Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road · Southall
Middlesex · UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 · F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

Written Submission to the Community Cohesion Inquiry

10th February 2025

About Us

Southall Black Sisters (SBS) was formed in 1979, at the height of the anti-racist struggle against fascist marches across the UK and the everyday reality of racist attacks. We continue to challenge racist violence and immigration controls and other state policies that question our right to live in the UK. We set up a not-for-profit, secular and inclusive organisation to meet the needs of Black, minoritised and migrant women to highlight and challenge all forms of gender-related violence against women, empower them to gain more control over their lives; live without fear of violence and assert their human rights to justice, equality and freedom. We have supported women to challenge all aspects of the intersection of racism, sexism and poverty.

In 2024, SBS expanded its support services, providing critical support to 5,472 callers through our national helpline and over 800 women through direct funded projects. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to offer legal advice, counselling, and emergency accommodation, ensuring that each woman receives the holistic wraparound support she needs to rebuild her life.

Summary

Community Cohesion

- Has diverted attention from government responsibility to address racism, socio-economic inequalities
- Has been exacerbated by the government's own anti-immigrant rhetoric and increasingly draconian laws.
- Has not tackled the main obstacles and levers of division, segregation and hatred – the Far-Right and religious fundamentalists - instead, the anti-immigrant racism of the Far-Right has been legitimised and validated by the main political parties.
- Has shifted attention from structural disadvantage and axes of power to the behaviour of minoritised communities. It exacerbates the tendency of welfare provision to make stark distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' migrants, and 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims.
- Has not helped to tackle power relations within minoritised communities between conservative religious leaders and women, LGBT community, minority sects, non-believers, and disadvantaged caste grouping and has not touched the divisive and discriminatory actions of a growing racial and religious supremacist politics within the UK.
- Has mistakenly attributed divisions in society to state focus on multiculturalism which, despite a Black feminist critique of multicultural governance and practice, delivered key government programmes through a privileged relationship between government and unaccountable religious leaderships.
- Has been framed in terms of race and religion but class is equally a factor in disrupting community cohesion. It has not attracted the same attention and the socio-economic measures required to counter the divisive impact of class have never been adequately

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

resourced. How class intersects with race and gender has also received minimal attention.

Our recommendations for government action

- An end to the rhetoric that focuses on the arrival of new immigrants as the source of all British economic and cultural woes.
- Proactive engagement in positive messaging that legitimises and values migration and recognises the struggles of all the people that wish to make a new life for themselves in the UK.
- Encourage and support schools to facilitate discussions on colonial histories, racism and the rise of fascist ideologies and also pro-actively teach about secular anti racist and feminist histories that have fought back against racist violence and fascist mobilisations within local areas.
- Proactive schools work on a range of religious fundamentalist ideologies and mobilisations within the UK and their impact on dissent, on rights, and on particular groups of people.
- Avoid partnerships with and the awarding of government contracts to individuals and organisations from the most right-wing sections of our communities and known religious fundamentalists.
- Similarly, local councils should institute community education programmes, including promote events that challenge racism and help a wide range of people within local areas to learn about secular anti racist and feminist histories that have fought back against racist violence and fascist mobilisations within local areas.
- Protect secular spaces as vital for guaranteeing freedom and rights, pluralism and equality, particularly through funding of secular women's organisations that have a history of ensuring freedom *from* religion as much as freedom of religious belief.
- Put an end to discriminatory and divisive faith based schooling. Schools should be secular not faith based.
- Dis-establishment of the Church of England so that Christianity does not become the defining characteristic of British identity. This would also go a long way to stem the parity demands of minoritised religions.
- Close the loophole in the Arbitration Act 1996 that has given space to religious fundamentalists to establish religious courts that are determining family cases and perpetuating inequality and discrimination as well as the coercive control of women within minoritised communities. There should be one secular law for all.
- Focus on safeguarding women's security through preventative programmes concerned with ending VAWG and by extending support/advocacy services for women rather than securitisation measures that would bring VAWG work into the remit of counter terrorism.
- Ring-fence funding for specialist secular Black and minoritised organisations that have a history of strengthening solidarities and particularly the rights of women and children.
- Overhaul policing. Their widely acknowledged institutionally sexist and racist practices have dented any possibility of community cohesion.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

- End the practice of setting citizen against citizen like the setting up of the immigration enforcement hotline or the anti-terrorism hotline.
- End the transfer of state policing functions to the public as we have seen with the policing of so-called 'illegal' immigrants being transferred to landlords, doctors, employers, academia and so on.
- End the selective conferring of citizenship rights to migrant populations. The unbelonging and uncertainty engendered in specific groups like those subject to No Recourse to Public Funds rules destroys cohesion.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

What assessments have been made of community cohesion in the UK in a local and national context?

A great deal has been written on Community Cohesion since its introduction by New Labour in 2005.[1] Cohesion and Integration on the one hand and Preventing Violent Extremism on the other were the main policy responses to two significant events in 2001. Firstly, the northern 'race riots' where Asian communities in the north of England mobilised to defend themselves against racist attacks, an increasing Far Right presence and police harassment. Secondly, '9/11' where members of the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda flew planes into the Twin Towers in New York. This was brought home by five young Muslim men who bombed London underground trains and a bus on 7th July 2005, pledging allegiance to Al Qaeda. Unfortunately, the fight back against racism and fascism on the one hand and the very different religious authoritarian assault on freedoms on the other, were collapsed into a racist discourse about the problem with Muslims who were accused of failing to integrate into 'British society', of living in ghettos, leading 'parallel lives', and of lying in wait as dangerous fifth columns preparing attacks on British society. The threat to community cohesion from the far-right, however, did not receive the same attention from the government.

These events led to an explosion of hypotheses on 'how we got here'. Prominent right wingers gave renewed energy to Samuel Huntingdon's 'clash of civilisations' hypothesis of an inherent incompatibility between Islam and the west.[2] Ignoring all the diversity within Islam and multiple progressive innovations by Muslims, Huntingdon accused all Muslims of being inherently barbaric and uncivilised and claimed that Islam is completely at odds with 'western' commitment to freedoms and equalities. Moreover, Far Right groups such as the English Defence League weaponised our Black feminist critique of religious conservatism within minoritised communities to attack us wholesale, but Muslims in particular, as inhibiting women's and LGBT rights and enabling 'Muslim fiefdoms' across the UK who intended to impose Shariah law on everyone. There were three focal points at this stage - the construction of mosques as symbols of Muslims trying to take over the UK, the hijab and niqab as a symbol of Islam's treatment of women, and forced marriage / honour based violence as reflections of the inherently 'barbaric' nature of Islam and Muslim communities. The English Defence League advocated deportation as the only solution.

Multiculturalism as governance and lived experience *also* became the focal point of much government critique as antithetical to community cohesion which, post-2001, veered towards a new discourse of assimilation couched as 'cohesion and integration'. Combined with the War on Terror (the invasion of Iraq and new counter terrorism measures such as Prevent and Channel), Community Cohesion *claimed* to shift the Labour Party's relations with minoritised communities in the UK away from a multiculturalist settlement, that offered a level of autonomy to those

[1] The following items offer a review of this sizeable literature:
Dhaliwal, S. (2011) *Religion, Moral Hegemony and Local Cartographies of Power: Feminist Reflections on Religion in Local Politics*. Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London [Thesis]
Patel, P. and Sen, U. (2011) *Cohesion, Faith and Gender: A Report on the Impact of the Government's Cohesion and Faith Based Approach on Black and Minority Women in Ealing*. Southall Black Sisters and Oxfam. Available at: http://comodino.peacelink.org/tdt/docs/1933.pdf
Dhaliwal, S. (2011) *Gender, Faith and Equality in the UK*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sukhwant-Dhaliwal/publication/316090128_Gender_Faith_and_Equality_in_the_UK/links/58efabec458515ff23a879d3/Gender-Faith-and-Equality-in-the-UK.pdf
Dhaliwal, S. and Patel, P. (2012) 'Feminism in the Shadow of Multi-faithism: Implications for South Asian Women in the UK' in Roy, S. (ed) *New South Asian Feminisms: Paradoxes and Possibilities*. Zed Books: London.
[2] Huntingdon, S. (1993) *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Simon and Schuster: New York.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

communities, towards one that expected greater integration, even though the government's own social cohesion statistics showed then, and continue to show now, that minoritised individuals are far more likely than white people to have mixed social circles and marriages. As Ted Cantle and Herman Ouseley reported, it was 'white flight' out of diverse multicultural neighbourhoods to predominantly white areas which contributed to monocultural communities.[3]

Below we discuss our experience that, beyond the rhetoric, the reality has been a slide from multiculturalism to multi-faithism not integration because minority religious leaderships have gained a great deal of government support to expand their influence over minoritised communities and neighbourhoods.

