



KIN

RUNNYMEDE

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Foreword

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In Summer 2018, KIN hosted its first three-day convening of over 50 black organisers, campaigners and activists at the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, South London. There was a wealth of experience, knowledge and insight, with representation from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The space held people of ages ranging from 17 to late 60s, there was LGBTQ+ representation and there were participants from different faiths. The group also included migrants, refugees and those from different class backgrounds. The community we created over the three days was small in number, but expansive in its wisdom, expertise and revolutionary potential.

As founders, we stepped into the creation of this initiative with clear intentions of plugging the gaps that we saw in our work and the work of those around us in the movement for black liberation. Erasure, devaluation and destruction of radical black history, legacy and knowledge had often made it seem to us as though intergenerational and diverse communities of black activists and change-seekers couldn't exist in the UK. At least not that we knew of.

In bringing together a rich cultural, geographical and generational diversity of black people, we aimed to host conversations and dialogue that represented a broad spectrum of experiences. This was in the hope that it would inform and bring forward the complex map of ideologies, practices and projects that exist among black campaigners, organisers and activists.

The convening took place at the Black Cultural Archive in Brixton. Alongside a wide array of sessions, with topics ranging from drug policy to housing, we made sure to include numerous sessions run by historians and archivists including representatives of George Padmore Institute and the Nottingham Archive. This was no accident. The commitment to logging, recording and reporting not just the events but the thought, the feeling and the energy of our era is entwined in KIN's DNA.

For us, an exploration by Runnymede of the key themes that emerged over the three days was important in remembering and continuing the conversations we'd begun. This report, authored by Kim McIntosh, not only captures the event and the emergent themes, but also gives us an important opportunity to further interrogate the ideas of our epoch.

One of KIN's core aims is the dissemination of knowledge in all of its forms, and we hope that this report will contribute to this project. We aimed to create a community of black activists to learn from each other, build meaningful relationships and learn about our radical history in this country and beyond. We never had doubts about wanting to make what came out of this initiative available to black folk, as well as those who have and will continue to fight against oppression and for liberation.

KIN will be hosting an international convening in 2019, where these conversations can be taken forward and new ones will surely emerge. We'll also be running socials and educational partnerships, and continuing our efforts to strengthen the movement for black liberation in the UK. The ambition is for the community to continue its growth with the complexity of thought, the richness of dialogue and the depth of understanding that characterised the first convening. As KIN co-founders, we are incredibly humbled by the generosity and love that was offered by all who took part in the 2018 gathering. We are hopeful that the knowledge documented in this report and alive in the KIN community will be a contributing factor in leading us into a more just and liberated future.

Introduction and background

KIN is a grassroots network founded in 2017 by a collective of voluntary organisers based in the UK and US. Groups involved in the conception of KIN included Black Lives Matter US, Take Back the City, Black Alliance for Just Immigration and many more.

KIN organisers identified a lack of joined-up strategic thinking and conversation about black organising in both countries, as well as an absence of intergenerational work in our communities or deep reflection on shared history. We believe that there is currently a lack of mainstream analysis and political discourse around how racism manifests and impacts people in the UK, from social institutions such as education and the media, to obfuscation and erasure of Britain's colonial legacy and history of global racial oppression. Consequently, there is a lack of mobilisation around issues that disproportionately impact black people – understood here as those of African descent. KIN is interested in addressing some of these issues by building shared power for collective liberation.

The case for black liberation

The inequalities faced by black people in the Britain have existed since records began. Olaudah Equiano published his autobiography in 1789 and was a leading voice in the abolition movement, and this autonomous fight for equality continues into the present. More quantitative evidence of racial inequalities has been collected for at least 50 years, with the seminal report *Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations* published by Jim Rose and colleagues in 1969.¹ From education and employment to health and housing, disadvantage is persistent and widespread.² This is a result of longstanding factors, past and present, and shapes life chances and experiences. Slavery and the false promise of emancipation in the Caribbean colonies; the colonisation of Britain's African 'possessions' and the ideology used to justify it – white supremacy – these left a legacy that continues to linger. How people arrived here, the differential rights they arrived with and the discriminatory treatment they received on arrival shaped the outcomes we see for black people in Britain today.

These outcomes are evidence that our society is still far from being fair, and black Britons do not share the freedoms their white counterparts enjoy, such as the freedom from discrimination in education and in the workplace or the right to equality of opportunity. In 2018, 47% of black children are growing up in poverty, compared to 28% of white children.³ Black Caribbean children are three times more likely to be excluded from school than white British pupils. More worrying, a black boy eligible for free school meals (FSM) who also has special educational needs (SEN) is 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded than a white British girl without SEN and not eligible for FSM.⁴ This

has been commonplace since 1967. When the data has been broken down by ethnicity, it is clear that black Caribbean students have been over-identified as having SEN. Pupils with SEN are also disproportionately excluded. Consequently, this disproportionately affects black pupils.⁵

In spite of this, between 2007 and 2017, black men and women saw a 24-percentage-point increase in degree attainment. However, this has not translated into better results in the job market.⁶ Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that 40% of African graduates are overqualified for their roles.⁷ Unemployment rates are higher for black people than for white people, at 3% for both white women and white men but 7% for black women and black men.⁸ Black people are less likely to own their own home, more likely to be in low-paid or precarious work, more likely to have lower household income and less household wealth.⁹

Further, the data shows significant pay gaps between black people and white British people, even when variables such as qualifications, age, region and socioeconomic group are taken into account. The largest pay penalty exists between black male graduates, who can expect to earn £700 less per year (full time) than white male graduates, even with their social background and job taken into account.¹⁰

While black people are over-represented in low-paid work, they are under-represented in the higher echelons of British institutions. In 2018, 3.7% of senior-ranking police officers were from all black and minority ethnic (BME) groups combined. There are only 126 black members of the judiciary, compared with 6,267 white members. In 2017, there were zero recorded senior university officials who were from a black background.¹¹ Only 0.2% of British journalists are black. There are only 17 black MPs out of 650.¹²

Beyond representation, black people are also not treated fairly by government policy and often face more punitive implementation of what should be 'colour-blind' and innocuous.

