



Breaking Barriers:

The Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice 5th Report on Dismantling Racism in the Church

The West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative is dedicated to ensuring that the Church of England embodies justice, equity, and love for all people. As the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice releases its latest report, it is essential to highlight key achievements and ongoing efforts to dismantle systemic racism within the Church. The ACRJ, established to address racism across theology, history, and participation, is nearing the end of its mandate in 2024. However, its work must continue. By raising awareness of these milestones, we can build momentum and encourage the wider Church community to join in this transformative journey toward lasting racial justice.

1. Theology & Slavery

• Legacies of Justification:

The Commission reviews historical teachings that justify slavery, examining their impact on modern-day church practices and beliefs.

• Reckoning with History:

Confronting the Church's role in systemic racism and its intellectual support for the British slave trade.



2. History & Memory

- **Monumental Change:** Re-site or contextualise monuments to slave traders in churches, transforming them from symbols of oppression into tools for education and reflection.
- **Emotional Harm:** Developing statutory guidelines to handle emotional harm caused by these memorials.



3. Culture & Liturgy

- **Diverse People Inhabiting Praise:** Conference: Brought together clergy and experts to discuss the inclusion of diverse voices in Church liturgy.
- **New Worship Resources:** Partnering with the Liturgical Commission to integrate UKME/GMH voices in worship materials.



4. Participation

Mentorship Program: Launched a mentorship program for UKME/GMH clergy, growing diverse leadership in the Church. The number of UKME/GMH clergy in ordination has **risen from 6% in 2017 to 13.2% in 2024.**

5. Challenges & Resistance

Confronting Resistance: Despite active efforts, there has been resistance from within the Church to the work of racial justice, including pushback against contested heritage reforms and diversity measures hold the Church accountable.





Looking Ahead

Continuing the Fight: The ACRJ's mandate ends in 2024, but the Church will establish new structures to ensure that racial justice remains a central priority, including independent auditing to hold the Church accountable.

Join the Movement

Join the Movement: The work of dismantling systemic racism within the Church is far from over. Help build momentum for lasting change by staying informed, participating in local events, and reflecting on racial justice within your parish. Contact West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative for mobilisation help and support: hello@wmracialjustice.org.uk



ACRJ Podcast with Revd. Brunel James

To listen to the podcast, scan the QR code below or visit link:

<https://tinyurl.com/3ja2kbpd>

Briefing Note:

The Church of England and Racial Justice

This briefing document reviews the main themes and important points raised in the provided excerpts from the Fifth Report of the Archbishops' Commission on Racial Justice (ACRJ) and other related Church of England documents.

Overall Theme: The overarching theme is the Church of England's ongoing commitment to racial justice and the challenges it faces in implementing meaningful change. The report highlights both progress made and the considerable work that remains.

Key Issues:

- **Resistance to Change:** The report acknowledges “active resistance to or obstruction of the work necessary to ensure that the Church of England lives out the Gospel in both its teaching and practice.” This suggests a significant internal struggle around racial justice.
- **Data Collection and Monitoring:** The Commission expresses frustration over the lack of reliable ethnicity data, hindering the ability to establish baselines and track progress: “Data collection work has been a real ‘bugbear’ for the Commission. We have been especially frustrated by the apparent inability of church bodies to master and apply data protection principles in a legally compliant way.”
- **Representation in Leadership:** While there have been some appointments of UKME/GMH individuals to senior positions, the overall representation remains low. For example, the appointment of Chigor Chike as Archdeacon of Lewisham is welcomed, but the report notes, “it is important to note that even with this appointment there will still only be four UKME/GMH Archdeacons within the Church of England.”
- **Clergy Training and Development:** The report calls for improved training for clergy on racial justice, cultural sensitivity, and anti-racism. It also highlights the need for more diverse curriculum and staffing within theological education institutions (TEIs).
- **Specific Case Studies:** The report features several case studies, including one detailing the experiences of a UKME/GMH curate who faced discrimination and bullying. This highlights the need for more effective complaint systems and support structures.

- **The Rustat Memorial:** The case of the Rustat Memorial, a monument to a slave trader, is presented as an example of the complexities involved in addressing the Church's historical links to slavery. The report argues that such figures should be remembered for their "iniquities" and not glorified.

Important Quotes:

- **Lord Boateng, Chair of the ACRJ:** "I would be failing in my duty owed to you... if I didn't raise with you a sense of real concern... at the evidence we have found of active resistance to or obstruction of the work necessary to ensure that the Church of England lives out the Gospel in both its teaching and practice."
- **Rt Revd Martin Gorick, Bishop of Dudley:** "We long to be a church where we can celebrate unity in our diversity, and encourage diversity in our unity. Where all are welcome - and all means all."
- **From the report on the Rustat Memorial:** "My personal view is that fellow Christians such as Rustat and Gordon should certainly not be forgotten, but that what they need to be remembered for is their iniquities."

Recommendations and Actions:

The report details the progress made on the 47 recommendations outlined in the From Lament to Action report. It highlights numerous actions, including:

- Establishing a permanent Racial Justice Unit within the National Church Institutions (NCI)
- Appointing a "lead bishop" as an episcopal champion for racial justice
- Increasing funding for racial justice initiatives
- Diversifying shortlists for senior clergy and lay appointments
- Implementing mandatory anti-racism training for all clergy and TEI staff
- Developing resources for youth leaders on racial awareness
- Encouraging data collection and monitoring to track progress.

Looking Forward:

The Fifth Report of the ACRJ demonstrates a clear intention to address racial injustice within the Church of England. However, the report also recognises the ongoing challenges and the need for sustained commitment and action to achieve meaningful and lasting change.

This briefing note was provided by the West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative, a three-year project to dismantle systemic racism within six dioceses in the Church of England. For more information about our work, email: hello@wmracialjustice.org.uk