Working Across the Lines

Connecting struggles of racialised and minoritised populations

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Voice4Change England was set up in 2007 to support the Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BME) voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Our aim is to build a strong and inclusive civil society that improves the life outcomes for BME and other populations subject to disadvantage. We do this in a number of ways, including developing BME-led self-organised action and contributing to a constructive discourse about race inequality and racism.

The Migrants' Rights Network (MRN), founded in 2006, promotes civil society partnerships, policy analysis and dialogue in support of the rights of all migrants, with an overall mission of promoting a rights-based approach to migration. We define a 'rights-based approach' to migration as one which reflects international human rights standards and involves migrants as full partners in the development and implementation of policies that affect them.

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Executive summary

In recent times we have witnessed the rise of a 'politics of prejudice' that seeks to blame many of society's problems on a range of racialised and minoritised populations (including those categorised as 'black', 'brown', Muslim, migrants, refugees, Jewish, Gypsies and Travellers). This sentiment is encapsulated by slogans such as 'taking back control', as featured in the European Union referendum campaign. This politics requires a response from those seeking to advance social justice.

Working Across the Lines is a scoping initiative by Voice4Change England and Migrants' Rights Network. It explores how advocates, activists and others in race equality, migrants' rights, and refugee and faith causes can connect struggles, stand together, work towards more equitable sharing of power and resources, and resist the politics of prejudice.

Efforts for particular racialised and minoritised groups are compatible with collective initiatives for justice. However, we also suggest that while efforts focused on specific identity and ethnicity groups can lead to particular gains, they will struggle to advance wholesale and system-wide changes.

The scoping work has revealed an unmet demand for connection among a cohort working for justice along differently racialised and minoritised lines. The work has also shown, through case studies, the possibilities of joint work across racialised and minoritised populations – for example in family campaigns after deaths of relatives at the hands of the state.

This report makes the case for working across the lines to counter the prevailing politics of prejudice by investing in a politics of connection. This would link the struggles of racialised and minoritised populations to better enable groups to stand up for one another and to create a climate for equity and belonging for all.

Specifically recommended is investment in a UK-wide community of advocates, activists, researchers, facilitators, organisers and policy specialists, perhaps through a Working Across the Lines Resource and Action Centre.

Members of a Working Across the Lines Community would be supported to develop narratives and analyses about shared aspects of experience and resistance by racialised and minoritised populations. This can be enabled by 'political education', to develop the skills to analyse patterns of privilege and prejudice as a basis for linking struggles. Furthermore, this cadre can be primed for practical action, e.g. by developing dialogue and conflict management skills to find common cause; and by being supported to mobilise around specific issues that disproportionately affect racialised and minoritised groups, such as low pay and (a lack of) 'diversity' in many parts of society and the economy.

Ultimately, as 'othering' is an act that lacks humanity, working across the lines is an act of shared humanity and solidarity. The ideas in this report are offered to help to catalyse meaningful connection across struggles for justice and practical efforts to work across the lines and stand up for one another. Moreover, it is hoped that the ideas in this report will be discussed and improved by those working in and for justice in race equality, migrants' rights, and refugee and minoritised faith causes, as well as by funders committed to advancing these agendas.

1. Introduction: Responding to a politics of prejudice

Working Across the Lines is a scoping initiative by Voice4Change England and Migrants' Rights Network. It explores how racialised and minoritised populations can combine to more effectively work against intersecting issues of racism, xenophobia and prejudice and make progress towards justice and belonging for all.[1] Racialised and minoritised populations can include but are not limited to people described as 'black' or 'brown', as well as Muslim people, migrants, refugees, Jewish people, and Gypsies and Travellers. This project specifically explores the possibilities of building a politics of connection by working across the lines in race equality, migrants' rights, and refugee and faith causes.[2]

Context: External and internal politics

The work has emerged against a backdrop of a 'politics of prejudice' in which racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, anti-Semitism and xenophobia operate in complementary ways to mark particular populations as 'others' in society.

For example, xenophobia and racism have been brought together in what the Institute for Race Relations has called 'xeno-racism'.[3] Such antagonisms can be seen in elements of the 2016 European Union referendum campaign and the Trump campaign in the 2016 United States presidential race, encapsulated in the respective slogans of 'taking back control'[4] and 'America First'.[5]

This politics of prejudice places the blame for many of society's ills on a range of racialised and minoritised people rather than focusing on underlying problems with economic arrangements, establishment politics or the impacts of globalisation.

This politics of prejudice places the blame for many of society's ills on a range of racialised and minoritised people

1 Racialised groups can be defined as including people of African, East Asian, Central and South American, south Asian, Arab and Caribbean descent and Gypsies and Travellers. Racialised populations as a whole are often minoritised. Minoritised people are by definition made lesser or inferior (www.com.washington.edu/2017/04/minoritized-and-marginalized/), e.g. by systematic legal and institutional treatment that discriminates against and disadvantages them and that is based on ideas of 'otherness'. Just as some populations are 'minoritised', others are 'majoritised' and gain privileges and advantages.

