



## Diversity in the National Curriculum—Multicultural History and Community Cohesion



Recommendation 30 of the Government's Response to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee Report (2-6) – now there's a recommendation we can really get our teeth into!

What recommendation you ask? The recommendation, indeed now our *legal duty*, to promote community cohesion in our schools – 'to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups' (*Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*, DCSF 2007, p1). As historians we are in a prime position to make a large contribution in this area, and an exciting one at that. But how can we be expected to make a difference through just a few hours a week? Can we ever pay more than lip service? And is it worth our effort? These may be the questions you are faced with when speaking to your colleagues. The fact that you are reading this article suggests you know the answers already, but may be looking for support and direction when approaching diversity in your lessons. The key is *inclusivity* - celebrating the diversity of **all** the children we teach. I make no apologies for the breadth of my embrace when talking about celebrating diversity. It has to be done sensitively, to bring pride but also to genuinely foster understanding, tolerance and respect rather than an attitude of 'them and us' (an attitude I have faced from students and, surprisingly, teachers from a range of backgrounds – it seems 'them and us' have many guises!)



The first approach is to look at teaching diversity as an extra, for example celebrating Black History Month rather than throughout your curriculum. There are many avenues to explore: change the food offered in the school canteen; have some fantastic Fela Kuti playing over the school music system; have staff come in their

national dress (I'll be the first to arrive in my kilt given the chance); learn the home languages of your students; bring in music and dance workshops; study art; look at the contribution of non-white sports men and women. The opportunities are almost endless. Having taught in a multicultural school in London, I have seen at first hand the sense of pride it can give - to students, parents and to staff. Perhaps even more importantly, if you teach in a school with one overwhelming culture, and especially if that is a white culture, then



these experiences may be the most your students ever get to learn about their neighbours. Expand and adapt Black History Month to meet your community's need - if there is tension between Asian and white young people then make it Black and Asian History Month. Find a way in to break down barriers and be as inclusive as possible. Can you include Scottish, Irish and European students too? You'll be amazed at the diversity of families if you go back just a few generations - delve a little deeper and see what you find!

What students learn under your care may be the difference between tolerance and intolerance in their later years. Black History Month clearly has value; spending special time to celebrate the contribution black people have made to Britain, learning about their cultural background and getting to know the 'neighbour next door' has clear and obvious benefits for students of all backgrounds.

Which is why Black History Month alone is not enough. Teaching about the contribution of different groups - and I include women and white working-class men in this - to Britain's history needs to be built into your regular schemes of learning. The experience of ordinary Britons - of all colours



and religions - is the name of the game. I first realised the importance of 'building it in' at an inspirational workshop by Martin Spafford a few years back at the Schools History Project confer-



ence. He simply used evidence from soldiers from across the British Empire in order to foster a deeper understanding of World War Two. The pedagogy was not mind-

blowing, but the effect on the students can be. The inferences, engagement and depth of learning that **all** students make when faced with the evidence is at times astounding. Rather than the simple narrative of 'the war' they would have previously got from my lessons, Year 9 students now get a glimpse into a complex and global world, seeing into the worst and, importantly, the best of attitudes in their own past. They empathise, laugh, recoil and, most significantly, relate to the experiences of the soldiers they are studying. This clearly matches our duty to 'promote shared values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping' (*Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*, DCSF 2007, p9). If you teach in a mono-cultural school, then addressing this element of our duty is essential, and Martin's idea does just that. The We also served site ([www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources\\_ftp/client\\_ftp/teacher/history/served/stories/index.htm](http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/teacher/history/served/stories/index.htm)) and teaching pack is a good place to start if you are interested in trying this out. A fully inclusive approach to History is surely what a rigorous historian should adopt – we have a shared past and a shared identity and this needs to be... shared!