A recent briefing note by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) found that stop and search, the controversial police tactic historically used disproportionately against black communities, has seen an increase in that disproportionality. In 2018, black people were 4.3 times more likely to be stopped under the law than white people, up from 2.6 times more likely in 2014. This is despite stop and search having a negligible effect on violent crime; and the data shows that despite being stopped more frequently, the police are less likely to detect crime when they stop black people than when they stop white people.¹³

Equally, our immigration system, past and present, has been less favourable to black people than to white people. From the 1948 British Nationality Act, through to the immigration legislation passed in 1962, 1968, 1971 and 1981, a two-tiered system has existed within the British Empire and subsequent Commonwealth that has disadvantaged black subjects and citizens.¹⁴ Today, Britain has a restrictionist immigration policy towards the members of the New Commonwealth – countries with predominantly black or brown populations – while providing more entry routes from the mainly white former Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Those seeking asylum in Britain face the risk of detention and the threat of, or actual, wrongful deportation. They are not allowed to work while their claim is processed and are only given £37.75 per person per week to live on.¹⁵ The risk of destitution and reliance on charitable support is high. The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 ushered in a 'Hostile Environment' policy that in practice targeted British-born black people and migrants. Requiring documentation in order to access housing, healthcare, bank accounts and employment encourages discrimination against 'visible minorities', who are more likely to be read as migrants by service providers. The Windrush scandal of 2018, which saw long-term black Caribbean residents losing access to these rights, and some detained and deported, made this clear.

Finally, there is not a uniform understanding of the reality of life in the British Empire or its legacy. There has not been a reckoning with Britain's role in initiating the transatlantic slave trade, with a focus instead on its abolition. Slavery and colonialism are not compulsory parts of the curriculum,¹⁶ and the Department for Education admitted in 2014 that it did not know how many schools were teaching the subject.¹⁷ Until this history is widely understood, it will be difficult to make significant progress towards racial equality.¹⁸ It is inextricably linked to the invention and propagation of racial hierarchies that underpin racism and is the reason for much of the black presence in Britain.¹⁹ Yet when polled, 59% of Britons felt that the Empire was something to be proud of, with 49% believing British colonies were left better off.²⁰ This is contrary to the evidence.²¹



Summary of the KIN convening

On 17–19 August 2018, the KIN network held its first convening, where participants came together to build meaningful relationships, explore organising practice across a breadth of contexts and strategise on how to co-create a community that supports local and national organising.

Over three days, 50 participants came together to be facilitators, conveners and participants. These were not mutually exclusive positions. Individuals ran workshops, two running concurrently, which were attended by the other participants. The trainers would then become participants, attending and contributing in the other sessions. Four facilitators from the KIN team were present to manage logistics and ‘hold the space’, encouraging positive communication between participants.

KIN convening: Values and objectives

The convening was organised to achieve a number of objectives and facilitated to maintain adherence to certain values and behaviours.

KIN values

- Treat participants with patience, compassion and empathy. Acknowledge that people come with difficult experiences, and discussion topics can be tough and emotive.
- Conflict will occur, but push back against different views with respect.
- The space is queer-affirming and challenges gendered behaviour, for example men dominating discussions or speaking over women, women doing the majority of the cleaning up.
- Discrimination will be challenged. but with an appreciation that sexism, classism, homophobia and transphobia are learnt beliefs or behaviours. These beliefs are a barrier to organising together.
- Interdependence and solidarity. Campaigners need to find similarities and build bridges between different types of activism. Nothing we want to achieve can happen in silos. A lack of collaboration is an inefficient use of limited resources and damages the struggle.
- Joyfulness is integral. Activism is hard work and it’s important to rest and have fun.
- We must have a strong vision that assesses and reassesses where we are headed.

Objectives of convening

- Share organising practice. How can black activists collaborate strategically to avoid silos and build on past and present practice? What infrastructure already exists, what needs to be built and who is missing?
- Build meaningful relationships. Participants will meet others who work on related issues and use those relationships to strengthen their work.
- Contextualise current movements for black liberation and equality by looking to the past. With a focus on archives, the convening will assess what came before, what has been inherited, what can be learnt and what needs to change.
- Provide a learning space. The environment will breed openness to listening and learning from conflict.
- Uniting diversity within blackness. Although many participants will share similar life experiences, there will be differences in beliefs and opinions. The convening will aim to unite around common goals.
- Build community and ourselves. The convening will provide space to build a community of black activists and equally to nourish individuals who may be carrying out draining and difficult work.

Methodology

The purpose of this report is to assess to what extent the convening achieved its objectives. To evaluate the potential impact of the convening, it was decided that the most appropriate methodology would be 'participant observations'.

Over the three-day convening, I observed half of the workshops on each day. I recorded the other sessions and allocated a KIN participant to observe and note the discussion topics, conflicts, consensus and tensions.



1. Contextualising current movements

Organised resistance to racism has long existed in Britain and within the Empire. The Great Jamaican Slave Revolt 1831–32, the 1919 West Indian mutiny and the creation of the League of Coloured People by Dr Harold Moody in 1931 all predate the arrival of HMT *Empire Windrush* in 1948.²² The growth of a settled black community in Britain led to a growth in anti-racist resistance and a struggle for rights and recognition in coalition with other ethnic minority groups. Campaigners monitored and challenged police harassment and racist violence. In the 1960s, Claudia Jones established the all-female Central Executive Committee of the Inter-Racial Friendship Coordinating Council, and in the 1980s, Suresh Grover created the Southall Monitoring Group (now The Monitoring Group).²³ John La Rose founded *New Beacon* books in 1966, to give continuity and validation to black culture, history and politics. It is this history that black activists today inherit, although it is not uniformly known and understood throughout the community.²⁴ Programmes such as the Black Cultural Activism Map, an initiative by the Stuart Hall Foundation, are currently working to document this history.²⁵

This need to understand the black British civil rights struggles and activism was raised throughout the convening. There was strong consensus that black activists must collectively document black British activist history, mapping past activism so successes can be celebrated, past mistakes learnt from and present movements for black liberation situated effectively.

The importance of archives and documenting black activism, particularly local histories, featured heavily in three sessions: ‘The 8 Principles of John La Rose’, ‘Archives as an

Act of Protest’ and ‘Black British Activism and Historians’. These spaces had a supportive atmosphere where participants felt comfortable sharing personal interventions, laughter was abundant and consensus was frequent.

Opportunity to learn new histories

These archival sessions taught participants new histories that were previously unknown to them. In ‘Archives as an Act of Protest’ the session leader shared the story of the 8th West India Regiment and their mutiny over lower pay and poor treatment during the First World War, and her interview of a descendent.²⁶ This was new information for some participants, who expressed shock. As the archive is based in Nottingham, local histories of the black presence in the area and of black activism was a source of new information for much of the group. From George Africanus, a former slave from Sierra Leone who became a successful entrepreneur in Nottingham, to the 1970s Black People’s Freedom Movement, also based in Nottingham, the sessions highlighted black presence and activism outside of two things: the usual time period and the areas usually associated with black histories.²⁷

Similarly, in the ‘8 Principles of John La Rose’ workshop, participants saw much continuity between the methods and practice of past activists and present. Among the archival material from the George Padmore Institute that participants looked at, the posters used to highlight injustices such as sus laws and the New Cross fire resonated. One participant pointed out that the leaflets used during the New Cross fire to counter the stories in the press were similar to what they had witnessed happening in Ladbroke Grove in response to the Grenfell Tower fire. Equally, language

such as ‘swarms’ being used by the media to describe migrants and the messages used to challenge sus laws were identical to those used today.

