



Max Colson

Some names: Mrs Martin, Mr Hamada, Mr Kunwe, Miss Nyakó, Mr Wrigley, Miss Adams, Mr Little, Miss Rennell, Mrs Prakash.

They are names, I suspect, that mean nothing to you. Nothing to you – but they mean everything, absolutely everything, to me. To me, a little boy in Colonial West Africa; a bigger boy in newly independent Ghana in West Africa; a big boy, a big boy on a council estate in a new town Hemel Hempstead; a big boy who had been taken by his mother with his sister, at gunpoint, from Ghana and ended up a refugee on that council estate.

Those names meant everything to me. They were my teachers. And each every one of you in this room – everyone without exception – will have names just like that, that mean everything to you.

We've all got them, everyone, it's the one thing that brings us all together. Teachers matter. Teachers matter.

You know there's something else that matters too and I was thinking about it as I listened to the Secretary of State and what she had to say about her school and as I listened to that first song – *may love be all around and shine in me and you, may love be all around and shine in me and you*.

There was a man who had started as an Anglican priest and ended up as a Catholic saint and his name was John Henry Newman and I carry a quote from his writings in my mobile phone – “All that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is beneficent, be it great or small, be it perfect or fragmentary, natural as well as supernatural, moral as well as material, comes from God.”

All that is that is true. All that is good. All that is beautiful. Faith schools matter. Faith schools matter. Because it in faith schools tat you can talk freely of God and of love. Faith schools matter.

There's something else that matters too and it's right that we should talk about it today because today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Today is a day we need talk about something that is ugly, we need talk about something that is hurtful, we need talk about something that can end up killing people, millions and millions of people.

That's what racism when it's not checked, that's what racism when it's ignored, that's what racism does at the end.

Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We remember the day when brave liberating soldiers went into Auschwitz and found what racism does in the end – killing people, millions and millions of people, killed for no other reason than that they were different. A different race, a different colour, a different ethnicity, a different politics, a different sexuality.

That's what hatred and bigotry always does in the end.

Today is International Holocaust Day and we need to remember that and we need to remember it not just as a piece of history but as part and parcel of our present – what's happening now. There is racism now. There is racism now in our world, in our country, in our schools, in our

communities.

Jewish people are attacked now on the way to school; on the way to shul. They are attacked in universities.

That's happening now.

Black people, people of colour, now, are subject to hatred and hateful remarks; now are less likely to do well at school now - not because of any fault of their own but because of racism and racial disadvantage. That's happening now. [They] are more likely to be excluded from schools - now. Not through any fault of their own but because of racism and racial disadvantage.

That's happening now and we have to do something about it. We have to do something about it. We have to come together to do something about it, we have to form partnerships to do something about it - partnerships at every level within schools and within communities; within and between peoples - this is a global issue, inclusive schools are part and parcel of our global Sustainable Development Goals which we're all committed to.

We have to do something about it. And we have also on this International Day of Holocaust Remembrance to understand the complexity of the issue that we've got to do something about, the forms it takes, the different forms, the need to be prepared to speak truth to each other and unto power.

Archbishop Stephen, you asked me and the Commission which I am privileged to lead, you and the Archbishop of Canterbury, you asked us to lead a Commission on Racial Justice, to walk with the Church and church institutions on the journey we have to walk together on to overcome racial injustice, discrimination and hatred.

And as part and parcel of what we do we meet groups of people who come and talk to us about what they're experiencing and our last Commission meeting but one, just before Christmas a group of people came to see us and I think it would be true to say, Archbishop, that we were profoundly shocked by what we heard.

And on International Holocaust Remembrance Day we should perhaps think about those people because they lost more people in the holocaust than any other individual group other than the Jews. And do you know they are? They are the Gypsies and the Travellers and the Romas. They lost hundreds of thousands of people.

And when we heard them what was so deeply troubling was that we heard that today as we speak Gypsies, Roma and Irish Travelling people are our country's – this country's – least liked group, 44.6 per cent of people actually hold negative views against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma people. The next least liked group are Muslims and 18.7 per cent of people hold negative views against them. And it doesn't end there.

And this is why it is so important that we come together to address this issue because the experience of education of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma people is that they are the least likely to enter higher education. They are the most underachieving of all groups of children within school, at every age within the school. They have some of the lowest rates of attendance and the highest rates of permanent exclusion. You are even more likely to be excluded as a member of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma community from school than you are if you are Black.