Unsurprisingly, over the last two decades there has been a huge amount of important anti-racist critique of this government shift from multiculturalism to cohesion.[4] Anti-racist academics and activists have argued that the cohesion framework side steps government responsibility to tackle inequality, structural and institutionalised racism, and shifts the blame onto minority cultures and religions and the practices of minoritised communities for their socio-economic disadvantage. Conversely, government should be tackling racism and long histories of social housing policy that dispersed minoritised communities across the country into the poorest neighbourhoods with the worst housing conditions.[5] If anything, minorities should be applauded for the way they managed to build home ownership and successful community organisations, defend neighbourhoods from racism, and improve their economic position, in spite of the lack of support from successive governments. Second and third generation ethnic minorities in Britain were no longer viewed as established citizens but rather as immigrants in need of integration. Moreover, the critique explains that 'community cohesion' replaces an effective anti-racist strategy based on a commitment to equality and rights with moral judgements that focus on people's behaviour and sharpen the distinctions between 'good' and 'bad' migrants. Furthermore, a new range of citizenship tests were testament to the creep of the 'clash of civilisations' discourse into the heart of government policy where questions about women and LGBT rights were used to judge the humanity of minorities, and particularly Muslims in the UK. The claim to 'British values' denied the contribution of Black and minoritised communities to

[3] Asthana, A. and Parveen, N. (2016) Call to action to address growing ethnic segregation across the UK. *The Guardian*, 1st November. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/01/call-for-action-to-tackle-growing-ethnic-segregation-across-uk

[4] Key interventions include:

Burnett, J. (2004). Community, Cohesion and the State. *Race & Class*, *45*(3), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/030639680404500301

Back, L., Keith, M., Khan, A., Shukra, K. and Solomos, J. (2002) The Return of Assimilationism: Race, Multiculturalism and New Labour. *Sociological Research Online*. Volume 7, Number 2. Available at: https://www.socresonline.org.uk/7/2/back.html

Kalra, V. S., & Kapoor, N. (2009). Interrogating Segregation, Integration and the Community Cohesion Agenda. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *35*(9), 1397–1415. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903125893

Kundnani, A. (2007) *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*. Pluto Press: London.

McGhee, D. (2008) *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights*. Open University Press: Milton Keynes.

Sivanandan, A. (2006). Race, terror and civil society. *Race & Class*, *47*(3), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396806061083

Worley, C. (2005). 'It's not about race. It's about the community': New Labour and 'community cohesion'. *Critical Social Policy*, *25*(4), 483-496. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018305057026

[5] Ted Cantle's report of the independent review on the 'race riots' in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford in 2001 detailed the scale and insidious nature of racist violence against Asians in these areas yet his recommendations failed to address this.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

shaping equality legislation and the role of British governments in regimes of brutal exploitation such as colonisation. It invoked a tension between patriotism and disloyalty.

While anti-racists raised important concerns about histories of discrimination and the introduction of sinister systems of surveillance, they failed to notice that, in practice, Cohesion and Integration (now Community Cohesion) and Preventing Violent Extremism (now Prevent) were delivered through a 'faith agenda' by the New Labour government. Ushered in by Tony Blair's personal commitment to religious belief and an economic commitment to finding non-governmental partners that could alleviate the financial costs to the state, this 'faith agenda' emboldened religious leaderships at every level of government consultation, policy development and service provision, including on areas like domestic abuse where they had been mediating women back into violent relationships and denying women's and children's rights to live free from abuse.[6] The effect has been that the most conservative and right wing religious organisations within our communities have had access to roundtables and to streams of funding while secular services have been downgraded. The Cohesion and Integration claims that government needed to address 'self-segregation' of minoritised communities actually turned into an attack on progressive secular self-organising, on black and minority women's organisations that had supported and enhanced women's equality and participation in wider society. In fact, multi-faithist governance and practice became the default position for all social policies. The way that multi-faithism has been consolidated and accepted as a 'common sense' framework for addressing social problems that concern minoritised communities is starkly obvious in Alexis Jay's (2014) report on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Jay critiques multicultural governance for enabling local authority and police complicity in the sexual exploitation of white girls and impunity for Asian perpetrators, and she berates the lack of engagement with women's and children's organisations. Yet she recommends a multi-faithist response that seems to centre mosques and other local religious organisations in the prevention of sexual exploitation.[7]

Moreover, the context became extremely polarised between a racist discourse about Muslims forming dangerous 'fifth columns' within Britain and an anti-racist defensiveness that prevented any critique of Islam within progressive circles. It became even more impossible to debate Muslim fundamentalism, the actual existence of terrorist networks within Britain and the role that ought to be played by both state and civil society in challenging religious fundamentalism.

In 2007, SBS joined forces with Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) to make a submission in response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion's consultation document *Our Shared Future*.[8] In addition to the points made by anti-racists academics and activists as above, the joint SBS/WAF submission critiqued the Commission's terms of reference for:

- focusing on 'cohesion' and 'integration' rather than on human rights principles, equality and non-discrimination;

---

[6] See Dhaliwal, S. and Patel, P. (2012) 'Feminism in the shadow of multi-faithism: implications for South Asian women in the UK' in Roy, S (ed) *New South Asian Feminisms: Paradoxes and Possibilities*. London: Zed Books. Particularly pages 180-181.

[7] Jay, A. (2014) *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham* (1997-2013). Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council: Rotherham. Available at: https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/31/independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-exploitation-in-rotherham-1997---2013

[8] WAF/SBS Submission to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion dated January 2007. See https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/02/sbs-and-waf-submission-to-the-commission-on-integration-and-cohesion.pdf.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

- asserting a set of fixed 'British' values and claiming these to be superior;
- the disproportionate focus on Muslims at the expense of discussing fundamentalist mobilisations and undemocratic tendencies within other religions and communities, including Christianity;
- ignoring the role that Muslims have played in democratic processes within Britain;
- promoting the idea of 'community' without any recognition that some people do not want to be assigned to 'communities' or of the internal inequalities within communities;
- and the way that government used the opportunity to tighten immigration rules as if internal stability could only be guaranteed by strengthening borders to prevent the influx of (undesirable) migrants and refugees, which in itself reflected the view that Britain has distinct 'values' (rather than ascription to international human rights standards) and that immigrants do not share these.

The SBS/WAF submission pointed to: the hypocritical nature of New Labour's assertions about assimilation and integration on the one hand and their pursuit of partnerships with fundamentalist networks that were masquerading as 'moderates', such as sections of the Jamaat-e-Islami Party, on the other; contradictory assertions about segregation and yet the promotion of religious leaders, faith schools and 'faith communities'; the particular way in which Christianity is 'given an affirmed legal status as the ideological cement of national culture'; and the substitution of demands for equality from the liberal sections of those communities with demands for religious recognition and religious literacy as espoused by right wing community leaders. .

We also complained that one of the members of the Commission for Integration and Cohesion, Ramesh Kallidai, was the then secretary general of The Hindu Forum which in 2006 had forced the closure of a London art exhibition by the renowned Indian painter M.F. Hussain on the grounds that it offended Hindu sensibility because of his depictions of naked Hindu female deities. WAF/SBS drew parallels between M.F. Hussain's experience and the way that minority women in Britain are policed by fundamentalist and conservative sections of ethnic minority communities for so called 'transgressions' such as: Asian women in Nottingham were prevented from watching the film 'Bhaji on the Beach' in 1994; in May 1999 artists at the Southall Dominion Centre were accused of offending the local community by exhibiting photographs of the lives of Asian LGBT peoples; and in 2004 Sikh fundamentalists attacked the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and threatened the life of the playwright Gurpreet Bhatti because her play 'Behzti' told the story of rape and sexual abuse within a Sikh temple.

In fact in 2007, SBS faced the full force of the establishment of Community Cohesion Divisions and Prevent strategies across England's local councils. As a direct consequence of this new framework, the core funding for our services was threatened on the basis that our specialist service provision for Black and minoritised women was a threat to equality, diversity and community cohesion. At the exact same time, the London borough of Ealing and other local authorities were encouraging and funding the emergence of a whole new wave of Muslim women's organisations and other faith based women's organisations. Blair's 'faith agenda' and the consecutive Conservative government commitments to the Big Society, which also pushed power and funding to religious organisations, created a seismic shift in the landscape of social welfare provision as a number of secular minoritised women's organisations lost their funding and a range of faith based services came up. In the context of Labour's assertion about a post-

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

race and post-class British society, religion became the main signifier of difference and this was welcomed by religious groups, particularly right wing religious groups, who had been working for some decades to shift the character and power distribution of local neighbourhoods towards their own faith based 'cradle to the grave' provision. Southall in the London borough of Ealing and Whitechapel in the London borough of Tower Hamlets are key examples of this where two religious organisations (Sri Guru Singh Sabha and East London Mosque) dominate power relations and, with the help of government, have extended their governance over Sikh and Muslim populations in these boroughs by commandeering educational provision, youth services, advice services (including domestic abuse advice!), and funeral rites.

