

# The Stephen Lawrence Murder Inquiry

## Part 2

*Identifying and addressing the issues around the failure of the police occupational culture to embrace the importance and needs of a multi-racial community*



Metropolitan Police  
London

# **Identifying and addressing the issues around the failure of the police occupational culture to embrace the importance and needs of a multi-cultural community**

Submission by the Black Police Association to the Stephen Lawrence Murder Inquiry

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of this submission is to assist Part Two of the Stephen Lawrence Murder Inquiry to identify the issues which contributed to the Metropolitan Police's inability to provide an acceptable service when tackling a racially motivated murder. The submission seeks to provide evidence of the current negligent attitude and emphasis with regards to race and ethnicity within the Metropolitan Police Service.

1.2 The submission reaffirms the Black Police Association's (BPA) viewpoint that the Inquiry's focus on policy surrounding racially motivated crime is restrictive and should be linked to the broader issues of race and ethnicity within the police service. Whilst the views expressed in this submission are derived from Metropolitan Police personnel, they are views which, from our considerable experience of networking with colleagues from around the country, illustrate a macro picture of police service culture.

1.3 Part One of the Stephen Lawrence Murder Inquiry provided the public with a graphic and perhaps unique insight into the insensitivity, ignorance and plain apathy to issues of race and ethnicity by members of the Metropolitan Police Service. However, to any of the many back police officers that have, over the years, taken the Metropolitan Police to Industrial Tribunal, the revelations from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry were perhaps an all too painful reminder of their own Tribunal hearings. Had their Tribunal proceedings been subjected to the same detailed scrutiny then many of the same issues would have been graphically exposed. It is perhaps worthy of mention at this stage that as many as eight Industrial Tribunals involving black officers await hearing.

## 2. BLACK POLICE ASSOCIATION (BPA)

2.1 The Black Police Association was born in 1993, the result of frustration amongst ethnic minority police officers, and their civil staff counterparts, at the "lip service" paid by the Metropolitan Police to the issue of equal opportunities and indeed community and race relations. In 1994 the

BPA was officially launched as an elected body with a constitution and an overall aim "to improve the working environment for police officers and civil staff of African, African Caribbean or Asian origins".

2.2 The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police attended the official launch as a key note speaker, and along with Assistant Commissioner colleagues, gave his unequivocal support, in the presence of numerous black dignitaries, High Commissioners and guests, to the aim and objectives of the Black Police Association.

2.3 The Black Police Association has existed as a constituted body for nearly four years and has a subscription based membership. It is important that the Inquiry appreciates that those serving on the Executive Committee do so and have done so in a voluntary capacity. The BPA, whilst recognised by the Metropolitan Police Service and indeed the Home Office is not afforded any support in terms of resources and, most importantly, time to carry out the increasing workload placed on the BPA by ethnic minority colleagues, external organisations, the Home Office and the police service. Equally as important to note is the absence within the police service of any formal means of recognising the considerable achievements of the BPA in terms of addressing issues of equality, both internally and within service delivery, providing support to colleagues and the numerous community events attended both here and abroad.

2.4 This lack of support for black networks and support groups is, however, not unusual and we are aware of many other similar groups in both the public and private sector that lead a similar existence. However, given the Metropolitan Police's much publicised commitment to equal opportunities and determination to recruit and retain officers from minority ethnic groups, policies which incidentally have met with limited success, the Met's attitude towards the BPA has at best been construed as arrogant. The BPA Executive Committee seeks to reflect the views of the membership and therefore provides a uniquely informed source of "black" opinion and advice from within the service, opinion and advice unavailable elsewhere within the police service.

2.5 With such an important resource available "on tap" so to speak is it not all the more remarkable that the BPA has not received the attention and tangible support from an organisation which publicly seeks the support and confidence of London's diverse communities?

### 3. INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

3.1 We know from statements made by some very senior managers within the Metropolitan Police Service that the concept of institutionalised racism is misunderstood. The senior management usually subscribe to the view that the responsibility for the differential treatment of the minority ethnic public, the numerous Industrial Tribunal cases involving black officers, the general lack of confidence in the police by the minority ethnic community, is the result of the actions of a few erroneous officers. In fact during the course of the Inquiry an Assistant Commissioner, in an interview on television, strenuously denied the existence of institutionalised racism in the Metropolitan Police.