This continuity, which contrasts with the way black histories are taught by schools and celebrated by mainstream institutions, was further emphasised in the ‘Black British Activism and Historians’ archival session.

This session opened with an interactive exercise that exposed the common parameters we use when thinking about black British history. In small groups, participants were asked to write key moments in black British history on Post-its and then order them into a timeline of events collectively. The focus was mostly limited to the past 50–100 years. This prompted a discussion on the structural and institutional barriers that shape and limit the type and breadth of knowledge of black British history, and what we should do differently.

Institutional barriers to documentation, and potential solutions

What gets commemorated and how it is remembered is a political act and a nation-building tool, and helps to produce national identities.²⁸ The focus on the abolition of slavery rather than Britain’s role in its trade, and the destruction of thousands of documents from the end of the British Empire, are examples of successive governments’ attempts to construct an incomplete national story.²⁹ Uncovering a fuller understanding of the past properly situates present inequalities and discrimination faced by black people in Britain. To try and bridge this gap in historical memory, the Our Migration Story project, a collaboration between the Runnymede Trust and the universities of Cambridge and Manchester, has created resources to support the teaching of migration and empire.

This was a recurring issue raised throughout the convening. During the ‘Archives as an Act of Protest’ workshop, a participant noted that the inclusion of black people in the narratives of colonial wars often sanitises history and removes racism from the equation.

‘This is giving me the tingles. This is old but we’re still doing this stuff.’

– participant

‘Volunteering’ to sign up for military service was often a false choice in a society with few alternative opportunities for black people. In a session on colourism, there was widespread agreement that the reality of colonialism is not taught, and that without this education, racist beliefs and institutions will continue to reproduce themselves. Further, when these messages are internalised, black people themselves become the conduits and agents of these beliefs. It was also strongly agreed that arbitrary divisions made during empire are a barrier to black solidarity in present movements. Understanding the past will be integral to the success of black liberation.

The potential solutions to this uneven understanding of these histories tended to fall into either formal or informal efforts. Informally, the need to prepare children with self-worth before entering the school system was a point of consensus. How to bring about institutional change was less clear.

The establishment of the Nottingham Archive took place in response to the absence of the black presence, beyond slavery, in the local museums. However, it took tireless work by volunteers, with no formal funding for ten years and initial scepticism from the black community. It took extensive, intergenerational outreach to get the support of the black community and even longer to secure institutional recognition. This builds on past traditions such as the Black Arts movement in 1980s Wolverhampton, which, told by institutions that there was no black art history, created its own and later received institutional recognition.



The question of the labour, power and resources needed to maintain an archive that is used across generations was raised in multiple sessions. Black people having the power and resources to create their own records, and reframing what constitutes an archive, were raised as solutions to increasing the appeal of archives to new, younger audiences and keeping the power within the black community.

A role for KIN should be to facilitate relationships between existing archives and support outreach efforts with younger audiences.

This led to discussion about how knowledge is created and how accessible it is.

2. Knowledge production and ownership: Understanding where we are now

How knowledge is understood, valued and created was the key source of agreement and contention in a number of sessions. Currently, knowledge is produced within institutions that reflect the inequalities that exist within society at large. The knowledge produced is the product of the political and cultural values of the institutions or individuals that created it, making it often inadequate, incomplete and based on power.³⁰ In a society where racism is prevalent, this shapes what knowledge is generated and venerated.

The question of who and what is considered a historian and history were central discussion points in the 'Black British Activism and Historians' and 'Decolonise Da Ting + Academia' sessions. Who gets to be the authoritative expert was a flashpoint in the 'Black British Activism' session. A participant, in jest, commented that they were 'learning things I don't know from random activists'. At first a minor point of contention, it started a discussion on how non-traditional forms of knowledge, such as oral traditions and personal experience, are sidelined in favour of traditional education and institutions such as the academy. There was strong support for relearning the value of different histories and recording and curating it in digital and physical archives.

It was widely agreed that new knowledge needs to be shared and given value to empower black communities. This is necessary in order to have a full understanding of the past, and to inform the activism of the present and inculcate against institutional racism. However, this needs to be separated from the 'white Marxism' that exclusively

emphasises class, does not speak to people's lived experience and is anchored in past movements rather than present ones.

This was seen as particularly necessary in light of the limited types of knowledge respected by formal education and the academy, and the racism that pervades these institutions.

The racism that exists within the academy and universities was raised in at least three sessions. Three participants shared across various sessions that this had caused them to leave academia. In the workshop 'Decolonise Da Ting + Academia', the presenter shared that they had left postgraduate study for this reason, which encouraged others to share experiences where their version of knowledge had been belittled or challenged because it differed from the norm, whether this was the language or accent used to deliver one's work or campaigning for a more diverse curriculum.

Higher education in the UK has ongoing issues with representation and outcomes for black students. The Russell Group, a collection of 24 prestigious 'research-intensive' UK universities, have lower representation of black students than other universities, at 4% compared with the UK average of 8%.³¹ A recent report by the Office for Students (OfS) found that, after controlling for entry qualifications, black students are between 6 and 28 percentage points less likely than white students to get a higher-classification degree. The differences exist at all levels of entry qualifications, even among students who enter higher education with very high prior attainment.³²

Only 85 of the UK's 18,500 professors are black, and only 17 are black women.³³ For every black female professor, there are 3,000 black female students. Most black women will never see someone who looks like them who is a professor. This lack of representation at these elite educational institutions can lead to a 'feeling of isolation or hostility in academic culture' and feeling 'out of place'.³⁴ This may contribute to the lower retention rates of black students than white British students. In the OfS research with stakeholders (students, academics, managerial staff), respondents noted the lack of diversity in the curriculum, diversity specialists/academics and mechanisms to deal with racial discrimination as key concerns.³⁵

Although there was much agreement that we need to 'decolonise knowledge', how best to achieve this was debated.

The master's tools? Reforming institutions or creating new ones

Reflecting the evidence, there was strong consensus at the convening that academia is steeped in elitism and not conducive to mental wellbeing for many black students. This was not, however, a disregard for formal education or a denial of its merits. It was agreed that participants who had attended universities had gained the knowledge they now used to understand and challenge racism during their studies. This hinted at an issue that would be raised recurrently during the weekend: the academisation of the language used to talk about race and racism that now pervades left-wing social movements and university campuses and that is not easily understood outside of these circles.