In 2007, Ealing Council's decision to cut SBS's funding included the following arguments: the name of our organisation was deemed to be unlawful under the Race Relations Act 1976; we were accused of excluding white women and of being discriminatory and divisive.[9] Instead the council decided to commission a borough-wide generic domestic violence service. We believed, and were proven right, that if this was left unchallenged, similar moves would be made to force the closure of Black and minoritised women's organisations across the country. These are the very organisations that had been set up to address gender inequality within minoritised communities and to enable minoritised women to participate in a democratic society. It is important to note also that the CEO of Ealing Council at this time was Darra Singh, a key member of central government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion. It's our view that these events in Ealing reflected the ideological underpinnings of the Cohesion and Integration agenda at central government. Fortunately, SBS launched, and won, a legal challenge to Ealing Council. We submitted key points on the need for secular specialist services in a context where black and minoritised women are struggling against historical and structural disadvantage, language barriers and immense cultural pressures. We also described the way that cohesion was enabled within our secular space as women of a range of cultural, national and religious backgrounds, and those with no religion, learnt about and tolerated their differences at the same time that they were empowered to challenge bigotry, hierarchies and practices that legitimise and enable violence against women and children. The High Court ruled on 29th July 2008 that there was no dichotomy between cohesion and specialist services, that providing such services promoted equality and therefore, cohesion, in stark opposition to the Council's position that 'single' group funding reinforced segregation.[10]

In 2009, we undertook our own research[11] to find out the impact of this slide from multiculturalism to multi-faithism in government policy and practice. The research involved in-depth interviews with 21 women of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. We found:

- The women were mainly believers but remained critical of tradition, culture and religion and viewed religion as a personal choice.

[9] Patel, P. and Sen, U. (2011) *Cohesion, Faith and Gender: A Report on the Impact of the Government's Cohesion and Faith Based Approach on Black and Minority Women in Ealing*. Southall Black Sisters and Oxfam. Available at: http://comodino.peacelink.org/tdt/docs/1933.pdf

[10] The full judgement is available here: https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2008/2062.html

[11] Patel, P. and Sen, U. (2011) *Cohesion, Faith and Gender: A Report on the Impact of the Government's Cohesion and Faith Based Approach on Black and Minority Women in Ealing*. Southall Black Sisters and Oxfam. Available at: http://comodino.peacelink.org/tdt/docs/1933.pdf

- They identified as being from the local area, Southall, or from a particular country, or as women first and foremost as their experiences of violence united them. They may have been believers but religion was not their social identity.
- They expressed a range of fears and mistrust of religious organisations and faith-based provision.
- They strongly rejected faith-based institutions and religious laws because they discriminated against women, and their own experiences/knowledge of the prevalence of sexual harassment and exploitation within and by them.
- The women 'adopted fluid and syncretic lifestyles … negotiating on a daily basis the right to slip in and out of various cultural and religious and non-religious spaces' and 'pushed away from those aspects that constrained their individual freedom'.
- They believed that the proliferation of faith based schools and religious tribunals would promote division.
- When asked what might promote cohesion, 'every single woman spoke of equality, respect and positive appreciation of difference'.

In our experience as service providers, we have noticed that government cuts to essential services, such as mental health facilities, have had devastating consequences for the most vulnerable sections of our communities, as well as state practices like social services' prioritising the keeping of the family unit together over the safety of women and children. Genuine community cohesion requires the state to prioritise justice and equity, and challenge oppression rather than enforce conformity. The implications of this denial extend beyond women themselves, impacting their children, who are subjected to severe instability, deprivation, and trauma. With limited access to safe housing, financial assistance, and legal protection, these children grow up in environments of insecurity, affecting their mental health, educational attainment, and future prospects. The government must recognise that children's well-being is intrinsically linked to their mothers' security, and policies excluding women with NRPF and other experiences of racism actively undermine social cohesion, and shape the lives of the next generation.

What are the primary barriers and threats to community cohesion?

From our experience, these are fourfold:

1. *The 'hostile environment' and anti-immigrant rhetoric has intensified suspicion of migrants and ushered in a new wave of colour racism*

One of the most damaging developments for cohesion and integration in the last 20 years has been the vitriolic return of a toxic anti-immigrant rhetoric and colour racism, alongside the exponential growth in anti-Muslim racism that is discussed in the next section. The links with Far Right activism are illustrated by the murder of Leeds MP Jo Cox in 2016 whose assailant chanted the slogans of Far Right organisation Britain First. The same links manifested in widespread xenophobia in the wake of the campaign to leave the EU where non-white British citizens were

told they would have to pack their bags and EU nationals were referred to as 'vermin'.[12] After years of acceleration, this spewed out on to the streets of England in August 2024 when large groups of people, not just Far Right activists, attacked hotels known to be housing asylum claimants, made threats against immigration advisors, and attacked Black and minoritised people on the street.

Following on from the discussion of Cohesion, Integration and Preventing Violent Extremism in the previous section, it's important to underline that these policies simultaneously implicated arguments for stronger immigration controls. Sivanandan astutely referred to this as the convergence of the War on Terror with the War on Asylum.[13] Immigration has continued as a hugely divisive political football, with the main political parties conceding to the racism of UKIP then Reform UK in a clamour for electoral votes, rather than amplifying messages about the value of migration and diversity. Pandering to right wing forces in this way has deepened distinctions between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' migrants, and also made the position of established BME British citizens more precarious than it was twenty years ago.

At the tail end of the last Labour government there was already a rallying cry against asylum seekers and an upswing of affective pronouncements about Britain being 'besieged'.[14] In this vein, David Cameron drew on the language of right wingers in his descriptions of desperate migrants as 'a swarm' of people coming across the Mediterranean while mainstream newspapers whipped up feelings of disgust by likening migrants to cockroaches.[15] Successive Conservative Home Secretaries positioned themselves as tough on immigration. In May 2012, as Home Secretary, Theresa May declared that she wanted to create a 'hostile environment for irregular migrants'.[16] Then in 2013, the Home Office launched Operation Vaken which included a mobile van carrying the message 'In the UK illegally? GO HOME OR FACE ARREST'. The van encouraged 'illegal immigrants' to call a number to arrange to be repatriated. The same messaging was rolled out through reporting centres where migrants were told that if life in the UK was hard they ought to go home. This was coupled with a number of other hard-line government immigration campaigns including immigration enforcement presence at train stations and bus stops, and the use of thermo-detectors to identify 'beds in sheds' followed by raids. Two new rounds of legislation in 2014 and 2016 turned a range of local people – doctors, nurses, landlords, teachers, University staff, local businesses - into internal border agents under threat of a fine if they did not check peoples' documents though they had no training on immigration law, leading to the inevitable and tragic denial of services to eligible people.[17] Immigration controls moved dramatically from the border to the everyday operations of local agencies. Thus, landlords and employers without any understanding of immigration legislation and despite the complexity of the term 'illegal immigrant' have since been required to ensure that renters and employees are in the country legally. Moreover, the then Prime Minister and a number of Home Secretaries engaged in photoshoots of immigration raids which involved the public humiliation and ejection of people

[12] Page 3 of Jones, H., Gunaratnam, Y., Bhattacharyya, G., Davies, W., Dhaliwal, S., Forkert, K., Jackson, E. and Saltus, R. (2017) *Go Home: the Politics of Immigration Controversies*. Manchester University Press: Manchester. Available in full here: https://www.manchesterhive.com/display/9781526117946/9781526117946.xml

[13] Sivanandan, A. (2006) 'Racism, Liberty and the War on Terror'. Posted to Institute of Race Relations website on 18th September. Available at: https://irr.org.uk/article/racism-liberty-and-the-war-on-terror/

[14] Hage, G. (2016) *État de siège*: A dying domesticating colonialism? *American Ethnologist*, 43: pp. 38-49. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12261

[15] Page 10 of Jones et al. (2017).

[16] https://migrantaction.org.uk/resources/regional/

[17] Goodfellow, M. (2019) *Hostile Environment: How immigrants became scapegoats*. London: Verso.

living in abject poverty. Photographs of raids on 'beds in sheds' were used to promote feelings of disgust.

