



rota
Race on the Agenda

2026

OUR STRATEGY

Nothing about us, without us.

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FOREWORD

FROM OUR CHAIR, ALI AHMED

At Race on the Agenda (ROTA), we begin with a simple but powerful principle: **nothing about us, without us**. This strategy represents not only our ambition as an organisation, but our collective commitment to ensuring that Black and Global Majority communities are at the centre of shaping the future we want to see. As Chair, I am incredibly proud of the direction set out in this strategy. It is bold, it is grounded in lived experience, and it is driven by a clear belief that systemic change is both necessary and possible.

Our vision - to help create a just and equitable UK by working alongside communities to eliminate systemic racial injustices - is not abstract. It is rooted in the everyday realities faced by us and the communities we serve, this strategy is shaped by their voices, knowledge and leadership.

This strategy reflects a deep understanding that change must happen at multiple levels. Through our focus on responding to immediate challenges, reimagining systems for the future, and resolving inequalities through tangible impact, we are setting out a path that is both practical and transformational. It is a strategy that balances urgency with long-term ambition, and advocacy with action.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our incredibly talented team - whose passion, expertise and dedication continue to drive ROTA forward. Their commitment to excellence, collaboration and justice underpins everything in this document. I am equally grateful to our partners, funders and stakeholders who stand with us in solidarity, helping to build the infrastructure and collective power required for lasting change.

Above all, I want to recognise and thank our members. **You are the heart of ROTA**. Your insight, your lived experience, and your unwavering commitment to justice are what make this work meaningful. This strategy is yours - it reflects your voices, your priorities, and your aspirations.

Looking ahead, I am particularly hopeful about the role of young people in shaping this future. ROTA has made a clear commitment to centre youth engagement and ensure that the next generation is not only heard but empowered to lead. Their energy, creativity and vision are essential to building a society that is truly just and inclusive.

This is a moment of possibility. While the challenges we face are significant, so too is our collective power to address them. Together, with our communities, our members, and our partners, we will continue to push for change - transforming systems, reshaping narratives, and creating opportunities for future generations.

I look forward to the journey ahead with optimism and determination.



INTRODUCTION

FROM OUR CEO, MATT JOHNSON

We are in unprecedented times which requires unprecedented strategic action. It is a time where far-right ideology is increasingly legitimised through the spread of mis(dis)information. At the same time, not only do inequalities persist but in many areas, they have been worsening. National declines in growth and productivity alongside the advent of austerity have had disproportionate impacts on Black and Global Majority Communities (BGM). This has led to increased homelessness, poor mental health and the exacerbation of a range of health inequalities. Turning the tide, will not come about through one organisation or institution. Rather it will require a collective movement, that is built on the foundations of solidarity.

Race on the Agenda was founded on the principle of nothing about us, without us. The central word here is 'us', and we believe that we can only win if we work together. This strategy outlines our ambition to do more than just observe and analyse the problems, (however important that can be at times). We also want to work towards resolving rather than being purely in a place of critique. Quite simply, we want to mainstream the notion that radical change is indeed possible and there is hope.

We seek to do this in three ways that each complement each other (discussed further later). These are namely: **Respond, Reimagine and Resolve**. These three R's allow us to **respond** towards the pressing emergencies of today. These include the racialised housing crisis, the inequalities in health provision, the poor treatment of BGM employees across a range of sectors and crisis of child poverty. These are emergencies that all require immediate attention in the short-term. However, we also know that systems and institutions are path-dependent with embedded cultures, logic and histories. Therefore, these systems need to be **reimagined** altogether. This is a longer-term aspect of our strategy and requires addressing the root causes of the systemic inequalities that we too often see play out across our society.

Finally, the **resolve** aspect of the work is about tracking distance travelled. We need to know how far we have come to give us hope on the journey ahead. To see change, we need to document, monitor and most importantly celebrate the wins. Hope is a powerful currency in addressing apathy. I look forward to working with our ROTA team, board and our wider stakeholders to implement this vision and work towards furthering racial justice in Britain.



ABOUT RACE ON THE AGENDA

Who we are

Race on the Agenda (ROTA) is one of Britain's leading anti-racist change drivers. Working with communities impacted by systemic racism, ROTA helps create the policies and practices to tackle inequality.

Originally set up in 1984, ROTA aims to support and amplify the work of anti-racist organisations across the country as they work to bring equality to their communities. ROTA focuses on issues impacting on the Black and Global Majority communities.

Our five guiding principles

POWER

We seek to amplify the existing power found within the communities and stakeholders that we work with.

INTERSECTIONALITY

We recognise that identities are complex, multiple and socially constructed. Therefore, we embrace and engage with this complexity across our work, rather than oversimplifying lived experiences.

SOLIDARITY

We see solidarity as the engine of systemic change and have an intentional approach to collective change.

