

THE ghost of Christmas Past haunts Mahmud Mustafa. An Iraqi Kurd asylum-seeker who has lived in Cambridgeshire for the past three years, the 49-year-old was with friends last Boxing Day when they were set upon by a gang of young racist thugs.

He and his friends were strolling through the city centre when a car carrying a group of youths sped up, forcing them off the pavement and into a pool of water. "When my friend shouted at them, the boys got out and started beating us," said Mustafa. "One friend was badly hurt [and] has since left Peterborough. Some locals here are very angry with us..."

Mustafa's bloody lesson in local community relations was an early indication of the rising tensions and simmering racial feuds which climaxed with a series of pitched street battles during the summer. Rival gangs fought with sticks and knives, windows were smashed and houses and cars set alight before police restored order. On one side were groups of young, male and predominantly Kurdish asylum-seekers. What made the wider world sit up and take notice was their antagonists weren't the stereotypical white yobbs of the far-right fringes. They were young Asians.

The city's May riots were initially dismissed as a localised problem, but Peterborough's experience of a violent antagonism between rival ethnic minority communities is increasingly finding echoes

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# The new model racists

## Asylum-seekers arriving in Britain are being met with violence and hostility, not from far-right white groups but from ethnic minority communities, reports BURHAN WAZIR

oes in towns and cities across England. The new racial tensions pit Pakistan against Kurd, or West Indian against African, while the white majority focuses on the cleaning of its own Augean stable. In Woolwich and Plumstead, south-east London, where young West Indians have been at war with their Somali neighbours, a black youth speaks of the African newcomers as being "a different kind of black, like dirt", and a West Indian grandmother wishes the Somalis would "go back where they came from".

In the West Midlands, successful Asian businessmen casually dismiss local blacks as lazy and drug-riddled. And in Peterborough, designated as a cluster area for the dispersal of asylum-seekers, the greatest resentment of the newcomers - is to be found among the city's 10,000-strong Kashmiri population.

Across England, ethnic minority communities formed at the tail end of the British Empire - West Indians, Pakistanis and Indians - seem to have discarded the immigrant solidarity which once united them against white oppression. To an extent, the long-term victims of racism have become the new model racists.

The growth of inter-ethnic hostility

has outraged veteran race campaigners, including the broadcaster and writer Darius Howe. He argues ethnic minority groups who first arrived in Britain in the 1950s have forgotten the persecution they initially suffered. "They have become too middle class," he says. "Remember that West Indians and Asians were loathed when they first arrived here. How can they then dish out the same treatment to newcomers? ... Integration has that effect on some people."

Peterborough is a curious mix of old and new. An ancient city with a 12th century cathedral designated a new town in 1968, its population doubled from 75,000 to 1,50,000 in the following 20 years. It has low unemployment and the region's highest per-capita GDP, but also features pockets of severe deprivation. Drugs are a major problem and violent crime has doubled since 2000.

The first Asians, Kashmiris, who came to the city in the 1960s, were hard

working and put down roots to form a cohesive and settled community. In recent years, they have found themselves living alongside fellow Muslims, asylum-seekers and migrant workers from Iraq and Afghanistan with whom they have little in common.

The new arrivals are viewed with suspicion and blamed for severe overcrowding problems, rising crime rates and the stretching of public services to breaking point. They seek the acceptance which the Kashmiri community earned over decades. Instead, they feel rejected by the very people they believe should most appreciate their sense of isolation.

Humayun Ansari is the author of *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain 1800*, a recently published analysis of Muslim immigration to Britain. He believes intercommunal ethnic violence is far more widespread in Britain than was previously thought. "There is a general trend towards older, more established Asian

communities in Britain taking on the fears of the host national," he said.

The Kashmiri enclave around Peterborough's Gladstone Road is a street of Victorian semis littered with the detritus of an impoverished underclass. Mohammed Choudhry, 45, director of the Gladstone Community Association, a local support group, delivers a withering denunciation of his Kurdish neighbours. "There are some serious cultural differences," he says. "The newcomers here 50 years ago were very hard working. They assimilated into the community and have made some notable achievements... The Kurds, for the most part, are single young men. They are aggressive and at times arrogant. They refuse to move from street corners; they are disrespectful to our women. This has led to tensions. The newcomers should be restricted to certain areas."

The anti-Kurd sentiments of Peterborough's Pakistani population are partly fuelled by a perception that the newcomers are moving solely into areas of the city which were historically Kashmiri.

Imam Abdul Rashid Nomani, of the Islamic Centre on Gladstone Road, said initially that the summer's problems had all been resolved and that many

Kurds worshipped at his mosque. Later however, he complained that some houses in "Kashmir" streets were now being occupied by up to 10 Kurds. "They want to be near us so that they can get access to the *halal* food stores - but that sometimes leads to differences. They hold more liberal values."

Peterborough's Kurds have the sympathy of Yassin Ismail, 38, director of the Somali Refugee Action Group in Woolwich, which is home to thousands of Somalis who have fled their homeland since the country's civil war.

Some have found themselves in open confrontation with members of the established West Indian community who, like the Kashmiris of Peterborough, have found it tempting to blame all their ills on "parasitic" refugees.

"The Somalis are the newcomers," said Ismail. "They tend to face persecution and alienation. Even now, there exist a number of stereotypes about us: that we are people without principles and live like warring tribes."

Many outbreaks of violence are caused by fundamental misunderstandings, he said. "When people from other cultures see a group of Somali men walking down the street, they are scared. They never stop to think: why are the men walking in a big group? As a newcomer to this country, doesn't it make sense that we would find comfort in numbers?"