As people expected and predicted, this raft of measures had an immediate impact on British black people in terms of racist discrimination in access to housing and employment as well as an increase in stop and search tactics around transport hubs. The Windrush scandal brought the implications for established minorities sharply to the fore. Government had destroyed a whole series of landing cards and thereby removed the only documents available to groups of people that had arrived as children and young adults from the Caribbean over 60 years ago to build a post war Britain. In the zealous climate of the 'hostile environment', some were deported and died or committed suicide. Though government later apologised and offered compensation for this allegedly 'unintended consequence' of their crackdown on 'illegal migrants', the assault on immigration continued and led to a great sense of uncertainty for established British residents as well as migrants whose applications were pending. It led to delays in people receiving medical assistance because they didn't have the 'right' kind of documentation and led to migrants not seeking medical assistance at the height of Covid outbreak because of a fear of deportation.[18]

An early survey[19] of local areas where the Go Home van was piloted found that local people recognised the slogan as adopted from 1970s skinheads who were involved in vicious attacks on Black and minoritised people across the UK. Survey respondents were also anxious about the impact of the government's rhetoric on cohesion within local communities, identifying it as divisive and incendiary. The vast majority were opposed to this messaging and almost a quarter believed that the government's motivations for this campaign were to increase intolerance. The majority thought this would lead to racial profiling in immigration checks, targeting people of colour, and that in turn would impact community relations.

Around 60% of the women accessing support at SBS are subject to immigration controls. They became very concerned that they would be stopped at stations and bus stops, many of them have cases in progress and would therefore be assumed to be 'undocumented' or 'irregular' migrants while they await decisions. They talked about their immense fear of going out, in case they were detained or deported and unable to explain their circumstances to officials because of language barriers and unable to access legal defence quickly enough. Combined with the ostracism they faced from families and communities because of domestic abuse, they suffered intense isolation, anxiety and depression. Even the women that had already gained the right to remain in this country as victim-survivors of domestic violence were scared of being stopped or detained.

SBS was involved in many initiatives to push back on this wholescale dehumanisation of groups of people. In 2013, we participated in the Mapping Immigration Controversies research project to engage local Black and minoritised women in focus group discussions to collate their experiences of these government campaigns.[20] At these very emotional focus group sessions, Asian, African and Caribbean women talked of the desperation among local people who feared

[18] Goodfellow, M. (2019) *Hostile Environment: How immigrants became scapegoats*. London: Verso.

[19] https://aarx.wordpress.com/2013/08/24/aarx-press-release-survey-shows-government-go-home-message-is-unacceptable/

[20] See findings from this project here : Jones, H., Gunaratnam, Y., Bhattacharyya, G., Davies, W., Dhaliwal, S., Forkert, K., Jackson, E. and Saltus, R. (2017) *Go Home: the Politics of Immigration Controversies*. Manchester University Press: Manchester. Available in full here: https://www.manchesterhive.com/display/9781526117946/9781526117946.xml Also the blog space for the research project here: https://mappingimmigrationcontroversy.com/

being deported back to countries where they would face isolation, persecution, violence, immense poverty and even economic enslavement. They talked about problems with the term 'illegal immigrant' as one that incited vitriol against a range of migrants still waiting on decisions about their applications, through no fault of their own, and the impact of Home Office delays and restrictions on their ability to support themselves through work. Some of the women wept as they narrated personal fears for their own futures and also gave examples of people self-harming and committing suicide because they feared deportation.

Given that one of these focus groups took place on the eve of European elections, we also saw a tension and breakdown in race solidarities that had long since been a strong feature of Southall. The discussions between established minorities and those still subject to immigration controls reflected the way that some minoritised communities have internalised this anti-immigrant rhetoric and the presentation of myths as fact. In the local area, we have seen Asians turning on Eastern Europeans and Caribbean residents turning on Asians – a significant blow to cohesion at the local level that has historically been built around a shared experience and resistance to immigration controls, racist violence and police brutality.

Encouraged by staff to discuss the impact of immigration raids on local people, SBS's service users led an impromptu stand against the proliferation of immigration raids in the local areas by chasing an immigration detention van out of the local area. We also supported the anti-raids network as they attempted to prevent the rounding up of asylum seekers around the country, and succeeding on many occasions. Nonetheless, we could sense a growing apathy, if not animosity. towards people subject to immigration controls and a breakdown in racial solidarities that had been one of the proudest aspects of the area.

In 2015, we called a public meeting in Southall to raise awareness of these Conservative Party campaigns and their impact, and to reinvigorate a sense of solidarity among the local community. We recognised that we needed to be actively involved in awareness raising in the local areas that would re-humanise migrants as people and shed light on their dire situation and the injustices that they face.

To highlight the impact of this new regime of internalised borders and a growing suspicion of Black and minoritised communities, we also contributed to the University of East London's research project on Everyday Borders. Their film features SBS women talking about the impact of these new regimes of internal borders.[21]

Unfortunately, the women accessing our services have continued to feel the full force of anti-immigrant rhetoric, restrictions to their access to public services, and the right to work. Our recent campaign on the No Recourse to Public Funds has highlighted the devastating consequences of what women have described as a simple technical bureaucratic distinction between migrant women and others that are fleeing domestic abuse, which leads some women to access a fairly comprehensive support package through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 while others who are not on a spousal visa are plunged into poverty, isolation and re-victimisation.[22]

---

[21] Nava, O. *Everyday Borders*. London: UEL. Available here: https://www.livingrefugeearchive.org/digital_archives/videos/everydayborders/

[22] There is growing research evidence on this point. See:
Dhaliwal, S. and Kelly, L. (2023) *Living at the Edge: CWASU Evaluation of the Support for Migrant Victims Programme*. London, CWASU. Available at: https://cwasu.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FINAL-CWASU-Evaluation-of-the-Support-for-Migrant-Victims-programme_12th-June-2023-3.pdf

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

There are clear links between this hierarchy of provision and service response that has acted as a relentless assault on immigrants, ongoing curtailment of their human rights and Britain's commitment to the refugee convention.

2. *Racist violence and the Far-Right mobilisations across the country*

There has been an exponential growth in Far-Right activism in the UK since the late 1990s. While the Far-Right is a great deal more splintered than it was just twenty years ago (and Hope not Hate suggests that the Radical Right within parliamentary politics is more influential now)[23], it is united in its focus on immigration and Muslims and in calls for repatriation and ethnic cleansing.[24] Hope not Hate argue that anti-immigrant politics remains at the heart of Far-Right organisations; they identified 'at least 123 specifically anti-migrant demonstrations and 158 visits to accommodation by so-called "migrant hunters" during 2023'.[25] This is reflected in the shift of Prevent/Channel and CT attention to Far-Right activism after the murder of Jo Cox MP – with a 'record number of far-right activists and sympathisers convicted of terror-related offences' in 2023 and at least one fifth of Prevent referrals of racial supremacists posing a significant threat.[26] It is worth noting though that the vast majority of those on the list of government's proscribed organisations are still Islamists; only two Far-Right organisations are on the current list. Moreover, the racist violence of August 2024 was the climax of waves of anti-Muslim racism that has been aided by every Islamist attack (9/11 then 7/7 then several attacks since 2017). Tell MAMA UK reported a 335% increase in anti-Muslim incidents in 2023. In the aftermath of the racist violence in August 2024, SBS, supported by 65 organisations wrote to the Prime Minister with a list of 12 demands to tackle the rise of the Far-Right. This included ending austerity policies, setting forth a positive and evidence-based narrative on immigration and tackling the unchecked spread of misinformation on social-media platforms.

Sadly, violence against women has become a key feature of Far-Right mobilisation particularly since Andrew Norfolk's 2010 expose of Asian/Muslim gangs sexually exploiting white girls. Consecutive Far-Right factions have instrumentalised VAWG to justify violence against minorities. Even more terrifying is the fact that this destructive and divisive crusade was easily shared by large numbers of the general public and led to attacks on places of safety for vulnerable

---

Southall Black Sisters (2019) *Protection for All: The Domestic Abuse Bill and Migrant Women. A Briefing Paper*. Southall: Southall Black Sisters.
Thiara, R. (2019) *Safe and Secure: The No Recourse Fund*. Southall: Southall Black Sisters.
Amnesty International and Southall Black Sisters (2008) *'No Recourse', No Safety: The Government's failure to protect women from violence*. London.
Anitha, S. (2010) No recourse, no support: State policy and practice towards South Asian women facing domestic violence in the UK. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40 (2), pp. 462-79.
Anitha, S. (2011) Legislating Gender Inequalities: The Nature and Patterns of Domestic Violence Experienced by South Asian Women with Insecure Immigration Status within the UK. *Violence Against Women*, 17 (10), pp. 1260-1285.

