

ALL TOGETHER NOW?

A portrait of race in Britain



Next month, it will be 10 years since the Macpherson report highlighted the institutional racism that marred the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. In the following interviews, 10 Britons, all born in 1974 – the same year as the south London student – describe their experiences of race relations in this country

Wealth of nations:
Abdul Chohan,
Radha Jenkins,
Ed Davidson,
Katherine Gibb,
Shezad Dawood,
Maneera Stenhouse,
Ade Akinbiyi,
Daren Nelson,
Kelly Regan-Mears
and Pete Turner

PETE TURNER

Bass player in Elbow

Pete Turner is the bassist for the band, Elbow, winner of the Mercury Music Prize. He grew up near Manchester and was adopted by a white British couple. He is not in touch with his birth parents, but he knows that his father was black and from Kenya and his mother was white



I was about four or five months old when I was adopted, and it's the best thing that ever happened to me. My parents are white, and from a very early age I've known they weren't my birth parents – it's not like they could have hidden it! I think adopting a black child in the 70s was quite a thing, really, and I'm proud of my mum and dad for that. It's funny – I've got three or four friends who are adopted and, if you're not, you assume that you'd need to find out about your natural parents, but none of us do. I know that my natural father was a Kenyan and my natural mother was a white lady, but that's all I need to know.

I was always aware that I was the only black kid in school, but I just got on with it. Looking back on that period of time, I know that in certain areas of the country it must have been horrible, but for me it was never really an issue.

I remember when I was dead little, though, about the first time that I was allowed to walk into the village and get some sweets. I was walking in with my sister and I remember a guy sitting on the other side of the road who looked a proper skinhead. I remember

him shouting “nigger”, but not loud enough that my sister could hear properly, and she asked me whether he was talking to us. Even though she was two years older I didn't want her to know that someone had said that to me – I thought it would hurt her as much as it would hurt me, so I just said: “Oh it's all right, I know him.”

When I was about 15, a mate of mine called Chris – who isn't black but used to think he was – moved up to near where I lived. He introduced me to Public Enemy and my life changed completely: that really was a massive, defining moment. It was so important for me hearing that music because it made me really aware of black culture; it made me aware of being a black person. I used to sit and look

at Chuck D's lyrics and it took me to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and hip-hop music, and the whole of black history. Since then I don't think a band has made such an impact on my life. Me and Chris used to walk round this little village north of Bury with an absolutely massive ghetto blaster, playing “Fight the Power” really loud. We must have looked ridiculous.

These days there's a lot of black people in indie bands – it's changed enormously over the last few years. But a lot of the bands that I've always liked, such as the Specials, have had black members in them, so it's never really been a thing. In the band everything is fair game with us, so someone will say something and I'll kill myself laughing. Like recently, there was a picture of TV On The Radio – they're a band with four black guys and one white guy. One of the guys in the band pointed to the one white guy and said: “Pete, that's you.”

On one hand I think there's been a lot of progress, but then I remember my mum being absolutely horrified and gutted when she got a leaflet from the BNP through the door recently. It's people's fears: if you watch the news or you read the *Mail* you're going to panic about things. Maybe it's there as much as it ever was, but if people have racist views in this day and age I think they keep them to themselves because they know they should be embarrassed.

I've gone to places where I've been very aware that I'm the only black person in town – but not in this country. I'm a Mancunian before I'm British, though. Manchester is a very cosmopolitan, liberal place and it's got a lot to do with the way I am: it's a good place, full of good people. I don't walk round telling people how black I am – unlike my friend Chris! But I know that when I walk into a room the first thing someone's going to see is a black man. I'm a black Mancunian man, but before that I'm Pete, and that's it.

“If people have racist views in this day and age I think they keep them to themselves, because they know they should be embarrassed”

MANEERA STENHOUSE

PR manager

Maneera Stenhouse works for a disability charity in London. Her parents are both Bengali



I met my husband at university in Salford in the first week, and to be honest it was never really a problem that he was English and I was Asian and Muslim because we fell in love and any differences were irrelevant. I think that because of the way I grew up – a nice, middle-class upbringing in Northampton – I always had both English and Asian friends, and so my parents were very welcoming to him. I went to a private Anglican girls’ school, so most of my friends were English and had a fairly privileged

upbringing. Also, my parents and I have seen quite a few arranged marriages struggle, so they were very keen to make sure that I was happy – that was first and foremost.