Think about it, it's that bad for the Gypsy, Travellers and Romas. And it's bad for all people of colour. And, Archbishop, what they told us too was that in all too many parts of the country the Church was not part of the solution, it was part of the problem.

We all have a responsibility to do something about that, we all have a responsibility to understand the complexities of racism and bigotry and the price of the absence of love - love not simply as some soft sentiment but love as the strategy that tells us we've got to do something about it. And we've got to create partnerships in our schools in our communities that address this issue.

And the good news is that it can be done; that there are things we can do. We can look at our curriculum and ask how do we teach history, how do we teach the holocaust – do we teach the holocaust?

And the Government has appointed an adviser who has come up with a very powerful report, a colleague of ours, Archbishop, in the House of Lords, actually showing how we can teach the holocaust in a way that helps understand it and helps us combat racism in our communities now. And we know, we know, that partnerships can be created within communities which help us do this together – between the voluntary sector, between the faith groups, with civic leadership, within schools. It can be done.

We know also, don't we, that how we teach history is only a part of the wider debate and discussion that has to occur around the curriculum, because we know, and the Prime Minister focussed on that just a few weeks ago, that we do need to teach maths and the STEM subjects better, we know that, the Prime Minister told us that.

Just last year Secretary of State's predecessor also told us that we didn't have enough people of colour, Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority people who were science, STEM [and] maths teachers.

Lewis Hamilton also in a very powerful intervention showed how in his industry it was necessary to have – if you are going to diversify racing – you needed more people coming through the system who were engineers, who were scientists, who did have maths qualifications and who had been taught by people who look like them, that it mattered.

We know through all the research and development that has been done in research and development in higher education that in order to diversify the background of teachers in terms of their ethnicity that you need to have in schools, within dioceses, policies that ensure that

governors and governing bodies truly represent whole communities and are diverse and that more people from a broader range of society - by reference not just to race but to class, socioeconomic background – that you have diverse groups of people becoming school governors so schools become reflective of the communities that they serve, that they become the great community resource that they can and are.

But it requires policy, it requires strategy and it requires resources. We know too that beyond history, beyond the STEM subjects, in English literature they did a survey of pupils and what they thought of what they were being taught and who they were being taught and whose work they were studying in English Literature and they found that the overwhelming majority of students wanted to have a more diverse group of authors, of playwrights studied, that's what the research showed.

And the sad thing is today, Secretary of State, and the All Party Group on Africa produced a report which was launched in your department by your predecessor who is now Foreign Secretary. He was good enough to launch the report. What we know is that in terms of the teaching of English Literature that because of some quirk in the system unless you are a English UK citizen you can't be examined, you can be taught but you can't be examined, in the English Literature curriculum. So you have the bizarre situation in which John Steinbeck, in which Chinua Achebe, the great Nigerian author who writes in the English language, who wrote *Things Fall Apart*, can be taught but can't be examined.

It simply doesn't make sense, it has got to change because the English language is our great gift to the world. We want to see children brought up so that they can appreciate the whole breadth of culture that will enable them to thrive and to flourish in the world.

'Rejoice in your youth,' that's what comes out from Ecclesiastes. That was my school motto in Hemel Hempstead, rejoice in thy youth.

Teachers matter. Faith schools matter. Fighting hatred, bigotry and racism matters.

So I want to big up the work that is being done in the Church of England on all those things. I want to big up the Leaders Like Us programme. Let's big them up [applause]. That's about identifying the next generation.

And I want to end on this note and it's something that you are all going to have to help me do. I was brought up in the Akan tradition. And when we want to celebrate something or when we want to prepare ourselves for the challenges that are to come we have a shout out that is both celebratory, inspirational but also a sign of our determination to do something to make a difference. And the shout out is this 'AyeeKo Yaaee, AyeeKo Yaaee, AyeeKo Yaaee' which means essentially let's just get up there and go for it. And so that's what I'm going to ask you to do. And we do it three times ...and then we get out there and we go for it. We go for schools that welcome everybody, we go for a world in which racism is defeated and that we celebrate one another in all the richness of our diversity, in all God's love.

So 'AyeeKo Yaaee, AyeeKo Yaaee, AyeeKo Yaaee' [conference joins in]

God bless you!

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