRU but across the board – in reality it meant that practically nothing has been done. I co-hosted a meeting for MOPAC about these issues with black leaders but then no notes were done or follow up actions implemented. This for me is symptomatic of the problem and as the Mayor you need to re-evaluate all the processes you have in place (and system leaders you have around you) to see if they are fit for the purpose of addressing structural racism. I also called for the equal representation of communities affected by violence in the VRU structure but again this has largely been fluffed. What particularly concerned me on our call on Friday was that Ebi, the only young black member of the VRU Board, said she had lost all faith in the VRU and that it should be dismantled which is very telling. I think the VRU has an important role to play going forward but it needs to have structural disproportionality and racism as a key plank of its focus otherwise there will not be the change needed. These are just my personal views based on my membership of the board. However, going forward I no longer want to be one of the few voices talking about structural racism – **RACISM IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS** - which the current protests are clearly demonstrating.

'The pain in our community at the moment is visceral, most of us are reeling with the intensity of the trauma taking place on the streets of America that is deeply reminiscent of scenes first witnessed 1958 Birmingham Alabama replaying out on our TV screens, with a US president who seems intent on pouring gasoline on this petrol fire. This is a deeply anxious and concerned time for all'

Quote from Black Men for Change member:

We need a new 'normal' in London based on a narrative that ensures that:

- 1. The principle of policing with consent is paramount and should be at the heart of policing the capital**
- 2. The police no longer racially profile and serve every community equally**
- 3. London is a place where disproportionality no longer exists**
- 4. Proper investment is given to local communities to play their role in tackling the impact of racism and have an equal seat at the table**
- 5. Systems and mechanisms are in place to hold all public agencies to account for reducing the disproportional impacts of racism**
- 6. Serious violence is seen through the lens of an asset based approach which builds and supports communities, particularly young people to be at the forefront of the change needed**
- 7. Racism is no longer something we need to talk about in 10 years' time**

So in terms of the focus for action here is a short list of key areas that we see the need to include in any action plan.

1. **A process of healing and restorative justice is required.** The Met need to publicly say sorry for past wrongs and commit to ensuring that families receive the justice they deserve and that there is an internal culture which unequivocally reprimands any officer found guilty of wrong doing—no one is above the law.]
2. **Police guidance is often not followed in encounters with black people so an overhaul of this is needed** so that every officer knows what they should be doing, that they know they will be reprimanded and that officers should be encouraged to expose the wrong doing of their colleagues. The training given to new recruits around race, racism and community engagement is woefully inadequate. By way of example, all officers who fail to put on their body cameras should be severely sanctioned, for example a substantial fine for every occasion. TSG and violence suppression units are a key part of the problem. They need to **be** seriously monitored by the Mayor/Deputy Mayor for their impact on race violence by the police.
3. **Structural racism is not just the preserve of how the police interact with black young men** through stop and search but also black young women and other communities too. Similarly how the police handle cases of domestic abuse in black communities is also questionable and affected by racism. This needs serious consideration as we feel a racist attitudes amongst some officers prevents victims getting the support they need and deserve.
4. **The police complaints system is broken and there is limited trust in the IOPC.** The view that it's the police investigating the police remains a core problem. A wholesale re-evaluation of the entire system of complaints and accountability is needed, learning from those who have led the call for change. The fact that very few black people would see value in complaining against the police is symptomatic of this loss of faith. We have previously reached out to the IOPC to help them better engage with young people but the young people have soon lost faith in how the IOPC operates - with the handling of Mark Duggan and Rashan Charles's deaths being cases in point. Trust and confidence among some communities is at an all-time low for many communities.
5. **Given MOPAC has a role in setting and overseeing police spending it should use its powers to withhold funding to the Met if targets or policies to address structural racism are not met.** Many in the black community would argue that we have created a system in this country, not dissimilar to the US, where structural racism has become an industry in itself – an economy of oppression. At the VRU I have repeatedly called for an examination of how much is spent on punishment vs prevention. This needs to be addressed for as long as resources are available to the Trident, TSG, Gangs units and other oppressive mechanisms then there will be no change.
6. **Many people have articulated that Safer Neighbourhood Boards, Stop and Search Monitoring Groups and IAGs either do not have the teeth they need** or their membership lacks the tools or skills to hold the police to account. It feels like a total reset of these systems is needed in order to reinstate confidence and proper accountability. This must include a commitment from the Metropolitan police service to provide the statistical detail and ethnic monitoring on all aspects of their operational policing activities. The restoration of trust and confidence can only be achieved by total transparency at the local level and keen accountability to local communities. Independent police monitoring groups, funded in part by the Mayor's office to radically transform the level of public accountability of the police service are part of the solution. These