In the workshop 'Youth and the Perception of Political Action', the convenor used formal methods at her university to challenge and decolonise the anthropology syllabus. She wrote a 30-page report on how colonialism had informed the discipline, interviewed BME students and used this to inform the future of the discipline and set out steps for change. As a result, she received funding to pay PhD students to update the reading lists for the modules.³⁶

This work was appreciated and well received by participants. However, in 'Decolonise Da Ting + Academia' the impact of much-needed work on the mental health of the people pushing for institutional change was discussed as a barrier. There was consensus that lived experience is often denied and not ascribed value. To make the case for change, the feelings of white people have to be prioritised so as to not 'place blame' or 'cause offence', and the reality of racism defended with the 'appropriate' language and evidence in order for it to be considered a reality. Even this was no guarantee that it would be believed or taken seriously. Creating spaces 'on the margins' of institutions, where black students, and particularly black women, could meet and talk through their experiences without them being denied was posited as a way to manage higher education.³⁷

Pushing for change within institutions or, as with the Nottingham Archive, creating it without institutional support and later receiving mainstream recognition are two important mechanisms for expanding the history that is taught, and for making change more generally. This is, however, labour intensive and responsibility for it can fall onto a few dedicated individuals.

Creating black-run institutions and presenting history and policy in more interesting ways were mentioned as solutions. In the '8 Principles of John La Rose' session, there was agreement that the school system as it stands is inherently racist, evident in the disproportionate exclusion rates for black pupils and the attainment gap.³⁸ Beyond attainment, there is a need to instil a culture of self-worth before black pupils enter the education system, where this may be questioned.

Starting black-led schools, anchored in the history of the supplementary school movement made prominent by John La Rose, was raised as a solution. This could look to improve attainment but also 'culturally and historically based learning' that gives students a thorough understanding of black history and the reality of racism.³⁹



Same knowledge, new language, new mediums

Words such as ‘decolonise’ have become more widely used to refer to interrogating curriculums and making them more inclusive. However, this may not be widely understood outside of the academy and social movements. The academisation of the language used in black radical spaces was a live issue that was mentioned in at least three workshops. In the session, ‘Including Black Refugees in Black Liberation’ the intellectual exclusivity of these spaces was a live issue, but there was much agreement that this is a barrier to including black refugees. Several participants shared that despite being well read, they still struggled with some of the language and topics discussed. However, they were not always confident to share this in case they appeared uninformed. This can alienate potential allies and prevent the widening out of movements to include a wider spectrum of black people. Equally, the need for clear language instead of jargon was spoken of as vital to making liberation movements more inclusive. Words and phrases such as ‘decolonise’, ‘epistemological’, ‘activism’ and ‘knowledge production’ were not uniformly understood by participants.

Traditionally, the story of race discrimination in the UK has been framed in terms of mass migration, racial tolerance and multiculturalism. A better way of explaining or narrating the evidence on race, racism and racial inequalities is needed. Using stories, and finding new ways of telling them, can convey ideas more effectively and set new terms of debate.⁴⁰ A number of solutions to this came out during the convening. Using examples from people’s lives to link the micro of the everyday to the macro of structural racism is necessary if black liberation movements are going to be relevant to people outside of academic spaces. Presenting knowledge in different mediums was successful during the convening.

For example, the session ‘Detention on Trial’ explained the policy and procedure that surrounds the detention system with an interactive courtroom exercise. Participants were put into two groups and had to defend either the Home Office or a detainee in a mock courtroom. Participants shared that they found it useful to explore policy and procedure with a scenario, as it was less dry than a presentation and made it easier to understand. This is useful not only for future KIN events but for

all campaigners and policy researchers when thinking about sharing complex messages to new audiences.

There was much shock in the room at the reality of our immigration and detention policy, particularly the scope of the Hostile Environment policy. The fact that anyone subject to immigration control can be detained was not common knowledge, nor was it well known that there is currently no time limit on detention in the UK.

The need to understand the arguments, narratives, policies and laws was a point of consensus. Only then can activists challenge unfair and discriminatory policies effectively. This was also raised in the 'Including Black Refugees' session. The 'Detention on Trial' session showed how presenting knowledge in a non-traditional way can help to increase understanding.

Theatre is another tool that has the power to suspend belief and help the audience to understand historic and current injustices. In the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' workshop, participants were introduced to forum theatre, in which the audience are active participants, with the power to stop, start and change the scene and the outcome. Pioneered by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, it purports that theatre can help problem-solving to push for justice and fight oppression.⁴¹

Participants were asked to think of stories of personal oppression and act them out in groups. Other groups were encouraged to 'step in' and change the scenario to end the oppression. There was a lot of laughter throughout. The performances resonated with other groups who recognised similar scenarios to those in their own lives. The workshop convenor shared that this method had been effective at getting young people to understand the law of joint enterprise, which is used to prosecute defendants in cases where they may not have committed the crime itself, but could have foreseen violent acts carried out by their associates.⁴² Research by both the University of Cambridge and the Prison Reform Trust has found that black men were disproportionately sentenced under joint enterprise.⁴³ Many lawyers believe young black men are disproportionately affected by the doctrine, which allows the prosecution to build a case around perceived gang membership.⁴⁴

Video, television and music were also highlighted as ways to communicate the reality of racism and to document the work of activists for posterity. Making the language and methods more varied and accessible is an important step towards uniting the diversity of voices and beliefs that the black population consists of.

3. Uniting diversity within blackness: Challenging conflict, finding consensus

Black people in Britain are a diverse group, encompassing a wide range of political ideologies, value systems, skin tones, socioeconomic status and histories. There was universal agreement that uniting the diversity within blackness to work towards common goals is necessary to secure black liberation. Who counts as black, what that liberation should look like and how best to achieve it were prevalent points of contention.

Moving on from Marxism

Marxism was embraced by black activists in the UK and in the former Empire seeking radical solutions to oppression.⁴⁵ A ready-made liberation rhetoric, it formed the basis for the radical politics of figures such as Claudia Jones, Olive Morris and George Padmore.⁴⁶

This history has left a lasting mark on black social movements in Britain. Marxism was a useful framework in a postcolonial context – often the only popular ideology calling for black liberation within and across nation states and empires. But there was consensus that a Marxism that centres on class, without fully accounting for race and gender, was a model that is no longer adequate.

There was much agreement that ‘left-wing’ ideologies should not be imposed as a way for black people to understand their own oppression. Although economic security and fairness cannot be separated from calls for racial justice, we should not assume that black people share the same ideas about the methods needed to achieve this goal or what that just future should look like. Instead of a focus on political purity, the focus should be on racial and economic inequality. There was an acknowledgement that black people, like

all people in Britain, need to live and exist within a mixed economy. Whether establishing successful black businesses or preserving and mainstreaming black British history is the focus, there must be space for both under the umbrella of black liberation. The role of KIN should be to bring these voices together to collectively harvest these aims into a manifesto.