We recognise that some people will be racialised and minoritised in more than one way – such as black women – but also that people's identity and identification do not neatly fit into categories such as racialised, minoritised 'race' or ethnicity; migrant, refugee or asylum seeker; or according to faith. However, people's lived experiences can be (imperfectly) predicted by such groupings and activists use these types of categories as a basis for organising.

2 There are other 'lines' – for example organisations may specialise in justice themes in health, education or criminal justice, and it may make sense to combine these efforts (for example given the 'school-to-prisons' pipeline). But that is not the line-crossing focus here.

3 www.irr.org.uk/news/the-emergence-of-xeno-racism/

4 http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/taking-back-control-one-year-on/

5 www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/trump-america-first/514037/

A variation on this finger-of-blame approach is rhetoric against Muslims, e.g. seen in the UKIP 'Breaking Point' poster – portraying a refugee 'influx' from the Middle East into Britain.[6] Furthermore, at the time of finalising this report, there is the case of the 'Windrush Generation'[7] – people with links to the Caribbean who have faced deportation from the United Kingdom if they cannot produce residency documents. The various examples demonstrate how issues of 'race', faith and nationality intersect and overlap and suggest the need to connect efforts, such as those for minoritised faiths, race equalities and migrant rights, to resist hostility.

In the past few decades solidaristic politics seems much diminished

On the other side of the equation, there have been shifts in how racialised and minoritised groups organise. Since the 1980s, cultural and identity politics has fragmented a collective idea of 'Black politics'.[8] Black politics, though far from perfect, combined identities of being Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BME), Muslim (potentially extending to encompass Jewish and Irish people) and migrant. It offered a response to racisms and xenophobia but also a platform to think about shared and different experience. In the past few decades this solidaristic politics seems much diminished and there is a dividing line between long-settled and newer migrants. 'Muslim' has been separated off from 'south Asian' and the discourse of 'terror' has both fed Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism and complicated collective effort against anti-Semitism.

In this fragmentation, justice efforts against prejudice may be focused on the specifics of identity and ethnicity groups and the experiences that they face. Specifics matter, and a focus on particular racialised and minoritised populations and their experiences can mean that progress is made in relation to specific injustices, e.g. reductions in 'Stop and Search'. But it may not allow for wholesale and system-wide change that facilitates belonging for all and equitable sharing of power and resources.

6 www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants

7 The 'Windrush Generation' refers to a cohort, estimated at around 50,000 people, with connections to the Caribbean who have faced the threat of deportation if they never formalised their residency status in the United Kingdom or do not have required documents to prove that status (www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/02/home-office-new-generation-windrushers)

8 Alexander (2018); see also https://qz.com/1219398/political-blackness-a-very-british-concept-with-a-complex-history/

However, this argument is not to set working across the lines at odds with the efforts of changemakers to focus on improving the conditions of particular racialised and minoritised populations. In other words, one should be able to specialise in improving the lives of, for example, black people or undocumented migrants in ways consistent with and supportive of the struggles of Muslims, Jewish people or European Union migrants, and vice versa.

The focus of the Working Across the Lines scoping project has been to: better understand existing working across the lines in pursuit of social justice in the fields of race equality, migrants' rights, and refugee and minoritised faith causes; to identify constraints in building connection and collective working; and to explore future possibilities to invest in connectivity, solidarity and joint efforts.

2. Working across the lines: An emerging evidence base

The insights in this section of the report emerge from original research involving advocates, activists, researchers and others working for racialised and minoritised groups along faith, refugee, migrant rights and racial justice lines. Specifically, there was a survey (59 responses); two focus groups; nine interviews; three case studies featuring aspects of working across the lines; and a conference in March 2018.

In this section we draw on our evidence base to consider what factors enable working across the lines, and those that hold back the potential for connecting struggles.

Conditions for connecting

Common threats, common struggles

In the survey, respondents were asked to name a number of factors most important to working across the lines. Most-mentioned – in 59 per cent of responses[9] – was the existence of 'clear and shared goals'.

9 20 responses out of 34.

Shared goals emerge in different ways. The project survey revealed that 'crisis' and external 'shock' provided impetus for collective action. For example, one survey respondent mentioned working across the lines as a means of 'challenging [the] EDL [English Defence League]'. Similarly, the response to the 'Go Home' vans (see Section 3) was intended to counter an external threat.

