

Let's Talk About Racism

A Comprehensive Resource by AEMWG CIC
Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group

This report provides a comprehensive resource on racism in Britain — written by and for ethnic minority women. It covers the many forms racism takes, from the overt to the invisible; the concept of intersectionality; the particular violence of 'polite' British racism and workplace discrimination; practical support for friends, parents, and immigrants; racism in Scottish schools; the uncomfortable but essential topic of interminority and lateral racism; discriminatory policies that disproportionately affect ethnic minority mothers; ethnic minority population data and the critical data gap; community voices from Aberdeen; institutional racism in NHS Grampian and schools; and a curated reading list of British resources.

It draws on the lived experiences of women in Aberdeen and across Scotland, the research presented at our annual women's conferences, and the collective expertise of community organisations working on the front line of racial equality.

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1. Types of Racism

Racism is not a single thing — it operates on multiple levels simultaneously. Understanding these different forms is essential for recognising, naming, and challenging racism in all its guises. Each type reinforces the others, creating a system that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Individual Racism

Personal prejudice, slurs, microaggressions, or discriminatory behaviour from individuals.

Individual racism includes racial slurs, 'jokes', stereotyping, refusing service, physical intimidation or violence motivated by race. It also includes microaggressions — the everyday comments like 'Where are you really from?' or 'You speak English so well' that may seem small but accumulate into a constant reminder that you are seen as 'other'. Every instance matters.

Real-World Examples

- A stranger shouts 'Go back to your country' in the street.
- A colleague makes a 'joke' about your food smelling different.
- Someone touches your hair without permission because it's 'exotic'.
- A taxi driver refuses to pick you up, then picks up a white passenger immediately after.
- 'You don't look like a doctor/lawyer/engineer' — because their mental image of competence is white.

"This country is over-run by Indians — a comment aimed at an ethnic minority woman and her child while walking home from school. This is not a rare occurrence. Street-level racism targeting mothers and children is a daily reality for ethnic minority families in Aberdeen and across Scotland."

— AEMWG Community Member

Institutional Racism

Discrimination embedded in organisations — schools, workplaces, police, healthcare, and housing.

Institutional racism operates through policies, practices, and procedures that disadvantage people of colour — even without individual intent. The Macpherson Report (1999) defined it as 'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin.'

Real-World Examples

- Racial profiling by police — Black people in England & Wales are 7x more likely to be stopped and searched (Home Office, 2023).
- The ethnicity pay gap — Bangladeshi men earn 20% less than white British men in equivalent roles.
- Black Caribbean children are 3x more likely to be permanently excluded from English schools.
- Ethnic minorities wait longer for NHS treatment and report worse experiences of care.
- CVs with 'ethnic-sounding' names receive 24% fewer callbacks than identical CVs with 'white-sounding' names (Nuffield College, Oxford).

Structural Racism

The way history, laws, and social systems create racial inequality across generations.

Structural racism is the cumulative effect of centuries of colonialism, slavery, and legal discrimination. It explains why ethnic minorities are more likely to live in poverty, have poorer health outcomes, face barriers in education

and employment, and be underrepresented in positions of power. It is not about individual bad actors — it is about a system that was designed to benefit some groups over others and has never been fully redesigned.

Real-World Examples

- Ethnic minorities make up 18% of England's population but hold only 10% of board positions in FTSE 100 companies.
- Black households in the UK have 10p of wealth for every £1 held by white households (Runnymede Trust).
- Ethnic minority communities were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 deaths — a direct consequence of structural inequalities in housing, employment, and healthcare access.

Cultural Racism

The assumption that one culture's values, beliefs, and standards are superior to others.

Cultural racism devalues the languages, traditions, dress, food, and practices of ethnic minority communities. It shows up in dress codes that ban headscarves or natural Black hair, curricula that centre only European history, media that stereotypes or erases people of colour, and the constant pressure to 'assimilate' and abandon your identity to be accepted. Your culture is not inferior — it is your strength.