This will not be easy to achieve and will involve difficult conversations. There are a multitude of values and beliefs within the black community. KIN has specific values that are integral to the network that are likely to be tested with any attempt to widen the movement. Members will need to collectively decide which beliefs are irreconcilable with the network and which differences can coexist to achieve shared goals.

Liberation for whom?

There was a keen awareness that the KIN convening participants shared similar values. Although the participants campaigned on a variety of issues, such as criminal justice, history and the arts, most ascribed to the values outlined in the introduction. Tensions and conflict did arise, but there were no challenges to the core values of KIN. Once KIN expands its remit to include more individuals and groups there may be more conflicts to manage.

The workshops ‘Restless Religion: Thoughts of a Young Black Priest’ and ‘Engaging Black Refugees’ brought this tension to the fore. The convener, a black, bisexual man with Jamaican heritage, mentioned that he was an anomaly in all the spaces he occupied: black-majority churches, white-majority churches and some black social spaces.

Attitudes to same-sex relationships and the LGBTQ+ community in Britain's former Empire is rooted in Sections 76 and 77 of the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, which were created in the British metropole and exported to her colonial outposts. This criminalised 'buggery' and 'gross indecency' as punishable by imprisonment.⁴⁷ This has left a longstanding legacy. Of the 72 countries with such a law still on the books in 2018, over half of them, at least 38 countries, were once subject to some sort of British colonial rule.⁴⁸ The moral mission of the legislators was to impose 'Christian' values onto colonial subjects. More recently, American evangelical churches with extreme anti-LGBTQ+ views have found new audiences in Britain's former Empire.⁴⁹ Jamaica, branded the 'most homophobic place on earth' by *Time* magazine in 2006, is still a violent and dangerous place for LGBTQ+ citizens.⁵⁰ Attitudes have begun to thaw slowly, but discrimination and violence is still a reality for LGBTQ+ people.⁵¹

These attitudes were repatriated to Britain with the migration of British subjects, and later from independent Commonwealth states. In the black British community, homophobic attitudes have lessened over time but are still recorded at much higher rates than among the white British majority. Analysis of the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes from 1990 to 2010 by the University of Manchester found that in 2010, 58% of black and South Asian 16–44-year-olds believed that same-sex relationships were always wrong, the proportion having fallen from 67% in 1990. Among white respondents in this age bracket, only 12% held this view, down from 46% in 1990. Religious belief also had a similar effect on views. In 2010, 60% of 16–44-year-olds who attended at least one religious service a week viewed homosexuality as always wrong, compared with 11% of those who didn't identify as religious.⁵² Only 7% of those who identify as having no religion are ethnic minorities.⁵³

Occupying multiple identities, and the lack of acceptance that can bring, were issues that resonated with the participants. There was much agreement that there are not many black-majority churches that are open to the LGBTQ+ community, but equally, white-majority churches were often reluctant to commit to anti-racist work or beliefs or to acknowledge the complicity of the Church of England in colonialism.⁵⁴

To unite the diversity of values within blackness, there is a need for honesty about contradictions within religion and a challenge to the parts of the bible that run contrary to the liberalisation of views on homosexuality and the role of women. This also includes challenging the virtues of 'patience' and waiting for a 'better life in heaven' which can breed complacency in the fight against injustice.

While it is imperative that we recognise the role and legacy of colonialism in forming anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes, there was consensus that it is now the responsibility of the black community to have difficult, intergenerational conversations that challenge homophobic views. This was reaffirmed in the 'Engaging Black Refugees' session. It was noted that the convening was being held minutes away from another event for black activists that day. This other event was not an LGBTQ+-friendly space, but is dedicated to its own vision of black liberation. Connecting with these spaces and with black churches and having difficult conversations with elders will be necessary. This should not be left to LGBTQ+ black people to do.

The work of Professor Anthony Reddie, scholar of black theology and black liberation theory, was offered as a helpful blueprint for coexistence and eventually acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities and Christianity. He asserts that all forms of discrimination deny the love of God. He posits the narrative of the first Pentecost as instructive of the necessity of embracing and affirming difference.⁵⁵

Who's still missing?

The workshop 'Engaging Black Refugees in Black Liberation' posed the question of who is missing from black radical spaces and why this is the case. The lack of BME representation in the charity sector was noted as a factor. The 'formal' campaigning space within non-governmental organisations (NGOs) reflects wider third sector trends of being mostly white.⁵⁶ Participants reflected and agreed that the first point of contact in support organisations for asylum seekers and refugees tended to be majority-white. However, the relative privilege held by black British citizens who have secure status compared with black asylum seekers and migrants with uncertain status was a point of contention.

Under the 1948 British Nationality Act, all Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies (CUKC) had, in theory, the same legal rights and protections. This included unrestricted entry and settlement, access to the labour market, voting rights and entitlement to welfare benefits for anyone born in Britain, a British colony or an independent Commonwealth country.⁵⁷ The arrival of HMT *Empire Windrush* in 1948 and the subsequent movement of peoples from the New Commonwealth – countries with majority black or brown populations – led to a sequence of restrictive immigration laws designed to limit such entry to and settlement in Britain.

A two-tiered system of citizenship, in which black people occupied the lower tier, was cemented by the Immigration Act 1981.⁵⁸ Beyond the right to movement and settlement, black people, even when UK-born or British citizens, were not afforded equal status in the labour market or in housing provision, where there was no legal protection against discrimination until 1968. The Race Relation Acts of 1965 and 1968 were passed to outlaw discrimination in public places and later to make it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services on the grounds of race, or ethnic or national origin.

The evidence is unequivocal that this discrimination and the social attitudes that drive it still exist in Britain. Research by the Runnymede Trust and NatCen found that 44%

of those surveyed believe 'some races are born harder-working than others' and 26% self-describe as 'very' or 'a little' prejudiced against people of other races.⁵⁹ These beliefs permeate our institutions and influence the choices of decision-makers. The result is rampant, long-lasting inequalities drawn across ethnic lines.