Elsewhere in your schemes of work there are plenty of opportunities to embed multicultural History. The Chartist William Cuffay

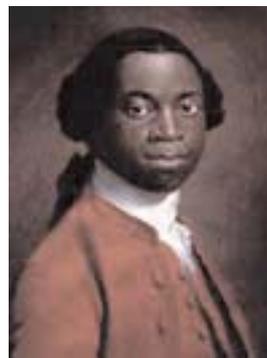


was the son of an ex-slave. Elizabeth I had black musicians at court. Walter Tull was a footballer and officer in World War I. The Old Bailey Online ([www.oldbaileyonline.org/](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/)) allows for some advanced, independent research. 18th-century art can be revealing. Pirate ships were multi-cultural, multi-lingual, often included ex-slaves and (at times) women, and were enterprising in the extreme (violence often being the extreme of choice...). Pirates even had a

quasi-democratic voting system on some ships. Why not spend some time looking at all these issues together? You could also invite students to create a virtual museum in



PowerPoint using artefacts from the Understanding Slavery website - [www.understandingslavery.com/](http://www.understandingslavery.com/) - (last year one eagle-eyed Year 9 student of mine spotted that you could hire slaves as well as own them - genuine research going on in a lesson!). The Black History 4 Schools ([www.blackhistory4schools.com/](http://www.blackhistory4schools.com/)) website is full of useful lessons on these and many other topics and some are expanded on in detail on Teachers TV ([www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv)).



The remarkable life of Olaudah Equiano provides another, almost impossibly rich opportunity for us teachers to integrate multicultural History and inspire our young charges. Not only did Equiano publish a book about his life: kidnapped as a young boy in Nigeria,

enslaved in Africa and the Americas; bought his own freedom; travelled the world as a sailor; settled down to marriage in London then Soham in Cambridgeshire. He also travelled the length and breadth of the country campaigning against the slave trade and publicising his book. On the Equiano Project website ([www.equiano.org/](http://www.equiano.org/)) you will find a map showing all the places he visited. Your school is undoubtedly close to one of these places. Thus you immediately have a local connection to Equiano, and it hooks the kids. Last year my own school and a school in inner city London collaborated on a blog and letter writing campaign - aiming to get a blue plaque in London for Equiano, and also one here in Halifax. This was the most engaged our Year 8s had been all year. Independent research, literacy letter checking and a real passion for the project. They were gripped. Perhaps it was because in Equiano they saw a hero, someone who succeeded despite the situation life threw at him – it is an inspiring message for all young people. Perhaps it was working with other young



people from different backgrounds. Perhaps it was feeling like they were making a difference to the world. I cannot be sure, but gripped they certainly were. It also matches the community cohesion duty to provide 'links with different schools and communities'. If you like this idea, why not get your classes involved too? The details of the blog (<http://ridingspirates.edublogs.org/>) our students created are below, and there are more details on the BH4S website too.



With the new national curriculum comes new opportunity for change in the topics we teach. With community cohesion comes a duty to celebrate diversity and encourage tolerance and understanding in the communities in which we work. We are uniquely placed, particularly as History teachers, to do this. Our input can help frame (or indeed reframe) the way our students see the world and their neighbours. We can correct misunderstandings and misapprehensions - it is an opportunity to build bridges or make connections where there were none before. We really can break down barriers. As was said in a recent edition of *Teaching History*, 'mainstreaming black history allows schools to challenge stereotypes, ignorance and racism'. (D Lyndon, *Teaching History*, March 2006).

### Resources:

blackhistory4schools ([www.blackhistory4schools.com/](http://www.blackhistory4schools.com/)) - for resources and articles of interest  
The Ridings School's Equiano campaign blog <http://ridingspirates.edublogs.org/>  
Equiano Project ([www.equiano.org/](http://www.equiano.org/)) - resource pack available  
schoolhistory.co.uk ([www.schoolhistory.co.uk/](http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/)) - the forum is full of ideas and support  
We also served ([www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources\\_ftp/client\\_ftp/teacher/history/served/stories/index.htm](http://www.bgfl.org/bgfl/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/teacher/history/served/stories/index.htm))  
Teachers TV - Walter Tull ([www.teachers.tv/video/26626](http://www.teachers.tv/video/26626))  
National Archives Learning Curve: British Empire ([www.learningcurve.gov.uk/empire/default.htm](http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/empire/default.htm)) - Snapshots and exhibitions  
Spartacus Educational: William Cuffay ([www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/CHcuffay.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/CHcuffay.htm))  
*The Impact of Empire*, Hodder Murray, ISBN: 978-0719585616  
Moving Here ([www.movinghere.org.uk/schools/default.htm](http://www.movinghere.org.uk/schools/default.htm))- explore and enjoy!

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## Additional Resources

The **Real Histories Directory** has a number of resources that might help with the teaching of multicultural history.

