

# The new geographies of racism:

**PLYMOUTH**

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## Introduction and methodology

In 2010 the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) published *Racial violence: the buried issue*, a report analysing 660 racist attacks which took place throughout the UK in 2009.<sup>1</sup> The findings indicated that patterns of racial violence in the UK are shifting. Whereas previously, attacks were frequently concentrated in impoverished inner and outer areas in large conurbations, there is now a marked increase in racist incidents in rural areas, towns and smaller cities. Such is the extent of violence in some of these areas that it appears almost systematic.

Over the last decade, the demography of the UK has altered significantly and, put simply, as patterns of migration and settlement have changed so too have patterns of racial violence. According to successive governments this is symptomatic of breakdowns in community cohesion, unsuccessful integration and even a failure of multiculturalism. However, such explanations ignore and downplay the role of state policies and actions which set the tone for popular racism and the context within which such attacks take place. Vicious attacks against asylum seekers and migrant workers have become a regular occurrence in some areas. Radical transformations in local economies, relying on deregulated, unprotected and flexible labour forces, have pushed workers into jobs where they are isolated, vulnerable and exposed to a risk of violence. As particular forms of popular racism have formed nationally – such as anti-Muslim racism generated through the war on terror – localised racisms have gathered pace and manifested themselves in abuse, harassment and brutality. Far-right organisations, in such climates, have been able to draw on and capitalise upon emerging hostilities.

Against this backdrop, the IRR is examining these new geographies of racism by conducting detailed investigations into three of the areas which *Racial violence: the buried issue* identified as experiencing particularly high levels of racist attacks. The first of these investigations focuses on Plymouth: dubbed by one journalist, because of the extent of some forms of racist violence, as the 'city of hate'.<sup>2</sup> Hate crimes in Plymouth have increased significantly in recent years and the number of racist incidents reported to the police rose by 60 per cent between 2004/05 and 2009/10: from 224 to 359 incidents.<sup>3</sup> However, such is the extent of under-reporting that the Plymouth & District Racial Equality Council (PDREC) estimated that throughout the city there are, in reality, at least fifty racist or religiously aggravated incidents a day.<sup>4</sup> Some of these incidents have left people seriously injured, permanently scarred and in need of continuous medical treatment; others have involved burning or

attacking people's homes, work, or places of worship; and others still have been part of concerted attempts to force people to flee the city.

The information contained in this briefing draws on in-depth interviews with a cross-section of those working on issues relating to racism and racial equality in Plymouth. Their experiences include work with asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers, Gypsies and Travellers, students and victims of racial violence. Given that some interviewees requested anonymity, a decision was made to ensure anonymity for all for the sake of consistency. All of the interviews were recorded electronically or conducted by email. As well as these interviews, discussions were held with people within Plymouth who were engaged in anti-racist campaigning in the city. Where appropriate, issues raised in these discussions were followed up either in the formal interviews or through researching key statistical sources.

Statistical information was gathered from official sources such as recorded police data, central government documents and from local authorities. Additional data was provided by the PDREC. Initial information about racial violence was gathered from a database, continuously updated by the IRR, upon which cases reported by local and national media are inputted and followed up by researchers.

By setting out the background to the levels of racial violence currently being experienced within Plymouth, this briefing provides an overview which incorporates recent demographic changes; economic developments; indices of poverty and deprivation; localised histories of racism and anti-racism; patterns of employment and labour force dynamics. It will be followed by investigations into two other areas and, subsequently, a report which draws together these researches and incorporates cases from the IRR's database on racial violence. It is envisaged that this research will help to inform the debates and tactics necessary in order to tackle new and emerging geographies of racism. ■