— *The Times, London.*

# Laughter cure for racism divides South Africans

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Guardian News Service  
Johannesburg, June 20

SOUTH AFRICA'S flagship cultural institution, the Apartheid Museum, has sparked a row over taste and prejudice by commissioning a TV advertising campaign based on racist jokes. Two networks have refused to broadcast the adverts, claiming they are too offensive, but the museum argues the country needed to confront the reality of enduring racism.

Commentators were divided over whether the campaign would help or hinder reconciliation in its raw depiction of attitudes which belie the rhetoric of a nation united in harmony. In one ad, a white man, looking into the camera, asks: "How do you stop a black man from drowning?" He answers: "You take your foot off his head."

Another features a black man with a different joke: "You've got two Afrikaners; one is fat and the other is thin. If they both jump off a cliff, who will die first?" The answer: "Who cares?" In the third, an Indian grins and asks: "What's the difference between a Jew and a snake? One is a cold-blooded creature of Satan and the other is a snake."

After each punchline a tag line runs across the screen saying, "if you thought that was funny, we'll show you why it was not", followed by the museum's

logo. The state broadcaster, SABC, has yet to decide whether to air the adverts but two private networks, eTV and MNet, have banned them on grounds of offensiveness and bad taste.

Museum director Christopher Till said the bans harked back to apartheid-era censorship and contradicted the spirit of free speech enshrined in the constitution. The adverts reflected reality, however unpalatable.

The advertising standards authority has a code on taste and decency but it cannot pass judgment on the adverts unless they are broadcast. Louis Gavin, the head of the Johannesburg-based agency which made them, TBWA/Gavin/Reddy, hoped they would soon be broadcast for the first time. He acknowledged the jokes were shocking and confrontational, but said they reflected the type of humor found at South African barbecues. "You can't be nice, well-mannered and sweet about a subject like this. I think it's appropriate that the advertising has a degree of ugliness," he said.

But Bronwyn Harris of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation said the campaign could backfire by reinforcing rather than challenging racism. "By provoking laughter in a way, it's defeating the point," she said. "People who hold those views are not necessarily going to get into their cars and drive to the museum."

21 JUN 2001

# Behave yourself in UK, Blunkett warns Le Pen

LONDON, April 23.  
— Police will take action against French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen if he causes a public disturbance during a visit to Britain this weekend, Britain's top law enforcement official said today.

Le Pen, who leads the anti-immigrant National Front party and has been repeatedly convicted of racism or anti-Semitism, is due to attend events organised by the far-right British

National Party in central England and Manchester in the north. His office said he would hold a news conference on Sunday afternoon.

British home secretary Mr David Blunkett said: "If he (Le Pen) incites, if he fosters hate, if he causes a disturbance or public disorder, then the police will take appropriate action." He added: "It is ironic that a right-wing fascist party should invite a foreigner to join them, but the contradictions of the BNP are well known."

A French court earlier this month convicted Le Pen, 75, of "inciting racial hatred" for disparaging remarks against Muslims made in a newspaper interview. He has been convicted of racism or anti-Semitism at least six times. He blames immigrants, especially from North Africa, for high unemployment, and wants to deport all illegal immigrants and tighten border controls.

Le Pen stunned many in France by reaching the runoff stage in the 2002 French presidential elections, shutting out the main left-wing candidate. President Jacques Chirac was re-elected thanks to a consensus vote to prevent Le Pen from winning. — AP



Jean-Marie Le Pen faces arrest if he causes a disturbance or public disorder in Britain

# Row over BBC host's 'racist' remarks

HD-19  
M/1  
By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, JAN. 11.** Just desserts for a provocative racist rant, or a case of political correctness gone too far?

The issue has divided the political and media pundits here after the BBC suspended a prominent talk-show host for writing a newspaper article in which he called Arabs "suicide bombers", "limb-amputators" and "women repressors". It took the decision following protests by Muslim groups and a complaint to the police by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) accusing the TV host and former Labour MP, Robert Kilroy-Silk, of inciting racial hatred.

The CRE Chairman, Trevor Phillips, said he had asked to the police to consider whether Mr. Kilroy-Silk's article in *The Sunday Express*, "We owe Arabs nothing," constituted an offence under the Public Order Act and amounted to racial incitement. "Given the extreme and violent terms in which Mr. Kilroy-Silk has expressed himself, there is a danger that this might incite some individuals to act against someone who they think is an Arab." The BBC, which has taken Mr. Kilroy-Silk's popular daytime show, 'Kilroy', off the air, said it 'strongly' dissociated itself from his views and had decided to suspend him pending investigations. But critics accused it of giving in to "political correctness" and applying

"double standards". They pointed out that the Oxford academic and poet, Tom Paulin, continued to appear on the BBC despite his controversial remarks in which he described Israelis living in Palestinian-occupied areas as 'Nazis'.

"I am not defending anything Mr. Kilroy-Silk has said, but I was greatly upset by what Mr. Paulin said, and I think the rules should apply to people equally," a Labour MP, Andrew Dismore, said.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk got support from an unexpected quarter when a spokesman of the Arab Press Freedom Watch, Ibrahim Nawar, attacked the BBC and called for his reinstatement. "I fully support... and salute him as an advocate of freedom of expression," he said.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk apologised for his anti-Arab remarks but also defended his right to free speech and said he was 'disappointed' by the BBC's decision. He also denied that he was 'racist' and claimed that he had done "more for race relations than the Commission for Racial Equality, empowering black people and presenting them in a positive light" on his programme.

Of late, ethnic groups have become extremely sensitive to any criticism and in recent months there have been a number of controversies in which Jews have complained of "growing anti-semitism" and Muslims have protested that they are being unfairly 'targeted'.

THE HINDU 12 JAN 2004