3.2 The following examples will provide the Inquiry with an understanding of the nature of institutionalised racism, which permeates the Metropolitan Police Service. This issue above all others is central to the attitudes, values and beliefs, which lead officers to act, albeit unconsciously and for the most part unintentionally, and treat others differently solely because of their ethnicity or culture.

3.3 In October 1997 the Police Promotions Examination Board decided that the presence of minority ethnic role players in the national police assessment examination (OSPPE) was providing the majority of candidates with a "different stimuli" and as a result all minority ethnic role players were advised that their services would no longer be required for future examinations (Annex 1). This decision was challenged by the BPA and as a result overturned by the Home Office. There are of course a number of issues of concern here but the most disturbing was the police candidates' inability to objectively address issues presented in the assessment scenario without allowing the role player's colour to influence their decisions. In a press release the BPA expressed the following view;

"If the findings are valid, there remains the issue of the officers' inability to interact with black people without prejudging the facts presented, this must be addressed. There are a number of issues here that are worthy of further research, which may for example assist in the better

understanding of how police deal in the first instance with victims of racial violence".

3.4 The attached Metropolitan Police personnel figures illustrate the serious under-representation of ethnic minority personnel in both the senior police ranks, and interestingly an almost identical profile is mirrored within the civil support staff rank structure (Annex 2). The ethnic profiles graphically illustrate, in particular, the lack of progression of both police and civil staff of African and African Caribbean origin, the largest minority ethnic group in London. The figures beg the question—why have the Metropolitan Police not taken remedial action allowed for within current legislation? (Race Relations Act, 1976). This inaction and apathy towards this manifestation of institutional racism is again most disturbing given the Met's public commitment to ethnic minority recruitment and equal opportunities.

3.5 The following incident illustrates, again, the unconscious nature of acts, which elsewhere would be considered deeply offensive and of course racist. In April 1998, a serious crime occurred in North London. The suspects were black males who made their getaway in a motor vehicle. The Detective Chief Inspector in charge of the incident made arrangements to transmit a message to every Divisional police control room in the Metropolitan Police Service. Included within the text of the message was the following; "all vehicles containing IC3 (black) males should be approached with caution". Only one person officially challenged this message, a member of the BPA. A message that was probably brought to the attention of a considerable percentage of personnel within the Metropolitan Police. Such is the stereotyping of black people, we can only assume that the majority of personnel considered it acceptable.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

4.1 We do not deny that the Metropolitan Police have achieved notable successes in changing the internal management culture; introducing for example greater objectivity in terms of staff appraisals and fairer assessment based promotional systems. A "fairness" culture which has undoubtedly produced a more open, self-critical organisation with increasingly high standards of ethics and integrity.

4.2 However, such progress in the area of personnel management and organisational change must be measured against the Metropolitan Police's willingness to accept the status quo where the issue of creating a multi-cultural organisation is concerned. The lack of vision and strategy in the acceptance of a white dominated mono-cultural police service, with all the inherent problems surrounding ethnocentrism, demonstrates at best an inability to appreciate the value of a multi-cultural organisation. At worst, a conscious decision to preserve the values and beliefs of the dominant culture. Those values and beliefs, the unconscious stereotyping of black and ethnic minorities, all perpetuated and reinforced by the organisation's values, can only contribute to the evidently differential service delivery afforded the minority ethnic population by the police service. A service delivery which has seriously undermined the confidence, in the police service, of a significant proportion of the population.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 5.1 Training

5.2 Whilst we would emphasise that mere training alone is unlikely to impact upon the ingrained occupation culture of the police service, it is nevertheless an important strategy in dismantling the current status quo.

5.3 Training around internal equal opportunity issues was introduced during the early 1990s in response to the Bristol Seminars (Metropolitan Police 1990). The seminars are worthy of mention, as they were perhaps a monumental watershed for the Metropolitan Police Service, in terms of appreciating the issues effecting the work environment for black officers.