Real-World Examples

- School dress codes that prohibit headscarves, turbans, or natural African hairstyles.
- The national curriculum teaching almost exclusively European history — as if the British Empire had no impact on the rest of the world.
- Media portraying Muslim women as 'oppressed' and Black men as 'dangerous' — creating stereotypes that shape real-world interactions.
- 'You should be grateful to be here' — as if living in Britain requires permanent gratitude from people of colour.

Colour-Blind Racism

'I don't see colour' — denying that race plays a role in people's experiences.

Colour-blind racism sounds positive but is harmful: by claiming not to see race, it dismisses the real, lived experiences of people who face racism daily. Phrases like 'I don't see colour', 'All lives matter', or 'I treat everyone the same' shut down conversations about racial injustice and make it harder to address inequality. Acknowledging race is not divisive — ignoring it is.

Real-World Examples

- 'I don't see colour, I just see people' — but colour shapes how institutions, employers, and police see YOU.
- 'All Lives Matter' — a phrase that emerged specifically to silence Black Lives Matter, not to uplift anyone.
- 'The best person should get the job, regardless of race' — ignoring that 'the best person' is judged through a racially biased lens.
- 'Why do you have to make everything about race?' — because race is already in everything; you just have the privilege of not noticing.

Environmental Racism

Ethnic minority communities disproportionately exposed to pollution, poor housing, and health hazards.

Environmental racism means that communities of colour are more likely to live near industrial sites, landfills, and major roads. They face higher air pollution, worse housing conditions, fewer green spaces, and greater

exposure to toxic substances. This leads to higher rates of asthma, cancer, and other health conditions. Where you live should not determine whether you breathe clean air.

Real-World Examples

- In London, areas with the highest air pollution are disproportionately home to Black and South Asian communities.
- Ethnic minority families are twice as likely to live in overcrowded housing (English Housing Survey).
- The Grenfell Tower disaster killed 72 people — the majority from ethnic minority backgrounds — in housing that had been neglected for years.

2. Ethnic Minorities in Aberdeen & Scotland

Understanding the demographic landscape is essential to contextualising racism. The Scotland Census 2022 provides the most recent data, though significant gaps remain — particularly for ethnic minority women.

2.1 Scotland Census 2022 — National Overview

Scotland's 2022 Census recorded 5.44 million residents, with 9.1% identifying as an ethnic minority (non-White Scottish/British), up from 4% in 2001. The fastest-growing groups include Other White (primarily Polish and other European), Asian Scottish, and African Scottish communities.

Ethnic Group	Population	% of Scotland
White Scottish	4,007,000	73.7%
Other White British	434,000	8.0%
Other White (incl. Polish)	295,000	5.4%
Pakistani / Pakistani Scottish	56,000	1.0%
Indian / Indian Scottish	40,000	0.7%
Chinese / Chinese Scottish	37,000	0.7%
African Scottish	36,000	0.7%
Mixed / Multiple Ethnic	32,000	0.6%
Arab / Arab Scottish	14,000	0.3%
Roma	3,218	0.06%
Other groups	~45,000	~0.8%

2.2 Aberdeen City — Local Picture

Aberdeen City has a population of approximately 225,000. Its ethnic minority population is proportionally higher than the national average due to the city's university and energy sectors attracting international professionals and students.

Ethnic Group	Population	% of Aberdeen
White Scottish	134,800	60.0%
Other White British	24,300	10.8%
Other White (incl. Polish)	25,398	11.3%
Indian	3,100	1.4%
Pakistani	2,200	1.0%
Chinese	3,400	1.5%
African	4,600	2.0%
Arab	1,900	0.8%
Mixed / Multiple	2,400	1.1%
Other ethnic groups	1,500–2,000	0.7–1.0%

2.3 The Indian Community in Aberdeen

Aberdeen's Indian community (~3,100 people) includes long-settled families and recent arrivals working in oil & gas, healthcare, and academia. Many Indian women face compounded discrimination based on race, gender, accent, and immigration status. The community contributes significantly to Aberdeen's economy and cultural life, yet remains underrepresented in civic decision-making.

