



CIVIL SOCIETY & RACE EQUALITY

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“The voluntary sector is becoming more diverse and equal”



1 (Totally agree)

5 (Totally disagree)

WHO ARE BRAP?

- charity transforming the way we think and do equality
- interested in helping individuals and organisations with issues of inequality and social justice
- established since 1999
- have four streams of work: research, training and development, organisational change, grassroots projects

AIMS OF THE WORK

- Civil Society Futures Inquiry – 2 year inquiry on how we can create a more sustainable future for civil society in England
- The inquiry has identified the difficulties much of civil society has in talking about and acting on ‘race’ and racism
- brap were asked to explore three lines of inquiry further:
 - Is civil society talking about ‘race’ and race inequality? If not, why not?
 - How is race equality being championed and progressed within civil society?
 - Where are the barriers and where are the opportunities for the future?

WHAT WE DID

- August-October 2018
- A short desk-based review of existing literature on the topic
- 15 interviews with race equality or BME-focused organisations or movements as well as other 'mainstream' voluntary sector organisations
- Five discussion events in London, Birmingham and York organised with partners (HEAR, ACEVO, Shilpa Shah, North East Race Equality Forum)

WHAT WE FOUND: WHY IS CIVIL SOCIETY NOT TALKING ABOUT RACE?

- A lack of focus on race equality within public policy
- Decline in the level of overtly 'political' work on race equality as BME voluntary sector becomes more professionalised
- Belief that we now live in a 'post-racial' society and the framing of topics in the media like 'immigration' or 'Islamophobia' as distinct from 'race' equality.
- More comfort discussing workforce 'diversity' and less comfort discussing patterns of discrimination and racism
- Lack of confidence to talk about 'race' if you are from a White British background for fear of 'getting it wrong'

WHAT WE FOUND: WAYS FORWARD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Vision and Impact:

- To make progress on race equality we need to speak clearly about what we are trying to achieve. The bar is sometimes set too low.
- There are many important activities within this field in civil society (e.g. services for BME communities). Yet not all activities are explicitly about progressing race equality.
- Civil society needs more clarity about impact on this agenda.
- A shared vision for race equality in civil society needs to include, but go beyond workforce diversity to include concrete outcomes associated with addressing structural causes of inequality.
- To achieve this, funders, organisations and movements within civil society may benefit from support to think through the *impact* of their activities

WHAT WE FOUND: WAYS FORWARD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

2. Power and Representation:

- We need to rethink how we judge success in ‘representing’ ethnic minority voices within civil society. It is about more than ‘numbers’ and ensuring the profile fits. Just because a civil society becomes more ethnically diverse, it doesn’t make it a nicer, fairer, more authentic place to work. Efforts to engage BME people within civil society can be tokenistic.
- We need to measure whether BME people feel they have power.
- We need to improve how civil society engages with those that experience race inequality. This should include recognizing how some views have less credibility or are not heard or understood.
- People should be supported to reflect upon and use their personal power to make a positive impact on race equality, but also enable others to step in and access power and resources too.

WHAT WE FOUND: WAYS FORWARD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

3. Accountability and Responsibility:

- There is a belief that BME organisations are best-placed to serve and work with their communities. Whilst there may be truth in this, this type-casting often keeps them under-valued, it keeps them poorer, it drives them out of business.
- Uncomfortably, it absolves the larger, richer parts of civil society and funders from any responsibility for this work.
- More shared accountability for this work would involve larger charities taking an active role in progressing this agenda.
- It would also involve funders being clearer and more ambitious about the impact on race equality they expect (of themselves and others).
- An assumption that White British people or mainstream charities can't 'do race' needs to be worked upon if accountability is to be shared.