In these examples, people across racialised and minoritised lines share goals because they share precarious circumstances. The same can be true within workplaces, where some of the most interesting potential exists for alliances across the lines, as pointed out by Amrit Wilson (2018, Interview):

> If you look at who does the lowest paid work now, you'd find people who are refugees from, say, Colombia, other parts of South America. Or, you'd find people from different parts of Europe, really, who do those low paid jobs. And yet, you'd also find a small number of Asian female workers, who continue to do those jobs, and some Asian men as well, and the same applies to Africans.

In this and other ways, racialised and minoritised people can come together in order to improve their circumstances. As Ilyas Nagdee, Black Students' Officer at the National Union of Students, states, doing so can be a powerful choice based on 'understanding the necessity of organising together [in order to] win' (2018, Interview).

However, coming together over common circumstances is not a simple matter. At a Working Across the Lines project conference, Grenfell activist and filmmaker Daniel Renwick explained that what he called the 'callous indifference' of the state before and after the Grenfell fire had galvanised local people. But he also described how the ongoing nature of the situation has created tensions and eroded shared ground over time. As such, around Grenfell there are differing viewpoints over distribution of housing and money and whether the monthly silent march is the right mode of protest.

Knowledge and political education

The idea of political awareness and knowledge is a longstanding approach to developing a shared outlook and politics upon which collective action can be built. Marx spoke of the concept of 'consciousness' and more recently, associated with Black Lives Matter in the United States, there has been much talk about being 'woke'.[10]

Consciousness and 'wokeness' do not just materialise – they are products of processes of political education. Political education equips recipients with the skills to analyse patterns of privilege and prejudice and see current experiences as part of a longer more connected story of oppression and resistance. Political education that supports working across the lines includes upgrading changemaker education so that we can better 'know each other's histories and … oppression' (Deepa Iyer, 2018, Interview).

In project focus groups, the need to invest in this type of education emerged as a cornerstone for working across the lines. It was also considered a gap that needed filling, as it was recognised that there were fewer spaces for education and critical thinking, given, for example, the demise of youth clubs and unions and the narrow versions of British history taught in schools.

The three Working Across the Lines case studies below are all, in different ways, products of a certain form of political education that sees parallels in the injustice facing racialised and minoritised populations and views this as part and parcel of structural inequities in our society.

Trust and relationships

Other conditions that support working across the lines – according to our survey and focus groups – are the quality of connection between activists, including good communication with partners (41 per cent[11]) and trust between parties (35 per cent[12]).

10 https://thedebrief.co.uk/news/real-life/woke-added-dictionary-really-mean/

11 14 responses out of 34.

12 12 responses out of 34.

Trust and the quality of communication are inextricably linked. Interviewee Esmat Jeraj describes one of the ways that Citizens UK tries to build trust and reciprocity among those with whom it works: 'a large part of what we encourage everyone to do is have one-to-ones to get to know each other better' (2018, Interview). Furthermore, she emphasised listening as critical to building connection, stating that 'through the process of listening, actually listening, you develop that empathy' (2018, Interview).

Trust, relationships and the quality of communication help connectivity across racialised and minoritised lines.

Yet, trust and relationships take time. In the United States, the Solidarity Is This initiative convened by Deepa Iyer invests heavily in relationship-building between activists, including residentials for a group of justice leaders:

> ...it's an investment to bring people together [on residentials] four times for three and a half days each, [but] it really does enable relationships to be built. (2018, Interview)

There appears to be no shortcut to building trust – it takes time and effort.

Taking action

Practical action across the lines is also critical as a binding agent in itself. This means that working together on shared issues both benefits from and builds connectivity, trust, communication and so on. We needn't wait for all of the conditions for connection to be present in order to connect struggles. Ali Harris, director of the Equality and Diversity Forum, speaks of the value of having an issue to 'rally around' (2018, Interview). In addition, participants in one focus group emphasised the value of changemakers from different racialised and minoritised groupings starting on small, agreed actions initially and building over time.

Limits and barriers to connection

Difficulties in collective working and working across the lines are not limited to racialised and minoritised groups. For example, there have been justifiable criticisms of white feminists for not taking into consideration the perspectives and experiences of BME women.[13]
In all cases there may be some contributing factors that encourage narrow working or thinking within the lines. These include the absence of elements identified above – such as common threats or political education – as well as features such as those listed below.

Closed identity politics

Thinking about, experiencing and responding to the world predominantly based on a particular religion, ethnicity, social background, etc. have come to be seen as hallmarks of 'identity politics'. In 'mainstream' thought, identity politics is often considered with blanket suspicion and even regarded as being against the 'common good'.[14]

A more nuanced critique of identity politics does exist, in which, for example, there are concerns about 'cultural' priorities taking precedence over efforts against racism, and about organising characterised by ethnic 'fiefdoms'.[15] Other problems include the ways that 'difference' across racialised and minoritised peoples can also be used 'to categorise and divide people who may share similar experiences and concerns'.[16] Here identities become so central that shared ground gets overlooked, as do wider questions of patterns of power, justice and equity in society.