2.4 The Data Gap

Census data, while useful, masks important realities:

- Most public data does not disaggregate by BOTH ethnicity and gender — making the specific experiences of ethnic minority women invisible.
- Hate crime data is widely acknowledged to undercount — many victims do not report, particularly women, immigrants, and those with insecure immigration status.
- Health outcomes data rarely breaks down by specific ethnic group, masking disparities between, for example, Somali and Nigerian communities grouped together as 'African'.
- Without data, policymakers can claim there is 'no evidence' of a problem — which is itself a form of structural racism.
- AEMWG calls for mandatory ethnicity AND gender disaggregation in all public data collection in Scotland.

2.5 Beyond the Census Categories

Census tick-boxes flatten enormously diverse communities into single labels. The realities behind each category — nationality, faith, language, skin tone, tribe, caste, and migration history — are far more complex than the data suggests, and these assumptions shape how people are treated every day in Aberdeen.

Arab & Middle Eastern (~1,900 in Aberdeen)

The “Arab” category is often assumed to mean “Muslim” — but Aberdeen’s Middle Eastern community includes Christians from **Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Georgia and Cyprus**, as well as Druze, Alawite, Bahá’í, Yazidi, Jewish and secular families. Many Christian Arabs belong to ancient churches (Maronite, Coptic, Chaldean, Syriac, Melkite, Assyrian) that pre-date most Western denominations. Conflating “Arab” with one religion erases this diversity and fuels Islamophobia directed at people who may not even be Muslim.

Chinese & East Asian (~3,400 in Aberdeen)

The “Chinese” tick-box collapses people from **mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and the wider East and South-East Asian diaspora** into one label — alongside Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Filipino and Indonesian residents who are often miscategorised. Many are Christian (Catholic and Protestant), Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim or non-religious. Taiwanese and Hong Kong residents in particular are frequently mis-identified and assumed to share political views, language or faith they do not hold.

African (~4,600 in Aberdeen)

“African” covers 54 countries and thousands of ethnic and language groups. Aberdeen’s African community includes Nigerians, Ghanaians, Kenyans, Ugandans, Zimbabweans, South Africans (*Black, mixed-race and white Afrikaner/English*), Sudanese, Somali, Eritrean, Congolese and many others — alongside Black residents from the **Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Guyana)** who are often grouped into “African” by people who don’t see the difference. Faith ranges across Christian (Catholic, Pentecostal, Orthodox, Anglican), Muslim, and traditional belief systems.

Crucially, **tribal, national and historical tensions travel with people**. Many Africans in the diaspora do not naturally see eye-to-eye with one another because of tribe, nation, language, or colonial history. A pan-African label hides this — and means support services often misjudge who can safely sit in the same room.

Latin American & South American

Latin America is a **huge Catholic-majority population** that the UK system barely understands. Latinas can be white-presenting, Black, Indigenous, Asian-descended or any mix — all speaking Spanish or Portuguese. The “Hispanic / Latin American” label is missing from most Scottish equality monitoring forms entirely, leaving these residents statistically invisible.

Colourism runs deep across Central and South America. Black and Indigenous Latin Americans are often looked down on within their own communities, and many families carry deep shame about Indigenous or African heritage — a legacy of colonial racial hierarchies that is rarely named in the UK.

“A Brazilian woman who didn’t look white or brown — with a heavy accent — told me she was white and not an ethnic minority, and that her child was ‘mixed race’. It was a quiet lesson in lateral racism, and in how deeply shame about Indigenous and Black heritage still travels with people.”

— AEMWG Founder reflection

Why this matters: When services design for “the Arab community” or “the African community” as if each were one group with one faith and one viewpoint, they get it wrong — and women who don’t fit the assumed mould fall through every gap. Naming this complexity is the first step to designing support that actually reaches everyone.

3. Intersectionality

Intersectionality — a term coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 — describes how different aspects of a person's identity (race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, faith, immigration status) overlap and create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. It is not about adding up oppressions — it is about understanding how they interact.