WHAT WE FOUND: WAYS FORWARD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

4. Connection and 'identity politics':

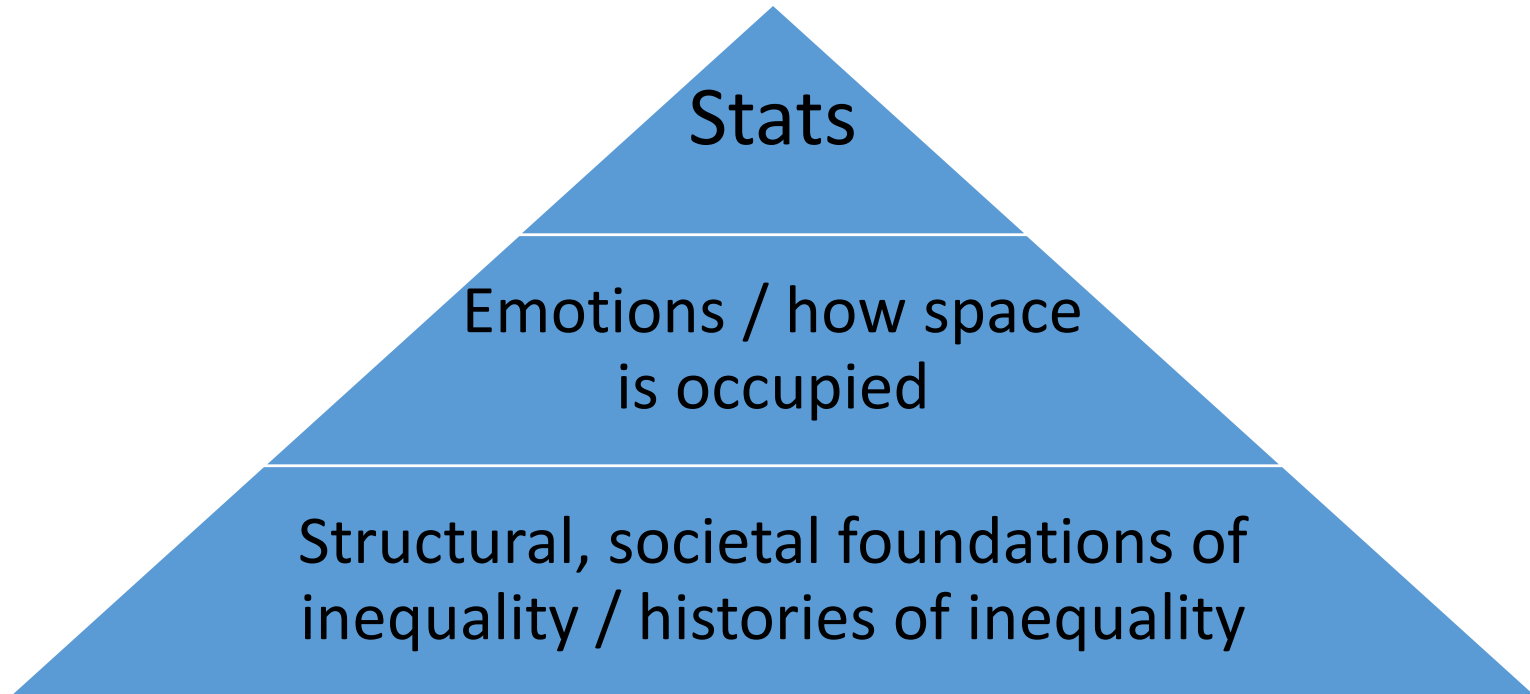
- 'Identity politics' can be powerful and it is often those in power that seek to de-value it.
- Yet some described a loss of momentum in collective action on race equality due to divisive funding practices for separate communities and simplistic approaches to representing and hearing different 'identities' within civil society.
- There are opportunities to deepen collective organizing through greater recognition of diversity within groups (ensuring more voices are heard). Also there could be greater collaboration between race equality and other social justice movements (like environmental justice or food poverty).