That said, my dad expected me to marry someone similar to him – a nice Bengali doctor – but now he adores Tom; so does my mum. Just because you marry someone from the same ethnic background it doesn’t mean it’s going to work out. But if I had picked someone who had a very different background to mine in terms of education – as snobby as that sounds – I think my parents may have objected.

Because lots of my friends were English, celebrating Christmas has never been a no-no for me, so once I was married and was celebrating the festive period with Tom’s family in Somerset, it didn’t seem such an alien thing to do. Similarly, Tom has always been interested in the culture he’s married into. So he wanted to understand what Ramadan was all about, and why fasting is such a big thing in Muslim people’s lives; now he takes part in it every year. The whole essence of fasting is that you appreciate the food that you have and that you share it, and those things are completely universal. The excitement of all sitting down to eat together and breaking a fast during Ramadan is almost like having Christmas every evening!

When we got married we had a civil ceremony followed by an Islamic ceremony – the two ceremonies pretty much mean the same thing: the union of two individuals, one in front of

the law and the other with Allah or God. I wore an ivory wedding dress for the first bit of the civil ceremony and a veil over my head for the Islamic ceremony. In the evening we had a formal Indian reception where I wore a gold *lehenga* – a traditional Indian dress – and Tom wore a gold *sherwani* suit. I wanted to make sure that the clothes reflected our different cultures, and the two dresses were both made by the same designer, so even though the first dress looked English it had Indian embroidery on it. I think it was a really good mix. There were aspects of the ceremonies that were perhaps a bit strange to Tom’s family, because the norm is to marry in a traditional village church, but they just took it all on board with open arms.

For some people religion is the most important thing, but I’ve been brought up to appreciate that being a good human being is first and foremost, so I shouldn’t discriminate against anyone who’s from a different religion. If I had, for example, grown up in a very strong Indian community and I had gone on to marry an Indian person as well, then it would be much more straightforward, but instead I’ve got lots of different influences. I feel that my identity is quite mixed because I’m Muslim, though not strict; Bengali, though I’m part of the Indian subcontinent as well, and I’m British, but then I’m English because I was born and brought up in England. I don’t think anyone’s straightforwardly British – I think everyone’s got a little bit of everything in them anyway. We have our differences and we might have a different way of looking at life, but in essence we’re all the same; we all wake up in the morning the same way and brush our teeth at night.

“I don’t think anyone’s straightforwardly British. I think everyone has a little bit of everything in them”

ADE AKINBIYI

Footballer

Ade Akinbiyi is a striker for Burnley Football Club. His parents are Nigerian

After growing up in a mixed area like Hackney in London it was a shock to join Norwich football club. I was 16 at the time and moved into digs with an old lady in the middle of the countryside. I was probably the first black person she had ever looked after and I found it very difficult; she probably did, too. It wasn't just race – there were cultural differences as well. My parents are Nigerian and I was used to eating jollof rice and chicken, but she cooked potatoes and roast dinners. I used to sneak home whenever I could.

Norwich was a very white place. To see another black person in those days was kind of a relief. I used to think about how other people might see me: what were they

thinking? If I missed the bus to get to training I would walk instead of standing about waiting, because I was worried that people would question what a black guy was doing around the area. They might not have done, but I was young and insecure at the time.

When I started playing football my mum didn't like coming to watch me. She hated the abusive side of it, the swearing and shouting. Even today I am appalled by what people will shout in front of their children; of course the kids then grow up and carry on shouting it. The racism is still there. It's quieter than it used to be and the police are trying to step up their work on it, but I don't think it will ever stop.

As a black man driving a nice car with tinted windows I get stopped by the police a lot. The famous phrase is, "It fits your description, blah blah blah." I'm never rude to them, because the ruder you are the longer it takes. Arguing with them is a waste of time.