A 2019 study by Nuffield College, University of Oxford, found that British employers continue to discriminate against ethnic minority job applicants when making hiring decisions. The researchers applied to close to 3,200 jobs, keeping the skills, qualifications and work experience the same but randomly varying the ethnic background of applicants. They found no real decline in discrimination against black Caribbean workers when compared with previous studies.⁶⁰ Further, they uncovered that Nigerians with a university degree and relevant work experience still had to send twice as many applications as the white British group to be considered for software engineering and marketing assistant jobs.⁶¹

This adds to a landscape which sees black men and women more likely to be in low-paid work and precarious employment, including agency and seasonal work, and less likely to own their home or have savings, than their white counterparts.⁶² A policy such as Universal Credit hits black women particularly hard, as it is less favourable to single parents than to couples and black women are more likely to be single parents than white British women.⁶³ The 2018 Windrush scandal, which saw British subjects who had moved from the New Commonwealth as children wrongly detained, deported and denied their legal rights, made it clear that even supposedly unalienable rights are not secure.

However, when compared to black asylum seekers, the established black British community is still at an advantage. For example, the black Caribbean community has English as a first language, as do 86% of Nigerian-born people. This contrasts with Somali-born people in England and Wales, of whom 27% have English as their first language and 53% can speak English well or very well.⁶⁴ While the Caribbean community

has been settled for two or three generations, newly arrived asylum seekers do not have settled immigration status, cannot work while their claim is being processed, and may not have the kinship and familial networks of more-established communities. The needs and experiences of these groups are different.

This was raised during the 'Engaging Black Refugees' session. Established black communities are still facing significant inequalities in the workplace, in the criminal justice system, in school and in academia. Grappling with these challenges and fighting for the rights and recognition that should have been afforded them in the 1960s has been the focus of black radical activists in recent years. The successful cultural integration but continued socioeconomic exclusion of the settled black British community was noted as a barrier, as fighting to 'fit in' and be accepted demarcates the community from new arrivals.⁶⁵ The shift from 'political blackness', where black African, Caribbean and Asian communities organised together in the 1970s and 1980s, to the more fragmented call for rights that we have today was noted as a consequence of new narratives around integration and multiculturalism from the 1990s onwards.⁶⁶ There was agreement that this needs to change so that black refugees are included, followed by a more joined-up anti-racist movement across ethnic groups.

The phenomenon of new migrations from sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and East Asia, combined with socioeconomic stratification between ethnic minority groups, complicates calls for solidarity.⁶⁷ Multiple histories, religions, languages, ethnicities and cultures exist within black identity and between ethnic groups. The advent of social media has also enabled diasporic identities to flourish. Linked histories and similarities in struggles have led to the spread of black movements such as Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall across continents. This further stratifies the old framework of political blackness, wherein African Caribbean and Asian communities shared similar experiences of treatment by the white British majority and the state in the 1970s.

The primacy given to 'culture' by the state from the 1980s onwards moved the conversation away from anti-racism and towards recognition of traditions and representation.⁶⁸ These are important, and KIN should look to build solidarity within the diaspora, where similarities in struggles, but also cultural production and identities, exist.⁶⁹ However, KIN should also build solidarity with other ethnic minority groups in the long term. Despite some socioeconomic stratification between ethnic groups, most face discrimination, share disadvantage in employment outcomes and are under-represented in British institutions. These issues offer space for solidarity. This solidarity will not, however, be built without challenge, as negative stereotypes and views exist between ethnic groups.⁷⁰

'When you're already marginalised, it can be hard sometimes to think about the ways you are privileged.' – participant

The tension between supporting new arrivals, accommodating a wealth of black experiences, and being mindful of the pressures and constraints on British-born black activists was a flashpoint. A story was shared by a participant about a relative who had moved from Kenya to the UK and faced having no recourse to public funds, being threatened with deportation followed by the imposition of extortionate fees to regularise her status. She did not feel supported by the black British community and, consequently, did not feel much sympathy for victims of the Windrush scandal. The differing treatment in public discourse of the experiences of different groups within the black community had further entrenched barriers.

However, the surprise expressed by participants in the 'Detention on Trial' session at the draconian Hostile Environment immigration policy and the reality of detention highlights two issues. Firstly, most of the convening participants had not been at the sharp end of such policies. Secondly, it flags up the importance of understanding our political system and policies, and the power of explaining them in different formats, as discussed in Section 2, in order to build solidarity and action within the black community.

A lack of knowledge of the reality of the black British experience among black migrants and refugees was another live discussion point. It was agreed that members of the longer-standing black British community are at an advantage in terms of immigration status, language proficiency and networks. However, the socioeconomic position of this group is a difficult one that must be appreciated when discussing responsibility towards, and support for, black refugees. Further, activists who have been making change happen for some time are facing capacity issues and tiredness.

A role for KIN, and particularly those with more privilege within the network, is to do meaningful outreach work to bring 'in' black refugees and migrants. This includes going to where refugees are supported, and translating materials into multiple languages and avoid using jargon. Participants offered to translate materials for free.

Convening a similar discussion with more refugees and a more diverse mix of black British people in the room was suggested. Finally, for those working in more traditional policymaking and campaigning organisations that focus on race or blackness, the issues facing migrants and refugee communities should be more embedded into the work they do.

Making space for mixed-race identities

What and who is defined as 'black', by wider British society and by the black community, was a point of contention. In the session 'Tower of the People', an exercise took

place where participants had to discuss the contribution to the black community of randomly selected public figures or characters, and whether they could be considered 'black'. One of the groups' conversation turned to whether the singer Sade, who has white British and Nigerian heritage and was born in Nigeria, could be considered black. Three participants, all men, articulated that Sade was not 'black enough', and one shared that 'you wouldn't even know she was black' as her music catered to 'whiteness'. Another member of this group stated that Sade was 'mixed-race' and not 'black'. Members of the other group overheard the conversation and tension arose. Two women left the space in response.

Other group members tried to move the conversation towards how 'blackness' is defined and to emphasise that it is not a monolith and space should be given to mixed-race people to define themselves in response to how they are read by wider society and their own experiences. This attracted agreement from many in the room. But one participant refused to accept this, and reasserted that the boundaries of 'blackness' are clearly drawn and defined, although he could not clearly delineate what those boundaries were.

This tension highlights the difficulty in defining a social construct which is an invention born of history but with modern, contextual meaning. Mixed-race identity and whether one background is given more credence than another is a process of self-definition based on an individual's life experience. Race can be a reactive identity, formed in response to how others perceive you. In terms of outcomes in education, for example, Black African, Black Caribbean, Mixed White and Black African or Caribbean pupils share similar results.⁷¹ This is also true of school exclusions.⁷² This does not suggest that black and mixed groups are a monolith that share all the same experiences. However, there is a relationship between black and mixed identities that should not be glossed over too simplistically. Making space for these identities, which constitute a rapidly growing demographic, within 'blackness' will become ever more important.

