

SPEAK!

An opinion piece on topical issues relevant to BME communities

'All Things Being Equal'

Racial equality is key to the establishment of strong, vibrant and sustainable communities. It represents a bridge to a wider range of social outcomes, which can bring people together. Where 'real' equality exists, barriers to progress are removed and where barriers are removed, people are equipped to make positive choices for themselves and others. In this way, racial equality can be seen as a building block for successful communities. One which makes it possible for all who live within them, to fully realise their individual and collective potential.

Social inclusion is an important indicator of a society that values racial equality. But it is important to explode the myth that social inclusion and equality are the same thing. They are not. It is possible to have access to opportunity but still be socially excluded. A person can be enabled to attain the highest academic standards

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(equality) and still not be recognised for their achievements (exclusion). Equally, one can purchase a home in an upmarket area (equality) and be shunned by their neighbours (exclusion). The fact is, equality is a bridge to social inclusion, but not necessarily a guarantee of it.

Like social inclusion, community cohesion is an equally important indicator of racial equality. A cohesive community is one where people get on well together, where they are recognised and valued (inclusion) and where

there are no barriers to their active participation (equality). Clearly, it is impossible to establish community cohesion, when there is inequality. If people do not have access to the same social and economic opportunity, what will they be able to contribute to the well being of their areas, even if given the chance to do so? Like social inclusion, equality is a bridge to community cohesion, but not necessarily a guarantee of it.

Understanding and establishing the link between equality, social inclusion and community cohesion is key to ensuring that together, we can work towards these outcomes in the most effective way. It ensures that we can target resources, implement interventions and correctly recognise success when we see it.