In one of the project focus groups a discussion took place about some of the negative consequences of a closed sense of identity politics. Participants spoke of the dangers of 'false binaries' taking hold, where seemingly one had to choose sides, e.g. to be against either anti-Muslim racism or anti-Semitism but not both.[17]

13 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/10/emma-watson-truth-race-white and www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/11/intersectionality-not-while-feminists-participate-in-pile-ons

14 www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/09/how-modern-addiction-identity-politics-has-fractured-left. The reality is more complex, and this criticism seems to ignore that prevailing social, economic and other arrangements seem to serve white, middle-class, university-educated, heterosexual men. These conditions are seldom labelled as identity-based, and are instead somehow considered 'universal', even though they are far from benefiting everyone.

15 http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-death-of-multiculturalism/

16 Alexander (2018)

17 At the same time, it seems necessary and understandable that changemakers want to pay particular (though not necessarily exclusive) attention to (in)justice as it relates to specific racialised and minoritised populations.

Funding scope

Focus group participants also noted that funding can reinforce problematic identity lines and more general competitiveness by, for example, encouraging organisations working for a particular racialised or minoritised grouping to emphasise why their cause should get funding over another racialised or minoritised population. Where joint work was possible it was noted that, as funder resources are finite and demands are high, funders may be asking for more to be done for less money, bringing additional risks to any kind of joint working.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the project survey found that working across the lines was rarely thought to be driven by funding and funding opportunities (mentioned in only seven per cent of cases in the survey[18]). As Mike Whine of the Community Security Trust said, 'the driver for collaboration was always a practical [shared] issue or a third-party recommendation' (2018, Interview).

This may be positive, in that activists may come together based on this being the ethical, logical or pragmatic thing to do rather than a funding requirement. However, that is not to say that funders and funding do not have a role to play in facilitating better connectivity across struggles. In a focus group discussion, some participants felt that the scope and terms of funding could be a limiting factor. For example, where collaborative work was funded, evaluation needed to be nuanced enough to avoid negatively assessing all partners if a project is seen to have not 'delivered'.
In addition, one interviewee mentioned that it would be helpful for funders to become more comfortable with the more disordered nature of work across the lines.

Empathy gaps

In a focus group, we heard about a number of initiatives where faith, minoritised and racialised populations were supporting refugees. It seems that some racialised or minoritised lines are easier to cross than others. There may be something about the humanitarian nature of support for refugees that enables, even compels, others to lend support more readily.

18 Two out of 28 responses.

19 www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/10/denied-free-nhs-cancer-care-left-die-home-office-commonwealth

Similarly, the recent media coverage of the Windrush Generation (though this was not necessarily the intention of advocates) has focused on people portrayed as 'dignified' and 'deserving'.[19] But can we extend such general support and empathy for certain refugees and the Windrush Generation to other racialised and minoritised groupings at risk, such as young black men treated unjustly by the criminal justice system?

In order to work across the lines to stand alongside those experiencing injustice, there appears to be work to do to expand our empathy beyond those currently considered 'worthy'.

3. Working across the lines: Case studies

In this section, the report considers three examples of working across the lines that showcase different aspects of connecting struggles.

Together the case studies bear out many of the emerging findings highlighted in Section 2. These include the galvanising effect of common threats and the value of a certain kind of critical thinking and political education in working across the lines. They identify constraints facing some civil society organisations (including funding) in seeking to address intersecting issues such as 'race' and migration, and the need to build such flexibility ('Go Home vans'). They also indicate solidarity and empathy gaps between long-settled BME populations and more recent immigrants ('Jimmy Mubenga'). They suggest that the way forward is to convene differently racialised and minoritised groups with care; to listen to each other's stories and experiences; and to support changemakers who can see and build bridges beyond racialised and minoritised lines and divides in order to deliver justice.

The first case study centres on the campaign for justice by family and supporters of Jimmy Mubenga, who died on an aeroplane on a deportation flight in 2010 after being restrained by G4S guards. The case shows the possibilities for family-led efforts to cross lines of ethnicity.

The second example is the campaign against the Home Office's 'Go Home' vans. The vans encouraged undocumented migrants to get in touch with the authorities to get help to leave the UK. The case shows the need for people and organisations to engage with issues that affect multiple racialised and minoritised groups, and the value of multi-pronged campaigning.

Case three is that of the Equality and Diversity Forum and its efforts to intentionally convene across the various intersecting lines of equality. The case suggests the need to convene with care; to listen for shared interests; and to rally around practical actions to keep people moving forward and moving together.

Example 1. Family ties: Justice campaigns and the death of Jimmy Mubenga

Jimmy Mubenga died on a British Airways plane in October 2010 after being restrained by three G4S guards. There was a significant justice campaign for Jimmy, supporting the efforts of his wife, Makenda Adrienne Kambana.