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## Demographic changes

Plymouth, in the south-west of England, is the fifteenth most populous city in the country with approximately 257,000 residents. Located on the south coast of Devon, it is based in one of the most homogenous areas in England and despite the number of people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the region doubling between 1991 and 2001 to 2.4 per cent,<sup>5</sup> this remained much lower than the average population of England as a whole (at 9.1 per cent). Roughly 28 per cent of those from BME communities in the south-west region are based within its capital, Bristol. And in 2001, according to census data, about 1.6 per cent of the population of Plymouth were from BME communities.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, the demography of the city has rapidly changed. The city council stated that this figure had risen to 6 per cent by 2006<sup>6</sup> and, by 2009, the Office for National Statistics showed that Plymouth's BME communities made up roughly 9.1 per cent of the city's population. The largest BME group, in these statistics, were Asian communities (at 2.6 per cent of the population); 2.4 per cent of the population were 'other white'; 1.3 per cent classed as 'mixed'; 1 per cent black and 0.4 per cent Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Plymouth has a small but long-standing BME presence, and 'natural growth' and movement within the city has, in part, underpinned demographic changes. However, at the same time, shifts in the population are linked to inward migration. The University of Plymouth, as one of the largest employers, has actively promoted an increased intake of international students 'from new and existing markets in order to sustain a diverse and multi-cultural student body'.<sup>8</sup> This 'internationalisation strategy', combined with attempts to increase the diversity of the (domestic) student population in the city, has led to the number of students from BME communities more than doubling from 982 (4.1 per cent of the total) in the 2003/04 academic year to 2,077 (6.5 per cent) in 2008/09.<sup>9</sup>

The demographic of the city has further altered as a result of the Labour government's asylum dispersal policies. In 1999, the city was designated as a dispersal area and since then it has consistently accommodated the highest number of asylum seekers in the South West. Reflecting the decreasing numbers of people applying for asylum in the UK, within Plymouth the number of accommodated applicants has reduced since dispersal policies were introduced, and whilst there were 340 people housed in 2001 there were 185 in 2010.<sup>10</sup> However,

these figures do not include those who are housed in 'Section 4' accommodation, those who have been granted leave to remain and have stayed in the locality, or those whose claims have been refused but still nonetheless live in the city. According to Refugee Action, in 2005 there were approximately 100-150 refused asylum seekers destitute in the city and 200-300 refugees.<sup>11</sup>

Although there are no detailed records, there is also evidence that within Plymouth changes in the local economy, tied to the expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, have underpinned population changes through the employment of migrant workers. In 2008, approximately 2,270 foreign nationals applied for national insurance numbers in the city and there is some indication that many of those obtaining this documentation had moved to the UK from Eastern Europe.<sup>12</sup> Between 2003 and 2007 the largest number of school children in Plymouth 'most likely to be immigrants' were Eastern European with an increase of sixty-nine pupils. However, in what may be an indication of the temporary work that their parents or guardians were employed within, 3.6 per cent of these school children moved to another area of England in this period.<sup>13</sup> Further, according to the Plymouth Community Safety Partnership, there are a 'significant number' of migrant workers from South Asia employed in the NHS and a cohort from South East Asia working in care and nursing homes.<sup>14</sup>

It is estimated that the number of Gypsies and Travellers living in the South West has grown over the last decade with an increase in both authorised and unauthorised encampments. In the academic year 2004/05, the Traveller Education Service estimated that there were 120 Traveller or Gypsy children in Plymouth.<sup>15</sup> And in 2006 there were twenty-one socially rented caravans in the unitary authority. Although accurate numbers are not available, in 2011, it was estimated that there were about 200 children from Gypsy or Traveller communities and twenty unauthorised encampments.<sup>16</sup>

## Economic history, deprivation and inequality

Plymouth's local economy has historically been based upon its shipping industries and, prior to the Second World War, its docks were both the primary employer and the key driver behind monetary growth. However, because of the significance of the maritime industries (and their part in shipbuilding for the Royal Navy), the city was bombed extensively in 1940-41 by the German Luftwaffe in a campaign which killed approximately 1,250 people, destroyed or damaged nearly 12,000 homes and

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destroyed entire parts of the city. Consequently, following the Second World War, the city centre was redesigned in line with an extensive programme of urban redevelopment and over 20,000 new homes were built within the next twenty years. Mindful of the heavy reliance on the docks for employment, the local council actively sought to draw in more diverse sectors and, in particular, manufacturing industries. Yet despite the relative success of this diversification the shipping industry still remained integral to the Plymouth economy. In the 1950s approximately 50,000 people were employed either directly or indirectly by the shipping industry, and Royal Navy engineering colleges were opened for new personnel.