are all structures that were historically in place, but were dismantled under the mayorship of Boris Johnson.

7. **Ethical leadership – the right strategic environments need to be created for all system leaders to be able to talk freely about racism.** Too many times we see senior figures unable, unwilling, uncomfortable or perhaps all 3 - to talk about racism. If it is one of the key drivers of disadvantage in this country then we need to talk about racism, white privilege and oppression. We need system leaders to be suitably trained and supported to discuss these issues. We need to co-produce strategies with the communities affected so there is a sense of equality from the outset and that these co-produced plans are based on the reality of experiences on the ground.
8. **In order to create a level playing field for discussion and actioning around structural racism, communities need the resources to be properly around the table and to be part of any action plan.** They need long term resources to be part of the solution which should be ring fenced for organisations led by the communities affected. The lack of investment in the infrastructure which supports black communities to have a voice has played into the hands of structural racism. Evidence from a range of studies including the work of Ubele and Charities So White have demonstrated the structural inequalities in the dispersal of funding to black and ethnic minority communities - therefore ring fencing is key. New significant resources for the voluntary and community sector to address the impact of structural racism are needed. In conjunction to resources there needs to be very strong public messages from the Mayor and colleagues about the importance of the voluntary and community sectors - an increase in the value placed on these organisations and the leaders in communities as well as revised structures which allow them to have an equal place at the decision making table. This needs to be encouraged at a local authority level too, with clear guidance and expectations placed on local authority leaders, NHS, Borough Commanders, head teachers etc to co-produce plans which tackle disproportionality and structural racism as well as an expectation that local sustainable resources will be made available for communities to play their role.
9. **The funding and partnership relationship between the state and communities is key.** The national focus on using private companies to deliver resettlement schemes and the limited engagement of the probation service with the VCS means the voluntary and community sector is not being utilised as a key mechanism to support offenders. Yet many VCS organisations would welcome opportunities to reenter YOIs and Prisons and be brought to bare on developmental initiatives for inmates. However the funding mechanisms and structural challenges mean that this type of partnership is limited. Similarly MOPAC and local authority funding for crime reduction is not benefiting black led organisations as much as it should. A new narrative about the need to invest in organisations closest to those affected is key so that grassroots organisations working with black communities are given a sustainable platform to continue to support those most at risk. A review of how MOPAC, VRU and local authority funding is or isn't benefiting black led organisations would be a useful starting point.
10. **Scope of focus – it's important that the lens of structural racism is not just on the police but across the whole public sector, especially around mental health, education, the prison system but also in terms of employment housing, health and other key areas.** A series of strong messages from the Mayor that structural racism is everyone's business and that all these key agencies need to have formal, monitored plans in place to tackle disproportionality will be key to

addressing the issue of state violence towards black communities. As you know I have repeatedly asked at VRU meetings for targets to be set to measure disproportionality across public bodies but none have been forthcoming.

11. **With the announcement from the Equality and Human Rights Commission inquiry into the impact of coronavirus on ethnic minorities, as Mayor you could facilitate community responses to this statutory investigation in relation to Policing.** By providing resources to community organisations to conduct their own locally focused consultation and feedback you could be seen to be facilitating community voices and holding the Metropolitan police service to keen account.

12. **The drugs policy in the UK is not working,** will not work and many countries across the world have realised this and have changed tack. Yet cannabis possession has long been used as the way that the police can oppress black communities in the UK. Again the Mayor needs to lead on a rethink of the current approach which means communities do not reel from the impact of a drugs war and the economy of illegal drugs does not fuel more violence. Instead an intelligent approach would see certain drugs sold safely and legally with the economic returns from this benefiting communities.