The workshop 'Bleaching, Skin Tone and Colourism: A Colonial Legacy' situated the history of scientific racism and colonialism in inventing and perpetuating racial hierarchies that place mixed-race people above darker-skinned black people. Three videos that were shown highlighted that colourism, the privileges afforded to black people with lighter skin and mixed-race people, has been internalised by black people themselves. The documentary *Dark Girls* showed testimonies from black girls whose family members perpetuated the idea that lighter was more beautiful. Films from South Africa and Jamaica on the prevalent use of skin lighteners showed the extent of colourism throughout the former British Empire. Both of these documentaries featured local celebrities who stated they felt 'more visible' after using skin lighteners and became more successful. Most of the companies that produce skin lighteners are multinational beauty brands that have colonial ties: Unilever, Revlon and L'Oréal.

A video by YouTube videographer VanBanter, which filmed mostly dark-skinned, black young men in Stratford, London, describing their 'preference' for lighter-skinned girls and denigrating darker-skinned ones elicited a strong reaction from the room. It was agreed that young men in particular need to be educated about the history behind such perceptions, to stop them perpetuating these ideas.

Participants strongly agreed on the need for more studies and research on colourism in the UK, rather than the US. Research by academics such as Tom Jacobs has found links between skin shade and labour market outcomes.⁷³ Research that links skin shade to economic outcomes in the UK has not been carried out, but there is work in which shadism is discussed.



4. Space to build relationships

Burnout, a state of chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, has become more commonly discussed.⁷⁴ At the same time, the closure of community centres and youth centres has reduced the public spaces where people can meet.⁷⁵ The need for spaces where black activists, and black people more generally, can meet and decompress was a recurring theme throughout the convening. Having the space to record activism past and present is also important for black activist movements. Beyond documentation, ‘nourishment’, the need to replenish the strength to continue campaigning, was mentioned throughout the sessions.

Interactive sessions during the convening played this role. In ‘Writing as Repair and Resistance’, participants shared their difficult relationships with language. For some, English was a second language that represented a break with familial ties or previous home. For others, it represented living in the diaspora, and the tension that can arise from being from multiple places. In two groups, participants looked at work written outside of the Western tradition and reflected on their relationship with language, as well as writing and performing a poem together. The ability to use words to transform painful or challenging experiences into something therapeutic was shared by participants as a motivation for writing.

Similarly, ‘Drapetomania and Other Cock and Bull Yarns’, run by an art therapist and artist educator, also had transformation as a central theme.⁷⁶ Drapetomania was a pseudoscientific mental illness invented in 1851 by American physician Samuel A. Cartwright, who claimed that this ‘disease’ was the cause of enslaved Africans attempting to flee. This enabled slave

owners to ‘explain away’ the phenomenon of runaway slaves rather than admit to heinous conditions and treatment being the cause. Session participants were encouraged to create an image that rejected the diagnosis of Drapetomania and instead showed the reality – that running away was a positive act. Other participants worked together to plait yarn that would be used to hang the images. At the end, the group danced together, with everyone smiling and singing, with laughter and spontaneous applause. The opportunity to have fun and partake in therapeutic group activities was well received by participants.

The space to have frank conversations about race without derailment or the need for extensive explanation was mentioned in several sessions. The need for a space to share ideas and organising practice and to check in, even when there is no ‘active’ campaign on, was raised throughout the sessions as a way to keep up momentum and maintain trust between organisations and individuals.

KIN will be holding more convenings and considering how the network can support other black-led spaces.



5. Movement mapping and sharing organising practice

The convening brought together a range of approaches to change-making. This included making change within institutions, creating new institutions or organisations, and personal healing and growth. Although there was debate over which approach is the most effective, particularly in relation to academia, there was little to suggest that any of these approaches are mutually exclusive. This is, however, within a group that shares similar overarching values.

Social movement ecology, a movement-building theory based on the US-based Momentum Training Program, is a useful framework within which to think through how these different approaches might fit together. Instead of having just one group or organisation, with a particular approach being the only way to bring about social change, each approach plays a role within the 'ecosystem'.⁷⁷ Although they sometimes have competing interests, they also have a symbiotic relationship and play different roles in keeping the movement alive.

Particularly in the formal NGO sector, too many organisations that require similar funding sources, engage similar supporters, use similar techniques and work towards similar goals can run into counterproductive conflict. Conversely, a network of groups working autonomously towards shared goals increases the probability of success.

For example, the creation of the Nottingham Archive discussed in 'Archives as an Act of Protest' was initiated in response to a lack of institutional recognition of black histories. Creating an alternative institution has led to 'mainstream' institutional recognition. The two presenters in 'Youth and the Perception of Political Action' won reforms from their university by working within

established university processes to widen the anthropology curriculum.

The interactive food-based session 'Nourishing Liberation ... Cultivating Healing and Liberation through Food' was a therapeutic experience that looked at personal transformation in the way participants engaged with food. Participants were given ingredients and asked to make a salad. The facilitator narrated the process, questioning participants' decisions to use a knife instead of hands, or to cut in straight lines rather than in rough cuts. Participants reflected individually and collectively about what food meant to them as members of the black diaspora, the healing power of food and the disconnection people had with food production. Global food sovereignty, a movement for a fairer food system that allows communities to control the way food is produced, traded and consumed, was also discussed.

Participants shared their perspectives on how to eat better and consequently feel nourished. These are all valid contributions to black liberation and can work symbiotically. The structure of the KIN convening, where everyone was both a trainer teaching the group about their activism and a participant who learnt from others on equal footing, is conducive to creating a symbiotic network. A diversity of organisation types could increase support for black liberation, as it would offer different levels of participation and engagement to fit with people's interests and responsibilities.⁷⁸

At present, KIN is a network of activists with similar, although not identical, political beliefs. As noted in 'The 8 Principles of John La Rose', where different organising methods were discussed in groups, left-wing ideologies

should not be imposed on people as a way of understanding the oppression they experience in their lives. There was consensus that black people needed to find ways to survive and thrive in a capitalist system that is unfavourable to them, and may have different ideas of what success for black people should look like. The need for ideological ‘purity’ that has undone left-wing movements in the past was viewed as unhelpful. The social movement ecology framework leaves space for this, up to a point.

For example, if a wider understanding of black history for everyone in Britain was a shared goal on the journey towards black liberation, the desired outcome could look very different for two different activist groups or NGOs. As noted in Section 1, a participant in the ‘Archives as an Act of Protest’ workshop noted that the inclusion of black people in the narratives of colonial wars often sanitises the history of racism and poverty. This was met with agreement by the group. For other activists or organisations, the inclusion of black soldiers in the discourse to ‘bring’ black people into the frame of national history is enough. The goal of widening understanding of black history has been reached. For others, this is a necessary step on the way to actualising the next stage: understanding the true extent of colonialism. Equally, another individual may find this counterproductive, making it harder to explain that there was an oppressive element to imperialism. As the KIN network widens, conflict management and holding space for disagreement will become a more and more pressing task.