Ship building at the Plymouth dockyard ended in 1968 and, although new maintenance and refitting bases were built,<sup>17</sup> defence sector budgets were cut substantially in the 1980s. The local economy was decimated. About a third of the city's dock workers had been made redundant by 1989 and, in 1993, around a third of these workers were still without work. Overall, about 13 per cent of the working age population of Plymouth – or nearly 20,000 people – were unemployed in that same year. And of the dock workers who had found other work, nearly half had taken up positions in industries where their skills went unused.<sup>18</sup>

Unemployment has remained persistently high within the city since this point and in 2009, 7.4 per cent of those within the city were out of work, compared to 5.4 per cent of the population nationally.<sup>19</sup> However, such statistics mask stark localised inequalities. In Devonport, for example (by the docks), the number of people unemployed rose by 56 per cent in 2009 to a level which was only slightly lower than in 1997:<sup>20</sup> a year in which the area was classed as one of the most deprived in the country. In March 2011, there were eight jobseekers for every vacancy in Devonport and this ratio rose to 16 to 1 in the neighbouring ward of Plymouth Moor View.<sup>21</sup>

Over 70,000 people – or 29 per cent of the population of Plymouth – live within wards which are classed as some of the most deprived areas in the country and over 10,000 children in the city are categorised as living in poverty. Yet, with some parts of the city particularly prosperous there are stark divides between rich and poor. Some 36 per cent of BME households have a gross annual income of less than £10,000, indicating earnings which fall far below the poverty line.<sup>22</sup> And of the five neighbourhoods within Plymouth classed as experiencing multiple deprivation in 2007 (Devonport, the city centre, Stonehouse, North Prospect and Barne Barton; all in the west and

south-west of the city),<sup>23</sup> each of these areas has concentrations of BME residents, although some are populated almost entirely by white people.

In response to persistent inequalities and stagnation within the city, in 2003 the 'Mackay Vision' was adopted as a programme of urban regeneration aiming to 'reassert Plymouth's role as a regional centre', 'deliver accelerated growth', 'challenge intra-regional disparities' and establish a 'city that is confident about itself again'.<sup>24</sup> This strategy set out to expand the retail sector, increase the education infrastructure and capitalise on the city's military and industrial history.<sup>25</sup> In doing so it promised 42,640 jobs by 2026 and, in contrast to the urban development promised after the Second World War, sought to decrease jobs in manufacturing in line with a markedly different economic aspiration. The maritime industry, in this strategy, remained central to Plymouth's economic restructuring and in 2010 the Devonport Dockyard – which is the biggest of its kind in Europe – directly employed more than 4,000 people, was responsible for a further 14,000 jobs and worked with approximately 400 businesses in the locality. The Mackay Vision further sought to expand the role of tourism, increase retail opportunities and draw in commerce.

Further restructuring, however, has been engendered as a result of the 2008/09 financial crisis. According to the chairman of the Plymouth Growth Board the economic crisis provided an opportunity to restructure the city's economy and as he stated in 2011, 'It is clear that the only way to drive the city forward in these challenging times is to take leadership and create blurring of lines between the private and public sector'.<sup>26</sup> In this context, increased commitment to privatisation has been combined with significant transformations in the nature of some of Plymouth's key industries. In the docks for example, which generate about 13 per cent of Plymouth's income,<sup>27</sup> the owners have pushed for plans to use them as a base to dismantle radioactive submarines despite opposition from campaigners who have warned that this will turn the locality, which has already suffered a serious nuclear spill in 2008 (when 280 litres of radioactive produce spilled into the docks) into a 'nuclear dumping ground'.<sup>28</sup> In turn, the already vulnerable manufacturing base has experienced declines in its output and adapted working practices and partnerships.