[23] Hope not Hate (2024) *State of HATE report 2024: Pessimism, Decline, and the Rising Radical Right.* London: Hope not Hate. Available at: STATE OF HATE 2024 – HOPE not hate

[24] Social Scientists Against the Hostile Environment (eds) (2020) Migration, Racism and the Hostile Environment: Making the Case for the Social Sciences. Section 4. Social Science contributions to the study of racist and anti-racist social movements and organisations: 4.1 Understanding and analysing the far-right. Available at: ssahe-report-march-2020.pdf (wordpress.com)

[25] Hope not Hate (2024) *State of HATE report 2024: Pessimism, Decline, and the Rising Radical Right.* London: Hope not Hate. Available at: STATE OF HATE 2024 – HOPE not hate

[26] Ibid.

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

migrants as well as colour racism against African and Caribbean British nationals. These supremacist tactics are creating a palpable sense of fear, particularly among Black, minoritised and migrant women and children with the least state protections. We must not allow them to claim to represent victim-survivors of VAWG - even more reason to ensure there are sufficient resources provided for women's organisations to support victim-survivors of VAWG who only go to racial and religious supremacists when they are not able to access any other help.

3. *Religious fundamentalism and religious identity politics*

By religious fundamentalism we mean modern political movements that reinterpret religion along conservative and extremist lines to gain or consolidate power, whether working within or in opposition to the state. We differentiate fundamentalism from religious observance, which we see as a matter of individual choice. At the heart of fundamentalist projects is the control of women's minds and bodies as women are seen as upholders of community morals and traditions. More recently we have used the term supremacy to highlight the connections between the ideologies and practices of racial, religious and male supremacist formations because all three are systems of 'election', where ideologues and their followers claim particular groups of people to be inherently superior to others on the basis of 'race' or religious belief or sex. Supremacist ideologies condemn a wide range of Others as inferior, immoral, heathen, uncivilised, and less deserving of rights. Even though many supremacist formations use the language of human rights, they are not human rights defenders because they do not believe in nor uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that human rights are *universal*, *inalienable* and *indivisible*. Rather these ideologies and networks believe that 'their chosen people' have more rights and entitlements than others. Obviously, the imposition of these ideologies is deeply divisive and relies on strong distinctions - in most cases also physical separation - between Us and Them. Supremacist beliefs are steeped in inequality, discrimination and segregation.

Religious fundamentalist mobilisations within minoritised communities in the UK started in earnest with Sikh fundamentalist demands for a separate theocratic state of Khalistan, on our doorstep in Southall. This had little traction among Sikhs in England initially but that changed dramatically in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assault on the Golden Temple in 1984 and the anti-Sikh riots later that same year. However, it was the Rushdie Affair that really brought transnational networks of fundamentalist activism to the fore, when the publication of the novel *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie led to two key global Muslim fundamentalist networks – the Jamaat-e-Islami party and Khomeinism – surfacing within the UK through public book burnings in the northern towns of England and a march through central London. Ayatollah Khomeini, then leader of Iran, issued a fatwa (Islamic legal pronouncement) condemning Rushdie to death and Rushdie went into hiding for over three decades. The legacy of this hatred of Rushdie resurfaced in 2022 when Hadi Matar viciously attacked the author at a public event in New York, leaving him hospitalised and with impaired vision.

Women all over the world have been at the forefront of the fight against religious fundamentalism. At SBS, we felt a visceral affinity with the assault on Rushdie's right to write, to dissent and to doubt, as we had been subjected to similar religious authoritarian and conservative attempts to silence and shame us. In 1989, we joined forces with women from a wide range of ethnic, national and religious backgrounds, atheists and agnostics to form Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) and we took a public stand in solidarity with Rushdie. We asserted women's right to contest

and doubt manifestations of religion, culture, tradition and norms, and to challenge self-styled leaderships that claim to represent us. Through a counter protest to the London march, we asserted Black women's tradition of struggle not submission.[27] That moment symbolised our distinct position – as standing against the illiberal stance of Muslim men on the march on the one hand, and white fascists that had organised an anti-Muslim counter-protest on the other.

The Rushdie Affair introduced the first major challenge to a multicultural settlement between the UK and minoritised communities. It heightened the tension between the 'freedom to' assert religious beliefs and make demands for religious recognition, and the need to safeguard 'freedom from' religion as the right to not believe, to dissent and question, to live free from the influence of religion, religious leaders and religious organisations. It brought a huge number of simmering demands for religious accommodation to the surface, especially for the extension of the then blasphemy laws protecting Christianity to also cover Islam and to extend rather than abolish state funding for religious schools. It was clear that these demands were made more credible and could be couched in the language of parity because of the privileged position of Christianity in Britain and state funding of Christian denomination and Jewish schools. We therefore took the view that disestablishment was both important and necessary and we actively campaigned for a secular state and secular services as the only way to protect freedom from religion as well as freedom to a range of religious interpretations and practices that do not subscribe to the narrow versions being imposed by this new wave of religious authoritarian movements. The claims of religious victimhood among Muslims was cemented in a new discourse of 'Islamophobia' that protected religious authorities and shut down feminist critiques of religion by framing them as anti-Muslim racism.[28]

However, while we focused on opposing the political forces behind the anti-Rushdie protests (Jamaat-e-Islami party and Khomeinism), the entrenchment of religious demands and dress codes escalated as Muslim fundamentalists gathered supporters, and other conservative Muslims asserted their religious identity in the face of growing racist portrayals of *all* Muslims as intolerant and barbaric. This period sees the secular cultural dress of South Asian women giving way to the proud adoption of the hijab by Muslim women, conflating their racial and religious identities, as a response to growing anti-Muslim racism. Some Muslim women also argued that the hijab protects them from the sexualisation of women within western capitalist societies.

Muslim fundamentalist networks have grown exponentially over the last four decades, particularly ascription to Salafi-Jihadi ideologies. They are employing sophisticated strategies to restructure social relations and service provision by effecting change through government spaces and non-governmental and even human rights spaces. There have been parallel developments with Sikh and Hindu fundamentalist organisations also making demands for religious accommodation (according to their narrow right wing interpretations of that religion) and effectively imposing religious governance on local areas such as Southall, Slough, Tower Hamlets, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Bradford, and Derby.

---

[27] See Sahgal, G. (1989) *Hullabaloo over Satanic Verses* Channel 4: Bandung File. A two part documentary. Part 1 is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki5n9CDVeqg and part 2 is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLbx47Nyfio

[28] https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/01/gendered-islamophobia-joint-submission-southall-black-sisters-one-law-for-all-and-council-of-ex-muslims-of-britain.pdf

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

In the London borough of Tower Hamlets, the Jamaat-e-Islami secured the East London Mosque and developed cradle-to-the-grave services. Their growing congregations also assured them of a firm space in government consultations and, as they became a key target for the English Defence League, they also became a location for anti-fascist organisers and a whole network of anti-Iraq War and Guantanamo meetings. The East London Mosque has demonstrated growing authoritarian tendencies, including surveillance of women, a normative pressure on them to wear the hijab, warn against alcohol consumption, and encourage the marginalisation of Ahmadiyyahs. This growing intolerance has been reflected in bursts of violence against LGB and T residents and bars in Shoreditch.

Similarly, Sikh fundamentalist influence has grown exponentially across areas where Sikhs are concentrated in the UK (namely Southall, Slough, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Derby). Our local area, Southall, is home to right wing Sikh organisations that have been implicated in violence against minority sects and Punjabi artists. It is also home to sects and activists that sought asylum from persecution by Sikh fundamentalists in Punjab.[29] However, as with the east London mosque, the Sri Guru Singh Sabha (SGSS) gurdwaras, infiltrated by Sikh fundamentalists who openly circulate the hateful speeches of the Khalistani leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, dominate consultations between Southall residents and the local council and central government. They also have a visible presence at the huge annual religious Sikh processions through Southall. Sikh fundamentalists seek control over how the religion is understood and practiced, control over members of its Quam ('nation'), particularly 'their' women and children, by implementing strategies to prevent interfaith marriage and control the sexual autonomy of Sikh heritage women. Two groups in particular – Sikh Awareness Society and Sikh Youth UK – have encouraged vigilante opposition to interfaith marriages to force gurdwaras up and down the country to reject requests for interfaith marriages on their sites (at threat of extreme violence) as they crack down on 'mixing'. They have been vociferous in spreading anti-Muslim hatred by weaponizing the conviction of Muslim heritage men for sexual offences.[30] At the same time, they are silent on sexual offences committed by Sikh men and Sikh religious leaders.[31] The recent partnership of the Sikh Awareness Society and Tommy Robinson, formerly of the English Defence League, and their weaponisation of sexual exploitation is a stark reminder of the way that racial and religious supremacists work together to sow division and hate.