Why It Matters

A Black woman does not experience racism and sexism separately — she experiences a specific, combined form of discrimination that is different from what a Black man or a white woman faces. An ethnic minority woman with a disability faces barriers that neither the disability rights movement nor the anti-racism movement fully addresses on its own.

Real-Life Intersections

- **Race + Gender:** Ethnic minority women face both racial discrimination and sexism — often simultaneously. In workplaces, they are less likely to be promoted than either white women or ethnic minority men.
- **Race + Faith:** Muslim women wearing hijab face specific targeting that combines Islamophobia with racial prejudice. Sikh men wearing turbans face similar intersectional discrimination.
- **Race + Disability:** Ethnic minority people with disabilities report being disbelieved, undertreated, and excluded from both mainstream disability services and ethnic minority community support.
- **Race + Class:** Working-class ethnic minority communities face compounded barriers in education, housing, and employment that middle-class ethnic minorities may not experience to the same degree.
- **Race + Immigration Status:** Women with insecure immigration status who experience domestic abuse face an impossible choice: report the abuse and risk deportation, or stay silent and endure it.
- **Race + Age:** Older ethnic minority women face isolation, language barriers, and exclusion from services designed for a younger or white population.
- **Race + Sexuality:** LGBTQ+ people of colour may face racism within LGBTQ+ spaces and homophobia or transphobia within their ethnic communities.

Why Intersectionality Matters for Policy

Policies designed to tackle 'racism' without considering gender miss the experiences of women of colour. Policies on 'women's issues' without considering race erase the specific challenges faced by ethnic minority women. Intersectionality demands that we hold all these lenses at once — uncomfortable as that is.

4. The Quiet Violence

Not all racism announces itself. Some wears a smile. Some hides behind policies. Some lives in what people *don't* do. Understanding the difference is key to naming it — and fighting it.

Polite Racism

Polite racism is NOT the same as microaggressions.

Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional. Polite racism is **deliberate** — the perpetrator knows exactly what they are doing but wraps it in social acceptability. It is racism with a smile. It is designed to exclude, belittle, or control while maintaining plausible deniability.

Examples of Polite Racism in Britain

- 'You speak English so well!' — implying that competence in English is surprising for someone who looks like you.
- 'Where are you *really* from?' — refusing to accept 'Aberdeen' or 'Glasgow' as an answer because your skin colour doesn't match their idea of Scottish.
- 'I don't see colour — I treat everyone the same' — which actually means: 'I refuse to acknowledge the racism you experience.'
- 'You're not like other [ethnic group] people' — intended as a compliment but revealing deep-seated stereotypes about 'other' people from your background.
- 'Can I touch your hair?' — treating an ethnic minority person's body as exotic and available for inspection.
- Clutching a handbag when a Black person sits next to you on the bus — a gesture that communicates suspicion without a single word.
- Speaking slowly and loudly to someone because they look 'foreign' — despite them speaking perfect English.
- Assuming an ethnic minority professional is the cleaner, assistant, or junior — never the boss.
- 'I'm not racist, but...' — the universal prelude to something racist.
- Praising an ethnic minority child for being 'well-behaved' with surprise — as if good behaviour from a Brown or Black child is exceptional.

Workplace Racism

Workplace racism in Aberdeen is widespread, normalised, and rarely addressed. AEMWG consistently hears from women who experience daily discrimination in public and private sector workplaces.

Common Workplace Experiences

- A co-worker saying 'They don't like anything Brown' to your face — and getting away with it because they were drunk, while 20 people do nothing.
- Your boss screaming at you for a trivial work issue days after you reported racism — and none of your co-workers intervene.
- Being passed over for promotion despite stronger performance, while less qualified colleagues advance.
- Exclusion from social events, networking opportunities, or key meetings that shape career progression.
- Your ideas are ignored until a white colleague says the same thing and receives praise.
- Being asked to represent 'the ethnic minority perspective' in meetings — tokenism disguised as inclusion.
- HR dismissing complaints with 'It's just a personality clash' or 'They didn't mean it that way.'