Being a footballer, you move around a lot, and I've lived in all kinds of areas. I've always kept my principles about mixing with all people and all colours, but not everyone is like that. You get those people who talk to black people at work, but they don't want to socialise with them outside. It happens in football, I'm not gonna lie. Even within

the black community there are differences. You get banter between Africans and West Indians. I had a team-mate at one of the clubs I played for who kept calling me "African this" and "African that". I kept saying to the guy, "You do know we're all from Africa?" That boy didn't know his roots. I don't think white people see any of that. They just see black people as all the same, just like how people get Indians mixed up with Bengalis.

I had a bunch of kids wanting to touch my hair at one club I played for. I didn't mind, I just let them do it because they had never felt hair like that before and they wanted to know what it was like. It was the first step for them, finding out about someone else's culture. That's something that is very important to me. I love reading about history and other cultures and I've tried to pass that on to my son – we always watch the news together. He's mixed race and goes to school in a very white area, so when he was younger kids used to go up to him and say, "How come you're dark skinned?" I had to sit him down and explain that a lot of parents don't teach their kids about these things.

"I had a bunch of kids wanting to touch my hair at one club. They had never felt hair like mine before"



DAREN NELSON

Concierge

Daren Nelson used to be in the RAF and now works at a police training academy. Both his parents are Jamaican



I've always been very patriotic, and I think that comes from being really into old black and white war films as a kid. It's also from talking to ex-servicemen and thinking: "You must have been really proud to do that job." It's something that's always been in me, so when I was 25 I joined the RAF and was there for five years. I was definitely in the minority as a black guy – I could go on a camp with 200 or 300 people and there would literally be just one or two black guys there. But in terms of

racism, colourwise I really didn't get any at all. The only aggro I got was from the Scots and Welsh and Irish about being English!

My mix of friends now is about half black guys and half white guys. I grew up in Basingstoke, which even today is still mainly a white area, so my closest friends from school are all white guys. Some of the other black lads that I muck about with are quite a lot shorter than me, so when I say I don't really get any racist bullying, they go: "Yeah, it's all right for you – you're six-foot two and 18 stone."

I suppose my size maybe makes me a bit intimidating, so that's probably why I've never been affected by hostile racism. You do get the jokey stuff from the older guys who think that the Bernard Manning/Jim Davidson sense of humour is still tolerable. So they'll come out with daft comments, like in the summer they'll say: "Oh blimey, you've got a good tan there, mate, where did you go on holiday?" But these are the same sorts who come out with mother-in-law jokes, so you can't really take them seriously.

But as a big black guy I do get stereotyped a lot. When I'm out I get people coming up to me all the time and saying: "Got any more of those

pills, mate?" They see a big black guy and automatically think he must be some sort of drug dealer. At first I found it quite funny, but after a while it grates a bit. I've got an older sister, and I do think maybe it's harder being a black guy than a black woman because there aren't so many preconceptions about black women. When people see a black guy wearing casual urban clothes, they think: "That geezer must be in a gang, he's a bit of a hoodie." I'd say those stereotypes have actually got worse because of the rise in drug use and gang violence: people are even more intimidated by groups of black guys hanging around now.

Unfortunately I do think that the race card is still being played. I've seen people in the air force who were incompetent during basic training, but they'd come out and say: "Oh the sarge just don't like me 'cause I'm black."

As a black guy you just have to do your job properly, be efficient at what you do, and only then, if you don't get the promotion, have you got grounds to say: "Well, I think there's some racial undertones here." But in general I feel pretty positive about how far we've come in this country – back in the day it used to be that black guys just hung out with black guys, but now there's much more of a mix: kids are growing up together, black kids and white kids hang around together, and everyone gets to know everyone else's culture. It's definitely a positive thing.

"In the RAF, in terms of racism, colourwise I really didn't get any at all. The only aggro I got was from the Scots and Welsh and Irish about being English!"

RADHA JENKINS

Mother

Radha Jenkins's parents were both British. Her mother was mixed race, her father is white. She lives in north London with her three children, Taylor, Liam and Lene

Some people used to have a go at my mum because they couldn't understand how this black woman had two white children. And even now when I fill in those forms there's not really a box for me – sometimes I tick “white” and sometimes I tick “other”, but I do wonder why we have to be put in a box. Why can't we just stand outside it? In family pictures it's like “spot the white person”, because most of my family are a shade of brown. It bothered me that I was different when I was little, but my mum would tell me I was her English rose.

