

MULTICULTURALISM IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO WELCOME PEOPLE TO OUR COUNTRY

I am the child of an immigrant myself, and I believe we should take more immigrants and refugees into Britain, not fewer. But it is increasingly clear that, forged with the best of intentions, multiculturalism has become a counter-productive way of welcoming people to our country. It promotes
 5 not a melting pot where we all mix together but a segregated society of sealed-off cultures, each sticking to its own.

[...]

But there is another dysfunctional aspect of multiculturalism. In practice, it acts as though immigrant cultures are unchanging and should
 10 be preserved in aspic. This forces multiculturalists into alliance with the most conservative and unpleasant parts of immigrant communities. For example, what would you do if, in your block of flats, there was a white family where the women of the house rarely left without the patriarch's permission, and – on the very rare occasions when they did – they covered
 15 their face so only their eyes were visible? What would you do if, in the same family, there was a gay son who knew he could never tell his relatives, because he would be beaten and then ostracised¹ from everybody he has ever known?

The answer is easy (I hope): you would be disgusted, and you would
 20 try to help them. But there is a family just like this in the building where I live, and there is only one difference – they are Asian. So I do nothing, and nor do any of the other nice liberals who live here, even though this family is as British as we are. Isn't there a word for treating people differently because of the colour of their skin?

25 Multiculturalism has caused British people to do this on a national scale. All this time, we could have been helping women and gay people from immigrant communities to enjoy the fruits of a free society. This would have created interesting and more progressive versions of Islam that would fight back against jihadism far more effectively than a
 30 thousand government initiatives or police raids. Instead, we have been inadvertently² helping the conservative men who want to keep these groups in a subordinate position.

We have been acting as though there is one thing called "Muslim culture", and elderly imams or enraged, misogynistic³ young men are its
 35 only voice. A few weeks ago, it was driven home to me how wrong this is.

I wrote about how the best way to defeat jihadists was to empower Muslim women, and I was inundated with e-mails from Muslim women, many explaining how the logic of multiculturalism weakened their hand.

On, in particular, is worth quoting at length: “My younger sisters go to
40 Denbigh High School [in Lutton] which was famous in the headlines last year because a girl pupil went to the High Court for her right to wear the jilbab⁴. Shabinah [the girl who took the case] saw it as a great victory for Muslim women ... but what happened next shows this is not a victory for us.

45 My sisters, and me when I was younger, could always tell our dad and uncles that we weren’t allowed to wear the jilbab. Once the rules were changed, that excuse was not possible any more so my sisters have now been terrified into wearing this cumbersome⁵ and dehumanizing garment all day against their wishes. Now most girls in the school do the same.
50 They don’t want to, but now they cannot resist community pressure... I am frightened somebody is going to fight for the right to wear a burqua⁶ next and then my sisters will not even be able to show their faces.”

So to multiculturalists, we have to ask: which Muslim culture do you want to preserve? The jilbab-wearing culture of Shabinah and the mullahs,
55 or the culture of the hundreds of Muslim girls who curse them? All immigrant communities are divided and diverse; it is a form of soft racism to assume they have One Culture that should be respected at all costs.

But multiculturalism binds the hands of those who want cultural change in immigrant communities by demanding tolerance and respect
60 for reactionary traditions. At a time when there is a battle within British Islam whose outcome whose outcome will affect us all, is it wise to continue like this?

It is not too late to unpick the dysfunctional logic of multiculturalism. We can actively promote dialogue, meeting-places and inter-breeding. No
65 more funding of divisive faith schools. No more separate community centres.

Britain has the highest rate of mixed-race partnerships anywhere in the world, largely due to sexual relationships between white and black people in London. This – not multiculturalism – is the British tradition to
70 promote. No more bland “tolerance”: let’s have rows and laughs and sex. Our future lies in this glorious mixing of races, not in separating them out and hermetically sealing them off in their own outdated “culture”.

Multiculturalism is dead: long live miscenegation⁷.

(813 words)

Source:

Johann Hari, "Multiculturalism is not the best way to welcome people to our country",
The Independent, 05.08.2005;

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/johann-hari-multiculturalism-is-not-the-best-way-to-welcome-people-to-our-country-501506.html>

Annotations:

- 1 to ostracise – ausgrenzen
- 2 inadvertently – versehentlich
- 3 misogynistic – hostile towards women
- 4 jilbab – long and loose-fitting coat
- 5 cumbersome – hinderlich
- 6 burqa – full body cloak covering parts of the face
- 7 miscenegation – the mixing of races