Similarly, Hindus are able to by-pass government scrutiny through projections of themselves as 'good migrants'. However, the community in the UK has been radicalised and influenced by the steady growth of the popularity of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), an Indian political party, led by Narendar Modi, which has embraced Hindutva, a nationalist politics which privileges Hindus as citizens of India, and has initiated and encouraged anti-Muslim and anti-Christian pogroms. The

[29] Chopra, R. (2011) *Militant and Migrant: The Politics and Social History of Punjab*. Routledge: India.
[30] For an overview see: Dhaliwal, S. (2016) Resurgent Sikh fundamentalism in the UK: time to act? *openDemocracy*, 18th October. Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/resurgent-sikh-fundamentalism-in-uk-time-to-act/
And
Jhutti-Johal, J. and Hundal, S. (2019) *The Changing Nature of Activism Among Sikhs in the UK Today*. London: Commission for Countering Extremism. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5daebff9e5274a5cb3074d74/the-changing-nature-of-activism-among-sikhs-in-the-uk-today-221019.pdf
[31] See Southall Black Sisters' and Sikh Women's Aid evidence to the Independent Inquiry on Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings here: https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/cp-religious-organisations-settings.html

presence of 60,000 Hindus at Modi's appearance at Wembley Stadium in 2015 is indicative of the scale of Hindutva sentiment and activism within the UK. Not enough people recognise the multiple avenues that are being used to influence and shift government policy to accommodate these right wing views.[32] However, there has been a consistent alliance of progressive South Asian organisations that have attempted to raise this. Over the years, SBS joined forces with other South Asian activists in Britain to speak out against the horrific murder of Muslims by the Hindu Right at Ayodhya in northern India in 1991 in Gujarat in west India in 2002, to draw attention to donations of gold bricks by Hindu communities in the UK for the rebuilding of the 'Ram temple' in Ayodhya, and in the growing intolerance of minorities within India in the wake of a Modi's election as Prime Minister of India.[33] However, the extent to which anti-Muslim hatred has become normalised across diasporic Hindu communities in the UK was acutely visible in the violence in Leicester in 2022 where social media platforms were used to spread misinformation that led to Hindu vigilante violence.[34] In the 2019 national elections, BJP set up extensive WhatsApp networks in the UK to influence the Hindu vote against the Labour Party because of its statement of support of Kashmir,[35] including 'fake news' that Sadiq Khan was planning to ethnically cleanse London of Hindus, although this was a national election and not a mayoral one. Yet despite the significant evidence of Sikh and Hindu fundamentalist hatred and violence in the UK, there has been little or no government attention to this. If anything, they have been patronised.

Moreover, recent critiques of Prevent have pointed to the way that government had recruited Muslim fundamentalist groups like MEND to do PVE work even though they are themselves invested in discriminatory supremacist ideologies. We know of Sikh fundamentalists that have also gained power and legitimacy through government spaces including one group that supported the Conservative government's deportation campaign Operation Skybreaker. And the previous section discusses the inclusion of Hindu Right activists in the Commission on Cohesion and Integration.

4. *Multi-faithist governance and the assault on secular spaces*

As discussed in the first section of this submission, social policy didn't actually move from multiculturalism to cohesion or integration, it moved from multiculturalism to multi-faithism. This involved a double movement where sophisticated religious fundamentalists nurtured religious identities on the ground, while New Labour then Conservative governments pushed a 'faith agenda' from above.

Although New Labour initially entered government with a strong human rights and anti-racist agenda – having established the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010 and opened inquiries into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and forced marriage – this was compromised by its counter push towards religious communitarian-ism where it relied on religious organisations to support its desire to shrink the welfare state. Tony Blair nurtured a new settlement that involved

[32] Sinha, R. (2024) British Hindus must take a stand against groups promoting Hindu supremacy in the UK. *The Wire*, 24th July. Available at: https://thewire.in/communalism/british-hindus-must-take-a-stand-against-groups-promoting-hindu-supremacy-in-the-uk

[33] Patel, P. (2003) 'Rama or Rambo? Then Rise of Hindu Fundamentalism' in Gupta, R. (ed) *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers: Southall Black Sisters*. Zed Books: London.

[34] Bridge Initiative Team (2023) Hindutva in Britain. *Bridge: A Georgetown University Initiative*, 24th November 2023. Available at: https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/hindutva-in-britain/

[35] https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/nov/08/british-hindus-urged-whatsapp-messages-vote-against-labour accessed 10/02/25

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

the state in active de-secularisation of every aspect of social welfare provision and government's relationship with civil society, particularly as regards ethnic minorities. As discussed above, even the preventing violent extremism work involved a large-scale transfer of resources to faith based, particularly Muslim, organisations. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) administered a range of funds to encourage and consolidate a role for religious organisations in the public sphere. Moreover, the DCLG produced 'myth-busting guidance' to counter the concerns of local authorities that were uncertain about engaging religious organisations, with little pause for reflection on the historical reasons for supporting secular public services. These New Labour commitments then trickled down through state apparatus at national, regional and local levels, including to the Greater London Assembly and government-led quangos. All this enabled religious organisations to have formal lines of influence over policy and practice in a wide range of areas, including domestic violence – an area where they had previously been accused of compromising the safety and rights of women and children. Religion became a structuring principle for responses to social problems.

Political parties had relied on ethnic, religious, caste and kinship networks to get them voted and these were quite quickly galvanised to establish religious councils modelled on the Jewish Board of Deputies which was seen as very successful. The Muslim Council of Britain, the Network of Sikh Organisations and the Hindu Forum of Britain were established. Other than the specific establishment of a Muslim Women's Network in 2002, these new national governance bodies are male dominated, and in our WAF/SBS submission we noted that this new faith agenda 'accelerated the process of communalisation of what were once Asian or even Black communities'.[36]

In addition to the flow of money into faith based women's groups and away from secular specialist services (as discussed above), education and family law featured strongly as spaces where religious organisations, particularly fundamentalists, could access government support to institutionalise their control over members of 'their' group and thereby consolidate parallel governance and parallel lives.

a. Faith schools and religious accommodation

Part of our campaign for secularism involved calling on the state to withdraw funding for faith schools, and opposition to the Education Act 1988, which imposed Christian worship within state schools. Locally we saw that Sikh parents and governors had eyed opportunities under Thatcher's government to take local secondary schools out of the control of the local state. We joined forces with several other secular Left and anti-racist groups to launch the Save Our Schools (SOS) campaign and found a great deal of support among parents and residents who were worried that the Sikh groups would establish more conservative schools that would enable greater policing of young people, especially young women, and that they would closely monitor, regulate and restrict the life choices of their students. We were able to support the parents to stop this happening and retain a secular comprehensive in the heart of Southall, an important victory in the face of a growing number of faith based schools in the local area. But unfortunately, the last Labour government pushed an exponential growth in the state funding of faith schools. There is now significant evidence of the discriminatory and divisive nature of faith based

[36] https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/02/sbs-and-waf-submission-to-the-commission-on-integration-and-cohesion.pdf

schooling – even though some of these look multi-ethnic in composition, admissions policies restrict entry to people of their faith and/or other faiths and places are not available to non-believers, plus there is evidence of homophobic bullying and opposition to holistic relationships, sex and health education, alongside strong messages from teachers and heads against sex outside of marriage and women's reproductive rights. A recent SBS victory exposed the strict gender segregation within faith based schools as well as the problem with the class content.[37]

At the same time, conservative and religious parents have strategically used parent power and access to governing boards to impose their particular religious views on the curriculum content, particularly the teaching of RE/RSHE classes, attempted to influence the school curriculum by taking charge of the board of governors of local secondary schools. Birmingham and the London borough of Newham have been flash points for this strategy in recent years. In 2019, we actively supported local parents and teachers to push back against a Muslim lobby at Anderton Park School in Birmingham who accused the Head teach of sexualising their children when she simply introduced primary school age books about diverse family forms. A particularly aggressive protest outside the school threatened local LGBT and secular parents who wanted to support the Head teacher. Meanwhile in East London, fundamentalist groups were meeting local Muslim parents to tell them they are obliged by Islam to use their leverage to determine the curriculum within their child's school.[38]

b. Religious incursion into family law

For several decades, SBS[39], One Law for All[40] and other organisations in the UK have highlighted the ways that religious bodies actively undermine and obstruct access to justice and violate the rights of minoritised women, children and religious minorities within those communities. This is particularly the case for victim-survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse, who are consistently pressurised to mediate with violent and abusive partners and extended families, as well as concede to child access demands even when these jeopardise their safety and the wellbeing of their children. To date, there is no evidence that religious institutions have acted in the best interests of the most vulnerable within our communities, no matter how many women are involved in the running of the institutions. There is, however, considerable evidence[41] that they have strengthened the power and control of husbands, male family members and mothers in law, and violated human rights[42].