I've mainly been out with white guys, but my sister, who's olive-skinned, only really goes out with black guys. But I'm not really a black guy's idea of a good girlfriend. There's this cultural thing of a lot of black men wanting their women to be dressed up, have their hair and nails done and the rest – I can't be bothered with that. When I was

about 18 I went out with an Irish guy and I remember when his mum found out that mine was mixed race she said to me, “Oh, you could get away with being Irish, couldn't you?” That shocked me, “What did she mean ‘Get away with it?’” – as if having a mixed-race mum was something you should hide.

I sometimes think there's more racism today – particularly with kids. There's more segregation and people are more anxious. You used to have three distinct groups: there were white people, Asian people and black people and they mostly sort of stuck in their specific groups. Now that people are so much more mixed it seems like everyone's racist against everyone. It used to be gangs of black kids versus gangs of white kids, but now it's much more complicated. When I was

younger everyone just hung around with each other, but now there's Somalian gangs, for example, who maybe don't like the Polish and the Polish kids don't like the black kids, or whatever. When did this happen?

When Stephen Lawrence was killed everyone thought it was horrific, now almost every day you hear about some kid that's been knifed or shot. My eldest son's 13 and I worry about him all the time. I even called the police once because he was late home. He sometimes has this big, blonde afro and I remember once I was walking behind him down the street and two older black guys walked past him and said: “Check out the white boy with his afro!” I wondered if maybe he gets that all the time. It looks amazing and unique, but some people don't like difference.



“I sometimes think there's more racism today particularly with kids”

SHEZAD DAWOOD

Artist

Shezad Dawood lives in east London. His father is from Pakistan and his mother is Indian



My parents divorced when I was quite young and I remember my dad's house in Barnes, west London, as being a kind of gem when I was growing up. He was a music photographer in the States, so not your usual stereotype of an Asian dad, and our house was very open. We had Jewish people, black people, gay people – I hate trundling out one-dimensional caricatures, but these were all vital, interesting, creative people who argued and discussed things together. It was like a mini utopia.

Outside the walls of my dad's house it was a different story. As a teenager I remember running for my life when I was chased by a gang of skinheads with Stanley knives and baseball bats, and I certainly ran a lot faster than I did at school doing PE. There was also this thing of bowing your head at school – a sort of “know your place”. I was not the sort to take it, so I'd punch someone, but it was a hollow victory because all it would get me was a transfer to honorary “non-Paki” status and I'd get to sit with the other kids who were not racially defined while they told racist jokes. Every day I was not sure if I was a traitor or a collaborator, so I had a really fraught sense of self and a muddled identity. I think it wakes you up very quickly to what it is to be human, to the worst and... I'm wary of saying “the best” because I think we have yet to get there.

Now I think London is the most advanced place in the world in terms of being allowed to be who you are. A lot of artist friends of mine have moved to Berlin, but I'd loathe to give up living here because I like the freedom of not having to identify. There was a bit of an upset after the 7/7 bombings, though: I was living in Bethnal Green and suddenly 15 years after leaving school you had to be aware

of race again. I remember going to the tube and in front of me was another “brown guy” with a beard. The police stopped him and I thought: “That could have been me!” I had that feeling again, – of having to be aware of yourself in a way you shouldn't have to be. Now I do find myself shaving before I travel by air, just for ease of passage.

I studied at Central Saint Martin's and the Royal College of Art, and when I graduated in 2000 there was, if I'm really honest, an envy of my peers being able to go into shows without any racial designation while I was always being labelled an Asian artist. Quite soon after graduating I was in a show at the Whitechapel Gallery which was Asian themed and I thought: I wish I could be here on my own merit rather than coming through the back door of the “Asian” category. More recently, I've been the beneficiary of positive discrimination in terms of funding, though. I see that as a kind of idiocy, but I have a strong belief in the work I make and the importance of it, so: you want to give me some money because I'm brown? Fine.