INFRASTRUCTURE

We believe in value for the many and in supporting the development of existing and new infrastructure for system change.

JUSTICE

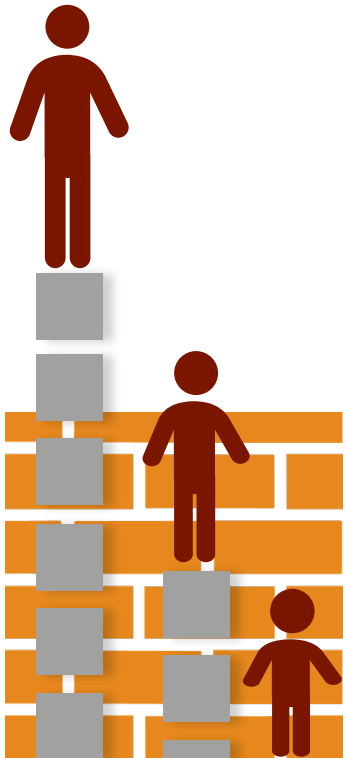
We are not striving for equality or equity but justice. That is, we wish to address the root causes of inequity and remove systemic barriers altogether.



FROM REALITY TO JUSTICE

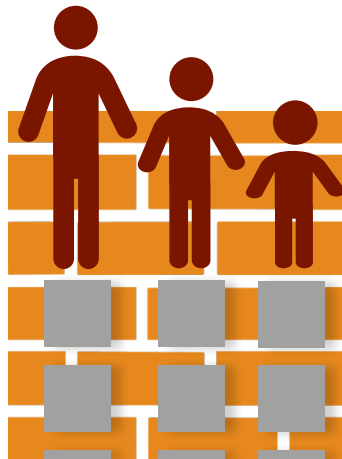
REALITY

One gets **more than** is needed while the other gets **less than** needed. Thus, a huge disparity is created.



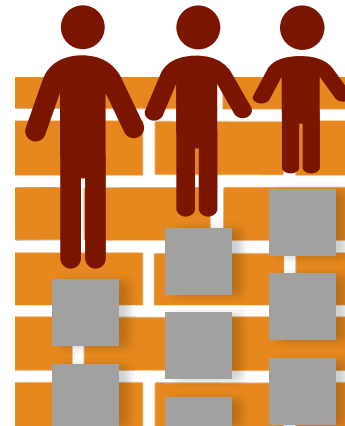
EQUALITY

The assumption that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is considered to be equal treatment.



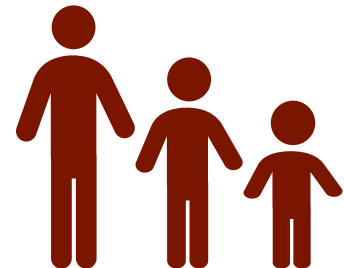
EQUITY

Everyone gets the support they need, which produces equity.



JUSTICE

All have visibility without supports or accommodations because **the cause(s) of the inequity has been addressed**. The systemic barrier has been removed.



OUR STRATEGY

Our vision

We aim to create a just and equitable UK, working with communities to eliminate systemic racial injustices.

Our mission

ROTA's role is to drive for structural change by using evidence and research, while working collaboratively with impacted communities and the organisations that support them.

We believe communities impacted by racism, and the organisations which serve them, already know how best we can create anti-racist policies and practices. ROTA works with these groups and uses its lobbying and communications expertise to enable communities to exercise their power, empowering them to wield their influence and drive change.

We abide by the principal of 'nothing about us without us'



OUR APPROACH

THE 3 R'S

Respond

While we are focused on longer-term institutional and systemic change, it is also important to support BGM communities while they navigate the system as it currently is. For example, the market forces driving the housing crisis vs supporting people to advocate for their rights for a house without mould.

This is the respond aspect of the strategy which focuses on engaging with the urgent issues at hand, such as school exclusions, overpolicing, healthcare access disparities and more. This work also involves responding to immediate legislative reforms such as the Renters Rights Bill, Race and Disability Bill, Race Equality Act and other forms of current legislative priorities. It also means providing the capacity and infrastructure for communities to hold institutions to account on the current systemic injustices that they face today.

Reimagine

Our reimagine work is aimed at influencing, undoing and redesigning the system as it should be. This involves:

- Centring BGM voices, ideas and imaginations within policy-making processes.
- Undoing research as it currently is and providing a decolonial lens.
- Reimagining housing, education, employment etc with new, bold and workable policy ideas.
- Holding to account but also building coalitions to develop lasting transformational change.
- Addressing apathy and replacing with hope and possibility.
- Ensuring research is intricately linked to impact rather than standalone reports (beginning with the end in mind).
- Narrative and discourse change.
- Influencing the resourcing gap for our BGM communities and the initiatives that they already have.