People of African and Asian origin have lived in Britain for at least two thousand years. The **Black Presence: Asian and Black History in Britain, 1500-1850** ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/)) online exhibition offers a selection of relevant records from the National Archives and other sources.

The Ministry of Defence's **We Were There** ([www.wewerethere.defencedynamics.mod.uk/index.html](http://www.wewerethere.defencedynamics.mod.uk/index.html)) website looks at the contribution made to defence by Britain's ethnic minorities over the past two hundred and fifty years. **First Black Britons** ([www.sweetpatootie.co.uk/](http://www.sweetpatootie.co.uk/)) is a film telling the story of how, between 1795 and 1927, the West India Regiment shaped British attitudes to race and citizenship.

**iRespect**, ([www.irespect.net/](http://www.irespect.net/)) backed by Gloucestershire LEA has a wealth of information for students, educators and the wider community including details of Black History Month activities. **Stockport's Black History** ([www.stockport.gov.uk/content/communitypeopleliving/ethniccommunities/blackhistory/?a=5441](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/content/communitypeopleliving/ethniccommunities/blackhistory/?a=5441)) site also has information of Black History Month events as well as an archive of what has taken place in previous years' BHM celebrations. **Birmingham Black History** ([www.birminghamblackhistory.com/](http://www.birminghamblackhistory.com/)) was originally set up to promote events during Black History Month, but since Black

history takes place all year round, it is now a resource that provides historical information, images, articles and educational material. **Acts of Achievement** ([www.actsofachievement.org.uk/](http://www.actsofachievement.org.uk/)) celebrates Black History Month in the North West. Norfolk Black History Month ([www.norfolkblackhistorymonth.org.uk/index.html](http://www.norfolkblackhistorymonth.org.uk/index.html)) presents an array of activities from comedy to drama, lectures to exhibitions, film to music. **Black History Month** ([www.black-history-month.co.uk/](http://www.black-history-month.co.uk/)) and, of course, the Real History Directory's events pages ([www.realhistories.org.uk](http://www.realhistories.org.uk)) have up-to-date information on Black History Month events nationally.

**Manchester Black History Trail** ([www.actsofachievement.org.uk/blackhistorytrail/](http://www.actsofachievement.org.uk/blackhistorytrail/)) focuses on African and Caribbean communities in five major districts. **Connecting Histories** ([www.connectinghistories.org.uk/](http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/)) aims to make known some of the experiences and histories of Birmingham's different communities. The **Brighton and Hove Black History** site ([www.black-history.org.uk/](http://www.black-history.org.uk/)) focuses on the area's cultural heritage. The **Northamptonshire Black History Project** ([www.wellingboroughrec.org.uk/blackh/blackh.asp](http://www.wellingboroughrec.org.uk/blackh/blackh.asp)) records and promotes Black history in Northamptonshire over at least the past 500 years.

**Journeys – Caribbean Stories**, ([www.unlockingthearchives.rgs.org/themes/journeys/default.aspx](http://www.unlockingthearchives.rgs.org/themes/journeys/default.aspx)) a Royal Geographical Society website, includes photographs and reminiscences of life in the Caribbean and the journey to Britain.

**Television, Memory, Race**, ([www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/439149/index.html](http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/439149/index.html)) is a two-part BFI documentary on the contribution of Black and Asian people to television history from the birth of television in 1936 to 1992. **Black Pioneers** ([www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/445627/index.html](http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/445627/index.html)) examines the early history of Black film-making in the UK.

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## The Real Histories Directory

The **Real Histories Directory** ([www.realhistories.org.uk](http://www.realhistories.org.uk)) has been created as a resource tool for teachers, parents, pupils and the wider community to support them in their teaching and learning about cultural diversity in the UK. The website helps you to locate **resources** in your and other LEAs, such as storytellers, dual language books, culturally diverse toys and relevant **events** taking place in the UK. There are also items of **news** that may be of particular interest to schools and teachers.

You can also submit resources that you would like to include in the directory free of charge by visiting the site, clicking on 'Submit an entry' and following the on-screen instructions.

As well as the varied resources available, each month a new **Topic of the Month** is added with suggestions for using the Directory in the classroom and at home.

We are interested in hearing your views on our Topics and the Real Histories website. You can email comments and suggestions to: [realhistories@runnymedetrust.org](mailto:realhistories@runnymedetrust.org).