In practice, the restructuring of Plymouth's economy which has taken (and continues to take) place has underpinned both increasing unemployment and an increasing flexibilisation of the workforce characterised, for many people, by isolation, insecurity and vulnerability. The south-west region

already has a disproportionately high number of people (30 per cent of the work force) working in part-time employment. Whilst this could, from one perspective, be construed as a shift in working practices in preference to unemployment, 'It may, however, indicate that there is underemployment in the South West, with people not being able to work full-time despite a desire to do so'.<sup>29</sup> Further, with a high number of people employed within the public sector (42 percent as opposed to 23 per cent nationally) it is especially exposed to Con-Dem spending cuts with up to 3,900 jobs expected to be terminated.<sup>30</sup> Given that BME communities are disproportionately employed within the public sector (for example, 16 per cent of employees in the NHS in Plymouth are from BME communities),<sup>31</sup> the ongoing economic reforms may underpin a combination of increased flexible work, unemployment and consequent funnelling of employment into sectors which are being prioritised by the local authority. In particular, there is a pressure within the city to take advantage of its coastal location by invigorating the tourism industry. This sector, in conjunction with work in hotels, distribution and catering already provides some 30 per cent of the city's employment and provides a key source of work for BME communities. Nationally, 70 per cent and 58 per cent of Bangladeshi and Chinese men are employed in services such as transport and catering and, within Devon (incorporating Plymouth) service sectors further provide a significant level of employment for migrant workers.<sup>32</sup> According to the Plymouth Social Inclusion Unit, there are also a notable numbers of migrant workers employed as agricultural labourers and within manufacturing in the locality.<sup>33</sup>

### Local histories of racism and racial violence

Throughout the 1970s the National Front (NF) made advances within Plymouth through capitalising on the imperial identity and naval links of the city, and pitched battles were fought with anti-fascists. According to local activists, anti-fascist campaigning reached a high-point in 1979 when the NF leader John Tyndall was forced to abandon a meeting and decamp.<sup>34</sup> However, such was the ongoing extent of popular and institutional racism within Plymouth and the wider south-west region that, in the early 1990s, the then Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) was prompted to launch an investigation into the day-to-day lived experiences of Plymouth's BME communities.

What was found was 'a disturbing picture of racial prejudice and discrimination directed against ethnic minority residents'. As the report of the investigation stated, 'While a few organisations and

individuals are taking positive steps to promote racial equality, there is mostly widespread complacency – or worse – in the majority white community as a whole.'<sup>35</sup>

According to the CRE, the south-west region had a history of racism which, for those from BME communities who were interviewed for the report, included persistent racial violence and harassment which was largely ignored and to a certain extent silenced by official narratives of local community relations. Respondents (not all of whom were based in Plymouth) described widespread discrimination in relation to employment opportunities and progression, isolation compounded by a lack of support from local authorities, ongoing and in some cases relentless racial harassment and serious incidences of racial violence. International students reported that white students would not sit next to them on public transport. A black woman explained that shop assistants made sure not to touch her when handing over change and there were reports of assaults, abusive phone calls and threats.