5.4 The Metropolitan Police Service, concerned at the premature resignation rate amongst minority ethnic officers, instructed nearly 400 officers to attend a series of two-day seminars at Bristol Polytechnic. Upon arrival the officers were placed in small groups and their views "facilitated" by members of the MPS's internal management consultancy. The resulting anecdotal evidence provided a chilling insight into a "canteen culture" that had no respect for the ethnic diversity within the service or the community.

5.5 The research provided the impetus for amongst other things, saturation "stand alone" training around equal opportunity issues. Such training, in hindsight, was often crudely delivered with the emphasis often upon the financial cost of failing to observe equal opportunity policy and legislation. Officers attending these courses often became resentful and viewed them as "political correctness" courses. Suspicion around the issue of the Commissioner's vicarious liability being discharged once the officers were "trained" also caused considerable resentment and hostility to the training.

5.6 Despite the fact that the Metropolitan Police Service has, over the years, funded the training of hundreds of officers on the six weeks' community and race relations course at the Home Office Specialist Support Unit, Turvey, Bedfordshire, the MPS has failed to introduce any strategy to utilise the talents of these "Turvey Graduates" or indeed evaluate the usefulness of such training.

5.7 In order to ensure the modern police officer is abreast of the most recent changes in legislation, policy and procedures, the service has in recent years introduced a "training day" into the cyclic shift pattern. On most, if not all, policing Divisions and a considerable number of "specialist" departments, officers now undergo at least one day's training every five-six weeks. In addition to this classroom based training, officers regularly undertake "officer safety" refreshment training. This training involves self-defence techniques, the correct use of the police baton, handcuff procedures and CS gas spray. It should be noted that within the past few months the issue of cross-cultural communication has been introduced onto the "officer safety" training.

5.8 The BPA would recommend the following:

The urgent introduction of a community and race relations training strategy which would necessarily address the following points:

- The urgent review of the under utilisation of Specialist Support Unit trained trainers.
- The structured utilisation of lay members of the minority ethnic community in any training initiative.
- The integration of community and race relations issues into core subjects, to be delivered on a regular basis on the divisional training days.
- That officers attached to criminal investigation departments (CID) are exposed to the same training introduced for uniform officers.
- The introduction of Crime scene management courses from a "racial incident" perspective to be urgently considered.

The training of a select pool of officers from minority ethnic backgrounds to act as consultants/advisers on race relations issues.

## 6. ROTTERDAM CHARTER

6.1 The Rotterdam Charter is an initiative, which has grown out of the partnership between the Rotterdam Police, Rotterdam City Council and RADAR, the anti-discrimination organisation for Rotterdam. This three-way partnership reflects their view that the necessary changes in policing cannot be achieved by the police alone.

6.2 The Rotterdam Charter is a document (Annex 3) which identifies the kinds of action which need to be taken, not just in the UK but across Europe if "policing for a multi-ethnic society" is to become a reality. It covers such topics as training on ethnic issues, the recruitment and retention of minority officers, the implementation of relevant law, partnerships with minority ethnic communities and the management of "ethnic crime statistics". What is unique about the Rotterdam Charter is that for the first time it is possible to find on one source document an overview of all the activities required in order to make policing a multi-ethnic society a reality.

6.3 The BPA recommends that the Rotterdam Charter is utilised as a resource when implementing strategies and solutions to effect organisational change.

6.4 The existence of a Black Police Association in the Metropolitan Police and other Forces around the country has presented senior police managers with a unique opportunity. An opportunity

to utilise the unique talents, experiences and views that perhaps only officers from the minority ethnic groups can bring to the decision making process. It is unfortunate that such a valuable resource has until now gone unrecognised.

6.5 The BPA recommends that the police service recognises the existence of Black Police Associations and other similar networks as a positive resource to be utilised where appropriate.

6.6 Management within the policing environment currently relies heavily upon the existence of performance indicators in order to achieve specific key objectives set by the police service and indeed the government. Initiatives that fall outside these key objectives are unlikely to be measured by performance indicators. Whilst the negative issues around such a performance driven culture can be debated elsewhere, the current government emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness and economic accountability is likely to mean that the adage, "if it can't be measured then it won't get done", will be a central theme to police management in the immediate future.

6.7 The BPA recommends that the police service, at a local Divisional level, introduces measurable and achievable objectives around furthering improved community and race relations.