Moreover, religious ADRs in the UK have been founded by men with narrow, conservative, and/or fundamentalist views of women, marriage and the family unit. They are religio-political projects that are deeply invested in the institution of marriage and patriarchal family structures and tied into wider political projects on community self-governance. There is no evidence that they are apolitical and benevolent agencies motivated by social

[37] Patel, P. (2018) The story of a feminist victory against fundamentalists and gender segregation in UK schools. *openDemocracy*, 11th January. Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/feminist-victory-fundamentalists-gender-segregation-uk-schools/
[38] https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/02/feminist-dissent-briefing-paper-on-rse.pdf
[39] https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/religious-arbitration-and-womens-rights/
[40] https://onelawforall.org.uk/10-years-of-one-law-for-all-timeline/
[41] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/sharia-debate-who-will-listen-to-us/
[42] https://onelawforall.org.uk/6997-2/

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

justice and equalities. Indeed, the examples given by spokespeople of The Sikh Court amount to support for coercive control, significant undermining of women's autonomy, and the right to freedom *from* religion. In one example, a Sikh woman's reason for divorce is presented as a petty overreaction to her husband not washing his own underpants when it turns out that the woman had been struggling with the overbearing presence of her mother-in-law. In another example, a woman is criticised for cutting her own and her son's hair while her ex-husband's 'religious rights' are defended.

SBS have made evidence-based submissions[43] to government and to The Law Society. These submissions cite a range of case examples (Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish) on the discriminatory practices of religious arbitration bodies which effectively institute parallel legal systems over families within minoritised communities. Despite attempting to distance itself from the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal and Shariah Councils because of widespread critique of these bodies, The Sikh Court is no different in its objectives.

While representatives of The Sikh Court claim that they are not a religious court because they defer religious judgements to the Akal Takht in Amritsar[44], they will operate on amorphous 'Sikhi principles' which are themselves open to interpretation and debate. They lay claim to 'equality' and 'integrity' as key principles but if this is so, why not focus energies on ensuring that the UK legal system delivers on those? More worryingly, if they are not a religious court, why have their members pledged an oath of allegiance to the Panj Pyare and the Akal Takht, a religio-political edifice in Punjab that has wide reaching influence over Punjabis around the world?

Religious conservatives seek to impose their political projects and their particular version of the religion through a range of legal avenues, educational projects and social welfare services. SBS have documented the ways that they have capitalised on cracks within government policy and the shrinking welfare state, including severely restricted legal aid provisions and a burgeoning pressure on the secular court system, to increase their own capacity and legitimacy to govern and police the lives of minoritised communities. In fact, the Sikh Summit Report[45] that accompanies this development precisely lays out a plan for enlarged self-governance of Sikh communities in the UK. Sikhs in Britain are not homogenous, yet just one version of Sikhism lies at the heart of these initiatives. This will invariably lead to the institutionalisation and privileging of this one interpretation of Sikhism and give rise to further accusations of blasphemy and apostasy against those that pose a challenge to their interpretation and authority over Sikhs in the UK; disproportionately impacting victim-survivors attempting to escape domestic abuse and other harmful practices.

What can be done at a local and national level to improve community cohesion?

It is vital that all approaches to tensions and violence within local areas is addressed through a civil liberties framework and upholds indivisible human rights for all, no matter what the

[43] https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/69170/pdf/
[44] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akal_Takht
[45] https://sikhsinlaw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Current-Summit-Report-amended.pdf

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

residence or citizenship status of their populations. We have fought hard for the recognition of equalities and it is vital that government is actively involved in tackling inequality at every level.

Specifically, we urge government to take the following steps:

- End the rhetoric that focuses on the arrival of new immigrants as the source of all British economic and cultural woes.
- Proactive engagement in positive messaging that legitimises and values migration and recognises the struggles of all the people that wish to make a new life for themselves in the UK.
- Encourage and support schools to facilitate discussions on colonial histories, racism and the rise of fascist ideologies and also pro-actively teach about secular anti racist and feminist histories that have fought back against racist violence and fascist mobilisations within local areas.
- Proactive schools work on a range of religious fundamentalist ideologies and mobilisations within the UK and their impact on dissent, on rights, and on particular groups of people.
- Avoid partnerships with and the awarding of government contracts to individuals and organisations from the most right wing sections of our communities and known religious fundamentalists.
- Similarly, local councils should institute community education programmes, including promote events that challenge racism and help a wide range of people within local areas to learn about secular anti racist and feminist histories that have fought back against racist violence and fascist mobilisations within local areas.
- Protect secular spaces as vital for guaranteeing freedom and rights, pluralism and equality, particularly through funding of secular women's organisations that have a history of ensuring freedom *from* religion as much as freedom of religious belief.
- Put an end to discriminatory and divisive faith based schooling. Schools should be secular not faith based.
- Dis-establishment of the Church of England so that Christianity does not become the defining characteristic of British identity. This would also go a long way to stem the parity demands of minoritised religions.
- Close the loophole in the Arbitration Act 1996 that has given space to religious fundamentalists to establish religious courts that are determining family cases and perpetuating inequality and discrimination as well as the coercive control of women within minoritised communities. There should be one secular law for all.
- Focus on safeguarding women's security through preventative programmes concerned with ending VAWG and by extending support/advocacy services for women rather than securitisation measures that would bring VAWG work into the remit of counter terrorism.
- Ring fenced funding for specialist secular Black and minoritised organisations that have a history of strengthening solidarities and particularly the rights of women and children.
- Overhaul policing. Their widely acknowledged sexist and racist practices have dented any possibility of community cohesion.

- End the practice of setting citizen against citizen like the setting up of the immigration enforcement hotline or the anti-terrorism hotline.
- End the transfer of state policing functions to the public as we have seen with the policing of so-called 'illegal' immigrants being transferred to landlords, doctors, employers, academia and so on.
- End the selective conferring of citizenship rights to migrant populations. The unbelonging and uncertainty engendered in specific groups like those subject to NRPF rules destroys cohesion.

What examples are there of best practice which has positively impacted community cohesion?

SBS has played a vital role in challenging division and inequality, enabling cohesive communities and protecting the most vulnerable people during periods of tension and conflict, especially for those women who have no recourse to public funds, have no status, and are impoverished. Our **Community Engagement Model** is a more effective model, one that prioritises empowerment, active participation, and systemic change. Our model is rooted in human rights and the recognition that solidarity, empowerment, and systemic change are fundamental.

The following are the key components of our Community Engagement Model. This work has helped to nurture and support deep and meaningful relationships, solidarities, and a sense of belonging among the women that use our centre, among children and young people, and among local Southall residents:

- **Our women's support group** meets weekly and is available to all women that are being supported by the advocacy team. This support group has ensured that women who have had to stand up to cultural and religious pressure and may have been ostracised from their whole family or community can find company and solidarity by building a 'home from home' with other women using the centre. The support group has provided a space for them to share their experiences, to talk about contemporary political events and engage in artistic and developmental activities that offer them new skills and diverse mediums to process their pain and, most importantly, to envision a better life. Through the support group, we have challenged oppressive structures around the women by fostering solidarity and ensuring meaningful inclusion. The support group meetings include discussion-based sessions which challenge religious and cultural bigotry, and enable women to critically engage with coercion and discrimination, fostering progressive dialogue within communities.
- **Using art to challenge oppression:** through our support group work but also more widely, we have established collaborative partnerships with cultural and educational institutions that have in turn engaged Black and minoritised women and amplified their voices in public spaces. We have engaged the support group in **free public film showings, dance and theatre productions,** exhibitions, and installations that raise awareness of issues such as immigration struggles and domestic violence , pushing back against the shame of speaking out on what is happening within homes across the borough. This is an important way to reclaim public space for women. Our collaborations with museums and galleries ensures that Black minoritised and migrant histories are

included in the national narrative and within the activities of these mainstream institutions.

- **Providing legal and advocacy support:** Integrating casework support ensures that women facing domestic violence, forced marriage, or insecure immigration status get access to justice.
- **Promoting secularism and protecting our centre as a secular space** that can be accessed by women and children with a range of religious beliefs and none. This assures space for religious diversity and also freedom from religion. It protects spaces for dissent and the right to critique religion and religious proscriptions that have been used to silence women and perpetrate violence against them. By fostering an environment free from religious imposition, SBS promotes genuine community cohesion based on mutual respect rather than dominance. We have built cross-community solidarity by working with diverse organisations, ensuring that community cohesion is built on solidarity rather than forced assimilation.
- **Developing leadership and advocacy skills:** we have encouraged women to engage in campaigns and public discourse to change the narrative but also equip them with the tools to become change-makers within their communities.
- **Workshops and public education through schools work:** Engaging young people in discussions about sex equality, anti-racism, and relationships education fosters a more inclusive society. We have consistently supported teaching staff within secondary schools and further education colleges to engage children and young people in activities and debates on the following topics: forced marriage and honour based abuse, religious fundamentalism, sexism, and resistance to racism. We also devised a free and comprehensive education pack - the ***Changing Hearts and Minds*** pack – which is aimed at supporting teachers, educators and youth workshop facilitators to equip them with structured activities and resources that empower them to raise awareness, challenge and positively influence young people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to violence against BME women and girls.[46]
- **Teaching local histories:** we have been actively engaging local communities to rebuild racial solidarities through a range of creative and educational events marking key historical moments in the construction of Southall as a space of unity and resistance. This has included talks in schools, local exhibitions such as at Gunnersbury Museum, and walking history tours. These are vital for reproducing solidarity and a progressive sense of community in the face of supremacist violence.