This, as previously stated, is not an exhaustive list but an illustration of some of the key issues that need addressing and some of the solutions to these. We would welcome a response to the suggestions made.

We would like to help you to decide on the best course of action going forward so that we that there is a new narrative and strategic direction which leads to real change, quickly, ethically, accountably and ultimately in everyone's interest. We would like to facilitate, co-produce and co-develop a new community policing framework and a new policing compact to support policing by consent.

We look forward to hearing from you soon

Regards



Jake Ferguson

Chair, Black Men for Change

On behalf of Black Men for Change Network – members listed overleaf

Cc: Deputy Mayors – Sophie Linden & Debbie Weeks-Bernard
Lib Peck – Director of Violence Reduction Unit

FIRST	SURNAME	ORGANISATION
Abdi	Hassan	Founder, Coffee Afrique
Andrew	Mohammed	The Investigator
Asher	Senator	Code7Ltd
Ashley	Flash	Youth Worker, Access UK
Ben	Lindsay	Founder, Power the Fight
Courtney	Brown	Founder and CEO, Father2Father
Dami	Solebo	Development Lead, Voyage Youth
David	Agana	YBM Inspirational Leader
David	Smith	YBM Inspirational Leader
Deji	Adeoshun	Youth worker
Dez	Brown	CEO, Spark2Life
Divine	Tetty	YBM Inspirational Leader
Dunstan	Creavalle	President, 100 Black men of London
Emmanuel	Atkin	YBM Inspirational Leader
Emmanuel	Onapa	YBM Inspirational Leader
Etienne	Joseph	Head of Archives, Hackney Council
Femi	Ade-Davis	Blue Marble Project Manager, Shoreditch Trust,
Franklyn	Harris	Founder, SWIM Enterprises
Gori	Yahaya	CEO, Upskill Digital
Great	Okoson	YBM Inspirational Leader
Jake	Ferguson	CEO, Hackney CVS
Jalil Marley	Fortunato	YBM Inspirational Leader
Jeremy	Crook	CEO, Black Training & Enterprise Group
Jermain	Jackman	Chair, Young Futures Commission & Founder BlaqueNation
Julius	Monero	Manager, Rainbow Bakery
Karl	Murray	Strategic Advisor, Ubele Initiative
Ken	Hinds	Chair, Haringey Independent Stop and Search Monitoring Group
Khallum	Caller	YBM Inspirational Leader*
Laurie	Hunte	Former Ministry of Justice Civil Servant
Lee	Jasper	Consultant
Leroy	Logan	Former Chair Black Police Association and Chair of Voyage Youth
Mark	Blake	Haringey Councillor
Matarr	Gaye	Senior Marketing Manager, Institute of Fundraising
Michael	Fuller	UK's first black Chief Constable, author of new book Kill the Black One First
Michael	Adewole	YBM Inspirational Leader*
Nana	Agyeman	Managing Director, Access UK
Niaman	Kasanga	Founder, Hackney Wick FC
Patrick	Vernon	Founder and Director - Every Generation Media
Paul	Reid	Former Director of Black Cultural Archives and Founder, Origin Rites of Passage
Peter	Merrifield	Founder, SWIM Enterprises
Royston	John	Mentor, Centre for Mentoring & Coaching; National Coalition-Building Institute
Sam	Bosedede	Community Youth Worker, The Wickers Charity
Saqib	Deshmukh	Head of Youth Programmes, Hackney CVS
Shane	Ryan	Senior Head of Partnerships, National Lottery Community Fund
Simon	Docking	CSR Team Leader, Coca-Cola European Partners
Solomon	Rose	London Borough of Hackney
Stafford	Scott	The Monitoring Group
Stephen	Addison	Box Up Crime
Thaddaeus	Brown	YBM Inspirational Leader*
Thyrece	Williams	YBM Inspirational Leader*

Toluwani	Farinto	Entrepreneur
Toyin	Agbetu	Founder, Ligali
Viv	Ahmun	Founder, Blaksox