I see my make-up as pretty much three-way in terms of religion: I was brought up with a Sufi understanding of Islam and an understanding of Hinduism, and went to a C of E school, while gnosticism and other more esoteric aspects of Christianity interest me just as much. To be entrenched in one's own culture and not to engage in society is a problem. With disappointment, I've seen a younger generation of Asians go back to their roots in a very one-dimensional way – particularly in terms of adopting a much less complicated, more conservative position on things. But what are your roots? They've multiplied and fragmented since then. Rather than getting alarmist about losing culture, that multiplicity is actually where it becomes interesting and is something we should all embrace.

“I've seen a younger generation of Asians go back to their roots, adopting more conservative views”

KELLY REGAN-MEARS

Communications manager

Kelly Regan-Mears works for a construction company in Kent. Her parents are both white Britons

I went to a boarding school with lots of people from different countries, but to me their difference was because of nationality. As a result, I actually had a bit of a culture shock when I went to Kingston University in Surrey. I was meeting people of British birth who looked different because of their skin colour, and who formed these quite cliquy groups which seemed to be about being of a similar race. They dressed in a particular way and used a particular type of street slang that I couldn't understand.

I think people considered me a little bit of a snob, but my three best friends at university were all non-white. One had a white mother and black father, another

had two black parents, and my other friend was of Chinese origin. One thing that I did find very difficult was if we were out as a group and we'd get racial slurs. I remember one instance where we actually didn't catch a bus into Kingston because there was a group of white girls and boys making negative comments. I said to my friends, "Do you not have a problem with this?" And they said they didn't – but I did.

I've always been absolutely blind to race. I've had several boyfriends who weren't white, but it was never a pride or trophy thing, they were just people I liked. Equally, I think I'd be safe in hazarding a guess that none of those men went out with me just because I was a white girl; they went out with me because they liked me.

My family never made it an issue for me, though I do recall a friend of my grandmother's saying: "It's not right for a white girl and a black boy to be seen together." But that was probably a generational thing. My grandparents had to overcome that themselves when my Irish father married my English mother. At the time, when my parents were courting, it wasn't the done thing.

I had a slight Irish accent when I was younger and the girls at school could get a bit nasty. I remember having to do a show-and-tell about our grandfather, and mine was in the Irish Republican Army when it was just the army, but word got out to girls at school that my family were members of the IRA. Just as not every Irish person was a member of the IRA, similarly every Muslim is not going to be a member of al-Qaida. It's the same with how Brits are typecast abroad: not everybody in Britain goes out, gets absolutely trolled and walks around in an England shirt abusing foreigners!

I always think that if people are prejudiced against something it's generally because they are ignorant, and education goes a tremendously long way to putting people straight.



“I always think that if people are prejudiced against something it's generally because they are ignorant”

ABDUL CHOCHAN

Assistant head teacher

Abdul Chohan teaches at a school in Lancashire. His parents are both Indian

I'm the assistant head of a school in Bolton where there are 40 languages spoken. Here, there's tolerance – it's built in as so many different cultures are part of the playground, so the staff have got to recognise that and take into account the different needs of kids from different faiths and cultures. It wasn't like that even five years ago, when I started. Then it was just white British and Indian

and Pakistani. When I was at school, it was a different world. There was such a big divide between the two groups of children: the white British kids and then the Indian and Pakistani kids. Now, the kids in my school are so much more integrated – for example, I've got this Sikh boy from Afghanistan, the first Sikh at our school. When he came I had a chat with him and he said he was a bit scared, but now he's fitted into a group made up of one lad from Afghanistan, a lad from Senegal and a Kurdish boy, so there's this foursome of friends who really get on, even though they're all completely different and speak different languages.