WHAT WE FOUND: WAYS FORWARD FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

5. Trust and History:

- Distrust between and within ethnic groups can get in the way of work to promote race equality. Often distrust relates to past experiences that are not talked about (e.g. the continuing effects of colonialism and class, previous exploitation of BME communities within civil society, different generations not having opportunities to learn from each others' experiences).
- Discussing history and our own roles in the maintenance of inequality within civil society may be painful. But without doing this, it becomes hard to expect different outcomes and to build trust and equity within civil society.
- We need spaces to bring different generations working on race equality together to learn from each other. We also need spaces where lived experiences of racism can be heard and valued.
- Greater trust will bring improved ally-ship. It will help to improve recognition for the leadership, wisdom and growth potential of marginalized individuals and communities (including young people) that haven't had access to power and influence.

DEBATE ON EQUALITY IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR



COMFORT ZONE

More comfortable topics:

- How representative are boards / management?
- How is funding distributed to minority groups?

Less comfortable topics / tension:

- Who has responsibility for work on equality in society?
- How is power within civil society distributed and maintained?
- What happens to minority voices when they enter the 'mainstream'?



WAYS FORWARD?

- We won't get change unless we change – need to engage with sources of tension and discomfort
- Growing inequality affects us all, it's not a 'minority' issue



Power

>>Consciously shift power

From  Towards

Unrepresentative

The ethnic diversity of my senior leadership team is not something I consider.

Representative

I take active steps to ensure those in leadership positions are representative of our diverse society and have the right skills, experience and values.

Tokenism

I do engage with people from ethnic minority backgrounds and recruit them, but I don't give them real access to power.

Sharing power

I think about and measure whether people from ethnic minority backgrounds feel listened to and whether they have access to power.

Not listening


I don't value, hear or understand the views and experiences of those that have experienced race inequality and racism.

Actively listening

I engage directly with and learn from the lived experiences of those who have experienced race inequality and racism.

Accountability

>>All of us taking responsibility

From  **Towards**

Race equality work is too hard for me

I can't do work on 'race equality' because it is too big or challenging an issue, I might get it wrong and I might be called 'racist'.

I recognise and work with personal discomfort

Despite personal discomfort and fear, I take active steps to learn about race equality and the role I can personally play in progressing it.

Displacing responsibility

People from ethnic minority backgrounds and organisations that work with and are led by them are the experts – it is their responsibility to progress race equality, not mine.

Taking responsibility

I take an active role in progressing race equality, and I use my power, profile and resources within civil to raise awareness about this agenda.

Closed to feedback


I work to progress social justice – I don't need to gain feedback about whether I am representing or meeting the needs and interests of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Open to feedback

I gather and listen to feedback about what I do. I understand whether people from different ethnic backgrounds experience the support I provide differently, or whether I am representing their interests effectively.

Connection

>>Coming together to address race equality

From  **Towards**

Division

I don't feel solidarity with others working on race equality within civil society, and don't feel able to learn about their work or engage with them.

Diversity within ethnic groups not recognised

I am doing work on race equality. I don't need to recognise the other aspects of diversity that intersect with 'race', like gender, disability, sexual orientation and so on.

Race equality is a stand-alone challenge

I work on race equality alone. Other social justice movements don't understand what I do and I have little to gain by connecting with them.

Building relationships

I actively think about my relationships with others within civil society, and work to be more curious about what others are doing on race equality and to become a better ally.

Diversity within ethnic groups recognised

I actively seek to understand a diversity of views and experiences within ethnic groups based on gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and so on. I create spaces where a diversity of views on race equality can be heard.

Race equality is linked to other challenges in society

I work to explore shared interests with others working on social justice issues in my community (such as food poverty or environmental justice). I aim to understand what they are doing and seek opportunities to work with them to progress race equality too.

Trust

>>Trust and history

From  **Towards**

Not recognising distrust

I am doing or funding work on race equality, I don't understand why people aren't engaging with me.

Recognising distrust

I recognise that past history and bias can affect how much I trust others and how much they trust me.

Not engaging with the past

The past is behind us and I don't want to talk about it. Talking about the continued effects of colonialism, empire and class is painful, or I'm not aware of it.

Engaging with the past

I am open to discussing and learning about uncomfortable topics of race inequality and histories of racism and discrimination.

You can read the report here:

<https://civilsocietyfutures.org/race/>

TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE THINK AND DO EQUALITY

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