What You Can Do as a Colleague

- Speak up in the moment if safe: 'That's not okay' or 'What did you mean by that?'
- Check in privately with the colleague afterwards — 'I saw what happened. Are you okay?'
- Offer to be a witness — your written account can support a formal grievance.
- Report it yourself — you don't need to be the target to raise a complaint.
- Push for meaningful anti-racism training — not a tick-box online module.

5. Community Voices: Lived Experiences

The following accounts are drawn directly from AEMWG members and women who have participated in our workshops, conferences, and support groups. Their words are presented here to ensure that institutional decision-makers hear what ethnic minority women in Aberdeen experience daily.

5.1 Access to Venues & Public Spaces

Finding safe, accessible spaces in Aberdeen's city centre has been a persistent barrier for ethnic minority women's groups. Council venues and cultural spaces charge prohibitive rents, while community centres available to EM groups are often in distant locations, poorly maintained, and not centrally located.

"Finding a space in the city centre for ethnic minority women has been a barrier. Most venues have high rent — including council venues like the Art Gallery and council spaces — except for distant community centres that are not maintained and are not centrally located."

— AEMWG Community Member

"Many women's groups reported how they were dismissed or told 'there is no space' as soon as venue staff saw they were ethnic minority women."

— AEMWG Community Member

5.2 Everyday Racism & Stereotyping

Our membership consistently reports experiences where professionals and community assumed ethnic minority women and children are economically disadvantaged, regardless of their actual backgrounds. This patronising behaviour reflects deeply embedded racial stereotypes.

"Women from our membership reported their children facing racism. Many assume ethnic minority women and children are poor and behave in patronising ways — because most are humble professionals who do not correct them."

— AEMWG Community Member

"A South Asian woman who was a Chief of Staff was spoken down to and offered charity tins with condescending remarks. She didn't correct them."

— AEMWG Member Testimony

"Women walking on the road wearing hijab were targeted with verbal abuse and intimidation."

— AEMWG Member Testimony

5.3 NHS & Healthcare

AEMWG is partnered with NHS Grampian to address racism experienced by both ethnic minority staff and patients. Reports from our community include:

- EM staff experiencing microaggressions and exclusion from career progression opportunities.
- Patients receiving dismissive treatment or having symptoms attributed to cultural factors rather than clinical assessment.
- Language barriers used as justification for reduced service quality, rather than providing appropriate interpretation.
- Mental health services failing to account for cultural context, leading to misdiagnosis or non-engagement.

AEMWG's partnership with NHS Grampian aims to embed anti-racism into clinical practice, staff training, and patient engagement — moving beyond tokenistic diversity statements to measurable institutional change.

5.4 Workplace Anti-Racism Training

Current workplace anti-racism training across Aberdeen's public and private sectors is wholly inadequate. The standard approach — sending staff a link to an online module — produces no meaningful change in attitudes or behaviour.

The Problem

- Council and NHS 'training' often consists of a 20-minute online module with a tick-box quiz.
- Private sector organisations frequently have no anti-racism training at all.
- Link-based training creates a compliance record without creating understanding.
- Staff complete modules without reflection, discussion, or accountability.
- Ethnic minority staff are sometimes asked to 'share their experiences' in training sessions — re-traumatising them for the education of their colleagues.
- Organisations use completed training as evidence of 'commitment to diversity' while continuing discriminatory practices.

What AEMWG Recommends

AEMWG advocates for **full-day, facilitated anti-racism training** delivered by people with lived experience. This must be mandatory across:

- **Aberdeen City Council** — all public-facing and management staff.
- **NHS Grampian** — clinical and administrative staff at all levels.
- **Private sector** — particularly recruitment, HR, and customer-facing roles.
- **Schools** — all teaching and support staff, with annual refresher sessions.

Training must include: historical context of racism in Scotland; understanding of intersectionality; practical scenario-based exercises; community-led content; and accountability mechanisms for implementation.

AEMWG recommends: training led by people with lived experience; mandatory follow-up actions; measurable outcomes; and consequences for non-compliance.

6. Practical Support Guides

These guides are designed for real situations — written by women who have lived them. Share them with friends, family, colleagues, and community members.