Against this backdrop, the PDREC was formed in 1993 and began to support and advocate on behalf of victims of racial violence, as well as engaging in community development work and awareness raising activities. Its work, as well as a series of further reports under the rubric of 'rural racism',<sup>36</sup> indicated the extent and severity of ongoing racial violence. And in the last decade its work has had to adapt to emerging forms of racism within the city. In 2003, an investigation by a journalist at the *Observer* brought to light unrelenting racial violence against asylum seekers which frequently left people needing hospital treatment.<sup>37</sup> A year later, a school was investigated after approximately forty pupils gathered in the playground shouting racist abuse at asylum-seeking children who, eventually, had to be stewarded into a separate room for their own safety. Some children had already been forced to leave the school after consistent assaults against them<sup>38</sup> and one interviewee, working with asylum seekers, explained that such violence has continued:

Things have got worse. And it was very bad when asylum seekers first arrived here. I remember three Somali mothers who came here, they had been only been here a few weeks and they had been spat on, they had had stones thrown at their babies.

Anti-Muslim racism, too, was beginning to ferment within the city and coalesced around the circumstances surrounding Nicky Reilly: a white Muslim convert who travelled to nearby Exeter in 2008 and attempted (unsuccessfully) to blow him-

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self up as well as members of the public in a cafe. Reilly had changed his name to Mohammed Rashid Saeed-Alim five earlier. He had asperger's syndrome, an IQ of 83, a history of self-harming and lived in a particularly deprived area of the city. Some members of his family had a violent background and months before the failed bombing, his brother had been sentenced for beating a Polish man unconscious and robbing him.

Hours after Reilly's failed terrorist attack, Devon and Cornwall Police suggested that he had been 'radicalised' as a result of his vulnerability. Within a few days an Algerian man who went to the same mosque as him, and had been at a cafe in Plymouth where Reilly bought a drink before going to Exeter, was arrested. (Eventually, no charges were brought against him in relation to the attack but he was, however, charged with immigration offences.) Another man was also arrested but released without charge.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, rumours abounded within the city that particular places Reilly frequented could have been related in some way to the attack.

At his trial, which resulted in a sentence of a minimum of 18 years imprisonment, it was suggested that Reilly had been encouraged to carry out the attacks via contacts on the internet rather than people within Plymouth. Nonetheless, regardless of the authenticity of links to mosques and Islamic centres in the city, the failed bombing inflamed what was already a volatile undercurrent of anti-Muslim racism. Applications by an Islamic Education Trust, to convert a building which was formerly used by the Labour party into a community centre, were manipulated by far-right groups to suggest that the (then) government prioritised the interests of Muslims within the city. And there was a spate of attacks on the centre as well as Muslims within Plymouth.<sup>40</sup>

The war footing on which Britain has been over the last decade, with troops stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq, has given particular impetus to far-right mobilisations in Plymouth. And in 2010, the BNP held a meeting which set out a strategy to make the naval city a stronghold for the party which began with a minute's silence in remembrance of a local soldier who had recently been killed in Afghanistan. According to an electoral candidate, 'The people of Plymouth are slowly awakening to the fact that the UK is a damaged society and that radical change is essential'.<sup>41</sup> Further, the city's branch of the English Defence League (EDL) claims to have one of the largest memberships of the various local divisions. However, whilst anti-Muslim racism has provided momentum for far-right activity, the actions of far-

right groups has not solely been confined to mobilisations in this context. In 2006, for example, a member of the BNP was relieved of his duties as an assistant warden in a hall of residence catering for university students of 'many racial and religious backgrounds' after writing deeply offensive comments on a student weblog.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that the party has been relatively unsuccessful in making inroads into the city