How should community cohesion be best approached in schools?

We need to re-invigorate anti-racist solidarities by teaching every generation about local histories of unity and campaigning against racist violence and the Far Right. Particular attention should be paid to the unifying political category of Black as an important way for signifying shared histories of colonisation, racism and migration as well as unity of common purpose. We need to be much

[46] It can be downloaded here: https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/news/changing-hearts-and-minds-pack/

more explicit about the difficult migration journeys and struggles of local populations and actively foreground the immense value of immigration to the UK.

Most schools already celebrate diversity through assemblies and they mark cultural, religious and national differences through dedicated activities, such as lantern making for Chinese New Year, or a focus on a particular country and language such as Spanish food and language in one term and teaching on Romanian language and food the next. These ways of recognising difference are important for pushing against assimilationist tendencies and rising racism within local communities, as well as for enhancing the self-worth of minoritised students. Historically, a focus on cultural and religious diversity has replaced more concerted educational efforts on racism and what we need is a commitment from schools to do more on overt discussions about structural, institutional racism and racist attacks as well as the way that communities have resisted these.

Moreover, there are power relations and differences within minoritised communities and the teaching of religion and national/regional histories has tended to be determined by conservative men from within those communities. As we have discussed above, educational spaces have been targeted by fundamentalist networks seeking to fix representations of their religion and impose religious proscriptions on 'their' group, particularly utilising SACREs (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, parental power, and representation on school boards of governors for their own political leverage. For instance, conservative Sikhs have been quick to access SACREs to project the Sikh religion as only the Khalsa version of that religion, thereby marginalising a whole range of practices and interpretations including Valmiki, Ravidassi and Namdhari interpretations. Muslim leaders have used multifaith forums to marginalise Ahmadiyyas and to institutionalise the claim that they are not Muslim.[47] They have both attempted to impose their version of the religion as the right one, as fixed through time and distinct from culture, rather than acknowledge that religion is the cause and consequence of cultural, political, social and economic transformations and religious practice is syncretic and fluid. Moreover, religious accommodation has been used to prevent minoritised children from accessing a full and deep discussion of healthy relationships and sex education, and has particularly limited the bodily autonomy of minoritised girls. Religious accommodation should not trump the school's duty to ensure the indivisible rights of all children at the school, particularly girls and LGBT students. Moreover, as the 2006 ruling on Begum vs Denbigh School asserted, schools need to be mindful of the impact of demands for religious accommodation on the rights and freedoms of ALL the other students at their schools.

As young people are accessing racial, religious and male supremacist ideological content through peer networks and social media platforms, we are encountering high levels of sexism and homophobia within schools. Staff are also anxious about offending religious sensibilities. Our own research with teachers at three local secondary schools, found that they mostly wanted assistance with the tension between ensuring gender equality and the growing pressure to accommodate religious demands that effectively limited the participation of girls at their schools.[48] The discussion on Anderton Park School and on gender segregation within faith based

[47] See examples in Dhaliwal, S. (2011) *Religion, Moral Hegemony and Local Cartographies of Power: Feminist Reflections on Religion in Local Politics.* Doctoral thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London [Thesis]

[48] Dhaliwal, S. and Patel, P. (2006) *Multiculturalism in secondary schools: Managing conflicting demands*. London Metropolitan University: London. Available at:

schools in the earlier sections of this submission have shown how religious identities are mobilised to undermine equality and diversity.

Actively promoting the participation of girls in every sphere of education should be carried out in the context of a whole school approach to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) which takes seriously the connections between gender based violence and sex equality to address this across the whole curriculum and school operations.[49]

We also need to actively address racist bullying within schools that has led students, such as Sairika Watkins-Singh, to pin their experiences of racism to claims for religious accommodation when in actual fact the schools failed to address racist bullying and racial discrimination.

On religious diversity, a Beliefs and Values Module should replace Religious Education in the National Curriculum to ensure there are active and open discussions of religions as philosophies rather than as historically static, fixed prescriptive entities. Such a module should also ensure space for discussion of non-belief, atheism, and the right to freedom *from* religion, as well as give space to a discussion of the ways that religious fundamentalist projects have impacted dissent, syncretic traditions within communities, varied interpretations, the rights of non-believers, and the particular rights of women/girls and LGBT people.

Schools should be secular spaces as these assure space for people of all religions and none. The practice of multiculturalism and multi-faithism has encouraged the state to conflate issues around racism (direct, structural, institutional) with religious identity as defined by fundamentalist and conservative religious leaderships. This has had the effect of limiting secular spaces in which dissent and the voices of marginalized sections of the 'community' can be raised. Secularism is not a denial of religious beliefs, it is an assurance that the schools as public spaces will enable all voices to be heard. Schools should not institutionalise religious dress and religious assemblies or prayers as this leads to moral hierarchies and they have as much of a responsibility to assure freedom from religion as they do to freedom of religion.

Elsewhere, we have been involved in the co-production of a briefing paper on RE/RSE [50]which welcomes the introduction of government guidance on the delivery of RE/RSE but also identifies three issues that threaten the roll out of this commitment that need to be urgently addressed to ensure that students gain maximum benefit from this mandatory requirement: space for flexibility in its delivery has placed head teachers vulnerable to considerable pressure from fundamentalists and anti-RSE lobbyists; parental rights are being given priority over children's rights and this carries the potential to significantly undermine the introduction of RE/RSE (as we have seen at Anderton Park School with something as simple as talking about diverse family forms); the way that the guidance privileges consultation with religious groups and religious leaders reinforces power hierarchies within our communities. It is far more important that schools are encouraged to work with and consult women's organisations and children's

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316090482_Multiculturalism_in_Secondary_Schools_Managing_Conflicting_Demands

[49] See EVAW (2023) *It's #About Time: A whole school approach to ending violence against women and girls*. London: EVAW. Available at: https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FINAL-About-Time-WSA-report-140723.pdf

[50] https://southallblacksisters.org.uk/app/uploads/2025/02/feminist-dissent-briefing-paper-on-rse.pdf

organisations that have a proven track record of work in this area. The Feminist Dissent/ SBS briefing paper also makes a number of recommendations that are relevant here:

1. The government must uphold and promote the non-discrimination and equality principles in all schools in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998 and other international human rights laws and standards to enable all children to flourish and develop their full potential and participate in society as citizens.

2. The government must advance the interest of equality by centring the rights of all children and guaranteeing access to a full and varied education including access to relationships and sex education.

3. Children's rights to education should be underpinned by a rights-based approach to education rather than an approach that is compromised by religious or cultural sensibilities that seek to limit the right of all children to access education in its broadest sense.

4. RSE teaching should be made compulsory in all schools and taught in accordance with equality and human rights law in an age appropriate way to all children, regardless of their backgrounds. Particular attention must be paid to the promotion of equality between the sexes and adherence to the requirements of the Istanbul Convention on combatting violence against women and girls which the government has committed to ratifying.

5. RSE content must form a core rather than a discretionary component of the national curriculum, delivered through fixed sessions and monitored by Ofsted. The content should be decided by a group of experts with backgrounds in education and in promoting equality and upholding human rights principles, especially in relation to gender equality within minority communities.

6. Schools should seek to consult a range of groups and stakeholders within minority communities including women, sexual minorities and other sub-groups who are also members of minority communities. Religious or faith-based organisations and groups should not be privileged or assumed to be representative of community needs and values.

7. The right of parents to withdraw children from sex and relationships education must be abolished. The right to freedom of expression, to be safe from violence, to enjoy a healthy childhood and to a full and equal education for all children must be fully protected.

8. The teaching of diverse family forms must form an essential part of the RE/RSE curriculum so that schools can foster a culture in which all children feel valued and can develop a sense of self-worth.

9. Schools and their regulatory bodies must have greater awareness of how conservative and fundamentalist religious forces seek to control educational content in order to curtail the right of all children to have equal access to knowledge and information. Particular

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road • Southall
Middlesex • UB1 3BL
T: 020 8571 9595 • F: 020 8574 6781
Helpline: 020 8571 0800
E: info@southallblacksisters.co.uk
www.southallblacksisters.org.uk

attention must be paid to demands that restrict children's and women/girls' right to access information that promotes healthy relationships, intellectual, sexual and bodily autonomy.