How to Support a Friend Experiencing Racism

- Listen without dismissing — never say 'Are you sure it was about race?'
- Don't centre yourself — this is not about your feelings or your guilt.
- Ask what they need — sometimes it's action, sometimes it's just being heard.
- Educate yourself — don't rely on your friend to teach you about racism.
- Be prepared to lose comfort — supporting someone against racism may mean challenging people you know.
- Follow through — don't just express sympathy and disappear. Check in again.

For Parents of Mixed-Race Children

- Your child will face questions about identity from both sides — prepare them with pride, not defensiveness.
- Learn about your partner's culture deeply — your child deserves to see both cultures celebrated equally.
- Challenge racist comments from your own family — silence is complicity.
- Find diverse communities where your child sees themselves reflected.
- Acknowledge that your child's experience of race may be very different from yours — listen to them.

For Immigrants Facing Racism

- You have the right to be treated with dignity regardless of your immigration status.
- Report hate crimes to Police Scotland (101) — you do not need to give your immigration status.
- Contact EASS (0808 800 0082) for discrimination advice — it is free and confidential.
- Keep a record of racist incidents — dates, times, locations, witnesses. This helps if you decide to report.
- Connect with local community organisations — AEMWG is here for you.
- Document incidents: date, time, location, what was said, any witnesses. This helps if you choose to report.
- Your immigration status does NOT affect your right to report a crime.

How to Be an Anti-Racist

- Being 'not racist' is not enough — anti-racism requires active effort to challenge and dismantle racism.
- Examine your own biases — take the Harvard Implicit Association Test honestly.
- Support ethnic minority-led organisations financially and with your time, not just with words.
- Challenge racist 'banter' — 'It's just a joke' is how racism gets normalised.
- Diversify your life: your social circle, the media you consume, the businesses you support.
- Teach your children anti-racism from an early age — they are never too young.
- Accept that you will make mistakes. Apologise, learn, and keep going.

How to Talk About Racism

- Acknowledge your own blind spots. You won't always get it right — but trying matters.
- Amplify their voice in spaces where they are underrepresented or unheard.
- Teach your children to see and celebrate difference — not pretend it doesn't exist.

Conversation Starters

- With a friend: 'I've been learning about this — can I share something with you?'
- With family: 'I know we've never talked about race, but I think it's important.'
- In the workplace: 'I think we should talk about this — it affects our colleagues and our culture.'
- If someone shuts down: 'I understand this is hard. I'm here when you're ready to talk about it.'
- Follow up — one conversation rarely changes minds. Consistency shows you mean it.

7. Racism in Schools

Our second women's conference focused on combating racism in workplaces, public spaces, and schools. A key theme was how racism affects school children — particularly those targeted because of their cultural heritage, religious beliefs, or the way they look.

The Scale of the Problem

- Children as young as 5 report being called racial slurs at school.
- Parents report schools dismissing complaints as 'playground banter'.
- Teachers sometimes fail to recognise racist behaviour — or participate in it through lowered expectations.
- Ethnic minority children are more likely to be disciplined and less likely to be praised.

5.1 Disproportionate Targeting

"In schools, ethnic minority children are disproportionately targeted by school admin as they are deemed to be 'not local' and their parents powerless."

— AEMWG Community Member

"There are no anti-racism workshops or curriculum in our schools. White students and families often discriminate for playdates or sharing resources with Black or Brown students."

— AEMWG Community Member

5.2 Physical Violence & Institutional Inaction

"A child was physically attacked and the school admin did nothing about it because the children who attacked were local whites."

— AEMWG Parent Report

The failure to act on racial violence sends a clear message: ethnic minority children's safety is secondary. AEMWG calls for mandatory incident reporting, anti-racism training for all school staff, and restorative justice processes.

5.3 SEND Children: Double Barriers

Ethnic minority children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) face compounded discrimination — racial bias layered on top of disability exclusion.

"When SEND ethnic minority children are present, they receive double barriers. Many SEND parents were refused support or even a central WhatsApp group to come together, as some schools were actively trying to remove them from mainstream schools."

