

# Overwhelmed by Change



**I GREW UP IN LONDON** in the 1950s. It was overwhelmingly white, but that's where the conformity ended. Our neighbourhood: three streets of decaying Victorian houses, bounded by the railway, the Kilburn High Road, a tidy terrace of good houses, and a well-kept park. The English were rare, most people were Irish and those who weren't, were Scots. My Mum was from Cashel in Tipperary. My Dad, known to all-an-sundry as "Jock", was from Paisley, just outside Glasgow. We knew the English from the heroic officers in the war pictures seen weekly at the Grange Picture House, the Gaumont State, and the Essoldo. We were subject to the highly polished accents and vicious snobbery shown by Noel Coward in *Brief Encounter* and *This Happy Breed*. This was reinforced

daily by the arch public-school tones of BBC wireless announcers and those people giving radio talks.

My 'identity' was working class, and it was not until my early twenties that it dawned on me that I was not Irish or Scots, but unavoidably English. This was sobering, given that England stood for the colonies, the Indian Empire, and *The British Grenadiers* that we'd sung about in school, along with a selection of 'folk' songs redolent of maypoles and Morris Men. As remote from us as anything that could be imagined. I left school at 15 and started full-timework in 1960 as a messenger.

I can't think why anyone would want any of this back. The truth is, of course, that nobody does. What the people who rioted recently want is an updated version of R. F. Delderfield's 'dreaming suburb' where all is prosperous, familiar, reliable, and white. The shock of rapid demographic change is palpable amongst many unskilled, badly trained, or poorly educated white people. However, this makes no sense to people like me: well-to-do, living in an upscale city-centre building; a deracinated homosexual, who can think of nothing worse than the community I grew up in.

Yet many hanker after this ideal community of yesteryear without dwelling upon its imaginary character. They aspire to a world of familiarity where everybody speaks English, does not wear outlandish clothes, practice outlandish religions, and are not blatantly outlandish. This is because, white people in poorer neighbourhoods are more dependent on their immediate surroundings, than those of us who are better off. They rely upon a network of relationships that are thrown into jeopardy by rapid demographic change.

Strictly speaking their concerns are not racist because there is widespread acceptance on many estates and housing projects of well-established black and brown people, and of intermarriage between people of different races. What is often deemed intolerable is the rapid arrival, in numbers, of single

young men, black and brown, with little or no English, who are entirely unconnected to the life of the neighbourhood, and are incapable of getting on board with the kind of life and relationships already established by the natives.

Another bugbear is the formation in many towns and cities of ghettos where Bengalis or Pakistanis have come together across a number of roads and streets to form exclusively south Asian and Muslim communities. It is here, in new mono-cultural districts, that purpose-built Mosques have proliferated, and religious leaders seek, with widespread local support, to impose Sharia Law, and conduct themselves as if they were at home in villages outside Peshawar or Gujrat rather than in Greater Manchester, Leicester, or Nottingham.

This alienation of large areas of our towns is seen by many white British people as a disturbing problem. The truth is, of course, they will have to get used to it. There is simply no possibility of reversing these transformations. No matter how hard Douglas Murray, and friends, lament the disappearance of the England they loved, it's not coming back. Our country is going through an epochal transformation where the cultural signature of the last thousand years is being irretrievably upended.

After the departure of the Romans at the beginning of the fifth century, the country was widely settled by Jutes, Angles, Saxons, and others. It was a land of many languages and cultures which had by the tenth century merged into an Anglo-Saxon polity, with a large helping of Danes and Norwegians. Then, in 1066 it was all neatly tied up by a murderous elite led by William-the-Bastard over from Normandy.

Since then, for a thousand years, despite the periodic arrivals of refugees of one sort or another, England was a homogeneous land; it was white, apart from pockets of "dusky foreigners down by the docks". Since then, much has changed. The country is no longer white – our large towns and cities have become racially mixed to a degree, that for somebody of my

age (born in 1945), is simply astonishing. What is more, it is going to get increasingly black and brown, and much less white, as the years go by. Nothing, nothing at all, can stop or limit this transformation of England into a radically different country.

Some regard for those who are finding this new reality hard to accept must inform public policy. Riot control and repression are merely temporary expedients. We must ensure that those who are particularly challenged by demographic changes are equipped to cope with novel circumstances – these will inevitably involve increased spending on further education for adults and better training facilities to ensure that people can improve their chances in the labour market. Housing shortages, rent controls, and a raft of other improvements in areas of deprivation must also be greatly improved.

What remains for us to ask is what can we preserve from the old England, that would be of value to the new England arising around us?

I would say it is, above all, secular government. Much can be said about our Christian heritage, but the division between ‘church and state’ is perhaps the most relevant here. Of course, I know our government is formally Christian. The King and Parliament are ritually Anglican, but our state has not actually been Christian for some time. Roman Catholics were emancipated in England by the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829. This was followed in 1858 by the Jews Relief Act which allowed for the removal of references to Christianity in the oath Jews made to the Crown on entering Parliament. Thirty years later in 1888 the Oaths Act allowed atheists, and the wilder varieties of Protestant, together with the followers of any other religion, to sit in Parliament.

The keystone holding all of these measures in place is freedom of conscience and speech.

Consequently, we must reject the attempts of religious leaders whether Jewish, Anglican, Roman Catholic, or Muslim to promote or insinuate their particular conceptions of blasphemy or law into the

legal practice or framework of our country. There must be no recognition of Canon Law, of The Beth Din, of Sharia, or the relentless and slippery attempts of the Roman Catholic clergy to refuse or resist the primacy of the civil and criminal law of Britain.

Courts and tribunals set up by religious authority should be denied any legal standing or protection – nothing can prevent religious people from appealing to these institutions, but it must be made clear that they are entirely voluntary bodies with no legal standing or protection. There must be one law of the land, one secular law only. This is, perhaps paradoxically, the only guarantee of religious freedom. Only when the primacy of one religion over all the others is denied can people's religious beliefs and practices be truly free. This is why 'church' and state (or 'mosque' and state), must be kept firmly apart.

To consolidate and strengthen recognition of our secular government all religious schools – the so-called 'faith schools' must be closed down. There must be no prayers or religious observance of any sort permitted in schools. All education must be secular in form. To facilitate this all sex and relationship education must be removed from the curriculum. (Regarding sex, only biology and reproduction should be taught in school.) Outside of school, parents, communities, and the religious, must be allowed to teach their children anything they like.

England and Britain are now inescapably multi-racial, and multi-ethnic. In order to guarantee social peace and getting along well with each other we must ensure that the rule of law, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech, is rigorously maintained. Therefore, Imams, Rabbis, Cardinals, and Bishops, must have no role in government, no privileged protection or status in law - and no religious text, edict, fatwa, or opinion, should be legally respected or privileged in any way whatsoever.

We can't "have our country back", but we can keep what is most valuable about it: the rule of law, freedom of conscience, and freedom of speech.