



Coalition for Race Equality statement on the Government's new Commission on Racial Inequalities

CORE is concerned about the announcement by the Government of a new “cross-governmental commission” to look into racial inequalities. CORE believes that such a commission can only secure the support of BAME communities and community organisations if there is transparency and accountability about how it is set up, who is involved in it and whether there is a real commitment to carrying out any recommendations that arise from it in a timely fashion. We are concerned about the commission’s terms of reference - it must concentrate on the significant issues of structural racism and systemic discrimination that do so much to damage the lives of BAME communities in Britain. The Chair and commissioners of any inquiry must be representative and secure widespread support from BAME communities and involve people who are prepared to analyse and challenge systemic racism. The Prime Minister’s remarks that he wishes to change the narrative on race “and stop the sense of victimisation and discrimination” do not bode well for a thoroughgoing investigation into racism in health, education, criminal justice and other areas of public policy where racial disproportionality and structural discrimination are so openly and clearly in evidence.

There have been numerous reviews, commissions and reports in the last few years that have already identified recommendations that the government has repeatedly failed to carry out. We need to be reassured that the outcomes of this new commission will be enacted especially where they may involve conclusions that may be controversial. We would suggest that carrying out the recommendations of the Lammy and Angiolini Reviews, the McGregor Smith and other reports and responding to the clear evidence set out by the Race Disparity Unit would be a more effective use of scarce resources rather than establishing yet another commission.

There has been a long history of public inquiries and commissions being used not to change policies and discriminatory practices but rather to stop or slow down any campaigns for real and systemic change. We need to be convinced that this new enquiry will be about identifying and changing the many issues of race disparity that we already know exist rather than kicking these vital issues even further into the long grass. If the commission is intended merely as a distraction from the government’s lack of action over these issues it will only increase the levels of anger and cynicism that are already so widespread. Now is the time for urgent action not a long drawn out inquiry. We are also concerned that the Prime Minister spokesman has declared that its scope will also cover issues beyond race: “It will look at wider inequalities, including issues faced by working-class white boys in schools, for example.” We believe that this dilution of attention away from racial inequality will also result in findings that avoid the appalling evidence of structural racism that must be dealt with as a matter of urgency.