Jimmy's Campaign held regular demonstrations and activities, and in November 2010 the Angolan and Congolese communities came together in a powerful way around his death. The campaign mobilised the refugee sector and anti-deportation efforts, and there were demonstrations at the G4S Annual General Meeting and outside the Crown Prosecution Service that gave the campaign powerful early momentum. Jimmy's death became a powerful focus for the Stop G4S coalition and highlighted forced deportations (that are still taking place); the conditions in detention centres; and the role of the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA). In addition, coverage by the Guardian gave the case prominence.

Harmit Athwal from the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), who was active in the campaign from the very beginning, observed strong solidarity between the Stop G4S coalition and the United Family and Friends Campaign (UFFC) between 2010 and 2014.

UFFC was set up in 1997 after the deaths of black men in South London at the hands of the Metropolitan police, and over time has expanded its remit to deaths in prisons, youth offending institutions, secure units and immigration detention centres. UFFC works with families of all ethnicities, but an important principle has been that it continues to be black-led[20] and as such represents an interesting model of working across racialised and minoritised lines from a specific base. Another key feature of UFFC is its strong underlying ethos of being, in itself, a type of family, offering mutual support to people with shared lived experience.

Family justice campaigns retain their potential to bring together bereaved families and connect struggles

While important connections were made, Athwal also reflected on the fact that in Jimmy's case it was challenging making links with other racialised and minoritised populations.

> Joy Gardiner's death in 1993 brought people together and there were many marches and public meetings. In contrast whilst there were some successes with Jimmy's campaign, there was not the turnout or numbers or even wider interest amongst our [racialised] communities or even activists. (Athwal, 2018, Interview)

Athwal attributed this in part to generalised anti-migrant sentiments that have eroded solidarities across racialised populations.

On 16 December 2014, after a six-week trial, the jury found the defendants not guilty. After the verdict was declared, Makenda Adrienne Kambana made the following statement:

20 https://uffcampaign.org/

21 www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/

> It is hard for me to understand how the jury reached this decision with all this evidence that Jimmy said over and over that he could not breathe. I wish to thank everyone who have worked so hard for justice for me and our children. My struggle continues.[21]

Family justice campaigns retain their potential to bring together bereaved families and connect struggles. But they require support.

Narratives and analyses can help to ensure that deaths are seen not in isolation but as part of a pattern and structure for which the state needs to be accountable. With the big picture in place, solidarities can be formed more coherently and expansively and more profound change becomes possible. More practically, families and their supporters need places to meet and access to communication facilities. Critical too are people capable of forging connection and common cause. The work of Harmit Athwal and IRR has been instrumental in helping to bring groups together in a spirit of solidarity after deaths at the hands of (agents of) the state. This is a function that can easily be overlooked, but is one that requires investment.

Example 2. Go Home vans: Joining the dots between 'race' and migration

In 2013, the 'Go Home' vans campaign was developed by the then-home secretary, Theresa May, aimed at undocumented migrants. The campaign centred on billboard vans bearing the slogan 'Go Home or Face Arrest'. The vans advertised a number to text for 'free advice and help with travel documents'[22] and were mainly driven around East London boroughs with high migrant and BME populations.

> 'When I saw the image of the van, I knew straight away it was wrong, especially where it stated "Go Home"'

The Migrants' Rights Network became aware of the van campaign, and informed others within their network, including the Refugee and Migration Forum of East London (RAMFEL).

22 www.channel4.com/news/immigration-advertising-van-go-home-standards-authority

RAMFEL, at the time managed by Rita Chadha, is a charity that supports vulnerable migrants to access justice and provides support in moments of individual crisis. RAMFEL led the campaign against the 'Go Home' vans and encouraged others to join the protest against what they viewed as divisive, discriminatory and likely illegal slogans.

The case has many facets. These include RAMFEL's scrutiny of senior Home Office officials and initiation of legal proceedings against the Home Office, and the challenges of connecting 'race' and migration.

Chadha saw the vans as causing harm to BME populations and failing in terms of obligations to meet Equalities Duties: 'When I saw the image of the van, I knew straight away it was wrong, especially where it stated "Go Home"' (2018, Interview). Chadha viewed the vans as bringing together 'race' and migration, and saw connections between the van and other actions affecting BME populations, such as 'Stop and Search'.

RAMFEL started to explore legal action against the Home Office and identified two claimants willing to take a complaint forward – one Lithuanian and the other an Irish national, both street homeless. The Irish national was visiting the RAMFEL office daily and had been spending time with Asian rough sleepers. He objected to the fact that they could be picked up, and could see connections between the vans and anti-Irish prejudice.