Students within the city have been the victims of a spate of ongoing attacks which, in some cases, have been particularly violent. In 2010, for example, a 22-year-old Algerian man was racially abused, beaten unconscious and woke up in a pool of his own blood in an attack which left him with a fractured eye socket.<sup>43</sup> According to one interviewee, who works in higher education, 'there have been instances of students attacking other students but, more often, attacks from people within the wider community'. Many of the attacks that have occurred within the city have taken place in the context of the night-time economy with taxi-drivers, takeaway staff and other workers, as well as members of the public, facing a threat of abuse and violence. In one incident, a sailor was acquitted of racially aggravated common assault but found guilty of common assault after attacking an African man whilst drunk in the city centre. In the trial, the judge told the perpetrator 'Your two friends are also a disgrace to the Navy; they told the jury lies to support your story'.<sup>44</sup> In another series of incidents, members of staff at an Indian takeaway were threatened and attacked repeatedly and burning paper was posted through their letterbox. However, according to the owner of the business, the police responded inadequately and did not at first acknowledge the racial motivation.<sup>45</sup> By 2010, attacks were occurring so frequently at night that the police were prompted to establish a specialist initiative to tackle 'hate crime' against workers and revellers.<sup>46</sup> Yet the success of such initiatives may, in turn, have been undermined by policing priorities which have targeted BME businesses simultaneously as potential victims of violence and potential immigration offenders. During 2010, thirty-six separate businesses in the city and the surrounding area – many of which were takeaways and restaurants – were raided by immigration officers in a series of operations which resulted in a spate of deportations and fines totalling more than £100,000.<sup>47</sup>

If such activities emphasise a somewhat contradictory state response to the needs of BME communities, such contradictions can be seen further in other contexts. In 2008, plans to establish a permanent site for Gypsies were met with significant resistance by certain councillors with one Labour

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member walking out of an emergency meeting and declaring 'it's war'. Local residents were encouraged by another councillor to protest against the plans and to 'take the campaign forward'<sup>48</sup> and, with controversy around the permanent site ongoing, Gypsy and Traveller families had to fight individual battles with the local authority to either stay on, or move to particular areas of land. In November 2009, a member of the PDREC argued that he was concerned about institutional racism within the local authority: stating that the barriers that had been put before Gypsies and Travellers would have been absent if they were 'ordinary home owners'.<sup>49</sup>

Such hostility occurred within a context where Gypsies and Travellers faced ongoing racial abuse and harassment. Research published in 2006, based on 128 interviews in Devon (including the Plymouth unitary authority), found that half of those contributing to the research project had experienced racism of some kind but less than one in five had reported incidents to the police. A lack of trust was cited as a common reason for this.<sup>50</sup> In turn, further research in 2010 indicated that Gypsies and Travellers faced particular difficulties when accessing certain advocacy services, including racism and a lack of confidence in the outcome.<sup>51</sup>

### **Anti-racist campaigning and case work**

In a city with significantly high levels of racial violence, the role and work of specialist case work and campaigning organisations are of particular importance. However, historically, within Plymouth the overarching official response to racism has been one of institutional denial. According to the CRE report published in 1992, the fact that there was a comparatively low number and proportion of people from BME communities underpinned a view that racism was consequently not an issue.

Questionnaires about racial equality policies and strategies, sent to local authorities, voluntary organisations and district health authorities, were predominantly returned with answers which made clear that such concerns were of little or no importance. And in this climate, BME communities had developed strategies of resistance against racism which eschewed statutory and voluntary agencies. Such strategies, in some cases, included individual and collective demands for rights and justice. But they also included 'survival strategies' such as avoiding particular areas, giving up cultural and religious practices in workplaces (such as wearing saris or praying) which drew attention to themselves so as to avoid 'rocking the boat' and, in certain cases, leaving the region to live in urban areas

in other parts of the country.<sup>52</sup>

Alongside the PDREC, two further organisations have recently been set up focusing on racism. The Plymouth Anti Racism Task Force was established to follow through recommendations made in the Macpherson Report and, in 2002, a rural racism project was established by the voluntary organisation the Monitoring Group to provide an anti-racist casework service. Moreover, several voluntary sector and community organisations provided some form of infrastructure within the city to provide services to particular communities. Following the introduction of the dispersal system, a range of organisations were established providing vital advocacy services for asylum seekers including help gaining employment (for refugees), case work and immediate support. Within this framework, a law centre offered legal advice for those within the city. And at the same time, community organisations and networking groups sprung up to meet community specific needs and concerns.