— AEMWG Community Member

5.4 Faith-Based Targeting

"Catholic, Christian, and Muslim children are targeted by atheist ideologies and teachers too. Faith is treated as something to be corrected rather than respected."

— AEMWG Community Report

5.5 Domestic Abuse Survivors Targeted by Schools

"Women who are ethnic minority and experienced domestic abuse were targeted by school staff and reported to social services even if they haven't done anything wrong."

— AEMWG Member Testimony

This weaponisation of safeguarding processes against EM mothers — particularly abuse survivors — compounds trauma and deters women from seeking help.

5.6 Food, Faith & Cultural Erasure

"Children with different food preferences due to faith and allergies who are ethnic minority were targeted, being told 'you are in the UK so be more British.' These are real occurrences."

— AEMWG Member Testimony

Requiring children to abandon cultural food practices under the guise of 'integration' is a form of cultural erasure that violates both the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What Parents Can Do

- Put every complaint in writing — emails create a paper trail that schools cannot ignore.
- Request the school's anti-bullying and equality policies — they are legally required to have them.
- Contact the local authority's equality officer if the school fails to act.
- Report hate incidents to Police Scotland (101) — racial bullying is a criminal matter.
- Connect with other parents — collective voices are harder to dismiss.
- Contact AEMWG for support and advocacy.

Remember

Your child's safety is not a 'sensitivity issue'. Racial bullying is a safeguarding matter. Schools have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to prevent and address it. You are not being difficult — you are being a parent.

8. Interminority & Lateral Racism

Interminority racism — prejudice between and within ethnic minority communities — is a reality that anti-racism movements have been slow to address. It is uncomfortable. It is also essential.

What It Looks Like

- **Anti-Black prejudice within South Asian communities** — colourism, stereotyping, and social exclusion of Black people by some South Asian individuals and families.
- **Anti-Asian prejudice within Black communities** — stereotyping, resentment, and dismissal of Asian experiences of racism.
- **Colourism within South Asian and African communities** — lighter skin is privileged, darker skin is devalued. This is a direct legacy of colonialism, but communities must take responsibility for perpetuating it.
- **Anti-Roma prejudice** across multiple ethnic minority communities — Roma people face discrimination from both the white majority and other ethnic minorities.
- **Religious prejudice** between minority faith communities — Islamophobia within some Hindu and Sikh communities; anti-Hindu sentiment within some Muslim communities. These divisions serve no one but those who benefit from minority communities being fractured.
- **Caste-based discrimination** among South Asian diaspora communities — a form of intra-community racism that is often invisible to outsiders but deeply harmful.
- **New vs. established immigrants** — newly arrived immigrant communities looking down on established minorities, or established minorities resenting new arrivals — competition for resources replaces solidarity.

Why This Matters

Lateral racism weakens collective power. When minority communities fight each other, the structures that oppress all of them remain unchallenged. Solidarity is not optional — it is strategic.

What We Can Do

- Name it. Lateral racism thrives in silence. Calling it out within our own communities is essential.
- Educate ourselves about other communities' histories and struggles — ignorance breeds prejudice.
- Build cross-community alliances — attend each other's events, support each other's campaigns.
- Challenge family members and community leaders who express prejudice against other minorities.
- Children absorb these prejudices. Breaking the cycle starts with honest conversations at home.
- True anti-racism means opposing ALL racial hierarchies — including the ones we participate in.

9. Discriminatory Policies & Ethnic Minority Mothers

Ethnic minority mothers in Aberdeen and across the UK face a unique intersection of racism and bureaucratic control that is rarely acknowledged in mainstream policy discussions. These policies and practices — often framed as 'safeguarding' or 'compliance' — function as instruments of coercive control over women whose immigration status, accent, or appearance marks them as 'other'.

9.1 The 'Permission Letter' Culture

One of the most insidious examples is the requirement — imposed by some schools, travel companies, and public bodies — for ethnic minority mothers to produce written permission from their husbands before travelling with their own children or making decisions about their children's education.