Chadha also noted that academics, too, such as some at the University of East London, saw the across-the-lines discriminatory aspects of the vans. Redbridge Council – the local authority where RAMFEL's Ilford office is based – also came out against the vans.[23]

According to Chadha, however, civil society organisations were somewhat reluctant to make the link between ethnicity and immigration status. This can be explained, in part, by organisations not having the culture of risk-taking or the flexibility in their work programmes or funding to engage.

23 www.theguardian.com/society/2013/jul/27/council-withdrawal-ad-campaign-illegal-immigrants

24 www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/28/willesden-green-twitter-wind-up-immigrants

Fragmentation in and across the migration and refugee sector also meant a lack of a coherent across-the-lines approach: 'The [migrant and refugee] sector is not holistic and works in silos' (Chadha, 2018, Interview).

Through social and mainstream media, the issue of the 'Go Home' vans gained prominence, including coverage from media outlets such as the Sunday newspapers and BBC breakfast television. The satirical actions of activist Pukkah Punjabi[24] helped to publicise the vans through social media. Pukkah Punjabi, in jest, telephoned the Home Office hotline and asked an official if they could help her to go home – to Willesden Green from Harrow!

Ultimately, the Home Office agreed to back down.[25] The victory seemed to be secured by a combination of RAMFEL's legal action and the negative publicity about the vans. Though not a mass action of working across the lines, enough people could see the racialised nature of the vans and the connection between 'race' and migration and were prompted to act.

However, the case did rely on a few committed actors, and raises questions about the need for more flexible funding for, and perhaps more imagination in, civil society to intervene on issues that affect more than one racialised or minoritised category.

In terms of legacy, it is not clear to what extent long-settled BME populations' and new(er) migrants' organisations might be able to stand alongside one another. The example of the Windrush Generation emphasises the racialised nature of migration issues and suggests a need for racial justice and migration advocates and activists to reflect this in their analyses, narratives and actions – not just when a particular crisis breaks but as an ongoing way of operating.

25 www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/12/home-office-backs-down-go-home-vans and www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/22/go-home-billboards-pulled

Example 3. Equality and Diversity Forum: The art of convening

In 2001 the government was considering the possibility of creating a single statutory equality body to replace the existing three Commissions – a significant shake-up of Britain's equality infrastructure. A meeting of specialists from six fields (age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation) was called in 2002 to discuss responses to the government's proposals. Despite their common concern with tackling inequality, up until then these people had rarely met together. Participants found that they had so much to discuss that they decided to meet regularly, and the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) was formed.

When convening people or organisations, EDF has sought to listen for agreement

Participants saw that a pan-equality and human rights network could be more than the sum of its parts, enabling its members to speak publicly with one voice on issues of common interest while maintaining and enriching their specialist expertise. EDF is a national network of organisations working across all areas of equality and human rights that aims to:

- bring together people from a range of disciplines, sharing knowledge and expertise;
- help members to speak with one voice on shared positions, informed by a strong evidence base; and
- communicate these positions in powerful ways.[26]

Successes have included influencing the scope and content of the Equality Acts 2006 and 2010, and the formation of a single equality body. From 2010 the focus has shifted to protecting existing laws and the potential impact on equality and human rights of the 2016 European Union referendum result.[27]

26 'About us' (http://www.edf.org.uk/about/)

27 www.edf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Final-strategy-2016.pdf

28 www.edf.org.uk/refugees-migrants-and-the-equality-agenda-edf-research-and-event/ and www.edf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/EDF-Report_Whos-Still-Missing_May-2011_Web_2.pdf

29 'About us' (http://www.edf.org.uk/about/)

In 2010 EDF held a roundtable bringing together representatives of refugee, migrant and equality non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to explore how refugees and migrants could be supported by and brought into the equalities framework. EDF commissioned research to explore what lessons could be learnt from the implementation of the Race Equality Duty and to consider how public authorities could effectively use the new Duty to incorporate refugee and migrant communities into their core work.[28]

In 2017 EDF had 29 members.[29] It also has associate voluntary sector organisations and observers (such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission), and a research network as a structured way to collaborate with academics on equality issues. In developing policy positions, EDF works by consensus, with small organisations having an equal say with larger partners.

Invest in a cadre of advocates, activists and others to be brought together to develop a politics of connection

The response from NGOs has been to value the constructive space EDF brings for discussion between government and civil society, enabling organisations and policymakers to build working relationships with each other. Being part of a broader network allows some members to engage in non-specialist or 'difficult' areas. Members have also reported that bilateral partnerships have developed as a result of convening at network meetings.

A lesson from EDF for working across the lines appears to be to find one thing to do and do it together. Ali Harris, EDF's director, states that having 'something to rally around' (2018, Interview) has been critical to its success as a convener of NGOs. Rallying points have included the Equality Act; bringing refugee issues and migration into the equality sphere; showing the value, from an equality perspective, of retaining the Census; examining hate crime across differently racialised and minoritised groups; and, more recently, exploring how Brexit might have an impact on equalities.