Organising autonomous groups and building networks

Individuals had different ideas on how best to organise smaller, autonomous activist groups and networks. In the ‘Black British Activism and Historians’ session, participants looked to past and present movements and discussed the pros and cons of different forms of organising. Having one charismatic leader was a point of contention. Having one leader can make an organisation, group or movement vulnerable to co-optation. If the individual dies, retires, is ‘bought off’ or imprisoned,

there is a risk that the movement is severely wounded or dies with them.

This was challenged by a participant who cited Nelson Mandela as someone who was charismatic and, given the context he was in, did not sell out. This was contested by another member of the group, but there was agreement that consideration of the context leaders were, and are, in is necessary when assessing their actions. Mainstream leaders have to appeal to a wider base, and this was recognised as inevitable. However, this was seen as a form of leadership that leads to tension and often distorts the role of others who contribute to a movement, collective or organisation. One notable example is the women involved in the US civil rights movement.

‘Leaderless’ or ‘leaderfull’ movements were supported as a potential structure that the KIN network could learn from. In ‘John La Rose and the Black Parents Movement’, participants read the principles of the movement in small groups. The principles of the Black Parents Movement included no leadership, to ensure that all members were dedicated and would carry out regular work, attend meetings and become fully involved. It still, however, had a structure including a Coordinating Council, a Steering Committee, Sections and Groups.⁷⁹ The aim was to build a membership organisation that centred around responsibility, not office or power.

In ‘Black British Activism and Historians’, the manifesto of the Combahee River Collective – the US-based black feminist lesbian organisation of which Audre Lorde was a member – was noted as an example to follow.⁸⁰ Its manifesto sets clear goals and outlines the values of the group.

Equally, Black Lives Matter and Sisters Uncut were mentioned as potential models to learn from. Both movements have manifestos, decentralised structures that allow people to start their own chapters, and collective leadership. Sisters Uncut use consensus decision-making, which ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into



account and that the final decision is either supported by everyone in the group or can be 'lived with' by those who do not support it.⁹¹ This is not an approach without tensions. A participant raised the fact that the Leeds and Manchester chapters of Black Lives Matter UK were not part of the wider movement and, as a result, dwindled after a few direct actions. Without direction, they lost momentum.

A commitment to a non-hierarchical structure was popular. But equally, the reality that some participants will be able to be more involved and engaged than others was raised throughout the convening. Once KIN is more established in structure and direction, the labour should be distributed more evenly and hierarchies reduced. At the next convening, space should be given to discuss organising practice and, more specifically, where collaboration would strengthen or expand the work of KIN members.

How KIN fits within the context of other movements for social change will need to be established. When to bring in non-black people of colour as allies was an issue of contention that remained unresolved, although the convening featured a social open to all people of colour which was attended by the majority of participants.

6. What role should non-black allies play in the KIN network?

The KIN convening was a space for black activists to centre and situate the struggle for black liberation. The issue of limited resources and activist burnout discussed previously, combined with the minority status of black people in Britain, means that support from allies outside of the community will be needed. The labour will need to be ‘snowballed’ out of the KIN network and into other networks and organisations that tackle interrelated issues such as inequality and class.

In the session ‘It Takes Courage: Moving from Passive Ally to Active Co-Conspirator’, participants agreed that as members of a minority group, black activists cannot be in every room. There was agreement that ‘active allies’ were needed who understand the ‘mutuality of our dignity and liberation and [are] committed to its realisation in the present’. People from other ethnic groups need support to understand how power and

privilege intersect and how they can act as trusted messengers to improve outcomes for black people. Rather than breeding guilt, which on its own is not productive, people may need direction on how they can make a difference. The Uncomfortable Tours project, which provides tours around museums and galleries and explores the history and legacy of colonialism, was cited as an example of effective work. It is led by a white Australian woman, and participants agreed that the message is perceived as ‘more acceptable’ from a white ally.

How this could be expanded was not fully resolved. The convenor suggested a training programme inspired by movement-building and liberation training. This was well received. This should be a topic for further discussion at a future convening, looking at both white allies and also other ethnic minority communities as discussed in Section 3.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The KIN convening touched on each of its objectives, with some given more attention and focus than others. Anchoring present activism in history with a focus on archival work was well covered. Participants saw continuity in the challenges facing black communities and the resistance to injustice. As two of the archival sessions ran concurrently, all participants attended at least one session. KIN should look at how it can support the outreach efforts of archives across the country.

Although conflict and tensions did arise, agreement and consensus were more common. There was a lot of laughter, and participants used the space to share personal experiences. Disagreement was mostly met respectfully and facilitators supported those who felt they needed to leave the space until they felt ready to return. As the network expands, dealing with conflict will likely become a more prominent issue. KIN should train more network members to be facilitators and to manage conflict, if resource allows.

The convening laid the foundations for the other objectives, and KIN will build on this work and move closer towards meeting these objectives as we move forward. Although participants discussed organising practice and some even suggested replicating similar work in other parts of the country, how to traverse silos and collaborate strategically was not discussed at length. Doing so would increase the strength of the relationships built at the convening, and KIN should focus on this in the future. Equally, the convening highlighted who and what is missing from black activist spaces, namely black refugees, activists outside of academic spaces and discussion of religion. KIN should continue with the extensive outreach process used to invite

applications for the convening, to reach out to these groups to include black refugees and to hold a session on black Muslim identity at a future convening.

The need for nourishment, rest and building connections even when there is no campaign were raised consistently throughout the convening. KIN should continue to organise socials and meetings to provide space for joyful experiences and the sharing of experiences, and to maintain relationships, in London and beyond.

Going forward

- To move closer to achieving KIN's objectives the network should:
- Organise another convening and, dependent on resources, intermittent meet-ups to maintain relationships and momentum.
- In the next convening, include time to share strategies on organising practice and see where collaboration could happen.
- Widen the network to include more diversity of thought, with more facilitators to manage potential conflicts and look for common goals.
- Use the outreach programme used to find convening participants, but with a focus on groups not well represented at the first convening, such as black refugees. This should include going to places where refugees are supported and churches, and engaging Women 4 Refugee Women to try and increase the representation of refugee women at the next convening.
- Collectively source what KIN's vision for black liberation looks like, with clear goals for how this could be realised.



Longer term

In the longer term, the network should:

- Bring in people who do not necessarily view themselves as 'activists' but who are active in the black community.
- Put on a programme of work that increases the understanding of the history of black activism in Britain, including supporting archives with their outreach.
- Locate black liberation within wider movements for social change, such as economic and racial justice movements.

Endnotes

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