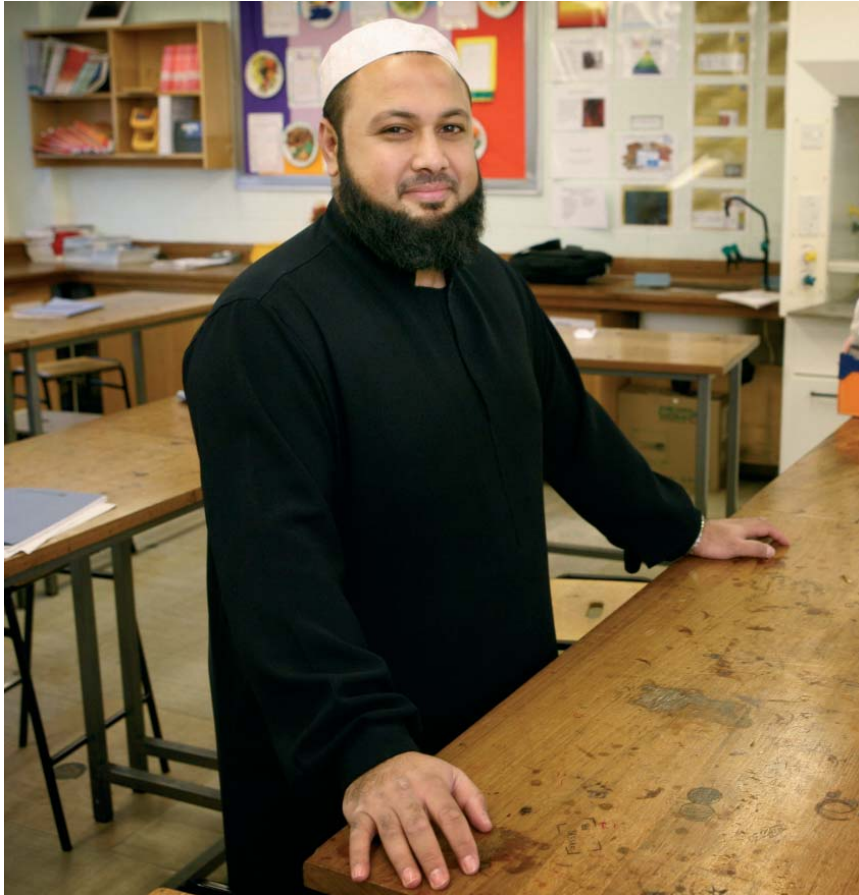
When tensions arise it's usually to do with geography, and you get turf wars between different groups. So, for example, the Pakistani kids are located in one area and the Indian kids in another area, and when they fight people assume it's racial, although it's actually just because they're from different parts of town. I was speaking to a colleague of

mine from Liverpool and she was saying it's the same with Catholics and Protestants. So sometimes I think: is it a race thing or is it just boys being boys? If I look at the same lads when they're much older, the 30-plus generation in Bolton, there's no tension there; it's gone by then.

I don't think my ethnicity – the fact that my parents are from India – has much of an influence on anything. When I go to India it's very alien to me. Years back I went to Pakistan and Nepal, but after two months all I could think of was a cheese-and-onion pasty and I wanted to be back in Bolton. The weather's not great here, but this is home.

I think the challenges now are more to do with religion than race. Especially after 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings. It's strange how someone who's been brought up here practising their religion can suddenly feel quite alienated. Islam was a big part of my upbringing, and because of that I feel like I'm trying to be an ambassador for my religion all the time, trying to promote myself and who I am. But what I say to the boys I work with is that in a lot of countries if you want to practise your faith you're in handcuffs, but you have your freedom to practise your faith over here, the freedom to do so many things. That's one of the main reasons I'm proud to be British.

“I don't think my ethnicity – the fact that my parents are from India – has much of an influence on anything. When I go to India it's very alien to me”



KATHERINE GIBB

Teaching assistant

Katherine Gibb lives in south London. Her father is a white Briton and her mother was a black Ugandan

In many ways I feel more black than white, and I find myself veering towards an African attitude, especially in the cultural things, like disciplining children. In quite a few African families there tends to be a lot more discipline with regards to children, and I kind of respect that. I don't mean corporal punishment, but rather letting the child know right from wrong and having certain standards and expecting the child to have standards, too. It's strange that I identify with my African heritage in this way because my mum left Britain and went back to Uganda when I was five. I never got to meet her family or see her again – Idi Amin was in

power and she and the rest of her family were murdered.

I've never really grown up considering myself African or English though – I just consider myself a human being and a woman, and it's other people who pigeonhole me when they see my skin colour. I've got close black friends and close white friends, and my black friends say that they see me as a woman, and when I'm with them I sort of think of myself as black whereas I suppose my white friends think of me as mixed-race.