As well as the rallying, there is value in the prior work carried out to understand the underlying issues. When convening people or organisations, EDF has sought to listen for agreement and desired shared outcomes and has found that finding positive things is more productive than the critiquing (often criticising) that one can encounter in civil society. The reality of working across the lines means that agreement needs to be nurtured and disagreements may need to be parked.

4. Working further across the lines: Knowledge resources and practical action

Against a backdrop in which racialised and minoritised populations are seen by some as 'out of place', the scoping work has both uncovered and stimulated a desire for connection among a cohort working for justice along differently racialised and minoritised lines. This final section of the report provides some initial ideas about how to nurture working further across the lines and create a climate for a politics of connection. In providing these ideas we hope to stimulate discussion and debate among changemakers pursuing social justice and the funders that seek to support these endeavours.

At the heart of any future work is investing in a Community through which struggles can be brought together and a politics of connection developed in opposition to a politics of prejudice.

The recommendation of the scoping project is to invest in a UK-wide cadre of advocates, activists, researchers, facilitators, organisers and policy specialists and to provide them with support networks, skills and knowledge to connect across minoritised and racialised lines to strategise and practically advance justice and equality. To give coherence to these endeavours, they might be best housed in some kind of Working Across the Lines Resource and Action Centre.

Building and maintaining an inclusive Working Across the Lines Community

Throughout the project the value of convening and coming together was evident. For example, 70 per cent of respondents to the survey (39 in total) said they would be willing to host a local Across the Lines network meeting – indicating an active and practical commitment to connection. Similarly, the over-subscribed project conference was marked by enthusiasm and provided an opportunity that participants would not have otherwise had to learn about each other's efforts for justice and a common desire to connect struggles. Numerous messages of support came from people unable to attend the event but who wanted to stay in touch with developments. The 150 people so far who have engaged with the project represent an emergent Working Across the Lines Community.

We would like to do more to consolidate and build this Community.

Face-to-face connection is powerful in terms of building the relationships, trust and positive communications required to work across the lines. Opportunities could take the form of an annual Working Across the Lines national convening, focused on community-sourced themes, including good practice examples from local action. Smaller gatherings can be useful too, such as local learning circles and themed groups. Online presence is also critical for collaborative decision-making and approaches on specific themes.

Bringing changemakers together is, we believe, a valuable investment in the pursuit of justice. Organically, positive outcomes flow from connection. However, to make the most of the community resource, it will be helpful to have some intentional programmed interventions to create the politics and practice of connection, where groups stand up for one another in the spirit of equity, justice and belonging for all.

We think about this programming for a Working Across the Lines Community in terms of two main strands:

1. Developing narratives about shared experiences and struggles of racialised and minoritised populations; and
2. Supporting practical action for justice by working across the lines, by improving skills, knowledge, capacities and alignment among Community members.

Each of these programming strands is further described below.

Developing shared narratives

The scoping work revealed considerable support for developing analyses and narratives to collectively make sense of and articulate the shared nature of the experiences and struggles of racialised and minoritised populations. A building block to this end is political education which can foster learning about the nature of privilege and inequality in society as well as about the experiences and acts of resistance of other racialised and minoritised populations.

Practical steps as part of this process might include accessible analyses connecting racism, xenophobia and related prejudices; commissioning easy-to-understand presentation materials on the modes of resistance and changemaking of different racialised and minoritised groupings; showcasing exemplars of action across the lines – including historic and international examples; and events to convene people to review, reflect and co-create stories for today.

Supporting practical action

Political education, analyses and narratives provide a climate for working across the lines, and this sits alongside practical efforts.

30 This cohort model is a key element in the Solidarity Is This initiative in the United States.

The potential for action among members of a Working Across the Lines Community could be enhanced through training in the skills of social change, such as the listening, dialogue and conflict management skills needed to bring people and causes together. To facilitate action, it may also be helpful to establish a smaller cohort within a wider Working Across the Lines Community. For example, a collective of around 12 or so people from across race equality, refugee, migrants' rights and faith activism could receive more intensive engagement, support and training to jointly develop initiatives for connecting struggles to which they are committed.[30]

The smaller grouping as well as the broader Community could be mobilised around a specific issue that disproportionately affects racialised and minoritised groups. Causes might include interventions on low pay during Living Wage Week or inputting into debates on 'diversity' and under- or over-representation of racialised and minoritised populations in parts of society and the economy. Changemakers can also be supported to instigate debate within the racialised and minoritised lines in which they operate: for example, race equality and migrants' rights activists can be supported in conversations that consider tensions between long-settled BME populations and more recent arrivals.

