

Paper 22: Events and perceptions over the decades

This paper

This paper contains eleven quotations from the period 1902–2004, each from a different decade. They illustrate between them a range of opinions and perceptions.

One valuable and stimulating way of using the quotations in staff training is to remove the dates and sources and to provide each on a separate slip of paper. The discussion task in a small group is then to assemble the quotations in chronological order.

Instead or as well, the quotations can be used to clarify principles for teaching about controversial issues (paper 16) with regard not only to the present but also to considerations of the past.

Only a matter of time

It is only a matter of time before the population becomes entirely foreign. The rates are burdened with the education of thousands of children of foreign parents. Among the thousands who come here there is a considerable proportion of bad characters, and the competition with home industries extends to burglary and other cognate crimes. (*Evans Gordon MP, 1902*)

Pending their repatriation

There is every reason to hope that the action of the authorities will prevent any further outbreak against the negro colony in Liverpool. To-day an official from the Labour Ministry conferred with the Lord Mayor and the Head Constable, and it was agreed to make arrangements for the internment of the negroes pending their repatriation. (*Daily Telegraph, 13 June 1919*)

Black face

Here is a native who has actually behaved like a gentleman; if it was not for his black face we would almost allow him to join the club. (*E.M.Forster's A Passage to India, 1920s.*)

Modern civilised life

It is to European man that the world owes the incomparable gifts of modern science. To the conquest of nature through knowledge the contributions made by Asiatics have been negligible and by Africans (Egyptians excluded) non-existent. It is hardly excessive to say that the material fabric of modern civilised life is the result of the intellectual daring and tenacity of the European peoples. (*H.A.L Fisher, A History of Europe, 1930s.*)

Don't point, Gregory

He attracted his mother's attention by yelling 'Look! She's black. Look, Mum, black woman.' – 'Don't point, Gregory. She's not black, she's coloured.' While from the other side of the road came shouting. Loud, uncouth and raucous. 'Golliwog, golliwog. It was three young men. Holding up a wall they yelled through the funnel of their hands, ' Oi, sambo.' (*Small Island by Andrea Levy, set in the 1940s*)

Squalid and deplorable

Most live in housing conditions that are primitive, squalid and deplorable. Many police reports say that coloured people seem to live in these bad conditions from choice. West Indian men are physically unsuited for heavy manual work and are volatile and potentially violent, and the women are slow mentally. Indians are mainly hardworking though unscrupulous. (*Home Office report, 1950s.*)

Neighbour

If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour. (*Campaign slogan in Smethwick, 1960s.*)

Pet animal

That there are many openly prejudiced teachers in Britain is not in doubt in my mind. I have experienced them personally.... There are many more teachers who are patronising or condescending towards Black children. These are the sort who treat a Black child as a favourite pet animal. I have often overheard teachers saying, 'I really like that coloured child. He is quite bright for a coloured child.' (*Bernard Coard, 1971*)

Tale of talent

Too often the history of Europe is described as a series of interminable wars and quarrels. Yet from our perspective today surely what strikes us most is our common experience. For instance, the story of how Europeans explored and colonised and - yes - civilised much of the world is an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage. (*Margaret Thatcher, 1980s.*)

Walking down the street

I still don't feel British. Because I know we haven't been fully accepted. We still walk down the street and get called a Paki. (*Focus group, 1999.*)

All

All Muslims, like all dogs, share certain characteristics. A dog is not the same animal as a cat just because both species are comprised of different breeds. (*Will Cummins, Sunday Telegraph, 25 July 2004*)

(Some of the quotations have been slightly edited.)