This practice is:

- Not routinely required of white British mothers.
- Based on racist assumptions about South Asian, Middle Eastern, and African family structures.
- A form of institutional coercive control — the state and its agencies become instruments of patriarchal control.
- Deeply humiliating and disempowering for women who are already navigating racism and, in some cases, domestic abuse.

"Do you have permission from your husband? — asked of an ethnic minority mother by a travel company when booking a trip with her own children. White mothers making identical bookings were not asked this question."

— Based on Elizabeth Spencer, LinkedIn, 2025

9.2 The Motherhood Penalty

Ethnic minority mothers face compounded disadvantage in the labour market:

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi mothers have the lowest employment rates of any demographic group in the UK.
- Black Caribbean mothers are disproportionately in insecure, low-paid work.
- Employer assumptions about 'cultural commitments' are used to justify not hiring or promoting ethnic minority mothers.
- The childcare system is designed around a working pattern and cost structure that excludes many ethnic minority families.

9.3 Safeguarding as Surveillance

Ethnic minority mothers — particularly those who have experienced domestic abuse — report being subjected to disproportionate scrutiny by social services, schools, and healthcare providers:

- Referrals to social services based on cultural practices, accent, or appearance rather than evidence of harm.
- Assumptions that ethnic minority parenting practices are inherently deficient or dangerous.
- Women who report domestic abuse finding themselves investigated as 'risks' to their own children.
- Fear of social services preventing women from seeking help — trapping them in abusive situations.

Source: Elizabeth Spencer, 'Do you have permission from your husband?', LinkedIn, 2025. Available at: [linkedin.com/pulse/do-you-have-permission-from-your-husband-elizabeth-spencer-vl3qe](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/do-you-have-permission-from-your-husband-elizabeth-spencer-vl3qe)

10. Reading & Resources

Essential Reading

- **Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race** — Reni Eddo-Lodge — *The book that broke open Britain's conversation about race. Essential.*
- **Brit(ish)** — Afua Hirsch — *What does it mean to be British and Black? A personal, political exploration.*
- **Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire** — Akala — *A powerful analysis of how race and class intersect in Britain.*
- **The Good Immigrant** — ed. Nikesh Shukla — *Essays by 21 British writers of colour on what it means to be 'other' in modern Britain.*
- **White Fragility** — Robin DiAngelo — *Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism — and why they must.*
- **How To Be an Antiracist** — Ibram X. Kendi — *A roadmap for actively fighting racism in ourselves and society.*
- **Me and White Supremacy** — Layla Saad — *A practical workbook for examining and challenging personal racism.*
- **Empireland** — Sathnam Sanghera — *How the British Empire shaped modern Britain — and why most British people don't know it.*
- **Black and British: A Forgotten History** — David Olusoga — *The untold history of Black people in Britain, spanning two thousand years.*
- **The Colour of Madness** — ed. Samara Linton & Rianna Walcott — *Mental health, race, and racism in the UK — essential for anyone in healthcare.*

Key Organisations

Organisation	Website	Focus
AEMWG CIC	aemwg.org	Ethnic minority women's support (Aberdeen)
Runnymede Trust	runnymedetrust.org	UK's leading race equality think tank
EHRC	equalityhumanrights.com	Equality & Human Rights Commission
EASS	equalityadvisoryservice.com	Free discrimination advice
Show Racism the Red Card	theredcard.org	Anti-racism education through sport
Kick It Out	kickitout.org	Equality & inclusion in football
Stephen Lawrence Foundation	stephenlawrence.org.uk	Anti-racism education & young people
BEMIS Scotland	bemis.org.uk	Ethnic minorities umbrella body (Scotland)

Key Contacts

Emergency & Support Numbers

- Police Scotland (non-emergency): **101**
- Emergency: **999**
- EASS (Equality Advisory Support Service): **0808 800 0082**
- ACAS: **0300 123 1100**

- Tell MAMA (anti-Muslim hate): **0800 456 1226**
- AEMWG: **workshops@aemwg.org**
- Victim Support Scotland: **0800 160 1985**

Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group CIC

aemwg.org | workshops@aemwg.org

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