Signals of success

Together, these efforts to strengthen community, political education, shared narratives and practical action can help to normalise working across the lines underpinned by deeper relationships and alignment among advocates, activists, researchers, facilitators, organisers, policy specialists and others who participate (and those with whom they work). In doing so, it may be possible to nurture a politics of connection in response to a prevailing politics of prejudice. This means equipping changemakers so that they are capable of working on the particular experiences of racialised and minoritised groups and tying these in to connected struggles for justice. To borrow a term used at a scoping project event, this means changemakers who can 'look down a microscope while looking through a telescope'.

Such effects take time, but it is possible to see signs of change and progress along the way. Things to look out for might include some of the following:

- numbers of participants in Working Across the Lines Community and from different racialised and minoritised causes;
- diversification of networks among racialised and minoritised activists;
- conference and event platforms focused on particular racialised and minoritised populations including speakers and participants from other such groupings;
- examples where one racialised or minoritised group speaks up and acts on behalf of another;
- changes in the framing of campaigning and advocacy messages to integrate a Working Across the Lines dimension;
- the emergence of new connecting analyses and narratives that both tie together and recognise differences between the experiences and resistance of different racialised and minoritised populations.

Conclusion

In the context of an assertive and aligned politics of prejudice and 'xeno-racism', now seems to be the moment for a politics of connection. There appears to be appetite among advocates, activists, organisers and others to grapple with the complex issues of how to better link the struggles of racialised and minoritised populations.

If a reminder was needed, the case of the Windrush Generation shows how issues of 'race'[31] and migration intersect. Furthermore, it suggests the need for ideas of racial justice to be deeply woven into activism on migration and vice versa, for the sake of solidarity and to resist a 'hostile environment'.[32]

31 www.theguardian.com/media/media-blog/2018/may/06/windrush-scandal-racism-papers

32 www.jcwi.org.uk/windrush-deportations-hostile-environment and www.theguardian.racism-papers

A separate issue is the role of 'mainstream' civil society organisations in advancing justice for racialised and minoritised populations. This project and report has deliberately focused on the possibilities for self-help and mutual support among racialised and minoritised changemakers. Yet, there are ways that 'mainstream' civil society organisations, through their actions and approaches, can either help or hinder justice for racialised and minoritised populations.

The point to make here, and to develop in the future, is the need for meaningfully engaged mainstream civil society organisations and actors, focused on achieving justice, including for racialised and minoritised people. This requires a willingness to cultivate awareness of issues such as power, privilege and prejudice in society. In practice this might mean mainstream civil society engaging in its own political education and drawing on (and resourcing) input from specialists from racialised and minoritised populations to help better orientate the mainstream towards inclusivity and justice.[33]

Working across the lines in its various forms requires effort and investment. As one project interviewee commented, investing in working across racialised and minoritised lines is 'tremendously messy and you just have to be at peace with the messiness' (Deepa Iyer, 2018, Interview). This lack of neatness can prove difficult in an environment where funders, organisations and change agents look to turn inputs into specified outputs and outcomes. Therefore, new impetus for working across the lines may require new ways to evaluate the success of building a new politics and practice.

33 An illustration of this way of working can be seen in Thomas Lawson's helpful provocation to encourage white civil society chief executives to discuss and tackle racial prejudice in society and charities: www.civilsociety.co.uk/governance/us-white-charity-ceos-need-to-talk.html

As a final word, we can reflect on themes of hostility and humanity. Just as categorising certain groups as 'others' displays a certain hostility and inhumanity, we should conceive of working across the lines as an act of shared humanity. As part of the project we have heard about the idea of thinking about adjacent racialised and minoritised groups as 'cousins' (Helen Jones, 2018, Interview), and other campaigners in common cause talk about being a 'family' (see UFFC case study in Section 3).

Thinking in these familial terms can helpfully guide our shared work for social justice. This endeavour will no doubt be messy and neither easy nor fast work. But it is one supported by many united in trying to overcome a politics of prejudice and to build something altogether more connected, solidaristic and humane.

To overcome a politics of prejudice we need to build something altogether more connected, solidaristic and humane

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Harmit Athwal, Institute of Race Relations
Rita Chadha
Ali Harris, Equality and Diversity Forum
Deepa Iyer, Solidarity Is This
Esmat Jeraj, Citizens UK
Helen Jones
Leeds Gate
Zoe Matthews, Friends, Families and Travellers
Ilyas Nagdee, National Union of Students Black Students Campaign
Mike Whine , Community Safety Trust
Amrit Wilson

Focus group participants

Mike Buckley
Martin Burrell, Luton Roma Trust
Aisha Dodwell, Global Justice Now
Edie Friedman , The Jewish Council for Racial Equality
Andy Gregg , Race on the Agenda
Nadia Hasan
Samir Jeraj, Race Equality Foundation