It annoys me when I hear the black youth of today using the concept of “you're discriminating against me because of my colour” as an excuse. I think: “Well, maybe you're not using your brain!” I think a lot of them still feel that they're owed something; they still hark back to slavery. Come on: that was 400 years ago. That said, I have quite a few black male friends who've

got their qualifications, got a job, and they're on the right path: they're not leaving school without qualifications and signing on the dole for the rest of their lives.

There's still slavery going on in Africa, though – black-on-black tribalism – but none of the black community ever condemns it. And that's where the black community falls apart. If you look at Africa as a whole, not one country has stepped forward to condemn what Robert Mugabe is doing and said: “You're doing this in the name of all black people and we disagree.”

I think British culture has a lot of negative things about it, but in terms of race I actually think Britain can be proud, I think we've done well for a country that was predominantly white 20 years ago.

I live in Plumstead in south London, and the place where Stephen Lawrence died isn't that far away from me. I think the area's changed a lot since he was killed and it's certainly become a lot more cosmopolitan. I moved here when I was 10, and it was fairly white – a typical suburb of London. Now I walk down to my local greengrocer's and I hear Polish, Albanian and Nigerian accents. We've changed massively.



“I've never really grown up considering myself African or English – I just consider myself a human being and a woman”

ED DAVIDSON

IT manager

Ed Davidson lives and works in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. His parents are both white Britons



I don't actively go out to seek black or Asian friends, but nor do I actively seek white friends. It just doesn't really register that much with me. There's this phrase, "ethnic ambiguity", that's bandied round at the moment, which is about how much attention we pay to people's creed and background. I'd much rather base the interactions I have with an individual on their personality – it's never in line with

their racial background. How much would I want someone to pay attention to the fact that I'm a stereotypical white male? Not at all, to be honest.

Of course there are certain privileges that I've enjoyed throughout my life because I am a white male from a middle-class background, who's financially stable. It's a comfortableness with many situations: I can remember standing in a queue to book into a hotel a couple of years ago and the guy in front of me was black. I remember the tension and the hostility coming from the man behind the desk. But when I moved up to the desk, immediately he was all: "Oh, hello, sir. Welcome." It was as if he was thinking: "You're the sort of person we want to stay at this hotel." I noticed it, but did I say anything? No. But I do say

something when I hear racist jokes. I've got friends who are comfortable making a racist joke, and it's usually the people who are equally ignorant who actually laugh at them. But I'll say: "I don't really think that's particularly funny."

My mum and dad are from a generation where it's far more politically correct to be "politically incorrect", but they're both intelligent enough people to realise that's not right. Every now and again, if my dad and I have had a couple of beers he'll make some sort of jokey comment and use a potentially politically incorrect word which I don't think should be said. There's certain race-related slang that seems to be far more offensive. I wouldn't dream of calling a Pakistani person a "Paki", for example, but I call my Australian friend an "Aussie".

I'm proud of being British, very proud. I get quite upset when people slag this country off. I can't stand people who whinge and moan and don't do anything about it. If immigrants to this country bring some value to society, then I think it's a good thing; what I don't approve of is people coming into this country, irrespective of what country they're from, and not adding value to the economy, to society, to culture. When I heard talk about a "Britishness day" I thought, "You'll never get away with that." It sounds too colonial. I'm very patriotic, though: I strapped a Union Jack to the back of my motorbike and zoomed up and down the streets when Lewis Hamilton won his first Grand Prix – he's from Stevenage as well!

"I'd much rather base the interactions I have with an individual on their personality – it's never in line with their racial background"

For further reading go to www.equalityhumanrights.com

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

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To mark the tenth anniversary of the report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the Equality and Human Rights Commission is initiating a major debate about race and equality in Britain today.

We have commissioned reports on some of the most salient issues in this debate: on how the police have dealt with race issues since the inquiry, on what the increasing diversity of the British population means for us all and how mixed-race Britons are the fastest-growing minority in the country, and on what the general public thinks about race in Britain today.

Visit the Commission's website to learn more about these issues, view a lecture by the Commission Chair Trevor Phillips, see videos of key players in this debate giving their views, and let us know what you think!

www.equalityhumanrights.com/raceinbritain.