However, within the space of a few years parts of this infrastructure were beginning to collapse. A combination of government spending cuts and wider measures reducing access to justice forced various key agencies to close their doors. In 2010, the local law centre – which offered free specialist support to asylum seekers, as well as taking on discrimination cases and advising residents in Plymouth on issues including education, community care and housing – had to disband and leave its clients without support. As the law centre succinctly explained in a statement: 'We are disgusted that the government thinks that this is a service that can be dispensed with. Plymouth will be all the poorer, in more ways than one, for the loss of its Law Centre.'<sup>53</sup> That same year, Refugee Action also had to close its offices in the city and other organisations have been forced to restructure their services in line with a hostile funding climate. As one interviewee explained:

Effectively, there was no legal aid provision for asylum seekers at one point in this city because of the cuts. Recently, there has been some interim cover provided but, whilst this is vital, there is not the same extent as there used to be.

The South West Rural Racism Project restructured its services and relocated its main office out of the city. And within a few years of commencing the city council withdrew from the Plymouth Anti-Racism Task Force. As such, although aspects of these projects still remain (and notwithstanding the ongoing work of the PDREC), a vacuum for specialised case work and community development

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work, alongside campaigning based on local understandings of racism, was created just when racist violence was taking new forms within the city. In part, this closure and restructuring of services reflects what one respondent described as a lack of local political will to focus resources and commitment on racial violence. As he stated:

On a local authority level, year-on-year small pots of money are sometimes available. That is hardly a commitment to racial equality. Where the local authority has to do something it throws little bits of money at it. This is not multi-agency working on a coordinated scale. It's doing the bare minimum. That's where this city is at.

But simultaneously, threats to services also reflect national policy shifts. To a certain extent, this is tied to a policy commitment which has redirected attention away from racism and towards community cohesion. Within this context, priority is given nationally to projects which engender cross-cultural contact and inter-faith activities aimed at 'bridging' communities.<sup>54</sup> However, according to a representative of the PDREC, the commitment towards community cohesion is not the only central government strategy which has deflected work away from racial violence. As he stated, the shift within the criminal justice system towards an understanding of hate crime worked simultaneously to prioritise certain forms of hate crime over others on the one hand; whilst on the other, provided scant resources to organisations combating such offences.

If you look nationally there is about £250,000 per year provided by central government to projects fighting hate crime. That money is nothing compared to hate crime in all of its forms. The interesting thing to look at is where the priorities are. The first years, out of the money available nationally for third sector organisations to bid for, the majority was targeted at groups responding to homophobic crime. In the last years, the same amount of money was available but the focus was on disability hate crime. Of course, each of those forms of hate crime is incredibly important. But it is an insult when a government says this hate crime is the flavour of the year. To say this is tokenistic is not enough. It is a national insult to victims of hate crime.

Continuing, he argued that regardless of where

and how the central government funding for projects tackling hate crime was spent, it was dwarfed, in any case, by the Labour government's instigation of the Prevent agenda:

At the same time that government was making available £250,000 nationally for hate crime, it was making £45 million available nationally over three years for the Prevent agenda. Plymouth has spent more money rolling out the Prevent agenda than it has on tackling racial violence. And the way this is prioritised is underpinned by the issues surrounding Nicky Reilly. It is focused against Muslim communities in Plymouth.

In 2011, Plymouth is a city which has experienced an exacerbation of racial violence. It is a city polarised by vast inequalities which have the potential to widen even further under the weight of substantial funding cuts and an ongoing process of economic restructuring. Further, it is a city within which the demography is undergoing substantial change. Historically, campaigning within the locality has largely focused on anti-fascism. And the 'formal' historical response to racism within Plymouth has been described, by some, as one of denial. Yet, as violence in the city intensifies, it will be through confronting this denial that the first steps are taken in forging the solidarities and collective movements necessary to combat Plymouth's new forms of racism. ■

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