Resolve

The resolve aspect of our strategy can also be conceived as the visible impact piece. Therefore, beyond reimagination this is about realisation and seeing tangible change and results. This involves:

- Learning, monitoring and communicating 'distance travelled' to create hope.
- Being direct, targeted and specific about the policy, community and narrative change that we want to see.
- Being solutions-focused as well as accountability focused.
- Being determined on winning victories with and outside the racial justice sector.
- Celebration.

Practically this means identifying where the narratives have shifted, where policy has changed, and where our influenced has been felt both within and outside the racial justice sector.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Definition

Our theory of change is defined as follows:

1. We need to work with and support communities to exercise their existing power.
2. We support organisations through convening, collaborating, developing evidence, capacity building, lobbying, and changing narratives (communications).
3. By supporting communities in the above way, they will be able to wield their influence to drive change.

Hence, our theory of change is based on the belief that change happens from the bottom-up, rather than automatically from the top-down. It recognises the role of agency, power and dignity of Black and Global Majority (BGM) communities.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The problem

Too often there has been a deep racial injustice in whose knowledge is valued, whose voice is heard and whose influence is felt in policy processes and in their associated narratives. There is a need to readdress this imbalance and connect the authentic lives narratives of racialised groups closer to systems change.

Inputs, activities and outputs



NETWORKING BUILDING

- Coalescing power at the community-level.
- Building and supporting existing regional networks.
- Increasing connectivity of these networks.
- Creating platforms address siloisation.



RESEARCH AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

- Develop relevant insights with accessible and digestible recommendations.
- Ensure all research is linked to developing platforms of change and impact.
- Utilise research for narrative change.
- Decolonise research.



TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- Deliver training where there have been historical underrepresentations, particularly in policy and research.
- Foster and grow our peer research training across Britain. For individuals and organisations.



Outcomes, impact and vision



EQUITABLE KNOWLEDGE AND INFLUENCE

- Reshape existing hierarchies so the BGM groups have more influence.
- Impact media and societal narratives which depict BGM communities from an overly deficit approach.



SYSTEMS WITH RACIAL JUSTICE

- Impact and radically change existing systems so that they have racial justice embedded throughout.
- Support the development of new systems of racial justice which may not currently exist.

OUR THEMATIC AREAS

Our seven thematic areas of housing, education, criminal justice, economic inequality, health, environment and climate and digital and technology are all fundamental to our work at ROTA.

We believe however that these are not single issue. As Audre Lorde stated 'There is no such thing as a single issue'. In reality all of these issues interact and intersect in complex ways. Therefore these strategic areas should not be seen as standalone pillars but rather as interacting themes.

Our aim on these interacting themes is simple: To ensure that race is on the agenda of all of them and that racial justice is realised.



OUR MEMBERSHIPS PARTNERSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENT

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A key aspect of our work is focused on the development of regional networks and building local collaborations in our key strategic areas. This involves the following:

- Fostering local partnerships, based on principles of added value, mutual understanding and solidarity.
- Monitoring the decentralisation agenda and providing an analytical racial lens on localised policy initiatives.
- Hosting joint events and sessions.
- Developing collaborative bids in partnerships with stakeholders.
- Building a team that has regional coverage.
- Knowledge sharing across regions and places.

NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

We work regionally through our various partnerships but recognise the need to influence national structures through:

- Engaging with parliamentary and policy processes at the national level.
- Joining the regional with the national for a collective voice and impact.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

We believe in disrupting knowledge hierarchies and that established approaches are too often dominated from a lens that is too narrow. Given our interconnected world, we believe in widening this lens by allowing our work, methods and approaches to be informed by voices beyond the Western world.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Britain's BGM communities are largely and relatively young. However too often the voices of young people are not ignored. We aim to rebalance this by not only making our more accessible for young people, but by centring youth in key aspects of our work.

PARTNERSHIPS, CONVENING AND ENGAGEMENT

We seek to grow our strategic partnerships to increase access to justice, change discourse and realise change. We will make a clear distinction between members and partners, with the former being for individuals and the latter for organisations. We seek to have a unique role in convening partners across different spaces, levels and lived experiences. We will also work collaboratively with others in the racial justice space and other sectors to advance our aims and to scale up impact.



HOW THIS ALL FITS TOGETHER

FOCUS AREAS



Housing



Education



Criminal Justice



Economic Participation



Health



Environment and Climate



Digital and Technology



OUTCOMES

Policymakers

Policy is better shaped by the voices of BGM communities.

Funders

The racial justice funding gap is eliminated.

Communities

BGM communities have better supportive and enabling infrastructure.



IMPACT

Racialised economic inequality is significantly reduced.

Drivers of wealth building for BGM groups is strengthened.

Narratives are changed with policy and legislation being more equitable.

Racialised health (incl. mental health) inequalities narrowed.



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